

BALANCED MIND

.....
The Perennial Synthesis
of Reason and Intuition
in Western Philosophy
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An Anthology of Readings with a Portfolio of Portraits Edited with Introductions by F. Lanier Graham

Architecture of Awareness
A Journal of Consciousness Studies

1995

Introduction

As an undergraduate, my favorite subject was philosophy. In high school I read all of Plato and Aristotle. At Kenyon College, in the late 1950s, I started to study the history of philosophy under Virgil Aldrich and John Yolton. At American University, in the early 1960s, I continued to study philosophy with Rebecca Coulton. As a graduate student, at Columbia University, I ended my formal study of philosophy with Richard Hofstadter's seminar on aesthetics. Obviously, all this history involved a great deal of talk about reason. However, unless the subject was aesthetics, there was very little talk of intuition. Standard histories had (and still have) very few pages cited in the index under "intuition".

Because my primary interests were (and are) aesthetics and metaphysics, I focused on the intuitive side of perception and cognition as I read the writings of the great philosophers. I found the authors of the "great books" consistently explaining various kinds of partnerships between reason and intuition. However, not a single survey of philosophy that I could find paid much attention to this fact. All the attention was on reason, as if intuition is of very little importance. I found it hard to understand why my professors made the same unbalanced statements in their lectures. Every time I would show them a passage that seemed to me to illustrate my interpretation quite clearly, I was told this was "an exception to the rule". Only later did I realize I had been up against a paradigm wall -- a wall of perception which let in the "solar" light-of-reason, but not the "lunar" light-of-intuition.

The principle of Balanced Mind as an ideal has long been central to Eastern philosophy. Western teachers of Eastern philosophy do not seem to have had any difficulty with that fact. However, it was not until the model of the left/right brain became popular in the 1970s that I was able to find professors of Western philosophy willing to re-think "exceptions to the rule" of reason, from this radically new perspective on the value of intuition. Nevertheless, I still found that I was swimming upstream in my conversations with professional philosophers. It was then that I decided it would be useful to edit a book of readings, with the Western philosophers themselves doing all the talking. I concluded that if the principle of Balanced Mind is inherent in most of the great books, a clear editing would bring this principle into focus. This anthology is the result of that decision.

Along the way, this work has been supported by philosophical people I have discussed this topic with over the years, particularly Virgil Aldrich, my first professor of philosophy in the 1950s, who later encouraged me to edit this anthology, as did Lama Govinda, Michael Murphy, Jacob Needleman, Frederic Spiegelberg, and Alan Watts. Special thanks go to Bruce Semler, who worked with me on this project while I was living in Australia during the 1980s, after being brought into focus by Frederick Copleston's translation of Plato's nous as "rational intuition". For centuries, Plato has been mistranslated by one-sided rationalists who rendered nous as "intellect", while being locked into the left-brain view that "intellect" is the highest form of knowing. Copleston gave us a much more accurate translation of what was intended by the balanced mind of Plato, Socrates, et al.

In a survey of this kind, there is not room for every major thinker of the last 2500 years. My effort has been to paint a picture of the general landscape, not a detailed description of every contour in the topography. This study guide is limited to a selection of the largest mountains in the historical landscape. If it is read by students of philosophy, along with the basic books and surveys, it will have served its purpose, which is to help move the study of Western philosophy back toward a balanced perspective.

A few words about the title and subtitle of this study guide are in order. By the use of the term "Balanced Mind" I do not mean to imply that every one of these philosophers had a perfectly balanced mind. Some clearly did not, by any common definition of "balance". The theme of this publication is the relationship between reason and intuition as articulated in the most famous philosophical systems in Western history. It is because this topic has been neglected, and is too important to be neglected, that I decided to conduct a general survey of this topic and share the results with students of philosophy.

The results of this survey, as recorded in the readings edited for this anthology, clearly demonstrate that both reason and intuition have been essential aspects of the best-known philosophical systems - those which are included in virtually every "Introduction to the History of Philosophy" which is taught in North America and Western Europe. In some systems, intuition is said to be less important than reason. In some systems, intuition is said to be more important than reason. However, in every case (with the possible exception of Wittgenstein), both reason and intuition are said to be important as ways of knowing.

How we know who we are, and/or what the universe is (according to the great philosophers), involves some kind of synthesis of reasoning and intuiting. That the mind somehow balances, or synthesizes, or harmonizes these two ways of knowing is why the title of this anthology is BALANCED MIND. I do mean to imply that any theory of knowledge which excludes intuition is unbalanced. I also mean to imply that there is great psychological value in developing to full capacity both ways of knowing.

The implications for understanding who we are, and/or what the universe is, are considerable. Primary is the fact that in the left-brain culture that Western civilization has become most people have been taught to trust their reasoning above any other way of knowing. The same left-brain paradigm is also the lens of perception through which historians of western philosophy have seen fit to say that "the great philosophers tell us reason is supreme" and that intuition is of little use. Clearly, this is a gross distortion of what the great philosophers actually have said.

The discovery of the intuitive functions of the right-brain, and analytical functions of the left-brain, have led psychologists and educators to the now widely accepted conclusion that we must educate both side of the brain if people are to be whole people. The bottom-line is that if our bimodal brain is unbalanced we are not as healthy as we might be, either psychologically or physically. This radically new conclusion by modern science, in the opinion of many, is supported by the traditional philosophical psychologies of the East which call for the harmonizing within each individual of the psychological opposites variously named yin & yang, yab & yum, ida & pingala, active & receptive.

My use of the adjective "perennial" in the subtitle is intended to mean what the term usually means: that which appears again and again, regularly. When I started this survey, I thought I would find the reason/intuition partnership in a large number of philosophers, but I was surprised when I found it in all of great philosophers recorded here. Such constant "regularity" led me to use the term "perennial". However, this publication is not designed to be an explication of the 'philosophia perennis' (perennial philosophy). That is a very different topic, even though the two topics overlap. "Philosophia Perennis" is a term coined by Leibniz (1646-1716). Leibniz was the most important philosopher in 17th-century Germany. He had a highly balanced mind. With the capacities of his left brain he invented calculus. With the capacities of his right-brain he intuited an image of the perfect "pre-established harmony" of mind and body, as conceived by God before Creation.

2.

The term became known to a large audience of readers when Aldous Huxley published THE PERENNIAL PHILOSOPHY in 1946. This book was widely read by intellectuals and artists during the post-war era, and is still widely read. Huxley tells us he included in that book of readings "hardly anything from the professional philosophers", because it is not what they talk about. The world of philosophers is primarily the world of reason, which is fine as far as it goes but does not lead to true wisdom. Those philosophers who do talk about the wisdom of Perennial Truth, says Huxley, usually do so not from direct knowledge but from hearsay. Huxley instead presents passages of sacred writing from the world religions which are beautiful statements of intuitive knowledge - trans-rational knowledge of Ultimate Truth. Huxley pointed out that common to the esoteric writings (not the "official" public doctrines, but the esoteric writings) of all the world religions is a strikingly similar pattern of ideas. This truly universal pattern of ideas is common to the esoteric traditions of Shamanism, Taoism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

Said simply, the basic premises of Perennial Philosophy are as follows. The transitory phenomena of the ordinary material world are manifestations of a non-material ground (the "Ground-of-Being"). Human beings usually are not conscious of this Ground, but can be if the ego is transcended, and the two "sides" of awareness are brought into perfect harmony. Full awareness of the Ground-of-Being involves knowledge of the identity between the particular reality of individuals and the general reality of the universe as a whole. To realize this, and to live accordingly, is the primary purpose of life. Those who do realize this, and live this way, are said to be "illuminated", or "enlightened", or "filled with grace". Such people are not self-centered but world-centered, and are animated by unconditioned love.

Those who wish to think more about Perennial Philosophy will profit from reading books by other 20th-century authors who present the subject with clarity and authority, such as Titus Burckhardt, A. K. Coomaraswamy, René Guénon, Frithjof Schuon, and Huston Smith. However, students should keep in mind that the information in such books is presented by means of left-brain faculties and absorbed by means of left-brain faculties. It is a basic premise of Perennial Philosophy that rational faculties can, at most, grasp only a superficial understanding of what is being discussed. Only by means of intuition can the Ground-of-Being be touched. There are ways of educating the intuition to be able to do this. However, that is not the work of those who teach analytical philosophy. That is the traditional work of the meditation masters who preside over the kind of meditation centers one finds in the Zen gardens of Japan, the caves and ashrams of India, the swirling dances of the Sufi, and in the desert cloisters of Christianity.

In such places, it is said, one can learn more about what Lao-Tzu, Buddha, Kabir, Meister Eckhart, and all the other articulators of esoteric knowledge, are talking about when they speak of that which is beyond-the-beyond. What goes on in such places of meditation is not the subject of this book. Is what they say true? There is only one way to find out.

Is it the case that there are no relationships between analytical Western philosophy and intuitive Perennial Philosophy? No. There are many relationships. However, historians of culture and consciousness are just beginning to work out what those relationships are. Students who want to examine these relationships further are referred to the bibliography. Meanwhile, those to claim Western philosophy is dead have spoken too soon. The East does not have a monopoly on wisdom. The great philosophers of the West have much to teach us about the potential uses of the heart-mind.

3.

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BIOGRAPHIES

1. PLATO (427-347 B.C.)
"Every soul has the capacity to learn the truth and the means of comprehending the truth. But the soul must turn its eye away from the shifting world of appearances in order to see reality". It is not by means of intellect, but by means of "rational intuition (nous)" that one can obtain ultimate knowledge.
2. ARISTOTLE (384-322 B.C.)
"It is by intuition that we obtain primary premises".
"Intuitive reasoning is concerned with ultimates".
3. PLOTINUS (3rd century A.D.)
Knowledge of the One "has no need for intellection".
"You ask how we can know the infinite? Not by reason".
4. AQUINAS (13th century A.D.)
posits three levels of knowing:
 - 1). animals who know by means of senses and imagination;
 - 2). humans who know more by means of that and reasoning and faith;
 - 3). saints and angels who know by means of "intellectual intuition".With such knowledge one "sees all things together and not successively".
5. DESCARTES: MEDITATIONS ON FIRST PHILOSOPHY (1641)
With "intuition" one knows with immediacy and certainty. "Intuition" also supplies the first principles of reasoning and certifies each stage of reasoning. In a simple act of "mental vision", I know [intuitively] that I exist.
6. SPINOZA: ETHICS (1665)
"Intuitive science...advances...knowledge [to] the essence of things".
With intuition one perceives the eternal aspects of life.
7. LOCKE: ESSAY CONCERNING HUMAN UNDERSTANDING (1690)
"Intuitive knowledge" is immediate perception "without the intervening" of reasoning. "Every step in reasoning has intuitive certainty". Our knowledge of our existence is intuitive. "This kind of knowledge is the clearest and most certain...".

