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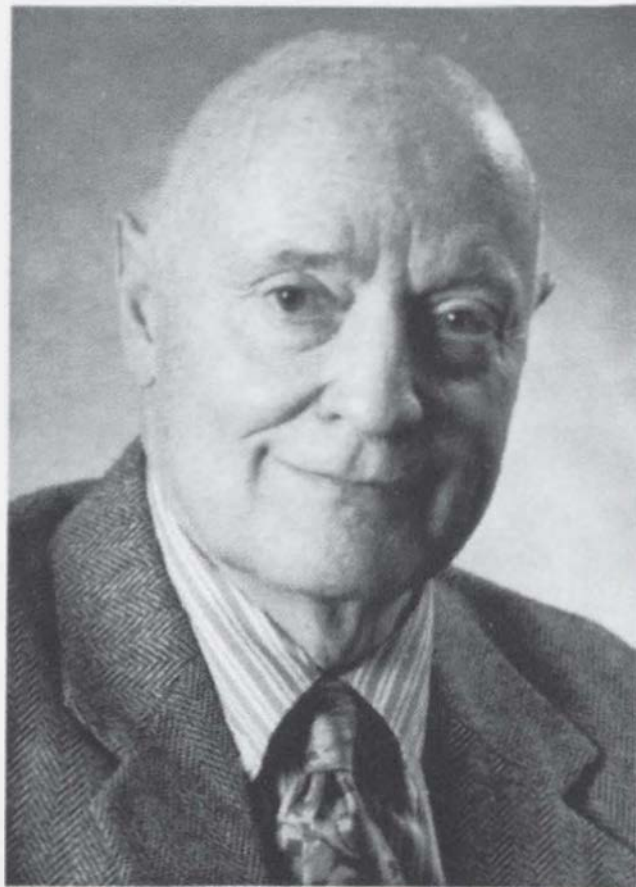
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Luck and the Enigmas of Fate

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1. Luck and the Unexpected

In the early morning hours of 9 August 1945, the B-29 bomber "Bock's Car," piloted by Army Air Corps Major Charles W. Sweeney, left the American airfield on Tinian island in the Pacific bound for the arsenal city of Kokura on the northern tip of Japan's Kyushu island. In the plane's belly sat "Fat Man," the second atomic bomb readied for military use. Three days earlier, the bomber "Enola Gay" had dropped on Hiroshima the first such weapon, "Little Boy" – a device constructed on rather different principles. And now phase two of the world's greatest physics experiment was about to take place. But matters did not go exactly as intended.

Over Kokura there was considerable cloud cover and haze, and the aiming point was obscured. In consequence, Major Sweeney proceeded southwards as per contingency plan to the secondary target, the old port city of Nagasaki. The rest, as the saying goes, is history. Kokura was a city literally saved by the clouds. And what was an incredible piece of good luck for the inhabitants of Kokura turned equally bad for those of Nagasaki.¹

As individuals, we may never know how lucky we actually are. For all we know, we narrowly escape death a dozen times each day—failing to inhale a fatal microbe here, and there missing by a hair's breadth the pebble that would cause us to slip and pitch into an on rushing bus. Luck, then, is a formidable and ubiquitous factor in human life as we know it—a companion that, like it or not, accompanies us all from the cradle and to the grave.

Considering the myriad ways in which luck impinges upon every human life, it is well worthwhile to have a closer look at what luck is and what it does. It is clear, to begin with, that luck produces unexpected effects:

The Persian, condemned to lose his tongue, on whom the operation was so bunglingly performed that it merely removed an impediment in his speech; the painter who produced an effect he had long toiled after in vain, by throwing his brush at the picture in a fit of rage and despair, the musical composer, who having exhausted his patience in attempts to imitate on the piano a storm at sea, accomplished the precise result by angrily extending his hands to the two extremities of the keys, and bringing them rapidly together, – all these seem so many fit types of the freaks of Fortune by which some men are enriched or made famous by their blunders, while others, with ten times the capacity and knowledge, are kept at the bottom of her wheel.²

Luck is a rogue force that prevents human life from being fully domesticated to rational management. Its foothold on the world stage is secure by the power of chance, chaos, and choice. Luck and her cousins, fate and fortune, make it somewhere between difficult and impossible to conduct our lives successfully through planning and design. Things in this world can always go wrong. It was a commonplace among the ancient Greeks that no man should be accounted fortunate until after his death. At any stage, disaster may strike to upset everything despite all our best efforts and most careful contrivings. As John Dewey

observed, our endurance in the world's course of changes is ever risky:

No one knows what a year or even a day may bring forth. The healthy become ill; the rich poor; the mighty are cast down; fame changes to obloquy. Men live at the mercy of forces they cannot control. Belief in fortune and luck, good or evil, is one of the most widespread and persistent of human beliefs. Chance has been deified by many peoples. Fate has been set up as an overlord to whom even the Gods must bow. Belief in a Goddess of Luck is in ill repute among pious folk but their belief in providence is a tribute to the fact no individual controls his own destiny. The uncertainty of life and one's final lot has always been associated with mutability, while unforeseen and uncontrollable change has been linked with time. . . . For Centuries poets made the uncertainty which time brings with it the theme of their discourse—read Shakespeare's sonnets. Nothing stays; life is fleeting and all earthly things are transitory.³

The temporal aspect is crucial for luck because luck pivots on unpredictability. A world in which everything goes according to a discernible plan leaves no room for luck. We ourselves, of course, live in a very different sort of world. Things often go well or ill for us due to conditions and circumstances that lie wholly beyond our cognitive or manipulative control. It was a matter of bad luck for the Spain of King Philip II when a storm scattered the "Invincible Armada" in the English Channel. But it was a matter of good luck for Queen Elizabeth's subjects. Luck—good or ill—impinges upon individuals and groups alike (think of the Jews of Poland or the passengers on the *Titanic*). There is no way of escaping it in this world. It is not just that having children is to give hostages to fortune, but having a stake in anything whatsoever. Wherever we invest our hopes and goals and objectives—whatever may be our expectations and aspirations and plans—good or bad luck can come into operation to realize or frustrate our wishes. Our best laid plans "gang aft agley" for reasons entirely beyond our knowledge and control. We play our cards as best we can but the outcome depends on what is done by the other players in the system—be they people or nature's forces. Our lives are lived amidst hopes and apprehensions. Things can turn out for our weal or our woe in ways that we can neither foresee nor control. And it is exactly here that the factor of luck makes its inexorable way into the domain of human affairs. Often as not, a person's life is a chain built up by links of luck. The youthful personal influences that inform one's career decisions, the contingencies that determine one's employment, the chance encounters that lead to one's marriage, etc. are so many instances of luck.

The role of chance in human affairs was once the topic of extensive discussion and intensive debate among philosophers. In Hellenistic Greece, theorists debated tirelessly about the role of *heimarmene*, the unfathomable fate that remorselessly ruled the affairs of the men and gods alike, regardless of their wishes and actions. And then there was Fate's companion, luck (*Tuche*). The Church fathers struggled mightily to combat the siren appeal of the idea of these superstition-inviting potencies, and Saint Augustine detested the very word *fate*. The issue of good or bad fortune, along with the related question of the extent to which we can control our destinies in this world, came to prominence again in the Renaissance, when scholars brooded once again about the issues raised by Cicero and Augustine. And the topic undoubtedly has a long and lively future before it, since it is certain that, as long as human life continues, luck will play a prominent part in its

affairs.

Disasters represent a particularly notable fork in the road of fortune because they divide those concerned into two: the lucky and the unlucky, the survivors or victims. (Think here of the aristocrats of the French revolution, the European Jews of Hitler's day, the kulaks small farmers of Stalin's USSR, or the passengers of a plane that crashes or a ship that founders in a storm.) When disaster strikes we face a stampede, as it were, that impels us along willy nilly one way or the other – the way of the lucky and that of the unlucky. It is a recognition of the role of luck, more than any other single thing, that leads us to appreciate the contingency of human triumphs and disasters. “There but for some stroke of luck go I” is a humbling thought whose contemplation is salutary for us all. The trenchant question of old (posed by unfortunate and fortunate ones alike) is: Why me? What have I done to deserve this? The irony of course is that the appropriate and correct answer is: *nothing*. It is simply a matter of chance—of fortuitous luck. To be sure, given our natural human commitment to the idea that we live in a rational world we are inclined to think—that there is always an ultimate reason why—a cogent explanation seems necessary. And when things go wrong we have a sense of guilt and burden: Why have I been selected? When things go well, we ask: What must I now do to prove myself worthy? All of this is perfectly natural but also totally futile. The only ultimately rational attitude is to sit loose in the saddle of life and to come to terms with the idea of chance as such.

In a world in which we must live our lives amidst some degree of uncertainty—in which for any of a thousand reasons the consequences of our actions and inactions are substantially beyond our predictive reach—a reliance on luck is to some extent inevitable. Our activities can make proposals to the world, but their consequences for good or bad are almost outside the range of our knowledge and control. Be it for good or bad, what actually happens to people is all too often a matter of luck.

Like an unexpected inheritance, luck generally comes to us unexpectedly, “out of the blue.” Sometimes to be sure we take preliminary and preparatory steps to put ourselves in luck's way. You cannot win the lottery without obtaining a ticket or make money on the ponies without placing a bet. Sometimes we have to be in the right place at the right time. But often there is little or nothing you need to do. To have a narrow escape, for example, you simply have to avoid—by a sufficiently narrow margin—being at the wrong place at the wrong time.

It is often luck alone that determines the status and significance of our actions. Was that leap in the dark a stroke of genius or the beginning of the end? Was John's confession a futile gesture or a sincere act of expiation? Was Henry's decision to return to the U.S. in an effort to prevent Mary's hasty marriage a wise move or a step into disaster? It all depends. What descriptions fit an act will depend on the outcome and the outcome all too often hinges on how things chance to eventuate—that is, on sheer luck.

