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Message from the President

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I

The lament for the condition of public education continues in the press and in more seasoned academic discussions. The back to basics movement ranges from the systematic cultural critiques of Alan Bloom and others to the straightforward hope by parents that their children be taught to read and write. Liberal democratic education, rooted in the ethics of society and cultural historicity, is social servicing, nursed by a vast industry of situational consultants who refer primarily to a pedagogy originally anchored in the sociology of knowledge. The principal thesis of Karl Mannheim's *Ideology and Utopia*, that there are modes of thought which cannot be adequately understood as long as their social origins are obscured, was transformed into the considerably less rigorous notion that there are no modes of thought severable from their social origins.

The condition of public education obviously reflects the condition of our culture and ultimately of our philosophy. And it cannot be known that our culture has a coherent history and theoretical underpinning if history is the only arbiter of how we think about history and culture. The transhistorical abstractions of the older metaphysics were inevitably displaced by historiologies - empirical, sociological, economic, hypothetico-deductive - and cultural self-portraits that cultivated a contingent instability and tedious revisionism. Such historiologies are equally abstract and unsupportive of any form of cultural unity, or more speculatively a unity in diversity. As Edward Gibbon once said of the ambassadors of a Renaissance Greek emperor: "persuasion is the resource of the feeble; and the feeble can seldom persuade".

The modern cultural historiologies do not even have an emperor.

Philosophy is neither historical nor transhistorical, contingent nor provident. Education is initially imitative, that is, sourced in an externality that the student does not yet know as a totality of subjective and objective referents. As an achieved mediacy, education overcomes itself and attains a non-imitative mediacy that is fundamentally the standpoint of philosophy and thus both historical and transhistorical. Educational institutions conceived as social service agencies absolutize the externalities of educational development and as such are inherently counter-philosophical. Our current educational environment is incapable of making such a critique of the educational milieu because it is devoid of a sufficiently rigorous speculative philosophy. The abstract socio-historical methodologies which drive the educational bureaucracies in the end prohibit more than promulgate educational and cultural development.

Most people are aware of this unhappy state of affairs. This is why many are calling for radical solutions, which are consistently opposed by entrenched interest groups in the public schools and universities. Radical reform is nothing but fundamental reform. *Radix* in Latin means "fundamental", but such reform is itself abstract and unstable if not properly contextualized within a broader speculative and philosophical portrait of human nature and human organizations.

The current lament for public education will continue as long as speculative thought enlivens only at the margins. As people recoil from the mediocrity of the government schools, more resources will filter out to the marginalized centres of speculative rationality. This has become apparent in recent years, with the growth of sentiment for the voucher system

in the United States and widespread disenchantment in Canada with high per capita educational costs and disproportionately low scholastic results. The 1990s could prove to be the decade when a command system of education becomes transformed into one more guided by a general speculative reason.

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This issue contains the second instalment of Dr. James Lowry's *Psyche and Cosmos*. Causation theory pervades by necessity the realm of education and educational theory. Speculation about origins and causes are one of the earliest enthusiasms of a developing mind. There is little outlet, however, for these speculations, as one advances through the

present educational system. The deadweight of sociological reasoning blurs reflections on the relation between the individual and the universe, making them appear irrelevant and puerile. Dr. Lowry shows that if these initial speculations on cosmology and the individual are taken up into a more rigorous system of thought, then educational theory and practice will no longer be vulnerable to continual detours and unimportant excursions. The rigor of systematic speculative thought is nurtured by our more immediate and youthful speculations about infinity, the origin of the universe, and the stark isolation of the individual. The third and final instalment of *Psyche and Cosmos* will appear in the next issue of *ELEUTHERIA*. provinces.

PSYCHE AND COSMOS

THE PERENNIAL PARADOX OF CAUSATION THEORY AND THE PERENNIAL DESIRE TO RETURN

James Lowry

III

Logically, our modern cosmic horizon is simply a scientific form of Greek metaphysics or theology. But it is a *camouflaged* metaphysics because it uses scientific rather than theological images. If we understand clearly the source of this camouflage, we can delve more precisely into the present state of our theoretical relation to our being. The paradoxes or antinomies of relating effects to causes on a cosmic scale were, historically, first attempts to go from effects to causes. Early Greek philosophers, such as Anaximander with his *ἀπειρον*, are our best examples. The problem Anaximander faced was how the indefinite could be definite and vice versa. Plato sought to solve the problem with the idea of participation (*μέθεξις*);²⁷ but this again is only an explanation if one assumes already the effects. The same is true of Aristotle's *νοῦς*, but as a principle which is without motion how can motion come from it?

Only if what moves is already present. With the Neoplatonists the problem is reversed in that we have a principle from which to begin. But the nature of the principle is logically other than its effects. Thus we are stuck in what Aristotle might call an *ἀπορία* - a blocked path.²⁸ We can most fully fathom the perennial and difficult nature of this *ἀπορία* if we approach it through a consideration of the two primary and at the same time most opposed ways of trying to prove the existence of God. For it is in these proofs, if anywhere, that the *full* extent of the dilemma of relating effects to causes becomes explicit.