8. KANT: CRITIQUE OF PURE REASON (1781)
Space and time are "forms of intuition", without which there could be no rational analysis of anything. Such intuitive knowledge is a form of aesthetic experience not rational analysis. "All conceptions of things-in-themselves are intuitions".
"The unconditioned can never be found in the chain of appearances".
9. HEGEL: PHENOMENOLOGY OF SPIRIT (1807)
"Absolute knowledge...is spirit knowing itself as spirit".
History is the growth of self-consciousness, with rational means being used for a non-rational end. Consciousness realizes itself intuitively.
10. SCHOPENHAUER: THE WORLD AS WILL AND IDEA (1818)
Aesthetic experience, by means of intuition, sets one free from the limitations of reasoning. When fully developed, such aesthetic intuition enables one to transcend the willful ego and to perceive the eternal present.
11. KIERKEGAARD: CONCLUDING UNSCIENTIFIC POSTSCRIPT (1846)
The task of every individual is to become whole. One begins with aesthetic consciousness, which is imaginative but uncommitted. At a higher level of consciousness, one becomes ethical as self apprehends itself. "The task is not to exalt [thought] at the expense of [imagination], but to give them equal status". Only then can there be "absolute relationship with the Absolute".
12. NIETZCHE: THE BIRTH OF TRAGEDY (1872)
Greece gave us the ideal: the union of the masculine intellect of Apollo and feminine intuition of Dionysus. It is a delusion that intelligence is the only virtue. "It is only as an aesthetic phenomenon... that existence and the world appear justified".
13. CROCE: AESTHETIC (1902)
"Knowledge has two forms: intuitive knowledge and logical knowledge".
14. BERGSON: CREATIVE EVOLUTION (1906)
Intuition is a kind of mental sympathy by means of which the uniqueness of the perceiver and the uniqueness of the perceived become inseparable". To see reality intellect "must turn inward on itself and awaken intuition". Then one sees "form is only a snapshot view of a transition," and the awakened philosopher "will see the material world melt back into constant flux". No mysticism is implied. Intellect deals with the ordinary material world, while intuition is the direct perception reality or consciousness. "Consciousness is coextensive with life as a whole".
15. JAMES: THE WILL TO BELIEVE (1897)
Argues for the value of intuitive certainty in social and religious matters whether or not there is "rational evidence" for such positions.

16. DEWEY: ETHICS (1932)

"...judgment, however intellectual...must be...colored by feeling...".
Psycho-social experiences provide intuition with an immediate grasp of total meaning. Such truth may not be Absolute, but it is practical.

17. WHITEHEAD: PROCESS AND REALITY (1929)

The fundamental nature of the universe is infinite love. The structure of the universe is an organic system. The basic working principle of the universe is continuous creativity. Only a little bit of these truths can be comprehended by intellect. At the basis of all understanding is feeling, including the connection of the "knower with the known".

18. RUSSELL: AN INQUIRY INTO MEANING AND TRUTH (1940)

In the British tradition of Empiricism, the focus on "scientific method" and logic is so exclusive that there is little or no talk of intuition. Nevertheless, intuition lies at the very basis of Russell's epistemology. It is intuition ("immediate experience") and the memory of it that "verifies" the "truth" of any proposition. Unlike the Logical Positivists, Russell makes room for knowledge of the metaphysical.

19. WITTGENSTEIN: TRACTATUS LOGICO-PHILOSOPHICUS (1921)

His work marks the end of intuition of the British school of empiricism, and the rise to the linguistic school of logical analysis which has dominated Anglo-American professional philosophy ever since. Metaphysics is not a subject for discussion. "Whereof one cannot speak [logically], thereof one must be silent".

20. HUSSERL: IDEAS (1913)

"Essences" (pure meaning) are discovered through intuition.
The ultimate source of the validity of all rational assertion is not reason but direct "seeing" (immediate, intuitive apprehension).

21. HEIDEGGER: BEING AND TIME (1927)

Being reveals itself to intuition. What we feel is what connects us with the real world. By conjoining past and future with the present authentic selfhood is attained in the ecstasy of knowing eternity within time.

22. SARTRE: BEING AND NOTHINGNESS (1943)

Being and Nothingness appear to be two sides of a duality but are not. Being and Nothingness are aspects of each other. The Ground-of-Being is not separate from Being. Being emerges from Nothingness. Being ("undifferentiated fluidity") "unveils itself" to intuition, if the ego has been transcended.

23. TILlich: THE COURAGE TO BE (1952)

When ego has broken through the shell of anxious individualism and united with the otherness of the world at large, "nous" (rational intuition) enables us to realize the nature of Being-Itself -- the supreme reality which is higher than God. To know Being-Itself (or the Ground-of-Being) is to become a New Being.

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Part 1.

TRADITIONAL PERSPECTIVES
FROM ANCIENT GREECE
AND MEDIEVAL EUROPE

PLATO

ARISTOTLE

PLOTINUS

AQUINAS

Western philosophy stands on two legs: the philosophy of Greece and Rome, and the theology of Christianity and Judaism. Both the Judeo-Christian tradition and the Greco-Roman tradition look back on Plato and Aristotle as major figures in understanding what the universe is and how it works.

Plotinus was a Roman. He is regarded as the founder of Neoplatonism, which brought Platonic thinking into the Christianized world of medieval Europe by means of St. Augustine and other Early Fathers of the Christian Church.

No other ancient philosopher was more important to early Christianity than Plato.

St. Thomas Aquinas in the 13th century brought the philosophy of Aristotle into the theology of later medieval Christianity. The systematic thinking of Aquinas dominated European thought until the beginning of the modern era, and remains the official philosophy of the Roman Catholic Church today.

PLATO

Born about 427 B.P. Died about 347 B.P. Student of Socrates. Teacher of Aristotle. Born to an old, aristocratic family in Athens, where he spent most of his life. Plato is widely regarded as the most influential philosopher in Western history. As Whitehead expressed it, the history of Western philosophy primarily is "footnotes to Plato". There is no aspect of philosophy that Plato did not deal with. The Academy he founded in Athens lasted 900 years, until closed by Justinian in 529. This is longer than the life-span of any educational institution in Western history. He taught there until his death at the age of 80, training young minds to be "lovers of wisdom", to remember the eternal truths their clouded minds had forgotten, and how to lead society harmoniously by using the philosophical principles of logical, psychological, physical, metaphysical, and social balance.

Until Plato, almost all philosophy was oral philosophy. Socrates walked and talked, but wrote nothing. Plato was the first to produce a complete body of written philosophy in book form. It appears that virtually all of his books have survived. At least 25 titles are accepted as by his hand. They are written in the form of dialogues, a form of communication he continued from Socrates. Plato's relationship with Socrates was so close that we will never know how much of the earlier dialogues are the actual thoughts of Socrates, as remembered by Plato, or the thoughts of Plato as placed in the mouth of Socrates. Plato's philosophy is not presented in a systematic way in any one of his books, rather it is to be found running through all his books. He also is very rare among great philosophers in that he is a great writer of poetic prose. One reads Plato much as one reads a great novelist.

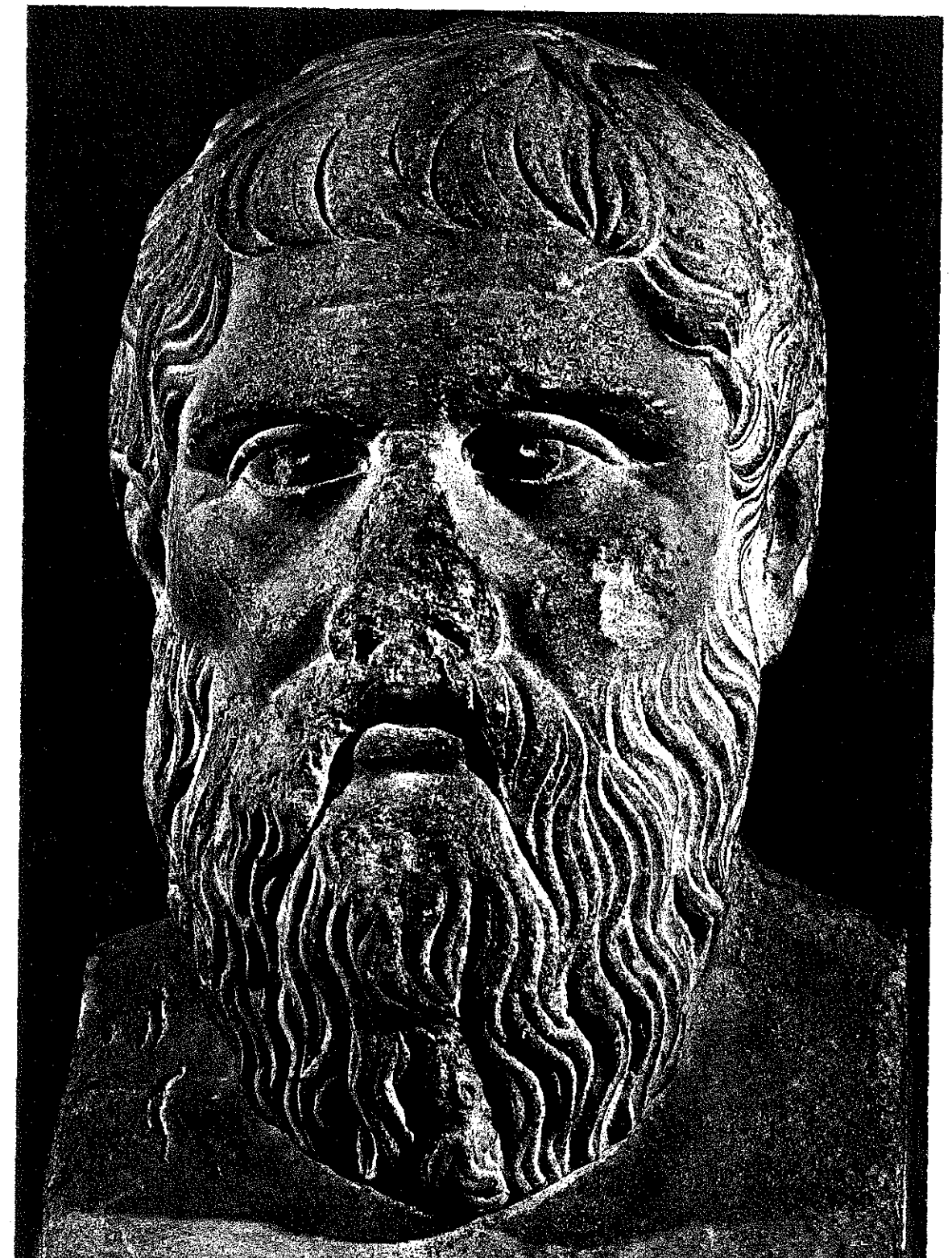
Rationalists, looking back, see Plato as a great rationalist. Mystics, looking back, see Plato as a great mystic. Actually, he was neither, or both, depending on how these terms are defined. In other words he had a balanced mind, using reason and intuition as appropriate. Rationality was very important to Plato. As the rationalists stress, he never lets undiscussable "feeling" take over his rational view of the universe, the way mystical writers usually do.

