The Relationship between the Reality of the World and the Reality of Consciousness

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Abstract

The concept of being is the central concept of philosophical inquiry. By the term "being," we mean a reality that encapsulates every kind of reality and is present in every field of philosophical inquiry. In the present essay, I shall investigate the different aspects of being and the relationship between consciousness and the world. There are two general models whereby philosophers interpret the world: the one gives primacy to the reality of the world, and it is known as philosophical realism, whereas the other gives primacy to the reality of consciousness, and it is known as philosophical idealism. The monistic varieties of philosophical realism ignore important elements whose identification and analysis undermine the validity of the monistic varieties of philosophical realism. The dualistic varieties of philosophical realism lead to contradictions and logical gaps. Idealism seems to be an arbitrary intellectual construction, which can be refuted on both substantial and logical grounds. However, idealism has the advantage of allowing various philosophical differentiations, which highlight the plasticity of idealism. In the present essay, I shall argue that the aforementioned two general models (realism and idealism) are not incompatible with each other, but they complete each other, and their common function contains elements that underpin the mutual adaptation between realism and idealism. My synthesis between realism and idealism is based on the use of the notion of "structure" (which refers to the link between "substance" and "form"), and, specifically, on the structural continuity between the energies of cosmic/divine reality and the energies of human consciousness. My conceptions of "intelligent activity" and of the "dialectic of intelligence" elucidate a unique way of conceiving the synthesis between realism and idealism, and they highlight the creativity of consciousness.

Introduction

One of the most important problems in every philosophical endeavour is the analysis of the relationship between consciousness and external reality. The arguments that have been articulated with regard to this problem can be reduced to two general philosophical "schools," namely: realism and idealism.

The central premise of philosophical realism is the following: *since experience provides human beings with images (irrespective of whether they are related or unrelated to each other) of a reality that seems to be external to one's consciousness, it naturally follows that this reality (namely, the reality of the world) is the cause that generates the set of the given partial images, which exist in human consciousness.* Therefore, on the basis of the principle of causality, there necessarily exists a mind-independent reality.

Realistic philosophical theories can be divided into two categories: monism and dualism. According to monism, only one basic substance or principle exists as the ground of reality. If this

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principle is material, then we talk about monism of the materialistic type (or materialistic monism), and, if this principle is spiritual, then we talk about monism of the spiritual type (or spiritual monism). On the other hand, according to dualism, two fundamental substances or principles exist, which often oppose each other.

The second general cosmological model to which one can reduce the relationships between consciousness and external reality is idealism, and it developed mainly in the context of Modernity. As opposed to realism, idealism does not distinguish between external reality and consciousness. The basic argument of the idealists is the following: *if the substance of external reality were distinct from the substance of consciousness, then we would not be able to know external reality.* Idealism presents the world not as something reflected in consciousness, but as an extension and a projection of consciousness outside itself and as consciousness itself.

Ancient Realistic Philosophy

The earliest Greek philosophy (which extends from about 585 BCE to the middle of the fifth century BCE)[1] is realistic, in the sense that it orients the mind toward the external nature; it is mostly hylozoistic, specifically, it conceives nature as animated; it is ontological, in the sense that it inquires into the essence of things; and it is mainly monistic of the materialistic type, namely, it seeks to explain its phenomena by means of a single material principle, such as a single natural element or a concrete combination of different natural elements. Monistic theories of the spiritual type were developed much later in the history of philosophy as extreme varieties of dualistic theories.

Two characteristic examples of dualistic realism are Platonism and Aristotelianism. Platonism[2] is a paradigmatic type of realistic philosophy: according to Plato, the "idea" comprehends or holds together the essential qualities common to various particulars. Plato argues that ideas are not mere thoughts (abstractions) in the minds of human beings or even in the mind of God; in Platonism, even the divine mind is oriented toward the ideas, which exist eternally, and they may be considered as the energy (or the mode of being) of the deity. Platonic ideas are the original, eternal, and transcendent archetypes of things, existing prior to things and apart from them and, thus, uninfluenced by the becoming of the manifest world. On the other hand, as Plato maintains in his earliest books (including his famous *Republic*), the particular objects that we perceive are imperfect copies or reflections of the eternal patterns (ideas). At this point, Platonism follows the philosophical legacy of Parmenides.[3]

According to Parmenides, there are no intermediate ontological degrees of being between being[4] and nonbeing: if being has become, it must either have come from being or from nonbeing; if it has come from nonbeing, then it has come from nothing, which is absurd; if it has come from being, then it has come from itself, which is equivalent to saying that it is identical with itself and, hence, has always been. Therefore, Parmenides argues that, from being, only being can come, that nothing can become something else, and that whatever is always has been and always will be, which means that there can be only one eternal, self-existent, unchangeable being and that the world of the senses, which is susceptible to change, is an illusion.

During the last period of his life, Plato (especially in his books *Timaeus*, *Critias*, *Philebus*, and *Laws*) was arguably influenced by the critique of his philosophy by Aristotle. As a result, Plato qualified his previous thesis about the irreducibility of ideas (namely, beings) and phenomena (namely, nonbeings), and he argued that reality is composed of beings and nonbeings as well as of nearly beings and nearly nonbeings. As Brann, Kalkavage, and Salem explain, in Plato's *Sophist*, nonbeing is not anymore "unthinkable and unutterable, as Father Parmenides asserted," but it is interpreted as the "Other," and, thus, it "ceases to be mere nothingness and becomes instead the source of articulated diversity in things and in thought. Parmenides has been superseded."[5] Indeed, in Plato's *Sophist*, "the Other is Nonbeing positively understood," and it "is in fact a necessary ingredient in thought and speech," since "it is still negative enough to help account not only for the diversity of kinds but also for differences in their dignity. An image or an imitation, because it has a share in Nonbeing, is not merely

other than its original but also less. It is less in genuineness and may even fall further into falsity."[6]

Finally, Plato asserts the existence of a series of different ontological levels, which inspired Neoplatonism. Neoplatonism, mainly through the works of Plotinus (ca. 204/5–70 AD), Proclus (412–85 AD), and Dionysius the Areopagite (one of the earliest Church Fathers), formulated a religious and philosophical argument according to which there exists a series of fundamental substances such that: they are related to each other, either through emanation or through return, and they compose an ontological hierarchy that starts from the One, namely, from the absolute being, and ends in matter, namely, in the absolute nonbeing.

The three basic principles of Plotinus's metaphysics are called by him "the One" (or, equivalently, "the Good," namely, the good-in-itself), "Intellect," and "Soul."[7] The One is the absolutely simple first principle of all. It is both "self-caused" and the cause of being for everything else in the universe. Plotinus was inspired with the idea of the One by studying Plato's *Republic*, where Plotinus's One is named "the Idea of the Good," and by studying Plato's *Parmenides*, where Plotinus's One is the subject of a series of deductions. Because of its absolute simplicity and transcendence, the One or the Good, is indescribable directly. Plotinus argues that we can only grasp it indirectly by deducing what it is not. The universe is an emanation of the One, an inevitable overflow of the One's infinite power or actuality. The first emanation of the One is Intellect. This emanation is a unified system of all the eternal and immutable entities that account for or explain the possibility of intelligible predication, namely, the Platonic ideas. In other words, in the first stage of the divine emanation, the One contemplates the pure ideal cosmos. The second stage of the divine emanation is Soul, which is an image of Intellect and less perfect than the original. In the highest life (namely, in the life of Intellect), we find the highest form of desire, because that desire is eternally satisfied by contemplating the One through the entire array of ideas that are internal to it. The Soul is a lower level of life, since it is the principle of desire for objects that are external to the agent of desire. "One" is paradigmatically what Intellect is, and Intellect is paradigmatically what Soul is. Thus, there are two phases of the Soul's existence: in the first, it is turned toward Intellect, and, therefore, it acts as its archetype and contemplates ideas; in the second, it is turned toward the sensuous world, and, therefore, it is impelled to bring order into matter. In his *Enneads*, Plotinus maintains that matter is to be identified with evil and privation of all form or intelligibility. However, according to Plotinus, matter is evil not in itself, but matter is evil only when it impedes humanity's return to the One. In other words, Plotinus maintains that matter is evil when considered as a goal or an end that is a polar opposite to the One.