Ancient philosophy began by being sceptical of the world's appearance and so sought a principle which could underlie change. Plato's *εἶδη* (Forms) and *ἓν* (One) and Aristotle's *νοῦς* (mind) were efforts, first initiated by the Presocratic philosophers, to achieve through speculation, through *θεωρία*,²⁹ a contempla-

tive state in which the soul enjoyed a rest similar to that required of an ultimate principle. Plato's participation theory fails in that it already assumes the existence of the moving. Aristotle calls participation a metaphor,³⁰ though Plato did in his *Laws, Book X*,³¹ argue for a soul, which, as self-moved, was a primary cause; however, Plato certainly did not regard this soul as an ultimate cause.³² Thus the problem of participation remains, though on a higher level: namely, what is the relation between the *δημιουργός*, the self-moving soul, and the One or Good? Aristotle's resolution is to disallow motion altogether to his first principle or *νοῦς*; however it is a disallowance which Plato claims for his first principle or *ξένον* as well. The difference is that the Aristotelian principle is characterized positively as thinking, being, and living, as well as negatively, as unmoving, while Plato's principle, as simply One, is said to be beyond (*ὑπέρ*) thinking, being, and living.³³ Nevertheless, the relation of the Aristotelian principle to the world was not, as with Plato, one of participation; but it was as one-sided as Plato's: motion, though caused by love of contingent being for the *νοῦς*, was after all a desire to *imitate* (a Platonist might say to "participate" in) the divine activity of contemplation, which, on an human scale, Aristotle explicitly says is our best possibility.³⁴ With both Plato and Aristotle the "being" of contingent being is *assumed* in assuming the necessity for its explanation. In both cases the explanations given, whether they be participation or thinking, are not explanations of the *existence* of finite beings, only of their *operation*. In this respect these ancient answers to cosmic questions are on a plane with our own scientific explanations; namely, they are operational explanations which *already* assume the existence of being which does not necessarily exist. The difference is that ancient metaphysics or theology concentrated its efforts on knowing necessary being and so was aware of the need to ground contingency; whereas modern science sets itself within the parameters of the contingent and so is less aware of its assumptions. Be that as it may, the Platonic and Aristotelian demands lacked a necessary being which could be the origin of the contingent.

The Greek universe was essentially always a fixed one in the manner of Ptolemy. That it needed explanation did not for the Greeks immediately mean that its existence was questionable. It did mean that the hierarchy of being which they assumed needed to be grounded. But that this hierarchy might not always have been was not a question for them. Thus the idea of *creativity* was not a primary problem for the Greeks. This is why for them *imitation* is the central concept in the making of art. For imitation occurs on the basis of what *already* is. It has, like recollection (*ἀνάμνησις*), the nature of a *repetition*. This is why *contemplation* was thought to be the highest activity - for contemplation (*θεωρία*) is, when reduced to its essence, not a making but a beholding what already is. It is a satisfaction based on the absence of novelty. It is an imitation and replication which is, paradoxically, a *passive* activity. We can see how pervasive and unyielding is this Greek emphasis on the eternity of the cosmos in Neoplatonism, where there is an effort to explicate a productive principle which is always secondary to the primary interest of the soul's return to the One. Thus in Neoplatonism the emphasis is always on participation and negation. Being, as the multiple existences other than the One, is negatively what the One is not. When really pressed, a Neoplatonist must not even allow that the One "is" or "is not" in any way, because, while Being participates the One, the One is altogether *other* than Being. It is for this reason, a reason of emphasis, that the tension between the logic of procession and return, and the ineffability of the One as the principle of this logic, as the source of the actual Being of the participants, cannot be overcome Neoplatonically. For a Neoplatonist the tension is not a tension, but rather signifies an ultimate release from the bonds of being. Logically, Neoplatonism is, in the end, religion. We would argue that it is, in fact, the most completely developed religious position possible. Neoplatonism in its final Procline form is a marvellously convoluted and yet simple expression of an hierarchically complete religious mysticism. The needed cosmic explanation of being, of which the discovery of

philosophy was the discovery, is finally by the discoverers themselves abandoned. Proclus was a practising priest of the ancient religions of Greece and Egypt, and a theurgic participant, as well as the principal philosopher of his generation. To explain the cosmic finitudes, the dependence of Being on the One, would be to understand what was by definition beyond (ὑπέρ) thinking (νόησις) as beyond living and being. We feel the difficulty more than Proclus in so far as we partake of a Judeo-Christian environment, in so far as we live *within* the radical *finitude* of Jehovah's creation. For this is the idea that the Greeks never really took up as absolutely primary. The idea of Creation only underlines the finitude of being and the equal finitude of the living and thinking of non-divine beings. The gulf between Jehovah and Creation is not unlike that of the Neoplatonic One and Being. As well, the Christian emphasis on mediation by a divine Son, who was somehow also human and finite and vulnerable to death, can be found in the elaborate structure of the Neoplatonic hierarchy of Being. And, most important of all, we find in both the Neoplatonic and Judeo-Christian cosmologies the soul's overwhelming desire to return, to be saved, to experience union. This is not so developed in Judaism, in so far as the Messiah dies not yet come, but the yearning is still there - in fact, it is all the greater because as yet unfulfilled. What we must try to understand is how the flowering of Greek philosophy in Neoplatonism becomes, because it is finally religion, underlined even more deeply in Christian belief. The tension in Neoplatonism between the One and Being is exacerbated by the Christian emphasis on Creation - an emphasis which finally *demand*s a doctrine that *all that is other than God is Nothing* - a doctrine which would reduce Neoplatonic Being to Nothing. While the Christian doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* represents the logical extension of Greek dualism, it is, nevertheless, a position which Neoplatonism could never come to. The idea of matter (ὕλη) is the peculiarly Greek equivalent to Christian Nothingness. This characteristically Greek idea is clearly outlined by Proclus in his *Elements of Theology* (Στοιχείωσις Θεολογική) where he perfectly

preserves the Greek conception of matter by making what is farthest from the One an almost nothing which is yet closest to the One.

