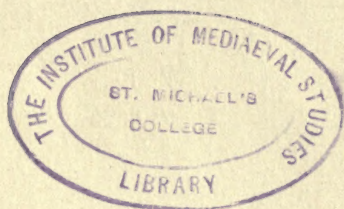


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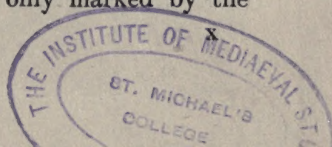


# TIME' AND 'HISTORY' IN CONTEMPORARY PHILOSOPHY; WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO BERGSON AND CROCE

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THERE is a chapter in Condillac's *Traité des Sensations*, the significance of which seems to me to have been hardly appreciated in any of the accounts of his philosophy. It will serve me as an illustration of the idea I wish to give expression to in this paper, and also as an introduction to the particular application of that idea which I have in view. The chapter is the short one at the end of the first Book, bearing the title 'Du Moi, ou de la Personnalité d'un homme borné à l'odorat'. It sets forth the first general conclusion reached in the analysis. The complete individual mind, and all that is essential to personality, is given in the power to distinguish one sensation from another, even though it be restricted to sensations of one sense. In other words, personality consists not in a variety, nor in an abundance, nor in any quality, of sensations, but in the mental activity which relates them. This reveals the direction of Condillac's speculation. It shows that so far from his being a mere follower of Locke and popular exponent of the doctrine that all our knowledge is derived from sensations, he is really bent on discovering the nature of the activity which characterizes mind. This apparently insignificant indication becomes of the first importance when viewed in the light of the later historical development. Condillac is generally recognized as the founder of the post-revolution philosophy which goes by the name of Ideology and which initiated the modern philosophical movement in France; just as Locke is recognized as the founder of what we are accustomed to distinguish as the English philosophy. In the study of every philosopher quite as important as the actual doctrine taught is its orientation. Philosophy offers us no finality, the solution of the problem of one age is only marked by the





emergence of the problems of a new age. Setting aside the overwhelming influence of Kant on the whole of Western speculation, we may, I think, easily distinguish two divergent directions, neither of them very pronounced, but both of them persistent and accumulative, one of which marks the English, the other the French philosophical advance. Each is a tendency to emphasize a particular aspect of the philosophical problem, a kind of mental bias towards one direction rather than another. The source of the English bias we may trace to Locke, of the French to Condillac.

This may sound fanciful. Yet in England we have always been conscious of a strong bias in our philosophy towards realism, and there is no less evident in the French development a distinct bias towards idealism, and this notwithstanding the fact that each line can produce representative philosophers of either form of philosophical theory. To a cursory reader Condillac may seem to have no originality, and merely to expand and expound the ideas to be found in his great English predecessor; to a more attentive reader he is turning inquiry into a new channel and giving it new direction.

This, however, is merely an illustration, only meant to indicate the principle that a philosopher or a system of philosophy cannot be judged as a compendium of special dogmas, however perfect and exhaustive be the inventory. The observation may sound commonplace enough, but it is more than a platitude. The one thing necessary in the study of philosophy is to discern the emphasis in the thought and expression of an individual thinker, the direction or tendency of an intellectual movement. The agreement between philosophers is more remarkable than the disagreement. Philosophies are not to be classified into true and false. Whenever we chance on a philosophical doctrine startling in its freshness and seeming for a moment to revolutionize the whole outlook, falsifying all we have hitherto accepted as true, reflection is certain to show its identity with views which, it may be, at first seemed only related to it by contrast.

I propose to examine in illustration of this principle two contemporaneous movements in philosophy which are manifestly influencing the general direction of philosophical development. I want to try and show that the importance of each consists not so much in any distinct contribution to philosophical theory, great though this may be, as in a particular emphasis on aspects of the reality it seeks to interpret. (They are the philosophy of Henri Bergson and the philosophy of Benedetto Croce. In placing these names together I have not the least intention of suggesting that they stand in any direct or indirect relation to one another. Indeed, probably no two,



contemporary philosophers whom I could name present greater contrast and are more completely distinct in the sources of their inspiration, in their outlook, and in their aim and tendency. It is only in the emphasis which each lays on a certain definite aspect of life that they seem to me in a peculiar way each to complement the doctrine of the other, and it is in this respect only that I venture to compare them. Were I asked to express in brief what seems to me the main burden of Bergson's philosophy, I should reply: the fundamental notion on which it is based is that the human mind, raised to self-consciousness, and seeking truth, finds itself dogged by an illusion—an illusion contrived to serve, and splendidly serving, the practical need of life, but an illusion which obscures every effort to attain clear knowledge—the illusion that change is conditioned by things which are changeless. Were I asked to express in like manner what seems to me the main burden of Croce's philosophy, I should reply: the fundamental notion on which it is based is that the human mind is subject to a persistent illusion which pursues it into every sphere of its activity, the notion of existence as something alien, confronting the active mind, independent of it, to which the value mind creates is something added.)