However, he also was "non-rational", as it were, in that he believed in reincarnation, in bringing the memory of "eternal truths" with us when we are born, and in that he consistently declares that absolute knowledge can be attained only by a mode of cognition that is beyond the capacity of reason, knowledge that is intuitive. The word he uses for this way of knowing is "nous". Those rationalists who have translated "nous" as intellect or reason in recent centuries have misunderstood Plato.

Since Copleston, more and more translators have come to realize that a more accurate translation of "nous" is rational intuition, or intellectual intuition. That is to say, in Plato's view, knowledge of the highest truth can only be gained when one is able to perceive with both intuition and reason employed to their highest capacity. While our intuitive capacity can take us to the "highest" light, out of the Cave of illusions, our reason can talk about where we have been, at least metaphorically.

Ethically, this is just what Plato tells us the philosopher should do. After he or she has "seen the light", the work is to bring the light of that wisdom into the daily life of the community. To attain enlightenment is not the end of living, but the beginning of a new way of living, of helping others to see. Socrates died to remind us of that.

Plato's most famous books include THE REPUBLIC, THE SYMPOSIUM, APOLOGY, PHAEDO, and TIMAEUS.



PLATO's appearance is unknown; only idealized representations survive.

ARISTOTLE

Born 384 B.C. in Macedonia, where his father was the royal physician. At the age of 18 he became a student in Plato's Academy, where he remained for two decades. Later he became tutor of Alexander the Great for several years. In 335 B.C. he returned to Athens where he created his own school called the Lyceum on Plato's model, and died in 322 B.C.

It is still being debated whether Aristotle or Plato is the most influential philosopher in Western history. There are good arguments on both sides of the question. Certainly Aristotle was the first Western philosopher to write a comprehensive survey of human knowledge.

Because he was also a natural scientist and a systematic historian, there is no general field of study that he did not address. In short, he is the author of the first encyclopedia. Unfortunately, some volumes in his corpus have not survived. His writings usually are classified under the divisions of aesthetics, biology, ethics, logic, physics, and metaphysics - an arena of thought which he invented as a formal discipline.

His most frequent mode of reasoning is inductive, up from the particular to the general. This is the opposite of Plato's preferred mode of deductive reasoning, from the general down to the particular. Too often this contrast has been exaggerated, with Aristotle being painted as the rational empiricist who was not highly intuitive, and Plato as the intuitive generalist who was not highly empirical.

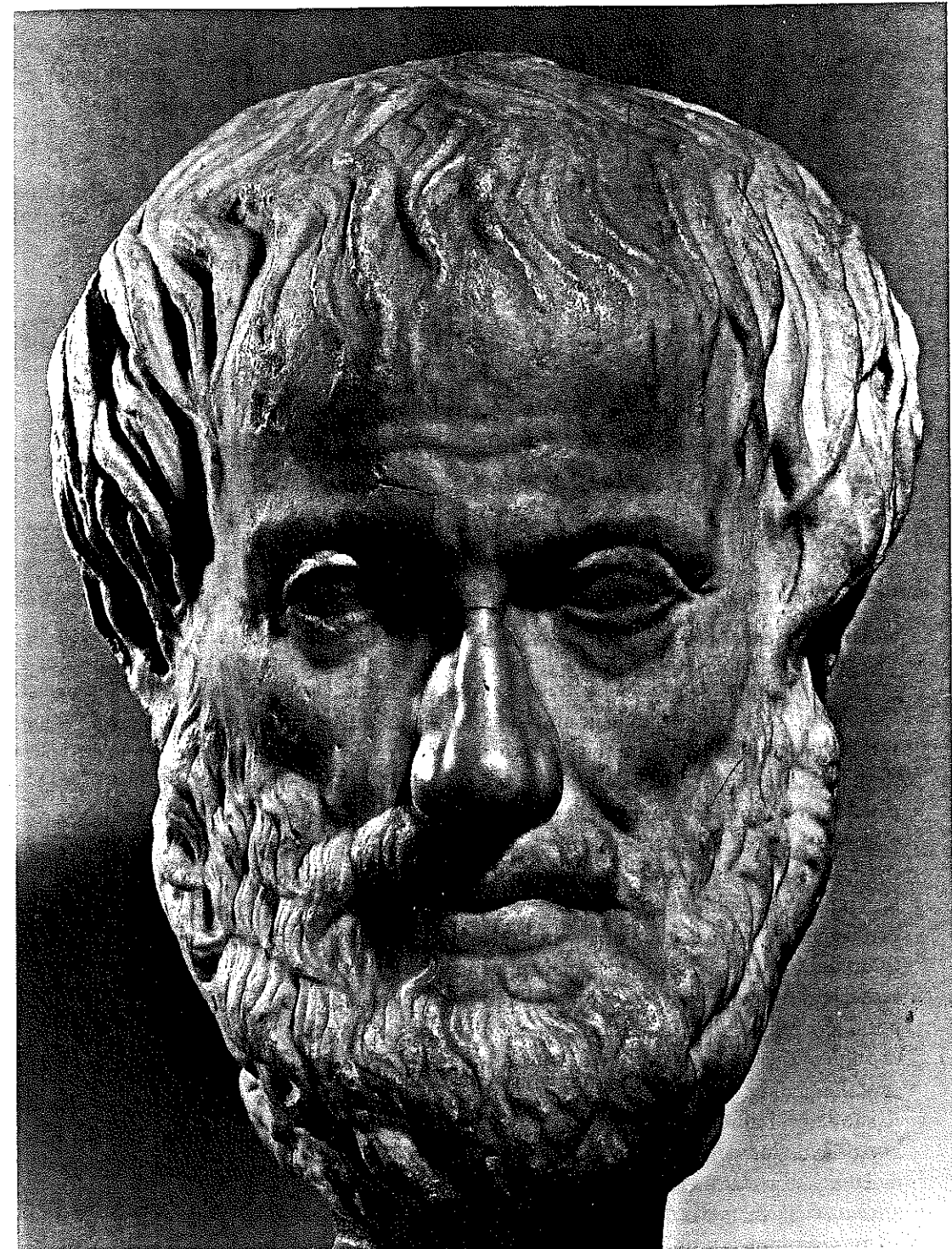
In Raphael's famous double-portrait of Plato and Aristotle at the center of "The School of Athens" (cover), the traditional contrast of this difference in method is vividly rendered. Raphael's point is that the two methods are complementary. And the fact is, Plato and Aristotle used both methods in ways that are complementary.

Aristotle leaves plenty of room for induction and intuition. To get from the particular to the general in Aristotle's system one uses "nous" (rational intuition). In short, both philosophers were rational and intuitive. Both had balanced minds, but minds that were balanced in different ways.

Plato had no desire to catalogue every form of flora and fauna; Aristotle did. Because he did, Aristotle is often regarded as the first natural scientist. While he also was highly sophisticated about the metaphysics of the relationship between matter and form, Aristotle gives to the material world a higher degree of "reality" than Plato does. As for the various levels of existence, Aristotle starts off with "materia prima" (that is to say unformed potentiality, or nothingness), then continues through various degrees of matter-in-motion.

At the top of this chain of matter being moved is the "Unmoved Mover". The "Unmoved Mover" is not only the source and conclusion of all thinking, but the origin and end of all loving. From another perspective, ultimate being is considered as unconditioned consciousness (consciousness with no object in mind). As such, the "Unmoved Mover" is pure, unconditioned love.

Passive or mechanical reasoning is enough to apprehend sense perceptions of material realities. However, active or intuitive reasoning ("nous") is required to apprehend metaphysical realities. Only knowledge of the highest truth can bring complete and continuous happiness.



ARISTOTLE. This head is believed to be a copy, made in the time of the emperor Claudius, of a statue set up in the philosopher's lifetime.

PLOTINUS

Plotinus (204-270) was a Roman while the Roman Empire was beginning to collapse. His biographer, Malchus, says Plotinus was born in Egypt, educated in Alexandria, and then went to Persia to study Eastern Religions. Devoted to Plato, he planned to build an actual Republic, on Plato's model, near Rome; but the idea was not realized.

Turning inwardly, he became the last great philosopher of the ancient world. As the founder of Neoplatonism, he also marks the beginning of Medieval European thinking. Plotinus had a mind of such universality that he was close to the heart of St. Augustine, and also is thought by many to have been trained in the mysticism of Hinduism and/or Buddhism.

His metaphysics includes a trinity: the supreme, indefinable One, with a lesser Spirit or mental faculty (which he called "nous"), and Soul. In Bertrand Russell's elegant "translation" (in A HISTORY OF WESTERN PHILOSOPHY), "nous" is "the light by which the One sees itself". Plotinus tells us that desires cloud the mind from remembering the One. We must remove our attachment to the senses. Plotinus tells us: "Cut away everything". Then divinely inspired intuition can take us "above reason" to where we can behold the One. Then "the soul becomes illuminated".

This ecstasy of union with the One is a state in which Plotinus often found himself. After the soul has received this light, which is the light of the One, then the soul can act appropriately in the third world, the material world. This world is not evil, as the Gnostics claimed, but full of its own kind of beauty. Out of the experience of the beauty of art, music, math, and nature come recollections of that supreme beauty which is the One. The love of earthly beauty leads us to loving the supreme beauty.

All earthly matter is created by the soul as a place of self-education, according to Plotinus, who also articulates the basic principles of reincarnation and karmic debt in terms that sound highly Oriental. However, he is not a fatalist or a determinist. We get what we have as a result of the actions of free will.

D. D. Runes (in THE DICTIONARY OF PHILOSOPHY) has summarized the balanced mind of Plotinus well: "Rational knowledge is the cognition of intelligible realities.... The climax of knowledge consists in an intuitive...union with the One."

To review the perspective of Plotinus on the paramount importance of intuition, here are two statements from his ENNEADS:

"Knowledge of the One "has no need of intellection".

"How can we know the infinite? Not by reason."

The Neoplatonism of Plotinus and his followers was incorporated into Christianity by St. Augustine, Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite, John Scotus Eriugena, and the Greek Fathers during the early centuries of Christianity. Neoplatonism continued in the thinking of Meister Eckhart, Nicholas of Cusa, Medici philosophers of the Italian Renaissance, the Cambridge Platonists of the 17th century, many Continental Idealists, the 19th-century Symbolists, and 20th-century Modernists.