Christian theologians, unlike Greek philosophers, had to try to account for creation while at the same time, like their pagan mentors, desiring to preserve the godhead from the infection of temporality and finitude. In doing so Christian theologians were faced with taking the *only* position which could be possible - yet a position that they could through the certainty of revelation alone have dared to take. For with a doctrine of a creation from nothing Christians took a step which the Greeks were never able, through natural theology, to accomplish.³⁵ The problem of the relation of the Many to the One, which is the central issue of Greek metaphysics, has its origin, as we have seen, in the question of how contingent beings are related to necessary being, of how contingent effects are related to their source as a necessary cause. Plato tries to grapple with the problem by postulating a One and a dyad.³⁶ How he was to reconcile these principles without ending up with an ultimately dualistic and thereby unintelligible cosmos was the difficulty that Aristotle posed for himself through his criticism of the Platonic One as a principle which could be neither a final nor an efficient cause. Plato was quite aware of the problem in so far as he recognized, in the old problematic of the Parmenidean not-Being, in the conundrum of Being as not not-Being, the clue to the nature of the finite. Plato's solution is to abandon forever the idea of an actual not-Being by distinguishing between a not-Being, which, as "not", cannot be thought, and a not-Being as "other".³⁷ The infinite dyad is Plato's answer to how there can be a "what is" which also "is not". What is not One is Being. But Being is both infinite as dyadic and finite as limited by the One. We see the depth of the problem in Plato's effort to explain the nature of becoming (γένεσις), by way of the meta-phor of a receptacle (ὑποδοχή) which is "the nurse of all generation."³⁸ What Plato can only describe metaphorically Aristotle thinks to understand through a conceptual transition from form

(εἶδος) and matter (ὕλη) to potency (δύναμις) and act (ἐνέργεια).³⁹ The Aristotelian context is also one of cause. His δύναμις, although a different word from Plato's ὑποδοχή, is really no more successful in overcoming a dualistic cosmos. His νοῦς is only the antithesis of δύναμις as not having any potentiality. This is because the problematic of cause is for Aristotle as for Plato, as thinkers in a Greek world, a problematic of motion. The problem of motion is that of generation or of how being and not-being can be related. It is more fundamentally the problem of change or, more definitely still, of contingency and time. If we remember that for the Greeks the question of not-Being does not arise in the sense that contingent being always or already is, we can see why for them Nothing is not a possible solution. For them the problem is more one of *relation* than of *existence*. This is why essence (εἶδος, ἰδέα, οὐσία, τὸ τί ἢ εἶναι)⁴⁰ is the Greek obsession. Not existence itself but the *perfection* of existence is what interested the Greeks. We see this perfectly in Plato's idea of the One and in Aristotle's unmoving νοῦς. And yet *matter*, materiality, the substance or ὑποκείμενον⁴¹ of essence, was the *hidden*, largely un contemplated, nemesis of Greek idealism. We can comprehend its force in different ways. It is present in the fate (Αἴσα) that hangs over Zeus⁴² as it did over Cronos and Uranos, and in the lifeless shades that we all, even as the Greek heroes,⁴³ become. Our dead souls are very like the formless matter of Aristotle and the amorphous receptacle of Plato. Without the blood of form we are, as only mere potencies, without the actuality of life and thought.⁴⁴ The deep clash in Greek thought between the One beyond Being and being as beings, and the *psychic* abyss that separates νοῦς as self-contemplation from the love of its admirers is due to (and only understandable by us when we remember) the fact that for the Greeks the ultimate metaphysical question of "why are there beings rather than nothing?" *could not* in their psychic world occur.⁴⁵ When we truly recollect the Greek psyche, when we enter into their cosmos and become one with their reality, we can see as clearly as the light

which the advent of Christianity compels, that metaphysics is not in the new religion overcome but deepened. For with the rise of the Christian sun the hidden face of nothingness must cast a shadow as if created for the very first time. The conundrum of Neoplatonism as it fulfilled its effort to reconcile Plato and Aristotle in the secular robe of its own Greek tradition, its final abandonment into mystery, is due to the nemesis of the Nothing. The One is not-Being as beyond Being, but it is not not-Being. The not-Being (τὸ μὴ ὄν) and the nothing (οὐδέν) are in this context but relative terms. There is no absolute nothingness. And, because there is none, the absolute principle is never free of its inability to *be* an account of that of which it is the principle.

