

WHAT IS PHILOSOPHY?

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I

VIEWED, as Gilbert Ryle would have it, as a *second-order* discourse, philosophy can help us gain a clearer view of concepts of which we already have a mastery. If well done, it can enable us to command a clearer view of our use of words which, when we reflect on this use, can be puzzling. (We know well enough what time is until we try to say what we mean by "time.") Philosophy so domesticated can help us get clearer about our concepts and this may in some cases indirectly help us to get a little clearer about our lives and about what is the case and what may come to be the case, including a clearer picture of how these things hang together. It may, where we are talking about the historically great unifying concepts (knowledge, value, truth, existence, cause), help us to gain a better understanding of what in some sense must be the case. But this is invariably second-order knowledge (knowledge embodied in our talk about our talk about the world). Without knowledge of the world, including a knowing how to use our language, we could not have any second-order knowledge or have any idea of whether our second-order truth claims are justified. We could hardly be in a position to assess Hume's or anyone else's analysis of causation unless we could recognize the truth or falsity of such sentences (or statements made by the use of such sentences) as "The bobber was caused to dip by the fish taking the bait"; "His bad breath was caused by all the raw garlic he ate"; "The moon's looking red was caused by the smoke in the sky which in turn was caused by the forest fire." If we understand the use of "cause" we understand those proper causal sentences while not understanding the following sentences "Its being red caused it to be colored" or "Philosophical dogmatism calmly causes." And if we have some understanding of the world—a kind of understanding we are not to expect from philosophy—we will in favored circumstances know whether those proper causal sentences are true or false. So in this important sense, that second-order knowledge is parasitical on a first-order knowledge of reality. Still, that second-order knowledge will give us a better understanding of what we already know. Second-order knowledge, that is, will give us a clearer picture of the workings of our language.

However, this knowledge is not *a priori* and it is not some distinctive kind of philosophical knowledge, enabling philosophy to be a distinctive kind of discipline yielding a knowledge that cannot be gained by empirical investigation. When philosophers describe the uses of our words or sentences they are

making empirical remarks about how language works. When or if they go on to explain or interpret what they describe, they are making further empirical claims about how language works. In the case of explanations they are, at least sometimes, empirical generalizations about linguistic regularities. In all these cases we have things which are in principle at least a part of the science of linguistics. I say "in principle," because linguistics may not in fact investigate these things. Still, they could be systematically investigated and this would plainly be an empirical matter. Moreover, it is something which would be necessary to gain well-confirmed claims that we could be confident were bits of knowledge. But to do this would be to make an inquiry that was an empirical study of language and that plainly would be linguistics. Philosophy, in such an eventuality, drops out. So construed it does not provide us with some sort of basis or foundation for everyday life and science, including linguistic theory. If what is actually done, as with Wittgenstein, Wisdom, and Ryle, is more impressionistic—"an assemblage of reminders for a particular purpose"—we would not have anything that could be called scientific (though it wouldn't be unscientific either). All the same, whatever their self-conceptions about what they are doing, they still would be making empirical claims, though impressionistic ones for therapeutic purposes, i.e., to relieve philosophical perplexity caused by a confused picture or image of the workings of our language, though typically not seen as such. They would for the most part be straightforward empirical claims of a commonsense variety about the workings of our language. They are not some special kind of philosophical knowing unavailable to science or commonsense. This more impressionistic move is, of course, fuel for an anti-philosophy-philosophy account. We break philosophical perplexities by reminding ourselves of our actual linguistic practices and in doing so, if we do it adroitly, this will keep us, on that occasion at least, from confusing one practice with another. For example, the philosopher who gets himself into the state where he believes no inductive claim could ever be justified, e.g., "We have no reason to believe that when the next match is struck it will burn," is probably really asking, though he is not aware of this, that inductive inferences be deductive and that, of course, is impossible. Seeing that inductive inferences cannot be justified in the way deductive inferences can, he claims, unreasonably, that even the best established inductive inferences are less reliable than any deductive inference. But this just confuses quite different practices with quite different rationales and claims. And it just assumes arbitrarily that deduction is better, more rational, than induction. An insightful reminder of what we do and why we do it when we engage in such practices will often break such philosophical obsessions.¹ But here we get no positive *philosophical* knowledge and nothing that isn't empirical. We are not laying "the conceptual foundations" for anything.

II

However, philosophy has not only been conceived of as conceptual analysis. I want now to see what can be said for and against one of the more traditional

conceptions of philosophy, and investigate how C. D. Broad, an able philosopher within the traditional analytic orientation of the period of Bertrand Russell, C. I. Lewis, and G. E. Moore, but, without what in their time was their iconoclasm and without anything remotely like Wittgensteinian or pragmatist commitments, reasoned, in the careful way characteristic of analytical philosophers, while retaining far greater sympathy than most linguistic philosophers for more traditional philosophical orientations.

