

1960

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Recommended Citation

Campbell, Harry M. (1960) "Some Facts About the Theory of Fiction," *Studies in English*: Vol. 1 , Article 7.
Available at: https://egrove.olemiss.edu/ms_studies_eng/vol1/iss1/7

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Some Facts about the Theory of Fictions

Harry M. Campbell

ONE OF THE most influential ideas in the modern world has been the theory of fictions, which received its fullest treatment in the book entitled *The Philosophy of 'As If'* (by the German philosopher Hans Vaihinger), written around 1875 but not published until 1911. This book was so successful on the Continent that Vaihinger in 1919, in collaboration with Dr. Raymond Schmidt, founded a magazine, *Annalen der Philosophie* ("with particular reference to the problems of the 'As if' approach"), contributors to which included "not only professional philosophers (Cornelius, Groos, Becher, Bergman, Koffka, Kowaleski) but also eminent representatives of the most important branches of science, the theologian Heim, the lawyer Kruchman, the doctor Abderhalden, the mathematician Pasch, the physicist Volkman, the biological botanist Hansen, the economist Pohle, and the art-historian Lange."¹ The fame of Vaihinger's work quickly spread to England, where his book was translated into English by C. K. Ogden and published in 1924 in the International Library of Psychology, Philosophy, and Scientific Method, of which Ogden was general editor. Ogden hailed the book as "monumental"² and later (in his introduction to Jeremy Bentham's earlier book on the same subject, which he reprinted in the International Library in 1932) added that "Today a Philosophy of As-if dominates scientific thought."³ The fame of Vaihinger's work had become world wide so

that, although *The Philosophy of 'As If'* is written in a rather technical and (for the most part) dry style, a second edition (English) appeared in 1935 and a reprinting in 1949. That Vaihinger's tremendous influence was not limited to scientific thought but had permeated all aspects of modern philosophy was attested by Etienne Gilson, who, in his book *The Unity of Philosophical Experience* (1952), said:

For what is now called philosophy is either collective mental slavery or scepticism. There still are men who hate both, and will not lament the passing of that alternative. But it will not pass away so long as the title of Vaihinger's book remains the program of our philosophical teaching: *The Philosophy of the As If, being a system of the theoretical, practical and religious fictions of mankind, on the basis of an idealistic philosophy. . . .* The time of the 'As ifs' is over; what we now need is a 'This is so,' and we shall not find it, unless we first recover both our lost confidence in the rational validity of metaphysics and our long-forgotten knowledge of its object.⁴

Jeremy Bentham's book entitled *Chrestomathia or Theory of Fictions*,⁵ published in 1815, is still in several ways superior to Vaihinger's, but since Bentham's work has for the most part been either ignored or dismissed (as Ogden says in his introduction to the edition referred to above), "with contemptuous reference," and since Vaihinger's work has had such a great influence on modern thought, it seems appropriate to reconsider Vaihinger to try to understand the reason for the great appeal of his system.

In the beginning, it may be noted that Vaihinger, while claiming to be most carefully scientific in his approach, assures the reader that both biological and spiritual benefits may be derived from the planned use in one's life of fictions, which he carefully defines as "hypotheses which are known to be false, but which are employed because of their utility" (HV, p. xliii). Biologically, thought, when used in this fashion, acts "as a means in the service of the Will to Live and dominate" (HV, p. xlvi). But this is only the beginning, from which mighty spiritual benefits will eventually flow. "Thus, before our very eyes does a small psychical artifice not only develop into a mighty

source of the whole theoretical explanation of the world—for all categories arise from it—but it also becomes the origin of all the idealistic belief and behaviour of mankind” (HV, p. 49). Surely, such a wonder-working device deserves our most careful consideration, even if we may be inclined to decide that the promises made here are almost as hard to believe as the miracles and paradoxes of religious orthodoxy. Of course, from one standpoint, we are assured that we need not believe anything. Vaihinger is a positivist, he tells us, believing that “we must accept as actually real only certain sequences of sensation” (HV, p. 68) and that “the psyche must be regarded as a machine,” which “works according to psycho-mechanical and psycho-chemical laws . . .” (HV, p. 101). All the rest is a process of fictions, but, somewhat paradoxically to say the least, we must *believe* in the amazing efficacy of these fictions.