Between the One and the immediacy of matter is the truly protean chain of being, an hierarchy that was easily taken over in another form by Judaism and Christianity in the chain of angels, archangels, and non-divine beings generally. Though the gulf between the One and Being is complete in Neoplatonism it has not the *absolute* character that obtains between God and Creation in Judeo-Christian belief. Neither is it *felt* to be so, because the idea of Creation cannot for Neoplatonism be absolutely primary. The difference in feeling is directly related to the way in which the idea of Creation enhances the uncertainty of worldly contingency. In the Greek cosmos change is an unchanging aspect of the lower forms of being. The lower the being the lesser is the degree of participation in the unchanging divine world where there are no cares. Homer depicts this beautifully in the gulf which separates the immortal gods from mortal men. The whole history of Greek philosophy is animated by the desire of men to participate in this divine world. The fulfillment of this desire in Greek philosophy is thought possible because the possibility that the contingent world might not exist is not brought into question. That things change and are, as changing, capable of not being is the focus of contingency. But that contingency *itself* might not be is not questioned. It is *assumed* that contingent being always exists: only the

particular instantiations of it change. Such a view is inherent in all forms of Greek philosophy. It is as much a part of the Presocratics, as of Plato, Aristotle, the Stoics, Epicureans, Sceptics, and Neoplatonists. What underlies this certainty of the eternity of the various forms of Being is the Greek certainty that essence is more primary than existence. What always persists and endures in the "that it is" (ἐστί) is the "what it is" (τὸ ἐστί),⁴⁶ and it is the freeing of the "what" from the "that" that is the moving spirit and motivation of Greek philosophy. To ground contingent being in necessary being and finally Being itself in the One does not for them mean that there is ever a time when Being is not.

IV

We can now see why the Judeo-Christian idea of Creation is so threatening to the Greek world-view and its self-understanding. The difference is striking. The gulf between Being and its principle is thrown into a completely *opposite* perspective. It becomes an abyss in which the "what it is" (τὸ ἐστί) persists and endures only so long as it does so in the "that it is" (ἐστί). Every grade of Being as the Greeks see it is now equally contingent in the most radical sense of Not-Being at all. Change is no longer a change of the "that it is" in which the "what it is" persists. The change here is equally essential *and* existential, not only existential as with the Greeks. We can understand this distinction more easily by considering the nature of the Judeo-Christian Creator. This God, like the different ultimate principles of Greek philosophy, exists necessarily, but, unlike them, he can and *has* existed alone. This uniqueness of existence is expressed by the fact that this God's primary characteristic is to interfere with, to directly act upon, his creation. He is not a νοῦς wholly caught up in his own self-contemplation, nor is he a One, who, far removed from the hurly-burly of finite life, exercises providence through endless intermediaries. Yahweh does not only interfere in wars or domestic disputes as a Zeus with a

view to rule. He actually considers the moral possibility, we might say contingency, of destroying all life on earth - of uprooting it completely and reducing it to its essence - to *Nothing*.⁴⁷ This is not a god, who, like Zeus, was *born* into a world already existing, but a god who *produced* the very world itself from *Nothing*.⁴⁸ This kind of ultimate interference means that the divine will is ultimate and, while it enhances the uncertainty and ambiguity of finite being, it also enhances the perennially longed for possibility of overcoming these finite inadequacies in a way more radical than can be found in the Greek purview. This enhancement occurs when the direct interference of Yahweh is transferred into a providence which is fundamentally *revelatory*. When God no longer assumes forms other than his own, as with the Greeks, nor disallows appearance absolutely, as with the Jews, but appears as he actually is in the person of Jesus and promises the lifting of the abyss between mortality and immortality, the struggle of the philosophers, which was always grounded in a love of wisdom that presaged immortality, seems to be assured. The "that it is" (ἐστί) is *finally* able to be primary throughout the cosmos. Life can take precedence over Being in that "we", each of us, is promised eternal life.⁴⁹ It is this *promise*, the fulfillment of the desire for the freedom of enlightenment which first motivated philosophy; the desire to be one with the source of being, which is the common animation of Greek metaphysics and Christian love. The perfectly innocent, unself-conscious way in which the λόγος is identified with Jesus in the Johannine theology⁵⁰ shows this common root. The fulfillment of philosophical struggle in revelation in the person of Jesus takes on the form of promise and the demand of faith. In this leap from philosophy to faith we are thrown back once again to the original situation of philosophy. Philosophy was fashioned out of Greek religion. The philosopher's quest was to make himself divine - to be one with the One or at least to achieve a contemplative state analogous to that of God. With Christianity God has made philosophy unnecessary by directly initiating this unity. But this anachronization

of philosophy in a religion in which saints need not philosophize is achieved only at a great cost. The price to be paid for divine *consolation* is an *ambiguity* and *uncertainty* about the eternity of the world and the consequent undermining of the Greek confidence in the power of reason. This about *turn*, presumed in the return of philosophy to religion, is the turn which we previously met in the change of feeling brought on by the change of focus from the idea of participation to the idea of creation. The price of love is the loss of philosophy in the loss of certainty about the world. The clearest indication of the immensity and novelty of the change is that in the Christian religion of fulfillment a need to prove the existence of God arises with an intensity never felt among the Greeks. *This is the decisive change* - a shift from trying to found the world in God to trying to found God Himself. This founding of God becomes the poignant effort of the soul to find God⁵¹ - an effort which yet again brings us to the fundamental phenomenon of return - the struggle of the soul to find its source, to regain its origin.