In two classical metaphilosophical essays—essays spaced some twenty years apart (1924 and 1958)—Broad carefully distinguished between Critical and Speculative Philosophy and laid out a typology for conceptions of philosophy which is very useful.² His conception of Critical Philosophy is in part the linguistic philosopher's conception of philosophy as conceptual analysis, though Broad believes more than they do that our "ideas about such general concepts are highly confused."³ They think (consider here Wittgenstein or Ryle) *au contraire* that our knowledge by *wont* here of such concepts is not typically confused but that our *second-order* talk—our *analyses* of "number," "cause," "thing," "quality," etc.—is standardly confused. We do not know how to operate *upon* concepts we know perfectly well how to operate *with*. Broad largely ignores such Rylean considerations. Still, his conception of Critical Philosophy is in part very like what has been called philosophy as conceptual analysis. However, in addition, Broad believes that there is, where it is rigorously done, a legitimate something called Speculative Philosophy, which should carefully build on Critical Philosophy.

In addition to philosophy as conceptual analysis, and relying on philosophy as conceptual analysis, Broad, as would many other philosophers, finds a second task for Critical Philosophy. This is to conceive of philosophy as criticism. As Broad puts it, "The second task of Critical Philosophy is to take these propositions which we uncritically assume in science and daily life and to subject them to criticism."⁴ The kind of propositions he has in mind are propositions central to metaphysical discussions such as "Every change has a cause"; "All things are determinate"; "Every thing is in process"; "All *sensa* are appearances of physical objects"; "Over time societies tend to become more complex." It is also a task of Critical Philosophy, in the process of engaging in criticism, to detect and formulate presuppositions, but this done, Broad stresses, Critical Philosophy should go on to make a critical appraisal of these presuppositions. This is, he has it, how philosophy comes in as criticism. However—and Broad is not sufficiently sensitive to this—what this will come to is not clear. Suppose we first "elicit and formulate the *de facto* presuppositions of a certain department of human belief and conduct."⁵ That done, we then "analyze these presuppositions and the notions invoked in them."⁶ But, paradoxically, even with that accomplished, the task of critical appraisal is still before us. The question to ask, Broad remarks, is this: "Is there any good reason for us as critical philosophers to accept these analyzed and formulated presuppositions, even if as plain men or scientists or as religious men we cannot help

continuing to believe and to act in accordance with them?"⁷ This, Broad remarks, "is the question of critical appraisal."⁸ But how are we to ascertain whether we have good reason to accept these presuppositions? How do we know what is true and what is false here? We have lots of reasons for believing that there are causes for changes, but do we have reason to believe that for *every* change? Some have thought *quantum mechanics* disconfirms that claim. But others give a deterministic reading to quantum mechanics. But, quantum mechanics aside, how do we ascertain that *every* change has a cause? It, unlike "Every effect has a cause," is not true by definition. Yet the very notion of a causeless change is problematical. Perhaps we can make sense of such a notion, but it is not evident that we can. It is, to see part of what is involved here, unclear what would count as a disconfirming instance to the claim that for every change there is a cause. It is not like "All swans are white." Still it is a presupposition many of us are inclined to accept both before and after conceptual clarification. Indeed even if we are not very successful in clarifying it, many of us are strongly inclined to go on believing it. Some of us are even inclined to think that that proposition somehow just *must* be true. But what kind of critical appraisal is going to help us ascertain whether that is so, to ascertain what is the case or is even likely to be the case here? How does critical appraisal go beyond analysis: the second-order elucidatory activity of linguistic philosophy? How it does or even that it does remains unclear. We are at loss what to say. The suspicion emerges that we are doing little more than arm waving here. Philosophical perplexity arises at this point. What, if anything, does critical appraisal come to here?

Critical appraisal might in some instances be taken to be the showing that a cluster of elicited and clarified presuppositions which appear not to form a consistent set really do, or else that they really do conflict and so at least one of these presuppositions must be rejected by reflective and properly informed people. Thus it might appear that the presuppositions of commonsense morality conflict with some of the presuppositions of experimental psychology. But that is not what Broad takes to be the crucial and paradigmatic circumstances of critical appraisal. These occur when we have, or at least seem to have, a consistent set of such presuppositions but still need a reason to accept the individual presuppositions. We might have a consistent set of presuppositions which are false. But what then does critical appraisal come to? It seems for Broad that critical appraisal comes to showing that some presuppositions, seemingly quite groundless, can be derived from some more general self-evident propositions. Broad's example is that of the rules of the syllogism. Few of them have the least bit of a trace of self-evidence but there are, Broad contends, "more ultimate principles which entail them and which are self-evident."⁹ Another of his examples he takes from Henry Sidgwick. It is Sidgwick's attempt to derive commonsense morality from abstract ethical principles which are also, or so he believes, self-evident. This time, if Sidgwick's own analysis is correct, it will show, with its dualism of practical reason, that there is no consistent set of abstract self-evident principles underlying and grounding

commonsense morality. Broad's third example is that of attempting to rationalize our inductive practices by showing that they can be justified by presuppositions in the logic of probability. But, he says of it that unfortunately the principles which would do the justifying are themselves not self-evident or at least have not been shown to be self-evident. So we have on his own account a rather mixed bag here. At best we seem to have some principles of logic which are self-evident from which other less than self-evident propositions can be derived.