And then, when we begin to examine Vaihinger’s system in detail, we encounter a startling number of paradoxes which, even under the most sympathetic inspection, prove to be dangerously like ordinary contradictions. This disappointing tendency is apparent from the beginning in his unqualified definition of fictions as “hypotheses which are known to be false, but which are employed because of their utility” (HV, p. xliii), *utility*, as he makes clear on the same page, in the sense of ethical value. This is in his Introduction, but a little further on he tells us that fictions are useful only so long as they are not known to be false. “We must accept as actually real only certain sequences of sensation, from which there arise, in accordance with definite laws, structures that are treated as fictions” (HV, p. 68). He refers here to “fictitious constructs” like space, matter, etc., which “arise out of elementary sensations” and which as “products of the psyche must also be regarded as fictions created by the logical impulse in order to attain its goal,” but “as soon as the mechanism by means of which these concepts perform such efficacious service is disclosed, the illusion of their truth disappears” (HV, p. 69), and they should be discarded. Here the fictions seem to be created by a benevolent, though mechanical, device of nature to protect us from shock until we are emotionally mature enough to dispense with “the illusion of their truth.”

But a problem arises from the relation between his original definition of fictions as consciously false assumptions and his further statement that we cannot know the world of reality, since "we must accept as actually real only certain sequences of sensation" (HV, p. 68). "Many thought processes," he says, "appear to be consciously false assumptions, which either contradict reality or are even contradictory in themselves, but which are intentionally transformed in order to overcome difficulties of thought by this artificial deviation" (HV, pp. xvi-xlvii). But if Vaihinger cannot know objective reality, how can he know when it is contradicted? How can he know, in other words, whether our thought processes may not, to some extent at least, reflect reality? For example, why does Vaihinger include as one of his "consciously false assumptions" the belief in a God? "It is a satisfying Fiction," he says, "for many to regard the world as if a more perfect Higher Spirit had created or at least regulated it" (HV, p. xlvii). Not even Bertrand Russell's atheism is this dogmatic; Russell admits the possibility, though not the probability, that there is a God. It would have seemed more logical for Vaihinger, like Kant, to refer to God as an hypothesis, except for the fact that Vaihinger considers an hypothesis as an assumption the truth of which can be proved by further experience. At least, in view of the almost universal belief in the existence of a Supreme Being, Vaihinger would have seemed less narrowly dogmatic if he had considered God as what Bentham, in his *Theory of Fictions*, called an "inferential entity." Bentham of course was a skeptic, but he was not willing to call God a fictitious entity since the existence of such an entity could be scientifically no more disproved than proved. Bentham defined an inferential entity as one "which is not made known to human beings in general, by the testimony of sense, but of the existence of which the persuasion is produced by reflection—is inferred from a chain of reasoning."⁶ Bentham also put in this category the soul considered as existing in a state of separation from the body.

Vaihinger, as might be expected, runs into logical difficulty on the problem of freedom. He says that "the idea of freedom is one of the most important concepts ever formed by man," though it is a fiction since such an idea "contradicts observation which shows that every-

thing obeys unalterable laws" (HV, p. 43). Freedom, then, is a fiction but an important one: "In the course of their development, men have formed this important construct from immanent necessity, because only on this basis is a high degree of culture and morality possible" (HV, p. 43). We act as if there were freedom when there really is none, and on this basis we develop a high system of morality, but Vaihinger should not use the word *morality* here since it usually indicates free will or responsibility for one's actions which he denies. But he says the fiction is useful, for example, in criminal law, "For if there is to be punishment there must also be guilt, but this cannot exist where responsibility and freedom are denied" (HV, p. 45). But Vaihinger's insistence that the idea of punishment must be maintained for the protection of society seems rather cruel, because society could be protected also by treating the criminal as if he were merely ill, as many modern criminologists now advocate. Vaihinger's fallacious attempt to claim Kant as an ally will be treated in detail later, but is mentioned here to show another basic contradiction, which is really Vaihinger's and not Kant's. "Thus, according to Kant," says Vaihinger, "man is not merely to be judged in his conduct *as if* he were a free agent, but should conduct himself *as if*, at some time or other, he were to be held accountable for his acts" (HV, p. 47). The word *should* here indicates obligation which may or may not be fulfilled and contradictorily indicates even in this deterministic statement that man is, to some extent at least, a free agent.

