

placeable? No—and, in fact, it could never be, for Croce is not concerned with the historic individual called Alexander but merely with some illustration which may clarify what he wishes to mean.

History, like all other knowledge, involves the Pure Concepts, for it cannot become knowledge without involving them. But unlike both Science and Philosophy, it is concerned with the intrinsically individual—that which never recurs, the unrepeatable. Art, having the intrinsic individuality of intuition, is not controlled by anything excepting the logic of Imagination. History, however, has an objective control, though more tenuous than in Science. Further, being a theoretic knowledge, it essentially uses the concept, both pure and pseudo, because without the one it would not be knowledge and without the other it would be not History but Philosophy.

Thus, it stands on the borderlands of Art on the one hand and Science and Philosophy on the other. Concerned theoretically with the intrinsically individual not in its immediacy, but in its temporality, it can concern itself with Science, Art or Philosophy, for they too, as thought in the mind of a thinker, have an individuality and a temporality. When it confines itself to a single person, we call it biography; when it deals with groups or societies in their individual temporality, we call it History. To think of Philosophy as History is, therefore, wrong for though philosophy has had a History, yet that history is a history of Philosophy and not, say, of Physics or of Biology or of the Roman Empire. There must, therefore, be some distinctive subject-matter of Philosophy; otherwise it could not have a history of its own as distinct from the histories of other subjects.

## CHAPTER XI

### EXISTENTIALISM

The centrality of the Self revealed by the 'transcendental reduction' and the problem of temporality brought into focus by discussions on the relation between Philosophy and History, seem almost to be directional pointers to the movement in philosophy known as 'Existentialism'. The Self that was revealed as central does not seem to be merely a knowing Self, but primarily a Self that wills—a Self that has the form of time, at least in its aspect as the future, within itself. This 'future' is, however, a valuational future. The problem of Self, Value and Time is, thus, once again re-opened—but, this time, not on the level of knowing, but on that of willing.

The problem of 'willing the good' has been a continuous pre-occupation of philosophy alongside that of 'knowing the Real'. Yet, there always have been philosophers who have been more interested in the one than in the other. Plato, at the very beginning, was equally interested in both and, following Socrates, thought that 'knowing the real' would inevitably lead to 'willing the good', for the real and the valuational were identical to his mind. In general, philosophers were, however, more interested in knowing the real and tended to *assume* that the real would inevitably be good and that the knowledge of the good would necessarily result in willing it as well.

Sometimes, the good in the sense of values has even been taken as a clue to the determination of the nature of the real. Even Kant could think only of the 'practical reason' as the way out of the impasse created by 'pure reason'. At other times, as in Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, the clue to reality has been found in 'the Will', though the Will admitted by them was, in no sense, the will that willed the good. Kierkegaard, like Kant before him, saw the deep relation of the will to choice while Nietzsche discovered the creative aspect of choice which, just because it is choice, creates value. Kant however, did not see the non-rationality of Freedom as evidenced in the fact of choice, for to him Freedom consisted in willing according to the pure form of reason and not otherwise. Thus he missed altogether the essential indeterminacy, which Kierkegaard has called the fact of the 'leap'. Nietzsche,

in his own turn, failed to make use of the creative aspect of choice which he had discovered. His *The Genealogy of Morals* and the concepts of slave-morality and master-morality are indeed first-rate contributions to the psychology and sociology of values; but from the point of view of the metaphysics of value, they are hardly of any importance.

The phenomenon of 'Will' itself and its relation to values was, thus, coming more and more into the focus of an important stream of post-Kantian thought. Bergson and the pragmatists carried the movement, in their different ways, into the twentieth century and, to-day, Existentialism seems to be the mature form that this trend has attained. There have, of course, been other factors and forces in the shaping of this movement and there are individual differences among its leading representatives. Yet, as a powerful way of philosophical thinking, it stands in its broad outlines and can be safely discussed, if not to the satisfaction of this or that Existentialist, at least, to the satisfaction of those who are interested not in individual differences between this or that thinker, but in the main contentions they make against the general run of other thinkers.

The centrality of the self-as-willing, as moving-out-into-the-future reveals two features at the same time. First, the self, even though essentially characterised by the temporal mode of futurity, is yet undetermined with respect to it. In other words, it has the future in the mode of willing and not in that of being, i.e. it determines the future with regard to itself and not itself with regard to the future. It is precisely for this reason that the self is a self and not a thing or, in Heidegger's terminology, a 'Dasein' and not a 'Vorhanden'. Secondly, the self-as-willing reveals that *it is alone*—alone in moving-out-into-its-own-future.

The 'ego-centric predicament' has been known for long in the field of knowledge, but that it operates equally well, or perhaps even more tellingly so in the realm of willing, has been brought into focus only very recently. Religious thinking, undoubtedly, had concerned itself with the problem of individual guilt and salvation but only within the framework of the theistic hypothesis from which it could not disengage itself. The 'ego-centric predicament' in the field of knowledge does not deny the objectivity of objects. What it rather affirms is merely that all objects are objects to a subject—a subject that cannot be different from the individual ego. Similarly, the 'ego-centric predicament' in the field of willing, does not deny the objects. Rather, in a deeper sense, the willing reveals more the objectivity of the

object than the knowing of it, for, the determinacy of the object known gives place to the deeper determinacy, or shall we say obstinacy, of the objects willed and acted upon. Similarly, the aloneness is of a deeper kind, for, the subject not only does not stand statically before a finished object, but stakes itself in the dynamic choice of its future and is, thus, alone not in its transcendental existence, but in *the very heart of its becoming*, in its *responsibility* for what it will make of itself.

This 'aloneness' in willing is the ground for what most existentialist writers have called the phenomenon of 'dread', the fearful responsibility of choosing the very becoming of one's own Self. It should be recalled in this connection that the Self is no longer 'one-among-the-many', a thing-among-things, because of the transcendental reduction. It would, however, be better if we tried to understand the exact situation from which the existential thinking takes its rise; and for this, it is necessary to understand the further modifications introduced into the situation of the phenomenological reduction by, what one may call, the existential reduction.

The Self-conscious-of-itself finds itself already in a world. (Here it should be noted that we do not mean by 'Self' some abiding, persistent, self-same entity, but merely the fact of self-consciousness.) This fact of being-already-in-the world is called by Heidegger the fact of 'thrownness' (Geworfenheit) in which the 'Dasein' finds itself. The word 'Dasein' is used to avoid the substantial implications of the word 'self'. This 'world' in which 'Dasein' finds itself thrown consists, according to Heidegger, of 'Umwelt' including all that is 'Zuhanden' and 'Vorhanden', and 'Mitwelt' including the vast multitude of beings of the kind of 'Dasein', in relation to which it finds itself. The 'Vorhanden' means things as given by Nature while 'Zuhanden' means things as transformed by Man in the pursuit of his practical purposes. The distinction is supposed to be important, for "Dasein is primarily not concerned with the things of Nature in an exclusively theoretical attitude, but in its foreground of attention and interest are the 'utensils', this term taken in the widest sense of a product made by man in the state of civilisation".\* Not only this, but "the things of Nature were originally encountered and discovered only in connection with such practical pursuit and they commonly form its background".†

\* Werner Brock in his Introduction to Heidegger's *Existence and Being*, p. 43.

† *Ibid.*, p. 43.

However, what is philosophically more important to understand is the fact that this 'Being-in-the-world' is as much a *constitutive* feature of 'Dasein' as its 'aloneness' or the fact that 'Dasein' is always my own 'Dasein'. In this respect, 'Dasein' is fundamentally different from things that are 'Vorhandene', for "it cannot be ontologically grasped as *the case or the example of a genus of beings*, as can be done with things that are 'Vorhandene'".\*

But the 'Being-in-the-world' of 'Dasein' and its 'aloneness' do not exhaust its constitutive structure. What is perhaps still more important, is that 'Dasein' is a kind of being which, in its Being, is concerned about its own Being, or, as it may be phrased, is 'for the sake of its own Being'. "This relatedness to its own potentiality of Being means ontologically: Dasein is, in its Being, always already in advance of itself." † The Being-in-the-world is, therefore, simultaneously a Being-in-advance-of-itself.

The 'essence' of Dasein, thus, lies in its *concern about its own possibility* and is, therefore, always unfinished and unascertainable. Unlike things that are 'Vorhanden', it involves in its very Being the undetermined 'yet-to-be'. It, therefore, has no essence precedent to itself which determines it to be what it is. The 'essence' whether in the form of Plato's 'ideas' or Aristotle's 'Forms' determines a thing to be what it is. But the Being of Man being always in-advance-of-itself i.e. in a continuous process of becoming, has no essence which makes it what it is unless, of course, we choose to call this very Freedom its essence. However, this freedom, it should be remembered, is of a Being that is essentially a Being-in-the-world. Further, this Being-in-the-world is not to be conceived of as just being in the world but as the 'world' revealed in and through the reaction of Dasein to the fact of its 'thrownness'—a reactivity that has been termed by Heidegger 'Care'. This 'Care' (Sorge) may either "be a *care of* . . . . if it concerns anything that is 'Zuhanden', or a *care for* . . . . if it concerns the Dasein of others" ‡.

The final structure of Dasein is given by Werner Brock as "Already-Being-in-the-world, in-advance-of-itself, as the Being-concerned-with-beings-encountered-in-the-world" §. The first emphasizes that Dasein is not isolated but finds itself thrown into what Sartre has called a 'situation'; the second that it is not a

\* *Ibid.*, p. 28. Italics ours.

† *Ibid.*, p. 64.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 65. Italics ours.

§ *Ibid.*, p. 64.

thing or 'Vorhanden' but a continuous becoming, a making-of-itself involving the fact of choice; the third, that the world it finds itself 'thrown in' is revealed to it in and through its active attitudes and not through a mere mirror-like passive reflection. Heidegger has named these active attitudes 'Befindlichkeit' and 'Verstehen'. The one is almost the 'feel', the 'mood' which reveals how one is 'placed' in the world. It brings the Dasein "face to face with 'That'," the fact, of the 'There', "discloses a persistent reference to the world of a somewhat compelling force" and reveals it as "in some way constantly exposed to the world".\* Co-original with this 'gestimmte Befindlichkeit', the attitude of 'Verstehen' (understanding) un-covers the world but always with respect to "the dominant purpose or aim, for the sake of which man understands himself to 'exist'". †

These analyses, however, do not give us the existential reduction, for, in the unreduced attitude we continue to look upon ourselves as 'one among the many', a thing among other things, a being among other beings. In the attitude of, what Heidegger has called, 'everydayness', "the 'self' exists together with its fellow-beings and indeed in many respects not as an 'Ich' (I), but as a 'Man', i.e., as 'one like many'". ‡ The existential reduction happens when 'I' is seen as the source and centre, primarily, of 'willing', and secondarily, of 'knowing' and 'feeling'. The centrality of 'I' in the mode of feeling has not, however, yet been exploited for philosophical purposes though, there seems no reason why the 'ego-centric predicament' which is so very obvious in the realm of feelings, should not form a basis for philosophic construction. The 'I' revealed as the central source of 'willing', is, however, no existent 'I'; it is nothing "except the power to become, at every moment, something—that is to say, something else". "The self is not a given entity, but a being which unceasingly presents itself to itself, and the sense which it has of itself is not so much the revelation of what it is, as a *call to the act by which it is to be*." §

The 'I' revealed as the central source of willing is, therefore, in a deep sense, 'is not'—or, in short, Nothing. The existential reduction resulting in a transcendence of the attitude of 'everydayness' brings us face to face with this essential 'is not' at the

\* *Ibid.*, p. 48-49.