III

Critical appraisal, on Broad's account, seems, as we have seen, to come to showing that the presuppositions are either, on the one hand, self-evident or derivable from principles which are self-evident or, on the other hand, they are not self-evident or derivable from principles which are self-evident. Where they are self-evident or derivable from principles which are self-evident, critical appraisal has shown the presuppositions to be justified; where not, not. But, to put it minimally, that seems, even if we accept it at face value, to be a very limited conception of critical appraisal and one that is not likely to be successful even in those limited cases. It is unlikely that anything of interest can be shown to be self-evident, so if such a criterion is taken to be the model for philosophical criticism there is little scope for critical appraisal. Ordinarily, it would be thought that the following propositions call out for critical appraisal and can be critically appraised: "Capitalism exploits workers unnecessarily"; "Catholic rules of priestly celibacy are too repressive"; "Doctors in the United States are too paternalistic." Such claims surely need critical appraisal but not by showing they are or are not derivable from self-evident principles. But the sense in which they can be critically appraised is not clear and the role of Critical Philosophy in their appraisal is at least equally unclear. What is it to critically appraise them and how, if at all, does philosophy help here? Yet these are the sort of claims that stand in need of critical appraisal. What kind of guide philosophy can provide here remains unclear. It is not even clear here that it can provide a guide.

IV

We want philosophy to be critical inquiry, but it is unclear how it can be so, beyond eliciting presuppositions in science and everyday life, clarifying them through analysis and then checking them for consistency. What it would be like to establish them in some philosophical way to be true, probably true, or warranted is anything but evident. This is particularly clear in that Broad, unlike Carnap or Quine, does not think that philosophy is or can become scientific, though he is at pains to point out that from the fact that it is *non*-scientific it does not at all follow that it is *un*scientific. "Philosophy," he tells us, "is a subject which is almost certainly of its very nature non-scientific."¹⁰ But this, he stresses, needs to be clearly contrasted with its being

unscientific. To be unscientific is to proceed in such a way that a "subject which is capable of scientific treatment is treated in a way which ignores or conflicts with the principles of scientific method."¹¹ But it is the very subject matter of philosophy, Broad would have it, which is not capable of being treated scientifically; so it could not, being incapable of being scientific, be unscientific though it could, of course, if it were bad philosophy, be sloppy, obscurantist or moralistically pretentious and the like. Presumably the reason philosophy is not and cannot be a science is that it is not an experimental discipline like chemistry or biology or a formal discipline like mathematics or logic. It does not carry out experiments or prove theorems. It doesn't try to do those things and fail. It doesn't even attempt to do them. Philosophers proceed discursively. They tell stories (set out narratives) and they argue, but it is not clear how philosophy can establish anything to be true, not to mention its being a *philosophical* truth (whatever that is). But, given this, it is difficult to know (*pace* Broad) what this critical appraisal, which is supposed to be integral to Critical Philosophy, is supposed to come to. It makes use of the discovery, stating, and elucidating of presuppositions, including the analysis of the key concepts of these presuppositions, but it is supposed to be something more as well, but what that "more" is is never explained and what (if anything) it could be remains obscure.

V

We have talked about the things that are, on Broad's understanding, distinctive of Critical Philosophy. These are, as he puts it, "Analysis of Propositions and Concepts," "Detection and Formulation of Presuppositions," and "Critical Appraisal of Presuppositions."¹² I have found the last one to be particularly problematic. But Broad, in giving his typology, also speaks of two other things: what he calls *synopsis* and what he calls *synthesis*. The former he takes to be "characteristic of all work that would generally be regarded as philosophical."¹³ The latter is only a characteristic of Speculative Philosophy.