It may be chance alone—or some trivial whim—that determines whether we took the *Mauritania* or the *Titanic* for our return journey. But which way the decision goes may in fact make “all the difference in the world.” In this life we are not masters of our fate—or rather are so to only a very limited extent. The hand of unforeseen contingency is present everywhere. The Greek idea that “character is fate” is deeply problematic in all of its versions,⁴ because it is our luck rather than our nature that determines what becomes of us in this world to a greater extent than any of us like to admit. Under the influence of Epicurean philosophy, various of the ancient Romans saw man as a master of his fate.⁵ But a different point of view was also very much astir, one according to which we are at the mercy of forces beyond our control; fate has her way with us, willy-nilly.⁶

"The gods knock us about like balls" said Plautus.⁷ And as poets see it, we are but court jesters in the realm of Chance, ruled by a despotic monarch whose whim is our command.⁸ Some of the risks we run are of our making but most of them come our way not only unwelcome but unbidden and uninvited, being simply unavoidable aspects of life in an uncertain and often unfriendly world.

Often—in lotteries, in marrying an heiress, or in escaping unscathed from an explosion thanks to the shielding of somebody else's body—one person's good luck can be attained at the cost of another's ill.⁹ One person's good luck is sometimes another's bad: X loses a \$100 bill, Y finds it—lucky for the latter, unlucky for the former. But of course things need not be so—good luck can be victimless. The person who strikes oil on his own land is lucky without being so at anyone else's expense. Life is not a zero-sum game that is so arranged that the good fortune of some is necessarily secured at the expense of others. If by some lucky stroke the world escapes an apocalyptic epidemic—or a nuclear war—everyone is lucky without any price paid by some unfortunates.

2. How Luck Works

Luck as such is a matter of things going well or ill for someone in a situation of uncertainty and unforeseeability. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the term as "the fortuitous happening of an event favorable or unfavorable to the interest of a person."

Luck is at work when things go right (realize our desires or advance our interests)—or the reverse—fortuitously, that is, in circumstances where we have no sufficient basis for confidently expecting this because the circumstances disallow our being able to securely foresee or control the outcome. The fruits of luck (be they good or bad) are accordingly uncertain. Thus if something we cannot (securely) anticipate (let alone unilaterally control!) turn out to our benefit, then we are lucky, and if they turn out to our disadvantage, then we are unlucky. We are in a situation where the issue to all intents and purposes hinges in chance.

Typically, good luck is a matter of having things go right (or fail to go wrong) unforeseeably, "by chance". But it need not necessarily be "against the odds." These are circumstances where we call people lucky even when the odds are on their side. Smith let his fire insurance lapse for a year, and nothing happened. (And this was to be expected—only 1 in 200 houses have a fire during the average year in the area where he lives.) Again, Jones played Russian Roulette and lived to tell the tale. He too was lucky even though only one of the six chambers of his revolver was loaded so that the probabilities favored survival. For it was only "by chance" that things turned out well. The survivor of a serious accident is lucky even if this occurred in circumstances where people generally survive (i.e. where survival was likely), seeing that it was by chance alone that our survivor was among the fortunate rather than the unfortunate. Still, when the odds are very substantially in their favor and the element of chance is minimal one would call people fortunate rather than lucky. A lucky or unlucky event must go against the grain of confident predictability and depart from reasonable expectation. The winner of a lottery is lucky but the loser who defied precipitous odds though in a way unfortunate—does not really qualify for a claim to bad luck. "He should have seen it coming"—being so probable, it was only to be expected and should have occasioned no surprise. People are lucky (or unlucky) when positive (or negative) things happen to them in ways that could not reasonably have been expected, and *luck* can be defined as the fortuitous happening of events favorable or unfavorable to people's interests. For example, the would-be bank robber recognized by the recently transferred security guard who

witnessed his most recent victimization of another branch is distinctly unlucky .

The unexpectedness that is at issue with luck is closely bound up with ignorance. If you find yourself at a tripartite fork in the road without any idea of which of the three roads before you is the one that leads to your destination, then it is improbable (in the most objective of ways) that you will pick the right one. To be sure, the chanciness bound up with ignorance need not be an objective one (it is not really "by chance" that the roads lead where they do.) But your selecting the right one is, in the circumstances, something that will happen by chance. And it is on *this* basis that you will be lucky in making the right selection.

3. Luck vs. Fortune

Luck is a matter of having something good or bad happen that lies outside the horizon of effective foreseeability. There is thus a significant difference between luck and fortune. You are fortunate if something good happens to or for you, period. But you are lucky if something good happens to you despite its being chancy—and particularly so if it occurs against the odds and reasonable expectations. A person who has acquired enough money to be able to travel first class is fortunate but not lucky in the stricter sense. By contrast, the airline passenger who finds himself shifted from coach to first class for the convenience of the airline is lucky. Fate and fortune relate to the conditions and circumstances of our lives generally, luck to the chancy eventuations that befall us.¹⁰ Our innate skills and talents are matters of good fortune; the opportunities that chance brings our way to help us develop them are for the most part matters of luck.

Good luck requires that the favorable outcome in view results not by planning or foresight but "by inadvertence"—by causes impenetrable to us, or as the 1613 *Lexicon Philosophicum* of Goclenius put it, "not by the industry, insight, or sagacity of man, but by some other, altogether hidden cause" (*non ab hominis industria et acumine iudicioque dependens, sed a causa alia occulta*). Accordingly, luck hinges outcomes on what happens by accident rather than by design. With luck, there must be the element of chanciness and unforeseeability with its room for surprise. What we know in advance of the fact is not grist for the mill of luck.

Their falling outside the scope of luck, strictly speaking, does not render foreseeable, unchancy goods any the less welcome or foreseeable, unchancy negativities any the less unwelcome. Suppose that we discover that a large but heretofore undetected meteor is on a collision course with the earth. Humanity's fate is sealed, the handwriting is on the wall. By a fixed number of days hence, the earth will be covered by an impenetrable cloud of debris and will become unable to sustain mammalian life. What a catastrophe! In these circumstances, however, humanity's fate is (strictly speaking) unfortunate rather than unlucky. It was *fortunate* for John Doe that he owned a pen-knife. But it was lucky for him that he happened to have it along on the day he needed it to deal with a snake bite. (He didn't generally carry the knife, but just by chance took it with him on that particular day.)

And so while we can (in certain circumstances) be *fortunate* to be red-headed (say when this makes one eligible for some benefit or other), one cannot be *lucky* to be a red head. One can, however, be lucky that red-headed individuals whom the institutor of the benefit at issue just happened to fix upon as the beneficiaries of her largesse. The point is that that in respect of which one can be lucky must involve the element of unpredictability. And this is reflected in luck's volatility and inconsistency. A Scottish proverb, cited as early as 1721, says "Behind bad luck comes good luck." (The reverse

would be just as true!). And another old proverb insists that “The only sure thing about luck is that it will change.”

The positive and negative things that come one's way in the world's ordinary course—including one's heritage (biological, medical, social, economic), one's abilities and talents, the circumstances of one's place and time (be they peaceful or chaotic, for example)—all these are matters of what might be characterized as fate and fortune. But the positivities and negativities that come one's way by chance and unforeseen happenstance—finding a treasure trove, for example, or walking away from an accident that injures others—are matters of luck. You are heir to a fortune by auspicious fate, but you are lucky to inherit it just in the nick of time to save you from bankruptcy.

It is just the element of surprise—of unpredictability that distinguishes luck from fate or fortune at large. Only if one takes too literally the idea of a *lot* in life—by thinking of human biographies in terms of a lottery of life-plan allocations to preexistingly identifiable individuals—can one conceptualize a person's over-all fate or destiny in terms of luck. For only then would the sum-total of the goods and evils befalling people become reduced—comprehensively and automatically—to a matter of chance allocation. Accordingly, a person can be fortunate to have a good disposition or a talent for mathematics, but she cannot be *lucky* in these regards because chance is not involved. Her disposition and talents is part of what makes a person the individual she is; it is not something that chance happens to bring along and superadd to a preexisting identity. One can indeed be lucky to encounter a person who induces or helps one to develop a talent. But having that talent itself is a matter of fortune rather than good luck. It makes no sense to assimilate personal fate to games of chance because with games there is always antecedently a player to enter into participation, while with people there is no antecedent, identity-bereft individual who draws the lot at issue with a particular endowment.

The goods and bads that come a person's way reflect her fortunes—she is fortunate in those positivities and unfortunate in those negativities. But *luck* does not as yet enter in. For if those goods are realized through effort and those bads realized through mistakes, faults, and errors—that is to say if chance is not involved—then luck is not at issue. The person who permits herself to be duped out of her life savings by a confidence man is unfortunate but not, strictly speaking, *unlucky*—as she would be if she lost it on a promising business venture. (To be sure, if the con man picked her out of the crowd more or less at random, we would, on this basis, say that she was unlucky as well.)

4. There's No Taking the Luck Out of Life

From the very beginning of the species, much human effort has regularly been devoted to devising practices, systems, and institutions to make the future more tractable by reducing the scope of chance and unpredictability in our affairs. Our early shift from hunter-gatherer to farmer, from nomad to settler, was clearly designed to make it possible to meet our needs and achieve our ends with greater assurance. And, over the millennia, an immense amount of human ingenuity and toil has been expended in this direction of reducing sheer luck's role in life.

But there is obviously only so much we can do in this direction. The very idea of perfecting “control over nature” is something deeply problematic. The sensible view is clearly that of seeing this issue of control as a mixed bag. Admitting that an element of unforeseeability pervades all human affairs,¹¹ Renaissance humanists often inclined to the optimistic view that rational endeavor can prevail against the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune. For example, the Italian scholar Poggio Bracciolini (1380-1459), in

his tracts *De miseria humanae conditionis* and *De varietate fortunae*, championed the efficacy of rational virtue: "The strength of fortune is never so great that it will not be overcome by men who are steadfast and resolute."¹² As he saw it, prudent action can control the future's developments. Others took a much less sanguine line. Machiavelli, in Chapter 25 of *Il principe* (1513) after surveying the cruelties and haphazards of the politics of his day, set more restrictive limits to human endeavor by assigning half of what happens in this domain to the intractable power of fortuna, though her rogue force might be partially tamed by prudently installed dikes and embankments. (On 20th-century indications, even this estimate looks rather too rosy.)