Because I have described the fundamental notion underlying each philosophy as that of an illusion, I am not to be understood as meaning that illusion is the common ground or basis of comparison between them. On the contrary, the recognition of illusion is the common ground of philosophy itself. If, as the naïve realist would have us believe, there is no illusion of any kind in cognition, then what is the task and what the problem of philosophy? Philosophy is based on the perception that things in their essence cannot be what they appear as. Philosophy may be described as the unceasing, untiring effort to present reality adequately to the mind. What spurs us on continually to this effort is the dissatisfaction with the view of life presented to us in the routine of our daily experience, the impossibility of resting content in the enjoyment of life as it passes, the deep and often passionate desire to discover its source in a reality compared to which the reality of immediate experience is rejected as mere appearance. What the Eastern sages named *Maya*, illusion, is postulated therefore in the very existence of philosophy. The great philosophical discoveries have always been of the nature of exposures of illusions of the type of Kant's Copernican revolution in philosophy.

It is true that in Bergson's philosophy illusion is not a mere negative background, nor is it a particular form of the ancient



distinction between opinion and knowledge, between what we now call the unanalysed data of common sense and the reality of reflective and scientific thought. In Bergson's doctrine a certain static view of external reality is absolutely essential to the practical form of our internal activity, and this prejudices and handicaps the mind in its effort to attain a theoretical concept of the reality itself. An intellectual effort is called for from all who would obtain true philosophical insight, an effort to overcome a bias, which bias is very part of human nature itself. Such an effort would be impossible, even inconceivable, and therefore in the absolute sense absurd, were the intellect the whole of our cognitive nature, were there not also in that nature another cognitive mode. (This is Bergson's doctrine of intuition. We not only know intellectually, that is, mediately by the categories of the understanding and the Ideas of reason, we also know intuitively, that is, immediately and instinctively, and this knowledge is one with the act of life itself. The intellectual effort we are required to make is not an effort to annul the intellect but to overcome its practical bias in order that we may obtain philosophical insight. This is the constant theme of Bergson in all his writings, and it is set forth with a wealth of striking imagery.

There is no correlative of this theory in Croce.) The illusion from which Croce would free us is not a practical utility but a worthless agnosticism. His distinction between aesthetic intuition and logical conception is not parallel with Bergson's distinction between instinct and intelligence as modes of knowing. Intuition for Croce is not instinct. The illusion therefore is not to be compared with Bergson's cinematographical illusion. What Croce combats throughout his philosophy is the idea of reality outside mind, reality in which mind is not immanent but to which it is transcendent, reality which in some way mind overcomes and subjects to its purposes. This illusion is at the basis of all philosophical dualism, ancient and modern.

(The comparison I wish to make and the fundamental agreement I wish to indicate between the philosophy of Bergson and that of Croce does not consist in any material or formal identity or even similarity in their specific doctrines, but in the fact that each has focused the attention on the dynamic aspect of reality and thrown the whole emphasis on the concept of activity as an interpretative principle. I propose to illustrate this by examining what I hold to be a characteristic doctrine of each.) First, the theory of Bergson that time is a material and not merely a formal element of the world; a pure quality which is the condition of quantity; 'the stuff' of things. Second, the theory of Croce that history is identical



with philosophy, that there are no external events; there is only a present activity of mind; that the historian, like the philosopher, is engaged in interpreting a present activity, and that history is therefore contemporaneous.

Before I try to show the importance of the tendencies which these two doctrines illustrate in contemporary philosophy, let me first defend my position against a possible objection. It may be said that ‘static’ and ‘dynamic’ are strictly relative terms, and that to give either a priority over the other is unphilosophical in the highest degree. Neither term can be defined except by means of the other, and neither can be conceived without conceiving the other. Further, it may be resented as an unfair aspersion on any school of philosophy to suggest that it has neglected the dynamic side of reality and emphasized the static. And equally the emphasis on the dynamic aspect may be read as a failure to do justice to the static.

With regard to the first and more general objection that static and dynamic are relative terms, the best answer I can give is to instance the theory of Bergson to which I have already referred. Suppose it be true that the mode of our activity in the sphere of practice depends on our success in staying the flowing, in materializing the formal, in solidifying the fluid, in giving shape and substance to the evanescent, thinghood to the changing, it will surely then follow that the condition of success in practice will impose itself on our efforts in theory and influence our judgement. It will give us a natural bias to the conclusion that the static aspect, so important in practice, is more original in theory, and will make things which change seem more fundamental than change. The task of philosophy will in such case be to deliver thought in its effort to attain theoretical truth from a tendency contracted in its service to practical activity.