Although religion takes over philosophy, it demands from philosophy a more difficult task than philosophy had ever posed for itself - to *prove* the very existence of God. Upon this question everything literally depended. The proof of God's existence was the main pre-occupation of philosophy once it had been taken over by Christianity and sub-ordinated to the role of handmaiden to theology. In the new transition from the Greek to the Christian cosmos theology is transformed from first philosophy to the reasonable unravelling of revelation. Reason now has to take second place to Revelation. The Greek King is now handmaiden to the Christian Queen. Nevertheless, into her humble servant's hands is placed the most difficult ἀπορία of all - the question, never really considered in the Greek world because it was, along with Being, generally assumed, of God's existence. This radical question, the *question of questions*, at first takes on the familiar Greek dress of moving from effects to cause. We may see this genre of divine

proof fully developed by Aquinas in its various sub-divisions.⁵² It is the genre itself which is interesting; for it is basically the old logic of beginning with beings and returning to their source. The arguments themselves can be found in Plato⁵³ and Aristotle⁵⁴ but in a different context. There it was a matter of grounding an already existing world in an unquestionably existing principle. Here in the Christian cosmos the argument is to ground an unnecessary world in a questionably existing original principle. Now, under these *new* psychic conditions, the difficulty of beginning with the effects which are to be proved is apparent as *for the first time*. If what is to be proved is the basis for the proof of its principle, the principle *itself* becomes inextricably entwined into what it is, by definition, not necessarily entwined with. Ultimate cause, which is ultimate because independent of its effects, is now *dependent* for its *being* on the being of its effects. It is undoubtedly this logical elenchus which preyed on the astute mind of Anselm as he endeavoured to think through the central question of the Christian philosopher. He himself tells us of the mental anguish he went through in wanting to prove the ground of the revelation of God.⁵⁵ What he celebrated when the sudden flash of insight seemed to carry his cares away was a *new* proof which seemed not to depend on the being of the world but on the very being of God Himself. In the ontological proof of Anselm the certainty of worldly existence is *transferred* to that of divine existence. Now the being of God can be argued *without* relation to the being of the world as a necessity of the divine essence. The definition of God as "that than which nothing greater can be thought"⁵⁶ demands that God exist. Aquinas' assertion that God's essence is his existence⁵⁷ actually has its root in Anselm's insight despite the fact that Aquinas denies its validity. What worries Aquinas is the same logical doubt as occurs with the proofs which he himself accepts. This is the doubt generated by the fact that the conclusion of the proof is already in the premise. If the definition of God already demands existence then the absence of existence is already denied in the demand. In

the earlier cosmological forms of the proof the difficulty is to distinguish between cause and effect at all. The proof lodges in the *imagination*. This is why the various refutations of it always base their objections on the problem of existence as the assertion of imagination. Gaunilo's most beautiful islands⁵⁸ and Kant's hundred thalers⁵⁹ are examples. In other words God's existence seems to depend on the finitude of the human imagination rather than on the objectivity of existence. What has really occurred is that in the move from *cosmology to ontology* we have moved from *objectivity to subjectivity*. What causes a preference for the cosmological proof is a *feeling* that it is objective, that it does not depend on our thinking. What causes a preference for the ontological variety is the *feeling* that it is not limited by finite objectivity. The *contrariety* of these proofs has as its basis the similarity of logical form. Both are logically circular and so assume their goal. By this circularity of contrariety we have returned to the very ἀπορίαι which we sought to dislodge. We are compelled by our very being to want to return to our source, but we are still stymied because the nature of the principle we seek seems to be logically other than its effects. Our efforts to reach a knowledge of it seem destined by the limits of possibility.

We might be able to simply get around the blockage by appealing directly to the theory of scientific explanation. According to the method of science we may only "speculate" on the basis of verification or more precisely of falsification. We can try to cut down on improbability by increasing the occurrence of probability. In other words, although the possibility always exists that a theory could be proved wrong, since it depends for its proof on particular instances, the uninterrupted number of particular instances increases its likelihood of being verifiable. The reason that the cosmological explanations of the present are what we called "camouflaged metaphysics" is that they have for their subject matter, like theology, an "absolute" case. In each case the effort to establish an absolute, in this instance

the origin of the universe, on the basis of effects is bound to fail in so far as the paradox involved cannot be overcome. In fact, the ubiquity of this *paradox* is the fundamental reason why we asserted earlier that the drive for a cause to return to will always continue. It is the *existential* nature of this paradox that demands from us a *more* than scientific or religious perspective.

Metaphysics or secular theology never itself produced a scientific attitude because it had for its subject matter what was by definition *beyond* empirical verification. The nature of the νοῦς or One or Good as ultimate principles varies, but that each is beyond the confines of natural law was not questioned. Indeed the very fact that each was beyond the scope of natural law led to the very paradox that we have pointed out; namely, the impossibility of verifying either the effects through the cause or the cause through the effects. We could adopt the attitude of Parmenides that the world of motion - the effects - does not exist, or maintain with the Christian Church Fathers that it is produced out of nothing and, in a radical sense, is not. Equally we might adopt an Heraclitean stance and posit that there is only a world of motion, a kind of endless process - the modern world of relativity. That this ever changing world of becoming has been more recently adopted, as has science over religion, is the result of a shift from *metaphysics to epistemology*.