† *Ibid.*, p. 49.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

§ Louis Lavelle quoted in *Existentialism* by Paul Foulquie. p. 117. Italics ours.

very heart of Dasein. However, the 'is not' of Dasein which is continuously trying to become an 'is', would lose itself the moment it becomes an 'is'. The Dasein, if it loses its essential 'is not', would cease to be Dasein and become merely a 'Vorhanden'. The reference to 'is' in the 'is not' of the Dasein is a reference in itself to its own Death. Death, therefore, belongs to the very Being of Dasein. It is the extreme, innermost and absolute potentiality—"the potentiality of Dasein being entirely and absolutely impossible."\*

In this ultimate potentiality, the whole 'Being-in-the-world' of Dasein and its 'care' for that world is at stake. Yet, in this very potentiality of itself—a potentiality that is irrelative and unescapable—it is compelled to face itself in its *complete aloneness* and *essential incompleteness*. "In it *all relations* to the Dasein of others are *dissolved*." † In the ordinary attitude of 'everydayness', the attitude of 'unauthentic existence', Dasein attempts to be in continuous flight from its essential and important Being-towards-Death, or conceives it naturalistically and considers it mostly as *happening* to other persons, as *something met with* in the ordinary course of events—in short, as something not to be worried about. But the moment one realises it as one's innermost potentiality of Being, one is filled with what Heidegger has tried to convey by the word 'dread'. The 'dread' reveals simultaneously the terrible loneliness of the individual in the face of its own annihilation and the character of its own Dasein as 'the thrown Being-towards-its-end'.

This Being-towards-its-own-death, when squarely faced, makes the Dasein pass from its 'unauthentic' attitude of everydayness to the 'authentic' mode which is now seen not as a mere 'reduction' or 'bracketing', but realised as the central, inalienable and final mode of the Dasein itself. As Werner Brock writes: "The irrelative nature of death singles the Dasein out and *refers it to itself*. *It makes it aware that all concern for the world of one's care and other people fails, when one's own potentiality of Being is at stake*." ‡ This reference to itself provides the first genuine possibility of being authentically itself with the simultaneous revelation of the 'unauthenticity' in which the 'self' was living until then and gives rise to the triple phenomena which Heidegger has called conscience, guilt and resolve. Conscience is the eternal call of the

\* *Werner Brock, op. cit.* p. 71. Italics ours.

† *Ibid.*, p. 71. Italics author's.

‡ Martin Heidegger quoted by Werner Brock in *Existence and Being*, p. 146.

'authentic' mode to the 'unauthentic' everydayness—and the moment it is listened to, there arise the phenomena of guilt, in virtue of the 'unauthentic' mode in which we had been living, and the 'resolve', which we make because of the call of the 'conscience' to the self to be it-self.

The Being-towards-death, as we have said, reveals not only the dreadful loneliness of the Dasein but also its essential incompleteness and utter impossibility of being itself. "The extreme potentiality of Existence is one of *ultimate renunciation*", writes Werner Brock—the renunciation, of course, being of one's own Dasein itself. What is disclosed here, for Heidegger, is the more fundamental problem of Being in which are grounded both the Dasein and the Vorhanden. Yet "only out of the Dasein, into which man may enter (but which is not identical with human life), a proximity to the truth of Being prepares itself." This opens the problem of the relation between Sein (Being) and Dasein (Existence). As Heidegger himself remarks in the note to his essay 'On the Essence of Truth': "The sequence of questions is itself a mode of thinking which, instead of supplying concepts merely, *feels* and tests itself a new mode of relationship to Being."\* This relationship is variously described in the *Postscript* to his inaugural lecture on 'What is Metaphysics?' It is an 'attunement', a 'caring', a 'sacrifice', a 'thinking', a 'dedicating' of the Dasein one has won for oneself "to the preservation of the dignity of Being". † This last turn in Heidegger's thought brings into relief the fact that he is interested in the problems of Dasein ontologically, *i.e.*, as elucidating the nature of Sein or Being and not in any psychological or anthropological sense.

This outline of Heidegger's thought, even when he emphatically insists that he has nothing whatever to do with the movement in philosophy known as 'Existentialism', was considered both necessary and useful not merely because "it was his work *Being and Time*, together with Karl Jaspers' philosophic thought, both being stimulated by Kierkegaard in this respect, that gave rise to the movement in our age" ‡ but also because it formulates almost all the essential positions of Existentialism with a difference only in emphasis and terminology at certain essential points. The thought of Jean-Paul Sartre and the other Existentialists directly

\* *Existence and Being*, p. 351. Italics ours.

† *Ibid.*, p. 390.

‡ Prefatory Note to *Existence and Being*, p. 18.

derives from Heidegger and—at one remove—from Kierkegaard and Nietzsche.

That man has to make his own essence, that he does not realise a pre-existent essence by virtue of which he is what he is, but has continuously to choose and decide what he is to become is agreed to by all Existentialists. The tragedy of the situation, however, lies just in the fact of this indeterminacy of essence, for the free choice has got no essential foothold in the realm of values; it chooses and must choose, but on its own responsibility—without rhyme or reason, for the choice is grounded in no objectivity. The centrality of the self in the mode of willing reveals the prius of choice, and thus of values lying not in objectivity or even transcendent objectivity but in the subjectivity itself. The self is seen as *centrally transcendent*, not merely to objects, but to values as well. The tragedy of man, therefore, lies just in this that he himself is the *ground* of his values, that his values are values *because he has chosen to accept them as values*. There is, therefore, no *sanction* behind values excepting that of the choice—a sanction that operates behind all choices, irrespective of the content that is chosen.

For the first time, Man seems to stand before his choice in its nakedness and feels dread before the abyss of Nothing that opens at his feet. "God is dead" declared Nietzsche—but only we realise that if God is dead, we ourselves have become God. Like him, we have to create out of Nothing and that is the supreme horror, the supreme dread, the supreme freedom. But man is afraid of his Freedom and so has tried to find a God, if not in high heavens, then, at least, in the dynamics of biological or sociological evolution, or even in a Humanism that tries to find the source of values in objective mankind itself. Voltaire is supposed to have said that if God is not, mankind would have to invent one. That, in fact, is what mankind has been doing all along as it is afraid of finding no God and losing all bearings in a world which has no objective ground of values in itself. A godless world is a world without values, without significance and without meaning. Once the God of theology had given way, mankind tried to find the objective ground of values in the universality of practical reason, as in Kant, or in the objective evolutionary process, as in Herbert Spencer and the post-Darwinian thinkers of naturalistic ethics. Such attempts have not yet ceased; and Dr. Julian Huxley is, perhaps, not the last man to suggest that increasing independence and control of the environment are the two values distinctly suggested by the evolutionary advance and, thus, grounded in an objectivity

which seems tolerably sufficient, at least, to the scientist. But the more fashionable objectivity of the twentieth century is that of Marxist sociology which assures us of a Necessity to achieve higher and higher syntheses in socio-economic relations till the absolute synthesis is reached—a Necessity that is inevitable and inescapable, grounded as it is in the *inherent* dialectic of productive relations immanent in the very nature of society. The latest soothsayers of 'scientific' socialism bring us also the glad tidings that we are on the last turn of the dialectic Spiral and may expect within the near future the first stages of that absolute synthesis. Only before that Age of Peace and Plenty we should steel our hearts if we see on the path the Darkness of Night made still more horrible by the lurid colours of blood and fire. Another prophet of the Age of Heaven upon Earth through the coming 'super-mind' is Sri Aurobindo, and he too talks of the 'darkness before the Dawn' and of the *inevitable* necessity of the emergence of the super-mind, for it already is involved in the darkest recesses of Matter!

To believe the direction of Time to be that of value as well, to believe that the later is always the better, to believe that there is something at the heart of objectivity which moves in the direction in which we would like it to move—has been the continuous feature of man's unending flight from the abyss of meaninglessness that yawns at his feet. Giving up these crutches, for the first time, existential thinking brings the subject face to face with this utter meaninglessness, and forces the fundamental fact of Freedom to create Value in face of this valueless Nihil to the fore. "Freedom", writes Marjorie Grene, "reveals itself rather, when we screw up our courage to see it without pretence, in the *dizzying collapse of external sanctions and universal laws*, in the appalling consciousness that I, and I alone, have, absurdly and without reason, brought order out of chaos, that I alone, crudely and stupidly, *without cosmic meaning or rational ground*, have made a world out of nothing: and with that awareness my world itself totters on the brink of the nothingness from which it came."\* Freedom, as the freedom in face of absolute valuelessness, is so clearly revealed in Death, which "in its *utter negation of meaning* limits, and so in the deepest sense determines, whatever resolve I make to turn the incredible past into a *significant future*."†

Significance is carved out by man for himself either through

\* *Dreadful Freedom*. p. 52. Italics ours.

† *Ibid.*, p. 52. Italics ours.

a continuous flight from the fact of his and everything else's meaninglessness or by turning round and asserting his values in the face of that Absolute Nihil. The former is the unauthentic attitude of 'everydayness', while it is only in the latter that the Self rises to itself and chooses freely and authentically for itself. It is not that the 'choice' does not operate in the former attitude for, as Sartre has written, "Freedom is freedom to choose, but not freedom not to choose. *Not to choose, in fact, is to choose not to choose*".\* It is only that the 'choice' is afraid of itself and tries to fly from the ordeal of facing itself and, thus, feels a certain secret guilt which one immediately becomes conscious of, the moment one rises up to the authentic attitude of 'self-conscious choice'. It should, further, be remembered that this Freedom is no free-will-in-itself existing inwardly "in eternal apartness from the afflictions or achievements of the existing, embodied individual".† The fact of what Heidegger has called 'thrownness' or what Sartre has called Being-in-a situation, is not denied. What is asserted is that "*circumstances become circumstances only for the consciousness that tries to make of them something other than mere circumstances*". "Sheer facts exist only for 'scum', offal, or a cabbage. For me they are always *my facts, which I must transcend in some direction, if only in the direction of flight, of madness, or of self-destruction*."‡ As the authoress commenting upon the environmental influence writes, "If malnutrition and bad housing made me a criminal, so have malnutrition and bad housing made poets, financial wizards, and what not."§ The distinction becomes clearer in Sartre's example of the person who has become an invalid. His having become an invalid is, certainly, not a matter of his choosing—but, equally certainly, he cannot be an invalid *without choosing the way* in which he regards his infirmity. He may regard it as 'intolerable', 'humiliating', 'to be concealed', 'to be exhibited to all', as 'a source of pride', as 'a justification for his failures', etc., etc. "I choose to be myself", therefore "not in my being, but in my *manner of being*."¶

This radical notion of freedom with its utter loneliness, inalienable choice and absolute responsibility in the face of complete meaninglessness that faces it would become, perhaps, more

\* Quoted by Paul Foulquie in *Existentialism*. p. 92. Italics ours.

† *Dreadful Freedom*. p. 46.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 49. Italics ours.

§ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

¶ Sartre quoted in Paul Foulquie's *Existentialism*. p. 65. Italics ours.

concrete if we reflect on the experiences of the underground Resistance, so poignantly expressed by Sartre in *The Silent Republic*. Thus, he writes: "Exile, captivity, and specially death (which we usually shrink from facing at all in happier times) became for us the habitual objects of our concern. We learned that they were neither inevitable accidents, nor even constant and exterior dangers, but that they must be considered as our lot itself, our destiny, the profound source of our reality as man. At every instant we lived up to the full sense of this commonplace little phrase: 'Man is mortal'. And the choice that each of us made of his life and of his being was an authentic choice because it was made face to face with death, because it could always have been expressed in these terms: 'Rather death than. . .'" "Thus the basic question of liberty was posed, and we were brought to the verge of the deepest knowledge that man can have of himself. For the secret of a man is not his Oedipus complex or his inferiority complex: *it is the limit of his own liberty, his capacity for resisting torture and death*." "Alone without a friendly hand or a word of encouragement. Yet, in the depth of their solitude, it was the others that they were protecting, all the others, all their comrades in the Resistance. *Total responsibility in total solitude—is not this the very definition of our liberty?*"\*

It would be almost a sacrilege to touch these sentences as they express a living, poignant intensity which has been absent for too long from the pages of philosophical writings. Yet, it seems necessary, even if for no other reason than that of avoiding false suggestions and overcoming accidental limitations. First, what is being said is only accidentally related to the French Resistance; it rather belongs to *any martyrdom* for the sake of values which the individual has chosen for himself. Existentially, the situation is no different from that of the German soldier who refuses to divulge secrets under imminent threat of death and incessant torture. It is, in fact, not the value of patriotism or of responsibility for one's comrades, but the *authenticity of the choice made in face of utter annihilation* that confers value upon such a situation. The custom of Duel in feudal society would equally well illustrate the situation with its formula "Rather death than dishonour". The 'total responsibility', then, is not

\* *The Republic of Silence*, Ed. A. J. Liebling. pp. 498-500. Italics ours.

the responsibility to one's comrades but *merely* to the value that one has chosen. Not perhaps even to the value one has chosen, but only to the subjectivity that comes to its full relief only against the background of utter annihilation. The valuational undertones of Sartre's article are existentially misleading—for the Resistance was existentially significant not because it was *Resistance*, but because it was an *occasion* for bringing men face to face with death in their aloneness and, thus, being forced to make, for the first time in their lives, an authentic choice and a genuine decision. It is merely an *accident* that most men come to a realisation of their aloneness in face of utter meaninglessness through an intimate relation with the phenomenon of Death. But it is not *necessary*. What is essential, however, is *not the way through* which one is brought to that realisation but the fact that one is brought to such a realisation.

