

Chapter 9

From the Nineteenth to the Twentieth Century

9.1 Materialism; the Secular Revolution

It was for a long time customary to give but short shrift to the materialism of the mid-1800's. It was, said professional philosophers, not philosophical enough, not scientific enough, too trite and vulgar to be taken seriously. We can now see, from a slightly greater distance, that it was in fact the revolutionary movement of the time. It could possibly be said that it has been the nineteenth century's weightiest bequest to us, the most difficult to fight, however unpalatable that might be to scientific philosophy. The question is how such a wide spectrum of thought could be affected by materialistic theory and how materialism can be overcome. The answer must be so basic that it is irrefutable, and so simple and clear that it is evident to the man in the street—an eminently philosophical problem. The philosopher fails not only when he is too popular, but also when he is too sophisticated. In what follows we propose to divide our treatment into the dialectical materialism of the Hegelian left and so-called “scientific materialism”.

The Materialism of the Hegelian Left

The Hegelian left wasted no time in turning Hegel's idealism into materialism. They extracted a part of the whole and developed it to the exclusion of the rest of the system. It was bad philosophy (was it philosophy at all?) because they engaged less in scientific thought than in journalism, politics and propaganda. They were inadvertently guilty

of some level of philosophically constructive reflection, but to refer to them as philosophers or to their output as a proper system is ludicrous. They regarded philosophy not as a primary challenge, a search for truth for truth's sake, but as a means to a higher end. This must be borne in mind by anyone approaching their writings. Even so central a concept as materialism was more a symbol of their political determination and a slogan for use against their political opponents than an impartially investigated philosophical principle. Their materialism was one of class warfare and had no use for philosophy apart from philosophy's tactical contribution by way of words and ideas. The same was true of the materialism of the French Enlightenment, which influenced them more than Hegel did, although they pretended their own version was far superior to crude Enlightenment materialism. The difference, however, was not great.

Ludwig Feuerbach (1804–72) was perhaps, of all nineteenth century materialists, the one with the strongest pretensions to strictly philosophical method. He sent Hegel a dissertation, but wrote on it that the “self” of the Christian God must be dethroned. Later, when his thought had gained in clarity, he referred to “that nonsense, an Absolute”. He rejected the theory that reality was posited by Mind, that concepts mediated reality, and said that only the sensible world existed because the mind was formed by the body and “man is what he is”. The prime datum of consciousness was neither God nor being, but sense-experience, as sensualism and materialism had always taught. If one insisted on referring to a deity, it was none other than man himself: The State existed to minister to his needs. It was the “content of reality” and “man's providence”. Feuerbach was the harbinger of Marx, whose *Theses on Feuerbach* (1845) end with his famous slogan, “Philosophers have hitherto only interpreted the world in various ways, the point is to change it.”

According to Karl Marx (1818–83), the prime factor of worldly reality was matter, not Mind as Hegel had stated. Matter was decisive. All conceptual entities like morality, law, religion and culture were epiphenomena of matter. Because Marx accepted the dialectic, he was still a Hegelian, but “tilted at an angle”, to use his own phrase. He added something to Feuerbach's materialism: his own version was to be “practical”. It was not enough to analyse the world as it was: one had to describe it as it should be. Feuerbach and the other early Hegelians had remained at the level of the existing world. All they had done, virtually, was to reinterpret it (in a materialist framework); they had not in any way altered it. They had failed to see that even materiality was a product of human

activity. Man's relation to the world was not one of passive receptivity. Feuerbach had said that man is what he is; Marx retorted that this was the sentiment of the well-fed bourgeois. Everything was the historical product of common human activity. Sense-perception and the great intellectual systems of man were equally the result of social—in particular industrial—relations. The handmill resulted in feudal society, the steam mill in industrial and capitalist society, in both cases with the corresponding spiritual and intellectual super-structure. In other words, philosophy, religion, art, culture, on Marx's theory, lost their traditional social and human justification, and became instead epiphenomena reflecting their material causes. There was no inquiry into the world as it was in itself. "It does not require any very extraordinary insight to appreciate that man's ideas, views and conceptions, in a word, his consciousness, alters with every change in his material existence, social relationships and social life generally. The history of ideas proves that intellectual production changes with material production. The ruling ideas of any age are always the ideas of its rulers."

This made Marx the father of historical materialism (although he did not use that term himself). And it also made him a perpetual revolutionary, with a basis in Hegel: becoming is eternal, opposites continually clash. However eternal becoming would cease with the classless society, when capitalism and the proletariat, those alienations of man, were overthrown and man had come to a new paradise. It is obvious here that Marx was not indulging in philosophy proper: his aims were political, not metaphysical. And it was almost foregone that the system would turn out atheistic. Religion was "the heart of a heartless world" and "the opium of the people", to quote a famous passage. Dialectical materialism (to use a convenient term as representative of many different thinkers) did not in theory reject metaphysics. But in fact, because the significance of "being" was determined by man's active practical intervention, no science of being was possible. Marxism (again to use a convenient term) could properly be called nominalism (dialectical, if one likes) or even decretalism, that is, ordained from on high, as if Marx has papal authority; this would be an accurate description.

Marx and Friedrich Engels (1820–95) enjoyed a lifelong collaboration. Engels' philosophy is hardly distinguishable from Marx's, except in so far as he seems to have concentrated more on dialectical materialism, Marx on historical materialism.