Plotinus, the Neo-Platonist

AQUINAS

Saint Thomas Aquinas was born near Naples in 1225. He was the son of the Count of Aquinas, and related to Emperor Frederick II. He decided to be a Dominican, studied at the University of Naples (1239-1244), and then at the University of Paris under Saint Albert the Great (1245-1248). After receiving his Doctor of Theology, he taught for two decades at the University of Paris and the University of Naples, then died in 1274.

For some time, his thinking was considered heretical, but after his death he was canonized and came to be regarded as the primary philosopher of the Roman Catholic Church.

After the closing of the Greek schools of philosophy in the 6th century, almost all the writings of Aristotle disappeared from Europe. It was the writings of Plato (as "Christianized" by St. Augustine in the 4th century) that played a major role in the development of Western philosophy and theology. Happily, Aristotle's work was preserved in Arabia, and was returned to Europe through Spain in the 12th & 13th centuries. Aquinas had all of Aristotle's surviving works translated, and then set out to "Christianize" his philosophy. Against enormous odds, he succeeded, and constructed a body of thought which is considered the quintessence of Medieval European philosophy.

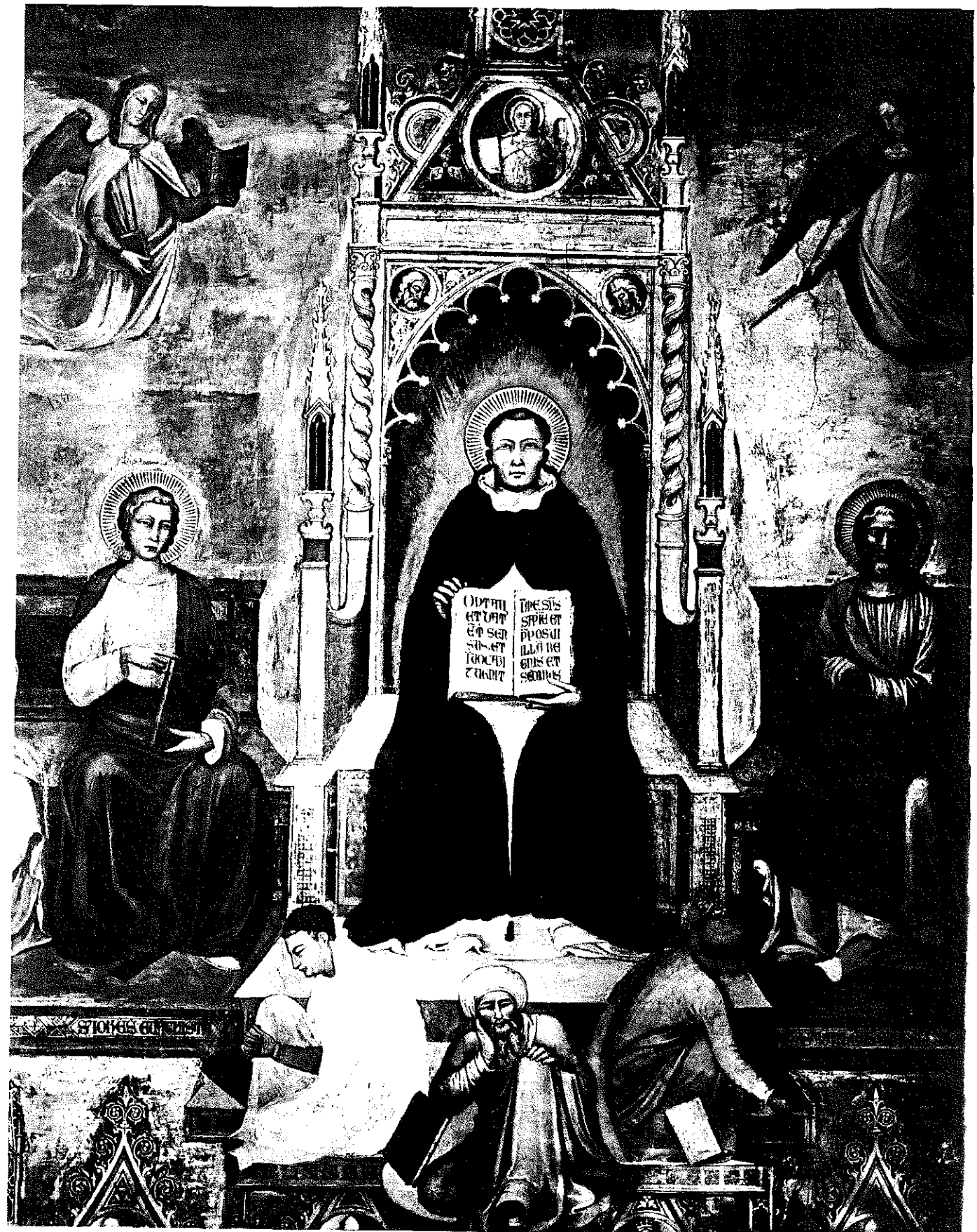
Platonic thinking, "from the top down", was well suited to a theology that looked at life on earth as a pale reflection of the Heavenly World. Having an attitude that is more "humanistic" and "naturalistic", Aquinas (like Aristotle) felt the material world daily life was entitled to more respect. In the beauty of the natural world he saw the revelation of the divine. Plato and the early Church Fathers doubted the ability of most people to know the Truth; therefore, needed to be told and to passively accept the Truth. Aquinas restored to dignity the innate, God-given capacity of all the find their way to Truth by means of reason and educated intuition. As a whole, the Thomist system is a brilliant and beautifully formulated harmony of heaven and earth, of thought and revelation, of reason and intuition. The logic is solid; the language is clear and precise; the whole theological-philosophical system is as beautifully constructed and articulated as a gothic cathedral.

As for how the mind comes to know various kinds of truth, Aquinas posits three levels of knowing: 1) Animals see and know by means of senses and imagination only. 2) Humans see and know by means of that, and by reasoning, and by intuition. There are limits to what reason can reach, while "knowledge of God is the ultimate end of cognition...". Revelation was given to humanity to raise the mind to greater heights, to the heights to which intuition can take the mind. Full vision of God requires an angelic eye.

3) Angels [and mystics whose heart has become angelic] see and know by means of "intellectual intuition" only.

The nature of rational analysis is such that it forces the mind to see things successively. It is by means of "intellectual intuition" that we "see all things together and not successively".

Aquinas, who started out as highly rational became increasingly mystical. In his later years, much of his time was spent "dwelling with God". Yes, he was a great Doctor of Philosophy, a great mind; but he also was a great heart. In the mind-heart of the Church, his heart had become angelic. Because his mind and heart had attained The Great Balance, Aquinas is known to this day as the "Angelic Doctor".



St. Thomas Aquinas in "Allegory of the Catholic Religion"

Part 2.

EARLY MODERN PERSPECTIVES
FORMULATED IN THE
17TH & 18TH CENTURIES
.....

DESCARTES

SPINOZA

LOCKE

KANT
.....

During the European Renaissance of the 15th and 16th centuries, there was a sea-change in Western thinking. Three of the primary transformations were the creation of urban life-styles for the first time since the Fall of Rome; the establishment of a new kind of individualism, which was nurtured by Humanism in admiration of Greek and Roman models; and a new kind of naturalism which eventually developed into the scientific perspective. Revealed Truth no longer went unquestioned. The printing press spread education from the upper classes to the middle classes. Individualism was institutionalized.

The perspective of the individual, rather than the traditional collective perspective of the middle ages, was central to the growth of economic capitalism, rather than feudalism; religious Protestantism rather than Catholicism; political nation-states, rather than empires; artistic compositions based on single vanishing-points rather than multiple perspectives; as well as works of literature and philosophy that look at the world "straight-on" from the individual's view-point rather than the hierarchical view-point of the Church which had been looking down on the individual from Above.

The scientific method, as we know it today, was anticipated in ancient Greece but took on its modern form in the 17th century. The scientific discoveries of Copernicus and Newton astonished the world, and gave to science a particular form of respect which was at least equal to the respect given to traditional theological revelation. Most of the great philosophers of the 17th & 18th centuries continued to believe in God. (Only Hume was an atheist). Within the context of the new Humanistic individualism, and the profound revelations of science, philosophers decided to rethink the nature of the universe and the nature of humanity. Of those who faced these problems in the 17th & 18th centuries, and provided comprehensive explanations, none have been more intellectually influential than Kant, Locke, Spinoza, and Descartes.

DESCARTES

Rene Descartes (1596-1650) was born in France into a landed family, and educated at a Jesuit college. He spent most of his life writing philosophical books in France, and Holland traveled and served as a soldier, then died in Sweden where he was tutor to Queen Christina in 1649. He made very important contributions to analytical geometry, optics, and musicology, but he is known primarily as the architect of Rationalism.

