

## A BRIEF PHILOSOPHY OF EVOLUTION AND HISTORY

Philosophy aims at a world – view. Though the poet has made the statement that “there are more things than your philosophy dreams of” in Heaven as well as the earth, Philosophy aims at knowing all things that Heaven and Earth comprise of and seeks not merely to know but to make all knowledge composite and thus fall into a view. The stress thus is on the view rather than on the world. If we could recognize that in all efforts at viewing we are really getting out of the world that has to be viewed, we shall be able to understand why Philosophy is bound to be abstractionist and objective, any why again it is forced to occupy the place of a looker-on rather than be the active force participating and moulding the movement of the world. What Philosophy perceives and understands some other force of existence might utilize, but Philosophy cannot by itself be the force that executes or creates or regenerates the world directly. It is all the same the only thing that can inspire all coherent activity, all creative harmony and all synthetic effort.

The attempts at viewing have been indeed various and many. Any significant attempt to study all the types of viewing would reveal profound differentiations due to temperamental predilections, as well as cultural influences. A Wellsian speculum is the best that we could at present get at. More than that Philosophy that seeks an adjustment of itself to the knowledge of sciences can never aspire. Philosophers who plead for an utter change in Education methods, in methods of investigation or criticism, in matters absolutely not within the purview of metaphysics are just trying to hoodwink themselves. Their efforts are bound to end in blind alleys. It is because Philosophers have not been just philosophers – contemplators—they have been unable to fix their attention on the view, and have sought to plunge themselves into action so that they have neither been effective in discovering the vantage point of life nor been effective in acting from the point of life nor been effective in acting from the point of certainty. This is not a little due to the dichotomous nature of intelligence

itself, that at once demands an insight into a situation and secures a response to it. This dichotomy has been exaggerated in Philosophy.

Since there are philosophers not Philosophy as such, we have constant contradiction between the viewing of the world and the world itself. This explains the movement in thought, the constant alternations between contemplators and moralists and more properly politicians. In other words, speaking psychologically, we find interruption between the viewing and the acting. There is interpolated between perception and action, the desire to perceive the larger Reality so as to plan for greater and vaster contingencies that might arise out of the immediate situation. The convolutions of the present need further discrimination and looking-into in order that there might be a fuller action and a corrector response. This explorative desire to perceive more than the immediate environment is undeveloped in the animal, and even where it is apparently developed as in the food-gathering activities of ants and bees, it is not due to conscious planning; amongst them there is no *interruption* caused by the desire for exploration. The desire to perceive the penumbra of experience at any one moment that fades gradually into an unperceivable circumference leads to speculations as to the future. It has been remarked that History is primarily of man, for the true Nature of history has reference to the future primarily and only reflexively has it been made into the recording of the past. Speculation is born essentially out of the desire to plan for the future that is looming large before the individual, vaguely and dimly encircling the present. Thus it is found that both History and Time are dependent on our finitude, that that is to say, on the desire for seeking more and dealing with more than what is fugitive in our ordinary experience. This desire to see more leads to the formation of the efforts to investigate the impenetrable frontiers of the Unknown Whole. It is the hope of the philosophic spirit that it is in the context of the wider and the whole that our Present gains its fullest measure of reality and significance and value.

Philosophy however limits itself to viewing and not planning, and seeks to know the plan of life rather than to react to the changing conditions. But it does react,

though it feels that to be a concession to the stress of life, not the truth of its being. It raises a contradiction between that which stimulated it to view and that which it was called upon to react to adequately. This divorce, this contradiction between perceiving and acting, between seeing and doing, is utterly a fact of methodology, which later found itself

It is one of the most important efforts of people of power of all times to clean up their history and to substitute virtuous performance of which they were never guilty. This is history written reflexively for us in the future. History thus is many times made to suit the future order.

confronted with dualism. This can be called the *Philosophic Illusion*. In Reality there can be no disjunction like this. However there is no doubt that it occurs. Why?