In fact, if we look deeper, we shall find that the Resistance or *any other martyrdom*, for that matter, can hardly be existentially significant. In a martyrdom—whether it be that of a Christian, a communist, a resister, a monarchist or of any other person—*death is not seen as meaningless, but is rather invested* with greater significance, meaning and value than Life itself. Both living and dying become suffused with a super-personal, super-temporal value—a situation just the opposite of the authentic existential one where a value is seen to be a value because it *has been chosen to be so*. The loyalty and responsibility in all these cases is to the value and not to the subjectivity that freely chooses the value. Death is not chosen, but only accepted as a necessity when encountered in the pursuit of what is regarded as the supremest of all values. It is not seen as the utter and absolute annihilation of all meaning and value, but merely as something to be met with or to be avoided as far as possible and, if unavoidable, to be accepted with as great calmness as possible. All these persons, therefore, believe in the *objective grounding* of their values. They cannot, for a moment, experience that “dizzying collapse of external sanctions and universal laws” which is the core of existential experience. For them, the *‘what’* of their willing is of absolute importance and, therefore, the persons with a different *‘what’* are, for them, always heathens, barbarians, Mlecchas, Kafirs, reactionaries—in short, the opposite of what they themselves are, *i.e.*, evil and wrong. But for the existentialist, it is the *‘how’* of willing that matters, only the question whether the willing has been authentic or not. The martyr, in fact has not performed the existential reduction and is, thus,

not aware of the *subjective grounding of his values in the willed choice of his own self*.

The relation to other selves sought to be introduced by the notion of ‘responsibility’, clearing up the ground for a revolutionary interpretation of the nature of social relations, is, therefore, not of the essence of existential thinking. In some rather deeper ways, it even seems to go against it. The ‘aloneness’ of the willed choice can never be abrogated nor the fact that it is ‘choice’. To *ground* the responsibility in other persons is, therefore, to lose sight of the foundational fact of ‘choice’ on which the whole structure and insight of existentialism rests.

The problem of other selves has been tackled by Sartre in a variety of ways, which are sometimes even contrary to each other. In his essay on ‘Existentialism’, originally given as a talk to the Club Maintenant and principally as a defence against Catholics and communists, he has tried to interpret subjectivity as human subjectivity in general and thus tried to show that the freedom of all is involved in the freedom of each. He has argued that in choosing for oneself, one chooses for all “for one chooses what is good, and what is good for one is good for all”. This sounds like the famous Moorean argument and gives up the whole insight that Existentialism had gained for us in the beginning. In fact, the very title in French seems to indicate that the Master of French Existentialism has not been able to keep on to the dizzying heights. It is entitled *L'Existentialisme est-il un Humanisme?* The question mark is unnecessary, for the answer is a veritable ‘yes’. To treat ‘existential subjectivity’ as ‘subjectivity in general’ is to fall into the famous idealistic mistake against which the existentialists have been fighting from the very beginning. To dissolve man's unique reality into a flux of material particles bound together by the relation of causality or into a super-temporal, super-spatial universal consciousness which always was, is, and will-be—is a position against which Existentialism has asserted *real menschlicher Existenz*.

In both Materialism and Idealism the uniqueness of Man as Man is denied. As Johannes Pfeiffer remarks “er vergisst über dem Allgemeinen und Unendlichen, dass er ein Einzelner ist in der Endlichkeit.” (He forgets that in the universal and the infinite, he is merely an isolated individual in his finitude). He has written further, “Beidemale also wird der Mensch als Mensch unterschlagen; beidemale wird die faktische Existenz des Einzelnen in der endlichen Zeit verraten an ein zeitlos—Allgemeines, an ein zeitlos—unendliches: in Naturalismus an das geschlossen

—kreisende Sein der Nature, im Idealismus an das geschlossenen —kreisende Sein der Idee—Beidamal wird das endlich zeitdasein degradiert zum blossen Schauplatz, zur blossen Durchgangsstätte eines unendlichen Lebens (hine der Natur, dort der Idee).” (In both, men as Man is suppressed ; in both, the factual existence of unique individuality in a finite stretch of time, is lost, almost betrayed in a Universal, Timeless Infinity—in Naturalism, to the self-enclosed Being of Nature ; in Idealism, to the self-enclosed Being of the Idea. In both, the finite, temporal Dasein is degraded to a mere spectacle, a mere moment in an unending Life—whether of Nature or of the Idea).\* But Man—as against the contentions of both Naturalism and Idealism—exists and partakes of both. Being-in-the-world and Being-in-advance-of-itself are, as we have already seen, the two essential features of Dasein. As Pfeiffer remarks: “Dasein meint: Ausgespanntsein zwischen Faktizität und Idealität, zwischen Immer-schon-da und über-sich-hinaus.” (In tension between Facticity and Ideality, between Always-being there and Always-in-advance-of-itself—that is Dasein).† Man, is, therefore, the *unique particular finite individual* thrown-into-the-world, limited-by-his-death, always-in-advance-of-himself and hence irreducible to any universal essence, whether it be that of Matter or of Spirit.

Sartre, however, has tackled the problem of other selves not only on this level but on other levels as well. In *L'être et le néant*, he has argued the existence of other selves from the directly experienced fact of the feeling of being-an-object-for-the-other. “It is the fact of another’s looking at me. . . that reveals the existence of another subject. . . For in that experience of being looked at by another I find myself becoming, *not the transcendence I otherwise feel myself to be, but a mere object, a body appearing thus and thus in someone else’s world.*”‡ “Thus my being-for-another, like the emergence into being of my consciousness, has the character of an *absolute event.*”§ The experience, referred to in these sentences, is quite common and as much a fact as the other experience of feeling others as an object to oneself. The second, of course, is almost the continuous state of our mind interrupted only, at not very infrequent moments, by the first type of consciousness. This experience of being-an-object-to-others

\* *Existenzphilosophie: Eine Einführung in Heidegger und Jaspers*, von Johannes Pfeiffer. p. 17.

† *Ibid.* p. 27.

‡ *Dreadful Freedom* by Marjorie Grene, p. 78-79. Italics ours.

§ Sartre, *L'être et le néant*. p. 341. Italics ours.

gives rise to the feeling of shame, as also of fear because of the feeling of destruction of my subjectivity in another’s possession of me. Some very subtle and profound analyses of love, sex, pride, shame, indifference, cruelty and pain follow but what emerges as a result is the central fact that we cannot escape the continuous movement between the-being-who-looks and the being-who-is-looked-at. The fundamental relation, therefore, between different persons is that of conflict, for each is an ‘I’ and is violated in the very heart of his being by his becoming a not-I for the other. For the other, one is always a ‘thing’—“for in the idea he forms of me, that which I wish to become—which is, for myself, my veritable being—does not enter into consideration at all.”\* Thus the solidarity and responsibility which Sartre has tried to make out in his essay *Existentialism*, is existentially non-existent on his own analysis and is, in essential respects, positively misleading. The ‘solidarity’, therefore, is no solidarity when the fundamental relation to other subjects is that of conflict. As for ‘responsibility’ how can one feel responsible for those whom one can know only as a ‘thing’ and never as a ‘person’?

As in the case of the problem of ‘general subjectivity’ so also in that of death and the dread before death, Sartre has made contrary pronouncements. In the above quotations from *The Silent Republic*, it seems clear that only being face-to-face with the utter annihilation of death, results in the authentic choice described by the formula ‘Rather death than. . . .’ But in *L'être et le néant*, it has been argued that my own death is more real for others than for me. As Marjorie Grene has summarised the position: “My death is for me so complete a non-reality as to be of little interest existentially.”† So also, dread is felt not, as in Heidegger, before the nothingness of death, but before the responsibility involved in the inevitably free choice of the Dasein in a world which possesses objective grounding of values neither in a divine sanction nor in a material necessity. It is the aloneness of Freedom—freedom to *create* values—that gives rise to dread, for, ‘I have not, nor can I have, recourse to any value *against the fact that it is I who maintain values in being*; nothing can assure me against myself; cut off from the world and my essence by the nothing that I am, I have to realise the meaning of the world and of my essence: *I decide it alone, unjustifiable, and without excuse.*”‡ In his book *Existentialism*, he fur-

\* Paul Foulquie. *op. cit.* p. 81.

† *Dreadful Freedom*. p. 53.

‡ Sartre, *L'être et le néant*. p. 77. Italics ours.

ther suggests that the tragedy of choice lies in the fact that our choice affects others and that we can never be certain whether the chosen result shall be effected or whether it has even been the best among the choices possible. The example given to illustrate this is that of a general who has to *choose* among various alternatives, even though he knows that he can never be sure of the results of any of them. What he can be certain of is only the fact that each alternative would lead to the loss of many lives and would, in its own way, determine the fate of his country and even possibly those of the generations to come. This refers back to the aspect of 'responsibility' involved in the discussion of Freedom given in *The Silent Republic*.

It becomes necessary, at this point, therefore, to disentangle the two competing insights and their intimate relation to value in the thinking of Jean Paul Sartre. The self (which is essentially the willing-of-a-value) faced with the loss of all objective grounding of values is the first and the fundamental insight. The other follows from the double fact that the self cannot abrogate its power of choosing and that it can never be sure of the results of this choosing even though the results shall and will extend into almost a temporal infinity. In the first, the self sees itself the creative source of value; in the second, it feels the facticity of both Sein and Dasein and the cause-effect relationship of action and is interested in and, therefore, finds itself bound by, the value of results achieved, the effects effected. *Values, in the second insight, still do not have an objective grounding, but they do have an objective status* which they certainly do not enjoy in the first insight. This, then, is the radical differences between the two insights—the values are not simply values because I have chosen to accept them, but they are values because they are so. In the first insight, the person who collaborates, the person who resists and the person who does neither, are all free in the creative choice of their values in the face of the utter Nihil which the existential relation of their death brings before them. In the second insight, however, it is the value-character of the effects—a value-character that is independent of the act of our choice—that becomes the important thing and that is supposed to determine the 'ought' of our choice. There certainly remains the freedom to choose, but not the freedom which certainly remains the freedom to choose, but not the freedom with regard to the 'what' of the value one is supposed to choose. One may not choose at all or may choose otherwise but that would not confer value either on the content or the act of one's choice. Values are objective *i.e.*, values-in-

themselves, whether one choose them or not, even if there be no transcendental necessity tending towards an inevitable realisation of them in the spatio-temporal process we call actually.

This is the implication of the second insight and that it goes counter to the first, is too obvious to be emphasized. The only values that are supposed to be objective in the first insight are those that are involved in the very being of Dasein as something that wills the future in the form of value, knowing full well that this value has neither an objective status nor is objectively grounded. The self-consciousness of Dasein in respect of its own Being, is the only intrinsic value that existentialism has recognised. Heidegger has called it the attitude of 'authenticity' as against the attitude of 'everydayness'—the state of 'Verfallenheit' in which all of us most of the time are. A valuational distinction, thus, exists at the very heart of Existentialism—an 'ought' that is, perhaps, more terrible and more exacting than any other 'ought' in history. This subtlest of 'oughts', however, does not wish to bring into being what is not but merely intends the self-conscious awareness of that which already and inalienably is. The continuous 'flight', the attitude of 'everydayness', the state of 'Verfallenheit' merely cover the central, inalienable fact of Solitary Freedom faced with utter valuelessness—a is-and-is-not that can, perhaps, best be described by that magic word, Śaṅkara's 'Maya'. Many are the differences between the radical thinking of the Existentialism of to-day and that of Śaṅkara and the Sāṅkhyan of Ancient India. Yet there is a close similarity between the Ātman or Puruṣa which can never lose its freedom, because it is eternally free and the Existential Dasein—though both, of course, get veiled by that real yet illusory, and illusory yet real forgetfulness, hiding-from-itself that can never really hide. The insight that un-covers and un-veils shows simultaneously that the veil never veiled and the covering never covered. Śaṅkara could even say that the liberation and the attempt at liberation were all part of the Maya—that, in truth, there was none to liberate for none was ever bound. The Sāṅkhyan Puruṣa never got involved in Prakṛti. However there are metaphysical differences in the status of Dasein on the one hand and Puruṣa and Ātman on the other which cannot be ignored.