The same kind of contradiction appears in Vaihinger's account of our psyche. "The psyche," he says, "must therefore be regarded as a machine, not only because it works according to psycho-mechanical and psycho-chemical laws, but in the sense that its natural forces are intensified by these mechanical processes" (HV, p. 101). In other words he is here a pure determinist, but on the same page he says that just as "man is continually perfecting his machines," so "the psyche is always perfecting its mechanisms. . . . Thus the psyche is a machine which is continually improving itself . . ." (HV, p. 101). There is certainly confusion here. To say that the psyche improves itself would seem to give it a certain amount of initiative which it could not have if it were actuated only by "psycho-mechanical and psycho-

chemical laws." We might reconcile this contradiction in part by assuming that the mechanical processes, derived from what Vaihinger calls elsewhere "immanent necessity" (a kind of beneficent *elan vital*), operate on the psyche to improve its efficiency, but on the next page this partial reconciliation is made impossible when Vaihinger says that "The proper task of methodology is to teach us to manipulate this instrument, this thought-machine" (HV, p. 102). Freedom, he maintains, is a fiction, and yet somebody (presumably Vaihinger) can work out a methodology from which we can learn "to manipulate this instrument, this thought-machine." There are three instances of freedom here: (1) "our" teacher of methodology, who may or may not work out this methodology; (2) "we," who may or may not elect to learn it and who (3) may or may not elect to use our knowledge and power after we receive it. But if we do manipulate this "thought-machine," we will be using a great amount of freedom.

Vaihinger contradicts himself even about contradictions. On one page he says, "The main result of our investigation is, then, that *contradiction* is the driving force of thought and that without it thought could not attain its goal at all . . . what we generally call truth . . . is merely the most expedient error. . . . So-called agreement with reality must finally be abandoned as a criterion" (HV, p. 108). But on the very next page he says:

All departures from reality and all self-contradictions are logical errors of the first degree . . . these errors must be cancelled, because otherwise the fictions would be valueless and harmful. . . . If, in fictions, thought contradicts reality, or even if it contradicts itself, and if in spite of this questionable procedure it nevertheless succeeds in corresponding to reality, then this deviation must have been corrected and the contradiction must have been made good. (HV, p. 109).

Thought must correspond to reality, he says here, but on the previous page he has said that "agreement with reality must finally be abandoned as a criterion." And if all departures from reality are mistakes, then it would seem that fictions, defined by Vaihinger elsewhere as "consciously false assumptions, which either contradict reality or

are even contradictory in themselves" (HV, pp. xlvi-xlvii), would certainly be mistakes and the thesis of his whole book would be cancelled.

Keeping in mind Vaihinger's original definition of fictions as "hypotheses which are known to be false but which are used because of their utility," it would seem that he also almost breaks down his theory in the following statement: "The mind has a tendency to bring all ideational contents into equilibrium and to establish an unbroken connection between them. An hypothesis is inimical to this tendency in so far as it involves the idea that it is not to be placed on an equality with the other objective ideas" (HV, p. 125). He then admits that a fiction even more than an hypothesis "interferes with the tendency toward an equilibration of ideational constructs. The hypothesis only hampers this adjustment negatively and indirectly, but the fiction hampers it directly and positively" (HV, p. 126). But a great part of his argument for fictions has been their "utility" in smoothing out thought processes in spite of the fact that they are "consciously false assumptions, which either contradict reality or are even contradictory in themselves . . ." (HV, pp. xlvi-xlvii). In fact, just five pages beyond his above statement about fiction "interfering directly and positively with the tendency toward an equilibration of ideational constructs," he seems to reverse himself by considering fictions as beneficial in promoting the working of the "law of the resolution of psychical tension": "One beneficial effect is that by this tendency to adjustment dogmas and hypotheses are, where possible or expedient, transformed into fictions. For so long as these ideational constructs are supposed to have objective value, contradictions and difficulties arise which disappear if we regard them as mere fictions" (HV, p. 133). Once more Vaihinger has contradicted himself about contradictions as well as about the effect on the psyche of fictions.