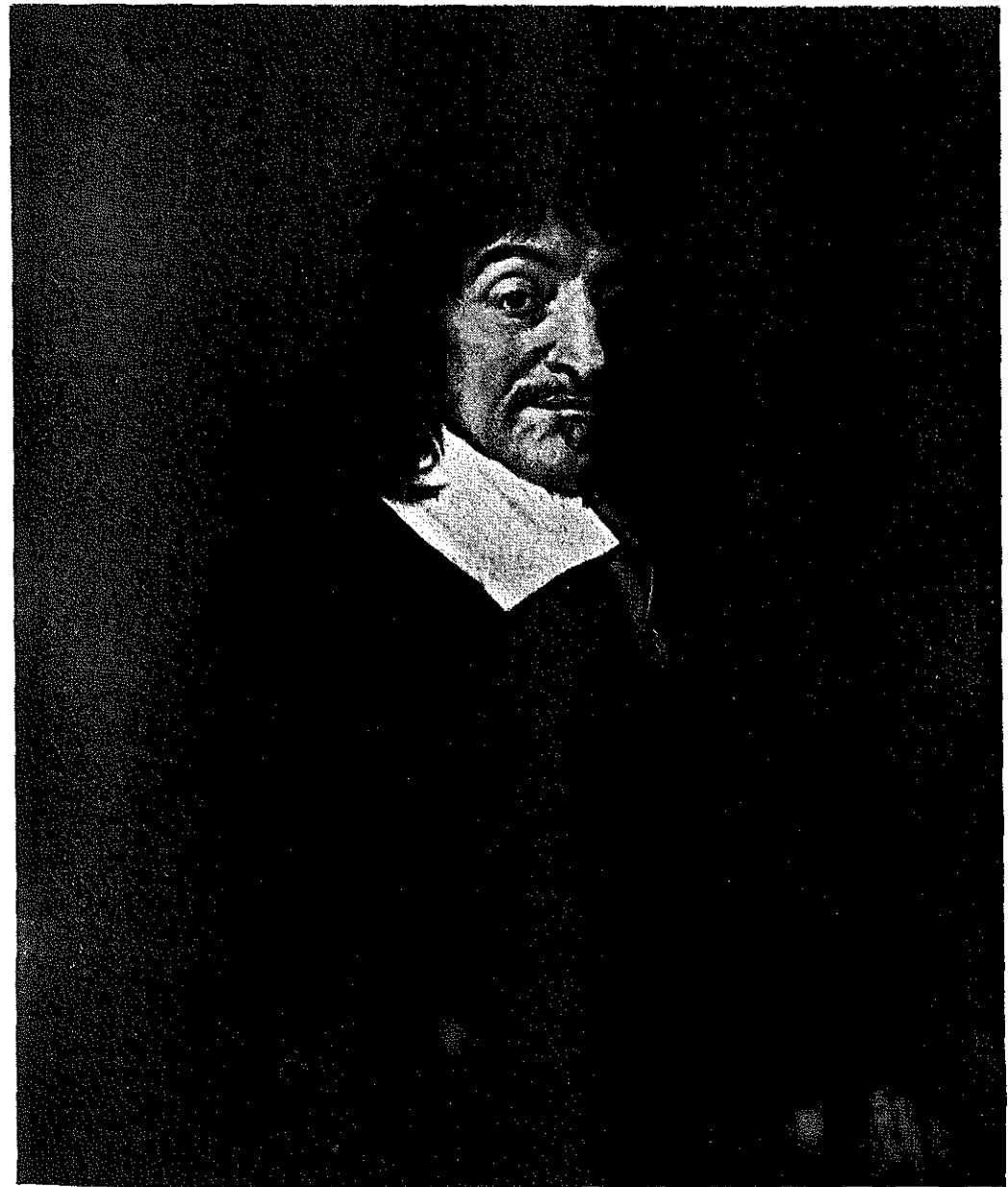
During the Renaissance of the 15th and 16th centuries, there was a profound sea-change in the arts and in social thinking. However, there was not a great deal that was new in the creation of comprehensive, systematic philosophy. Most of what was published drew heavily from the great thinkers of the past. Aristotle's empiricism encouraged the growth of a Modern scientific perspective, while the idealism of Plato continued to inspire many. What was new was a revolutionary increase in the size and sociology of the educated public, and a humanistic attitude toward the importance of the individual. Indeed, between the 15th & 17th centuries, individualism as such came to be institutionalized in the religion of Protestantism, the economics of capitalism, the political and social structures of urbanized nationalism, and in the single-point perspective of visual art. Each set in this reconfiguration of the Western cultural system reflected a new set of values based on individual experience and perception.

However, it was not until the 17th century that early Modern systematic philosophy began to take shape in ways that have continued to be characteristic of Western thinking. Descartes stands at the beginning of Modern urban thought. He embodied the turning away from traditional authorities, and the new focus on questioning the universe from an individual's point of view. God did not disappear from Early Modern philosophy; that came later. During the 17th & 18th centuries, all the great philosophers continued to believe in God, except Hume.

For the first time since Aristotle, Descartes set out to create an entirely new philosophy. Descartes was troubled by the fact that philosophers seldom agreed with each other. He decided to question everything. He systematically doubted all aspects of existence in the hope of finding something that was not doubtful. Eventually he was able to conclude he could not doubt that he was a thinking being. He wrote: "Cogito ego sum" (I think therefore I am). It should be noted that this solid certainty was not so much a logical conclusion as a profound intuition. He also came to a feeling of certainty about the existence of God and the soul. Again, this was only partly out of a process of rational analysis, but by an intuition that the idea of God must be innate in the human mind.

In his discussions of mind and matter, he made a number of distinctions which had the net effect of separating mind and matter, and body and soul, entirely. Although it was not his intention, later interpretations left people thinking Descartes was a non-spiritual rationalist.

His own system, articulated in lucid prose, actual is a dynamic balance of analytical knowledge and intuitive knowledge. However, this balanced thought was neglected as Western society moved increasing away from trusting intuition toward trusting empirical, logical, "scientific" knowledge in a world that became increasingly materialistic.



RENÉ DESCARTES

SPINOZA

.....Baruch Spinoza
(1632-1677) was born and educated in Holland as the son of a well-to-do Jewish merchant. Jewish people were welcome in Holland. The first synagogue in Amsterdam was built in 1598. Rembrandt's paintings show us members of a well-established Jewish community. Spinoza studied Jewish literature, including the Kabbalah, before studying Latin, the natural sciences, and Descartes.

This free-thinker eventually separated himself from the Jewish faith in 1656, and found a new kind of non-Biblical faith which is distinctly modern. He lived modestly and alone, earning his living grinding optical lenses. He declined a professorship at the University of Heidelberg in 1673, not wanting anything to interfere with his thinking - a way of thinking that was both scientific and intuitive, a method of reasoning he called "scientia intuitiva (intuitive science)". What term could be more expressive of balanced mind?

From Moses of Cordova, and other Kabbalists, he learned the idea of the identity of God and Universe; that the matter of the world is part of the actual body of God. He continued to find this concept of "all reality is of one substance" in the pre-Socratics and Bruno. In Descartes, he found two universal substances which was a problem for a mind seeking unity. He rejected Descartes duality, feeling certain that God and the processes of nature are one. In his own words: "The greatest good is the knowledge of the union which the mind has with the whole of nature". Versions of this kind of pantheism are central to the mind of tribal people, and any number of mystical traditions, but pantheism was new to modern urban Europe.

In his most famous book, ETHICS, Spinoza defines intuitive knowledge as perception of things "sub specie eternitatis (in their eternal aspects)". Thus seen, it becomes clear that mind is not material, nor is matter mental. Only dualistic thinking creates such categories. Individual separateness is an illusion. There is one substance in the universe. Seen outwardly, all that is perceived is matter. Seen inwardly, all that is perceived is thought. Body and mind do not act on each other; they are each other. In the last proposition of the book, this gentle, loving man concludes: "Blessedness is not the reward of virtue, but is virtue itself".

Spinoza's pantheism was a strong influence on the post-Kantian philosophers and Romantic poets of Germany, especially Novalis and Goethe who regarded him as a saint. He was regarded with similar reverence by Coleridge, Wordsworth, Shelley, Byron, and George Eliot. Spinoza also is a powerful presence in the mental "genealogy" of Hegel, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Bergson. In short, Spinoza had put his finger on the pulse of life.



Portrait Painting at Wolfenbüttel
(Copy in The Hague)

LOCKE

John Locke (1632-1704) was born and raised in England as the son of a Puritan. He studied at Oxford when Cromwell was in power, but favored the Revolution of 1688. He became a physician, but spent most of his life writing books on theoretical and political philosophy. To students of politics, Locke is best remembered as one of the major architects of modern democratic thought. His ideas are basic to the American Declaration of Independence and Constitution. As amplified by Montesquieu and Voltaire, Locke's political ideals also became part of the French Revolution, and the modern liberal tradition in general.

Before the Revolution of 1688 he wrote his most important book of theoretical philosophy, *ESSAY ON THE HUMAN UNDERSTANDING* (1690). This was the first book of analytical psychology, and the beginning of the powerful tradition of British Empiricism. The tone is open-minded, allowing for faith, reason, common sense, and doubt. For example, this highly religious man states: "The bare testimony of revelation is the highest certainty". However, he qualifies that by saying: "Revelation must be judged by reason". In general, he had little interest in metaphysics. He allows it, but gives it little space in this thinking. His focus was on what can be discussed concretely in clear terms. His mind was that of a scientist, who establishes the truth of something one step at a time. He had no interest in constructing grand systems like those of his continental contemporaries. His radical claim is that everything we know comes from experience and from nowhere else. There are no "innate ideas", no Platonic forms, no reincarnation, etc. We are born with a mind that is a blank tablet, upon which the experiences of life leave marks. These marks, primarily linguistic and ideational, are put together by something he calls "internal sense" which enables us to fabricate general ideas out of particular ideas.

The tradition of Empiricism, which Locke founded, became extremely powerful especially in English-speaking cultures over the next three centuries. Its simple logic, and compatibility with both scientific analysis and the practical purposes of pragmatism has made it the dominant philosophical perspective in Western culture. In most people's versions of Empiricism, there is little room for a word like "intuition". It is rare to find this term in any book by an Empiricist written in the last three centuries. Thus the word has almost disappeared from the mainstream of philosophy in much of the world.

However, while frequently overlooked, the term is there in Locke's philosophy. In his *ESSAY ON THE HUMAN UNDERSTANDING*, Locke states there are three ways of knowing, and only three [Book IV, Chapter 3]: 1) sensation; 2) intuition; 3) reason. Our knowledge of material things is sensitive. Our knowledge of our own existence is intuitive. Our knowledge of God is rationally demonstrative, *but inherently intuitive*. Locke also says that "intuitive knowledge" is immediate perception "without the intervening" of reasoning. Can intuition also be part of the reasoning process? Yes, says Locke: "Every step in reasoning has intuitive certainty". As for our intuitive knowledge of our own existence, Locke agrees with Descartes and states: "This kind of knowledge is the clearest and most certain...".

One of the curiosities of the pseudo-scientific method of Empiricism, from Locke to Russell, is in its psychology. While the term "intuition" became a taboo-word and rapidly disappeared from the Empirical literature after Locke (as the Empiricists did battle with the *overly* intuitive idealists on the European continent), the psychological actuality of intuitive processes continued to be part of the thinking, as we shall see.



John Locke

KANT

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) spent his life in the small East Prussian town of Königsberg. His family had come from Scotland a century before. They were poor in funds but rich in religious spirit. He first studied theology, then philosophy, anthropology, and astronomy. He eventually became not only a professor of philosophy (1770), but one of the greatest philosophers in Western history, having created a monumental synthesis of modern scientific thought and perennial wisdom. Most 19th-century philosophy was written in response to Kant. Much of 20th-century philosophy continues to be constructed on Kantian foundations, including the work of Husserl, Heidegger, and Cassirer. No modern philosopher has exerted more influence in the field.

No-one expected revolutionary thoughts from this short, frail, shy man, but he did revolutionize philosophy. His *CRITIQUE OF PURE REASON* (1781 & 1787) boldly refutes the British Empiricists. Knowledge does not come from the senses, only sense-data does. The innate rationalizing structure of the mind organizes data into knowledge. Causation is not observed in the outside world but assumed by the inherent logic of the mind. Reason is the active power that puts passive nature into place. The clear, precise motions of the natural world, as traced by Newton and Copernicus, are that way because they are reflections of the clear precision of our innate logic. Moreover, our sense of space and time are not derived from experience but are intuitively realized, intrinsic elements of the mind. Along these co-ordinates raw sensations are organized into coherent perceptions. Without this grid of context there could be no logical analysis of anything. Such assumptions about the inherent structure of the mind have ever since been part of the modern tradition of Idealism, and have much in common with ancient Platonism. The book ends by stating people waste their time trying to "prove" religion by means of rational analysis. Science is wonderful as far as it goes. It is equipped to deal with material reality. However, attempting to use the scientific method for religion is not appropriate. It does not apply to this subject. Religion exists because there are other ways of knowing.