Ultimately the main exponent of the materialism of the Hegelian left was Lenin (1870–1924). Regarding Marx's and Engels' philosophy as

a single theory, he made it his own and claimed to represent orthodox Marxism. He opposed the alleged subjectivist individualism of Ernst Mach, Richard Avenarius, and their Russian followers. Against them Lenin defended “objectivity” and identified the “objective” or “real” with matter. In this he was a naive realist, because he believed that the scientific description of reality was a copy in the sense of a quasi-photographic reproduction. Lenin’s confession of realism aroused a half-astonished, half-laudatory reaction in realists of other persuasions. In the *Philosophical Notebooks*, however, the concept of matter is ambiguous. Lenin saw that what is usually called “matter” is perhaps less the object of the senses than the object of thought, and so could well be the product of an intellectual process. Commentators have often therefore distinguished a philosophical and a physical concept of matter in Lenin. By the latter is meant that which is extended or accessible to sense-experience (the materialists of the Enlightenment had used it in this sense), by the former that which is indeterminate in the sense in which Aristotle (to whom Lenin explicitly refers) used the word (as in “prime matter”); this latter, in the mind of other naive realists, was a point in Lenin’s favour. As a matter of fact, Lenin’s writings on the subject of matter did the “official” concept no good, because they threatened to turn matter into the goal and product of semi-spiritual (!) functions. This is why appeal to the *Philosophical Notebooks* by Soviet officials is so infrequent. The Russian leaders need not in fact worry: Lenin was saying nothing more than Marx when the latter proposed a practical materialism and subordinated sense-experience, the object of which was supposed to be extended matter, to factors arising out of the relations of labour in society. Lenin’s theories are equally pragmatic—“Marx and Engels were biased from start to finish”, he once wrote.

The final authoritative summary of Marxism-Leninism was offered by Joseph Stalin (1879–1953). It was a concise account of historical and dialectical materialism, originally intended as part of the Party history, but then published separately and distributed to the people. It treated the subject under three headings: the significance of the dialectic, the concept of dialectical materialism as a philosophy of being, and the concept of dialectical materialism as a philosophy of history. Dialectic was explained as follows: nature is a whole; everything in it is organically bound up with everything else and can be understood only as part of the whole. Being is in a state of continual development from lower to higher, simpler to more complex forms. Insignificant and unseen quantitative changes lead ultimately to qualitative changes. These suddenly break up,

in accordance with the law of inner contradiction which, in the style of the Hegelian dialectic, demands the emergence of their opposites. Dialectical materialism was explained as follows: reality is constituted not by Mind or consciousness, but by matter exclusively, and matter follows its own laws established by the dialectical method. Being is also matter. Consciousness is a derived or secondary form of reality. "Thinking is a product of matter whose evolution has reached an advanced stage"; it is also "a product of the brain", and "thought cannot therefore be separated from matter without the gravest error."

Without noticing it, Stalin here abandoned the main lines of dialectical thought. Matter as he described it was the physical stuff of vulgar materialism. The old materialists, from Hobbes to Holbach, had unanimously taught that thought could not be separated from its material base and that thought was a product of matter (in particular the brain). Stalin adopted their language exactly: for him, dialectic did not describe the laws of matter; it laid them down, because, being a necessary mental methodology, it was logically prior to matter. If matter had any laws of its own at all, they were purely mechanical. This was clearly understood in official Soviet philosophy, but then (1931, 1947) proscribed because the slogan "dialectical materialism", which had meanwhile come into favour, could not be changed. The initial attempt to go beyond the primitive physical concept of matter by applying human, social or other considerations, as we find it in Marx and Lenin, was abandoned by Stalin. Even for Marx and Lenin, however, the ideological propagandist implications of the word matter (drawn from the French Enlightenment) were more evident than the philosophical implications. In consequence Stalin based the philosophy of history on metaphysics and so derived historical materialism from dialectical materialism. "Historical materialism", he wrote, "is the extension of the theses of dialectical materialism to the investigation of social life . . . and to the history of society." "One will consequently look for the key to the investigation of the laws of social history not in men's heads . . . but in the means of production . . . in the economy of society." But then, as Marx had maintained against Feuerbach, mind precedes matter. And surely mathematical formulae and the laws (principles of identity and contradiction) and basic concepts (identity, difference, equality, unity etc.) of logic are prior to everything material? Is this not necessary if we are to be able to see and handle matter? Much more besides could be adduced. But mathematics and logic are enough to disprove the materialist proposition that all thought is a product of matter. Finally, we must again point out that Marx and Lenin only partially resorted to dialectic and Stalin not at all.

Scientific Materialism

The Hegelian left received considerable support from so-called “scientific materialism”. This was a branch of thought that emerged in the nineteenth century parallel to the Hegelian left and was more often than not proposed by natural scientists. For myself, their endeavours simply go to show that if scientists are not sufficiently alert to the limits of their discipline (whatever it may be), they too easily run the risk of mistaking the part—the study of physical phenomena and their causes—for the whole—reality—and of equating being with bodiliness. Many scientists today are keenly aware of this danger, but a group of particularly vociferous writers of the last century were not. We may mention R. Vogt, who wrote *Physiological Letters* (1845) and a polemical treatise called *Blind Faith and Science* (1854), J. Moleschott, who wrote *Rotation of Life* (1852), L. Buchner, the author of *Force and Matter* (1855), and H. Czolbe, who was responsible for a *New Account of Sensualism* (1855). For these scientists the world was force and matter. If the word God has any meaning at all, they said, it refers to this corporeal world, and the spirit or soul was (if conceded to exist) a function of the brain. For none of them did it exist in its own right. They all spoke about reason or understanding as distinct from sense-perception, but the distinction was one of quantity, not quality. Their concept of matter was naive. Matter, for them, was what man could directly perceive with his senses. It was apparently beyond their powers of critique to consider whether there was a specifically human contribution in sense knowledge. Materialism, then, dialectic or no dialectic, is ordinary naive sensualism. Both sorts of materialism are therefore monistic. The observer will not be deceived by the sophisticated vocabulary: “new qualities”, “higher layers” and so forth. Pluralism is possible only if the higher forms of life do not automatically (whether mechanically or dialectically makes no difference) proceed from earlier stages but somehow come “from without”, as Aristotle so accurately and splendidly expressed it.