Again in this same chapter entitled "The Law of Ideational Shifts," Vaihinger's attitude toward the history of religions seems ambiguous if not actually contradictory. He has all along indicated that to consider religious dogma as fiction is not only the best but indeed the only proper way to consider it. He agrees with the philosopher Forberg that "it is not a duty to believe that there exists a moral world-government or a God as moral world-ruler; our duty is

simply to act *as if* we believed it" (HV, p. 323). He has, as we have seen, even gone so far as to say that "as soon as this *as if* is transformed into a *because*, its purely ethical character vanishes and it becomes simply a matter of our lower interests, mere egotism" (HV, p. 49)—which would certainly imply that the quality of religion is vastly improved when the *because*, which sometimes comes first, is transformed into an *as if*, which "small psychological artifice . . . becomes the origin of all the idealistic belief and behaviour of mankind" (HV, p. 49). That is, belief and behaviour based on God, immortality, reward, punishment, etc., as *hypotheses* are not really idealistic; indeed their ethical character is "destroyed." Keeping in mind his repeated emphasis on the above ideas, it is curious that he definitely connects his "law of ideational shifts" with the "decline and break-up" (one would have expected him to say "the great improvement") of religion (the shift being from dogma to hypothesis to fiction as the religion declines more and more). "At first," he says,

all religion consists of general dogmas. . . . Then doubt appears and the idea becomes an hypothesis. As doubt grows stronger, there are some who reject the idea entirely, while others maintain it either as a public or a private fiction. This last condition is typical of every religion so far known when it has reached a certain age. It can be seen to great advantage in Greek religion, where the Greek folk-deities were at first general dogmas. . . . Subsequently they became fictions for the educated classes, who adhered tenaciously to the worship of God, or rather of the gods, although convinced that the ideas represented nothing real.

The most extensive series of errors in Vaihinger's book are revealed in his valiant efforts to make Kant his ally in considering as fictions rather than hypotheses the Thing-in-itself, God, immortality, liberty, and other such ideas not scientifically verifiable. In Part I he finds himself disappointed because Kant "wavers between the *Ding an sich*, as an hypothesis or a fiction" (HV, p. 74). Kant's system, says Vaihinger, logically demanded the *Ding an sich* as a fiction.

Just as we introduce into mathematics and mechanics ideas which facilitate our task, so Kant introduces a device in the form of the concept *Ding an sich*, as an x to which a y ,

the ego, as our organization, corresponds. By this means the whole world of reality can be dealt with. Subsequently the 'ego' and the *Ding an sich* are dropped, and only sensations remain as real. From our point of view the sequence of sensations constitutes ultimate reality, and two poles are mentally added, subject and object. (HV, pp. 75-76)

This kind of temporary use of the *Ding an sich*, Vaihinger is saying, like the temporary use of "fictitious constructs—space, matter, etc.," mentioned above, would have done Kant credit. In other words, the Thing-in-itself would have been "the most brilliant of all conceptual instruments" if Kant had used it temporarily as a fiction so that "the whole world" might "appear to be understood as an effect," and if he had then dropped it to accept the mature wisdom of Vaihinger's basic doctrine that "only sensations remain as real." But unfortunately Kant "did not adhere to this definite standpoint, but his *Ding an sich* became a *reality*, in short an *hypothesis*, and hence his hesitating discussion of the concept" (HV, p. 76). "The great philosopher stained his glorious discoveries by clinging to effete rationalistic dogmas and thus himself contributed to the fate of his true achievement, which was consigned to oblivion" (HV, p. 30).