Furthermore, Proclus, by applying his views about the place of matter in the metaphysical hierarchy and carrying long-held views, like those of *Timaeus*, through to their conclusion, argues that matter is not the absolute nonbeing, but it has a degree of being. In particular, Proclus argues as follows: Given that bodies are made of limit and unlimited, it naturally follows that matter is an unlimited, and form is a limit. If, therefore, as Proclus maintains, God substantiates every unlimited, it is evident that God also substantiates matter, which is the last unlimited. From Proclus's perspective, God is "the First and Ineffable Cause of Matter," and, "because everywhere the sensible exist by analogy to the intelligible causes . . . likewise, the unlimited which is down-here ['gross matter'] derives from the Prime Unlimited."[8] Moreover, Proclus argues as follows: ". . . the Prime Unlimited, which is prior to the mixed existence (Being), is established at the summit of the intelligibles and from there it extends its irradiation as far as to the last things, so, according to it, Matter proceeds from the One and the Unlimited which is prior to Being . . . For this reason, matter is to a degree good and infinite, as well as that which is most obscure and formless."[9] With regard to Dionysius the Areopagite, another major Neoplatonic scholar, it should be mentioned that his work consists in putting a "Christian dress on the thought of Proclus."[10]

In general, within the framework of Neoplatonism, Plato's dualism is transformed into a type

of theoretical spiritualism, since the One, or the idea of Good, is considered to be the absolute being, whereas matter, as such, has neither form, quality, power nor unity, and it is considered, even by Plotinus, as the absolute nonbeing, until Proclus is led to assert the value and goodness of both stable matter, as a cosmic substratum created by the One, and unstable, "gross" matter found in the world of the senses.

Aristotelianism is a dualistic realism, since it is based on the equality between two elements that are related to each other, namely: matter and form. All objects are composed of a certain material arranged in a certain way. The material they are composed of is their matter, and the way it is arranged is their form. In other words, according to Aristotle,[11] all objects have matter (namely, a material of which they are composed) and form (namely, they are characterized by a certain way in which their matter is arranged). The form of a thing makes a thing what it is. For instance, form allows us to distinguish between a vase and a sculpture.

Whereas Plato asserts the separation of the form of a thing from the thing itself, Aristotle argues that every form is, like the Platonic "idea," eternal, but, instead of being outside matter, it is in matter; they coexist. In particular, form is the manner in which matter exists. Thus, according to Aristotle, reality itself is formed within the world of the senses by matter and by the manifestation of a spiritual factor, specifically, form (or species). Within the framework of Aristotelianism, when we say that an object changes its form, we do not mean that form itself changes, since no form (species), as such, can change into another form. Change occurs when the arrangement of matter changes, namely, when it assumes different forms. In other words, the original form of matter does not change into another form, but a new form fashions matter.

Intimately related to the distinction between form and matter is the distinction between "actuality" ("einai emergeia" = "being actually") and "potentiality" ("einai dynamei" = "being potentially"). In particular, Aristotle identifies actuality with form, while identifying matter with potentiality. Potentiality is that state of being in which a being's existential program has not been completed yet, and it may be only at its initial formative stage, but it is already firmly oriented toward a specific purpose ("end"). Actuality is that state of being in which a being's existential program has been completed, and the completion of this program determines both the corresponding being itself and the corresponding being's behaviour. For instance, as long as a pot remains stored in a cabinet, it exists potentially, but, when it is used in accordance with the purpose for which it has been constructed, it exists actually. Furthermore, Aristotle distinguishes between "primary substances" (those which exist only as subjects and never as predicates) and "secondary substances" (species and genera); for instance, Socrates is a primary substance, while man is a secondary substance (man is predicated of Socrates).

Medieval Realistic Philosophy and the Rise of Idealism

The Aristotelian theory of form and matter played a decisive role in the medieval philosophical clash between philosophical realism and nominalism. During 268–70 AD, Porphyry, a Syrian pupil of Plotinus, wrote his *Introduction* to the *Categories* of Aristotle.[12] Boethius's *Isagoge* (sixth century AD), a Latin translation of Porphyry's *Introduction*, became a standard medieval textbook in European schools and universities.[13]

As he was writing his commentaries on Porphyry's *Introduction*, Boethius came across the problem of universals. By the term "universals," we mean general or abstract qualities, characteristics, properties, kinds or relations (for instance, being male/female, solid/liquid/gas, or a certain color, etc.) that can be predicated of individuals or particulars, or that individuals or particulars can be regarded as sharing or participating in them. The following sentence in Boethius's Latin version of Porphyry's *Introduction* ignited an ongoing controversy in medieval philosophy: "Next as to *genera* and *species*, do they actually subsist, or are they merely thoughts existing in the understanding alone; if they subsist, are they corporeal or incorporeal; are they separate from sensible things or only in and of them?"[14] The two major general philosophical positions ("schools") that emerged in

the context of the aforementioned medieval philosophical controversy were medieval philosophical realism (or essentialism) and nominalism.

Medieval philosophical realists were based on a peculiar variety of rationalism according to which Aristotle's general concepts (universals) were interpreted like Platonic ideas, namely, like entities totally distinct from the material world, and they interpreted Plato's ideas like logical substances, which was absurd. Thus, medieval philosophical realists endowed abstractions of genus with ontological autonomy. In fact, medieval philosophical realists, specifically, essentialists, failed to understand that, far from being identical with concepts (abstract thoughts), Platonic ideas are the energy (or the mode of being) of the deity (the good-in-itself), and that, for this reason, Plato argues that the knowledge of ideas by the human being presupposes not only logical accountability but also psychic cleansing. The issue of psychic cleansing was methodically studied by Plato in his book *Phaedo*. In *Phaedo* (74a–c), Plato made the first presentation of his theory of ideas as autonomous entities and as the archetypal reality of beings. Additionally, in *Phaedo* (65e–66a), Plato studies the problem of the knowledge of ideas, where he argues that "he who prepares himself most carefully to understand the true essence of each thing that he examines would come nearest to the knowledge of it," and that this would be done most perfectly by employing "pure, absolute reason" and by removing oneself, "so far as possible, from eyes and ears, and, in a word, from his whole body." In this way, Plato integrated the Orphic Mysteries' tradition of cleansing into philosophy.

According to Plato, the soul suffers because it is mixed with the body and its appetites, and it can be cured with psychic cleansing. Plato understands psychic cleansing as "purification and purgation" (Plato, *Cratylus*, 405a), and, from this viewpoint, he speaks about the acquisition of "a pure mind" (*ibid*, 396c) and about "making a man pure in body and soul" (*ibid*, 405b). Hence, when Plato writes that "they expel the lot and leave the soul of their victim swept clean, ready for the great initiation" (Plato, *Republic*, 560e), he means that the soul must be liberated from the corporeal passions. Also, when he writes that "true philosophers practice dying," since "they desire to have the soul apart by itself alone" (Plato, *Phaedo*, 67e), he means that the soul must be liberated from the senses, because a soul that is enslaved to the senses cannot sense the truth (Plato, *Phaedo*, 114c).

From the perspective of original Platonic philosophy, the knowledge of ideas by the human being is ultimately a mystical *experience*, consisting in one's *participation* in divine energies (ideas), and not merely the result of correct syllogistic reasoning. Hence, intimately related to Platonic epistemology is Platonic love, namely, a pure philosophical experience of mystical union. On the other hand, realistic medieval philosophers interpreted Platonic ideas like logical substances, thus establishing and proclaiming a peculiar worship of reason (rational thinking) and giving rise to social systems and worldviews that are oppressive exactly because they are logically closed systems, in the sense that they are accountable only to the system's intrinsic rationality. The reason why the medieval Papacy was the major source of oppression was the fact that, in the context of scholasticism, the Papacy's major theologians subscribed to the aforementioned variety of rationalism, thus transforming Saint Peter's Church into the major guardian and provider of rationalism in the Middle Ages.

Indeed, in the Middle Ages, the scholastics' rationalist approach to philosophical realism (specifically, essentialism) was used by the Vatican in order to consolidate its power and authority. Using the scholastics' variety of realism as an instrument of cultural diplomacy, the Pope managed to impose his *plenitudo potestatis*. On the basis of the scholastics' philosophical realism, the Pope could behave like his archetype, namely, like his most abstract form, which was God himself. In general, the argument that the individual is significant and valuable only if and to the extent that it serves the universal implies that the authority that represents the universal has the right and the duty to suppress the individual in order for the universal to be served according to the judgment of the established authority, which is (supposed to be) the exclusive image of the corresponding universal. The

oppressive and authoritarian nature of medieval Western realism is not due to realism itself, namely, it is not due to the very belief in a mind-independent reality, but it is due to the fact that medieval Western realism identified Platonic ideas with logical substances, thus endowing logical concepts with substance, and, therefore, it equated the degree of reality with the degree of generality (level of abstraction). On the other hand, Plato, by refusing to identify his notion of an eternal, mind-independent world of ideas with the world of logic, and by conceiving ideas as divine energies rather than as logical substances, gives rise to an epistemology, a moral theory, and a social theory that, instead of being founded on the oppression that stems from logical necessities and their "vicars," are founded on an enlightened intuition, which underpins the mystical union between humanity and the good-in-itself in the form of humanity's participation in the world of ideas (namely, in the deity's mode of being).