The 'ought' of authenticity, therefore, is the only 'ought' that remains in Existentialism. This, however, is not an external 'ought' but merely the silent call of the Self to itself, to be It-Self. Only in the terrible and inescapable loneliness before suffering and pain and death, as also the utter meaninglessness which these

bring face-to-face before it, does the Self come to It-Self. Yet, at this very point, the Self, being essentially a will, would have to *choose to decide the way* in which to *react* to this fact of meaninglessness which stares in the face of its freedom. This choice is made in full freedom and absolute authenticity—yet, the Existentialists have tried to exclude certain alternatives, which only shows how difficult it is to be a complete Existentialist. Heidegger, Sartre, Camus, Bataille—all agree in excluding the supreme choice of which the Dasein can possibly be capable, the choosing of its own non-being, its own annihilation i.e. Death. It should be noted here that whatever the choice, it would have an equal validity and value, being made in the completest mode of authenticity possible to Dasein. The Being-in-advance-of-itself of Dasein never attains Being except in the cessation of its Dasein character and in falling or rising, whichever way one may prefer to put it, into its character as pure Sein or Being. The most ultimate choice, therefore, for Dasein, is to become Sein and to lose its Dasein character. Sartre has called this the distinction between ‘pour-soi’ and ‘en-soi’—the being-*for*-itself and the being-*in*-itself. The desire of the ‘pour-soi’ is always for the ‘en-soi’ but it can never attain it except through its own annihilation. As he has written: “The human reality is the desire-for-being-in-itself (en-soi) . . . . . existing as ‘being-for-itself (pour-soi).’”\*

The human situation is, thus, impossible in its straining desire—an impossibility relieved only by the fact that it can *choose* its own annihilation. This choice, however, is deliberately excluded by the existentialists. “Man’s greatness lies in an attitude of revolt against the absurdity of the world” writes Albert Camus. But he has forgotten that neither greatness nor revolt has any objective status as a value in the insight gained through Existentialistic vision. Schopenhauer, long ago, in his *The World as Will and Idea*, had suggested that the intellect is merely an instrument of the will-to-live. This, perhaps, is the explanation why the Existentialist intellect turns back before this supreme potentiality of itself. The absurd meaninglessness of the world is supposed to be relieved by the fact that Man chooses to live in the fact of this meaninglessness. But this choice itself is absurd and hardly a choice at all. One does not choose to live, for one finds oneself already living. What one can choose is only a particular kind of life and, in the ultimate analysis, perhaps, only death. Death—not because a particular kind of life has

\* Quoted in Paul Foulquie, *op. cit.* p. 91.

not been available, but as a *sheer alternative* to all life, of whatever kind, involving as it does, a continuous choice in the face of utter meaninglessness—a choice which itself seems to be meaningless. Death, however, even in this case of willed choice of its own annihilation by Dasein, should not be seen as a valuational alternative—for, otherwise, it would be the supreme projective illusion and would invest the very act of Suicide with value. The existential insight makes an ‘überwindung’ of values possible—an überwindung that reaches its possible height in the act of self-annihilation on the part of Dasein knowing full well that it has no meaning or significance either to itself or to the world of Being which can never not-be. With suicide, therefore, there is no ‘ought’—all ‘oughts’ being already overcome in the existential reduction. Dasein stands free to choose but the ‘what’ of one’s choice no one can determine excepting oneself.

Existential thought, at this point, has made a most subtle detour and raised a problem of great significance. However radical the Being of Dasein, it is still a Being. The larger problem of Being (Sein) opens beyond the problems of Existence (Dasein) that we have been discussing until now. The vista discloses the problem of the relation between Sein and Dasein, a relation that should be of utmost importance to Dasein, for it would determine it in the very core of its Being. The Sein of Dasein, however, is only a *specific* Sein and, thus, not really Sein which in itself is not this or that Sein but merely Sein. Being, as Werner Brock writes, “is not identical with any special kind of being, such as that of a star or the earth or a plant or an animal or a man. *It is in all that is*; and while we live amidst all that is, we think practically always of some kind of Being itself.”\* This Pure Being, which is neither this nor that, gives rise, as Hegel remarked long ago, to its complete opposite i.e. Nothing. It is at this point that Heidegger takes up the problem and shows the intimate relation between Being and Nothing on the one hand and Nothing and the Dasein on the other. He writes in the postscript to his famous book *What is Metaphysics?*: “Being is not an existing quality of what-is, nor, unlike what-is, can Being be conceived and established objectively. This, the purely ‘other’ than everything that ‘is’, is that-which-is-not (das Nicht-Seinde).”† However, the bottomless Nothing into which Being seems to dissolve, does not merely suck up Being into itself

\* *Existence and Being.* p. 219. Italics ours.

† *Ibid.* p. 384.

but gives it a being in contrast to itself. It is only in the background of Nothing that Being becomes what-is. In Heidegger's famous phrase: "Nothing, conceived as the pure 'other' than what-is, is the *veil* of Being."\*

One may be excused if one is reminded of the recent interpretations of the Buddhist concept of *S'unya*, which is not a Pure Nihil that merely negates but that which in negating makes possible the determinate affirmation of Being. In fact, the famous '*neti, neti*' of Vedanta is brought out in these clear words of Heidegger: "Because what-is-in-totality slips away and thus forces Nothing to the fore, all affirmation (lit., is-saying 'Ist'-Sagen) fails in the face of it."† He is trying to explain the dumb silence that pervades our being in 'dread'. The Silence, in spite of the word 'dread', reminds us of the famous phrase of Vedantic thought 'S'anto' yam Ātma' or 'Silence is the Self'. The echos find a discordant note in the notion of 'dread', which, at least as far as the word goes, is alien to Indian thought. Still, the deep experiential metaphysical nuances and undertones of the word are not so alien as they appears at first sight. Distinguishing dread from fear and anxiety which generally lead to confusion and loss of one's bearings, he writes, "In dread no such confusion can occur. It would be *truer* to say that *dread is pervaded by a peculiar kind of peace.*" Fear is always a fear of something, but "The indefiniteness of *what* we dread is not just lack of definition: *it represents the essential impossibility of defining the 'what.'*"‡ The essential characteristic of 'dread', therefore, is the impossibility of defining the 'what'—an experience that is further positively described as pervaded with a peculiar kind of peace. It, then, is very much akin to the losing of oneself in a difference-less identity, or that which cannot be described even in this way—and, yet, which giveth the peace that passeth understanding. In fact, he has positively written, "Hence *we too*, as *existents in the midst of what-is, slip away from ourselves along with it.* For this reason it is not 'you' or 'I' that has the uncanny feeling, but 'one'."§ But why '*uncanny*', if it gives peace? The reason, perhaps, is Heidegger's love for the 'uncanny' and not any distinctive feature of the experience itself. Yet, as Being becomes Being only when contrasted with Nothing which is nothing but

\* *Ibid.* p. 392. Italics ours.

† *Ibid.* p. 367.

‡ *Ibid.* p. 368. Italics ours.

§ *Ibid.* p. 366-67, Italics ours.

the *veil* of Being, so Dasein does not become Dasein till it projects itself into Nothing. It is only the projection into Nothing that gives Dasein its freedom—otherwise, it would be merely a what-is. Thus, Dasein comes to itself only when faced with the Nihil of Nothing *i.e.*, Death. Otherwise "we *completely lose ourselves in what-is.* The more we turn to what-is in our dealings the less we allow it to slip away, and the more we turn aside from Nothing. But all the more certainly do we thrust ourselves into the open superficialities of existence."\* In Heidegger, therefore, the ultimate Negation and the 'dread' which reveals that Nothing to Dasein, are merely preludes to the *positive* possibilities of Being and Dasein becoming themselves. The individual's Being-towards-his-own-death returns him back into the resolve that gives back to him the never-alienated, yet somehow forgotten, authenticity of his own Dasein. And the same happens also to Being which becomes Being only in contrast to, and as a repulsion from, Nothing. But it is at this point that the thinking of Karl Jaspers, Garbriel Marcel and other Christian Existentialists takes its start.

Heidegger has generally been regarded as an atheistic Existentialist. This, however, would be wrong if we consider deeply the significance of 'Dread', 'Nothing' and the relations of Sein and Dasein in his system. The "essential", for Heidegger, "is a thanksgiving and a Voluntary sacrifice in response to 'Being'". How can the person who has written sentences such as these, be called an atheist? He writes, "Freed from all constraint, because born of the abyss of freedom, this sacrifice is the expense of our human being for the preservation of the truth of Being in respect of what-is. In sacrifice there is expressed that hidden *thanksgiving* which alone does homage to the grace wherewith Being has endowed the nature of man, in order that he may take over in his relationship to Being the guardianship of Being."\* The darkness revealed by these sentences would not be so dark for anyone acquainted with religious thought. Perhaps these sentences from his essay on 'Holderlin and the Essence of Poetry' may make the meaning more clear: "The affirmation of human existence and hence its essential consummation occurs through freedom of decision. This freedom lays hold of the necessary and places itself in the bonds of a supreme obligation."‡ But

\* *Ibid.*, p. 371. Italics ours.

† *Ibid.*, p. 389. Italics author's.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 398.

obligation to whom? To the Truth of Being, of course. And though he has admitted that this is "the time of the gods that have fled *and* of the god that is coming; the time of *need*, because it lies under a double lack and a double Not; the No-more of the gods that have fled and the Not-yet of the god that is coming"\* yet, the function of the thinker, for him, remains, what it always has been, *i.e.*, to utter *Being* just as the poet's function is and always has been to name what is holy.†

Yet, however profound the *détour*, it has been a *détour* all the same. The investing of Nothing with supreme meaning and value and the free choice of Dasein to dedicate itself to truth of Being is, perhaps, the deepest and the profoundest truth that Spiritual experience has yet given us. Whatever be the terms of its expression or formulation, the insight has always been the unconstrained choice of the Self to dedicate itself in its freedom to the Divine which never compels, yet eternally attracts. Still, the investing of Nothing with value is *merely* an *investing*; the choice, only a *choice*. The *positive* turning is no more necessary than the *negative* turning. If anything, it is far less warranted by the existential reduction than the negative one. The 'dread' of death seems really to have become a dread—for, it makes every Existentialist turn and find some *reason* to live—albeit, to live in an authentic manner. Not merely Heidegger, but even Sartre, who does not take this turning, flees back from death and finds reasons in social solidarity and collective responsibility. To live, they all chose—and into the bargain convince themselves that there is a reason for their choice. Only Gabriel Marcel has admitted that "consent to life is a *matter of free choice*, and an *act of faith*".‡ Of course, he *has chosen* to live? At least, that is what he claims. But how can one *choose* to live, when one is bound to be forced to forego this choice? Life is only *permitted* to one and, at any moment, this permission may be refused. One may choose to live, but Death, when it comes, does not care for one's choice. It does not stay for one moment and ask, "Are you prepared to choose me?" One finds oneself living and, generally, one is forced to die. There is, however, one choice left for the self-conscious human Dasein—the choice to walk gracefully out of the room with a gentle farewell and a smile half-formed on one's lips, instead of being kicked out unceremoniously

\* *Ibid.*, p. 313.

† *Ibid.*, p. 319.

