

THE PATTERNS OF PHILOSOPHIC THOUGHT

BY CLARENCE ERICKSON

(Concluded)

THE oldest articulate form of Dualism is the ancient Persian religion, given to the Persians in the sixth century B. C. by Zoroaster, otherwise known as Zarathustra. Reality is conceived as a struggle between two irreconcilable principles, Light and Darkness, Good and Evil. This ethical Dualism is represented in the Christian religion to this day in the conception of the conflict between God and evil, or the personification of evil in the shape of Satan.

The classic example of philosophic Dualism is the philosophy of Plato. We have already discussed Plato's philosophy under Spiritualism, as he is usually classed with the Idealist philosophers, because of his emphasis upon the supernal realm of the Ideas.

In Aristotle we find somewhat of an attempt to resolve the sharply-sundered Dualism into more of a unity. *Form* has now taken the place of *Idea*, and *Form* can only be realized through the medium of matter. Matter is that which has the potentiality of becoming something, while *Form* is the directive principle which guides and determines the process of becoming.

Scholasticism, the official philosophy of the Roman Catholic Church, is a modified form of Aristotelianism. Thomas Aquinas, the thirteenth century scholastic, is the thinker who did the greatest part of the work of adaptation. The Scholastic philosophy, with a few modern revisions, still reigns in Catholic institutions of learning.

Descartes, the founder of modern philosophy, that is, philosophy after the Renaissance, was also an exponent of Dualism. Reality is composed of two substances; matter, or extended substance, and spirit, or thinking substance. The essence of matter is its space-

filling property, said Descartes, while the essence of spirit is its property of thought or consciousness. Also, spirit is unextended, does not fill space. God is the creator of both matter and spirit, but Himself is a pure spirit. Only man, in the Cartesian scheme, has a soul. All animals other than man are unconscious chemical machines, strictly mechanical in their behavior, which is a rigid mechanism of causes and effects. Indeed, the entire material world is a mechanism, capable of being reduced to a realm of cause and effect by science, according to Descartes. The material body of man, too, is a machine. But the conduct of this body-machine is somehow controlled by the soul, which comes in contact with the nervous system through its seat in the pineal gland, in the middle of the forehead, thought Descartes.

The weak point in Descartes' system obviously is his inconsistency in sharply sundering spirit from matter, and then assuming that spirit can interact with the body-machine and influence its actions. If the material world, the human body included is a complete and closed circuit of mechanically determined causes and effects, how can a spiritual cause break its way into the already complete chain of material causation? How can matter and spirit, by definition belonging to two different realms of being, act upon one another?

Cartesian Dualism, then, proved to be an unstable philosophy, owing to the impossibility of accounting for the interaction of matter and spirit. The philosophy of Descartes evolved into two other philosophies. Spinoza resolved the Dualism into a Monism by setting up the hypothesis of a single substance, which is God, making itself known to us by two attributes or aspects, Matter and Spirit.

Another school of philosophers, seizing upon Descartes' idea of mechanical causation in the material realm of being, founded the mechanistic philosophy, which holds that the universe is a machine, an iron-clad reign of cause and effect. Spiritual substance was discarded by the mechanists as a superfluity. They attempted to explain away the fact of consciousness by reducing it to a motion of material particles.

The Behaviorist psychology is based on the mechanistic hypothesis. Hence its denial of consciousness, since there is no place for it in a closed circuit of material causes and effects. A rather drastic way of getting rid of a troublesome fact that does not fit into a

preconceived theory! What fact can be more certain than the fundamental fact of consciousness? John B. Watson says that consciousness probably is an illusion. But an illusion itself is a state of consciousness, a mental state that is wrongly interpreted. If there were no such thing as consciousness there could be no such thing as illusion. Therefore in admitting the existence of illusion Watson is also admitting the existence of consciousness.

Getting back to our subject, Dualism is represented to-day by Bergson, the Neo-Platonists, the Scholastics, and a few other philosophies of less importance. The Dualism of Bergson demands a word of notice. The dichotomous division, characteristic of every form of Dualism, is made between matter and a Life Force, or *Elan Vital*, which pushes its way up through matter in higher and higher forms of life by means of a process of Creative Evolution. Bernard Shaw is an adherent of this doctrine. In connection with the science of biology the theory is known as Vitalism. Biologists are divided into two camps, the vitalists and the mechanists. The latter maintain that life is a purely physico-chemical affair, in opposition to the former, who believe in an *Elan Vital* which animates matter and raises it from the inorganic to the organic level.