That there is such a bias in our intellectual nature, and that an intellectual effort is necessary to overcome it, and that few indeed, and they only at rare moments, succeed in overcoming it, is made evident by the history of philosophy. Let any one compare the two great paradoxes of the Greek philosophy, the ‘nothing moves’ of Zeno and the ‘all things flow’ of Heraclitus, and test for himself which to his own mind is the most contrary to his natural inclination. Zeno by his masterly dialectic and picturesque illustrations has given the world a problem which even to-day is regarded by some as insoluble and denounced by others as a sophism. But it is the dialectical argument, not the proposition itself, which arrests us. The very eternity of that problem shows that the fundamental conception on which it is based is one which the mind naturally accepts. Heraclitus’s



doctrine is, on the other hand, to the ordinary mind a direct paradox; it does not depend on dialectical argument, but in its very statement seems, even while we accept it, to cut across the obvious beliefs which underlie and form the basis of all our actions.

I do not propose to enter here on a critical exposition of Bergson's theory of real duration. I can presume that the theory is familiar to every one interested in contemporary speculative philosophy. I mean the theory that time, as we employ the concept in ordinary discourse, as it enters into the mathematical sciences, as the astronomer conceives it, is really space. It is a dimension, but it is not even a special non-spatial kind of dimension; it is itself spatial, and without the spatial category absolutely incomprehensible. This, however, is not real time, for there is a time which is not a dimension, and which is not conceived spatially. This time is psychical in its nature and psychological in its order. It is non-quantitative, and therefore non-measurable and indivisible. This is duration, and distinguished from the spatialized concept as *the true duration*. It is not the *condition* of existence nor the condition of the knowledge of existence; it is itself existence.

I want to call attention to two points in this theory, viz. its psychological basis and its metaphysical character, in order to show, apart from its actual value as theory, its peculiar significance in revealing a philosophical tendency.

The world of our experience is infinitely complex. To the natural mind it is inexhaustible, an infinite possibility, disordered and chaotic. Understanding is primarily a bringing of order into this chaos of experience—a rough utilitarian order at first, rising afterwards gradually and progressively to a perfect scientific order. Whether it be actually so or not, we certainly all come in the process to believe that the order we have come to know is an order we have discovered, and not an order we have arbitrarily imposed. We suppose it existed in its true nature undiscovered, and that it did not come into being with the activity which disclosed it. This belief constitutes natural dualism, and gives to the problem of philosophy its most obstinate form. Yet the moment we subject this belief to reflection it seems impossible to justify it. We search in vain for any psychological basis for it, and are perforce constrained to base it on reasoning and not on immediate experience.

Epistemology to be scientific must direct the attention in the first place to the psychological basis of experience. Consciousness in its simplest meaning is awareness of what is affecting us in so far as we are sensitive to it, and cognition in its highest meaning ultimately rests on this. What are the immediate data of consciousness, and



what are we justified in inferring from them? I do not mean by this question to indicate the inquiry concerning the origin of conscious experience in the new-born individual. We can form no idea of a temporal beginning of experience. Consciousness for us is itself the negation of a beginning of consciousness, for when we are conscious we are conscious of what we already know. By the immediate data of consciousness I mean the most original form of our common experience, what for all of us is the basis of our experience, not what actually came first in the chronological order. The answer psychology gives to the question is that the immediate data of consciousness are the data of sense. What are the data of sense? The data of sense are the immediate objects present to the mind in sensing, and for the psychologist these immediate objects are sensations. The problem for the philosopher is—What is the nature of the reality we are in contact with in sensation, and what do sensations reveal?

The answers which from time to time have been offered to us may be regarded under two heads: either, sensations are regarded and treated as a definite species of object, or, they are regarded as subjective modes of apprehension. In the first case they are distinguished from their conditions—from the formal conditions they depend upon in the sense organs, and the material conditions they depend upon in the external, physical world, the sensations being themselves the actual present objects from which the conditions (other objects) are inferred. In the second case they are merely regarded as modes of the cognizing act which supposes a relation between knowing act and thing known. A thing is known by its sensible qualities, and these sensible qualities when experienced are sensations. The present controversy concerning new realism seems to me to be between upholders of one or the other of these views.