Monism is even more evident in a second wave of materialism of which E. Haeckel (1834–1919) and W. Ostwald (1853–1932) were the main representatives. Haeckel did much to spread Darwinism in Germany, although it was a more radical version than Darwin’s own. Charles Darwin (1809–82) shattered the universal convictions of millennia on the unalterability of species (polyphyletic pluralism) by proposing the evolution of all species from a single cell (monophyletic evolution) in his *Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* (1859), and in his other great work on *The Descent of Man* (1871) he expressly included

the human species. However, he contrived to hold that the primitive organisms from which everything else was derived were the product of divine creative activity. Haeckel, on the other hand, thought the world was eternal, that life emerged by itself (spontaneous generation), and that the various species, man not excepted, descended mechanically from the primal organisms. Man's immediate forebears were the primates. Hence the catchphrase: "man is descended from the apes". If a little more critical and accurate thought had been given to the question, things might have been different. The theorists should have been more nuanced. But they jumped straight from matter to spirit, ultimately because their monistic presuppositions identified the two. Haeckel's theories have been propounded almost universally in Marxist assemblies and the German paper *Forwards* wrote: "Voltaire's contribution to the French Revolution should be applied, *mutatis mutandis*, to Ernst Haeckel. He prepared the German Revolution."

9.2 Kierkegaard; Christian Subversion

The upheavals Marx sought in political life Søren Kierkegaard (1813–55) sought in the Christian life. He threw the old, the outworn, the fake overboard and called on Christians to evolve a new life-style. His early thought was stamped with a motif that was to remain with him all his life: action not theory, commitment not detachment. There was no sense, said Kierkegaard, in amassing vast amounts of knowledge just for the sake of it. The purpose of life was to perceive the truth, to enter into oneself and *exist*. "What I needed to do was live a complete life, not one of theory only, and if I succeeded I knew my conceptual development would be based on something . . . which, together with the deepest roots of my existence, with which so to speak I grew into the divine, would cling to God, even if the whole world should collapse about my ears."

He therefore challenged men to live fully, to *exist*. Kierkegaard's notion of existence did not yet carry the full weight of meaning attached to it by modern existential philosophy, but it was not far off. Existentialists frequently refer back to Kierkegaard. By existence he meant the uniqueness of the personal self and its decisions. There man is totally alone, and no theories, laws or concepts can avail to incorporate his activity into a higher unity, as Hegel would have wanted. "All talk of a higher unity designed to reconcile absolute opposites is a metaphysical attack on ethics." A second key idea in Kierkegaard's philosophy was that man needed courage to take an existential jump into *paradox*. "The history of

individual life is a continual movement from state to state. Each of these states is reached by taking a leap.” And in fact if theories and ideas are no use in pointing out our way, only the jump remains. This implies freedom, dread and nothingness. These are concepts we still associate with Existentialists today. In Kierkegaard’s mind they were explicit antidotes to Hegelianism, which, as he thought, had nothing to say on individual life, however much it pretended to, but remained at the level of the abstract because for Hegel an idea was as abstract as it was for Schelling. Kierkegaard therefore demanded paradox instead of reason. Individuality had long been said to be inexpressible. Hegel wanted to say it, but he did not manage to get beyond universality. Closely connected with the idea of paradox was faith. Kierkegaard developed a somewhat oversubtle idea of faith as an obedience to God demanding the suspension of human reason. A paradox is not only something hard to understand, but humanly speaking something not understandable at all. Kierkegaard described this concretely in his analysis of Abraham’s sacrifice. Again here he rejected Hegel’s rationalization of religion, which turned religion into philosophy and so, in Kierkegaard’s opinion, abolished it altogether.

It is not surprising under these circumstances that Kierkegaard waxed eloquent against the official religion of his country at the time, the Protestant Church of Denmark, and finally broke with it. He appealed for a new Christianity, for “ministers who can separate people from the crowd and give them back their individuality; ministers who do not rely so much on study and who want nothing less than to rule; ministers who are as rich in silence and endurance as they are in eloquence; ministers who are as learned in refraining from judgement as in knowing the human heart; ministers who can wield authority and make sacrifices; ministers who are ready and trained to obey and to suffer so that they can soothe, exhort, edify, move and also compel—not with force, far from it, but with their own obedience—and patiently minister to the sick without losing their temper . . . the human race is sick and, spiritually, sick unto death.”

If one turns to the ascetic writings of the Church and reads in the sources what is demanded of the faith and its priests, one realizes that Kierkegaard was saying nothing new. His only contribution was an affected dialectic and an over-cultivated literary-aesthetic form that bordered on schizophrenia. His influence, however, was wide and disturbing, and his lead has been followed by many up to today, particularly in dialectical theology and existentialism.