The ancient philosophers were never scientists in any modern sense, any more than were medieval theologians. The Greeks possessed advanced mathematical concepts and surprisingly accurate physical knowledge; for example, Eratosthenes posited a spherical planet and was able to measure mathematically the circumference of the earth with a high degree of accuracy.⁶⁰ Yet despite their advanced theoretical knowledge and empirical discoveries, the Greeks did not pursue science as we know it today. Experimental science was not something they can be said to have invented, although they were well aware of the difference between deduction and induction. Aristotle among others carried out a number of what we

might call "empirical" investigations. The way of modern technological life was open to the Greeks, yet we might just as well say it was a closed book to them - as closed as any can be. But why? This is a question which we well might pause over. The answer lies in the way in which the Greeks looked at the world. For them all roads must lead back to a first principle. The inductive method could not but be defective for them, for what they sought was *perfect* knowledge. Their whole world was grounded in *transcendence*. Every theoretical effort that they valued was an effort to transcend the finite, which was for them by its very nature, as a world of motion, insufficient and, in so far as it moved, valueless. If we are to understand this concentration on transcendence we must ever keep in mind the idea of changeless rest, the infinite immobility of Aristotle's νοῦς and the Platonic εἶναι. The Greek ideal was perfection. We can see it in their art, in the divine sculpture with a human form no longer human, which we can only gaze upon with awe as did Achilles when Athena, grasping his hair, made herself known to him.⁶¹ In the Greek statuary of the best period we have before us an ideal which transcends, like a luminous Platonic idea, any finite instantiation. The imperfect, like irrational numbers, was not something that truly interested the Greeks. It was certainly nothing to make a science out of. If we keep this clearly before us we can easily understand why it was that knowledge for the Greeks was the preserve of metaphysics, of that study of first principles which transcends the finite world of change and devotes itself to the contemplation of what cannot be experienced but only known. Expressed in this way Greek metaphysics cannot but cause a modern mind to wonder at its assurance of transcendence. This is because the modern mind has had, since the dawning of its day out of the sun-drenched stained glass of the Middle Ages, before its eyes, beyond all else, the question of *whether* and *how* we can know at all. This question replaced that of what is a sufficient first principle. And it is this *replacement* that should cause us, its heirs, to wonder anew. The Greeks were well aware of the difficulties of empirical knowledge. We

can experience this not only in the works of Plato and Aristotle, but also by studying the ancient sceptics, who developed the inadequacies of our sensible limits to a finer art than did ever Hume or Kant.⁶² Their conclusions, however, were not to limit knowledge or to aim at a smaller target of research. Rather they, in true Greek fashion, even questioned their own scepticism, thereby turning from knowledge altogether to a kind of inner passivity which partook of the world as if it were a dream. Like the Stoics and Epicureans, the Sceptics sought freedom from activity. The inability to know did not lead them to simply give up a transcendent world, but rather to give up the empirical world as being beneath any important or even possible notice. How unlike the modern scepticism of science is the ancient scepticism of ἐποχή and ἀταραξία.⁶³ The one is aloof, calm, and pas-sive, the other active, involved, committed fully not to a goal but to an activity.

While the ancients knew the inadequacy of empirical knowledge and, notwithstanding the sceptics, fled to the transcendent, the moderns also knowing its inadequacy do quite the opposite. Again, *why*? The clue is to be found in the distinction we have already considered between the need to find a final ultimate first cause and the desire to prove its existence. In each case the relation of the principle to finite being is one of cause and effect. But the two cases differ in their appraisal of the being of the terms of the relation. In Greek thinking the being of the two sides is assumed; in Christian thinking it is not. Not only must finite being be grounded but so must primal being. In each case the motivation is the same; a motivation springing from the desire to return to the source of being, to be one with the One or God. And in each the same paradox of circularity occurs. Despite the change of emphasis the assumption of cause and effect cannot be removed. Rather, in the move from Greek reduction to Christian proof, the *paradox* is strengthened and the assumption is intensified along with the anguish of a motivation blocked from bliss.

The ἀπορία or blockage that barred the Greek and Christian is *also* what lies at the root of modern life. It is not an ἀπορία that will go away but a paradox that is as *crucial* and yet as *hidden* as ever. What has occurred is that thinking has moved from finite being to infinite being to itself; from the Greek effort to transcend the everyday, to the Christian effort to ascend by providing the basis of proof, to the modern secular emphasis on self-limitation. The idea of self-limitation may at first seem untoward in the light of what appears as the increasing aggrandizement of nature by man to the point of introducing space travel, producing artificial intelligence, and modifying behaviour by conscious manipulation. However, this idea is easily understandable in the context of the shift from metaphysics to epistemology. In metaphysics the effort of thinking is *outwardly* centred on the nature of finite and infinite being. When this activity becomes questionable the only recourse is to try to uncover the blocked way of metaphysics. This can only be done by trying to get at its assumptions. The fundamental *assumption* of metaphysics is that the power of thinking is adequate to its object. And it is just this assumption which the circularity of proofs for God's existence must finally bring into *question*. A reversion to Greek objectivity does not alleviate the problem because, as we have shown, it is the problem which just arises with Greek objectivity that underlies the transition to Christian proof.

Thus it is the inadequacy of grounding the divine being as cause or existence that leads to questioning the whole enterprise by turning *inward*. For epistemology is really only this. It is a turning inward into self to examine the possibility of this self's being able to establish any certain relations with anything else, be it finite or infinite. Precisely what happens with Descartes is a first form of this effort of *self-examination*. His desire to doubt everything is the reverse side of his need to be certain. What he ends up with is really a kind of ontological proof of his own existence which has the peculiar result that God's existence depends on