We are now ready for a brief discussion of Monism. The word stands for a philosophical attempt to reduce reality to one principle, or one substance. Hence, both Materialism and Spiritualism are forms of Monism, in that they set up either matter or spirit as the only substance. But in actual philosophical usage the term *Monism* is generally reserved for a doctrine which received its most characteristic expression in Spinoza, the Moorish-Jewish philosopher who lived in the Netherlands in the seventeenth century.

We have already seen how the Dualism of Descartes evolved into the Monism of Spinoza. The great difficulty inherent in Dualistic systems is the problem of accounting for the interaction and connection of two such sharply-sundered substances as matter and spirit. Spinoza escaped this difficulty by affirming a single substance which manifests itself in two attributes, matter and spirit. This substance he called God, the One, the All. Spinoza's system therefore is a Pantheism, since God and the world are one. Dualism is theistic; that is, God is conceived of as being apart from and distinct from the world. Spiritualism obviously is also pantheistic, while Materialism is atheistic.

In Spinoza's Monism the problem of the relation of matter to spirit is solved by assuming the parallelism of the material and spiritual aspects of the one true substance. Every material phenomenon has accompanying it a parallel psychic phenomenon. When a chain of causes and effects passes through a circuit of sense organs, sensory nerves, brain, and motor nerves, issuing in a muscular response, the material circuit is complete in itself. But accompanying this closed material circuit is a parallel circuit of mental causes and effects, composed of sensations, perceptions, volitions, and other states of consciousness. As Huxley has put it, for every *neurosis* there must be a *psychosis*, and vice versa. That is, for every movement of the particles composing the nervous system, there must be a definite accompanying state of consciousness in the psychic aspect of being. In psychology this doctrine is called *psycho-physiological parallelism*.

According to Spinoza, not only is every neurosis accompanied by a psychosis, but every physical phenomenon has its corresponding psychical correlate. Thus even atoms and electrons have, in a very rudimentary form of course a psychic life. The interconnection of physical and psychical, of material and spiritual, is very easily accounted for on this hypothesis. Underlying both matter and spirit, and fundamental to both of them, is the true reality or substance, and hence neither material nor spiritual causation is ultimate. The true causal activity takes place in the one true substance, which Spinoza calls God, and manifests itself to us in the two parallel aspects, known to us as matter and spirit. It follows that spirit cannot influence matter; neither can matter influence spirit. Both must change in parallelism with one another, through changes in the underlying substance. Body and soul, then, are a unit, and not two separate things as Dualism contends.

There is no exact prototype of Monism among the ancient philosophers, because the mind-body problem is a comparatively recent development. The earliest Greek thinkers, Thales, Anaximander, and Anaximenes, however, somewhat approximate Monism. The problem of philosophy for them was to find the one permanent substance beneath all the diversity of the world. Thales thought that water was this primal element. Anaximenes held that it was air, while Anaximander said that the *apeiron*, the limitless, a sort of fiery mist, had condensed itself into things as we know them. The

primal substance, whether water, air, or the limitless, was alive. These early philosophers took this for granted because the distinction between organic and inorganic, between consciousness and unconsciousness, had never occurred to them.

The Stoic philosophers held a doctrine also roughly similar to that of Spinoza, inasmuch as they held that the universe is a unity, animated by the World Reason, of the laws of nature. The Stoics are best known for their ethical doctrines, which were widely current among the Romans before the Empire adopted Christianity. Marcus Aurelius, the philosopher-emperor and the author of the famous *Meditations*, was a Stoic. Conformity to Natural Law, or the World Reason, is the essence of the Stoic ethic. Reality has an ethical drift, and we must find this drift and live in harmony with it if we would work out our ethical salvation.

At this point it will be useful to compare the ethics of the systems of philosophy we have so far reviewed. Materialism and Naturalism hold that moral law is social or human law; Dualism finds moral law in Divine law, or the law of a God or Creator; Monism maintains that moral law is Natural law. In systems of Spiritualism, evil is considered either as a necessary step leading to an ultimate good; or else an illusion proceeding from our ignorance of the ways of the Absolute. Spiritualism has ever found the problem of evil its great stumbling block, and its ethical theory is more or less an attempt to explain away evil, rather than to meet it squarely.

Returning to the subject of Monism, we find that it is still a live philosophy to-day. Many scientists see in it the only theory that does full justice to both physical science and the facts of consciousness and mental life. It is a combination of Materialism and Spiritualism, retaining the strong features of both while escaping their difficulties. Albert Einstein, while not definitely committing himself to any system of philosophy, has confessed that he feels strongly drawn toward the Pantheism of Spinoza. Two eminent modern philosophers, S. Alexander and C. Lloyd Morgan, the latter a noted biologist, are followers of Spinoza and his Monism.