In his next great book, *CRITIQUE OF PRACTICAL REASON* (1788), Kant deals with religion directly. Theology is said to be too unstable a basis for religion, because it is based on nothing more solid than reasoning. More stable is morality which is based on the absolute certainty of intuition or "direct perception". There is nothing more certain or inescapable than the "categorical imperative" of our moral feeling which emerges from our impulse toward the good and through freedom finds its fullness by "treating humanity as an end and never as only a means". It also is by means of intuition that we know God exists behind the shifting world of temporary images. The transcendental world of what he calls the "noumenon" is known by means of what he calls "nous" (the capacity to know directly). In short, Kant agrees with Plato. Kant also agrees with Rousseau that above reasoning is the feeling of the heart; and with Pascal that "the heart has reasons of its own which the head can never understand".

In his third great book, *CRITIQUE OF JUDGMENT* (1789-1793) that side of us which is rational, individual, and inward, and that side of us which is outward, moral and social, are brought together. The book is a profound expression of the psycho-cosmic synthesis of cognitive modes which is balanced mind. A third way of knowing is activated when there is harmony between the inherent structure of our reasoning mind and that which is perceived. This knowing is aesthetic. The experience of beauty is when the world outside and the world inside conjoin perfectly, when reasoning and feeling are united as if by love. It is primarily by means of Kant that the perennial perspective on the functional synthesis of thought and feeling in human experience entered modern philosophy for Hegel, Nietzsche, and Existentialists to wrestle, and for Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard and Bergson to sing.



Immanuel Kant

Part 3.

MODERN PERSPECTIVES

FORMULATED IN

THE 19TH CENTURY

.....

HEGEL

SCHOPENHAUER

KIERKEGAARD

NIETZSCHE

CROCE

BERGSON

.....
Between the late 18th century and the early 19th century, the political revolutions in the United States and Europe, and the Industrial Revolution which swept Western Europe and the United States, established the sociological framework of the modern urban world as we know it today. Many of the standard assumptions of the past were swept away. Materialism and Empiricism became such a powerful forces that even God was swept away from the minds of many urban intellectuals. In short, spirit got separated from matter.

Within the social confusion that followed the collapse of the traditional moral and mental authority of the Church and the Monarchy, there was no longer "one answer" to the enduring questions that haunt every human being: Who are we? Why are we where? Where are we going? Instead, in the modern, democratic world, everyone is offered many possible answers, and is required to find out for themselves the answers which are most meaningful. The six philosophers whose ideas are presented in this part of the study guide developed their perspectives during the 19th century, even though some continued to publish in the 20th century. Each articulated comprehensive answers to the major philosophical questions, but each answered very differently.

One feature all six philosophers have in common is that they do not accept the extremely logical vision of the "British School" of Empiricism, which developed rapidly from the time of Locke to the time of Darwin. Empiricism developed within the history of Western philosophy under the inspiration of the methods of physical science, and still functions under that inspiration. Empiricists usually believe reality is outside the mind. The six Idealists presented here usually believe reality is inside the mind. They also believe in spirit-matter.

HEGEL

G. W. F. Hegel (1770-1831) was born and educated in Germany where he spent most of his life. He was the son of a minor government official. After studying philosophy, theology, and the classics at Tübingen (1788-93), he taught in Frankfurt, Jena, Nürnberg, Heidelberg, and Berlin. In 1806, Napoleon's soldiers entered Hegel's home. He barely escaped with the manuscript of his first important book, *THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF SPIRIT* (1807). Goethe helped him through his poverty. After that he wrote *LOGIC* (1812-16), and then *ENCYCLOPEDIA OF PHILOSOPHIC SCIENCES* (1817), which included just about everything that is to be found in his comprehensive vision except his *LECTURES ON AESTHETICS*. He came to be greatly honored, so much so that he was widely spoken of in the same breath with Goethe and Beethoven. Gradually he faded into becoming the classic "absent-minded professor" who lectured with one shoe. His influence (for better or worse) was enormous, even though his awkward, complicated, and obscure writing is extremely difficult to read.

His famous method is called the dialectic, which is made up of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. He described the key characteristic of this method as "holding fast to the positive within the negative". The method does not work for abstract systems that contain logical contradictions, but only for factual systems. Hegel claims his method leads to the discovery of the Absolute Idea, or Absolute Spirit, which is the ultimate "truth of Being".

Spirit is the underlying reality of all realities. Self-knowledge grows, in dialectical stages, toward awareness of the Absolute Idea. What is the Absolute Idea? The idea that thinks itself.

In his philosophy of history, he sees a constant becoming, leading to greater and greater freedom. This constant becoming is also the development of "cosmic reason". His view of history gained many supporters, both liberal and anti-liberal, particularly Bismarck, Marx, Lenin, and Hitler. In short, his strange idea of freedom led him to support a totalitarian state, such as the Kingdom of Prussia. He did not like Kant's vision of "eternal peace" among nations, but tended to prefer that nations go to war, otherwise they would grow weak. Although he believed in God, he puts the State over the Church. Divinity is the totality of relationships within which all things have their being.

What non-violent people (including John Dewey) inherited from Hegel that is of value was a sense of organic wholeness, or systemic wholeness. Within both logical systems and social systems, that which is individual finds its fullness in its relationship with the whole.

There are enormous implications to this simple idea, not only for morality and social institutions but for the general systems theory which emerged in the 20th century.

Where is intuition in all of this? Almost everywhere. Few philosophers have so clearly bent logic to articulate their emotions. More specifically, in Hegel's system it is intuition that tells him the cosmic spirit is moving through history. And it is by means of intuition, not reason, that consciousness become aware of itself. As for Absolute Knowledge, that for Hegel is "spirit knowing itself as spirit".



G. W. F. HEGEL

SCHOPENHAUER

Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) was born and raised in Prussia. However he had little sympathy for the Prussian values that were celebrated by his fellow Prussian, Hegel - a philosopher whom he came to dislike intensely. Indeed, he was not happy with the whole history of modern Western philosophy (with the exception of Kant), nor with the established doctrines of Christianity and Judaism. In his quest for a "better answer", he looked to the East. He was one of the first Western thinkers to consider the philosophies of India superior. He never tired of celebrating the wisdom of Hinduism and Buddhism. Moreover, he expressed his thinking in clear language (unlike Hegel and many other philosophers).

His father was a merchant. His mother was a novelist. Goethe was a family friend. He was born in Dantzig, but grew up in Hamburg and Weimar. He completed his doctor's dissertation in philosophy in 1813. Then he set to work on his most famous book is *THE WORLD AS WILL AND IDEA* (1818). It is the first book since the ancient era of Plato and Plotinus to present a comprehensive vision of the world in a way that is parallel with the philosophy and psychology of Hinduism and Buddhism.

Reason is described as being capable to gasping only the superficial realities of the material world. Highly developed intuition can set us free from the limitations of reason and the illusionary world that ordinary perception puts before our eyes. When a fully developed intuition has transcended the grasp of the ego, one can perceive the eternal present, and realize how the will of the ego has been the binding chain.

The will of the ego-bound individual is so strong that it actually creates the universe that most people see every day. Every star, rock, fruit, flower, and face is an "utterance of the will". In other words, we see only what the will wishes us to see. Ego-animated will also is the root of all evil and suffering. Until one can break the chain that binds, one will always suffer, and perpetuate the evils that plague humanity. Once free from the dark, ugly chain of the ego-saturated will, one's transformed will - the "illuminated" will - moves in harmony with the cosmic will (which is of the same "substance"). Then, and only then is one truly free from suffering.

When commentators speak of Schopenhauer's "apotheosis of Will", they often miss the point. He was not talking about something to be celebrated but to be overcome. It is said that Schopenhauer was pessimistic. If so, no more so than the Buddhists and the authors of the Vedas which Schopenhauer so deeply admired. It might be more accurate to say he was realistic. Most of the world actually is filled with and formed by ego-dominated individuals. One a few are ever able to transcend the ego, or transform the ego, so that it comes to be a reflection of not the dark side but the light side. When this does happen, say the sacred teachings of Hinduism and Buddhism, one is no longer self-serving but world-serving. Such a vision of humanity carries within it an inherent optimism: one can reach ultimate wisdom or Nirvana, which Schopenhauer describes as "That peace which is above reason, that perfect calm of spirit...serenity".

Although entirely overlooked for many years, Schopenhauer's emphasis on the intuitive and the instinctive eventually came to be widely admired during the Age of Romanticism, when the poets and painters were more interested in emotion than reason. However, that was only a small part of the message Schopenhauer was trying to communicate.



The Young Schopenhauer
(Copper Cut by Ludwig Ruhl)

NIETZSCHE

Frederick Nietzsche (1844-1900) was born in Prussia. His father was a minister who tutored members of the royal family. At the age of 18 he lost his faith in God. He had a gentle soul and loved music, but he idealized a more vigorous form of masculinity. His search for a new deity led to "Superman". Schopenhauer's thinking fired his mind. It was the dark side of SCHOPENHAUER that appealed to him. He had no interest in serenity. He called Schopenhauer and Wagner "pity-ful Buddhists". Room must be made for the strong to be strong. His guiding principle ended up being the "will to power". He wanted to become a warrior, but he became a Ph.D. in philosophy instead.

In 1872, Nietzsche published his first (and only complete) book, THE BIRTH OF TRAGEDY OUT OF THE SPIRIT OF MUSIC. It is a passionate celebration of the bi-singular ideal he most admired in Greek art. He tells the story of Dionysus, the God of wild sensuality and emotional ecstasy who embodied the masculine power of instinct, and mystical intuition. Then he tells the story of Apollo, God of lucid wisdom, whose calm beauty is feminine.