9.3 Nietzsche; the Revaluation of Value

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) is the third subversive thinker of the nineteenth century. Like Marx and Kierkegaard, he noted the decline of the bourgeois-Christian world and looked for new horizons. But he seems never to have bothered very much with Marx, and he began to read Kierkegaard only late in life. On top of that he regarded the former as too vulgar and the latter as too Christian. He preferred to think of himself as the great lone wolf, the most radical of thinkers, a turning-point of history. “My name will be connected with the memory of some huge event, a crisis such as the world has never known . . . I contradict as no one has ever contradicted before . . . When truth battles with the lie of millennia, there is a convulsion, an earthquake, a meeting of valley and mountain such as has never been dreamed of.” The event that was Nietzsche has not, however, proved quite so cataclysmic. There was more wind than substance. According to Heidegger, Nietzsche was still hung up on the old metaphysics; he was not the nihilist he wanted to be; and the wholly new, the forgotten, the disguised, being itself, came to light only with Heidegger. Was this perhaps the result of Nietzsche’s philosophical self-crucifixion: that although he did not usher in, at least he announced the earthquake, the wholly new?

The development of Nietzsche’s thought

In his early period, Nietzsche fought for a new educational ideal, the aesthetic-heroic image of man whose prototypes he saw in the tragedies of the pre-Socratic age of Greece, in Heraclitus, Theognis and Aeschylus. To this period belong his *The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music* (1871), and the unpublished essays on *The Future of our Educational Institutions* (1870–2), parts of which found their way into the four *Untimely Meditations* (1873–6) on David Friedrich Strauss, Schopenhauer as an educationalist, the advantages and disadvantages of history in life, and Richard Wagner at Bayreuth. As these titles show, Nietzsche was strongly influenced at this time by Schopenhauer’s philosophy and Wagner’s vision; severing his connection with Wagner later on was all the more painful. In his second period (1878–82), he underwent a sudden transition to pure theory, and became what he called “a man of learning”; in other words he gave up his lectureship and restricted his activities to writing. This period saw his (conventional) attack on metaphysics, praise of free-thinking, and belief in the law of nature and its causal determination. The reader of Nietzsche’s works at this time could be

forgiven for mistaking him for a writer of the French Enlightenment. He became what he had before abhorred: an intellectual and a Socratic. His works included *Human, All Too Human* (1878), *Daybreak* (1881) and *The Gay Science* (1882). Then the motifs of his earlier period re-asserted themselves, and in a more radical form, as the “will to power”. This concept predominated in his third period, principally in *Thus Spake Zarathustra* (1883–5). *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886) and *The Genealogy of Morals* (1887) were also published at this time. In this later work, and in the *Will to Power* (1884–8, published posthumously), he expressed his theories on the reversal of traditional values to be engineered by the Superman, heralded by Zarathustra and symbolized by Dionysus. Nietzsche’s insanity began in 1889 and is evident in his last works, *The Anti-Christ* and *Ecce Homo*.

Down with Morality, up with Life

Nietzsche was happy to be thought an immoralist. He wanted to live “beyond good and evil”: a not unusual phenomenon. But he was not really an immoralist, because his intention was to replace traditional morality—idealistic, eudaemonistic, Christian, bourgeois-German, as he thought it—with the morality of life. This aimed at revaluing values. To that extent Nietzsche’s whole philosophy was an ethic. The question is what he meant precisely by “life”, and, if the truth be told, his writings are far from clear on the subject. He was at pains to distinguish his own concept from that of the British, eudaemonists all, according to him, intent only on achieving the maximum happiness. But beyond that, he succeeded only in wrapping himself up in words. Life, he said, was the will to power. This he repeated in scores of different ways. But what was the will to power? There is good and bad power. Nietzsche said he meant the power of rulers, of the aristocracy, of big men. Traditional morality was the preserve of slaves, of the weak. It was the feeble who had praised love, compassion and submission, and called the strong evil. Their morality expressed their envy of men with more in life than themselves. Was lordship then something merely biological or physical, a muscular superiority? No. It was the life-style of Superman, a unique quality. “The Superman lies close to my heart, *he is* my paramount and sole concern—and not man: not the neighbour, the poor, the greatest sufferers, the best.” “God has died. Now we want the Superman to live.” What was meant by Superman? It is not enough to repeat the word without analysing more closely what actually constitutes the Superman and

raises him even above the level of the rulers and aristocracy. Superman is he who gives the world its law. What law? The law which offers new values. What are these values?

Here Nietzsche goes several times round the mulberry bush. Instead of giving some account of the new values and explaining how man's life might be modelled on them, he merely repeats that the Superman is a race apart, lives his own life, possesses an abundance of strength, beauty and courage, culture and good manners, has no need of moral imperatives because he can afford to do without, stands beyond good and evil, etc. The reader looking for eloquence of written speech will be satisfied; the reader looking for solid ideas is more than likely to be sadly disappointed. There is another idea of Nietzsche's: "eternal occurrence", but that expresses not a value but the nature of existence as a process ruled by fate. "My formula to express man's greatness is *amor fati*." Man's constant attempt to fight down the pessimism and intractability of life will transform him into a Superman. If fate, however, were the overriding principle of life, all reference to values would be meaningless. Even the Superman would be meaningless, because he, after all, is a concept of *value*: strong men *should* strive after his ideal. "One's aim should be to prepare a revaluation of values for a particularly strong kind of man, highly gifted both in intellect and will, and therefore gradually to free in him a whole gamut of instincts so far repressed." Did Nietzsche really know what he wanted? Was he a philosopher, or just a writer? Would this explain his influence on many musical, non-philosophical minds?