In order to understand the controversy between philosophical realism and idealism in the context of medieval and modern Western philosophy, we must bear in mind that, since the era of Augustine (354–430) who was Bishop of Hippo Regius (located in the Roman province of Africa), Western thought has been oriented toward the thesis that the certitude of self-consciousness forms the basis of truth. Thus, as I have already argued, inherent in the medieval scholastics' variety of philosophical realism is rationalism, which, in turn, expresses the medieval scholastics' endorsement of the thesis that the certitude of self-consciousness, specifically, of the soul's rational faculty, forms the basis of truth, which runs counter to Plato's, Aristotle's, and the Neoplatonists' own varieties of philosophical realism. Original Platonic realism is primarily founded on *mystical experience* (participation in a transcendent reality) and the quest for *divine illumination* (existential salvation), whereas the scholastics' "Platonism" is primarily founded on *logical abstraction* and the quest for a *rational way of organizing life*.

From the distinction between the sensible and the intelligible worlds, Augustine infers that the soul knows bodies only through an inward experience and not through its relation to the body, and he argues that humanity's salvation consists in the soul's elevation into the intelligible world. Augustine's thought signals a philosophical shift from the natural world to the soul. The aforementioned shift resembles Plotinus's thought, but it is something different. Plotinus (*contra* Plato's *Phaedo* and Porphyry's *Introduction to the Categories*) maintains that the mind (*nous*) does not simply participate in the essence of cosmos, and it is not simply related to the essence of cosmos, but, since, according to Plotinus, the mind dynamically contains a multiplicity (the forms) and a duality (knower and known, or intellect and intelligible), it constitutes the essence of cosmos, which implies an active and creative consciousness. In Plotinus's own words, "no distinction exists between being and knowing," and "the truest life is such by virtue of intellection and is identical with the truest intellection" (Plotinus, *Ennead III*, 8). However, the previous Plotinian syllogism does not lead to Augustine's intellective individualism, because Plotinus argues that the mind (namely, the quintessence of the human being) is essentially divine, and, therefore, the subject cannot become ontologically autonomous, namely, it cannot be ontologically individualized (it cannot become a "pure subject"). According to Plotinus's *Ennead III*, God (the absolute One) is pure spirit, and He creates the soul (the second level of the divine emanation); the soul is the effect and image of pure spirit (and, like every effect or image, less perfect than the original), it is supersensuous and intelligible, it is active and has ideas, and, by contemplating the ideas, it forms the cosmos in the ideas' image. The soul produces matter (the third and lowest level of emanation), which is absolute impotence and privation, in order to act on it and, thus, form the world.

According to Plotinus, the world *per se* is neither good nor evil; it is good in the extent to which it participates in being, and it is evil in the extent to which it participates in matter. Before Plotinus, Plato, in his *Sophist*, had already argued that being and nonbeing are the extreme terms of an ontological series, whose intermediate terms are the nonbeing of being and the being of nonbeing. Hence, the vision of truth is achieved through the sensation of the world,

and the ancient Greek notion of beauty signifies the triumph of spirit, namely, the triumph of the ideas over the amorphy (formlessness) of non-being. By contrast, Augustine maintains that knowledge is in no way derived from the senses, but it is only derived from the ability of the soul to contemplate immaterial, moral, and aesthetic truths *within itself*, namely, without needing to be in touch with an external reality, specifically, with the reality of the world.

In his treatise *De libero arbitrio*, Augustine defines *ratio* as the logical process according to which the intellect discerns and connects the objects of knowledge, and, furthermore, he discerns two functions of human reason: *ratio superior* and *ratio inferior*. According to Augustine's *De trinitate* XII, *ratio superior* discerns ideal reality in and through the human soul and leads to the truth, whereas *ratio inferior* uses the senses to look outward on the world of sense objects and cannot lead to the truth. Augustine contrasts the inner truth and certainty of impression (intellectual perception) with the uncertainty of sense perception. In Augustine's philosophical and theological works, the soul is the epitome of personality, and *ratio superior*, as the exclusive way in which the soul knows the truth, is combined with the rejection of sense perception. As a consequence, from Augustine's perspective, truth is not a matter of spiritual freedom, since it is constrained by *ratio superior*, and, therefore, the human being is ontologically heteronomous and cannot be united with God in this life (namely, salvation is impossible in this life).

From the perspective of the mystical Greek Church Fathers, who were philosophically founded on Plato and Neoplatonism, thus articulating an interpretation of Christ's Gospel that was different from the theology that prevailed in medieval West, the knowledge of God consists in humanity's *participation* in God's mode of being, and, hence, in a *metaphysically grounded experience* of freedom from every (logical and natural) necessity.[15] On the other hand, for the scholastic West, the knowledge of God is analogous to the knowledge of the human being, in the sense of an inward experience that stems from the human will, which continuously forms and reforms the contents of consciousness. Augustine substitutes sensation with will, and he argues that the awareness of an external stimulus is a result of the soul's intentionality, whereas Neoplatonism distinguishes the mind (*nous*) from the soul (the soul being second level of the divine emanation), and, therefore, it also distinguishes an external stimulus *per se* from the act of its conscious recognition. Furthermore, according to Neoplatonism, the task of the soul is to unite spirit with matter.

From the perspective of the mystical Greek Church Fathers, who were philosophically founded on Plato and Neoplatonism, thus articulating an interpretation of Christ's Gospel that was different from the theology that prevailed in the West, the knowledge of God consists in humanity's participation in God's mode of being, and, hence, in a metaphysically grounded experience of freedom from every (logical and natural) necessity.

Before Neoplatonism, Aristotle, in his *On the Soul*, had pointed out that ancient Greek psychology is a theory of the acquisition of knowledge through the senses. Additionally, in Plato's *Timaeus* (45d), the soul, like the body, is characterized by "that sensation which we now term 'seeing,'" namely, even though cognition is not founded on bodily sensations, it is not founded on representations created by a subjective mind, either. Plato argues that cognition is founded on a peculiar mental *sensation*, in the sense that the mind does not reproduce an external object through a process of visualization, or conceptualization, nor does it create mental models of an external object, but it *participates* in the transcendent idea of an external object, and, therefore, it knows an external object due to the experience of the light of the

corresponding idea. As a result of this relation between knowledge and the light of the idea, Plato's philosophy is opposite to every form of intellective subjectivism. By contrast, Augustine's distinction between the soul and the body implies the following: rational truth is reflected in human spirit, but the personal will of God can be known only by analogy with the human being's personal will. For this reason, Augustine can be regarded as the father of intellective subjectivism.

As I have already argued, the radical distinction between the sensuous and the supersensuous worlds played a dominant role in the work of the Roman statesman and philosopher Boethius, too. Boethius's work exerted a very important influence on the entire medieval Western thought, since, until the thirteenth century, Boethius's books constituted the only significant intellectual link between Greek philosophy and the Latin world. However, this link was conditioned by the mentalities of the Latin world and by the scope of the Latin education. The primary scope of the Latin education was rhetorical power and, hence, syllogistic perfection. In the medieval West, the pursuit of rhetorical power led to the substitution of metaphysical pursuits by rationality. Thus, in the medieval West, the Greek term *logos* was substituted by the Latin term *ratio*, and Boethius proposed a Platonic interpretation of Aristotle's logic. Both Boethius and Augustine interpreted Aristotle's general concepts (universals) like Platonic ideas, and they interpreted Plato's ideas like logical substances. The cause of this confusion of the medieval Western thought is that the Latin scholars who were concerned with metaphysical problems ignored that, from the perspective of ancient Greek philosophy, the problem of "substance" was never an intellectual/rhetorical power game. Aristotle's logic itself is primarily concerned with the human reason's potential to comprehend and express an external spiritual reality (the reason of the cosmos), and not with the abstract systems of formal logic. In contrast to the Greek term "logos," which refers to an experiential understanding of truth through participation/sharing (in Greek, "methexis"), the Latin term "ratio" means the individual ability to syllogistically arrive at a comprehensive, exhaustive understanding of truth.

The formative period of scholasticism, beginning with the ninth and ending with the twelfth century, was founded on the works of Augustine and Boethius. As a conclusion, from the above-mentioned arguments, it follows that this period is marked by an attempt to arrive at a comprehensive, exhaustive knowledge of God according to the methodology and the criteria of the human soul (intellect and sentiment). This attempt put an indelible imprint on the entire medieval Western thought and determined the course of scholasticism. The dominant philosophical path that the West followed during this stage of scholasticism is a variety of philosophical realism, according to which, as I have already argued, Aristotle's general concepts (universals) were conceived, in Platonic fashion, as the real substances of things and as prior to things (*universalia sunt realia ante rem*).