‡ Paul Foulquie, *Existentialism*, p. 108. Italics ours.

when the wily vampire, we call Life, has had its fill and finds us no more useful to satisfy its lust, its ambition, its pride. We can choose to make the "cosmic dance upon the marbled breasts" cease, not by the withdrawal of Puruṣa into its 'Kaivalya' from Prakṛti but merely by a bullet through our heart. The veil of Maya can be torn by an over-dose of morphine; the futility of Dasein by a kiss from the cup that has cyanide at its lips. Freedom, therefore, is the freedom to choose Death, instead of being chosen by it. Who shall be the hunter and who the hunted?—that has been the eternal problem of Man and the eternal fear of the gods. The Great Refusal is not that of a Christ or of a Buddha, for they refuse not Life but only certain things which are generally sought after in Life. It belongs only to the person who refuses, not this or that, however generally sought after, but Life itself.

However, the freedom gained in the existential reduction is too transcendent to be in need of any *external* positing, not excepting even the supreme positing of death. All 'oughts' having fallen, the choice can only be left to the individual Dasein itself. What we have been attempting is to show the supreme Either|Or that Dasein must face if the implications of the existential reduction have been genuinely understood. As Johannes Pfeiffer has put most pithily in his *Existenzphilosophie: Eine Eineführung in Heidegger und Jaspers*, "Entweder ich bringe mich ganz auf den grund der Glaubensgewissheit und will und übernehme von daher mein Leben wahrhaft und wirklich,—oder ich entziche mich der Glaubensvoraussetzung in Sprung des Selbst-mords. Es fehlt dieses Entweder—Oder mir uzir verschleiern trachte." (Either I bring my whole being to the fundamental ground-certainty of Faith and take possession therefrom of my life as truthful and real; or I withdraw myself from the fundamental precondition of Faith into the leap of self-destruction. So long as I attempt to veil from myself this fundamental Either|Or, my Life would lack a fundamental and innermost sincerity).\* Of course, there can be no 'ought' about either of the alternatives. Even the penumbral suggestion that one cannot choose to live without simultaneously having some ground-certainty of Faith, is existentially unwarranted. Into this 'Etwedder-Oder' has crept that subtle illusion which makes Life and Value triumph even in death. The 'or' of Death is a *conditional* 'or'; it is chosen with a regret

\* *Ibid.* p. 50.

and only because Life *fails* to come up to expectations. *If* it had been otherwise, one would have chosen to live Life. And thus even in this choice of Death values of Life triumph. The metaphysical suicide, however, is quite another thing. It is the choice of Death even when there is the ground-certainty of Faith, even when Life is seen as a value. Further, Death is chosen in such a suicide not because it is regarded as more valuational than Life, but because it is regarded as beyond both value and dis-value. The act of metaphysical self-destruction is not invested with value; it merely springs from the transcendence of both Value and Being which seems to us to be the core of existential insight. There is fundamentally, no 'because' of this choice and, therefore, to the cause-seeking mind, it is essentially ununderstandable. The transcendence of both Being and Value through the supreme category of Nothing, made Heidegger only turn back and re-accept both—though, of course, this time, in freedom. Even Metaphysics he has defined as "an enquiry over and above what-is, *with a view to winning it back* again as such and in totality for our understanding".\* But the 'turning back' is not necessary and Metaphysics may be merely a preliminary clearing-ground for that last leap into transcendence, which we generally call suicide. The ground-certainty of Faith (Glaubensgewissheit) of Karl Jaspers is not denied but transcended in the supreme category of Nothing, which is the limiting concept both of Being and Value.

Existential thinking, thus, reformulates the problem of Being and Value once more and leaves us face to face with Nothing which transcends, and by transcending limits, both. It has given up in a most radical manner the traditional presuppositions of Philosophy. In fact, the task of Philosophy, as conceived by it, is no more the knowing of the Real, but some sort of a clarification and exposition of confusions which may bring the individual face to face with his Freedom and the Liberty to choose. The traditional pull of Reality, however, has proved too great for individual Existentialist thinkers and even those among them who have somehow escaped from the gods of the past, have found it difficult to escape from those of the present.

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This brings us to the close our 'Discussion' of those alternative conceptions of Philosophy, which have either been

\* Heidegger, *op. cit.* p. 375. Italics ours.

involved in the practice of certain thinkers or formulated as a matter of self-conscious theory by certain others in recent times. Not that the alternatives discussed are exhaustive, but that they seem, at least to us, the most important as well as the most representative in our times. The two most obvious omissions are the views of philosophy as conceived by the Marxists and the Freudians—the two most influential thought-currents of this century. Philosophy as the articulation of the class-interests of the dominant class in the organisational mode of production relations, is held by the Soviet Union and the Communist Parties all over the world as the only true view of Philosophy. Orthodox Freudians, on the other hand, think of Philosophy as an obsessive ratiocination of usually the anal-sadistic type of personality. These are, however, matters too intimately connected with Sociology and Psychology to be seriously discussed here. The causal-genetic view is generally irrelevant to the validity of a problem; moreover, the Marxists have yet to explain the persistent problems of Philosophy in different societies, and the still more glaring fact that the alternative solutions have almost remained the same from the times of Plato and Aristotle, with the occasional exception of a Kant or a Hegel who has either raised a new problem or given a new solution.

The negative result of the 'Examinations' and 'Discussions', however, brings us back to the fundamental point of our enquiry, *viz.*, the nature of philosophical thinking or of Philosophy itself. 'What then is philosophy?', therefore, forms the next question in our enquiry and we propose to treat it in the next chapter. And so—What is Philosophy?

PART FOUR

THE NATURE OF PHILOSOPHY

## CHAPTER XII

### WHAT, THEN, IS PHILOSOPHY?

If philosophy is not the determination of the 'really real', as was generally supposed in the classical tradition, and if its business cannot be reduced to any of those suggested by the modern movements discussed above, the question naturally arises, what really, if any, is its nature and subject-matter? The question is not an arbitrary verbal pronouncement about how a word is to be used, but a deeper one regarding the articulation of the very kernel of philosophical thinking as it has been practised through the ages. Any answer which excludes the classical tradition in the thinking of the past or even in that of the present—a thinking to which the adjective 'philosophical' has been continuously applied—will merely be an arbitrary announcement that we are going to use a certain word in a certain way.

The philosophers, however, have *not merely thought* in a certain way but *also thought that they thought* in a certain way. What we need take into account is the former, *i.e.*, the philosophic practice and not the latter, which, in all probability, may be wrong. We have previously argued that the philosophers' conception of their task as the determination of what was 'really real', was wrong. But such a conception of their task even if wrong is bound to give a wrong twist to their thinking, for the setting of a false problem inevitably leads to pseudo-solutions or rather to the impossibility of any solution, as the very positing of the original question has been wrong.

This is the explanation of the fact, noted in our 'Introduction', that radically different and even contradictory answers are asserted as true by eminent thinkers. If this term 'real' is to be distinguished from the term 'unreal', we would have to take some *selective criterion*, the presence or absence of which would make for reality or unreality, as the case may be. But at the point of the *choosing* of the criterion, an arbitrariness enters which would inevitably result in different philosophers choosing different criteria. Any attempt to determine the choice of the criterion is bound to fail for, unless one *chooses to accept*, one cannot be forced to do so. This is most evident in the presence of different Logics which, however much one may be convinced of one's own,

fail to convince each other. Time and again have we come across the singular fact that philosophers, while aware of each others' arguments, fail to be convinced by them. It is not the argument that is disputed, but its *significance*.

Of course, there are times when the arguments themselves are disputed, but the deeper difference always relates to the *significance* of certain facts or certain arguments. Descartes' 'Cogito, ergo sum', Berkeley's 'Esse est percipi', Husserl's 'Phenomenological reduction', Alexander's 'Democracy of mind among the objects of the world' are all obvious truisms which may be accepted, but the significance that they have tried to attach to them and the super-structures they have sought to build on the fact of this significance may be and, in fact, have been disputed.

Significance, however, is a thing of which one cannot be convinced and, therefore, the failure of philosophers to convince each other is not surprising. The objectivity of reason is not here denied, but that objectivity is merely of a formal 'if...then' kind—an objectivity that, by itself, never determines the *choice* of the 'if' premise. Further, even if we agree on the 'choice', the *empirical* constituents of the premise and the relations suggested therein, are of such an indeterminate and more or less probable kind that they always leave a wide margin for divergent and even contrary conclusions from the same premise or premises. The danger becomes still greater when it is the whole of Reality, with a capital R, that is supposed to be the subject of a philosophical assertion. Every predicate applies to this subject—and the choice of the predicate depends only on its supposed adequacy or significance. The hierarchy of predicates, constructed by most philosophers, depends on the *initial choice* of the criterion by which reality is to be distinguished from unreality.

Yet, even if the question, 'what is real' gives a wrong turn to philosophical thinking it, still, is a philosophical question. If we contrast it with any scientific question, *e.g.*, 'what is the structure of morphine, the distinction becomes obvious. Here a distinction in the use of the word 'philosophical' should be noted. Even such a question as the above would have been characterised as philosophical at one time, as is evidenced by the still persisting fact that the transactions of the Royal Society are known as 'Philosophical transactions'. Cosmological and cosmogonical speculation of the early Greeks are described both in the histories of Science and of Philosophy. Descartes' theory of vortices finds place in histories of philosophy as a description of his view of the

physical universe. Newton, with his idea of absolute space, time and of particles in motion attracting each other in direct proportion to the product of their masses and in inverse relation to the squares of their distance, all obeying the three laws of motion as formulated by him, has also been regarded as a philosopher.

This was inevitable when philosophy was regarded as the knowledge of the real. The determination of 'what exactly is the case' has been the task of Science and if philosophy be regarded as the determination of 'what really is', it is obvious why the two have been considered so close to each other. Of course, the scientists gradually came to feel that the philosophers' activity in determining 'what really is the case' was superfluous, if not definitely harmful. And rightly so—for, the philosopher had misconceived his function and, with the advance of science, felt more and more the utter superfluity of his business with regard to the determination of the 'what' of reality.

Yet, he also came at the same time to discover certain problems which could possibly admit of no scientific solution and which, to his surprise, seemed to be persistent in more or less identical forms from the time of Plato till to-day. Histories of Philosophy became more and more disinterested in Plato's cosmogony and Physics and relegated them to foot-notes or included them as additions in small print, more for the sake of scholarly completeness than specific relevance. Kant's epistemology became more important than his theory of the heavens and Descartes' 'Cogito' more significant than his physics or physiology. Genuinely philosophical issues began more and more to be sifted from the multi-variant interests of different philosophers. The first clear sign of this shifting is perhaps found in Windleband's *History of Philosophy* which emphasises the concepts and the problems around which the thinking had revolved rather than the detailed account of what each philosopher had said about all possible questions and things. Hegel's *History of Philosophy* too had grasped the essential philosophicality of certain problems, but was vitiated by a metaphysical bias and by the still more persistent attempt to fit the philosophical development into the development of his dialectics.

This sifting, however, was continuously overshadowed by the fundamental idea that the task of philosophy was the determination of the real. A world-view seemed still the philosopher's main occupation and many of the newly-discovered facts of science provided the base for diverse philosophic constructions. The evo-

lutionary series, both biological and sociological, provided the great base for an increasing faith in the idea of Progress and a supposed insight into the dialectically developmental and valuational nature of Reality. However, the arbitrariness of these constructions was always revealed by their diverse and contrary character based on the opposite significances read into the same facts. Further, facts are always so *variant* in character that one can always choose among them that are most favourable for one's own system.

The arbitrariness of the different world-views suggested that the task of such an articulation be left to the growing coherency of Science itself. But the epistemological critique of the scientific method undertaken by scientists, on the one hand, and by logicians, on the other, revealed the 'as if' character of scientific constructions. The interpolation introduced to explain the observed data was only indirectly verifiable and, thus, of a completely 'as if' character which was accepted only because it was convenient and worked and which, therefore, could be replaced at any time by a different picture which either was more *convenient* or more useful. This is most evident in the wave-particle theory of light where the interpolated picture has changed from wave to particle and then back to wave, till it has reached a position where we no longer care for a physical picture of the interpolation but remain content with the mathematical equation alone.

The physical picture of the atom is another example where we have had to give up one model after another and have had to be content with the mathematical equation alone. Remarking about Faraday's lines or tubes of force which were supposed to have a real existence in a magnetic or an electric field and connect magnetic poles or electric charges, William Ceceil Dampier writes: "*Whether real or not, Faraday's lines of force give a ready and convenient way of representing the stresses and strains in the insulating medium or electric field.*"\* Such a remark is applicable not merely to Faraday's lines of force but to all scientific interpolations.