It is difficult, indeed impossible, to avoid this controversy when speaking of the immediate data of consciousness. I will therefore say one word upon it, though it is not the problem to which I am directing attention. It has been often remarked in recent epistemological discussion that the terms realism and idealism show a tendency to lose their original clear and sharply defined contrast. Some theories of extreme ‘new’ realism are with difficulty distinguishable from the old idealism. The ‘non-mental’ or ‘physical’ sense-data which constitute for some of the theories the external reality which the mind becomes acquainted with in knowing, are as strange to common sense and as remote from the ordinary notion of physical reality as are the perceptions which in Berkeley’s view exist only when some mind, ours or God’s, is perceiving. The dilemma which is



patent in idealism is in my view only concealed, and sometimes barely concealed, in realism. I mean the dilemma, the one horn of which is the impossibility of transcending the immediate object of consciousness, and the other the impossibility of knowledge unless the immediate object is transcended. I would suggest, however, and this is the remark for the sake of which I have referred to this problem, that we are in a position to be clear on one point, and that the most important point, for it has been the stumbling-block and rock of offence throughout the whole development of theory of knowledge. Whatever be our view of the nature of the immediate object of consciousness, whether we regard it as in some form or in no form a construction of the mind, we may agree that it is not a *tertium quid*, a reality of a distinct kind, mediating between the mind and the physical world and in some way *representative* of a reality which it itself is not. If in any respect we are now in contemporary philosophy on a higher plane of epistemological discussion it is in the fact that we are all agreed in rejecting a purely representative theory as impossible. Indeed a philosopher is seldom charged with holding a representative theory except by implication and as a term of reproach.

With this remark I may turn to the problem of the immediate data of consciousness. For the psychologist these are sensations. There are two views of sensations. One view is that they are clear and distinct individual entities which enter into various associations and combinations, and are the fundamental stuff of which our psychical life is composed. In their own nature they are ultimate and fundamental. They cannot be defined in terms of something else, they can only be referred to, and they are what they are experienced as. As objects of consciousness they can be classified, compared, measured. They are not spatial, and therefore they have no extensive magnitude; but they have duration, they can be numbered, and they have intensive magnitude. By means of them we are able to conceive the physical stimuli which materially condition them, and the receptive organs of sense which formally condition them. In this way we can make them objects of a special science, psychology. The other view is that sensations are not ultimate irreducible entities which enter into combinations, but the last resultant of the analysis of complex situations or presentations. They are essentially abstractions, and possess nothing whatever of a concrete or individual nature. In both views, therefore, the sensation is ultimate in the sense that there is nothing psychologically or epistemologically more elementary. Whether or not all knowledge be a construction out of sense data there is nothing more fundamental than sensations.



If now we turn from what I may call the theory of the sensation to the genetic problem of the origin of sensations in the actual experience of the living individual, we are forced to acknowledge that the sensation is not a direct datum of experience. The idea that sensations are first in the order of knowledge is not derived from the direct experience that it is so, but is a result of reflection, abstraction, analysis, and ideal construction of experience. We simply assume that if we could be witnesses of the birth of conscious experience we should of necessity see in the first place pure sensation. We ourselves are a developed experience, and therefore in our case it is easy to understand that the notion of the sensible thing or of the thing with its sensible qualities precedes the notion of the pure sensation. For us the notion of the pure sensation is very difficult to attain, and probably is only attained, if it is ever attained, by psychologists very skilful in experimental introspection. Even so the pure sensation is not experienced; such experience is in its nature impossible, that is to say, in no case could pure sensation be consciousness of pure sensation, for consciousness implies comparison and negation. Sensations, therefore, are not the immediate data of consciousness, but our notion of the kind of thing the immediate data of consciousness must be experienced as.

I come now to my main purpose in this argument, and to the point to which I desire to direct special attention. There is in the mind when it seeks to distinguish the immediate data of consciousness an already formed notion which determines the idea of the sensation. The actual, that is the historical process, starts from the notion of the sensible thing as conditioning sensations, and arrives by reflection and analysis at the idea of sensations as conditioning the notion of the sensible thing. The order of knowing is recognized as being the reverse of the order of being, and *vice versa*. I do not arraign the process nor condemn the conclusion; they could not in the nature of things be other than they are. What I do insist on is that sensations considered as the immediate data of consciousness must and actually do from this very process receive a stamp or mould which gives them predetermined form. They are in fact statically determined in advance. They are endowed as it were, before the idea of them even is reached, with a static nature, with a kind of thinghood, by reason of and in consequence of the intellectual process by which alone the idea is attained. It is this thinghood of the sensation which the psychophysicist accentuates and exaggerates when he treats sensations as measurable objects.

The theory of pure duration seems to me the distinct advance in



philosophical theory which Bergson has achieved. In calling our attention to the bias in the intellect towards the statical, and in grounding that bias in the practical necessity of our living activity, he has brought a new problem to light, and thereby made possible a further progress. Our sensations, which for most psychologists and philosophers are the original data of consciousness, are for Bergson already intellectualized. They enter consciousness with a certain fixity and permanence which does not belong to them of right, but is stamped upon them by the intellect. There is a more original matrix or stuff than sensations, viz. the flow or change or duration of the life itself out of which they appear and within which they are made to assume a shape. They are not constituents or elements of duration, for true duration has no constituents. They are artificial divisions of it, a schematic arrangement of it, made possible by regarding it under a special aspect and in a purposive mode. But the real duration itself—how are we to attain the notion of it? By an intellectual effort which may succeed in setting us free from, or in turning aside, the intellectual bias. We must reverse the scientific method if we would obtain philosophic insight. We must neglect the relatively fixed points in the movement and concentrate attention on the pure movement itself. In Bergson's often-quoted phrase, we must install ourselves within the movement.