In the ninth century, the first Western scholar who methodically studied Greek Church Fathers was John Scottus Eriugena, who translated a collection of writings of Dionysius the Areopagite, Gregory of Nyssa's treatise *On the Making of Man*, and Maximus the Confessor's *Ambigua* into Latin. In Eriugena's studies about the relation between faith and reason, the former takes precedence over the latter, but Eriugena does not underestimate the significance of reason. Moreover, in Eriugena's thought, faith follows the path of philosophy, and, for Eriugena, philosophy offers a cataphatic form of knowledge that underpins apophatic (mystical) theology. Eriugena endorsed the Augustinian formula "crede, ut intelligas" ("believe so that you may understand"; Augustine, *Sermones*, 43, 9), and, inspired by Neoplatonism, he created a system of philosophical realism in which general concepts (universals) are substances, and they create and determine every other entity. For Eriugena, the cosmos (universe) is God who has given form to Himself, a partial unfolding of the divine nature, and a pure *theophany*. From the perspective of Eriugena's logic, God is the superessential and indefinable absolute universal, but He is still part of Nature, and, therefore, in the context of Eriugena's logic, initially, the individual is deduced from the

general, and, finally, in Neoplatonic fashion, the individual is absorbed back into the general. Eriugena maintains that the real is the rational, and the rational is the real.[16]

The thesis of the ontological autonomy of universals (general concepts) and the tendency of medieval Western philosophers to identify reality with the intellect characterize the work of Anselm (1033–1109), Archbishop of Canterbury, who was the leading proponent of philosophical realism (more accurately, essentialism) during the formative stage of scholasticism.[17] Following the legacy of Augustine and Boethius, Anselm attempted to offer logical proofs for the existence of God. In his *Proslogium*, Anselm articulated his so-called ontological proof of God, which consists in deducing the existence of God from the concept of God, in showing that the very concept of God implies Its existence. According to Anselm's syllogisms, the concept of God is the notion of something greater than which nothing can be thought, and, therefore, if God did not exist, this concept would not be the concept of the greatest thing thinkable (since it would not have existence). However, the Benedictine monk Gaunilo (or Gaunillon), in his anonymously published book *Against the Reasoning in Anselm's Proslogium*, exposed the fallacy in Anselm's argument: human mind's capability of constructing the existence of God by logic, Gaunilo maintains, is the same as human mind's capability of constructing the existence of any other thing by logic, that is, so far as it is thought. For instance, by Anselm's way of thinking, one might prove the existence of a perfect island: the definition of a perfect island as the most perfect conceivable island is enough, by Anselm's way of thinking, in order to prove that a perfect island exists.

In the eleventh century, Anselm's logic became an important cause of intellectual uncertainty, because the French philosopher and theologian Roscellinus, a contemporary of Anselm, argued that the content of Anselm's logic consists of names, not of real entities.[18] Thus, Roscellinus founded nominalism. According to Roscellinus, ideas are simply words (*flatus vocis*), or names, not substances. Hence, for Roscellinus, the genus and the species have no substantial unity, and the union of individuals in the genus or in the species is a mere fabrication of language or the work of thought; only individuals are real. Nominalism paved a way to positive science.

However, in the twelfth century, Peter Abelard, a French philosopher, theologian, and preeminent logician, put forward a new theory, known as conceptualism, which is an intermediate position between philosophical realism/essentialism (e.g., Eriugena, Anselm, etc.) and nominalism (e.g., Roscellinus). According to Abelard, universals are neither substances nor mere words, but they are products of intellectual abstraction. Abelard maintains that, through abstraction, the mind can separate form from matter, but form does not subsist outside the mind, since it is predicated of a class of things. Abelard opposes essentialism by arguing that we cannot predicate a thing of a thing, but we can predicate a universal of many things, and, therefore, a universal cannot be ontologically autonomous (namely, it is not a thing). For instance, the concept of a human being does not subsist in the world, but it exists only through and within particular beings. Hence, knowledge is derived from both conceptualization and sense perception. Additionally, Abelard opposes nominalism by arguing that the universal is a word only in relation to the objects of which it is predicated, and, therefore, universals are not mere words, but conceptual predicates.[19]

As a response to the rising spirit of positive science and to Abelard's conceptualism, which addresses the problem of knowledge independently of theology, Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153), a French abbot and the primary builder of the Cistercian Order, admitted the significance of dialectic and science, but he emphasized the depth of Christ's humility and love, and, thus, he became the founder of medieval Western mysticism. In his work *On Loving God*, Bernard of Clairvaux argues that his vision of a loving union with God presupposes freedom from the mortal body, and, therefore, it consists in a psychological phenomenon of "divinization," which is due to an ecstatic mental state.[20] By the term "ecstasy," we mean a state of consciousness in which the subject is totally involved with an object of one's awareness, whereas, in an ordinary state of

consciousness, the subject is aware of other objects, too. Hence, ecstasy is an altered state of consciousness characterized by diminished or minimal awareness of other objects. For instance, Bernard of Clairvaux's conception of the loving union with God involves the cessation of awareness of the physical body.

In the twelfth and the fourteenth centuries, the West experienced a period of philosophical and theological flourishing (known also as the period of the culmination of scholasticism) as a result of the influence that Arab and Jewish philosophers exerted on the Latin West during that period and because, during the same period, the Latin West came in touch with Aristotle's original writings. However, it should be pointed out that the Arabs' treatises on Aristotle, which exerted a very strong influence on medieval Western thought, were based on particular Neoplatonic approaches that had prevailed among the Arabs.[21] Under the Abbasid Caliphate, the works of Plato, Plotinus, and Aristotle were translated into Arabic and influenced philosophy throughout the Islamic world. Neoplatonism flourished especially among the Persian philosophers of the tenth century and in the Fatimid court of Egypt in the eleventh century. Additionally, since the Hellenistic era, the influence of Neoplatonism on Judaism had been so strong that many ancient and medieval Jewish scholars articulated a synthesis between Neoplatonism and the Jewish religion (for instance, the Kabbalistic literature consists mainly in a synthesis between Jewish mysticism, Neoplatonism, and the ancient Pythagorean school, from which the Kabbalists' "Tree of Life" and Gematria derive).[22]

During the twelfth and the thirteenth centuries, the West continued to have fragmented knowledge of Greek philosophy and of the mystical Greek Church Fathers' writings, and it depended on incorrect translations of the Greek philosophical and theological vocabulary, but, in this way, the scholastics managed to create a peculiar Western philosophical and theological identity that paved a way to the Renaissance. During this period of the cultural history of the West, the leader of philosophical realism/essentialism was Thomas Aquinas (1224–74), an Italian Dominican priest, philosopher, and theologian, and the leader of nominalism was William of Ockham (c.1280/5–c.1349), an English Franciscan priest, philosopher, and theologian (In 1328, Ockham was officially excommunicated for leaving Avignon (for Pisa) without permission. Louis of Bavaria, the Holy Roman Emperor, offered Ockham's group protection, and, in 1330, Ockham traveled to the imperial court in Munich, where he spent the rest of his life writing about political and ecclesiological affairs).

In his *Scriptum super libros Sententiarum* and *Summa theologiae*, Thomas Aquinas argues that the truth is one, and that the soul, as a separate species and as the entelechy of the body, unites the domains of the sensuous and the intelligible into a unified natural whole (knowledge originates in Augustine's *ratio inferior* and culminates with Augustine's *ratio superior*). According to Thomas Aquinas, the soul is the supreme, *ne plus ultra*, intelligible creation of God, but it is immortal, immaterial and capable of comprehending the intelligible realm. However, Thomas Aquinas maintains, the soul is bound to the body, and, therefore, the soul does not directly understand the intelligibles, but only indirectly, through reason (*ratio*), which leads to the conception of the universal within the individual.

For Thomas Aquinas, the soul comprehends the essences of things through the conception of the corresponding species, and it comprehends the accidental properties of things through their sensible species, or sensuous representations. But, from Thomas Aquinas's viewpoint, sensible species are neither Platonic/Neoplatonic emanations nor Democritus's idols (i.e., projections of bodies themselves, guided by one's eyes toward one's soul). Thomas Aquinas argues that immaterial entities (namely, substances distinct from the sensible species by which they are represented) exist within material bodies, so that the comprehension of objects by the human mind is not externally determined by their representations, but it is determined by the inner principle of comprehension, specifically, by reason. With Thomas Aquinas's epistemology, rational thought, as an exact organ of knowledge, repudiates the ancient Greek theory of ideas (as entities independent of

consciousness), since the ancient Greek theory of ideas is not a rationalist theory of knowledge, but it is a method of spiritual cleansing. In contrast to the ancient Greek theory of ideas, Thomas Aquinas's epistemology paved a way to the modern tradition of individual intellective truth (rationalist subjectivism), which was founded in the seventeenth century by Descartes. The ancient Greek theory of truth *qua* spiritual cleansing and participation in the external realm of ideas leads to a holistic understanding of society, whereas rationalism maintains that truth can be found through analysis or calculus, and, ultimately, it identifies truth with the self-assurance of the *ego*.