## II

Intelligence in one of its manifestations is curiosity or inquisitiveness. Discovery is the one supreme function of intelligence. In philosophy the scientific spirit of adventure the instinct of inquisitiveness coupled with the instinct of exploration, has triumphed over the absolute need of reacting to the environment or rather to a forced adaptation to it. It is because inquisitiveness has triumphed over the stress of immediate and has been able to repudiate its claims on one's attention, there has occurred the emergence into fullness of intelligence itself. Thus do we find intelligence mothered by the instinct of exploration of inquisitiveness; intelligence and inquisitiveness are found to be mutually supporting one another leading to the extension of the frontiers of understanding and to the appropriation of the extended domain in a measure undreamt of by animal or by 'close' societies.

But the curiously—instinct that has led to the free experience of intelligence and that has enabled it to operate to an unlimited extent, has always been reminded by the natural and no less imperative instinct to act for the sake of self preservation. This

procedure of nature, at once to extend the domain of action through intelligence as perception and to act within that enlarged sphere, reveals the fundamental dichotomy of which we have already spoken. It is only when the feeling towards action has been overcome and man has refused to yield to action that there has happened progress.

It is usual to assume that there is a swing of the pendulum, or a 'dialectic of opposites' between Being and Non—Being that leads to Becoming or Progress or Change. What exactly non-being is has never been clearly defined in any philosophy, but it is presumed that it is that which makes progress possible. It is also presumed that this becoming is one of progress, an upward movement towards a greater and richer and fuller realization of the Spiritual Unchanging Reality, the Absolute. This view is implicit in all that Hegel wrote.

Let us canvass this position carefully. If being and non-being are real terms that is to say positive terms that annihilate one another, then non-being is the positive opposite of being. In other words, non-being refutes and tries to annul the existence of being. If it tries to do that, (as it must), then it is its turn operates as existence of being and thus in its very nature it is other than nonexistence and because of the sheer contradiction it cannot be non—being but only another or other than the being we know. Thus when we are asked to treat being and non-being as real 'polar' opposites, we have perforce to define exactly the status of both being and non-being, and the synthesis or higher change or form of being has to be clearly stated in concrete situations. Whether this type of progress could ever be called synthesis is indeed a vital matter but we shall drop the consideration of that at this place.

Here the difficulty of the argument lies in the use of concepts instead of real forces or terms which indicate them. A real dialectic, or what Marx calls historical dialectic consists, in the opposition of two forces. It is indeed true that the dialectic used by Marx is 'inverted' Hegelianism, but he was certainly right in claiming the two opposites of the dialectic to be real forces. Let us see how Monsieur Bergson states his position in his 'Two Sources of morality and Religion' which is certainly more really a dialectic than Hegel's. We have at first one force operating with full vigour and

relentlessly, in 'frenzy' so to speak, and then the other force operates or rather begins to operate equally frantically the moment the first has achieved its peak—point. Becoming is the description of movement, the passing of one into or displacing the memory of the previous moment persists and is in fact incorporated into the latter. This conservation of the past movement within the present it is that makes becoming, a continuity. This synthesis has a place and a meaning. Reverting to the consideration of the two-fold nature of intelligence, we find that curiosity enlarges our field of action, enlarges thus the movement of itself at first. Then there is the self-protective and preservative activity coming into full play garnering the labour of curiosity. Curiosity just recedes into the background when the self-preservative tendency is in action. Thus the individual does not annul his knowledge when he is acting or his acting when he is knowing. It is precisely knowledge that sustains the action, and it is the urge towards a completer life. It is thus precisely his knowledge that impels the action to be larger, wider and more significant and good. This means that the two forces of intelligence are synthesized, and this makes for progress or real becoming, dynamic and actual and truly historical. Man requires a systematized structure of knowledge, a "closed" world in one sense upon which he could unhesitatingly rely, and within the frame-work of which he could unhesitatingly act.