Broad, like Wilfrid Sellars and Richard Rorty, takes *synopsis* to be a characteristic and unproblematic feature of all philosophy: "A strong and persistent desire to see how things hang together is perhaps the one characteristic common and peculiar to philosophy. I understand by the word 'synopsis' here the deliberate attempt to view together aspects of human experience which are generally viewed apart, and the endeavor to see how they are inter-connected."¹⁴ This search for synopsis, as Rorty stresses, is something that will remain even after the "end of philosophy" as a distinctive discipline yielding (supposedly yielding) distinctive philosophical truths. It is something which is deeply embedded in our very natures as reflective persons, and only a very deep scepticism will lead a reflective person to abandon such a quest. It can remain even after one has firmly concluded that there is no distinctive philosophical method, philosophical knowledge, or disciplinary matrix that is philosophy.¹⁵

Synopsis, as Broad stresses, is characteristic of both Critical and Speculative Philosophy. Neither common sense nor science attempts to see things synoptically, to see how various facts, domains of experience, concepts and principles hang together.¹⁶ “A scientist,” to take his example, “who investigates and theorizes about man and his powers and activities is himself a man exercising certain characteristically human powers and activities. But the account which he is led to give of man, when he treats him as an object of scientific investigation, seems difficult to reconcile with the validity of his own most characteristic activities as investigator, experimenter, and reasoner.”¹⁷ We try to give a description of human beings that squares with seeing them both as physical mechanisms moving around in space, conscious beings whose experience is in some way private, and as self-reflective beings who can reflect about—and sometimes even critically reflect about—the thoughts, sensations, and memories they are having, and about the behaviour in which they engaged. “There is,” as Broad puts it, “obviously need for synopsis by someone who is aware of all the main facts and can hold them steadily together in one view.”¹⁸

For both Critical Philosophy and Speculative Philosophy, synopsis is, on Broad’s account, but an “essential first stage.”¹⁹ Here, of course, he is worlds apart from Rorty. For Rorty synopsis is all we are going to get and all we need. Be that as it may, critical philosophy alone could, again on Broad’s view, suffice if “the results of taking a synoptic view of a number of different mutually relevant departments of knowledge or belief were to show that they all obviously fit together without difficulty into a single coherent whole.”²⁰ If such were the case, Broad remarks, “there would be little or no occasion for philosophy.”²¹ But, Broad has it, this is seldom the case. What we typically have are concepts, principles, and beliefs in one domain which hang together satisfactorily, but when they come into contact with concepts, principles, and beliefs in another domain we find, when they are contemplated together, “sets of concepts and principles” which “seem *prima facie* to conflict with each other.”²² Each domain can be coherent when taken by itself, but when we try to take them together we run into problems. Broad asserts, “It is synopsis, revealing *prima facie* incoherence, which is the main motive to philosophical activity.”²³ What linguistic philosophers such as Ryle and Wittgenstein think is enough here, and believe is all we can get, is to give an analysis of the troubling terms in the *prima facie* conflicting propositions and to note the proper contexts of these propositions. This comes to the *second-order* activity of describing their use and seeing how sentences expressive of these propositions stand to each other in the context of the practices in which they have their home. There is no need to go on and search for underlying presuppositions or to give some critical appraisal of them or explanation for them. Reasonably accurate description plus sensitivity to context will suffice. Moreover, when we do this attentively, we see that the *prima facie* incoherence is merely *prima facie* and that actually the disparate propositions cohere, or at least do not stand in conflict with each other. The apparent inconsistency is only apparent and not real.

Broad, and not a few others, think that there is no *a priori* reason to make this assumption of harmony. In fact, they believe, it very much appears to be the case, as with our concepts of freedom and concepts of causality, that there is a genuine conflict. We are not justified in assuming that our practices, even our most fundamental ones, fit together like a seamless web. We must go, they claim, beyond description and look to our deepest presuppositions and through critical appraisal ascertain which ones are coherent and secondly, if coherent, which are true or have the best warrant. So for Broad it is necessary, if our critical philosophical work is to be adequate, to supplement synopsis with analysis, presupposition detection and formulation, and critical appraisal. Linguistic philosophy of a Wittgensteinian sort believes contrariwise that all that is necessary are perspicuous rather localized *synopses*: perspicuous because the use of the troubling words is set out clearly and localized because there is no assumption that all the departments of knowledge and belief can be fitted together into a single coherent whole. There is no claim to or belief in such a grand holism. There is only the belief, indeed a very commonsense belief, that the various practices can be described in such a way that they can be seen to make sense in their diverse actual contexts. Our ordinary and scientific practices are all right as they are and stand in no need of reform or replacement.²⁴

Broad rejects this, and stands in certain respects closer to what later would become the Quine-Dummett-Armstrong tradition of systematic analytic philosophy. Critical Philosophy, for Broad, has a more extensive role than in the linguistic philosophy of the Wittgensteinian-Rylean sort. Critical Philosophy, he would have it, goes beyond perspicuous representation by giving conceptual analyses of the basic concepts of thought and action, an articulation and clarifying of the underlying presuppositions of thought and action and by giving a critical appraisal of these concepts and presuppositions. We have seen how problematical some of this is. However, for the nonce, be that as it may, another philosophically frustrating thing about this activity, Broad contends, is that when "one tries to appraise critically the presuppositions which one has elicited and formulated one may find that, although they do not conflict with each other or with those of any other department of thought or action, yet there appears to be no reason, direct or indirect, for accepting them. They are not self-evident, and one cannot discover any set of self-evident propositions from which they follow."²⁵