According to Thomas Aquinas, the universal does not exist as such (universal *qua* universal), but it exists only in an individualized manner within material bodies due to the quantitative differentiation of matter. From this perspective, human knowledge originates in the senses, and its integration is brought about by reason. In the context of Thomas Aquinas's philosophy, reason reigns over the soul, and its cognitive power, leading to the knowledge of God, is the most important asset of the human being. Thus, Thomas Aquinas maintains, the intellect, or the ability to reason, is superior to the will (since the will of a rational being is determined by the knowledge of the good), and, additionally, the intellect is superior to freedom (since the freedom of a rational being is underpinned by the necessity of reason). Inherent in the previous arguments of Thomas Aquinas is a latent form of the rationalist humanism that became explicit in the West in the context of Modernity.

William of Ockham's and Thomas Aquinas's essentialism can be regarded as the two sides of the same coin, specifically, of the Western rationalist humanism. William of Ockham's nominalism begins with the skeptical arguments that sense perception is not a source of certain knowledge and that universals (intelligible species) have no existence outside the mind (that is, they are not inherent in things). According to William of Ockham, to assume mind-independent universals, as essentialists/philosophical realists do, is to make entities of abstractions, and, hence, it is an unnecessary doubling of the universe. This principle is known as "Ockham's Razor," since it shaves off the unnecessary universals.[23]

In his *Summa totius logicae*, William of Ockham argues that only particulars exist, and they can be known independently of abstract concepts, through simple psychological activities, specifically, through representation. Science, therefore, is wholly concerned with self-evident truths (tautologies) and truths known by experience. If one believes in the ontological autonomy of general concepts, then universals (even though, for William of Ockham, they exist merely as thoughts in the mind) function as necessary constraints on the reality of the particular/individual and, also, on God's freedom. Thus, in order to save God's and humanity's freedom from universals, William of Ockham proposes the complete abandonment of general ideas, and he reduces them to psychological representations, meaning "expressions of one's own inner states" (intellections, acts of will, joy, and sorrow). William of Ockham's nominalism is the first ontological legitimization of the individual *qua* "subject" (i.e., a historical actor filled with reason and will and, more precisely, a historical being capable of acting on the basis of reason and will) and of the individual's autonomy from communal authority.

Aquinas's philosophical and theological system consists in a rational hierarchy of syllogistic reasoning, in the context of which the degree of generality is equated with degree of reality, and the most general concept corresponds to the deity. In other words, Aquinas's philosophical and theological system is a type of religious rationalism. As a result, for Thomas Aquinas, society consists (or, at least, should consist) in an authoritarian hierarchy that is the image of the aforementioned rational hierarchy of syllogistic reasoning, and the Pope is the authority that can explain and impose the will of the supreme universal, or the divine wisdom. According to Thomas Aquinas, the essence of politics consists in the deliberate guiding by human reason of humanity's will in social actions. Moreover, Thomas Aquinas argues that the state has positive value in and of itself on the grounds that it is an expression of God's providence and will for humankind and it secures peace.[24]

On the other hand, gradually, the medieval Western subject realized that the most effective way to fight against Papal absolutism consists in the refutation of the scholastics' philosophical realism. In particular, it was the bourgeoisie that, from the eleventh century onward, decided to unleash an attack on the philosophical foundations of the Papacy, specifically, on the Papal theologians' philosophical realism. The bourgeois understand society, not as an expression, or image, of a universal, but as an *association of individuals*. Therefore, they endorse nominalism. William of Ockham argues that sovereignty derives from the people, who have the natural power to legislate and institute rulers.[25] The individualistic humanism that stems from William of Ockham's nominalism is a more radical type of humanism than the one that stems from Thomas Aquinas's essentialism/philosophical realism, since William of Ockham's nominalism can potentially justify unrestrained egoism, either at the level of the individual human being or at the level of the nation (nationalism).

Logic is inherently authoritarian, since the "more general" lords it over the "less general." Moreover, in the context of logic, it is impossible for the less general to be united with the more general, and, of course, logic (with its general, impersonal rules) precludes personhood and any personal relationships. Therefore, if one, like the medieval essentialists/philosophical realists, fuses metaphysics and logic into a system that treats Platonic ideas like logical substances, thus endowing general concepts with metaphysical weight and conceiving God as the most abstract concept, then not only is God a "Supreme Being" that exercises dominion over every other being, but also all the beings and the things that exist in the world are related to each other according to logically necessary and coercive rules of dominion. In this case, the development of a personal relationship between humanity and deity is impossible, and the Christian who attempts to be united with God is merely a caricature of oneself. This is the reason why, as I have already argued in other writings of mine, the mystics in general and the Byzantine Orthodox mystics, known as the Hesychasts, in particular vehemently oppose any type of religious rationalism, including the medieval scholastics' essentialism/philosophical realism.[26] On the other hand, the nominalists' revolt against essentialism/philosophical realism fails to address the issue of humanity's relationship with (specifically, participation in) the good-in-itself, it indiscriminately nullifies the ontological significance of any principle that transcends the individual, and it underpins egoism. The nominalists attempt to safeguard and empower the individuality of the human being, but their victory over the scholastic essentialists/philosophical realists is a Pyrrhic victory, because nominalism gives rise to an individual who is unable to sufficiently understand and appreciate the functions and the dynamics of social consciousness. The nominalists' individual lives according to a nexus of conventions, leaving the sociality of the human psyche permanently injured.

Consciousness is both the essence of the human being (namely, it is the "me," the self, the higher self, the lower self, the known) and the means by which the human being confirms its autonomy and its quest for other beings, which it meets at the level of their own consciousness. This meeting is carried out by the intentionality of consciousness, which is expressed by critically and creatively relating the particular quests of the intentionality of a conscious being to the place where the interaction between different conscious beings takes place.

The means by which conscious beings communicate with each other are called symbols. Symbols derive from activities that express the tendency of different conscious beings to meet and understand each other. In other words, symbols are objects that express commonly accepted intentions and activities and are organized in sets that are called codes. When conscious beings act and behave according to common codes, then a society of conscious beings is an inter-subjective and conscious continuum, since there are things that have the same meaning for all conscious beings. As a code becomes more complete and more complex, it may increase the efficiency and the accuracy of the communication between conscious beings, but, on the other hand, it may make the communication between conscious beings more difficult.

The elements of a code whereby conscious beings communicate with each other are called "signs." Each and every sign receives a meaning (a conceptual determination) that depends on its acceptance by all conscious beings and on the fact that it is a member of the established code. Every code, every symbol, and every sign have a dynamic structure that enables them to be functionally adapted to the requirements of their users.

In its attempt to establish correspondences between significances and things, consciousness continuously follows two directions: an extroversive one and an introversive one. The introversive inclination of consciousness consists in the descent of consciousness into the depths of its own self in order to achieve the following goals: (i) to endow itself with a more complete structure, (ii) to obtain a higher level of self-awareness, and (iii) to preserve and reinforce its ontological status by itself. In this way, a human being becomes psychologically deeper, and, by constraining the exchange of information between one's consciousness and other conscious beings, one avoids the danger of excessive information entropy. Nevertheless, the tendency of a being to entrench itself does not *ipso facto* safeguard this being's existential integration, because, in general, the existential integration of a being depends not only on the given being's autonomy but also on the exchange of information between the given being and other beings. Through the social ego, by exchanging information with other beings, one exits oneself in order to meet other beings, and, through one's communication with other beings, to become aware of one's own self. But if consciousness persists in intensifying its inner ego (its own self), then the inner ego inhibits the manifestation of the social ego; in this case, the social ego cannot enrich consciousness through communication with other conscious beings.

In its attempt to endow things with significance, the ego needs assistance from and cooperation with other egos. The existence of symbols and signs corresponds to the need of the ego to be complemented by other egos. Symbols and signs specify the relationship between conscious beings that partake of common aesthetic experiences and/or exchange information with each other. Thus, consciousness is faced with two risks: (i) the risk of over-information, which is associated with extremely high information entropy, and (ii) the risk of under-information, which is associated with extremely low information entropy. Over-information intensifies the social ego and, by increasing information entropy, gives rise to a disoriented being. Under-information intensifies the inner ego and gives rise to an ego-centric being.