The scientific construction, however, may have many logically irrelevant and superfluous elements which would better be pruned and eliminated. This task has been brilliantly performed by Russell in his *Our Knowledge of the External World* and in some of

\* *A History of Science and Its Relations with Philosophy and Religion*, 4th Ed., p. 223. Italics ours.

the essays contained in his book *Mysticism and Logic*. Whitehead's *Concept of Nature* is another brilliant attempt in the same direction. The radical use of Occam's razor may be disconcerting to the scientist at first, but is ultimately bound to be beneficial to him. Yet, however much the constructional element in our scientific understanding of this may be, there seems no other and better method for the self-articulation of various objects and facets of our experience. The task of discovering a coherent pattern among the divergent facts and contrary theories in different fields of phenomena, may be left to the growing articulation of Science itself. There must, of course, always be a criticism of the metaphysical and valuational constructions built mostly upon misconceived ideas of logic and philosophy. One such, for example, would be the idea that only the vibration-frequencies are *real* and not the colours that we see. The notion of reality is a misconceived notion taken from philosophy—a notion whose misconceivedness can only be established by an analysis which, if it is to be called by any name, can only be called philosophical.

Philosophy, then, even if it is not a determination of Reality, is still not a mere matter of emotion or action. It is a cognitive activity *par excellence*. But if the object of this cognitive activity is neither any particular object nor any realm of objects nor even the whole of objects including the subject itself, how can it be said to have any content at all? That there must be such a content is undeniable for, even those who have recently been engaged in denying the very possibility of any subject-matter, specific or general, to this study, have themselves been engaged in an activity which is *distinct* from all other types of cognitive activities, and thus, unless the prejudices against the word be too strong, be called philosophical.

If we reflect on the type of activity involved in the contentions of those who urge that philosophy can have no distinct subject-matter of its own, we shall find that it is a peculiar kind of activity quite distinct from the usual types of cognitive activity. It is contended that the truth or falsity of any proposition presupposes that the proposition has some meaning. The meaning of a proposition, however, is the "possible experiential state of affairs" which, if it is as the proposition claims it to be, makes it true and false if it is not. The subject-matter of philosophy was usually taken to be the whole of Reality but if so, there must be some possible experiential state of affairs which would make propositions about Reality true or false. There can, however, be no such 'state of affairs' which can possibly prove or disprove a

proposition about Reality. Supposing you say 'Reality is spiritual', then what about a stone? Either you can deny that it is real or assert that its experienced materiality is an illusion. If, on the other hand, you say 'Reality is material', you will be forced to deny either the reality of the human mind or assert the illusiveness of its experienced immateriality. Whatever assertions you make, the problem of outright denial or some problem of illusory appearance will stare you in the face.

The problems, however, are revealed to be of a pseudo character through an analysis of the very notion of Reality itself. This whole activity, whether right or wrong in its conclusions, is different from any other cognitive activity in its method, purpose and subject-matter. Its method is more an analysis of concepts; it is concerned more with arguments than with any specific or even general state of affairs. The reason why a philosophical proposition cannot be proved or disproved by an appeal to facts as they are, is not, as the logical positivists have argued, that they are pseudo-propositions, but that they *are not concerned with any state of affairs at all*. It would perhaps be admitted generally that the proposition 'this table is red' is not a philosophical proposition. Yet, those who admit this would think that the proposition 'the soul is immortal' or that 'God exists', is a philosophical proposition. But if these two propositions are about matters of fact, as they seem to be, then they can in no way be considered as philosophical propositions. That eminent philosophers have thought about them, is no more a reason for considering them philosophical than it would be if we were to regard all the physical, cosmogonical and psychical speculations as philosophical just because it was the philosophers who made those speculations. The attitude of psychical research, for example, to the problem of immortality is as much an empirical-factual attitude as that of any physicist or biologist to his specific problems. The psychical research worker is no more philosophical than the physicist or the chemist.

The second proposition, 'God exists', may seem to be impossible of any possible empirical proof or disproof. But, if so, it would be philosophical in the sense of being an object of philosophical analysis resulting in the conclusion that it is a type of proposition which cannot have any empirical verification. Such a conclusion results from a type of thinking which is distinct from the usual empirical kind of thinking. If, supposing for example, God is a person sitting in high heavens, then the proposition is certainly capable of empirical proof or disproof. This

conclusion follows from the analysis of 'high heavens' as having a spatio-temporal location, but it would have by no means followed if the phrase had been interpreted as a mere metaphor.

The subject-matter of such an analysis, however, is distinctly peculiar. It obviously is not an empirical subject-matter. Nor is it the formal relations of a logico-mathematical kind or even any of the other realms of essence discovered by the phenomenological insight. It seems to belong more to the realm of concepts than to the realm of things and the problems that arise therein, seem to arise from the active interrelation of concepts rather than of things. It seems to be some sort of a mid-way region between the formal relations studied by mathematical logic on the one hand and the empirical and transcendental sciences on the other. The problems in the other fields seem to be distinctly different from those that arise in this field. The problems on the two sides of this mid-way region are problems in the sense that answers to them can be found—and the very form of the problem, in most cases, suggests the type of procedure that would determine the answer.

But this does not seem to be the case with the problems of the mid-way region. Here, the problems seem to be insoluble in their essential nature and, thus, *it is the problems themselves that form the subject-matter and not a subject-matter that gives rise to any problems*. Philosophical problems, therefore, are of a kind different from that to which belong the problems in empirical, logical or transcendental studies. This, however, can only be understood if we undertake the analysis of the very notion of problem itself.

A problem exists only for consciousness or, better still, for self-consciousness. There can be no problems by themselves. The problems of nuclear physics, for example, are problems for the human mind only, and cannot in any sense belong to the nuclear world itself, unless, of course, we suppose that the individual particle has some sort of consciousness. The statistical nature of laws, if it is not to be merely an expression of the inadequacy of our knowledge, can have meaning only if the individual is really indeterminate or, in other words, if its activity is really problematic. In the-whole-of-what-is, therefore, there are no problems. All problems, thus, are, in a sense, abstract.

The problematic nature of the problem arises when two opposite solutions seem to be demanded by different aspects of the same fact, or when mutually excluding hypotheses are entertained about different facts, or when the fact itself seems to be in-

compatible with the whole existing structure of knowledge. The example of the first and second are numerous. The third, in its most radical sense, is confined to such facts as telepathy and foreknowledge. The fundamental space-time structure is violated by such facts if they are supposed, even in one case, to exist. The incompatibility, of whatever kind it may be, must, however, be *felt* as an incompatibility. Otherwise the problem would not be seen as a problem at all and, in all probability, be dismissed as abstract. In itself, the incompatibility too is not a problem. It becomes a problem only when it is felt that the incompatibility *should* not be.

The dismissal of any problem as abstract, therefore, means either that we do not feel the incompatibility or that we do not think the incompatibility to be a problem. The Communists for example, feel no incompatibility between the historical necessity of Communism and the whole of their revolutionary attempt to bring it about. The dialectical synthesis, of which the Communists claim to be the most insistent discoverers, was asserted long ago, in this respect, by religion. The problem of grace versus effort—the fact that nothing can happen without the will of the Lord and yet, the insistence by the church on individual effort—has always been resolved by what the Communists, following Hegel, have so pompously called the dialectical synthesis. The incompatibility may not be felt by the devout adherent of either church, but to the infidel, there as here, the high-sounding phrase only hides the bare, brazen assertion which, whether backed by the self-righteous, contemptuous superiority of the persecuted church or by the militant power of the Church Triumphant, fails to convince.

The existence of a problem, however, is itself a problem—a problem which, in its very nature, is incapable of solution. But it is not, for that reason, a pseudo-problem as most of the logical positivists would contend. It is rather a different type of problem from the usual problems of science and mathematics. Why is not there Nothing?—seems, to Heidegger, to be the most fundamental question in philosophy. Yet, that very question appears to Carnap to be a pseudo-question of the first order. Bergson, in his own turn, thinks the question to be profoundly wrong and gives his reasons for thinking why this wrong orientation came to be given to philosophical thinking.

We, however, are not here concerned with the truth or falsity of either of these positions but with the still more fundamental fact that all the three *are concerned* with a type of propo-

sition which is distinct from the empirical or logical kind of propositions, and that the *way* in which they are concerned with the proposition is distinct from the way in which the scientist or the logician would have been concerned with it. The activity of Heidegger, Carnap and Bergson *presupposes* the problem, even *if it be only to show that it is a pseudo-problem*. Heidegger sees in it a profound significance, while Bergson and Carnap think it to be an equally profound mistake, but—and this is the point—the *activity of all would have been non-existent if the problem had not been there as a problem*.

This would seem, to most, an obvious triviality. But the phrase is purely adjectival—and what we are concerned with is the fact and not the adjective one chooses to apply to it. Why are Heidegger, Bergson and Carnap regarded as philosophers and not scientists? The reason lies *in the type* of propositions with which they are concerned and the way in which they are concerned with them. True, Carnap is also a logician, but so is Eddington a scientist. One's being a philosopher does not debar one from being anything else, but one is a philosopher only when one is philosophically concerned with a philosophical problem.

'This table is red', we said, is not a philosophical proposition. Yet, the moment a philosopher gets interested in it, it undergoes a transformation and only superficially looks like the original proposition. The quality 'red' seems to belong to the table, but would the table not be the table if did not possess this quality 'red'. Obviously, there are tables which are not red, and even this very table which is now red may gradually come to lose its colour and still remain a table. Yet, if a table gets burnt it no more remains a table. The table, therefore, must have some qualities other than 'red' etc., which it cannot lose without losing itself. But if the table loses its 'redness', does it still remain 'this' table? Does it not, in fact, become another table—the table which is not red? But the table which *is not* red, *was* red and may, perhaps, in the future, again *become* red. What, then, is 'this table' which persists through the 'was', 'is', and 'will be'? Or, does it persist at all? Is not the table different at different moments of time, and its persistence only an illusion? And what is this time—this past, present and future? Millions of years have passed, but why millions?—in fact, there is no end to it. Shall we believe, then, that an infinity of Time has passed? But how can Infinity pass? Or rather, how can anything pass—for to pass is to be what one is not, and how can one become what one is not? Is not the whole notion of time and change,

then, unreal? And what is this table, after all? We see it and touch it. But does it exist when we neither see it nor touch it? How can one be sure? And even when one touches and sees, is the table not inside our mind and not outside? What about our bodies? Well, they too are like the table—and hence exist only in our minds. But what is this 'we'? Or, rather, 'I'—for the 'I' will always escape me and in being known become the 'not-I'?

What a mess! One should really be excused if one feels like Dr. Johnson and gives a resounding slap and asks, 'was it real'? But, problems, as everybody knows, can never be solved by a resounding sleep. The better solution would be, to sleep and forget. But, short of the final solution of all problems which is Death, one can only analyse each step and find where the mistake, if any, lies. However mistaken the problems, they can only be solved by a detailed exposure of the mistakes involved. The first demands the second, the second presupposes the first and, in its own turn, gives rise to problems, which, for their solution, demand a renewed analysis. The circle and the cycle ever goes on; what is required is only the sustaining interest of the few who feel the problems to be problems.

Of course, the dominant interest of someone may not be philosophic at all. If so, he would not *feel* such problems to be problems at all—and even if we can get his attention to see that here really are problems of a certain sort, he would fail to be interested in their solution. Supposing the dominant interest of the man to be scientific, he would ask, 'what is red and what is the table'? The colour is not seen in the dark and hence light must have to do something with the colour. On the table, of course, there is varnish which makes it red, but then the flowers are also red, and so is the rainbow in the sky. Somebody happens to see white light through a prism and, so, he finds all the colours of the rainbow present therein. He supposes white light to be composed of seven colours and makes a colour disk and revolves it at a certain speed to see whether it would begin to look white after a certain speed. And what is the table? The table is, after all, made of wood. So the problem resolves itself into 'what is wood'? Supposing we burn it, it turns into ashes and a particular kind of gas in which things cannot burn. And so it goes on—one problem giving rise to another, each solution setting a new problem and demanding a new solution.