Germanity and Christianity

Nietzsche was loud, and abusive, in his attacks on Germanity and Christianity. "I want to be known as the despiser of everything German." "Germany is coextensive with the ruin of culture." "The Germans are quite oblivious of how low they are." Sentiments like these could be multiplied with no difficulty. Their tenor is universal, but in fact Nietzsche meant only the Germans of his time—another proof of the shallowness of much of his writing. His objections to Christianity were even more forceful: "The God on the cross is the curse of life." "I call Christianity a great curse, a great inner corruption ... a great stain on humanity" etc. There are, as always in Nietzsche, statements giving a completely opposite point of view—another proof that he must not always be taken too seriously. His writings have even been perused for a hidden theory of

being, God and genuine Christianity. Heidegger interpreted his statement “God is dead” in the sense that Nietzsche did not deny God but was looking for him. Nietzsche’s undistinguished successors seem to go a stage further than their master, to their detriment; what in the master was still of some interest becomes insipid in the disciples.

Nietzsche in the Twentieth Century

Nietzsche has suffered much at the hands of his interpreters. Despite its extensive talk of interpretation, our own age has little understanding of him. Its only concern is to explain *itself*, instead of giving a faithful and unbiased commentary on the text as it stands and as it was intended by the author. Commentators take a couple of ideas and use them to paint the victim in their own colours. There has been a whole series of Nietzsche interpreters. E. Bertram has given a George-style interpretation in terms of aesthetics and music. A. Baeumler prepared him for popular consumption under National Socialism. K. Jaspers turns him into a failed existentialist philosopher of his own persuasion. M. Heidegger appeals to him for support in denying everything philosophy had so far achieved because it was concerned only with beings, not being. All this and much more has been read into Nietzsche. And I suppose the process is not over yet, as long as commentators refuse to interpret scientifically and as long as they are happy to use Nietzsche as the springboard from which to rise to heights of fame themselves.

9.4 Phenomenalism and Variants

We are on *terra firma* again with phenomenism, which as its name implies based its inquiries on perceptible and verifiable phenomena. Since Kant, metaphysics had declined, ethics had been empiricized and the intelligible, on which Kant had placed so much emphasis, completely forgotten. In phenomenism it was only the Kant of the critique of experience who lived on. From the many variations, we shall single out the positivist, empiricist and Neo-Kantian trends.

French and German Positivism

The father of French positivism was Auguste Comte (1798–1857). He coined the watchword of the movement by proposing the positively given as the sure basis of all scientific knowledge. By “positively given” he

meant what appears to and is perceptible by the senses. The critical mind dare not rely on anything else. Unfortunately mankind had not always realized this. There had been a long development. Comte distinguished three stages (in the so-called “law of three states”): theological, metaphysical and positive. The first was the period in which men ascribed natural events to superior personified powers (fetishism, polytheism and monotheism). In the second, men talked in terms of abstractly conceived powers, essences, inner natures, forms, ideas and so forth. Men were still uncritical, because they persisted in living in a world of fiction. They did not recognize the nature and purpose of science until the third period. Then it was that they concentrated exclusively on the “directly given”, which constituted and exhausted reality. The idea was to extract from the examined phenomena the constant factor (or scientific concept, as it was called), and then study the regular sequence of events, thus arriving at scientific laws. In other words, for Comte the purpose of philosophy and science was to investigate laws not causes, the how not the why of human phenomena. The concept of positive data was intended to be a principle of science, but it was not in fact. Alleged data contain much that is not given. The claim that only phenomena could be classed as real is actually a metaphysical statement, although that was not recognized before neo-positivism. Comte also opted for a “positive” religion, with its own sacraments, feast-days and ceremonies. Its God was humanity. Another important French positivist Jean-Marie Guyau (1854–88), however, specifically rejected all religion and metaphysics as distractions from positive data. His prime interest was in ethics. Ethics, he said, had nothing to do with duty or other supra-sensory values, but dealt with life in society. Man just was a member of society for no particular reason and therefore stood “beyond good and evil”. Guyau has been called the French Nietzsche. He agreed with Nietzsche in so far as the concept of life was a central one. He influenced modern vitalism, especially Bergson.

German positivism also concentrated on sense-data, on the “realities of experience”, denied the usefulness of metaphysics, advocated the ideals of evolution and progress, and replaced religion with science, art and sociology. As opposed to the universal ideal of experience of other positivisms and empiricisms, it stressed the critique of theoretical knowledge. R. H. L. Avenarius (1843–96) called his system “empiriocriticism”, arguing that scientific philosophy should consist of purely descriptive accounts of experience, purged of metaphysics. A similar view was advocated by E. Mach (1838–1916), most notably in his

The Analysis of Sensations. Mach argued that there are only sensations (which he called “elements”) and that both things and selves are constructed out of these elements. This view was later attacked by Lenin in his 1909 book *Materialism and Empiriocriticism*, directed at Avenarius, Mach, and their Russian followers (Bazarov, Bogdanov, Yushkevich, Valentinov, and Chernov), claiming that it is merely reheated Berkeley. Under German positivists we may also include E. Laas (1837–85) and W. Schuppe (1836–1913).

British and German Empiricism

That British empiricism could hold its own in the nineteenth as well as eighteenth century is understandable. It was, so to speak, the philosophy of common sense. Who would not want to base knowledge and science on experience? British empiricism remained unchanged as the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had shaped it. Kant had hoped to improve it by steering the phenomena of experience into strictly pre-established channels with his *a priori* forms. But nineteenth century empiricism would have none of it. It was determined to stake all on reality as it could be seen and touched. And its success was enormous. Many philosophers, some of them from very different traditions, agreed with its main lines and stated that we think realistically and empirically. It is a curious thing that Mill, Spencer, the Positivists, Lenin and the Neo-Thomists could all rally to the empirical standard. It says something for the power of words.