The nominalists underestimate the fact that the ego needs to be complemented by other egos, and they ignore that, from the perspective of mysticism, the divine energies (collectively referred to as the "divine grace") transcend the individual, but they can be participated in by the individual (in the context of the individual's divine illumination), and, therefore, divine energies embrace the individual from the inside and endow the individual with the universality that characterizes the divine energies themselves. This is the meaning of humanity's union with the deity. The event of personal communion between the human being and the deity endows particularity (specifically, the human individual) with universality (specifically, with the light of God's glory) and enables one to overcome the contradiction between "individuality" and "sociality." Thus, instead of being solitary, the human individual is united with the source of the significance of the beings and the things that exist in the world, and, in this way, the human individual develops an infinitely large inner space (capable of carrying humanity) without negating one's existential otherness.

The Controversy between Realism and Idealism in Modern Philosophy

Modern philosophy arose as a protest against the old scholastic system, and it made human reason the highest authority in the pursuit of knowledge, but it did not, and could not, break with the past. In fact, the founder of modern philosophy, René Descartes (Latinized form: Renatus Cartesius, 1596–1650), formulated a philosophy that belongs to the "school" of dualistic realism. Descartes's dualistic realism is based on the distinction between two

concepts: extension and thinking.[27] Descartes points out that we imagine that there are bodies outside ourselves, and then he poses the following question: how can we know that they actually exist? He observes that we have various feelings (e.g., pleasure and pain), appetites, and sensations, which are instinctively referred to bodily causes, but our sensations often deceive us, and our appetites often mislead us. Therefore, Descartes argues that the existence of bodies cannot be proved from the existence of such experiences. However, Descartes continues his argument as follows: if God induced in us a deeply rooted conviction in the existence of an external world, when no such world existed, then God would be a deceiver, but God is a truthful being; the existence in my mind of illusions of sense does not disprove the goodness of God, because God has endowed me with the power of intellect to dispel and correct every delusion. Hence, Descartes concludes that our sensations are caused by bodies, which exist independently of our thinking. According to Descartes, such an independent thing is called substance.

Furthermore, Descartes poses the following question: what is the nature of external things? He answers that what we clearly and distinctly perceive in body is the essential attribute of the body, which is extension. By the term "extension," he means a spatial continuum of three dimensions (length, breadth, and thickness). According to Descartes's dualistic realism, the attribute of body is extension, and, thus, bodies are passive (God is the first cause of motion in the world), whereas the attribute of mind is thinking, and, thus, mind is active and free. In other words, in the context of Cartesianism, these two substances (mind and body) are absolutely distinct.

In Descartes's philosophy, bodies exist independently of our thinking, but the only reason we have to believe in their existence is a deeply rooted conviction in the existence of an external world. Thus, in Cartesianism, truth is ultimately subject to the requirements and the limits of individual consciousness. Even though Descartes wants to prove the existence of bodies independently of our mind, he unintentionally opens the way to the idealistic autonomy of the individual consciousness. Apart from this antinomy, another problem with Cartesianism is the distinction between the mind and the body. In fact, modern *neuroscience* has shown that there is a dialectical relationship between the mind (consciousness) and the brain (the centre of the nervous system), and, thus, extension is an attribute of the mind, too.[28]

One of the most influential students of Cartesianism was Baruch Spinoza (1632–77). Whereas Cartesianism is an example of dualistic realism, Spinoza's philosophy is an example of monistic realism. In particular, according to Spinoza, thinking, which is the essential attribute of the mind, and extension, which is the essential attribute of the body, do not stand in mutual opposition, but they are interconnected due to a process of transition from the one to the other.[29] Spinoza, inspired by Neoplatonism and modern physics, unites God's substance with the substance of the natural world in a way that gives rise to a deterministic model of the universe.

Another variety of monistic realism is materialism. According to Descartes, the entire reality is organized in a mechanistic manner, but the human being is an exception to this rule, because it has soul. However, Descartes's philosophy cannot offer convincing arguments on the basis of which one could accept that the human being is an exceptional entity in the mechanistic universe of Cartesianism. Thus, many post-Cartesian mechanistic philosophers, such as Ernst *Haeckel,* Julien Offray de *La Mettrie, and* Karl *Vogt*, used the model of the mechanistic Cartesian universe in order to defend the argument that the human being is a machine-animal and that the mind is only an excretion of the brain. A major epistemic problem of this eighteenth-century materialistic monism is that it is based on a completely objective view of the world, thus ignoring every subjective aspect of the inner states of consciousness.[30]

Furthermore, modern biological research has refuted the mechanistic model that is inherent in Cartesianism, in Spinoza's philosophy, and in the nineteenth-century materialistic monism. In particular, in contrast to Spinoza's biological determinism and biocentrism, new research carried out by Sarah Berkemer (based at the Max

Planck Institute for Mathematics in the Sciences in Leipzig, Germany) and Shawn McGlynn (from the Earth-Life Science Institute at the Tokyo Institute of Technology in Japan) and published in 2020 in the advanced access edition of the journal *Molecular Biology and Evolution* "suggests understanding early life may be trickier than previously thought."[31] Berkemer's and McGlynn's analyses "confirm other work which suggested that only a limited understanding of the lifestyle of the most ancient cells can be derived from DNA comparison," and show that "early in life's history, different gene types changed at different rates," thus suggesting that "early mutation rates were much higher than at present and there has been a significant contribution of 'gene jumping' over time which makes a simple interpretation of the early 'family tree' of life misleading."[32] In addition, in 2020, Antony Jose (associate professor of cell biology and molecular genetics at the University of Maryland), in two research papers that he published in the *Journal of the Royal Society Interface* and the journal *BioEssays*, refuted the common view of heredity according to which "all information passed down from one generation to the next is stored in an organism's DNA," and he argued that "DNA is just the ingredient list, not the set of instructions used to build and maintain a living organism," and that the instructions "are much more complicated, and they're stored in the molecules that regulate a cell's DNA and other functioning systems."[33] In contrast to old mechanistic models, Jose maintains that, far from being the "blueprint" for life, DNA "is at best an overlapping and potentially scrambled list of ingredients that is used differently by different cells at different times."[34] For instance, "the gene for eye color exists in every cell of the body, but the process that produces the protein for eye color only occurs during a specific stage of development and only in the cells that constitute the colored portion of the eyes. That information is not stored in the DNA."[35]

As I have already mentioned, the second general cosmological model to which one can reduce the relationships between consciousness and external reality is idealism, and the modern realist philosopher Descartes was the unintentional founder of modern idealism. Descartes's principle "cogito ergo sum" ("I think therefore I am") implies that consciousness is an ontologically sufficient foundation of reality and assurance. Another unintentional founder of modern idealism is the empiricist philosopher John Locke (1632–1704). In his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Locke is concerned with the discovery of the source from which our knowledge springs, and he argues that, if it is true, as Descartes and others argued, that we have an innate knowledge of principles, it cannot be explained why we question its validity.[36] In other words, Locke refutes the Cartesian doctrine of inborn truth by assuming that the mind must be conscious of its innate principles, if there be any (for, nothing can be said to exist in the mind of which it is unconscious). In the case of Descartes's philosophy, idealism (in its modern sense, which I clarified in the Introduction) is inherent in his principle "cogito ergo sum," and, in the case of Locke's philosophy, the element of modern idealism is inherent in his attempt to substitute Descartes's principle "cogito ergo sum" with the principle "I question therefore I am." According to Locke, the two sources of all our ideas are sensation (which supplies the mind with sensible qualities) and reflection (which supplies the mind with ideas of its own operation, such as perception, believing, doubting, willing, etc.).

Modern idealism has been developed under different forms. The most radical form of idealism is solipsism, according to which only one's own consciousness is sure to exist. According to a more moderate form of idealism, the world of the senses is a degraded sensuous appearance of an experienced conscious state, which is the only reality. Another form of idealism is known as immaterialism and was founded by George Berkeley (1685–1753), who was inspired by Neoplatonism and denied the reality of matter.