Bergson's doctrine of duration, therefore, at the same time that it forms the psychological basis of his philosophy, involves in it the denial of a science of psychology. The psychical fact—life, mind, consciousness, reality—is known in its immediacy in being experienced, in being lived. We cannot take and analyse this psychical duration, form ideas or particular concepts of the separate facts which seem to compose it, classify, measure and calculate these imagined components, without thereby altering the character of the fact itself and presenting it to the mind as other than it is. When we think we are analysing this real duration we always find by our failure that it is not this at all but something different, a creature of the intellect, which we have subjected to scientific treatment. In one of Bergson's images, we are like the children who try to clasp smoke by grasping it with their hands. This fact, that of real duration there can be no science in the technical meaning, that is, no mathematics or physics, is the burden of the whole argument of Bergson in *Les Données immédiates de la Conscience*. In this fact, that duration is psychical reality and not an abstract postulate of the intellect, lies the whole ground for affirming a method of philosophy, distinct and autonomous, itself the ground of all method, including that of the mathematical and physical sciences.



This denial of a science of psychology by confining psychology to what is alone in the real sense psychical, and rejecting all schematic and artificially abstracted data, whatever their claim to be immediate, can only meet the sceptical challenge by affirming against science a special method of philosophy. The method of philosophy is to concentrate attention on the living, not the dead, on the acting, not the acted, on the doing or making, not on the accomplished or already made. The method of philosophy is psychological, and psychology is not the science of abstract data; in so far as it is pure science, it is a science of quality not of quantity, of the concrete not the abstract; a science of science, philosophy.

I now turn from the consideration of the psychological basis of the theory of duration to its metaphysical character. The distinctive mark of the metaphysics of duration is the insistence on the priority of time or of the temporal form of reality over space or the spatial form. What precisely do I mean by this? Not that we are able to conceive the perception of a pure time while as yet there is no perception of a pure space; nor even, to employ the Kantian terms, that time is the *a priori* condition of space. I mean that there is an intellectual bias towards space which makes it appear to us more original than time. It seems to us that space is in a manner indifferent to time, a constant in relation to which time is an independent variable. To take Bergson's illustration, it seems that space would abide unaltered even though the rate of the time-flow were to vary infinitely. This intellectual bias shows itself in philosophy in very subtle ways, and as tendency rather than dogma. It makes us speak of space and time rather than of time and space. It makes the ideality of space seem more paradoxical than the ideality of time, so that when we think we have succeeded in proving the one we are content to save ourselves the trouble of proving the other, satisfied with the general remark that the arguments which apply to space, apply *ceteris paribus* to time.

When we have to do with living action, however, we see that though space may indeed be the condition of it, time is the stuff of it. In fact we find that in the analysis of living action the conditions are the reverse of those we find in the analysis of physical action. (In living action time is the constant and space is the independent variable; the very opposite of what appears to the chemist or the physicist as the true relation and order of conditioning in the data of the science with which he has to deal.

The metaphysical import of this fact that for life or living action time is more fundamental than space in the sense that duration is



essential in a primary meaning in which extension is not, is of the greatest consequence in philosophy. It offers a solution of the contradiction of dualism; for it suggests at once that life is not something added to matter, but that matter is something abstracted from life. Life is the more of which matter is the less. There is no way of addition by which we can pass from the less to the more, but from the more to the less we can pass naturally by way of diminution, that is, by abstraction or exclusion.

Lest I seem to any one to be merely juggling with terms I will compare the concrete or philosophic concept with the mathematical or abstract concept. In asserting a priority of time over space, what I am affirming is not the existence of one kind of dimension prior to, and independent of, the existence of another kind. The very formulation of such a doctrine, if not actually self-contradictory, would at least be circular, for priority is a term which already presupposes the concept of time. The doctrine is that time in the concrete sense of duration is quality in an original meaning which does not apply to space, even in the concrete sense of extension. The existence of quality implies quantity; but quality is the condition of the existence of quantity, and not *vice versa*. Duration is not succession plus an external principle of union. That is the abstract quantitative concept. Duration is process in its unity, simplicity, and individuality. Past, present, and future are distinctions within it and not external to it. A process such as we have in any instance of living action differs from another process qualitatively and not quantitatively. There exists no calculus of life. A living action is present in its entirety throughout its development and progress. Unless it be apprehended as a concrete whole it is not apprehended. Such is the concrete concept of duration.