We are now ready for a brief examination of Sensationalism, or Phenomenalism as it is also called. Both of the above words have unfortunate popular connotations. The reader must not suppose that Sensationalism is the philosophy of the modern newspa-

per man. Philosophic Sensationalism has no conception whatever with journalistic sensationalism.

In our discussions of Spiritualism and Dualism we were obliged to anticipate a great deal of our discussion of Phenomenalism, in order to show the influence of Hume, the typical philosopher of Phenomenalism, on Kant and all later philosophers. This is another instance of the profound influence even rival systems of thought exercise upon one another. It is impossible to discuss a single one of the fundamental types of philosophy without bringing every other type into the discussion. There could be no more convincing refutation of the notion that the different philosophers are entirely out of touch with one another, and that nothing permanent is ever accomplished in philosophy.

As we have seen, Phenomenalism was introduced into philosophy by David Hume, the eighteenth century Scotch philosopher and historian. His doctrine was the next step in the evolution of the thought of Locke and Berkeley.

Locke had been a Dualist, maintaining the independent existence of both mind and matter. But he left an opening in his system that was to serve as the starting point of his successor, Berkeley. Locke distinguished between the primary and the secondary qualities of matter. The primary qualities were hardness, durability, and extension in space, while the secondary qualities were color, sound, odor, etc. Only the primary qualities were objective, that is, belonging to matter in its own right. The secondary qualities were subjective, or contributed by our own minds, believed Locke.

Berkeley demonstrated that the so-called primary qualities of matter were just as subjective as the secondary qualities, and that all our impressions of matter were mental. He dropped the notion of material substance and reduced reality to spiritual or mental substance alone.

Hume logically completed the evolution of this line of thought by destroying the notion of spiritual substance. We have already seen the arguments by which he brought about this result. In a word, he demonstrated that the notion of spiritual substance underlying our sensations, perceptions, volitions, and memories was an inference that would not hold water logically. Nothing was now left existing except sensations or phenomena. Hence the terms

Sensationalism or Phenomenalism in connection with Hume's system.

Along with Hume's Phenomenalism went a doctrine of causation that threatened to knock the foundations from under not only Religion, but Science as well. If we analyze our notions of cause and effect carefully, said Hume, we can find no compulsion, no necessity in any given effect following a given cause. When one billiard ball strikes another billiard ball we expect the latter to be set into motion by the former. We think that the effect must of necessity follow the cause. But a little analysis reveals that it is not a certainty, but only a probability—a very high probability in this case—that ball B will be set into motion by Ball A. Suppose that one had never seen the collision of two billiard balls, or of two pieces of matter of any kind. Would one be able to deduce beforehand that ball B would have motion transmitted to it by ball A? We can find no logical reason why any effect should follow from a given cause. In the above example, to one who had never seen the phenomenon in question, it would be just as logical to suppose that the second ball would fly off into space, or remain stationary while checking the first ball. Almost anything could be supposed to happen and pure logic would be powerless to choose between the alternatives.

In truth, we learn the sequence of any given "cause" and "effect" relationship only through experience. The mind then associates the two, so that when we see A we naturally expect to see B follow. The greater the number of times our anticipation is fulfilled, the stronger our mental association of A and B becomes. But from this we cannot logically deduce that A and B are bound together by a causal necessity. All that we can say is that it is highly *probable* that B will follow A.

It is through the influence of Hume's above analysis of the cause and effect relationship, by which he reduced causation to little more than an association of ideas, that the terms *cause* and *effect* have fallen into disfavor among scientists, and that *antecedent* and *consequent* have taken their place. The laws of science, any careful modern scientist will hold, are mere statements of probability, not rigid, invariable "laws" of nature.

Hume's analysis of causation also had momentous implications for Religion. The two strongest arguments for the existence of

God, the *cosmological* and the *teleological* arguments, were based on the older notion of causality. In the cosmological proof the universe was considered the "effect" which only God as a "cause" could explain. The teleological argument held that the design and purpose apparently evident in the world pointed to a "cause" in the form of an intelligent being who did the designing. By demolishing the concept of causation and substituting for it the concept of mere sequence, Hume rendered it impossible to prove the existence of a Deity. Hume's philosophy, then, gave a tremendous impetus to Agnosticism. Thereafter, belief in God could be only a matter of faith, faith unassisted by reason. It may interest the reader to know that Hume himself had faith in the existence of God.