George Berkeley, following the idea of body as held by Locke, argued that to exist means to be perceived, specifically, to be in the mind, and, therefore, bodies exist only when there is a mind that perceives or knows them.[37] However, all things we perceive (ideas) are inactive, and, thus, they cannot be the cause of sensations. Berkeley argues that the cause of sensations is

an immaterial, active substance called spirit. By the term "spirit," Berkeley means a unified, active being, which, in so far as it perceives ideas, is called "understanding," and, in so far as it creates (i.e., operates upon ideas), is called "will." Since all ideas are passive and inert and since spirit is active and creative, there can be no idea formed of spirit, and, thus, we can perceive only the effects produced by spirit but not spirit itself. It must be mentioned that immaterialism and realism can agree about the nature of perception itself, but normally they disagree about whether there are any mind-independent material objects at all. Moreover, with regard to Berkeley's thesis that, "for unthinking things, to exist is to be perceived" (since it is impossible to form an idea of an unperceived object), Thomas Nagel maintains that it "involves the mistake of confusing perceptual imagination as the vehicle of thought with a perceptual experience as part of the object of thought."[38]

David Hume (1711–76) agrees with Descartes and Locke in requiring that genuine knowledge must be self-evident, but he argues that he has not found such knowledge anywhere except in mathematics, which merely analyzes its own concepts.[39] According to Hume, the constitutive and fundamental elements of knowledge are impressions and ideas. By the term "impression," Hume means a lively perception, which brings with it conviction or positive belief in the existence of a corresponding objective reality. All our sensations, passions, and emotions as they make their first appearance in the mind are characteristic examples of impressions. By the term "idea," Hume means a copy of a corresponding impression, left behind by the given impression, and, hence, according to Hume, ideas are less lively than perceptions. In the context of Hume's philosophy, ideas are faint perceptions of which we are conscious when we reflect on impressions, and they are copied by the memory and the imagination. According to Hume's "law of association of ideas," impressions and ideas are linked together by an inclination to recall one another. However, Hilary Putnam has pointed out that, by arguing that we "do not have such a thing as an 'abstract idea' or a 'general idea' of green," Berkeley and Hume fail to realize that, "if I can think of a *particular* relation of 'similarity,' then I am able to recognize at least one universal," and, therefore, "universals cannot really be avoided in the way Berkeley and Hume wanted to do."[40]

Bergson argues that there are two ways in which an object can be known: absolutely and relatively. According to Bergson, the method of knowing an object relatively is called analysis, and the method of knowing an object absolutely is called intuition. Bergson calls intuition "sympathy," which consists in putting ourselves in the place of others. In other words, Bergsonian intuition consists of "entering into" the object of consciousness, and, thus, it differs from the analytical method.

At the political level, Hume's philosophy implies that social and political institutions should be understood as devices developed in response to emergent human conditions, and not as products of reason. Therefore, Hume's theory of government was primarily a theory about the function of government; he was interested primarily in who was likely to rule well and command the allegiance of people and not so much in who was morally entitled to rule. Hence, in his *Treatise of Human Nature*, II, iii 3, Hume argues that "Reason is, and ought only to be, the slave of the passions." However, Plato has posed a crucial political question that has been rather unsuccessfully evaded by Hume, Thucydides, Demosthenes, and Machiavelli; namely, in his *Republic*, 340c, Plato asks: "was this how you meant to define what is right, that it is that which *seems* to the stronger to be his interest, whether it *really* is or not?" (emphasis mine). Therefore, the political pragmatism that is inherent in Hume's idealism is a protection

against ignorance and against ambivalent sentiments, but, if you know what you are doing, and if your sentiments have a clear orientation, pragmatism makes little sense and is synonymous with moral abdication.

Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) formulated a philosophy that he called "critical." Kant's critical philosophy is a compromise between realism and idealism. According to Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781), there are two different worlds: the noumenal world and the phenomenal world.[41] The noumenal world is the world of things outside us, namely, of things that exist independently of our minds (the elements of the noumenal world are called "noumena"; singular: "noumenon"). Kant argues that our consciousness cannot comprehend the essence of the noumenal world, and that we can only perceive an altered version (a fainted image) of the noumenal world, which Kant called the phenomenal world. The phenomenal world is the world that we perceive, specifically, the view that we have of the world that is inside our minds. It must be stressed that Kant's refusal to accept the comprehension of the essence of the noumenal world by mind is a cognitive argument and not an ontological one (since, according to Kant, the noumenal world exists even though we cannot comprehend its essence).

In Kant's philosophy, the communication between the noumenal world (pure concepts) and the phenomenal world (phenomena) becomes possible due to the theory of schema. By the term "schema" (plural: "schemata"), Kant refers to a set of twelve kinds of pre-existing (*a priori*) judgments, or rules, which are hard wired into our minds and interact with the noumenal world, thus helping us to create the phenomenal world, which exists in our minds.[42] Thus, our perceptions of the world are caused by the external world, and, therefore, we perceive a world that really exists, but what that world looks like to us differs from what that world is really like. According to Kant, our perception of the world is necessarily conditioned by schemata, and, therefore, Kant gives primacy to the logical form over the real content of experience. In Kant's philosophy, there is no knowable transcendent world, and, therefore, Kantianism signals the complete abandonment of the metaphysical tradition that originated from Plato's philosophy.

In Kant's philosophy, the synthesizing activity of the mind (manifested in the rule-based structuring of perceptions into a world of objects) is derived from "transcendental imagination," a term used by Kant in the first edition of his *Critique of Pure Reason*. According to Martin Heidegger, transcendental imagination is what Kant refers to as the unknown common source uniting sense and understanding.[43] Furthermore, in Kant's philosophy, transcendental imagination underpins consciousness and secures it against the changeability and volatility of phenomenal objects. Hence, by virtue of transcendental imagination, which ultimately is a variation of Descartes's *cogito* principle, consciousness becomes a pure and solid *ego*, which connects percepts according to its own forms, meaning in its own way. To sum up: in Kant's philosophy, imagination forms space and time, safeguards the unity of the *ego* vis-à-vis the multiplicity of the phenomenal world, and, thus, the subject imposes its categories of understanding on phenomena. As a result, thinking is derived from imagination, and, therefore, ultimately, we are logically urged to accept arbitrariness (specifically, choices based on an individual's own opinion or discretion) as the foundation of the *ego*! Kant was so horrified to find out the philosophically dangerous consequences of his theory of transcendental imagination that he omitted this term from the second edition of his *Critique of Pure Reason* in 1787, without, however, ceasing to glorify the *ego*.

Kant identified genuine knowledge with synthetic *a priori* judgments,[44] on which he founded the distinction between the noumenon and the phenomenon. Thus, according to Kant, we can know only products of our minds, and the world is structurally united with the thinking *ego*. Furthermore, science can only convey knowledge of phenomena, and, therefore, reality and truth are mutually separated. Apart from abstract categories of understanding, the only solid content of Kant's pure reason is the subject.

From the perspective of Kant's philosophy, the subject derives its ontological autonomy from

pure reason through the moral law, which is a categorical imperative, in the sense that it commands unconditionally. A categorical imperative is a universal axiom, and, therefore, it can simultaneously be a universal law and an individual duty. Hence, the subject whose individual morality is such that it has the authority and the value of a universal law can set aside the problem of the ontology of the universal good (the good-in-itself), and such a subject can substitute pure reason, interpreted as the consciousness of duty, for the universal good, thus abandoning the morality of love, which is derived from and founded on one's relationship with the universal good. In his *Critique of Practical Reason*, Kant argues that the relation between human will and law corresponds to the relation between practical reason and pure reason. Thus, in his *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant formulates his fundamental moral maxim as follows: "I ought never to act except in such a way that I can also will that my maxim should become a universal law."[45]

According to Kant, the will legislates, and reason determines the subject's way of life, so that a will is good when it is determined by respect for the moral law, which is a manifestation of reason. The will is subject to reason and, hence, to the moral law, so that, ultimately, the will legislates its own laws. In other words, Kant's moral philosophy extols duty for duty's sake, and it identifies free will with irrationality. Thus, with his moral philosophy, Kant seeks to accommodate transcendental imagination to the moral law. If it is to be stable and universal, "good will" cannot be a subjective goal. Thus, in order to liberate "good will" from the subjectivity of practical reason, Kant asserts that humanity is an end in itself. In particular, in his *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant argues as follows: "Act in such a way that you always treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never simply as a means, but always at the same time as an end."[46] The principle of humanity as an end in itself and the corresponding political order as a union of partial ends express a belief in the ontological autarchy of humanity, which, in the absence of a transcendent *Logos*, is secularized in conformity with the commands of pure reason. The sovereignty of pure reason implies that the *telos* ("end") of history is a historical goal (and not a transcendent one), and, therefore, it provides "good will" with an objective end that is the source of the categorical imperative, and it determines what politics can legitimately do.