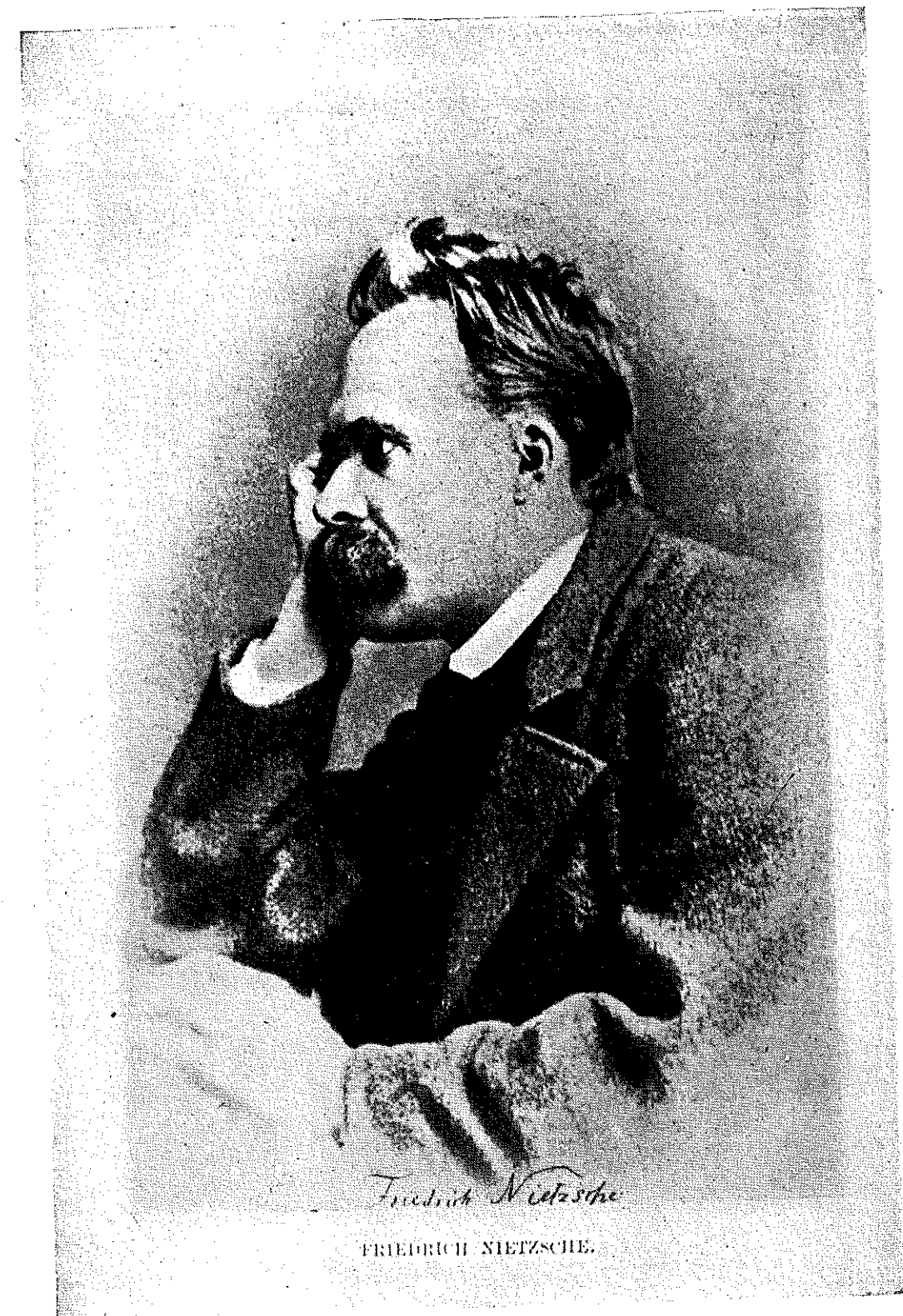
He concludes that the most noble of Greek art is a union of these two ideals. Although he does not use the term (perhaps because he was not comfortable with the sexual implications), he is pointing to a synthesis that is androgynous. Said in terms of contemporary psychophysiology, he is pointing to a dynamic integration of left-brain and right-brain. In Greek drama, he notes how this synthesis took place historically. The chorus grew out of the devotees of Dionysus, while the dialogue emerged later as a rational reflection. This insightful observation was the perception of a balanced mind.

In Nietzsche's view, the ancient Greeks raised themselves out of their pessimistic world-view during these ritual performances, having discovered that "it is only as an aesthetic phenomenon...that existence and the world appear justified".

From these vigorous, semi-tribal origins of Greek aesthetics and metaphysics, he saw a decline that can be traced to Socrates - once a strong warrior and then a soft philosopher. Plato who was an athlete became a mere esthete. While youthful Greece produces profound mythology and poetry, decadent Greece produced only logical and philosophy and a party-line that claimed intelligence and calm balance are the only virtues.

As for recent centuries, Nietzsche regretted that German art was too long under the Apollonian restraint of Italian and French aesthetics, and was very happy to see primal power coming back in the form of Bach, Beethoven, and Wagner.

Nietzsche's mind did not remain balanced. His later writing have the sound of madness ringing through them. He criticized mercilessly everything that he had loved, including the loving qualities within himself. Ultimately, during the last 12 years of his life he was officially insane. While part of himself was still in tact, he wrote *THUS SPOKE ZARATHUSTRA* (1883), which certainly is brilliant but not quite as brilliant as he believed. Here we are told "God is dead" (as God obviously was for him). Here we read the words of a mind in which the chorus of Dionysus is shouting wild shouts with little Apollonian reflection on stage.



KIERKEGAARD

Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) was a Dane. However, he drank heavily of Hegel at the University of Copenhagen, and has entered the history of philosophy as an honorary German. In many ways, he marks the end of German Idealism.

Turning away from Hegel, and all the great system-builders, he moved philosophical thinking in the direction of 20th-century Existentialism. Indeed, he was the first philosopher to use the term "existential". His use of it is not the same as would later be used by the likes of Heidegger and Sartre, but there are a number of important similarities.

In general, he moved away from heavy-handed, forceful conclusions, and opened the way to irony, anxiety, and uncertainty as the fate of modern humanity.

Throughout his writing, reason plays a very small role. That in itself is revolutionary. If Kant called into question the traditional assumption that reason is supreme, Hume and Rousseau hammered it, and Schopenhauer and Hegel almost shook it apart by the passionate winds of "The Will", Kierkegaard simply blew away what remained of the crumbling pedestal of reason with the soft winds of his poetic prose. In place of reason grew subjectivity, anxious uncertainty, and finally a firm commitment to intuition.

In CONCLUDING UNSCIENTIFIC POSTSCRIPT (1846), he claims all truth is subjective. One's individual existence is the only certain reference-point for thoughtful analysis. Existence is not a riddle to be solved. There is no rational answer. The solution to the problem of living is to act on faith in one's intuition of what is to be done.

The task of every individual is to become whole. One begins with aesthetic consciousness which is imaginative but uncommitted. At a higher level of consciousness, one becomes a committed ethical being, as self begins to apprehend itself. In a very clear expression of balanced mind, Kierkegaard states: "The task is not to exalt [reason] at the expense of [intuitive imagination], but to give them equal status". Only when the mind attains this condition of dynamic balance can one have an "absolute relationship with the Absolute".

His other books have been more widely discussed, because balanced mind has been a neglected corner for modern historians of Western philosophy, because most contemporary philosophers don't talk about the Absolute any more, and because his other mentations have so much in common with the skepticism, anxiety-ridden melancholy, and self-doubt that became so characteristic of 20th-century thinking.

The titles of his other books sound very much like they were written by a 20th-century author, e.g., FEAR AND TREMBLING (1843), SICKNESS UNTO DEATH (1843), THE CONCEPT OF DREAD (1844). Do these not sound like the titles of plays or novels from Germany after World War I, or from France after World War II?

EITHER/OR (1843) points out that whether one chooses to live a life based on aesthetic ideals, or a life based on ethical ideals, the choice is not rational. The highest path, the path toward "absolute relationship with the Absolute", is a non-rational choice in favor of a life of the spirit. Even though this is what this devout Christian actually believed, in this book he does not force the conclusion. He is remarkably undogmatic. He invites you and I to come to our own conclusions. In fact, he insists on it, by backing away from the traditional dogmatism of categorical statements. He does not take a stance for us on the fundamental issues. In short, we must take our own stance in the world.



CROCE

Benedetto Croce (1866-1952) was born and raised in Italy as the son of a prosperous merchant. Unlike most of the leading philosophers in Western history who lived modestly, Croce was able to live quite comfortably in Naples. Italy had not contributed a great deal to art or philosophy since the Renaissance. Croce wanted to change that, and he did. He wrote so much, and so well that he came to be regarded as the greatest Italian philosopher of modern times, without even having been a professor.

He is often grouped with the German Idealists, and it is true that he was the intellectual son of Kant and Hegel. Like all traditional Idealists, Croce was convinced that all reality, properly so called, is in the mind (unlike traditional Empiricists who say no reality is in the mind). He also is in a line of direct descent from the idealistic Scholasticism of St. Thomas Aquinas (as are most Roman Catholics to this day). Even though Croce eventually lost his faith in Christianity, he maintained his scholastic habits and love of beauty. In place of traditional religion, Croce (like so many in our time) came to worship art and beauty. Croce made contributions to many aspects of philosophy, literary criticism, and liberal social thinking. His stand against the Italian totalitarians of World War I and World War II made him popular hero. He also was a Senator, and Minister of Education.

Croce started off as an historian before he turned to philosophy about 1893. His view of history as philosophy is one of his many views in which we can see his reason and his intuition operating in partnership. Like Vico before him, Croce in his book *ON HISTORY* argues that history should be written by philosophers. When I was growing up, both my parents used to read aloud Will Durants's *THE STORY OF PHILOSOPHY* (1926 & 1938). I still remember a number of Durant's pithy statements by heart. This gifted popularizer of Western philosophy summed up the main point of Croce's *ON HISTORY* this way: "He believes that the fetish of the perfectly scientific history has led to a microscopic erudition in which the historian loses the truth because he knows too much". In short, ~~analytical precision~~ with intuitive synthesis together yield truth. Neither analysis alone or intuition alone can do other than yield aspects of what is true.

Croce is most widely remembered as the founder of modern aesthetics, dividing expression from representation. His most famous book is *AESTHETICS* (1902). It was the first of three volumes that were collected under the title *PHILOSOPHY OF SPIRIT* (1917). For Croce, everything is a manifestation of "spirit". In *AESTHETICS* he tells us: "Knowledge has two forms: it is either intuitive knowledge or logical knowledge". One provides knowledge of the particular. One provides knowledge of the universal. His definition of philosophy is the "study of the concrete universal", in other words, the study of how to find the universal in the concrete by using the synthetic method of rational intuition.

Art is a language, not a rational language such as written expression but an intuitive language. Aesthetics is the rational study of this intuitive language, both in the creation and perception of beauty. In as much as reality is mental and subjective, "It is always our own intuition we express when we are enjoying a beautiful work of art". In dealing with the traditionally unanswerable question "what is beauty?", he is both specific and open-ended in his approach. He defines beauty as "expression". But what is being expressed? One of his answers is that beauty is the mental image that which expresses the essence of that which is perceived. In ordinary perception, reason and intuition combine such that we view the world in generalities. In purely aesthetic experience, one perceives only the uniqueness of a reality. He ends with the open-endedness characteristic of modern thinking: "I shall never know exactly why a thing is beautiful.... [I simply] follow my feeling".