To all appearances, then, it is the mixed-bag view of distinctly imperfect control that best accommodates the realities of the situation. For it is clear that various factors dictate that our power to shape the course of events is small—that our prospects of control are severely limited. One such factor is *causal impotence*. There is simply nothing that most of us can do, as individuals (unlike, say, the Secretary of Treasury or the Chairman of the Federal Reserve Bank), to influence the stock market to rise or fall: the issue is one that lies beyond the reach of our powers. Another limiting factor is *inadequate information*—and predictive information in particular. (If I knew which stocks would rise tomorrow, I would make money—buying some of them is within my power—but of course I lack any such knowledge.) For us humans, the future is veiled, as it were, in a cloud of unknowing. Through our predictive efforts we peer into it as we peer into a fog. Very little can be seen at a distance—and that little with but little clarity. But as things draw near and the fog of unforeseeability dissipates, we can—frequently—make out their features with greater detail. And so it is with the future. A future we cannot foresee is *a fortuna* a future we cannot control. And historical experience and theoretical analysis alike indicate that both of these factors, both impotence and ignorance, severely limit our capacity to manipulate nature's course of events and to control the future consequences of our present endeavors. And here, of course, lies the root of luck. Given the limits of human knowledge and power, and given the prominence on the world's stage of the contingency engendering factors of chance, chaos, and choice to say nothing of ignorance as such—it transpires that luck is something that we simply have to accept as an inevitable fact of life.

The profound importance of luck roots in the consideration of its constituting one of the salient characteristic features of the human condition. For, as emphasized throughout, luck is a fundamental and inevitable aspect of human finitude reflecting the fact of our vulnerability in the world over which we have imperfect cognitive and practical mastering. There simply is no way to take the luck out of a life whose future we can neither control nor foresee.

5. A World Without Luck

Is this fact of luck's role in human life an unmitigated misfortune? Would we even want the project of cognitive predictive control to be perfectible and thereby render the future "a sure thing"? How much would we actually want to know about the future—at any rate about that relatively near-term future that is most relevant for the lives of ourselves and those we know of and care about? Would we really want to have foreknowledge of the suffering that the yet unturned pages of time and circumstance hold in store for us and our children and their posterity—the catastrophes and misfortunes and suffering that await us all? These are challenging questions. And their resolution calls for some challenging acknowledgements. For in fact there are surely few punishments that could

be inflicted upon a person that would be as bad as to be confronted with the timetable of one's future—to be informed station by station, as it were, of all the major eventuations of one's life on earth. What misfortune will not be multiplied by anticipation, what triumph not diminished by foreknowledge of its certainty and its impermanence?

It is the element of openness—of uncertainty—that gives our human present its savor and endows our envisioned future with a suspenseful interest. The factors of contingency and unpredictability play a central and definitive part here. There is a great experiential difference between the original game and the replay where the outcome is already “a foregone conclusion.” Sheer contingent unpredictability gives life's eventuations a special interest. Not only in reading novels, plays, and mystery stories, but also in living their everyday lives people generally welcome novelty and surprise whenever this does not involve something that is inherently unpleasant. In general the unsurprising is, for that very reason, uninteresting. (Noone finds “yesterday's news” all that intriguing.) We admire the technical skill of the tight-rope walker. But the ever-present chance that something may possibly go wrong adds a special thrill to the process.

It is clear that our human psychological make-up has evolved in and become attuned to a world whose future is largely inaccessible to intelligence—a world whose plans for us lie concealed behind an impenetrable veil of unpredictability. This, for us, is part and parcel of the natural condition of things to which we have been attuned. And it has thereby become a positive thing too. For is it not one of the things that make our ever-continuing transit into the future bearable that we do not know what it will bring? The veil of ignorance leaves room for hope, and the destruction of hope is the worst of evils.

One can certainly imagine a creature in whose life luck has no role, a creature whose welfare and well-being is only affected by effective certainties, by totally predictable eventuations, that bears on its weal and woe being pre-ordained, pre-programmed, predictable. Such a being would lead a life without suspense and surprises, a life bereft of unexpected twists and turns where everything always runs “like clockwork,” according to pre-designated plan—automatically. But this creature whose life is predictable in all its substantial details would certainly be something very different from ourselves. And we would surely not want to trade places with it. For we have been configured and compounded by natural selection to a world whose *modus operandi* is very different. And being what we have become, we would find it horrible to live in a luckless world.

Our psychological and emotional condition is such that we would not want to live in a pre-programmed world—a world where the rest of our fate and future is pre-ordained and indeed pre-discernible in the realities of the present. The human yearning for novelty—for new experiences and prospects and possibilities is surely a characteristic aspect of what makes us into the sorts of creatures we are. A predictable world whose future is already fully pre-figured in the condition of the present, is something we naturally find repugnant. Even at the price of falling victim to chance and haphazard we yearn for novelty and innovation—for a liberation from an inevitability programmed by the past's dead hand. To eliminate luck we would have to lead less totally routinized lives. Like a colony of insects or a species of fish, we would seek out and eventually attune to virtually stable conditions. In consequence, we would have to stop being the sort of creature we are—a creature that lives by intelligence and thereby needs challenges, innovations, novelty. Escape from the ennui of established routines and predictable activities constitutes an important factor in our lives. The yearning for open horizons—of new developments that make for suspense and surprises is inherent in our human nature. (Had we been content with static predictability we could have remained in the Garden of Eden.) *Homo sapiens* is a creature of innovation endowed with an insatiable

need to explore, to try to encounter novelty. For us who see even a “predictable” novel or play in a decidedly negative light, an unfailingly “predictable” life would be painfully boring and altogether distasteful.

Luck makes an important contribution to the savor and interest of human life. Its superposition of chance on skill gives a suspenseful excitement to our dealings which is important for us as the sort of creatures we have become under evolution’s shaping. A pastiche of foregone conclusions makes life dull, uninteresting, insupportable. No one wants to watch a match between a top team and the neighborhood amateurs. Nobody wants to watch the same sporting event for fifty television replays. It is the unexpectedness and unpredictability of a contest between two evenly matched teams that lends interest to a sporting event. To take the luck out of it is to destroy its interest.

The risk of bad luck is the other side of the coin with which we pay for the prospect of good luck. And the whole two-sided complex of life in a world where luck holds sway and uncertainty plays a role is what we need to lead a life that we—constituted as we are (that is, as evolution in this world has made us)—can possibly find satisfactory.

6. Life in a Halfway House

For a satisfying human life we need to exist in a halfway house with regard to predictability. We need (and apparently do actually have) a balance—a world that is predictable enough to make the conduct of life manageable, and—by and large—convenient, but unpredictable enough to make room for an element of suspenseful interest. For we do also require the presence of much that is unpredictable, novel, and surprising. A totally unpredictable world would be a horror even if (contrary to hypothesis) we were able to live in it. But the opposite extreme—a world that is substantially predictable, would equally be a horror.

Predictability, then, is not a be-all and end-all. We humans need novelty and innovation—contact with the new, strange circumstances to nourish our minds and spirits. Without some exposure to chance and uncertainty we cannot function as the creatures we are — the sort of creatures we have become under the pressure of evolutionary development. We thrive in the interstices of chance that pervade a world of predominantly lawful order. We play games of chance, seek out stories and plays with unpredictable “suspense” endings, and pursue novelty change and breaks in routine precisely so to make life less predictable—less dull, routine, and boring. An enjoyable life, like a good story, must have a judicious mixture of uncertainty (suspense) and predictability (security). All the same, such escapes should themselves be circumscribed, limited and predictable if they are to prove benign. We need and seek novelty and change, but it remains something we want in predictable ways. (Which is why we opt for the predictability of genres such as “the detective story.”) To live in ways that render our circumstances substantially foreseeable—at least as regards fundamentals is an important feature of our human strategy for survival in a complex world.

From the larger philosophical point of view, the crucial fact is that the role of luck in human affairs illustrates the limitedness of human knowledge and highlights the cognitive situation of *Homo sapiens* as a being of limited capabilities. Our limitations in this regard reflect our expulsion from the Garden of Eden, with the consequence of putting us at the mercy of a reality over which we have only imperfect *cognitive* control—only limited predictive foresight. Yet given the fact that we also have imperfect *practical* control, this cognitive incapacity is a blessing. For it would surely be horrendous to realize in advance the program of unwelcome things to come whose inexorable onset is

altogether beyond our power to help or to hinder. And, moreover, a predictable world is one without suspense, surprise, luck, and all these deeper forms of novelty that provide much of the "spice of life."

It is clearly of the essence of the condition of humanity as we know it that we live in a halfway house as regards predictability—a mixture of knowing and ignorance that may change in its proportions with the condition of the times but always hovers well between the extremes. For us, constituted as we are as we have become, if you will, under evolution's inexorable pressures—a world that is too preponderantly predictable or too preponderantly unpredictable would alike prove disastrous.

Luck therefore is, for good and ill, a factor with which we have to come to terms in this world. And in the final analysis we would not want to have it otherwise. A creature in whose life luck has no role would be something very different from ourselves, condemned to an existence which we would find abhorrent.

Footnotes

¹ For the historical details see Richard Rhodes, *The Making of the Atomic Bomb* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1988).

² William Mathews, *Getting on in the World: Hints of Success in Life* (Chicago: S. Griggs & Co., 1880). This quaintly old-fashioned how-to book contains many illustrations of the role of luck in life.

³ John Dewey, "Time and Individuality" (1940) in Harlow Shapley (ed.) *Time and its Mysteries* (New York: Collier Books, 1962), pp.141-159 (see pp. 141-142).

⁴ "Sui cuique mores fingunt fortunam" (Cornelius Nepos, *Aratus*, II, 6).

