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P R E F A C E

Any question which is pushed to its beginning or its end becomes a philosophic question. Prolonged conversations on a subject tend, consequently, to contain reminiscences or parodies of philosophic dialogues, and participants in a discussion defend their positions when challenged by expounding their philosophies. One reason for reading philosophy is to gain insight into the basic questions hidden in everyday experience and in personal convictions and to become aware of answers that have been formulated and of errors that have been exposed in sustained inquiries concerning them. Education in philosophy should not be dogmatic indoctrination into one set of answers propounded by one master, nor should it be skeptical rejection of the questions because no one set of answers has been universally or enduringly accepted.

A newcomer to philosophy sometimes hits happily on a position which seems to him both true and enlightening, but more frequently his first experiences in philosophy are encounters with subtle and unheard-of absurdities. The teacher of philosophy to beginning classes encounters less frequently the problems arising from premature acceptance of philosophic insights by his students than he encounters the problems arising from immediate refutation of Plato, Locke, Kant, or Dewey before even minimal clarity concerning what is in question or

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what is asserted is achieved. The reading of philosophers is made into a philosophic experience when it contributes to the understanding of basic questions. This is done in two ways. First, since certain basic questions continue to be encountered and raised, with many changes in the manner of their formulation, the reader of a philosophical work, ancient or recent, may make his reading a dialogue with the author about issues which concern them both. Or, since approaches to problems and data relevant to them change, with many indications of continuity and derivation, the reader of a philosophic work, with which he agrees or disagrees, may make his reading an historical exploration into the meanings of terms like "being," "knowledge," "truth," "form," "matter," "cause," "fact," "process," and "decision," which disclose the conditioning circumstances of the questions one raises and of the answers one gives.

Although all questions are based on philosophic assumptions and have philosophic implications, certain questions have taken a central place in philosophical discussion and recur in different forms and sequences in the historical evolution of philosophy. One such question is about the relation of what we say and think to what is. This question was given a dramatic place in early Greek philosophy when Parmenides took the position that what I say and what I think must necessarily be. This conviction determined what he meant by discourse, thought, and being in his exploration of "the way of truth" and "the way of opinion," and whereas few later philosophers accepted his extreme views, alternative theories could be set up only by developing other conceptions and analyses of words, thoughts, and things. Other questions arose in the course of these analyses—questions about the nature and connections of things, the foundations and organization of the sciences, the significance and connections of statements and proof. The answers to these questions depended on altering previous conceptions of being, form, substance, and cause, of assertion and question, of reason and action, of principles and consequences, of reason and sensation, of rational perception and discursive understanding, of facts, actions, and sentences. Sometimes it seemed best to be-

gin these philosophic speculations and adjustments with determinations concerning the nature of reality; sometimes it was argued that the beginning was in the forms or contents of thought; sometimes it was assumed, with no need or possibility of proof, that what is and what is thought is derivative from experience or existence or language.

The three ancient philosophers whose work is included in this Reading Plan took positions on these central basic questions which were to recur frequently in the long history of philosophy after them. Plato held that reality is through and through intelligible, and he named that which most truly is, "Ideas." Dialectic is at once a method of discovering things, of clarifying ideas, and of defining terms. Dialectic is not only the highest of the sciences but it is also in a broader sense the method of all discourse and dialogue. The organization of the sciences is in a hierarchy ranging from opinion through the various branches of mathematics up to dialectic. Virtue is discovered to be knowledge. Aristotle refuted Plato's doctrine of separated ideas, and instituted an inquiry into being as such, which was later to be given the name "metaphysics." It depends on the principles of non-contradiction and excluded middle, which are principles both of argument and of being. It makes use of "causes" to examine substance, form and matter, actuality and potentiality. This inquiry into principles leads to the differentiation of three kinds of sciences—theoretical, practical, and productive. Virtue is not knowledge, but ethics is a part of practical science. Lucretius held that the principles of being were the atoms and the void, and that knowledge too is a motion of atoms. He shared Epicurus' suspicion of verbal logic or dialectic. The foundation of ethics is pleasure, but knowledge can contribute to human well-being by reducing fear and superstition.

The coming of Christianity profoundly influenced the formulation of basic questions in the West. St. Augustine recognized that his statement of Christian doctrines had analogies with the Platonic philosophy. St. Thomas Aquinas worked, eight hundred years later, to bring the newly translated Aristotelian sciences into harmonious relation with the Au-

gustinian theology. He distinguished two modes of truth, one dependent on revelation and the other on the principles of natural reason. Since the truths of revealed theology and the truths of natural theology are both truths, they cannot be in contradiction. Questions of truth, however, extend beyond the conformity of understanding and things, which provides criteria for human ideas, to the conformity of divine understanding and things, which determines the being of things. Montaigne three hundred years later found in the *Natural Theology* of Raimond de Sebonde both a refutation of atheism and a support of skepticism.

The philosophers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries endeavored to reform philosophical thought by use of the methods of the new sciences. But science, no less than philosophy, is conceived in different ways when one raises basic questions concerning it. Descartes sought to formulate the method of a universal mathematics, and he thought he could secure clarity, distinctness, and adequacy in philosophical thought by use of the long chains of reasoning of mathematicians. Bacon sought a new method of discovery of truths and of sciences, and he projected in detail a program for the advancement of learning, including sciences and philosophy. Descartes demonstrated his own existence, and the existence of God and of the external world; Bacon divided philosophy into natural theology concerned with God, natural philosophy concerned with the world, and human philosophy concerned with man.

Spinoza undertook to demonstrate ethical philosophy in geometric order, and took his beginning from God, who is nature, substance, cause of himself, and who has two attributes, thought and extension. Locke, who admired the scientific method of Newton, analyzed the nature, derivation, and relations of ideas, and thought that he had evidence in them for the existence of God, the self, and the external world. Berkeley, who continued to distinguish among our ideas by means of the activity and the passivity of the mind, argued that there was no evidence for the separate existence of the unperceived external world. Hume, who undertook "to in-

roduce the experimental method into moral subjects," showed that there was no basis in the relations of ideas or in the conception of cause for arguments for the existence of God, the self, or the external world.

Kant heralded a second "Copernican revolution," and took his beginning not in dogmatic conceptions of the nature of things but in a critical examination of the forms of thought. His three *Critiques* treat of problems reminiscent of Aristotle's division of knowledge into theoretical, practical, and productive, but he makes use of the so-called "Platonic" division of philosophy into logic, physics, and ethics. William James found new formulations of ancient problems in a context of psychological processes and new criteria of truth in a context of actions and consequences.

The modern reader of philosophy is engaged still in a dialogue with the thirteen philosophers whose answers to fundamental questions are opened up in the Reading Plan, and he is also their descendant and inherits from them modes of statement and conception. The dialogue will become crossed monologues unless the positions are questioned; the history will be disrupted unless the positions are understood. The fashions of formulating questions have changed again: the reader who comes to these thirteen philosophers today will have heard echoes of questions about the significance of metaphysical statements and the soundness of ethical questions, he will have encountered existential and linguistic philosophies, or pragmatics and dialectics, and he will have seen signs of new philosophic problems emerging from the contacts of cultures, peoples, powers, and traditions. He will have some experience of basic questions to bring with him in the discussion of permanent issues and in the examination of newly available facts and data. These are the materials of philosophic inquiry and speculation, and the reading of the works of great philosophers is one initiation to the organization, use, and understanding of these materials.

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