his own.⁶⁴ Descartes actually falls into the same trap that we have seen over and over again, and which we will further trace to the present. His conclusion turns out to be his assumption. His idea of perfection, which he thinks must be due to a perfect being, includes existence.⁶⁵ Like Anselm he gets caught up in his imagination. In this lies a crucial pre-monition of the *modern* psyche for which the worlds of objectivity and subjectivity have no clear demarcation. Nevertheless, Descartes in turning inward charted a course the lines of which we can only *now* begin to see clearly. The subjective side of this self-examination took the form of ever more radical attempts to reduce the objective world to the life of a subject until, with the absolute idealism of Hegel, we have a universe of one, continually developing into itself. This infinite One, willing only itself, turns out to be only the will to will or, as Nietzsche claims to discover, only a sameness which becomes itself ad infinitum, a kind of reductio ad absurdum to self. The other side which arises out of Descartes' self-examination is an objective certainty in the guise of mathematical clarity. This objective side took the form of a diverse finite life which exhibited the ability to be reduced to calculation or an ideal form of the imagination. This idealization begins as the development of a method of investigative discovery. What we now call the "scientific method" was to inform all doubt with the proof of certainty. The uniformity of an absolute is here present in the eternal sameness of procedure. Here we have not a solipsism of being and will but of its possibility. Of course, the possibility is the possibility of our knowing. This possibility becomes the assumption of any science whatever. And this possibility depends for its certainty on the certainty no longer of metaphysics but of epistemology. The turn to epistemology becomes the turn from *speculation to empiricism*, the turn from knowledge as cause to knowledge itself. The turn is, as we shall see, really one of emphasis. The nature of knowledge as knowledge of cause is unimpaired, but the *context* of its limits has changed.

NOTES

27. Plato, *Phaedo*, 100c5.
28. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Book B, - for example, B.1. 995b4.
29. The Greek word θεωρία comes from the verb θεωριέω, to behold, or to look or gaze at; hence, the translation "contemplation". For Aristotle θεωρία was the highest activity possible. Our word "theory" is a direct transliteration of the Greek word, but its meaning and impact are for us immeasurably weaker. The reason is bound up with the difference between the Greek and modern cosmos - which difference is developed below.
30. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, A. 991a22.
31. Plato, *Laws*, X, 894c5.
32. Plato would have regarded the Good as the ultimate cause as he states in *Republic*, VI, 508e1-509a5. The Neoplatonists made much of the One of the *Parmenides* as, for example, where the One is denied being: *Parmenides*, 141c1-12.
33. The Neoplatonists are very definite about this. Proclus states it perfectly in his *Elements of Theology*, Prop. 115: "Every god is beyond Being and beyond Life and beyond Mind." (Πᾶς θεὸς ὑπερούσιός ἐστι καὶ ὑπέπζωος καὶ ὑπέρνους).
34. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, X. 8 and *Metaphysics*, Δ. 7. 1072b23-25. The contemplation Aristotle speaks of both in relation to the νοῦς and the philosopher is θεωρία.
35. The germ of this Hebraic idea is to be found in the second commandment (*Exodus*: 20,4) where God forbids his people to "carve idols for yourselves in the shape of anything in the sky above or on the earth below or in the waters beneath the earth." (New American Bible translation) This idea is further explicated in *II Macabees*: 7, 28 where a mother cries to her son: "I beg you, child: look up into the heaven and at the earth, and, seeing everything in them, know that God made these things out of beings that were not (ἐκ οὐκ ὄντων); even the race of men became in this way." In *Hebrews*: 11,3) Paul instructs: "We discern (νοοῦμεν) by faith that the eons (ἀιῶνας) were created by the word of God, and that the visible came into being through the invisible." When Christian theologians, intellectually submerged in the conceptual world of Greek philosophy, tried to think of this absolute difference between God and creation they had to think not only of a matter without form which was almost nothing, but had to take the radical step of making it out of nothing. We can see this in Augustine when he grapples with the question at the end of his *Confessions* where he says: "For you, Lord, made the world out of unformed matter; which as next to nothing, you made out of nothing: out of which you might make those great works which we sons of men wonder at." (*Book XII*, 8)
36. Aristotle mentions Plato's use of the one and the dyad in *Metaphysics*, A. 6, where he says the teaching is peculiar to Plato. He also discusses the principles in *Metaphysics*, M and N. J.N. Findlay in his book, *Plato: the Written and Unwritten Doctrines* (New York, 1974), treats the question of the one and the dyad at some depth as one of Plato's hidden doctrines.
37. Plato comes to this solution about not-Being chiefly in the *Sophist*: especially, see: 258b ff.
38. Plato, *Timaeus*, 49a5-6.
39. Aristotle effects this transition in the middle books of the *Metaphysics*: Z and Θ.

40. Each of these words in Greek can correspond to "essence". Εἶδος as "form" and ἰδέα as "idea" are chiefly Platonic. Οὐσία and τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι are chiefly Aristotelian. Aristotle commonly uses οὐσίς for "substance" as well as essence, and, indeed, in his thought there is a bias in favour of form. We can see this both in his contention that νοῦς, as primary οὐσία, is without ὕλη or δύναμις, and in his coinage of the phrase τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι, which means "the to be what it was." The idea in this coinage is that the essence persists through time and change.