But one who is not sufficiently interested in this whole problem, would fail to be roused by it—and even if he can be made to see

that these are problems, he would be disinterested in their solution. The colour red, for example, would, for a woman, be merely the colour of her lip-stick or that of her blouse or sari, which, in a certain shade, can make her attractive to others. If somebody starts telling her the whole set of physical, physiological and optical problems involved in the colour she is intending to choose for dress, she would listen, at best, out of politeness and wonder how the man can be interested in such problems at all. The logician's take-off from the proposition, on the other hand, would immediately transform it into a purely formal relationship which shall be studied only with regard to its formal properties. The proposition 'this table is red' becomes immediately 'this A is B' and the problem arises how to distinguish it from 'All A is B' and 'Some A is B'. The Marxist, however, would see in the 'table' a certain sociological level which a society has reached and, most probably, will start correlating the number of tables one possesses with the social status one occupies in the class-division of that society. He is bound to dismiss our whole discussion as well as the activity of all others with regard to the 'table' and the 'red', as a profound sign of 'bourgeois decadence', which, instead of equally distributing the number of tables in a community, concerns itself with such pseudo-problems to distract the attention of the working-class from the task of proletarian revolution.

We have put, rather too crudely, the various types of problems that can arise from such a simple proposition as 'this table is red'. The philosopher, the scientist, the Marxist and, perhaps even the girl, will be more subtle in the posing of their problems and in the reasons they will give for thinking the other people's problems to be no problems or, at least, to be problems of no *profound importance*.

We should guard ourselves here against a misunderstanding. We are by no means asserting the multiplicity of meanings with regard to this or any other proposition. It is not that the proposition has no simple, determinable meaning which can immediately be understood and verified by any person who knows the English language and is not blind. What we are asserting is the *multiplicity of problems* and not the multiplicity of meanings, as most people contend. In fact, the problems have no determinate relation to the proposition. The philosopher, the scientist, the Marxist and the logician are not interested in the proposition at all. It provides merely an *occasion*—an occasion that could easily have been supplied by *any other* proposition. In fact, none of them deals with such a trivial proposition as this: what they are interested

in is problems of a certain sort which they can generally reach from a most multiple variety of propositions. The problems, however, are effectively problems only for those who are interested in them as problems. The problems exist in a certain realm and all those who are disinterested in that realm are generally unaware of those problems. The problem of transfinite numbers before Cantor, for example, or the deciphering of the pictographic writing of the Minoan Civilisation, are problems one would never come across unless one happens to be interested in the realms to which the problems belong. Ask a physicist why Iago behaved as he did and you will know the problem we are trying to elucidate.

Yet, however much the difference between the problems of different fields and their recognition as problems, there lies a deeper difference between the type of problems that can be called scientific and logical on the one hand and those which are or should be called philosophical on the other. If we leave volitional and emotional problems on one side and confine ourselves to cognitive problems alone, we would find that all scientific problems are of a distinct type in the sense that they refer to a possible state of affairs, which is capable of direct or indirect verification. A logico-mathematical problem, on the other hand, refers to no actual or possible state of affairs and thus is incapable of any direct or indirect verification in the empirical sense of the term. It is concerned with formal relationships, and its test is coherence, not verification. Its terms are indeterminate, and thus the problem of verification never arises. As Russell said about mathematics, we never know what we are talking about and whether what we are saying is true or false. The *relata*, however, are defined by the defining relations and given the relation we can always know that certain consequences must follow. So the question whether some things do possess the defining relations is entirely irrelevant to the consequences that follow from the relation.

Problems of philosophy, on the other hand, are of a very different nature. They are neither concerned with any possible state of affairs, nor can they, in any sense, be verified. One, of course, has the feeling that philosophers are concerned deeply with possible state of affairs—a feeling shared eminently by the philosophers themselves. What can be more matter-of-fact than the problem of our immortality, the existence of God, the independent existence of objects, the reality of mechanism and teleology, space and time etc. etc. But the moment one tries to understand the possible state of affairs which these problems are

supposed to refer to, one finds that there is no such state of affairs which can be supposed to follow from the truth or falsity of the assumed hypothesis and, thus, render it possible of direct or indirect verification. One does not go about establishing or refuting such propositions as one does with regard to scientific propositions. One does not ask, for example, what would be the consequences if the supposed hypothesis were true and proceed to see if the state of affairs was such. The whole procedure, in fact, rests on certain arguments which are considered to be of supreme importance by the person who offers them and of utter unimportance by the person who rejects them.

Take, for example, the famous Idealistic argument that the object of knowledge is never known outside the act of knowledge and, hence, to think of it as existing outside and independent of the act of knowledge, is superfluous and unwarranted. The whole argument rests on the profound importance attached to the fact that one cannot know an object without knowing it—a fact, which to the opponents, seems utterly trivial and tautological. Or, take, the famous reply of Moore that the very act of knowledge reveals the object of knowledge to be independent of the act of knowledge—a fact dismissed as unimportant and illusory by the Idealists. The other subtle distinction of Moore between 'sensing' and 'sensum' is admitted by Gentile in his distinction of 'thinking' and 'thought'. But it results in just an opposite Idealistic construction where the act of 'thinking' becomes, in its own turn, the *object* of another 'act' and thus turns into a 'thought'.

It should be noted that neither the person who advances an argument nor the person who opposes him are concerned with some actual or possible state of affairs. They are concerned with the arguments of each other, and not with any facts possible of verification. Of course, they, generally, do bring in facts, but only as subsidiary to the main argument. The argument would remain valid even if the facts are of a sort other than the philosopher thought them to be, or even if there are facts of an opposite nature. It is, for this reason that philosophical problems remain, to a great extent, unaffected by the changes in our growing knowledge of objects. Plato's physics and astronomy were outmoded long ago but not so his formulation and solution of philosophical problems. One is literally amazed at the perennality, not merely of the problems posed but of the solutions proposed, when one reads those leisurely dialogues in which unbounded philosophic curiosity is mixed with a wit and grace and a charming abandon and transcendence of even the philosophical prob-

lems themselves, that is so sadly absent from the dry, arid and logical tomes of a Kant or a Hegel.

Philosophical problems, on the other hand, are also not logical or formal in character.. Whatever be the nature of problems concerning God, immortality, independence of objects etc., at least, this much is certain that they are not of a formal or logical nature. The problem of formal relationships is not involved even though the problems do not seem to be empirical, in the usually accepted sense of the term.. It is this difficulty which has led many recent thinkers to think of philosophy's subject-matter as identical with some of the new fields that have been opened up by recent studies. Some of these attempts have been discussed in the last five chapters under the general heading 'Discussions'. Yet, even in these cases, any person working in these very fields would regard these persons as philosophers because they are concerned with the subject in a way *different* from that in which he is concerned with the subject.

Whitehead, Russell and Husserl are mathematicians and Croce, a historian—but in a different sense than the one in which others are so. Collingwood, for example, is not merely the historian of Roman Britain, but also the author of *The Idea of History*. The distinction seems to have been fairly grasped in these sentences of Hans Reichenbach, at least with regard to physics, in as much as he writes: "Whereas physics consists in the analysis of the physical world, philosophy consists in the analysis of *our knowledge of the physical world*."\* This sentence may very well apply not merely with regard to the extremely lucid work of Reichenbach himself concerning quantum physics, but also to that of Whitehead and Russell as well. Reichenbach believes that "philosophy should not try to construct physical results, nor try to prevent physicists from finding such results". Yet "a *logical analysis of physics* which did not use vague concepts and unfair excuses" was both needed and possible. It, however, "should not take refuge in conceptions of speculative philosophy which must appear outmoded in the age of empiricism, *nor use the operational form of empiricism as a way to evade problems of the logic of interpretations*".†

Thus, for Prof. Reichenbach, the philosophical problems arising from physics are *neither physical nor logical*, but somewhere between the two involving both but exclusively neither.

\* *Philosophic Foundation of Quantum Mechanics*, p. vii. Italics ours.

† *Ibid.* p. vii. Italics ours.

The problems are neither empirical nor logical, but of a distinctly different type—a type that Prof. Reichenbach is forced to call philosophical. It should also be noted that Prof. Reichenbach refuses to take the course usually taken by logical positivists and dismissing the whole set of problems as pseudo-problems. But if the problems are, really, of no interest to either the physicist or the logician, it is difficult to understand why Prof. Reichenbach is so positively against the 'evasion' of such problems. The reason can only be understood in the light of our discussion on the nature of 'problem' itself. Prof. Reichenbach *feels* it to be a problem demanding a solution, while the physicist and the logician do not. Yet it will be wrong to accept Prof. Reichenbach's statement as a complete articulation of the nature of philosophical problems in general.

Still it confirms our suggestion that there is a certain type of problems which are neither logical nor empirical in character and yet which cannot be dismissed as pseudo-problems. Whether these problems are to be conceived of as relating to a mere logical analysis of different sciences, is, on the other hand, a different question. Comparing Moore's analysis of 'The Conception of Reality', for example, with Reichenbach's analysis of Quantum Physics, we find a great difference between the two. Not merely Prof. Moore's analysis but the very subject of his analysis is peculiar, being different from the usual subject-matters of other studies. The subject of Prof. Reichenbach's analysis is Quantum Mechanics—a subject which is as empirical as any other subject-matter of science. What is peculiar about him is that his approach brings to light a certain set of problems that are distinct from both the empirical and the logical problems and, thus, are called philosophical. The conception of Reality, however, is not a subject that can be ascribed either to science or to logic, but a subject of its own type belonging to neither. It is, therefore, not merely the problems with which Prof. Moore is concerned that are called philosophical but the subject, that gives rise to his problems, is also regarded as being such.

Still, the distinction should not be pressed too far. Even the problems of the conception of Reality may be approached in an empirical manner.. One may try to analyse the psychological aspects of the feeling of reality as a psychological phenomenon as contrasted with the feeling of unreality. Or one may try to understand the different senses in which the word 'reality' has been used at different times and so attempt to build some sort of a dictionary-meaning of the word. In these cases, not merely the

problems but the subject-matter itself gets transformed, as a result of the approach, into an empirical one. In fact, it is only the superficial identity of the words that makes us think that the subject-matter is the same in the two cases. Philosophers have generally been unable to distinguish between these two strands in their thought. Psychological analysis of philosophical concepts is regarded as philosophical, it being forgotten that the very undertaking of the psychological analysis has transformed the philosophical problem into an empirical one. Much of the philosophical writings of Locke or Hume are, thus, not philosophical but psychological in character.

The reason why philosophical writing is generally interspersed with non-philosophical matter lies not merely in the fact that the philosopher is not only a philosopher but a man with other interests as well, but also in the misconceived notion that the philosopher has of his own function. If the determination of the really real is supposed to be the special function of the philosopher, the chances are that physics, biology, psychology, moral or aesthetic or religious values, sociology of the brand one prefers, in short, all that one happens to know and like and prefer, will rush in and assume the garb of reality. Yet, the philosophers have generally approached things in a different way—a difference that is becoming more and more distinct with the coming of the empirico-scientific attitude into its own. Nowhere is this difference more evident than in the writings of those scientists who have also turned philosophers. Arthur Eddington, for example, approaches a problem in astro-physics in a way different from that which he follows, when thinking about 'the nature of the physical world'. The vast array of physical facts that are brought to advance certain conclusions, are there *only* because Eddington's mind is full of them. The facts, however, are in the main irrelevant to the conclusion as is evidenced by the fact that the same conclusion was reached by certain philosophers because of certain reasons even when the facts were undiscovered.

The existence, then, of a type of subject-matter and approach which is neither empirical nor logical and, hence, which belongs neither to Science nor to Logic may be assumed to be a well-established fact. It should be noted that such a subject-matter or approach is also not transcendental in character. The word 'transcendental' is here used to denote the study of Eidetic Essences through the method of phenomenological reduction. Logic as the study of formal relationships forms only a part, though a radically distinctive part, of the realm of Eidetic Essences. Philo-

sophy, however, is in no sense the study of such Essences, though the study of any such Essences may give rise to problems of a philosophical nature. The choice of the word 'philosophical' for describing an approach and a subject-matter which is neither empirical nor logical nor transcendental seems fairly appropriate in as much as both the subject-matter and the approach refuse to be reduced to any other subject or approach which has already a distinct name for itself. Also, the region of problems denoted by the word as well as the approach thereto, is fairly in accord with the *practice* of most philosophers, past and present. Of course, the philosophers thought about their practice differently, but it is our contention that their thinking was misconceived and their practice correct.