There are no ancient prototypes of Phenomenalism, because that philosophy is a very modern development. The Greek Sophists, however, somewhat approximated Phenomenalism in their skepticism. Real knowledge is impossible, all knowledge is opinion, believed most of the Sophists. The most extreme form of this skepticism was that of Gorgias, who said, "Nothing exists; if anything existed it could not be known; if anything could be known it could not be communicated to others."

Humian Phenomenalism is in great favor to-day among a brilliant school of philosophers who have approached philosophy through the gateway of science. Karl Pearson, the English physicist and mathematician; Wilhelm Ostwald, the German chemist; and Ernst Mach, an Austrian author of great works on physics and mechanics, have philosophical systems very closely resembling Hume's Phenomenalism.

Hume was, perhaps, the most influential philosopher in the history of European philosophy, although that fact is not adequately realized. Indeed, it can be said without fear of exaggeration that every system of philosophy after Hume up to the present day bears unmistakable signs of Hume's influence. We have already seen how the systems of Kant and the German Idealist were attempts, in part at least, to escape the skepticism of Hume. Other schools of philosophy hold that Kant's refutation of Hume was an evasion rather than a real answer, and hence Hume's doctrines play even a greater part in the systems other than German Idealism.

We have now completed our survey of the fundamental types of philosophy. It now remains for us to demonstrate how complex

modern systems of philosophy can be analyzed into their simple components.

Let us take the philosophy called Pragmatism, certainly one of the dominating systems of to-day. Pragmatism also goes under the names of Humanism, and Instrumentalism. William James is usually associated with Pragmatism, F. C. S. Schiller with Humanism, and John Dewey with Instrumentalism. This difference in terminology must not be allowed to mislead the reader. Pragmatism, Humanism, and Instrumentalism represent what is substantially one system of thought.

Pragmatists (whatever they may call themselves) frequently speak of a doctrine called "radical empiricism." Radical empiricism is a species of Humism or Phenomenalism, in that it holds that the world of actual experience, the world of sensations and perceptions, is the real world. When the Pragmatist says that the world is made of a stuff called "pure experience" he is merely advancing the doctrine of Phenomenalism.

The most characteristic teaching of Pragmatism is its famous theory of truth. Truth, according to Pragmatists, is a mental weapon forged by the mind for the purpose of gaining control over experience. For example, the atomic theory of chemistry is a concept or mental tool which has enabled us to enrich our experience to a marvellous extent. We all know the rôle modern chemistry has played in medicine, industry, and in many other walks of life. It is unessential whether atoms really exist or not. The atomic theory is true, according to the Pragmatist, because it has proved such a potent instrument in gaining control over our environment and enhancing the fullness of our lives. Utility and workability are the principal tests of truth.

This doctrine of truth is not new by any means. It was hinted by one of the ancient Greek Sophists, Protagoras, who said, "Man is the measure of all things." The Pragmatic view of truth is a natural development proceeding from the skepticism of Hume. If we can have no knowledge other than that of probabilities and sequences, it behooves us to accept those sequences as true which it is useful for us to accept as true.

Let us subject the system of Bertrand Russell to our method of chemical analysis. We find that Russell's views on ethics and religion are similar to those of Epicurus. Moral codes and systems

are merely human devices for securing the maximum of happiness for man; religion to Russell is a species of fear, which it is to man's interest to leave behind him. The world, according to Russell, is made of a stuff that is neither mind nor matter. "Neutral monism" is the name given this doctrine. This neutral stuff consists of "events." The entire conception is a variety of Humian Phenomenalism, for the "events" are phenomena or sensations. Russell places great faith in the absolute nature of mathematical truth, which he holds is independent of experience. In this respect, then, Russell is somewhat of a Platonist, since he affirms the independent existence of abstract ideas in the form of mathematical propositions. Thus the philosophical system of Bertrand Russell is a compound of Naturalism, Phenomenalism, and Platonism.

What are some of the benefits that would accrue from a more widespread interest in philosophy? Has philosophy any practical value?

The reading of the philosophers cannot help having a beneficent effect on one's character and ideals. Contact with the great philosophers, who were invariably men of the loftiest character and the highest moral idealism, is an experience fully as worthwhile as contact with the great minds of literature, music, and art. The calm, quiet pleasures of reflection and study come to be valued more highly than the degrading pleasures of modern life. Our hurried, but withal aimless, lives, are largely the outcome of false valuations and ideals. The lust for material gain is largely responsible for the feverish tempo of modern life. A truer sense of values, which the study of philosophy can hardly fail to instil, would do much toward freeing man's mind of the low ideals and petty material ambitions which are responsible for so many of the ills of modern society.