John Stuart Mill (1806–73) based all science on the perceptions of the moment. Only they were positively given. There were no such things as objective essences, or timeless authorities, or *a priori* structures and activities in the mind. All science had to do was work on the material provided by experience, not by respecting *a priori* rules, but by abiding by what experience threw up. In other words, science was purely inductive. For Mill induction was the key word. He wrote a *Logic* using it as his base. The book set out to explain how one could get beyond direct perception: after all, one could not stay at the level of the individual reality, but must proceed to the universal and the predictable. Hume had found this a problem years before, and had tried to solve it with his laws of association. Mill tried another line, taking a certain method of scientific reasoning and developing it into a general theory of knowledge. The concern of his *System of Logic*, as its full title (*System of Logic Ratiocinative and Inductive Being a Corrected View of the Principle of Evidence and the Methods of Scientific Investigation*) suggests, was the

basis of scientific demonstration and research. Whether the new method of science as proposed by Mill really stemmed ultimately from Hume is debatable. The same may be said of Mill's ethics. Mill propounded a utilitarianism just as if Kant had never existed. The Greatest Happiness Principle stated that the measure of right and wrong was "the greatest happiness of the greatest number". Mill owed this idea to Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832), a friend of his father and founder of the English Utilitarian School.

The other important empiricist of the nineteenth century was Herbert Spencer (1820–1903). He is especially known for diffusing those famous nineteenth century words, evolution and progress. He discovered ethical values in amoebae and followed them through to the highest human values. For example, he associated human loyalty with the loyalty of a dog to its master. He also proposed a philosophy of history. History, he said, was coextensive with culture and civilization, and its purpose was to fulfil man's existence. Spencer had no time for idealism with its morality, rational commandments and supra-sensory world. Marx and Engels, with their ideals of a human paradise ("lush meadows for the vulgar crowd", said Nietzsche), therefore found a fertile soil in old and new empiricism, and not only in French materialism.

In Germany Franz Brentano (1838–1917) was the most prominent representative of the empirical current. He was thoroughly acquainted with the writings of Aristotle and the Scholastics. He tried to use the concept of evidence to arrive at sure knowledge, and thereby derive from experience what Kant had postulated *a priori*. C. Stumpf (1848–1936), known particularly for his psychology, was influenced by Brentano.

Neo-Kantianism and Neo-Hegelianism

However, there were thinkers in the nineteenth century who did not share the uncritical approach of the materialists and utilitarians, who did not support the otherwise universal appeal to experience, and were also sceptical of the speculations of the idealists. A number of them in the 1870's, in particular F. A. Lange, K. Fischer, and O. Liebmann, called for a return to Kant. They again made critique the chief function of philosophy, much more so than the positivists, who on other points shared many of their concerns. True to the Kantian tradition, their explicit interest lay in the formal and methodical. Transcendental philosophy became the order of the day, pure knowing, pure will and pure religion the watchwords. These thinkers opposed psychologism and

any emphasis on pure factual experience, preferring to rely on *a priori* transcendental laws that make experience possible in the first place. Objects and essences were not “out there”, they were produced by the mind in accordance with timeless rules. Nevertheless divergences from Kant were very noticeable. For example, Bruno Bauch understood the contribution of sense-experience and the role of the idea in an almost Platonic way. The pure formalism of the other representatives of this tendency was certainly a major weakness; they were too abstract, too timeless, without any very solid *content*. The Neo-Kantian school enjoyed a rapid vogue in Germany. At the turn of the century it was the main philosophy in the universities. Method was the focus of interest. A centre of the Neo-Kantian trend was Marburg, where students of philosophy expended vast energy in investigating Kant’s mathematical-scientific ideal of knowledge. We may mention H. Cohen (1842–1918), P. Natorp (1854–1924), whose book on Plato is still as readable as R. Hönigswald’s (1875–1947) history of ancient philosophy, A. Liebert (1878–1946) and E. Cassirer (1874–1945). The other centre, the so-called “Baden school”, was more interested in the Kant of the *Critique of Practical Reason* and concentrated on the philosophies of mind and value. The school included W. Windelbrand (1848–1915), H. Rickert (1863–1936), E. Lask (1875–1915) and B. Bauch (1877–1942).

In France too idealism attracted famous followers; C. Renouvier (1815–1903), O. Hamelin (1856–1907) and L. Brunschvicg (1864–1944), among others. Hamelin was responsible for some important historical research, including books on Descartes and Aristotle. Brunschvicg was an emphatically methodical thinker. Next to Bergson and Blondel, he was undoubtedly the greatest French philosopher of his time. He wanted to develop both Kant and Hegel, but also followed Plato, Descartes and Spinoza, and in his philosophy of religion was particularly influenced by Pascal. His main works were *The Modality of Judgement* (1897) and *The Stages of Mathematical Philosophy* (1912). Brunschvicg asked, what do we mean when we say “is”? The “is” of our judgements expresses the result of a process of thought or a transcendental connection, as Kant called it. There are no things-in-themselves. Philosophy therefore is a philosophy of mind. This is true of Brunschvicg’s philosophy of religion, in which he almost came to the point of saying that God himself was the *content* of philosophy (ontologism?). God, for Brunschvicg, was the copula of judgements, but not a thing-in-itself which we could know or love. Neither was He an idea, as Kant had held. Rather he was the mind itself, which was equally connection, copula, transcendental

apperception and deduction. This was again “pure” religion, a Third Testament, superseding and *fulfilling* the New as the New fulfilled the Old. For Kant it was the religion of reason, which was to interpret history and reduce it to morality. For Hegel philosophy was raised to the level of religion.