⁵ Thus "fabrum esse suae quemque fortunae" (Sallust, *De republica ordinanda*, I, 1) and "sapiens ipse fingit fortunam sibi" (Plautus, *Trinummus*, II, ii, 84).

⁶ "Ducunt volentem fata, nolentem trahunt" (Seneca, *Epistola*, 107).

⁷ Plautus, *Captivi*, prologue.

⁸ Shakespeare speaks of a "fool of fortune" in "King Lear," IV, 6 and again in "Timon of Athens" III, 6), and of "fortune's fool" in "Romeo and Juliet," III, 1.

⁹ As one German writer puts it, often "the guardian angels of those who have luck are the unlucky" (Die Schutzengel derer, die Glück haben, sind die Verunglückten). Hans Pichler, *Persönlichkeit. Glück. Schicksal* (Stuttgart, 1967), p. 47. An American proverb makes the point more succinctly: "Bad luck is good luck for someone" (Wolfgang Mieder: *A Dictionary of American Proverbs* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992], p. 392, no. 5).

¹⁰ The luck/fate distinction goes back to classical antiquity. For the ancients distinguished between haphazard *fortuna* (which operates by accident and chance) and necessitarianism *fatum* (which operates according to fixed deterministic laws).

¹¹ *Nam rerum humanarum tanta est obscuritas varietasque. ut nihil diuicidie sciri possit.* (Erasmus, *Encomium Moriae*, XLV.)

¹² For an illuminating discussion see Antonino Poppi, "Fate and Fortune, Providence and Human Freedom" in C.B. Schmitt, et al. (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 641-67.



Kai Nielsen

IS “TRUE PHILOSOPHY” LIKE “TRUE ART”?

Kai Nielsen

I

“Philosophy,” unlike “oak” or “robin,” is not a name of a natural kind. It is now and has been for a very long time many different things, going on in a cultural context where standardly there is no clear sense of what their relationship is to each other. More than that, they seem often at least to be conflicting things. It is not very easy to see what (if anything) makes all these things philosophy. I shall display something of these differences, and in doing so show why “What is philosophy?” is itself a *philosophical* problem and indeed one which is deeply contested, perhaps intractably contestable.

Why should it be that “What is philosophy?” is itself a philosophical question and such a taxing one at that? Don’t philosophers know what they are doing? “What is chemistry?” or “What is art history?” are not problems in chemistry or art history. We could say similar things for botany and engineering and a host of other subjects. Introductory textbooks on these subjects, as well as other similar subjects, as Thomas Kuhn has shown, oversimplify a bit and make things more straightforward than they actually are, but, that to the contrary notwithstanding, they usually give definitions or general characterizations of their subject matter in the first few pages of their texts – characterizations that usually do not seem essentially wrong to other people in the field. But this is not so with philosophy for if the sampling of philosophers is at all wide, taking into consideration the history of the subject and diverse cultures, the very characterization of what their discipline or activity is will be keenly in dispute. Some philosophers will say that other philosophers are fundamentally mistaken in their very conception of what philosophy is and they will set out what they take to be the correct conception which in turn will be similarly rejected by other philosophers. Jacques Maritain, Rudolph Carnap, J. L. Austin, Martin Heidegger and Jacques Derrida are all famous philosophers—infamous famous philosophers in some quarters—and they all do philosophy very differently. More generally, definitions and characterizations of philosophy differ radically. Some philosophers find the characterizations offered by some other philosophers to be utterly wrongheaded or sometimes just plain gibberish.

What are we to make of an activity in which there is such chronic dispute over what it is all about? Why should philosophy be such a tower of Babel? Perhaps philosophy is a cluster of conceptual confusions that should be dissolved, revealed by careful analysis to be the pseudo-problems philosophy gives voice to. All good contemporary philosophy books, such philosophers believe, should be anti-philosophy *philosophy* books. But then there is the question of the very status of the conceptual analysis that does that dissolving. Is that itself a bit of philosophy and, if that is so, and if its conceptual analysis is soundly carried through, then it surely looks like not all philosophy can be conceptual confusion. Moreover, that aside, another at least initial response should be that throughout their history human beings have grappled with certain very fundamental categorial questions: good and evil, mind and body, freedom and necessity, God and immortality, and what is it for something to exist or for some of those somethings to be persons? These questions are not the creations of philosophers but something that nearly everybody at one time or another, but typically when they are quite young, find it natural to reflect about and to seek to answer. It seems at least, the response goes, gratuitously dogmatic to push them

aside as pseudo-problems. One would have to have – or so it seems at least – very good grounds indeed for saying that all the problems of philosophy are pseudo-problems: symptoms of a conceptual malaise. Moreover, this very claim, namely, the claim that all philosophical questions simply reveal the existence of a conceptual malaise, would itself have to be made out on philosophical grounds. So while it is reasonable to remain skeptical and suspicious about philosophy, it is not reasonable to dismiss it so easily as a putative discipline specializing in conceptual confusion.

Granting that “What is philosophy?” is itself a contentious philosophical question, why could it not have an uncontentious historical-sociological answer given by philosophically informed historians of ideas standing, though still with an understanding of the subject, outside of philosophy altogether? Such historians, as such specialists, would know about philosophy in the sense of having a good knowledge of what philosophers have said, including the reasons they have given for saying what they say, and even of what they are saying now, but such historians still would, *qua* historians at least, be without philosophical views themselves. Why could such historians not take careful note of various activities that philosophers engage in and regard as philosophical, note what common and distinctive properties (if any) they have or what family resemblances they have (if any) and then, if there are such distinctive commonalities or resemblances, build a philosophically neutral definition or characterization of philosophy on these commonalities or resemblances? If no such features show up then the historian of ideas will report that there is not in fact the overlap necessary to yield a general characterization for the varied activities that different people over historical time and cultural space have thought of as philosophical. This is, after all, an empirical issue, and indeed (or so it seems) rather straightforwardly so, and surely it is not impossible that a philosophically trained, though philosophically viewless, historian of ideas, if she were diligent enough, could either come up with a philosophically neutral characterization or show why the activities called “philosophical” are so various that no such general characterization can be given, given the facts of the case.

There are at least two problems with this. First, if we delete enough detail we may well get something that is common to everything philosophers do. We could note, for example, that philosophers “reflect and think” or “ask questions” or “give arguments.” Such things would, however, hardly be (a) both common to and distinctive of what philosophers do for activities that are not at all philosophical also involve those things and (b) what we find is so general as to be trivial. It gives us no good idea of what philosophy is about. It is highly unlikely that we will find anything that is significant and common to the various activities that get called philosophical. What is more likely is that such an historian could only responsibly note that philosophy is said to be X or Y or Z or V or T or.... But these features (even the ones listed) would themselves sometimes at least yield conflicting beliefs about what philosophy *really* is or should be. Some philosophers would go on saying about some of these conceptions that they were radically mistaken, hardly deserving to be called philosophy. Moreover, philosophers have often been well aware of certain characterizations of their discipline, and yet they have gone out of their way to say either that this is not what philosophy really is or that such characterizations actually obscure the “true goals” of philosophy. The great innovators in philosophy – Plato, Aquinas, Descartes, Locke, Hume, Kant, Hegel, Dewey, Husserl, and Wittgenstein – all thought the old philosophical foundations and conceptions were in shambles and sought to conceive of philosophy in a radically new way. It is these, and other, distinctive conceptions that count in trying to conceive what philosophy is.

The historian of ideas can draw to our attention, when we get too ethnocentric or *parti*

pris, that philosophy has not always been just what we say it is and that there are other conceptions of philosophy about in the world. But the struggle is over which activities are genuine philosophical activities worthy of pursuit and which are not. But here the historian of ideas, *qua* historian of ideas, can supply little guidance. He can only enrich our historical perspective. Only philosophers, if anyone, can substantively help us here. They alone, if anyone, can tell us what genuine philosophy is. That is a philosophical issue and must be argued out and thought out on philosophical grounds. That is why, as Ludwig Wittgenstein and Stanley Cavell have stressed, there can be no metaphilosophy if by "metaphilosophy" is meant a view *prior to any philosophy* which can tell us what philosophy is and to be reasonable must be. There is no nonphilosophical vantage point that can decide that. Philosophy cannot help but be a bootstrapping operation. The skeptical philosophical worry is that "genuine philosophy" might turn out to be like "true art," "real champions," "genuine religion," or "real native cuisine."

Let me illustrate. I know perfectly well that Rudolf Carnap regards philosophy as the logic of the sciences and Martin Heidegger regards it as "the correspondence to the Being of being"; but I regard both such conceptions as radically inadequate. Carnap's is wildly one-sided catching at best what some philosophers do and Heidegger's approximates gibberish. (This is not to give to understand that everything Heidegger says is so approximate.) Moreover, neither in their characterizations get at what I take to be the heart of the matter – what is really important in philosophy. But, though I perfectly unequivocally feel that way, the historicist in me prompts me to ask. Perhaps some of this onesidedness, after all, gives us the only sort of thing that philosophy can really do if it is to aspire to give us genuine knowledge or insight. Perhaps philosophy of science is philosophy enough. Moreover, can I be so sure that what I regard as gibberish really is so? Heidegger has many admirers; and philosophers from my own tradition whom I very much admire (Richard Rorty, Charles Taylor and Stanley Cavell) take Heidegger to be a philosopher of very considerable importance. I should, given such considerations, be a little skeptical about my beliefs about what is really fundamental or about what is really gibberish.

Perhaps my own reactions simply give voice to one culturally and historically circumscribed conception of what philosophy is. But how, one is tempted to respond, could it be anything else? But if it couldn't be anything else or more, then why accept it? The other side of the coin is "How could anyone do anything else? How could they not but see things by their own lights? What other lights could they see them by?" Still, we can listen to others, sometimes very different others, turn over and take to heart what they say, and sometimes, in doing this, we can correct our own views or at least change our minds or (more realistically) partly change our minds. It remains, however, after all that, that there is no alternative but to see things by our own lights and we further know that we, like everyone, are creatures of a certain culture of a certain time in history with all the contingencies that brings. And we know that there is no escaping that. We cannot, as Hegel stressed, leap over history.