To the metaphysician this qualitative distinction is all important; to the mathematician, on the other hand, it is indifferent. In the mathematical sciences qualitative differences are unmeaning. Priority of time over space or of space over time is equally unmeaning, since both are dimensions. Space and time are the axes of co-ordination by which any event is described from the standpoint of an observer and its relation to other events determined. The three spatial dimensions and the temporal dimension are represented by symbols,  $x$ ,  $y$ ,  $z$ , and  $t$ . In the new Principle of Relativity, space and time are not constants but variables. Mathematics has given up in the new Principle the old theory of a framework of absolute space and time within which and in relation to which all movements of translation can be represented. There is no absolute scale of velocity



with zero as its lower limit. It is more convenient, we are now told, to regard space and time as variable, undergoing alteration with the acceleration of the system of relative translation, and to regard velocity as constant. The convenience is that it accords with the fact, determined by experiment, that to observers in a system of translation undergoing acceleration in relation to other systems, the velocity of the system is constant. As velocity is a ratio of space and time, a constant velocity implies a variable space and time. What alone appeals to the mathematician in this principle is the greater convenience of the calculus; to the philosopher, however, there arises a profounder problem.

Space and time are the most abstract concepts of externality, and externality is the philosopher's problem. How are we to reconcile the intellectual paradox of the naïve belief of common sense that the mind is an internal reality which knows an external reality independent of it, by means of its own images and ideas? Bergson's theory of duration points the way. Time, as we ordinarily envisage it, is a division of reality into existent and non-existent parts. From the reality which now is, is excluded the reality which was and the reality which will be. Duration knows no such distinction. The past exists in the present, which contains the future. The concrete and ever-present instance of duration is life—for each of us living individuals, his own life. How then from life does externality, spatiality, extensity, arise? How does it come to be posited as an alien world? By what mysterious means does the living reality become a perceiving reality, and the perceived object stand over against the perceiving act as passive datum of the perception? (Start, as the materialist does, with a priority of matter and spatiality, and there is no possible answer. There is no passage from matter to mind.) Try how we will, we are left at last with the necessity of accepting what appears as what is. We are without any principle by which to derive the harmony of the world and account for the success of the sciences. Wonderful, even magical or miraculous, must this harmony appear, perhaps pre-established by an intelligent creator, perhaps unknowable by reason of our limitations. It may inspire us with awe or thrill us with mystical emotion. It may give us religion, but it cannot give us a philosophy. On the other hand, start with duration as the essential quality of life and action, and we find we have a principle from which space, matter, perception, memory, intellect, instinct can be derived because they can be shown to be implied in its very nature. Such seems to me to be the importance and true meaning of the emphasis on time in the philosophy of Bergson.)



The reflection that materialism may be religion, either in the form of theology or of mystical nature-worship, but that it is not, and in its nature cannot be, philosophy, is the dominant note in Croce's writings, and may therefore serve fitly as an introduction to the consideration of the Italian philosopher.

In reading Bergson we are hardly conscious of the distinction between scientific and philosophic truth. The sciences only differ from philosophy in being partial views or in dealing with particular aspects selected from reality, and therefore falling short of philosophy, which apprehends reality as a whole and activity at its source. In reading Croce, we enter at once in philosophy into a special realm in which a new order and other principles than those which guide us in the natural sciences hold sway. The mathematical sciences are abstract, the natural sciences are empirical, and they are founded on arbitrary assumptions, pseudo-concepts, philosophically justified indeed by their economic utility, but 'sciences' not 'science' in the strict and only true sense of philosophy.

There can be no doubt, I think, in the mind of any one who takes up the study of Croce's philosophy, that the guiding interest which has determined its direction is a method of historical criticism based on a new concept of history. It is not a new concept in the sense of being an original discovery; it is new in its direct application to the problem of philosophy. Croce acknowledges that he owes it to Vico, that it is in effect the fundamental idea of that philosopher's *Nuova Scienza*.

What is it to be real in the full sense of the term reality? It is to be historical. The concept of history is the concept of reality as actual concrete fact. History is not chronicle. The records of a dead past, chronicles, the material on which the historian works, are not history. There are no dead facts. All that is is present reality. To be historical is to be an essential part of the living present. History is science, but not one of the sciences. It is the science of the fully concrete reality, and therefore it is one and identical with philosophy.

Just as in Bergson there is continual insistence on the contrast between the abstract spatialized time of mathematics and concrete duration, so in Croce there is continual insistence on the contrast between the mathematical and natural sciences, abstract and empirical, and the science of history, concrete and universal.

First, however, let me try briefly to indicate to those who are not familiar with Croce's philosophy what is its distinctive note and general character.