Neo-Kantianism was in fact a world-wide school. It had its representatives everywhere. Apart from those we have already mentioned, they included T. H. Green (1836–82) and E. Caird (1835–1908) in Britain, the so-called “Transcendentalists” in the States, and A. Chiapelli (died 1932), G. Gentile (1875–1944) and B. Croce (1866–1952) in Italy. The last two named are really better classed as Neo-Hegelians, but the distinction is not clear-cut.

Amongst the Neo-Hegelians, therefore, we may mention Croce. He wrote important works on aesthetics, logic, practical philosophy and the philosophy of history. In all these areas he attempted a synthesis, not of opposites as in Hegel, but of differences, in which the differences were unified but not destroyed, and which was markedly positivistic. The more interesting of them were his syntheses in aesthetics, where he has been the leading light of recent philosophers, and in history, in which he proposed an identity of philosophy and history: philosophy was itself a concrete historical event and therefore a development, and conversely the development apparent in history could be understood only on the basis of universal conceptual presuppositions. The synthesis of all syntheses was Mind. Mind was infinite growth, the absolute, and the substitute for religion, which in its historical forms was only a stage in the development of Mind.

Neo-Hegelians in Britain included F. H. Bradley (1846–1924), B. Bosanquet (1848–1923) and E. McTaggart (1855–1925); in the States J. Royce (1855–1916); in Germany A. Lasson (died 1917) and R. Kroner (1884–1974), and the philosophers of law J. Binder (died 1939), K. Larenz (1903–93) and W. Schönfeld (1888–1958).

Pragmatism

Pragmatism is another philosophy that deals in phenomena. Its purpose, however, is not just to describe them and verify them on logical or transcendental laws, but to control them, make them manipulable by man so that he can improve his material lot. Pragmatism, therefore, is a practical philosophy. We clarified this term in connection with dialectical materialism. And in fact pragmatism is not far removed from dialectical materialism, although it stresses the freedom of the individual.

As a philosophy, it began with F. A. Lange, one of the founders of Neo-Kantianism. By defending religion against the attacks of materialists with the argument that religion was the locus not of truth and error but of man's need, and by seeing in this satisfaction of man's need the purpose and essence of religion, he effectively gave birth to the theory of pragmatism. Its most significant spokesmen, however, were W. James (1842–1910), F. C. S. Schiller (1864–1937) and the American philosopher and pedagogue J. Dewey (1859–1952). James made this illuminating remark: "Ultimately our mistakes are not so very important. In a world where, despite all our foresight, mistakes are unavoidable, a certain measure of careless levity is healthier than an excessive nervous worry." In practice it might often be possible to follow this recipe. But the principle itself means ignoring the question of truth and acting only on personal preferences. Such a principle cannot be held to be valid, because beyond the level of "I should like" and "I need" there is a right and a wrong which impose duties on man. Truth may not, as Dewey's instrumentalism would have it, be turned into a tool and symbol of our pretensions and requirements. Objective truth is superior to all subjective expediency. The proper fulfilment of man's existence can be sought only within the limits laid down by truth and right. Mere desire leads only to disorder.

9.5 Inductive Metaphysics

Despite the general overemphasis on phenomenalism, the nineteenth century did manage to produce a metaphysics. But because of the overwhelmingly empirical trend of the times, that metaphysics was of a rather special kind: it was inductive. Relevant names here are Fechner, Lotze and Hartmann.

Gustav Theodor Fechner (1801–1887) set out to elaborate a metaphysics which would clarify the nature of religious belief in a way that was more than just creating concepts in the service of some pragmatic world-view and which, without abandoning critical thought or endangering the scientific conscience, would be acceptable to the natural scientist. His metaphysics was intended to be an investigation into reality as a whole. It started from experience, was inductive, and claimed to go beyond experience. In classical metaphysics, the ideal structure of the world enabled the philosopher to say, "This is how things are and must always be", but in Fechner's metaphysics, the result of induction was only an anticipation of further experiential data, to avoid an otherwise

necessarily fragmented approach. In reality, then, the Fechner brand of metaphysics did not advance beyond sense-experience. All one could do was hypothetically anticipate data by means of generalizations and analogies. One could not say, “This is how things will always be”, but only “Things will probably continue like this”. Basically, then, inductive metaphysics was empiricist, but in so far as it claimed to include the “whole of being”, the title metaphysics was justified. The inductive form has been popular in the twentieth century. Fechner also did great services to psychology, which he developed on a natural science methodology and interpreted in the style of psychophysical parallelism.

Rudolf Hermann Lotze (1817–81), like Fechner a metaphysician (although he styled himself a “finalistic idealist”), went back beyond Kant to Leibniz and adopted something like Leibniz’s pan-psychism. He accepted the scientific concept of causality but developed it in another context. Whereas Kant thought a causal subordination was possible but unknowable, Lotze defended it by maintaining that because of a basic inner coherence of the cosmos, all causality was included under a universal causality in (a spiritual and personal) God. On other points too Lotze had no scruples in ignoring Kant: the concept of substance, for example, or the freedom of the will. In ethics he ranks as one of the founders of the modern theory of value. For him values were objective authorities like the Platonic ideas, which Lotze also interpreted as objective authorities.