Empiricist philosophers, including pragmatists, will say that there just are some things which are in fact the case and there is no reason why they *must* be the case and there is, moreover, no explaining the sorry scheme of things entire. It just is the case that there is a world and material things and human beings who can and sometimes do reflect. There is no reason why this *must* be so. Wittgensteinian philosophers will react somewhat differently. They will argue that Broad's pessimistic "discovery" only shows that justification must come to an end. Sometimes the demand for justification is in place but if we push far enough, e.g. ask, "Why is suffering bad?", "Why must people die?",

“Why can’t we turn into toads?”, “Why are there any objects at all?” all we can say is that this is how we take things, this is how we reason and what we unshakably believe, this is how we proceed in life. If we try to doubt these things no judgments will stand fast at all. And if we believe nothing at all—something we cannot do anyway—we cannot even manage to doubt. The very possibility of doubting a proposition presupposes a background of beliefs which on that occasion are not doubted. Without such a background there can be no doubting. Perhaps everything can be doubted; but not everything can be doubted at once. This is like an empiricist attitude in rejecting rationalism’s claim that certain things just must be the case, but it does not claim that justification always comes to an end with things which just in fact are so. Sometimes, on the Wittgensteinian turn, justification comes to an end with what in fact we do and feel we must do or believe. For both the empiricist and the Wittgensteinian, there is a rejection of anything even like a Principle of Sufficient Reason.

VI

Broad sees things differently. He believes that Critical Philosophy leads us to see that in our systems of thought and action there are underlying presuppositions which, in not being self-evident, require justification. However, he also claims that Critical Philosophy cannot provide that justification. However, Speculative Philosophy, if some such system of thought could be shown to be sound, would. A good Speculative Philosophy, as we have noted Broad claiming, builds on Critical Philosophy but goes beyond it by providing what Broad calls *a synthesis*. “The purpose of synthesis is to supply a set of concepts and principles which shall cover satisfactorily all the various regions which are being viewed synoptically.”²⁶ A Speculative Philosophy in producing a synthesis will start by taking such a synopsis and will do one of two things. It may replace the concepts, presuppositions, and principles of the synopsis by more adequate sets of concepts or principles. To have the requisite adequacy Speculative Philosophy requires, Broad has it, that they must be shown to be self-evident and consistent with each other and they must form a unity: a unity that is not merely contingent but must in some sense be necessary. Alternatively, the speculative philosopher will show that the concepts, presuppositions, or principles of the synopsis (perhaps after some clarification) can be derived from some such *set* of self-evident concepts and principles that have actually been shown to be self-evident. These will be given in the synthesis. This is a central task of Speculative Philosophy. There are, Broad believes, no *a priori* reasons why such a task could not be carried through but Broad is very doubtful that it ever will be. The very considerable diversity, without anything like convergence, in the history of metaphysical thinking counts against it.

Be that as it may, let us see how Speculative Philosophers are to proceed. Speculative philosophers, in giving a synthesis, will set out an abstract system of thought. They will be aware that their principles, or at least certain of them,

will not seem self-evident to most people. Their hope is that when they have carefully articulated their systems of thought and have set aside confusions and misunderstandings, people, if they carefully reflect on what the speculative philosopher is saying, and really think about the propositions which they have in mind, they will find them as self-evident as the philosopher does himself. This, Broad adds, in a way that at first blush at least seems sensible but would hardly gain universal assent, "is evidently the only possible method of procedure in such cases."²⁷

Where we get full bodied systems of metaphysical construction, we have a synthesis which is all embracing, such as we find in Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, Leibniz, Spinoza, and in our time in Whitehead, McTaggart, and Blanshard. While Sidgwick tried to provide a synthesis simply of ethical thought, these philosophers tried to do it for all thought, for everything there is or could be. "To many people," Broad rightly remarks, "these are the most typical and the most exciting products of philosophical activity."²⁸ But he also stresses that it is extremely doubtful whether anything coming even close to truth or warranted assertability can be established for any of these systems. What we get, rather, is a parade of fashions.