This contextualism (if that is the right name for it) is not unique to philosophy. But should be seen as a cautionary tale to any philosopher or philosophy that has sufficient *hubris* and unselfconsciousness to think it could speak for all time and eternity. Speaking for all time and eternity is not likely to be a hang-up of a chemist or economist. It is philosophers spooked by what they take to be the spectre of relativism who try to escape into Absolutism.

II

Even with this firm sense of the contingency of things (the cultural and historical variability of things) it is not unreasonable to seek some order here. A philosopher in asking what philosophy is is in reality typically asking what, of the tower of Babel that has been philosophy, would be *good* philosophy, the doing of something that would give philosophy a genuine point. Some initial ordering *might* come from these characterizations:

1. Philosophy is an analytical study of concepts.
2. Philosophy is an analytical study of the pivotal concepts that in the most general way organize our thought or action.

These are conceptions that *some* analytical philosophers would defend. They are also certainly conceptions which are not without their problems. First it is anything but clear that this should be the whole of good philosophy. But, that aside for the time being, it is not clear what a concept is and if, to clarify things, we say a concept is simply the use of a word we land ourselves in various ways on contested ground. Suppose we say that to speak of the concept of mind, truth or justice is to speak of the use of "mind," "true" or "just." We speak of concepts not in order to try to fly into a Platonic heaven (something even the early G. E. Moore did) but to make it evident we are not only talking about the use of English terms but, as well, about the equivalent terms in other languages.¹ But if this is what the analytical study of concepts comes to why is it not an empirical study of the way language works and so a task for linguists or at least a task to be shared between linguists and philosophers? Still, is it not clear that here we have with such a conception a task for philosophy? But it is clear that if we so construe philosophy it would no longer be the autonomous discipline or activity that philosophers have prized.

Relatedly it is not clear what an analytical study of concepts comes to. Is it a description of the concepts, an interpretation of their import, an explanation of them and if so in what sense of "explanation" or is it a logical analysis of these concepts, but, if so, in what sense of "logic"? Logic seems to be essentially a matter of proving theorems and making various kinds of derivations but that does not seem at least to be what is involved in the conceptual analysis of concepts.² How is clarifying the concept of mind, truth or justice anything like a matter of proving theorems or making derivations? If we call it *logical* analysis what does "logical" mean here? It does not seem (*pace* Carnap and Hans Reichenbach) that anything like derivation or demonstration is at issue here. But then what is? What does an analytical study of concepts come to and how is it – or is it – the unique province of philosophy?³

Even if such issues can be reasonably resolved we need to ask questions about the second articulation of what philosophy is. If philosophy is not the study of just any concepts you like or the concept of science (as some logical empiricists believed) but of pivotal concepts that in the most general way organize our thought and action, then it is incumbent on the philosopher so conceiving of philosophy to say what they are and to elucidate a bit what he means by "pivotal" and "organizing" here. Presumably truth, existence, human being, knowledge, rationality, reasonability, belief, evidence, goodness, justice, beauty, freedom, God and immortality are such concepts, though plenty of contemporary philosophers would not so regard the last two. Indeed some of them think of these last two as pseudo-concepts to be excised from rational discourse. But historically for many philosophers they have been thought to be pivotal organizing concepts. A good philosophy would have to have some way of deciding such an issue or at least showing that some ways of looking at things were more plausible or reasonable than others. But

in getting tolerably clear about such a conception of philosophy we need to get an idea of what we are talking about when we say that these are pivotal concepts that organize our thought or action. And why action as well as thought? Is a proper philosophy to tell us (in some general way) what to do or what right or just action is? Is that a role for the analytical study of anything? And why the qualification "general" in that characterization of philosophy? How general and in what way? Perhaps such general characterizations will yield only platitudes?

There is a different but perhaps complimentary conception of philosophy that has often been articulated. R. G. Collingwood was an important defender of such a view. It can be stated as follows:

3. Philosophy articulates and makes perspicuous the underlying presuppositions of science, morality, politics, art, religion – in short our various central forms of life – and seeks to give a coherent account or at least a coherent picture of how they fit together.

I think it is clear enough that 3 is compatible with 1 and 2. Indeed it is probably the case that a coherent account or even a reasonable picture of how these forms of life hang together could not be had without some clarification of the concepts involved. So difficulties that attach to 1 will be passed on to 3. But 3, as interesting as it is, has problems of its own. What is a "presupposition" and what is "an underlying" one? Perhaps "underlying presupposition" is pleonastic? That last point aside, how do we detect them in science, morality, politics and the like and in our life-world more generally? (Hans Reichenbach, for example, argued that what Kant took to be a presupposition of science, namely, the principle of causality, wasn't one.)⁴ Is some principle of induction a presupposition for science, is some conception of rationality one for morals and is some conception of the ubiquity of power one for politics? But then how is induction, rationality and power to be conceived? And how is philosophy to articulate them?

Presumably philosophy seeks to isolate these presuppositions, dig them out so to speak from the flow of talk and conceptualization in these various forms of life and the workings of the social practices that are part of these forms of life. In making the presuppositions perspicuous, it presumably states them clearly and further clarifies them where necessary. (But when is it necessary? Do we have any conception of "complete clarity" or even of "sufficient clarity" here?)⁵ It will also display their relations. But again we can ask is what is to be displayed their logical relations, causal relations, or some other kinds of relations? And if some other kind what other kinds? Moreover, is it reasonable to expect them to fit together? And, if so, how is this fit to be conceived? We also need some characterization of what a form of life is and of what science, morality, politics, art and religion are and some demarcation of them as well. What are the respective spheres of religion and science or religion and morality or morality and politics and how is this to be determined?

It is not only with "underlying" that we have something problematic, but with "central" as well in "central forms of life." There are many forms of life. Some at certain times and places have greater or lesser importance. Some, even though they are ubiquitous, are certainly not central. Morality is ubiquitous and central. Exorcism is not ubiquitous across cultures and times, but during some times and at some places it has been both central and ubiquitous. Many-sidedness is ubiquitous but not central. Still how we are to determine what is central and what is not is not by any means crystal clear. Perhaps it would be pervasively contested at least across times and cultures?

Finally, what is it to give an account of how these forms of life hang together? What kind of an account are we to give of their hanging together? An empirical descriptive

account, an interpretive account, a causal account, some kind of critical normative account or some combination of them and if so in what combination? Should it be some kind of metaphysical or categorial account which is distinct from any of the above and, if so, what is meant by "metaphysical" or "categorial" here? If such an account can be nothing more than a picture, how is the metaphor "picture" to be understood? And we should recall that there were philosophers in the heyday of logical empiricism who spoke of verbal magic here: who rejected picture thinking with its analogism.⁶

The questions I have directed toward 3, as well as 1 and 2, are questions typical enough of philosophical activity particularly on the analytical side. So by illustration you can get a glimpse of what some characteristic philosophical activity looks like. I do not mean to give to understand by posing all these questions that I think these conceptions of philosophy are worthless or even unfruitful. I think all three have a point and indeed an important point. It is also easier in philosophy, as elsewhere, to ask questions than to give answers. The Socrateses always have an easier time of it than the Aristotles. It is also difficult to ascertain or even guess when we have fecklessly asked a question, asked a question once too often, as sometimes children do and as something clever sillies turn into a vocation. It is also difficult over such matters, as it typically is in philosophy, to determine where the burden of proof lies. Once this has been firmly established the battle is often at least half won. Sometimes it may even be all over. Which ones (if any) of these questions would need to be answered could only be ascertained by a detailed examination of these conceptions.

For certain purposes we might ignore them for all three conceptualizations. For any given inquiry certain questions need to be begged; certain things need to stand fast.⁷ Sometimes there is a point in taking a certain conception of philosophy and seeing how far we can run with it. This seems to me true of 1, 2 and 3. But in our present context in trying to give a sense of how contested and contestable the very concept of philosophy is it is important to see something of the range of questions that can readily, and not altogether artificially, be raised about these different conceptions. We, if we reflect on them, will come to see how reasonable persons might come to reject any or all of these conceptions.

There is a fourth conception of what philosophy is or at least should be that rests on the prior acceptance of something like 3 as a legitimate task of philosophy, but conceives of what it takes to be a still more fundamental or important task for philosophy, a task which gives expression to a distinct conceptualization of the subject.

4. Philosophy is a critique (a cluster of interrelated criticisms) of the underlying presuppositions of the various forms of life, practices, institutions and ideologies of humankind.

Here, too, a whole battery of questions emerge about such a conception. How does philosophy gain a foothold here? For "philosophy" in 4 we could have substituted, perhaps without loss of content, "social criticism," "theology," "critical social science," "cultural critique" and perhaps other things as well. (That most of us now would not put theology in that role says something about what Max Weber characterized as the relentless disenchantment of the world.) Not a few philosophers, Wittgenstein, John Wisdom and Richard Rorty, but as well many linguistic philosophers with no philosophically therapeutic intentions, would challenge that philosophy had any or could reasonably come to have any such critical function. What kind of knowledge or understanding – knowing things that no one else can know so well – would philosophy have to have to

enable it to play the role of culture critic? What criterion does it have that enables it to show that whole domains of science are in error, that morality itself (not just some philosopher's or ideologist's conception of morality) rests on a mistake, that religion is irrational, that art is devoid of insight or that philosophy is something that yields us a kind of insight not possessed by the ordinary person? It assumes (or at least seems to assume) that philosophers have some discipline called epistemology that tells them in general terms what knowledge really is or what justified beliefs really are so that philosophy could, using this discipline, find out if there really is any knowledge or justified beliefs in any science or in morality or in any area of everyday life. It would tell us how to fix belief in any domain whatsoever. But, as the critique of foundationalism and other general conceptions of normative epistemology has forced on our attention, it is very questionable indeed whether we have any clear conception or even a fruitfully suggestive conception of how we might come to have such a general criterion for knowledge or justified belief. It is not clear that philosophers, or anyone else for that matter, could say anything non-trivial about what knowledge – any kind of knowledge at all in any domain – consists in or whether there are such general criteria at all.⁸ Perhaps we can, perhaps there is such philosophical knowledge or such a general Archimedean point, but in our very conceptualization of what philosophy is we cannot reasonably start by just assuming it. We, in some other sense of "philosophy," would have to argue for it and once we had, if we ever would have, such a sound argument then we could make a claim for its being a part of but not the whole of what philosophy is.