Karl Eduard von Hartmann (1842–1906) elaborated a system which, in his own words, was a synthesis of Hegel and Schopenhauer (with a decisive preponderance of the former) on the principles of Schelling’s positivism and concept of the unconscious from his first system. Also included were an individualism derived from Leibniz and a series of basic propositions from modern empiricism. That is why Hartmann can be numbered among the inductive metaphysicians. He is best known for his “unconscious spirit” in which logical “thought” and illogical “will” were one. Like Schopenhauer he described will as an irrational force, and the representation or intellect as a powerless idea—two thoughts later adopted by Scheler. Existence, again as in Schopenhauer, was given a pessimistic interpretation. Non-being was better than being. The function of ethics was to achieve the triumph of this conviction and redemption from the will to be. Future world religion was therefore to be a mixture of Buddhism and Christianity.

9.6 Neo-Aristotelianism and Neo-Scholasticism

Apart from inductive metaphysics, the nineteenth century was also no stranger to classical metaphysics. The Neo-Aristotelians and the Neo-Scholastics were its partisans.

A prominent member of the Neo-Aristotelian school was Friedrich Adolf Trendelenburg (1802–72), who made significant contributions to the understanding of Aristotle's philosophy, not only historically, but also systematically. He was not carried away by the latest theories, but looked for the truth as an artist for beauty. Not every thinker, he said, need start from scratch and work out a new philosophy. Philosophy was already at hand "in the organic world-view based on Plato and Aristotle which had only to deepen its grasp of basic concepts, both in isolation and in dialogue with the real sciences, and so perfect itself." These basic concepts included purpose, organic whole, the mind and its logical rules, the fulfilment of the mind in a divine world-spirit, and an eternal law which provided an objective criterion for all other positive laws. His best-known work was his *Natural Law on the Basis of Ethics*. Trendelenburg's followers included F. Brentano, G. von Herding, O. Willmann, G. Teichmüller and R. Eucken.

Willmann and Herding form a sort of bridge with the other school of classical metaphysics, the Neo-Scholastics. These referred back directly to the Middle Ages, some to Thomas Aquinas, others to Augustine and Bonaventure, but they were all ultimately rooted in Aristotle. An awareness that Aristotle derived his thinking in large measure from Plato could have invigorated the whole spirit of neo-scholasticism, but it was too slow in making itself felt; Aristotle had become something of a rallying-point, and there was little interest in Plato's work. Neo-scholasticism was influenced by some of the trends in modern philosophy. Just as some said "Back to Kant", so others called for a return to the classical Schools. J. Balmes (1810–48) was a pioneer here, followed by Z. Gonzalez (1831–1892). Other names are M. Liberatore (1810–92) and T. Zigliara (1833–93) in Italy, K. Werner (died 1888) in Austria, C. von Schüzler (1827–80), J. Kleutgen (1811–83), A. Stöckl (1823–95) and K. Gutberlet (died 1928) in Germany. From the start the most important centres of neo-scholasticism were the Institut Supérieur de Philosophie at Louvain, founded by Desiré Joseph (later Cardinal) Mercier (1851–1926) (the Institut was originally a school of Thomism; today the curriculum is quite general), and Quaracchi, the centre of the Franciscan Order, now known only for its exemplary editions of theological and philosophical works.

Neo-scholasticism took two forms, historical and systematic. To the historical form we owe the editions and researches which have contributed extensively to an accurate knowledge of the Middle Ages (the prejudice and invective of the Reformation and Enlightenment had completely obscured, and the enthusiasm of the Romantics had overestimated, the true value of medieval thought). At first, particularly in the schools of C. Baeumker and M. Grabmann, the researches were confined to establishing accurate texts and plotting the actual development of ideas. Today, in the light of modern philosophy and the contact of Neo-Scholastics with it, the problems are more speculative and philosophical. The so-called “systematic form” of neo-scholasticism tried to perfect a *philosophia perennis* by extracting the eternal truths from various philosophical tenets. There is such a thing as truth, it says, there are such things as eternal truths; man’s knowledge is conditioned subjectively, but is not exclusively relative to the subject: it is directed at being and so has an objective side which is more important than the subjective side. Being itself is therefore knowable; it can be analysed into created and uncreated being, substance and accidents, essence and existence, act and potency, model and image, bodily, living, psychic and spiritual being; man’s soul is immaterial, substantial, spiritual and immortal. Man is therefore essentially different from animals. Morality, law and the State are controlled by eternal norms, even though they can be based on man’s subjectivity; the prime cause of being, truth and value is the transcendent God.

As often happens in philosophy, individual members of the “school” differed considerably on basic questions as well as on details of interpretation. It would be quite unjustified to accuse the Neo-Scholastics of a lack of originality because they all allegedly said the same thing. No school is totally uniform. Like the Neo-Kantians or the Empiricists or the Phenomenologists, the Neo-Scholastics shared a point of view, but the real question is how they acquired it. If a school simply takes over somebody else’s views, we cannot strictly talk about genuine philosophizing. If on the other hand a group of thinkers together elaborate a way of looking at things, each making his own contribution to the whole, we can talk about a philosophical position or trend without drawing attention to anything exceptional in the history of philosophy; on the contrary. And if some schools can reach a sceptical or atheistic or Marxist philosophy without attracting unfavourable comment, there is no apparent reason why others should not come to an objectivistic, theistic and even, as German idealism shows, Christian position. Nothing can be

decided as to the genuineness or not of a philosophical school simply by counting heads. Each case has to be taken on its own and examined for originality and invention. It is original and inventive thought which makes for philosophy, nothing else. Our times have more than enough paid functionaries in other areas.

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