Croce conceives mind as activity. This activity is not confronted with an independent matter to which it is passive. Passivity is a pure negation, and so enters into and is included in the concept of activity. This mental activity is reality, and the science of it is philosophy. Mind, because it is essentially activity, cannot be studied as one of the sciences, and by the method we adopt in mathematics and physics, for these cannot exist until the mind has posited for them static data. The data of the mathematical and natural sciences are posited by a direct act of the mind itself which abstracts them from concrete reality. Philosophy is the science of the activity itself. It has no elements out of which, or by the adding together of which, it is formed. It is quality, not quantity. It has degrees, and its degrees have an order, and its degrees and their order determine the divisions of philosophy into the philosophical sciences. These degrees are the four moments of the development of mind; their order is twofold. The terms ‘four-’ and ‘two-fold’ do not imply discreteness, for mind is never discrete, and the terms are not employed in the arithmetical meaning of an enumeration. The whole reality is in each moment, but while each moment expresses explicitly one distinct nature, the other moments are implicit in each. The order also is not chronological but logical, the first degree being only first in the sense that it conditions the second, and the second only second in the sense that it depends upon the first. The first activity of mind is a theoretical activity of knowing, and upon it depends a practical activity of doing. Theory is to practice a first degree, and practice is dependent on theory. Each of these, theory and practice, is again itself subdivided and subject to the order of a twofold degree. Theory is aesthetic, then logical; practice is economic, then ethical. Hence are distinguished four philosophical sciences, each representing a moment of explicit expression in a developing activity. Two are theoretical, aesthetic and logic; and two are practical, economics and ethics. The object of philosophical study, therefore, is the universe presented as value created by mind, and conversely as mind in its essential activity, comprehensively and concretely expressing itself in the pure concepts, beauty and truth, utility and goodness.

If we accept this scheme of a philosophy of mind and the principle of its division into philosophical sciences, the question at once presents itself, how are we to subsume under it those pure products of mental activity which are preserved by us and for us in fixed and determinate forms—the plastic forms of art and the literary forms of poetry, history, natural and mathematical science, each distinguished by its own peculiar method? And not only the artistic and literary forms,

but the concrete facts themselves—facts which find expression in a deeply marked if unscientific classification of lives into those of scientists and philosophers, poets, artists and men of letters, historians, inventors, men of action, saints and heroes—all these must find their ground and justification in a philosophy of mind.

When we consider the accumulated heritage of the human race preserved in its literature and communicable in its language, there is one broad and deep division which receives general recognition. This is the distinction between literature and science. Employing a wide generalization, we may say that the first expresses the theoretical activity, the second the practical activity of mind, and that they correspond therefore to the theoretical and practical moments of the life of mind. But such a generalization, though illustrative, would be of little actual use to philosophy, the purpose of which in distinguishing moments is to make manifest what is pure in each, and no actual expression is pure in the sense that it presents the character of the moment free from any admixture of the other moments which go to make its concrete life.

From this general sketch of Croce's scheme of the philosophy of mind or spirit, I now turn to consider the concept in which it seems to me Croce shows profound insight, and also indicates a new direction of philosophy—the concept of history. History is reality in its most universal, most concrete meaning. What is historical is actual, and what is actual is historical. The matter of fact, the content of history, is wholly ideal. In history, therefore, we have reality which is ideality, and we are able to see that ideality is the only true reality. Philosophy, therefore, is history, and the historiographer conscious of his purpose is the true philosopher. In this theory of the identity of philosophy and history we have a dynamic concept of reality analogous to Bergson's doctrine of true duration, and with it indicating a new direction in which the modern mind is moving.

The ordinary notion of history is that it is a particular form of literature which has for its subject-matter events which occurred in the past and are now without living interest; and for its ideal the presentation of what was most likely true about these events. We discuss, perhaps, whether it ought rightly to be regarded as a science or an art, for it seems to be affiliated to both spheres, and also to compare unfavourably in either sphere with the recognized arts and sciences. As art it is limited by the objective nature of the events it records, and in consequence cannot be, in the pure meaning of art, imaginative. As science it is limited by the barrenness of its objective



material of chronicles and records when these are divested of artistic imagination.

In claiming that history is philosophy, Croce raises it at a bound to a dignity which sets it above comparison with the arts or the natural sciences. History introduces us straightway into the absolute sphere of mind, and by this is meant that in history reality appears as mind, as spiritual, in its actual nature, and not as in physical science something independent of mind and confronting it. When once we attain this standpoint the nature of the physical and mathematical sciences leaps to view, and the concepts of reality they are concerned with are seen to rest on a practical and not on a theoretical necessity of thought.