Vaihinger can never, in Part I of his book, stop chiding Kant for not consistently maintaining the point of view that his scientifically unverifiable ideas were fictions. Though the misguided Kant did not consistently hold to this view, in ethics, for example, Vaihinger states

what constitutes the real principle of Kantian ethics, namely, that true morality must always rest upon a *fictional* basis. All the *hypothetical* bases, God, immortality, reward, punishment, etc., destroy its ethical character, i. e. we must act with the same seriousness and the same scruples *as if* the duty were imposed by God. . . . But as soon as this *as if* is transformed into a *because*, its purely ethical character vanishes and it becomes simply a matter of our lower interests, mere egotism. (HV, p. 49)

In other words, Vaihinger is saying that all the religious believers, including the great saints, who have not regarded as fictions "the *hypothetical* bases, God, immortality, reward, punishment, etc.," have

acted out of "lower interests, mere egotism." This would of course include Christ himself.

Another slightly puzzling idea in the above explanation of what, even if Kant did not have insight enough to maintain it, constitutes "the real principle of Kantian ethics" is the statement that "true morality must always rest upon a fictional basis." But why, one wonders, cannot the fiction of morality, as Vaihinger has argued for the Thing-in-itself, be kept up only temporarily until the psyche is ready for the mature wisdom of his doctrine that "only sensations remain as real"? Perhaps we will understand the distinction in due time. In the meantime, it is pleasant to contemplate the soaring eloquence of his next sentence: "Thus, before our very eyes, does a small psychical artifice not only develop into a mighty source of the whole theoretical explanation of the world—for all categories arise from it—but it also becomes the origin of all the idealistic belief and behaviour of mankind" (HV, p. 49).

Now since such wonderful results flow from this "small psychical artifice," he generously decides that Kant after all must have really meant to be an "As-If-er" in Vaihinger's sense of the term and devotes forty-seven pages of Part III to arguing thus. It is my firm belief that Vaihinger is mistaken in maintaining that Kant ever considered his transcendental ideas fictions, in Vaihinger's sense of fictions as mental constructs known to be false. First, I cite three passages early in *The Critique of Pure Reason*, which appeared in 1781 and to which Vaihinger devotes more attention than to any other of Kant's works. First, Kant makes it clear that he regards things in themselves as real in the following passage: "The estimate of our rational cognition *a priori* at which we arrive is that it has only to do with phenomena, and that things in themselves, *while possessing a real existence* [italics mine] lie beyond its sphere."⁷ Again, on the next page he says:

. . . while we surrender the power of *cognizing*, we still reserve the power of *thinking* objects, as things in themselves. . . . In order to *cognize* an object, I must be able to prove its possibility, either from its reality as attested by experience, or *a priori*, by means of reason. But I can *think* what I please, provided . . . my conception is a

possible thought, though I may be unable to answer for the existence of a corresponding object in the sum of possibilities. But something more is required before I can attribute to such a conception objective validity. . . . We are not however confined to theoretical sources of cognition for the means of satisfying this additional requirement, but may derive them from practical sources. (*Critique*, p. 9)

Kant's whole effort in his approach to the subject of God, freedom, immortality, etc., was to "satisfy this additional requirement" so that he could attribute to his concepts the "real possibility" of "objective validity."

And the third passage occurs on the next page, where he says, "I must, therefore, abolish *knowledge*, to make room for *belief*" (*Critique*, p. 10). He certainly was not abolishing knowledge to make room for fictions in Vaihinger's sense of the term, and it is clear that when Kant uses the word which is translated *fiction* he is using it as synonymous with *hypothesis*.

I have quoted these passages from the first few pages of the *Critique of Pure Reason* to indicate that Vaihinger was mistaken in thinking that Kant even began with the idea of the Thing-in-itself as a fiction.