There are some philosophers today who try to show that such system constructing is not an illegitimate or incoherent activity, and who try appreciatively to consider the great system constructors of the past, but they are the admirers and commentators, not the emulators, of such systems. There is little such philosophical system construction now. No philosopher of acknowledged importance is now doing what Whitehead, McTaggart or Blanshard have done. Some, like David Armstrong, David Lewis, J. J. C. Smart, and C. B. Martin, give what they take to be metaphysical analyses of certain philosophical conceptions, e.g., Armstrong on universals, Lewis on possible worlds, Smart on mind/body problems, Martin on causation, but they do not try to construct systems of all embracing conception à la Whitehead or Spinoza and they make no claims to have established certain self-evident propositions which outreach and could override anything that science or common sense could establish.²⁹ We also have intellectuals, such as Leo Strauss and Allen Bloom, who produce narratives in praise of one of the great traditions of speculative (metaphysical) philosophy. But they do neither Critical Philosophy nor Speculative Philosophy themselves. They do not construct philosophical systems or even defend by careful philosophical arguments, as does F. C. Copleston, a traditional system somewhat rationally reconstructed, namely, the Thomistic-Aristotelian one. Rather, Strauss and Bloom construct narratives about such systems and make historical comments on them: laudatory but rather undisciplined comments on Plato's and Aristotle's systems.³⁰ But that is not itself to construct metaphysical systems or do Speculative Philosophy. The central point is that such metaphysical system construction seems to be a thing of the past. It now only has its commentators, people rationally defending the legitimacy of some portions of it (usually some of its conceptual analysis or presuppositional articulations) and its propagandists, subtle and unsubtle.

VII

Broad, however, is right in maintaining that it is such grand systematizing that attracts many people to philosophy. Because of this much of present day philosophy, which is largely critical and analytical and not concerned to make such grand syntheses, is unsatisfying to many people with a certain kind of metaphysical thirst. For people with such a thirst, this feeling of dissatisfaction is exacerbated by the fact that such critical philosophy often, if it notices it at all, scoffs at the very idea of such a Speculative Philosophy. Broad thinks himself, without having any positivist or Wittgensteinian inclinations, that this metaphysical thirst is one that cannot be quenched. Such grand philosophical systems will always fail. And this is indeed a widely held view in our time. In certain circles it is so pervasively held that it is by now little more than a commonplace. Yet, such incredulity toward metaphysics aside, Speculative Philosophy has historically speaking been a very central element in the philosophical traditions of both East and West. However, as the above list of historical figures (e.g., Aristotle, Leibniz, Whitehead) indicates, many of the great philosophical figures of the past also did Critical Philosophy and as an integral part of their Speculative Philosophy. Yet they, as much as Hegel, were full blown speculative system constructors. An attempt to think about what philosophy is and has been, and what its premises are, which ignored that phenomenon, would be inadequate and very historically unconscious. Speculative Philosophy should be treated, as does Broad, not as bits of awkward poetry or unwitting mythology or just as undisciplined though grandiose expressions of *Weltanschauung*, "but as speculations about the nature of things, to be accepted or rejected after critical examination by our intellects."³¹

We should also see, however, the role of Speculative Philosophy as standardly functioning to establish or disestablish a *Weltanschauung* or, sometimes, to articulate a new or modified *Weltanschauung* in the face of a declining or tendentious actually existing *Weltanschauung*. In the seventeenth century, as Broad puts it, "almost everyone that mattered believed quite seriously in the existence and providence of God, in the immortality of the human soul, in an objective system of moral law, and in rewards and punishments in a future life."³² Some philosophers, e.g., Pascal, gave these beliefs a Fideistic defense; others, e.g., Locke, gave such beliefs a defense within the bounds of a Critical Philosophy but more characteristically other philosophers, e.g., Spinoza, Leibniz, Wolff gave them a defense as a part—indeed a crucial part—of a speculative metaphysics. Spinoza, for example, attempted "to establish by deductive argument the fundamental nature of God or the Universe."³³ Spinoza, that is, sought to justify a kind of pantheism. But the more typical thing, as in Descartes, Malebranche and Leibniz, was to construct metaphysical systems which, whatever the intent of their construction, served to provide rational support for the then dominant theistic *Weltanschauung*. Other philosophers, more materialistic than the traditional rationalists, constructed materialist systems of metaphysics, Baron d'Holbach explicitly, Hobbes implicitly, which

functioned to support the new rising materialist or naturalist *Weltanschauung*. It was not just anti-metaphysical philosophers such as Hume that did so. What is most characteristic of Speculative Philosophy, according to Broad, and is reflected paradigmatically in the writings of Spinoza and McTaggart, is the belief "that important results about the structure of reality as a whole can be reached by deductive arguments from self-evident premises."³⁴ Perhaps these two restrictions, though they have been held pervasively, are too strong. Perhaps a metaphysical system need not start with self-evident premises or gain them through system construction and analysis, and perhaps its arguments need not, or not all of the time, or even characteristically, take a deductive form. There can perhaps be cogent arguments that are not deductive and perhaps we can view philosophy as a species of plausible reasoning eschewing claims to self-evidence or the proving of something like theorems from such premises. Argument is, of course, central to metaphysical construction, but perhaps it need not, or need not always, take a deductive form. But once we abandon such attempts at self-evidence it becomes less clear why Speculative Philosophy should be seen as the foundation of science and everyday life for without claims to certainty or necessity science and everyday life can give us systematic rational theorizing too. If philosophy cannot give us certainty it is not obvious what its advantage is over science or commonsense. And given its backing away from claims to necessity and certainty, it is anything but clear why it should be regarded as foundational for science and commonsense. It is not obvious, if speculative philosophers must so rein themselves in, that we need Speculative Philosophy at all.