We are accustomed to regard the reality presented to us in the concepts of the physical and mathematical sciences as bedrock, the solid basis upon which the whole structure of knowledge is raised and supported. Ideality in contrast to this reality seems like the baseless fabric of a vision. We bring this same criterion of reality to our judgement of historical events. It seems to us that the reality of history consists in physical fact, and the ideality of history is a more or less fantastic embellishment of fact. The essential condition of physical and mathematical science seems to be the presence of external fact confronting the knowing mind, and this also seems to be the essential condition of history. Does it not depend on documents and records? Are not these the matter of history? Is not history the study and interpretation of these in order that past, dead, external events may be preserved as a true chronicle? Has this chronicle any living use other than that it may serve as an example or warning, or at least as an idle interest to those engaged in military, political, or imperial experiments? So history then is a science, comparable in its methods with physics and mathematics, and like them having both a pure, or theoretical, and a practical, or applied, form. The comparison, so far as scientific standards are concerned, moreover, is to the disadvantage of history. A very little reflection, however, will convince us that the reality of history is of another order and different from that of the reality of science. Documents, records, chronicles are not history. They are the instruments or tools of the historian, not the matter of history. They are not even comparable with the pigments the painter uses, or with the gases, metals, and salts the chemist uses, or with the figures and symbols the mathematician uses. The reality of history is not recorded dead past event, but present living action. History is not something we have, it is something we are. It is a reality



unlike the empirical concepts of physical science and the abstract concepts of mathematical science, for it is a reality which is absolutely universal and absolutely concrete. All that is history, not merely the abstract past. Present reality is not in external union with past reality, the present holds the past in itself, it is one with the past and it is big with the future. Not only does every new present action modify our judgement of the past, it reveals the meaning of the past, and even in that external sense the past is not dead fact to be learnt about, but living development changing continually. Consequently the historian who is interpreting the past is interpreting the acting living present, and there is no finality in historical interpretation. The reason why we can have no final history is the reason why we can have no final philosophy. Reality is life and history.

This concept of history as present reality is the leading motive in Croce's philosophy. We may make the concept clear to ourselves by reflecting on the great world events in the midst of which we are living and in which we are taking part. We know that this world war will furnish to future generations the subject of historical research. Yet we distinguish. We suppose that we are making history, but that the history we are making is not history for us; it will be history only to those for whom it is past accomplished fact. To the philosopher this is not the pure historical concept. History is what we now are and what we are now doing, it is not a character our actions will assume only when they have receded into the past. The basis and the substance of this concept is that our present actions lose their meaning the moment we regard them as new existence externally related to another and past existence. We carry our past in our present action, we do not leave it outside and behind us. Not only is there no break between the present and the past, but both the form and the matter of present reality, what we now are and are now doing as individuals or as nations is in its essence history.

It will be seen then that the two philosophers whose writings I have had mainly in mind, reach, by entirely different routes and from entirely different standpoints, practically one identical concept. I do not think this is a mere coincidence. It marks a tendency to emphasize the dynamic aspect of reality as more original and more explanatory than the static aspect, and also to recognize that the static is derived.

There is every indication that a new concept of the fundamental nature of reality is emerging, and that its acceptance will mark a distinct advance of the human intellect to a new stage in its search for self-knowledge. It is not only in philosophy, but very definitely



in the mathematical and empirical sciences that the old concepts which have served us hitherto are being discarded and giving place to new. The change, moreover, is distinctly in one definite direction. In physics we have witnessed in recent years the birth, development, and complete establishment of the electron theory. We are now able to demonstrate the intimate nature of the equilibrium of the atom. The stability of the atom does not consist in rigidity. The equilibrium of its constituents requires an adaptability which enables them to respond to every disturbance. (I have in mind the recent experiments of Sir J. J. Thomson on the composition of the atom.) In mathematics we have witnessed the sudden and surprising revolution of ideas which has replaced the Newtonian concepts with the new Principle of Relativity. In Biology it is true we are still without any decided issue of the controversy between mechanists and vitalists as to the nature and origin of life. There has, however, been quite recently some experimental work which seems to me to indicate that we may have to revolutionize the concepts on which this controversy depends. (I have in mind the investigations of Dr. J. S. Haldane into the physiology of breathing.) The living principle appears to manifest itself primarily in the maintenance of a constant normal against the opposition of a continually varying environment, and to this end structure and organic function seem to be wholly subservient. What is common to all these scientific theories is that in every case the ultimate existence is a formal equilibrium actively maintained in conflict with disruptive forces. If in this we have the essential principle of life itself, then we may see why matter is subservient to form, structure to function, nature to mind. We see in fact that the concept of mind or spirit, if it be the concept of pure activity, universal and concrete, immanent and not transcendent, can be all-inclusive and all-explanatory where the old concepts have failed. In philosophy it seems at last to open to us a final way of escape from ✓ the stultification of the Cartesian dualism.