Vaihinger, even in dealing with this work which seems most to favor his view of Kant, carefully selects a few sections for comment and from these quotes portions of passages which seem to make Kant an "As-If-er" in Vaihinger's sense of the term. But even on the ground selected by Vaihinger his interpretation will not work. He first selects the section entitled "The Discipline of Pure Reason in Hypothesis." "Near the beginning of the section," Vaihinger says, "we find the 'rational concepts' described as 'mere ideas,' as 'heuristic fictions,' and expressly distinguished from hypotheses" (HV, p. 272). But this is exactly what Kant has not done, as would be indicated in the very title of this section, the first paragraph of which reads as follows:

This critique of reason has now taught us that all its efforts to extend the bounds of knowledge, by means of pure speculation, are utterly fruitless. So much the wider field, it may appear, lies open to hypothesis; as, where we cannot know with certainty, we are at liberty to make guesses and to form suppositions. (*Critique*, p. 227)

And the whole section is devoted to this procedure.

In the paragraph referred to by Vaihinger, Kant is concerned as always to make it clear that these hypotheses about the realm of pure reason (the noumena) do not apply in the phenomenal world. "The conceptions of reason are, as we have already shown, mere ideas, and do not relate to any object in any kind of experience." But "mere ideas" are not fictions in Vaihinger's sense of the term. When Kant says that they "cannot be employed as hypotheses in the explanation of real phenomena," he is emphasizing, as he does throughout this paragraph, that one must go as far as possible in the phenomenal world and not confuse it with the noumenal. The noumenal world, though not demonstrable, Kant always considered as necessary, universal, and real in its sphere. Each object indeed has a sensuous character and an intelligible character, the latter by no means to be considered as "imaginary" in spite of the fact that it cannot be experienced as a "real phenomenon." In the past part (entitled "Scepticism not a Permanent State for Human Reason") of Section II immediately preceding this section discussed by Vaihinger, Kant finds Hume defective on this very point. Hume mistakenly "believed he could infer that, without experience, we possess no source from which we can augment a conception, and no ground sufficient to justify us in framing a judgment that is to extend our cognition *a priori*" (*Critique*, p. 226). Vaihinger would take us right back into Hume's error of regarding the ultimate reality as phenomenal, a conclusion which Kant opposes with all his might.

There are undoubtedly some fields in which fictions in Vaihinger's sense are useful, as, for example, the one in the German Commercial Code which provided (at the time Vaihinger was writing, about 1875) that "goods not returned to the sender within the proper time are to be regarded as if the recipient had definitely authorized and accepted them" (HV, p. 35). In mathematics also such fictional constructs as negative, irrational, and imaginary numbers, as Vaihinger says, "possess great value for the advancement of science and the generalization of its results in spite of the crass contradictions which they contain" (HV, p. 57). But granted the limited procedural usefulness of fictions in the sciences, mathematics, jurisprudence, and certain other

fields, Vaihinger's mistake lies in pushing his theory too far into the philosophy of religion, in which analogies with these other fields must be handled with great caution. Vaihinger is correct in saying repeatedly that "Without the imaginary factor neither science nor life in their [*sic*] highest form are [*sic*] possible" (HV, p. 44). But the question is whether the imagination employed in religious speculation, which forms a very important part of Vaihinger's concern with life, issues in hypotheses or fictions. As Vaihinger has well said, an hypothesis sometimes becomes "degraded" into a fiction, but he at the same time seems to feel that such a change is really progress. I should agree that it is well for an honest man to know when an hypothesis is no longer valid as such (that is, cannot lead into eventual truth), but when it is definitely discarded as an hypothesis, then it has little value, either practically or theoretically, in philosophy or religion. Most intelligent people surely cannot shape their lives ultimately around ideas which in their opinion are fictions, though it is amazing how many think they are doing so. Kant may have been wrong, but at least he "abolished *knowledge*, to make room for *belief*," not for fictions in Vaihinger's sense. The beliefs for which Kant thus made room were the traditional ones in God, freedom, and immortality. Many modern philosophers have acknowledged the genius of Kant's destruction of knowledge about metaphysics but have not been much impressed with his back door return to faith through moralism. It is strange, however, that some who thus condemn Kant will accept as perfectly convincing a system like that of Vaihinger. Such a system would appear to be indeed a desperate shift—evidence of the last stage of a culture when many sophisticated thinkers, having lost religious faith, cannot abide the consequences of its disappearance and have taken a precarious refuge under the flimsy shelter of fictions—a procedure in some respects fully as naive as primitive word-magic. Language, the ultimate reality through "autonomous" symbolism, is our refuge; such is the message of a prominent school of modern philosophers.⁸ The same idea is a fundamental one for I. A. Richards, who has an international reputation as a psychologist, literary critic, and poet, and who can speak with authority for a large group in each of these three fields. Richards in his *Coleridge on the Imagination*