BENEDETTO CROCE

BERGSON

Henri Bergson (1859-1941) was a French philosopher matured during the 1890s, and was appointed to the chair of philosophy at the College de France in 1900. He was more influential than any other metaphysician of the 20th century. In a century of pessimism, he was optimistic. In a century full of very narrow empiricism and pseudo-scientific logicalism, he was profoundly intuitive. This brought almost nothing but criticism from other professional philosophers. However, to his students and to a large reading public, he became an extremely popular hero. It would be difficult to exaggerate his importance in French and English-speaking countries between 1900 and 1930 where many shared Bergson's rejection of the deification of scientific and materialistic thinking.

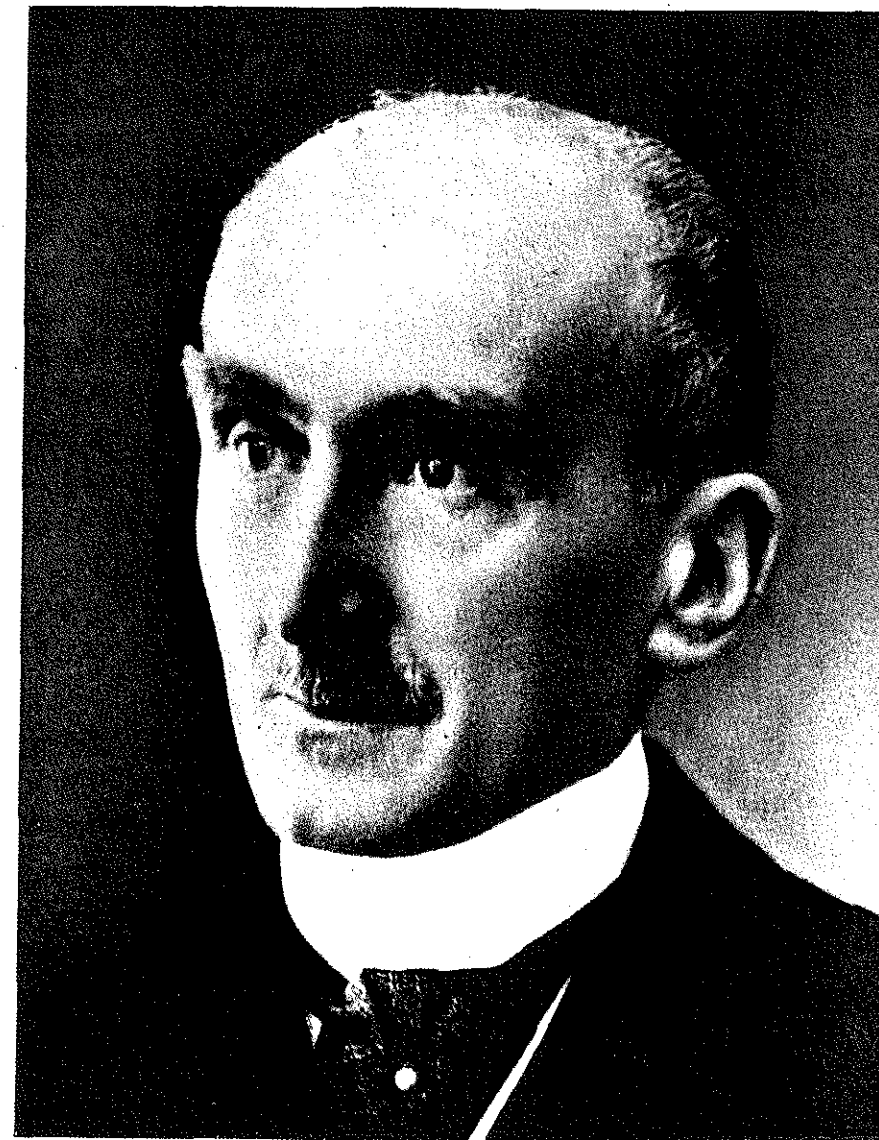
His unique blend of mythic perspective on eternal forces and verbal fluidity, held together by an elastic logic, had an appeal that was almost magical for a huge audience. In the writings and conversations of the major Modern artists of his era, for example, there is a constant stream of references to the dynamic ideas of Bergson. He inspired Modernism's quest for the infinite. Bergson also was a major influence on Freud and Jung, as well as Proust, Bernard Shaw, and James Joyce. He gave them a new framework for time and "spontaneous arisings" He not only wrote in a vivid and highly visual style, but used terms that could be easily comprehended by non-philosophers. Perhaps no philosopher since Plato has had such a literary mastery of language. He won the Nobel Prize in 1927.

His rationalistic critics usually misunderstood what Bergson was saying. He was not anti-intellectual. However, he continued Kant's criticism of those who would celebrate reason above all else, and insisted that intuition be recognized as being of equal importance.

In fact, he was the first to attempt to give intuition a scientific basis. In private life, he was a highly spiritual person, but he chose not to inject his personal Judeo-Christian religiosity into his public expressions. He wanted to articulate a universal philosophy that did not include mysticism (unlike the French Neo-Thomists whom he respected). He also was highly democratic in his perspective. Intuition is not only the capacity of a gifted few, he said, but of everyone alive. As crisply noted in THE DICTIONARY OF PHILOSOPHY, edited by D. D. Runes (1942), Bergson's "conception of intuition may be viewed as akin to Spinoza's 'intuitio': to wit: a completion rather than a rejection of reason". As Russell said in WISDOM OF THE WEST, "logic itself is the influence that must be overcome". When overcome, life is seen as a vast "vital impulse". Matter is thought poured into form.

Bergson was quite ill during the last 20 years of his life, and he grew 'out-of-fashion'. Optimism in modern philosophy could not survive the horrors of World War II. Nevertheless, Bergson's fame was such that after the fall of France to the Nazis in 1940, the Vichy government offered him a special exemption from the anti-Jewish laws so he could continue teaching. He declined out of sympathy with the suffering of his fellow Jews, resigned from the College de France, and died the following year.

Bergson wrote too well, and too "intuitively", to be appreciated by the army of logic-loving positivists who took control of so much of the professional philosophy that has been taught at the universities of Europe and America, positivists who have had little or no room for metaphysics on their agenda. However, Bergson did have an important influence on James, Whitehead, and the "process philosophers" of the 20th century, as well as on the fertile minds of Husserl and Heidegger - those who dared to study subjective truth.



BERGSON, HENRI

Part 4.

LOGIC, PROCESS,
AND PRAGMATISM
IN THE 20TH CENTURY

.....

JAMES

DEWEY

WHITEHEAD

RUSSELL

WITTGENSTEIN

.....

These five English-speaking philosophers all started off as science-oriented Empiricists. Most of them remained empirical, but used empirical methods to discover new ways of thinking about the world.

James and Dewey pioneered the American School of Pragmatism, the "practical" philosophy which has dominated American thinking ever since. In terms of popular philosophy (what most people think about and agree with), Dewey may well be the most influential philosopher of the 20th century.

Whitehead, Russell, and Wittgenstein pursued a different line of thinking. They wrote about the most logical thinking ever developed in Western philosophy. They also are a special "lineage". Whitehead taught Russell who taught Wittgenstein (In college, I used to call them the Socrates, Plato, & Aristotle of modern logic).

The balanced mind of Whitehead, who was both a scientist and a philosopher, did not limit himself to discussions of logic. His thinking process (not unlike the thinking process of Socrates) was a synthesis of analysis and intuition, of the physical and the metaphysical. Russell, however, was very uncomfortable with the idea of discussing intuition. He and Wittgenstein virtually eliminated "the intuitive" and "the metaphysical" from the chalkboard of the 20th-century academic philosophy. Of those who have influenced other philosophers, most influential philosophers of this century have been Wittgenstein and Heidegger. From one came Existentialism. From the other came the Logio-Linguistics which has dominated academic philosophy in Europe and the US for decades. It had little competition until the development of the Consciousness Movement in the 1970s.

JAMES

William James (1842-1910) was born in New England and taught at Harvard for many years. His prominent family included his brother, Henry James, the celebrated novelist. William was a warm-hearted, highly ethical, and very democratic human being (with none of his brother's snobbishness). William started his professional life as a medical doctor, and made most of his contribution to Western thought as a psychologist. However, he also did so much in the field of philosophy that he may properly be called a philosopher. James is the first American philosopher to have earned so much international respect as a philosopher that he appears in the standard histories of Western philosophy. To be sure, there are earlier Americans who were highly philosophical. This includes many of the Founding Fathers of the United States, especially Thomas Jefferson, who put into practice much of the 18th-century philosophy of the "Age of Enlightenment". There also are seminal figures such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, the great poet and essayist, whose philosophical thinking has had a profound influence on American thought.

However, they were not systematic philosophers who provided a comprehensive and logical vision of all aspects of existence in the form of an integrated whole. This concise survey of Western philosophy is limited to those individuals who did leave us with such visions. The intellectual history of the United States does not include many "comprehensive" philosophers. Usually only two American names appear in the general surveys of Western philosophy, James and Dewey. With their names are associated the fields of thought to which North Americans have made the most lasting contributions to philosophical thinking: "Pragmatism" during the first half of this century, and "Consciousness" during the second half of this century.

James is widely regarded as the "father" of both ways of exploring reality. He did not invent the word "Pragmatism". That was done by one of his teachers, C. S. Pierce, but Pierce did not develop Pragmatism very far. James and Dewey did. Pragmatism has become virtually synonymous with "how Americans think". For many, it is more of an attitude than a full-blown philosophy. However one chose to define "philosophy", as an operating set of assumptions on which most Americans do base their daily decisions, and as a way of looking at life, the pragmatic (or the practical) certainly does describe the average American's view of reality. In both *THE WILL TO BELIEVE* (1896), and *PRAGMATISM, A NEW NAME FOR SOME OLD WAYS OF THINKING* (1907), James argues for going with one's intuition even when there is no obvious "reason" for doing so. He also insists that if philosophy can provide what is useful it is useless. If something makes people virtuous and happy, James is willing to call that "true". Being non-dogmatic, James also leaves the door open for "further discussion".

In an essay called "Does Consciousness Exist" (1904), James spoke against the entire inherited tradition of Western philosophy which claims there is something called mind (or soul) which does the knowing, and something else called the known - the object of knowing. This dualistic assumption has been widely held by both Idealists and Empiricists. James said consciousness is not separate from what one becomes conscious of. There is "only one primal stuff...".

The book that became the point-of-departure for "consciousness studies" for American psychologists and philosophers is James' *VARIETIES OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE* (1902). Here he makes consciousness the central subject of psychology, and opens the field wide to every level of rational knowing and intuitive knowing. He opened the door for new levels of universal understanding.



William James (c. 1895)