VIII

To sum up, philosophy as the analysis of concepts clearly has a place where it is construed as a second-order activity yielding, by careful description, perspicuous representations of the workings of our language. Such description does not claim to give the semantical or "logical" structure of our language. Rather it is designed to break philosophical perplexities about our concepts, perplexities that characteristically arise when we reflect on their role in our various practices, including our scientific practices. It breaks perplexity by showing us what the actual use of our terms are here. These perspicuous representations do not give us anything like either "complete clarity" or a systematic overall understanding of our concepts in their interrelations, but they do, by assembling reminders for a particular purpose, break specific philosophical perplexities. When we think about concepts, concepts we normally effortlessly employ, we can readily become perplexed by them—think we do not understand them. We relieve that perplexity by coming to understand a reasonably accurate characterization of their use in the common contexts of their employment: their use where the engine is not idling.

Many philosophers have wanted more than this. What this "more" is, as Broad pointed out, comes to giving what is called a critical appraisal of these

concepts. But what could this come to beyond analysis (careful description and elucidation) remains opaque. (“Logical analysis” as something distinct from description and elucidation remains a metaphor. Except for using some of the terminology and sometimes, for bits of what is being done, the formalism of logic, conceptual analysis has little to do with logic.) However, some traditionalists claim that to gain a critical appraisal of concepts is to show how they are employed in propositions which are self-evident or are derived from propositions which are self-evident. This will yield the necessity that philosophical claims should have. But self-evidence, at least in matters of substance, eludes us. Moreover, such a traditionalist conception of critical appraisal is unduly restrictive. There are claims, as we have seen, which very much stand in need of critical appraisal but to critically appraise them we are not asking that they be derived from self-evident propositions or be analysable into such propositions.

Philosophers not infrequently give synopses. They seek, in doing so, to see how things hang together, to spot the key propositions in these hangings together, to clarify them, and to show how they form (if indeed they do) a consistent set. But even if we can reasonably so clarify them and show they form a consistent set it may well be the case that, when we reflect carefully, we will see, or so the claim goes, that there is no reason for accepting them. They hang together but they have no independent justification. And that, for a traditionalist at least, is a not inconsiderable defect. A set of beliefs, of course, could be consistent but silly and groundless. While the term “silly” is too strong for many of the beliefs of our extant belief-systems, the beliefs involved may very well be no more than some, or perhaps even *the*, groundless presuppositions of our thought.

To move to Speculative Philosophy is to move to a systematic account of reality—“ultimate reality” if you will—which at least in aspiration reveals or establishes the ground of propositions given in the favored synopsis of the philosopher in question. Speculative Philosophy, where it has any plausibility at all, builds on Critical Philosophy or (where that fails) replaces the propositions of the Critical Philosopher’s synopsis with other propositions (systematically arranged) which, if such there be, really do have such a ground. The goal of Speculative Philosophy is to achieve a system of thought which shows what there really is and *must* be and shows, as well, how reality forms a system. We gain, if such an account can be justified, a system of thought consisting in self-evident rationally necessary truths.

Broad skeptically concludes that we have no good reasons for believing that any of these speculative syntheses are justified or that a justified one is waiting just around the corner to emerge from the rigorous development of philosophy: a systematic metaphysics rooted in logical analysis. But, skeptical as he is about Speculative Philosophy, he still does not draw the Wittgensteinian and positivist conclusion that the very idea of a Speculative Philosophy rests on a mistake. He takes it to be a coherent possibility and he recognizes this speculative engagement is something that fuels the interest of many people in

philosophy. It is central in philosophy's history and should not, Broad believes, be simply set aside as a pointless activity, as something we now know should not be attempted. Moreover, we should not fail to acknowledge that philosophy, in abandoning such a metaphysical quest, such a search for the holy grail, as it now standardly does, has lost much of its attraction. But Broad's skepticism is not diminished by the acknowledgement of the psychological pull of such a metaphysical conception. Why people should want to have such a system is plain enough. But often people want a lot of things that they cannot have. Still, that notwithstanding, Broad holds out more for the possibilities of traditional philosophy than we are justified in expecting. He offers us no good grounds for thinking that Critical Philosophy could lead us to the establishment of synthetic rational necessities seen on careful reflection to be self-evident. Such necessities elude us either in the relatively isolated claims of Critical Philosophy (Broad style) or in the grand systematic orderings of Speculative Philosophy. Still, skeptical as he is, Broad remains a traditionalist. He was not content with the nay-sayings of John Wisdom and Wittgenstein and I do not think he would have been content with Rorty's either. And he certainly would not have been content either with Rorty's positive turn to a conversationalist neo-pragmatism or to a more orthodox pragmatist or critical theorist changing of the subject, or even to a "metaphysics," à la Smart or Armstrong, within the limits of science alone. He wants, though rigorously argued, the traditional stuff or nothing. But what he actually leaves us with is nothing, given the traditional expectations (shared by him) of what gaining something would come to.