Could we substitute "logic" for epistemology as providing the substance of the rationale for such critique? I think not. Logic could show us whether certain sentences or propositions were consistent with each other and it could help us see the logical implications of our beliefs or at least those that had been or at least could be codified by logic. This can in some circumstances be helpful. Reasonable people do not want to have genuinely inconsistent beliefs and in gaining a perspicuous representation of our beliefs it is useful to have clearly displayed at least some of the implications of our beliefs and their logical relations. But a set of beliefs or even a whole belief-system (say, Christian Science) might be consistent and perspicuously displayed and still be utterly absurd or mythological. Logic can help in critiquing our presuppositions by showing us what follows from what and what can consistently go together but it can hardly provide the core of our critique. But we seem with such a conception of philosophy to be without any clear understanding of what critique would or could come to here.

There is a related conception of philosophy advocated by some pragmatists among others that has related difficulties but if they can be overcome it could afford us something quite useful.

5. Philosophy is the criticism of criticisms.

Here philosophy goes *überhaupt* from literary criticism, cultural critique, social critique, critical social science, science, theology and any of the more determinate forms of critique. It gives us, in the form of a critical theory of inquiry, general criteria of criticism for assessing the soundness or at least the plausibility of our various forms and types of criticism and of our different styles of reasoning. It could show us, for example, that our specific canons of criticism, say, in literary criticism or social criticism, were mistaken. Dewey, in a wide sense of "logic", called this theory of inquiry logic. It can (and does) use the consistency criteria and implicative criteria of formal logic (logic *period* as we characterized it above). But, as we have seen, that is not enough to yield a philosophical

criticism that would give us a basis for a "criticism of criticisms." Dewey made non-formal claims about method – scientific method – where "science" is broadly conceived. But this looks at least as if it would be afflicted by difficulties similar to those of epistemology discussed above.

Richard Rorty, a neo-pragmatist generally sympathetic to Dewey, argues against Dewey (and Sidney Hook as well) that such a conception of inquiry vacillates between truisms which would not give us anything sufficiently substantive to so critique forms of life and something more substantive which is also problematical.⁹ The truisms are just that, but Dewey in seeking something of more substance for his theory of inquiry falls into some of the mistakes of the epistemological tradition. Again, we have a conception of philosophy which is interesting, but would for its defence require extensive philosophical argument in some other sense of "philosophy" than that of "a criticism of criticisms."

III

The above five conceptions of philosophy all more or less securely belong to what has been called critical philosophy: philosophy whose central aim is *not* to construct speculative systems of thought designed to reveal or articulate "ultimate reality" or "the ultimate nature of reality" in its interconnections, but to critically analyze the concepts and beliefs that we have or the beliefs and concepts, or conceptualizations that some philosopher, scientist or other intellectual might concoct. But there are other more speculative, more metaphysically oriented conceptions of philosophy – let us call them speculative philosophies – which conceptualize philosophy differently than any of the ways conceptualized above. They are no longer, at least in an Anglo-American-Scandinavian environment, the dominant conceptions of philosophy, but historically they have been very important and they have some able defenders today. Two, themselves rather different conceptions, will serve as examples. Jacques Maritain, a distinguished Catholic philosopher, defines philosophy as follows:

6. Philosophy is the science which by the light of reason studies the first causes or highest principles of all things – is, in other words, the science of things in their first causes, in so far as these belong to the natural order....¹⁰

It is evident at a glance how distant this conception is from the conceptions of critical philosophy. But, even more than critical philosophy, it is very problematical indeed. For starters to think of philosophy as a science is, at best, perplexing. It is certainly not an experimental science like physics or biology and it is not a formal science either like mathematics or logic. But that seems at least to exhaust all the sciences there are. Perhaps in using "science" Maritain means no more than what in German is meant by "*Wissenschaft*" where what is being referred to by *Wissenschaft* is any systematic study. On that conception, theology is a science but so is astrology or perhaps even Christian Science and that seems at least to be a *reductio* of so speaking of science. At least, if this is Maritain's construal, calling philosophy a science is not very useful. Presumably he intends something more vigorous, but it is not evident what that something is. And to speak, as Maritain does, of what "by the light of reason" philosophy studies is to use a metaphor which very much needs unpacking. What is it to speak of "reason" here? Is to study something "by the light of reason" simply "to think carefully, systematically and thoroughly" about it? But if that is so why doesn't Maritain simply say so? Speaking of "by

the light of reason," given the tradition of the Ancients and Classical rationalism, certainly suggests something more.¹¹ But what is this more? It suggests some kind of "rational insight" going beyond argument and the marshalling of evidence.¹² But what is that? Is there such a thing? How does it differ – or does it – from feeling strongly about something or having a sense of certainty? At the very least such a conception needs careful elucidation. It appears at least only to obfuscate things. It does not help us gain a clear conception of what philosophy should be.

Right after his talk of "by the light of reason," Maritain speaks of philosophy as studying "the first causes or highest principles of all things", but this, as a way of characterizing philosophy, is even more question begging than some of the other conceptions we have discussed. Perhaps there are first causes or, what is something else again, highest principles and perhaps, what is still something else again, "the highest principles of *all* things", but lots of good philosophers have not thought that. A few have even thought that such conceptions are incoherent.¹³ It is a bad mistake to so *define* philosophy such that thinkers with such beliefs could not even be doing philosophy. Rather "philosophy" should be so defined as to accommodate both kinds of thinkers and then *within philosophy itself* arguments should be developed as to whether or not we could prove or in some way establish (either conclusively or probabilistically) that there are or are not such first causes or highest principles of all things or whether either or both of these conceptions are incoherent. We should not beg such issues in our very definition of what philosophy is.

A similar thing is true of Maritain's "the science of things in their first causes, in so far as these belong to the natural order." This repeats the other assumptions and introduces the conception of "the natural order." But this just assumes what many philosophers and others as well would deny, that there is something to contrast with "the natural order," e.g., "the supernatural order," "the spiritual order," "the non-natural order," "the moral order." Perhaps some such contrast can be coherently and even justifiably be made. But it is not evident that it can. There are philosophers who think "the natural order" is pleonastic and others who think that, whether it is pleonastic or not, that is all there is. Again we do not want to preclude such lines of thought in our very definition of philosophy.

The second example that I shall give of the speculative tradition defining philosophy comes from Maurice Cornforth, a well-known English Marxist of a preanalytical Marxist vintage. Cornforth tells us that

7. Philosophy is the attempt to understand the nature of the world and our place and destiny in it.¹⁴

With this conception there is the problem, inherent in some of the other conceptions as well, of distinguishing philosophy from theology, religion, myth or science. We could substitute any of those things for "philosophy" in Cornforth's definition. The various sciences attempt to understand the nature of the world as do religion and theology, at least on some conceptualizations. Some of the sciences try to show our place in the world and a few scientists, more frequently as they approach retirement, might think that some bits of science attempt to understand our destiny (assuming we have such a thing). Certainly religion, myth and theology all try to aid us in understanding our destiny. So to characterize philosophy as Cornforth does, does not distinguish it clearly from these other disciplines or activities.

Such a conceptualization does not at all help to demarcate philosophy. To say,

moreover, that only philosophy really helps us to understand the nature of things is a rather incredible claim to make in the face of the development of physics and biology. Furthermore, again such a claim needs to be argued in philosophy and not to be made as part of its very definition. Some philosophers think that if anything explains such things it is science. Others, skeptical about any claims of anyone to explain something so general as the nature of the world, let alone our place and destiny in it, will be through and through convinced that it is not the task of philosophy or indeed any other discipline to give such explanations. Some will believe that attempted explanations here can be nothing other than pseudo-explanations.¹⁵ Again such things as Comforth claims here should be argued for inside philosophy and not made a part of its very *definition*.

IV

Perhaps other definitions of philosophy which capture better the tradition of speculative philosophy can be given. Still the above two conceptions are representative of the once dominant tradition. To get a fair perspective here it should be added that defenders of such a tradition can and sometimes do accept a good bit of critical philosophy.¹⁶ They could believe, for example, that philosophy should involve the analytical study of concepts, indeed that that was even a necessary *first* step in philosophy, but they still take that study to be ancillary to speculative philosophy. The central thing, these speculative philosophers believe, is that we should seek to attain an understanding of the ultimate principles in terms of which everything, including the nature and destiny of human beings, can be explained. To satisfy our craving for explanation, we need, speculative philosophers believe, to have explanations which will give us an ultimate accounting of things. Being the sort of creatures we are our hearts and minds will not, the claim goes, rest easy until we have such ultimate explanations of ultimate reality. That is the fundamental metaphysical urge that cannot be theorized away. We are, among other things, metaphysical animals. We will push, typically, perhaps always inarticulately, towards ultimate explanations and ultimate principles which show us what ultimate reality is like.¹⁷

In doing this we should start by characterizing our presupposed concepts and beliefs accurately and clearly in a manner that shows their connections. We should then seek to ascertain which of these presupposed beliefs and presuppositions are true and, as well, determine which of the true beliefs or presuppositions are the more fundamental and, with respect to the more fundamental ones, define the concepts embedded in them and, using these defined concepts, try, using beliefs expressive of them, to derive other true beliefs from the more fundamental ones. Some of our concepts may be so fundamental, say, goodness or truth, that we will have to take them as primitive. But, whether this is so or not, we should seek to articulate our most fundamental concepts and the ultimate presuppositions containing them and to see how they hang together. This may give us a picture of ultimate reality: the point where a quest for explanation *must* come to an end where we have something that on reflection we recognize to be *self-evident*.¹⁸