The early Eleatics took their denial of motion and plurality to be a denial of their reality. What they, in fact, were doing was to bring to light a set of problems involved in the concepts of motion and plurality, as understood by them. The innumerable problems that arise in Plato's dialogues are problems that arise during the clarification of certain concepts and it is a significant fact that many of the problems remain unsolved. With this is involved, in Plato, the halting intuition of the phenomenological search for Essences—halting, not in the sense that his search for Essences is lukewarm, but in the sense that he has not grasped the problem of Essence. Aristotle's synthesis of Being and Becoming, which was the central problem of Greek philosophy, was a conceptual synthesis of a conceptual problem. The problems arising from the concepts of Substance and Causality are the central pivot around which the thought of both the Continental Rationalists and the English Empiricists revolves. With Kant, philosophy consciously circumscribes itself to the *synthetic a priori*—a realm which is neither logical nor empirical in nature. Kant called it 'transcendental' but in a sense different from that in which the phenomenologists generally use the word. With Kant's successors, the problem resolves itself into that of the analysis of the notion of 'Thing-in-itself'—a resolution that is done in various ways by Fichte, Schelling and Hegel. Modern philosophy, in its various streams, is trying to analyse such concepts as 'Space', 'Time', 'Dependence', 'Meaning', 'History', 'Success', 'Value' etc. etc.

Modern or Ancient, Eastern, or Western—the philosopher has always been interested in problems that seem both futile and trivial to others. These problems are of a recognisably distinct type and, thus, have always attracted a distinct name to themselves.

This name has been applied simultaneously to the problems that are analysed and the attempt to clarify and analyse them. Thus, philosophy is not merely the name for the *analytic clarification of conceptual confusions*, but also of those *conceptual confusions themselves*. The philosopher, however, is not merely a philosopher but also a man. He, therefore, inevitably tries to correlate this activity of his with other activities. In order that the activity may be regarded as supremely worthwhile, he has generally convinced himself and, at times, others as well, that he was attempting to know the really real. Indian philosophers have even conceived of such knowledge as essential to liberation, for unless one knows the true nature of reality, how can one establish the right relation to it? Plato's 'Contemplation of Ideas', Spinoza's 'Intellectual Love of God', Kant's and Schopenhauer's Ethics, Samkhya's 'Kaivalya' and 'Samkara's' 'Supreme Identity'—are all supposed to follow from their view of what is real. In fact, to them, this was the supreme feature of their view of reality though, to the historian of philosophy what is perhaps important is only their discussion of certain concepts and conceptual problems and their envisagement of new alternatives with regard to those problems.

The attitude and the analysis were related, however, only by the peculiar psychology of the thinker and not in any essential way to each other. The value and validity of the attitude is in no way dependent upon the solution of the diverse philosophical problems that these thinkers posed and attempted to solve. One can be moral and even religious without deciding the innumerable problems centering round the notions of Self, God and Matter. One can, of course, convince oneself that one's own theoretical solutions are essential for behaving in a certain way, but the very fact that others can and do behave in the same way without holding to those theoretic opinions, is a sufficient proof that the supposed essentiality is only psychological in character.

The imaginative construction or interpolation, generally known by the proud name of metaphysics, has only one thing certain about it—and that is, that it is false. This does not mean that metaphysics is, or should be, forbidden, but only that it should be recognised for what it is, *viz.*, imaginative construction. Its difference from the other type of imaginative construction *i.e.*, Art lies in its greater universality and abstractness as also in its utter disregard of the aesthetic logic which is decisive for Art. It is supposed to be moved by considerations of logic

but, in fact, there is inter-locked in it the analysis of concepts with the construction of concepts. The genuinely philosophical elements, thus, lie interfused with constructional elements which are, generally, not seen as constructional at all but as essentially philosophical.

The diverse elements that have found place in the writings of most philosophers, thus, need a disentangling, which would disengage the philosophical element from the scientific and the logical on the one hand and the imaginatively constructional on the other. The increasing articulation of experience, on all its levels, is the task of science. Its imaginative completion is the task, in their different ways, of both art and metaphysics. The articulation of formal relations involved in the very notion of relation and the assumptions required for the building of any system, is the task of logic. The problems of science and logic are specific and have, in themselves, the possibility of solution. Imaginative construction requires boldness and a vision and an insight into the very heart of possibility. This may or may not react on the transformation of actuality through the instrumentality of man. What is more important for our purposes, however, is the fact that in all these fields a certain set of problems can arise which for their solution require a different methodology than the usual one adopted for the solution of problems that *specifically* belong to that field. These problems seem only apparently to belong to those fields. In fact, they are conceptual problems arising because of a supposed conceptual incompatibility which, for their resolution, require a reformulation of concepts, or a renewed analysis of them, or both. To the worker concerned directly with the problems in the field, these appear trivial and superfluous—and rightly so, for they are mostly irrelevant to the problems with which he is concerned.

Philosophical problems, then, arise because of conceptual confusions and, for their resolution, always require conceptual analysis. This, we submit, has been the essential nature of philosophical thinking in the past and in the present. There have generally been other factors interfused with this, but those factors, as we have already pointed out, have always been 'other'. Philosophy has been the comprehensive name both for the confusions and their clarification. The philosophic activity is peculiarly parasitic upon a particular type of confusions. The confusions are conceptual, *i.e.*, are of such a nature that they can be resolved in no way other than that of conceptual analysis. The resolution gives us freedom from the problem *i.e.*, from philosophy itself.

Philosophy, therefore, lives in the clarification of its own confusions, a clarification that is its own death.

It would be tempting to imagine that the realisation of the general nature of philosophical problems would result in a complete overcoming of the philosophical activity on the part of the thinker himself. Yet, it does not generally happen to be so, for the person who happens to be a philosopher is peculiarly fitted by his temperament just for the entertaining of such type of problems. Hence, even if certain problems get solved to his satisfaction, certain others are bound to arise and engage his attention. Even such a thinker as Prof. Moore, who has confessed that he would not have become a philosopher if other philosophers (i.e., their philosophic confusions) had not existed, has not yet found an end to the confusions that he has still to clarify. Professor Dewey, another great thinker who has tried to explain the traditional problems of philosophy through a misconceiving of the nature of the method of knowledge derived from the sharp division in ancient Greek Society between those who practised 'doing' and those that practised 'knowing', has been doing nothing else except criticising the self-same confusions over and over again. All such philosophers are at a loss to find some genuine function of philosophy. For, if one accepts their contention, the philosophical problems of the past have been pseudo-problems and once their pseudo character is realised there remains nothing for philosophy to do. Professor Dewey, for example, in his *Reconstruction in Philosophy* had contended that "it will be seen that the task of future philosophy is to clarify men's ideas as to the social and moral strifes of their own day".\* In his 'Introduction' written twenty-five years later to the same book, he observes more explicitly that "it must undertake to do for the development of inquiry into human affairs and hence into morals what the philosophers of the last few centuries did for promotion of scientific inquiry in physical and physiological conditions and aspects of human life".† And what the philosophers of the last few centuries did, was to produce "a *climate* that was favourable to initiation of the scientific movement".‡

What Professor Dewey wants philosophy to do is to produce a climate which would be favourable to the initiation of scientific

\* p. 35.

† *Ibid.* p. xxiii.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. xix. Italics ours.

movement in social and moral affairs. The function of philosophy would, thus, mainly consist in an analysis and exposure of confusions: which stand in the way of such a scientific study. Apart from the fact that sociologists, anthropologists and psychologists have already undertaken such a study, the question about the function of philosophy when such confusions have been clarified, remains. Unless, therefore, Professor Dewey believes that his clarifications will not be accepted or that some other confusions will arise when these clarifications have been accepted, he is bound to agree to the fact that his specifically philosophic function presupposes and is parasitic upon the confusions of the past and the present which he has taken as his task to expose.

The nature of the conceptual confusions, however, has been misunderstood by Professor Dewey. He has found the cause in the sociological conditions of ancient Greece, with the obvious corollary that the confusions should cease when the conditions have ceased. But the confusions are conceptual and arise more because of the nature of concepts—not this or that concept, but because of the very conceptual nature of concepts. The confusions have a certain kind of objectivity in the sense that anybody who can be sufficiently interested, will find himself holding, one after other, almost all the classic positions of philosophy—albeit, in a crude manner. It is only because the common man is not sufficiently interested that his attention is not held by the immense complexity of these problems. The philosopher, by temperament, is one of those who, in the famous phrase of the Urdu poet, Ghalib, gets more and more involved in his attempt to unravel the problem till he gets caught and can find no end to the unending string he seems to be unravelling.

Philosophy, thus, is unending in a deeper sense than Prof. Dewey or Prof. Moore seem to imagine. It is the inevitable accompaniment of a *self-conscious* humanity which reflects not merely on the objects that confront it, but also on its reflection thereof. However, a self-consciously misconceived function of philosophy can be of deep harm to the human spirit. For, man is not merely static but dynamic as well. Human experience does not merely need an increasing articulation, but also an increasing deepening—a reaching out for new dimensions and new depths. This, in its experiential essentiality, has been, in general, the task of religion. Any misconception about the function of philosophy can stand powerfully in the way of such deepening. It is the task of philosophy to become self-conscious of its function and, thus, avoid dictating the limits to either Science or Religion

—a dictation that seems to have been its continuous task in every age and clime

It, however, cannot be avoided—at least, for a person who thinks. It is as inevitable as the confusions it seeks to clarify and, hence, is a necessary moment in the life of most thinkers and a persistent one in the life of some. Philosophy is, thus, the eternal watch-dog between the increasing articulation of all levels of experience, which is the task of Science, and eternal deepening and widening of experience, which is the task of Religion.

Marx said in his theses on Ludwig Feuerbach that philosophers had tried to interpret the world, while the task was to change it. But the function of the philosopher is neither to understand *i. e.* articulate the world nor to change it. His function *qua* philosopher is merely to clarify certain conceptual confusions in which he finds himself involved when thinking about certain problems. Whether these problems are important or trivial is an irrelevant matter, for the answer would always depend on the simple fact whether the person answering is sufficiently interested in the problems or not. Every person changes the world—whatever we may mean by this blanket-term—in some way and understands it to some degree and is engaged in philosophic confusions and an attempt at their philosophic clarification to some extent. Whether one is to be regarded as primarily a man of action, a man of knowledge or a philosopher is mainly a matter of emphasis or degree. But Marx would say the task is not merely to change it, but change it nearer to the heart's desire. But whose is the heart to the tune of which the world is to dance? To no man, even if he be a Christ, a Karl Marx or a Gandhi, there is the shadow of a doubt. The tune to which the world is to dance, is the tune of one's own heart—the eternal Aladdin's Lamp, the omnipotent human wish. Of course, Marx, like the prophets of old, has claimed that the universe is moving towards the realisation of his heart's desire—in fact, that there is an inherent dialectical drive compelling its realisation, and, thus, has claimed the sanction of Reality, with a capital R, behind his will and effort. What Marx has done for society, Sri Aurobindo seems to have done for the Individual. Immense Vistas of Possibility with the assurance of a metaphysical sanction behind them. Still, these have been the persons who have given us the vision of Dynamic Possibilities with regard to the Individual and the Society and if there linger among them still some vestiges of the metaphysical sanction, it is only because of a past that they have not yet outgrown.

Philosophy, then, is simultaneously a name for the conceptual confusions that arise in thinking about any subject and the attempt at the clarification of those confusions. Here is a region, a realm, a set of problems. It only needs a name and we submit that the word 'philosophy' can adequately perform this function. We also submit that it is in accord with the practice of most of those persons who have been known as philosophers in the past and the present. If this be disappointing to some who seem to imagine that philosophy should provide a back-door peep into the mysteries of the universe, it cannot be helped. It is time that philosophers dispel the general impression that they are on intimate terms with Reality with a capital R, and on hobnobbing terms with the Absolute and the God Almighty. The philosopher should not don the false plumes of the shaman, the priest or the prophet. If he is ashamed of his job, he may as well leave it, rather than deceive the people with regard to a function which is not his own.