speaks almost ecstatically about the prospect of "a general theoretical study of language capable of opening to us new powers over our minds comparable to those which systematic physical inquiries are giving us over our environment."⁹ For Richards the gospel of language will take the form of poetry (this of course in the tradition of Matthew Arnold's *Literature and Dogma* and much speculation since that time): "If philosophic contemplation, or religious experience, or science gave us Reality," says Richards,

then poetry gave us something of less consequence, at best some sort of shadow. If we grant that all is myth, poetry, as the myth-making which most brings 'the whole soul of man into activity' . . . becomes the necessary channel for the reconstitution of order . . . poetry . . . will remake our minds and with them our world.¹⁰

But other poets, though like Richards in proclaiming the gospel of poetry, seem considerably less happy about it than he. In the sinuous paradoxes of Wallace Stevens—for example, his "Profundum, physical thunder, dimensions in which we believe without belief, beyond belief"¹¹—there is an undercurrent of melancholy, as, to return to the philosophers, there certainly is in the more violent paradoxes of two prominent modern German existentialists, Jaspers and Heidegger. Says Jaspers: "Just as Being and Nothingness are inseparable, each containing the other, yet each violently repelling the other, so faith and unfaith are inseparable, yet passionately repel one another."¹² And Heidegger:

Does Nothing exist only because the Not, i. e., negation, exists? Or is it the other way about? Does negation and the Not exist only because Nothing exists? Where shall we seek Nothing? . . . Only in the clear night of dread's Nothingness is what-is as such revealed in all its original overttness: that it is 'is' and is not Nothing . . . the Nothing nothings.¹³

All the above are various versions, differing only in tone and degree, of the theory of fictions, even though some theorists, like Stevens and the two German existentialists, have evolved the most ingenious fiction of all—that their system both is and is not fiction. There are many other modern versions of the same As-If system, and

I propose to treat a number of them later. There are certainly enough to justify the statements of Ogden and Gilson (quoted in the beginning of this essay) that the philosophy of *As If* is a very powerful influence in our age. Apropos of all this, my contention, quite simply, is that if one cannot believe, he must prepare himself to forego the consolations that reward the believer, and try, even if in vain without divine assistance, to find in human relationships a source for his "emotional equilibration."

¹Hans Vaihinger, *The Philosophy of 'As If'* (London, 1924), pp. xvii-xlviii (hereafter referred to as HV).

²*Ibid.*, Preface, p. vi.

³C. K. Ogden (ed.), *Bentham's Theory of Fictions* (London, 1932), p. cxlviii.

⁴Etienne Gilson, *The Unity of Philosophical Experience* (New York, 1952), pp. 294-295.

⁵Referred to in Ogden, Introduction, p. xxxiii.

⁶*Bentham's Theory of Fictions*, p. 8.

⁷Immanuel Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, in *Great Books of the Western World* (Chicago, 1952), LXII, 8—hereafter referred to as *Critique*.

⁸Cf. Ernst Cassirer, *Language and Myth* (New York, 1946) and Mrs. Susanne Langer, *Philosophy in a New Key* (New York, 1942), and the books to which they refer.

⁹I. A. Richards, *Coleridge on the Imagination* (New York, 1935), p. 232.

¹⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 228, 229.

¹¹Quoted in Jacques Maritain, *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry* (New York, 1953), p. 181.

¹²Quoted in Hector Hawton, *The Feast of Unreason* (London, 1952), p. 200.

¹³Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 188.