41. Aristotle grapples with matter throughout his speculative work. This is because he recognizes it as on the one hand a cause and as on the other hand a kind of indeterminateness which is other than actuality. This is a dilemma which lies at the heart of Greek experience. We can see the philosophical dilemma in Aristotle when he finds he can only define substance (οὐσία) in the *Categories* (2a11-12) as neither predicable of a subject nor present in a subject (ἢ μήτε καθ' ὑποκειμένον τινὸς λέγεται μήτε ἐν ὑποκειμένῳ τινί ἐστιν). The obvious implication is that οὐσία is ὑποκείμενον; that substance is a subject. This is borne out by Aristotle's contention that substance has no contrary (ἐναντίον - *Categories*, 3b24). For Aristotle this is crucial because it means that οὐσίς, while remaining one and the same, can receive or admit of contraries (*Categories*, 4a10-11). When Aristotle is wrestling with the problem of change, he speaks of matter (ὕλη) in the same way as a ὑποκείμενον (*Metaphysics*, . 3.1029a20 ff.) whose very indeterminateness makes it the ὑποκείμενον of οὐσία! Aristotle immediately takes this back as being unable to account for separateness (τὸ κωριστόν) and "thisness" (τὸ τόδε τι); for separateness and thisness are tied up with the Greek insistence on an invisible immaterial world, which Plato first explicated with his theory of ideas as more real than their material copies. Aristotle, while not accepting Plato's theory as accurate, is just as consumed with transcending becoming, which he sees as the infection of form by matter. Aristotle's effort to get beyond matter to a νοῦς without matter *submerges* the problem of how matter as pure potentiality (δύναμις) - an equivalence which Aristotle implies in trying to make the transition in *Metaphysics* from φύσις to νοῦς - can *be* at all. To say that it is never by itself without form does not solve the problem; it merely exacerbates it. Ὑλη is for Greek speculation what Μοῖρα (Fate) was for Greek poetry; a hidden nemesis ever waiting to crack the perfect glass.

42. Αἴσα is the goddess of Fate and more or less interchangeable with the goddess Μοῖρα. Both are from verbs which mean to "share". Homer has Hera chide her husband, Zeus, when he thinks to put off the fated death of his son, Sarpedon (*Iliad*, XVI, 431-461).

43. Achilles in a memorable conversation with his goddess mother, Thetis, speaks of the inevitability of his fate to die when he kills Hector, and of his acceptance of it (*Iliad*, XVIII, 94-126).

44. Odysseus sacrifices sheep so that their dark blood may run into the pit Circe has bid him dig that he may speak with the souls (ψυχάϊ) of the dead (*Odyssey*, XI, 20-50).

45. Heidegger makes much of this formula in his *Einführung in die Metaphysik* (*Introduction to Metaphysics*) (Tübingen, 1966): "Warum ist überhaupt Seiendes und nicht vielmehr Nichts?" We must stress that, however much Heidegger might like to take this question back into what he thinks to be the original Presocratic ground, the question is *his* question - a "modern" question arising out of Christian and post-Christian experience trying to recapture pre-Christian experience.

46. That the Greeks were well aware of the distinction between what we may call "essence" and "existence" can be seen in their very language. Aristotle makes the distinction already in *Metaphysics*, E. 1. 1025b18. What is crucial is the way in which they tried to reconcile the distinction in favour of τι ἔστι.

47. God says to Noah in *Genesis*: 6, 13: "I have decided to put an end to all mortals on earth; the earth is full of lawlessness because of them. So I will destroy them and all life on earth." (New American Bible translation)

48. See above, note 35.

49. Jesus stresses over and over again in the gospels the message of the promise of life eternal. A particularly beautiful story is of his conversation with the woman at Jacob's well who, having had five husbands, was living with a man to whom she was not married. He promises her "a spring of water welling up to eternal life." (*John: 4-15*) (Revised Standard Version translation)
50. Especially, see *John: 1, 1-14*; and *I John: 1, 1*.
51. The best way to understand the struggle of the Christian soul to find its consolation by achieving union with God is through the literature of the great Christian mystics; especially that of the medieval period. Of particular interest are the works of St. Teresa of Ávila and St. John of the Cross. The latter's idea of "the dark night of the soul" (*noche oscura del espíritu*) perfectly expresses the poignancy of Christian experience.
52. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae, Ia,2,3*.
53. Plato, *Laws, X*.
54. Aristotle, *Metaphysics, Book II (α)*.
55. Anselm, *Proslogion, Pooemium* (Preface).
56. Anselm, *Proslogion, Chapter II, Quod vere sit deus* (That God truly is).
57. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae, Ia,3,4*.
58. Gaunilo, *Quid ad haec respondeat quidam pro insipiente* (Reply to the foregoing by a certain writer on behalf of the fool), *Section 6*, in: *St. Anselm's Proslogion with A Reply on Behalf of the Fool by Gaunilo and the Author's Reply to Gaunilo*, Latin text and English trans., M.J. Charlesworth, Oxford, 1965.
59. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason, A597/B625*.
60. For an account of how Eratosthenes arrived at his measurement of the earth's circumference see: G. Sarton, *A History of Science, Vol. II - Hellenistic Science and Culture in the Last Three Centuries B.C.: Chapter VI, Geography and Chronology in the Third century, Eratosthenes of Cyrene, esp. pp. 103-106*. Cambridge, MA. 1959.
61. Homer, *Iliad, Book I, ll. 196-200*.
62. The ancient sceptics are best represented by Sextus Empiricus in his *Πυρρώνειοι ὑποτυπώσεις* (*Outlines of Pyrrhonism*). The most convenient edition is that edited by R.G. Bury in the Loeb Classical Library series.
63. Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism, Chapter IV (Δ), What Scepticism Is*.
64. René Descartes, *Meditationes de prima philosophia, Second Meditation*.
65. René Descartes, *Meditationes de prima philosophia, Third Meditation*..

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