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Notes

1. Max Black, *Problems of Analysis* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1954), pp. 157-225, and Max Black, *Models and Metaphors* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1962), pp. 194-218. Paul Edwards, "Bertrand Russell's Doubts about Induction" in Antony Flew, ed., *Logic and Language*, First Series (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1952), pp. 55-79 and Frederick Will, "Will the Future be like the Past?" in Antony Flew, ed., *Logic and Language*, Second Series (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1953), pp. 32-50. The more general line of argument I have gestured at in this first section is developed in my "On there being Philosophical Knowledge," *Philosophical Investigations*, vol. 15 (1992), pp. 147-77.

2. C. D. Broad, "Critical and Speculative Philosophy" in J. H. Muirhead, ed., *Contemporary Philosophy* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1924), pp. 17-99 and C. D. Broad, "Philosophy I & II," *Inquiry*, vol. 1 (1958), pp. 99-129. The latter essay has been reprinted in H. D. Lewis, ed., *Clarity is Not Enough* (New York: Humanities Press, 1963). References are to the journal. See also Chapter I of Broad's *Scientific Thought* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1923).

3. Broad, "Critical and Speculative Philosophy," p. 80.

4. Broad, "Philosophy I & II," p. 122.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 123.
6. *Ibid.*
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.*, p. 124.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 103.
11. *Ibid.*
12. *Ibid.*, p. 115.
13. *Ibid.*
14. *Ibid.*, p. 116.
15. Richard Rorty, *Consequences of Pragmatism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), pp. 211-30. Kai Nielsen, *After the Demise of the Tradition: Rorty, Critical Theory, and the Fate of Philosophy* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1991), pp. 1-25, 163-93.
16. Broad, "Philosophy I & II," p. 119.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 120.
18. *Ibid.*
19. *Ibid.*
20. *Ibid.*
21. *Ibid.*
22. *Ibid.*, pp. 120-21.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 121.
24. Ludwig Wittgenstein, *The Blue and Brown Books* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1958) and Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, G. E. M. Anscombe trans. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1953). See also Richard Rorty, *Consequences of Pragmatism*, pp. 19-36 and Kai Nielsen, *After the Demise of the Tradition*, pp. 91-122.
25. Broad, "Philosophy I & II," p. 126.
26. *Ibid.*
27. *Ibid.*, p. 127. Perhaps the clearest example we have of a philosopher so proceeding is Henry Sidgwick in his *Methods of Ethics*, though he limits this to the metaphysics of morals.
28. Broad, "Philosophy I & II," p. 128.
29. Brand Blanshard even now makes such a strong claim. Brand Blanshard, "The Philosophic Enterprise" in Charles J. Bontempo and S. Jack Odell, eds., *The Owl of Minerva: Philosophers on Philosophy* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1975), pp. 163-77. His *The Nature of Thought* (1939) is the clearest and most forceful statement of Absolute Idealism we have.
30. For programmatic statements, see F. C. Copleston: "Philosophical Knowledge" in H. D. Lewis, ed., *Contemporary British Philosophy*, Third Series (London: Allen & Unwin, 1963), pp. 119-40; "Philosophy as I See It" in J. Bontempo and Jack Odell, eds., *The Owl of Minerva*, pp. 153-61; "The Possibility of Metaphysics," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, vol. 50 (1949-50), pp. 65-82; *Positivism and Metaphysics* (Lisbon, 1965), pp. 5-15; and *Contemporary Philosophy* (London: Burns & Oates, 1956). For a more detailed carrying out of his conception, see his five essays under the title of "Man and Metaphysics" in the following issues of *The Heythrop Journal*: Vol. 1, no. 1 (Jan. 1960), pp. 3-17; Vol. 1, no. 2 (Apr. 1960), pp. 105-17; Vol. 1, no. 3 (June 1960), pp. 199-213; Vol. 1, no. 4 (Oct. 1960), pp. 300-13; and Vol. 2, no. 2 (Apr. 1961), pp. 142-56. I have criticized this account in my *Reason and Practice* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), pp. 487-90.
31. Broad, "Philosophy I & II," pp. 128-29.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 103.

33. *Ibid.*, p. 115.

34. Broad, "Critical and Speculative Philosophy, 1" p. 98.