This conception of the classical tradition of metaphysical or speculative philosophy is a tall order. Not many people any more think that anything like this can be achieved or that we should even try to achieve it. We could not, of course, prove an ultimate principle for if we could prove it it would not be ultimate, nor can we give grounds for ultimate explanations for again if we could give grounds for them they would not be ultimate explanations. But somehow we should just be able to see – to intuit – that certain explanations are ultimate and certain principles are true ultimate principles. We will just,

the claim goes, intuitively apprehend them to be true – self-evidently true – if we will be genuinely and carefully reflective.¹⁹

The problems here are myriad. Perhaps there are very general propositions which are self-evidently true such as "Red things are colored"; "Puppies are young dogs"; "All objects have extension"; "Every event has a cause" (as distinct from "Every effect has a cause"). All or some of these may be self-evident and true, but, even if they are, they are not very substantive and it is also not so evident why we should regard them as ultimate or fundamental and try to base our understanding of reality on them. Some, as in my first two examples, are true because they are true by definition. We just mean, in the appropriate context and when not talking about seals, by "puppy" a "young dog" and something that is red is just something that we will also say is colored. We have no understanding of what it would be like for something to be red but not colored. This just reflects our conceptual practices. (I say "conceptual practices" rather than "linguistic practices" for the same thing holds for equivalent sentences in other languages.)

The other two examples are more problematic. "Every effect has a cause," like the first two, is true by definition. All three sentences are sentences which, in the pre-Quinean analytic tradition, would have been called analytic, i.e., true in virtue of their meanings or use alone. But "Every event has a cause" is not equivalent to "Every effect has a cause" and most people would be hesitant to claim that determinism is true by *definition* or by *stipulation* and some would not think that determinism is true at all. It is, moreover, not at all clear what would count towards establishing the truth or falsity of "Every event has a cause." Some say the phenomena of quantum mechanics refutes it. But others give quantum mechanics a reading that is compatible with determinism. What is clear enough is that "Every event has a cause," while being a bit more substantive than "Every effect has a cause," is not self-evident. Indeed it might not be true at all. Similar things are even more evidently true of "All objects have extension." Some think it is plainly false because of mathematical objects and other universals or, alternatively, because of intentional objects. Others would refuse to give numbers or redness or humanity or the State such a Platonistic reading. Indeed some think such talk incoherent. But some will think of "intentional objects" and they will not think of them as having extension, though they will not Platonize them either. In any event "objects have extension" is hardly true by definition or a self-evident truth.

More generally where, on the one hand, we get anything among these general truisms (or perhaps in some instances falsisms) with some substantive bite they are not self-evident and how we would establish their truth or falsity is (to put it minimally) unclear. Where, on the other, we get²⁰ something that has the smack of self-evidence we get something with little content.

The above aside, talk of "ultimate reality," "ultimate explanations" and "ultimate principles" is obscure. Do we have in mind the fundamental particles of physics when we speak of ultimate reality? If we do then that is plainly something for physics (an empirical science) to ascertain and claim, if any discipline does, and not for philosophers to pontificate on, let alone for it to be something that is taken to be a part of the very province of philosophy. But it is not only that but as well that there is an historical element involved here that would surely not be welcome to the metaphysician. What physicists took to be the fundamental particles 200 years ago is not what they take to be the fundamental particles now and it is a safe bet that what they will take to be the fundamental particles 200 years from now will be still different. There is no way of just determining, from some perspective outside of history, from some view from nowhere, from some Absolute perspective, what the fundamental particles must be. Some

metaphysicians wish *a priori* to determine this. But that is not something they can do. This is, *ultimately*, whatever its genesis, an experimental issue and there is no second-guessing physics. The philosopher cannot even say what the fundamental particles are let alone what they must be. There is, moreover, no gaining something which is self-evident here.

It is, however, doubtful that most metaphysicians have something like this in mind when they talk about ultimate reality. Some—physicalists or materialists—will say that everything is physical, leaving the concrete specification of what is physical to the scientist; mental matters (sensations, believings, thoughts) are physical processes or occurrences (perhaps brain states, perhaps grosser functions of the body as well) and numbers (so called mathematical objects) are human constructs. Metaphysicians out of the Cartesian tradition will say that besides physical things and processes there are, as a distinct kind of reality, mental things or processes and that neither can be reduced to the other. Other metaphysicians – they may or may not be dualists – will say that in addition to material things there are spiritual principles revealing a supernatural reality which is the ultimate reality and is the explanation and ultimate cause of all the other realities.

These metaphysical stances can and sometimes do receive a far more sophisticated articulation than what is gestured at here, but the point in this context is that in any of their formulations they are far from self-evident. It is not clear how any of them could be established or that they are even coherent. But even granted, as many now think about physicalism, that it can be coherently stated, it is far from clear what would establish it to be true or the most probably correct account we have of ultimate reality: the way things are and must be. Perhaps among sophisticated philosophers physicalism is the only metaphysical game in town if indeed there are any plausible metaphysical games in or out of town. But that judgment may say more about the contemporary *Weltgeist* than about anything that could be soundly argued. But that any such metaphysical claim at all – dualist, physicalist, supernaturalist – could be established is even a more fundamental problem. The attack on metaphysics has been going on for the last 200 years; it is not just a phenomena of logical empiricism and goes with, though it may not be dependent on, the rise of science as a fundamental source of explanation of the way the world is, including the human world. The metaphysician's *a priori* constructions carry little conviction in our *Weltgeist*. If we have metaphysics at all it is very likely to be metaphysics within the limits of science alone.²⁰

Some will say that such an attitude is a scientific attitude reflecting the dominant ideology of our time, namely, the groundless and indeed a partisan belief that what science (most particularly the hard natural sciences) cannot tell us humankind cannot know. It is this ideology, not clear thinking, not a clearly articulated critical philosophy, not the development of science or logic, that sustains, some believe, the anti-metaphysical attitude of our time. This itself is a reasonably widely held view, but people who would pounce on it as a rationale for sticking with speculative philosophy should at least take pause that such leading critics of scientism as Hilary Putnam, Richard Rorty, Stanley Cavell, and Jürgen Habermas are also rejectors of metaphysics.²¹

V

I want in bringing this essay to a close to give something of a rationale (a very partial rationale) for why "What is philosophy?" has itself been so variously construed and to make a suggestion about how we might possibly and plausibly set about giving some order to that chaos.

Philosophy, as we have noted, like "science," "religion," "morality," "explanation,"

"knowledge," and "belief and unlike "rock," "tree," "human being," "bear," and "fly," is not a name of a natural kind. It has no essence or underlying structure that it must meet or be to be philosophy. There are no necessary and sufficient conditions for something being philosophical any more than there are necessary and sufficient conditions for something being scientific. What is science is what scientists do when they do what they regard as science. What is philosophical is what philosophers do when they are doing things they themselves regard as philosophical. So in saying what is philosophy or what is science, it would seem, at first blush at least, that we should go completely descriptivist: what is philosophical is what philosophers do. They, of course, do many different things so philosophy is a many varied splendor just as is science.

However, it should also be noted that "philosophy" and "science" are also used eulogistically.²² There are disputes among people who regard themselves as scientists about what disciplines are really scientific. Some physicists and logician-mathematicians (to say nothing of traditionalist analytic philosophers) wish to rule psychology, sociology, and anthropology from the scientific domain or to rule out at least large parts of those disciplines (pseudo-disciplines). Moreover, there is disagreement among scientists about which putative scientists are really scientists. Some will deny that accolade to Freud, Skinner, Marx, Pareto, and Piaget. Philosophers have similar difficulties with what is philosophy. Some logicians do not regard moral and political philosophy as really philosophy and some moral and political philosophers return the compliment. Whether Montaigne, Pascal, Vico, Herder, Kierkegaard, Newman, Nietzsche, or even (in some quarters) Hegel are really philosophers is a matter of dispute, though not whether Plato, Aristotle, Descartes, Locke, Hume, and Kant are. The latter group, it is pervasively believed, are securely a part of the canon. But we have to be careful even here. For a long time Hegel would have been securely a part of the canon and in some quarters Marx would be too. But some now would deny that canonical status to Hegel.²³ And some, including some who think very highly of Marx indeed, would deny that he was a philosopher or say that philosophy was only a marginal concern of his: a concern principally of his youth. Nietzsche is perhaps the most instructive example. For Continental philosophers as different as Heidegger, Habermas, Gadamer, Foucault, and Derrida, Nietzsche is securely a part of the canon as he is for such Anglo-American mavericks as Danto, Taylor, MacIntyre, Rorty, and Nehamas. Indeed some think of him as a very central figure in the Western tradition. But even such astute and non-*parti pris* Anglo-American philosophers as Isaiah Berlin, Iris Murdoch, Stuart Hampshire, and Anthony Quinton in their 1955 discussion, "Philosophy and Belief," all agreed that Nietzsche plainly was not a philosopher at all but, as important as he was, was a sage going *Weltanschauungish*.²⁴

So, as with scientists on science, so with philosophers on philosophy, if we try to go purely descriptive, we will see that this is hardly possible for there is disagreement about who are the philosophers and who are not. The canon shifts. If it is replied that the canon shifts but not completely so, then it should in turn be replied that if we take only the most ubiquitously certain members we would constrain our conception of philosophy far more than most people who get paid for teaching something that is called "philosophy" in the university curriculum would desire or be willing to accept. It is a hot matter of dispute whether Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Emerson, Newman, or Marx are really philosophers. And it is equally a matter of dispute, though the dispute is less torrid (fewer people care), whether Church, Gödel, Brouwer, Schefer, Montague, or Foucault (to take a very different example) are really philosophers, though some of them taught in philosophy departments. The dispute over cases like these (particularly the former cases) tends to

be hot for it touches nerves about what philosophy really is or should be.