When Philosophers speak of the 'dialectic of opposites' they forget that they speak not in terms of history but in terms of abstract or to use Croce's phrase 'pseudo—concepts.' If Philosophers instead of running after concepts would only learn to think in terms of real forces, then they would understand the profound meaning of the term 'synthesis.' That means that they have to speak in terms of real human forces. Progress is synthesis and nothing but that. But it is not true to say that it is at an end at any time. The field is widening in one sense, and the constructive effort has all the time been employed in coping with this growing world or 'expanding universe.' Looked from the objective stand-point we find that progress is always achieved by an ideological compromise, a compromise of ideals, and by an adjustment or process of apportionment. Human intelligence has struggled to do the impossible task of achieving two things at once; the result is a compromise as well as a synthesis, a regeneration.

The metaphor of the swing of the pendulum is inadequate to describe this process of acquisition and continuity that is presented in synthesis. The opposites cease to be opposites; they appear as the dichotomy of one spirit that pushes on, conserves its gains and advances and moves onward and upward. There are however also sometime leaps into syntheses which were not planned for. From telescopic vision of History we may, as Hegel visualized it, see this as the swing of the Pendulum or even as a cycle of eternal recurrence, or the wheel of fate itself. But the metaphors of the mechanical swing of the pendulum or the wheels mechanical circular movement do not, as obviously they cannot, even intimate slightly the leap that happens. Progress is always achieved by a leap, a leap into a new configuration of prior elements. It is thus a biological fact of importance, call this leap emergence or creative evolution.

It was Benedetto Croce who pleaded for the giving up of the representation of the dialectic of opposites as the swing of the pendulum or eternal cycle of recurrence at first, for the spiral ascent of spiritual life. There is only an apparent return to the starting point, he pointed out, not an actual return; there is striking similarity in the situations. There are delicate differences however. There are superficial repetitions of features of the past, but never the whole of the past; a fragrant memory and perpetuated continuity linger and only that. The opposites in Croce's Philosophy have the abstract nature as in Hegel's as such their opposition can never be historical. Despite Croce's claim it can never explain the difference, the individuality, the uniqueness of the synthesis that is perceived as a novelty or newness about a recurrence. History never repeats itself, is not repeated at all, except to the gross mechanical observer. Croce's explanations of ugly as opposite of beauty and as having no positive character makes it impossible for it to evolve into beauty or into something richer than the 'present' beauty. In other words, because in Croce's view beauty is positive and ugly is a negation of that positive, the dialectic does not lead to evolution but to preservation, mere continuance or bare persistence in time. Seeing this Croce himself seeks evolution in the dialectic of distincts, and not as Hegel or Marx did in the dialectic of opposites alone. But this does not rescue his philosophy from the criticism of mere conceptuality. Either he has to renounce the dialectical

method in favour of Bergson's or he has to accept the dialectic and renounce the positive history of evolution.

The truth is neither Hegal's nor Croce's. Spiral evolution is certainly nearer the truth than the triangle of forces in the synthesis of thesis—antithesis. The dialectic of Hegal is as much a mechanical dialectic as Marx's but the with this lack that it is not even '*positive*' or realistic. A realistic interpretation of evolution requires the taking into consideration every fact of existence including ideas. There is a sense in which ideas or concepts do operate as forces in evolution or history. That every step forward is registered by triumph of certain ideas, forces and urges goes without saying. Every ideal incorporated in an idea finds its realization through the medium of an intension. Every ideal is desirable end. Knowledge of the future, the apprehension of the larger unity of our existence, even the struggles for freedom, liberty and equality, and equity, fraternity and love are at first ideas. When they are chosen they become our ideals and ends, and then they become intentions. These intentions alone are real forces, vital in nature, purposive and capable of progressive realization.

Ideas become chosen when they ingrain themselves into the intelligent of the individual. These ideas afterwards by being constantly chosen form the ethos, the ethical and social organization of the consciousness and form institutions. Organization is the first act of instinct. It is nature's defensive reaction against disruption that is caused by change, inventions, creations and explorations and expansions. But from the earliest periods of human existence these organizations of instincts have been made to adjust themselves to new creations, new invasions of intelligence. That is all institutions have that fundamental nature of flexibility along with that persistency of unity amidst change. Evolution however is never achieved by mere instinct. Intelligence has to rescue itself from the fatal conformity and monotonous repetitiveness that characterise all instinctive reaction.