Indeed, for the most *pari pris*, even the securest part of the canon is not entirely safe. Some might argue that Plato is really more of a sage than a philosopher. He should, in a way he standardly is not, be classified with Nietzsche or perhaps Hegel as a sage (in Hegel's case an obscure and pompous sage) who told big tales of a *Weltanschauung*ish nature and not with Aristotle and Descartes who are plainly philosophers. And some might even say that Hobbes and Hume, as important as they are, should not be classified as philosophers but as social scientists with Adam Smith and Adam Ferguson. To go contemporary, really partisan people (blinker dogmatists) would deny that Heidegger, Derrida or perhaps even Dewey are really philosophers while other partisans (equally blinkered dogmatists, though of a different sort) would deny that Frege, Gödel, Church, Montague, or perhaps even Tarski are really philosophers. They are instead, such people would claim, formal scientists concerned with the (if there is such a thing) foundations of mathematics, logic, or the semantics of formal languages. But that, some would say, is not philosophy just as others would deny that what Heidegger and Derrida do is philosophy.

I think partisanship pushed to such extremes is absurd. Yet it is also true that some think that what Heidegger did or what Frege did is the really most crucial move in contemporary philosophy: a central turning point, while others think of the curse of Heidegger or the curse of Frege. That is, they think of one or another of these philosophers (usually not both, though I could understand a pragmatist thinking that) as taking philosophy down the garden path.

The above considerations were designed to show how impossible it is to simply go descriptivist about what is philosophy. Philosophers deeply differ about their subject and, for most of them, it is important to them what is thought here as can be seen from the fights, or near fights, which typically break out in philosophy departments when it comes to hiring a new member. More than competence, field, or (what presumably is a no-no but in reality is not) personality is typically at issue.

Going purely prescriptive will not solve things either. "Rule out Hegel, Nietzsche, Foucault, and Derrida: banish them to the literature departments" or "Rule out Frege, Tarski, Montague, and Church: banish them to the mathematics or linguistics departments" does not solve anything either except practically. (Practically because it is important that all of these people get studied in universities. In what departments they are studied is less important.)

Where prescriptions are given reasons need to be given for them if they are not to be purely arbitrary and the giving of reasons will turn on beliefs about what is really important or desirable in philosophy or about what can reasonably be done in philosophy, given what we know now or can reasonably believe and what our situation is. It seems that philosophy isn't essentially anything, there being no thoroughly uncontested answers to what the function or functions of philosophy is. (Indeed it may not even have a function.) So what is essential to argue is (a) about what really is (if anything) important and desirable about philosophy ("philosophy" unavoidably construed in some determinate way or other) and (b) what can be done in philosophy, given our situation and what we can know now or can reasonably believe. Perhaps there are and can be no tolerably objective answers to those two questions. But that cannot be reasonably accepted *a priori* or taken as something which is just plainly so.

Perhaps, given this state of affairs, some *rational reconstruction* of philosophy is possible and desirable. To employ a method of rational reconstruction is neither simply to **present** nor simply to describe. A rational reconstruction of philosophy will not apply

to everything which has previously gone under the name of philosophy. Rational reconstructions are in part prescriptionist but not arbitrarily so and they will leave intact considerable segments of what (now speaking descriptively) had previously been widely regarded as philosophy. The rational reconstructionist will argue that unless some prescriptive restrictions are made one will not be able to demarcate philosophy from other forms of inquiry or reflective activities or articulations of *Weltanschauung*. In demarcating philosophy more precisely, say, from science, literature, religion, or pure sagery, the rational reconstructor calls attention to differences. But in rationally reconstructing she will at least keep the most central figures of the canon: Plato, Aristotle, Hobbes, Locke, Descartes, Leibniz, Spinoza, Berkeley, Hume, Kant, and Hegel and she will try to show what (if indeed there is any determinate thing) about them that makes us quite unequivocally classify all of them as philosophers. With this in hand, we will be in a *somewhat* better position to know, with respect to disputed figures, e.g., Kierkegaard, Herder, Smith, Ferguson, Nietzsche, Marx, Thales, whom to include and whom to exclude from the canon.

There will, of course, be dispute about when a reconstruction is *rational*, for how rationality is to be conceived is itself a deeply contested notion. Moreover, answering these questions of rational reconstruction seems at least to require some plausible answer to our previous questions (a) and (b): to wit, answers to questions about what (if anything) is really important about philosophy and what can be done in philosophy, given our situation and what we can know now or can reasonably believe. (The two cannot, of course, be answered independently of each other.) Perhaps there is no consensus or even a reasonable basis for a consensus here. If that is so, then the prospects for a rational reconstruction of philosophy are bleak.²⁵

Notes

¹ On Moore's early Platonism see Thomas Baldwin, "Moore's Rejection of Idealism" in *Philosophy in History*, Richard Rorty et al., eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 357-74.

² Gilbert Ryle, *Collected Papers*, Vol 2 (London: Hutchinson's, 1971), 319-25 and 194-211.

³ Friedrich Waismann, "How I See Philosophy" in *Contemporary British Philosophy*, H. D. Lewis, ed. (London: Allen & Unwin, 1961), 447-90.

⁴ Hans Reichenbach, *The Rise of Scientific Philosophy* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1951), 39-49.

⁵ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, Part 1 (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1951).

⁶ Hans Reichenbach, *The Rise of Scientific Philosophy*, 11-13, 195, and 303.

⁷ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *On Certainty* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1969). See also Georg von Wright, "Wittgenstein on Certainty" in *Problems in the Theory of Knowledge*, Georg von Wright, ed. (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1972), 47-60.

⁸ Richard Rorty, *The Consequences of Pragmatism* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1982) and Kai Nielsen, *After the Demise of the Tradition* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991).

⁹ Richard Rorty, *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth*, 63-77, 211-22 and Rorty, "Introduction" to *John Dewey: The Later Works, 1925-1953*, Vol. 8 (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1986), ix-xviii. See also Rorty's introduction to John P. Murphy's *Pragmatism: From Peirce to Davidson* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991).

¹⁰ Jacques Maritain, "The Nature of Philosophy and of Theology" in *What Is Philosophy?* Henry W. J. Johnstone, ed. (London: Macmillan, 1965), 32.

¹¹ Hans Reichenbach, *The Rise of Scientific Philosophy*, 3, 11, 70, 78, and 304. His conception should be contrasted with that of the Frankfurt School and particularly that of Max Horkheimer.

¹² John Passmore, "Philosophy" in *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy* Vol. 6, Paul Edwards, ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1967), 216-25.

¹³ See various writings of A. J. Ayer, Axel Hägerström, and Kai Nielsen.

¹⁴ Maurice Cornforth, "The Task of Philosophy" in *What is Philosophy?* Henry W. J. Johnstone, ed. (London: Macmillan, 1965), 68.

¹⁵ Hans Reichenbach, *The Rise of Scientific Philosophy* and Isaiah Berlin et. al., "Philosophy and Belief," *The Twentieth Century* (June 1955), 495-521.

¹⁶ Brand Blanshard, "The Philosophic Enterprise" in *The Owl of Minerva*, Charles J. Bontempo and S. J. Odell, eds. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1975), 163-77 and Frederick C. Copleston, "Philosophy as I See It" also in *The Owl of Minerva*, 153-61. See also F. E. Sparshott, "Speculation and Reflection, or It's All Done by Mirrors," *University of Toronto Quarterly* V, no. 1 (Oct 1965). See also, for a critique of such conceptions, my "Jolting the Career of Reason," *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, vol. VIII, no. 2 (1994), 113-140.

¹⁷ C. D. Broad, "Critical and Speculative Philosophy" in *British Philosophy*, First Series, J. H. Muirhead, ed. (London: Allen & Unwin, 1924), 77-110 and C. D. Broad, "Philosophy I and II," *Inquiry* 1, no. 2 (Summer 1958), 99-129. See also my discussion of Broad's conception of Philosophy in my "What is Philosophy?" *History of Philosophy Quarterly*, vol. 10, no. 4 (October 1993), 389-404.

¹⁸ See Broad's discussion of Henry Sidgwick in "Philosophy I and II," *Inquiry* 1, no. 2 (Summer 1958), 121-23 and 127-29. See also Henry Sidgwick, *Philosophy: Its Scope and Relations* (London: Macmillan, 1902), C. J. Ducasse, *Philosophy as a Science* (New York: Oskar Prest, 1942), and E. W. Hall's discussion of Ducasse in "Is Philosophy a Science?" *Journal of Philosophy* XXIX, no. 5 (Feb, 1942), 113-23.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Hilary Putnam, *Realism with a Human Face*, 105-19 and 3-53.

²¹ For Putnam's rejection of metaphysics see citations in note 20. For Rorty's, note the books and articles already cited and in addition his *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979) and *Essays on Heidegger and Others* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979). For Cavell's, see *The Claim of Reason* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979) and *Conditions Handsome and Unhandsome* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1990). For Jürgen Habermas, *Autonomy & Solidarity* (London: Verso, 1985). James Conant, in his "Introduction" to *Realism with a Human Face*, discusses these issues very well indeed.

²² Max Black, *Problems of Analysis* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1954), 3-23.

²³ Hans Reichenbach, *The Rise of Scientific Philosophy*, 67 and Karl Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, Vol 2 (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1945), 27-80.

²⁴ Isaiah Berlin et. al., "Philosophy and Belief," *Twentieth Century* (Spring 1955).

²⁵ I have tried to do something to show how very difficult it is to achieve a rational consensus concerning philosophy in my "Can there be Justified Philosophical Beliefs?" *Iyyun* 40 (July 1991), 235-70. I have tried to show where our rational reconstruction should take us in my *After the Demise of the Tradition* and in my *Transforming Philosophy: A Metaphilosophical Inquiry* (Boulder, Co. Westneir Press, 1995). See also my "On Transforming Philosophy," *Soundings* LXXIII, no. 4 (Winter 1990), 575-93.