The sovereignty of reason, which Kant endorses, is overthrown when the *telos* of existence is the transcendent good-in-itself, specifically, the bliss of the union between humanity and God, in the sense of one's union with his/her lover (as it has been described by Plato and the medieval mystical Christian theologians, such as the Byzantine hesychasts, Meister Eckhart, Johannes Tauler, Henry Suso, John of Ruysbroeck, Richard Rolle, Walter Hilton, Julian of Norwich, etc.). When the *telos* of existence is the transcendent good-in-itself, the path that leads to humanity's ontological perfection is freedom. On the other hand, Kant depends on the objectivity of moral law because he intends to found his pietistic ethics on the categorical imperative. In order to overcome the contradiction between the subjectivity of practical reason and the objectivity of the categorical imperative, Kant's moral rationalism gives rise to a subject whose inner world is extremely poor, since the Kantian subject is filled with a sense of duty that has replaced free will. Kant argues that a moral act cannot depend on the absolute good (since, according to Kant, the absolute good as a thing-in-itself, i.e., as a noumenon, is unknowable), and, therefore, Kant has no other choice but to assert that the moral value of our acts is derived from "good will," in the sense that it is determined by the categorical imperative. Thus, from Kant's viewpoint, the moral status of an act is determined by the goodness of its end, and not by the good *itself*, which is a noumenon and, hence, according to Kant, unknowable. As a consequence of Kant's moral rationalism, humanity loses its spiritual freedom, and it is subjected to the formalism of pure reason.

When one is truly and, hence, unselfishly, in love, his/her good will toward his/her lover is not derived from the categorical imperative, but it is a manifestation of his/her free will, and, also, it is a way of life. This is the reason why

Plato proposes *eros* (love passion) toward the absolute good (which, in Plato's philosophy, is a knowable noumenon) as an epistemology and as a moral philosophy, and, similarly, the medieval mystical Christian theologians' epistemology and morality are based on *eros* toward Christ, the incarnate channel of God's love in history.

The enforcement of outward ("exoteric") moral rules can possibly correct one's behavior, but it cannot offer existential salvation. The suppression of passions does not save the soul, since a suppressed passion, most probably, will mutate and reemerge as a new passion. The suppression of passions through the moral law resembles witch hunts, since it is a Sisyphean process. The soul can be saved only if one is aware of the ultimate goal that underpins and guides one's passions, namely, only if one can look at the depths of one's soul. Hence, many mystics emphasize the purification of passion. In fact, it is the purified passion (and not the categorical imperative) that makes humans capable of fulfilling the New Law of Christ, which is love (Mark 12:28–31).

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich *Hegel (1770–1831) criticized Kant's* doctrine of the unknowable not from the perspective of mysticism, which I propose and defend in the present essay, but from the perspective of modern rationalism, and, therefore, Hegel proposed a different way of arriving at a synthesis of realism and idealism than Kant's philosophy, while simultaneously, like Kant, he repudiated ancient and medieval metaphysics.[47] According to Hegel, *if the unknowable is beyond every kind of knowledge, and if it is beyond the use of the concepts of understanding, then we cannot apply the concepts of causation, reality, and existence to it. In other words, Hegel argues that, if we apply the concept of existence to the noumenon, and if this statement is true, then we know the noumenon to that extent, and, thus, the knowledge of the noumena is not impossible. Furthermore, Hegel argued that we cannot and should not hide behind the argument that the term noumenon is a limiting concept in order to avoid our responsibility of knowing the noumenon. For Hegel, to be aware of a limiting condition is to go beyond it. In other words, when we know the limiting conditions of an object, we are aware of the part of reality that is different from this object.*

Hegel's critique of Kant is based on the romantic idealism of Johann Gottlieb *Fichte (1762–1814) and* Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph *Schelling (1775–1854). Fichte argues that the only reality is the "ego" (i.e., consciousness), which creates alone the objects of its perception, and which gets aware of itself by contrasting itself with everything that is contradictory to it.*[48] *Schelling, whose philosophy is very similar to the philosophy of Fichte, argues that the "ego" and all things that contradict the "ego" are functional forms of a unique reality that he called the absolute.*[49] *Thus, the principle of the "ego" opposes recourse to the noumenal world. Hegel put the previous teachings of Fichte and Schelling about dialectic into a more rigorous philosophical setting.*

Hegel argues that all life and movement are founded on contradiction, which rules the entire world. Everything tends to change and pass over into its opposite. However, according to Hegel, the opposites are opposites only with respect to one another, and not with respect to the unity or whole of which they form parts. In Hegel's philosophy, God is the potential universe, the Idea. According to Hegel, being (the thing-in-itself) is the Idea (universal reason) that moves far away from itself, specifically, it gives rise to a contradiction to itself, in order, ultimately, to return to itself enriched by its adventure. In addition, by the term spirit or mind (Geist), Hegel refers to the idea realized. From Hegel's perspective, spirit is the subject that, after its exodus from its inner world and its adventure in the external world, returned to its own self. Thus, at the theological level, Hegel's dialectical philosophy implies that God cannot be without creating the world (as a contradiction to God), because God cannot be without knowing Himself in His creation (the "outside-Himself"). Hegel's God is not the Biblical God, who created the world out of nothing (*ex nihilo*), according to His own divine will, but Hegel's God exists in a dialectical relationship with the natural world. *At the historical level, the Hegelian subject exists as the "nation" and its spirit as "the spirit of the nation" (Volksgeist).*

With his dialectical philosophy, Hegel attempted to avoid Kant's unknowable noumenal world, since Hegel argued that Kant's doctrine of the unknowable is self-contradictory. However, Hegel seems to ignore the difference between "knowing" and "thinking." The unknowable (i.e., Kant's noumenal world) can be thought and yet remain unknown, since it is not given in sensibility. Moreover, something may be an object of "faith" without being an object of "knowledge." In other words, for Kant, the unknowable does not form part of any cognitive meaning, but it may have emotive, persuasive or imperative meaning. Thus, Kant's doctrine of the unknowable is not as self-contradictory as Hegel contends.

Hegel transcended the subject (individual "ego") of the earliest German idealism (Fichte and Schelling) in order to ascend to a quantitatively higher (larger), and, hence, spiritually safer, subject, namely, the historical subject (the "nation"). In Hegelianism, reason (*Logos*) is the self-consciousness of spirit, and, thus, it consists in the knowledge of a truth that is totally determined by the logic of historical becoming; since, according to Hegel, the universal subject is history, and spirit is the reason of history. Therefore, in Hegelianism, the human being is capable of knowing the historical truth, but, in contrast to Christianity's teachings about the union between humanity and the divine spirit, Hegelianism precludes the union between humanity and Hegel's notion of spirit (namely, the reason of history). The purpose of traditional metaphysics and especially of mystical Christianity is for the human being to become God, but, in Hegel's philosophy, the human being cannot *become* history itself. In Hegel's philosophy, the human being exists alienated from the "spirit" (namely, the reason of history) within a deterministic historical setting, and, therefore, the human being, as an individual, is not a true being. In this way, the life of the individual human being reduces to a course that is determined by historical phenomena, independently of the individual's inner experiences.

The Synthesis between Realism and Idealism

Existence means the continuity of being. Consciousness as consciousness of existence aims at preserving the existence of a being under the best possible terms. Thus, consciousness aims both at preserving the existence of a being and at improving the given being's existential conditions. The intentionality of consciousness (namely, the power of consciousness to be about, to represent, or to stand for things, properties, and states of affairs) functions as a tendency to participate in the world (since consciousness absorbs the world) and as pure self-knowledge. These functions take place at four different levels, namely: instinct, experience, intellect, and intelligence.

At the level of instinct, conscious activity is minimal, and existence reduces to the two basic instincts, namely, those of survival and reproduction. Instinct is a highly formalized behavioral code that reflects the reason of organic nature. The correctness of instinctive behavior is determined by the practices of an unlimited number of generations. In fact, the certitude that characterizes instinctive activity is based on the accumulation of unlimited experiences by the species. Every problem or difficulty that impedes the confirmation of instinctive activity is related to the manner in which a being is adapted to given conditions. At the level of instinct, adaptation takes place according to the method of "trial and error." Jean Piaget, the preeminent developmental psychologist of the twentieth century, has pointed out that trial and error experimentation in handling objects gives rise to the concept that the external world is not part of the self.

At the level of experience, the intentionality of consciousness is expressed through the functioning of the senses. The senses are oriented toward the external world, with which they connect existence. Experience is about finding oneself in some situation and being aware of it. In other words, experience is an event participated in or lived through. The degree of conscious activity at the level of experience is higher than at the level of instinct. However, at the level of experience, the role of consciousness is mainly passive; for, according to empiricist philosophers, consciousness is originally a "tabula

rasa," meaning a blank slate, on which experience writes, thus filling the mind with ideas, and it is only in a later phase that consciousness recalls those ideas which it considers useful to it in order to act on several occasions. In contrast to empiricism, both Kant and Gestalt psychology[50] have pointed out that consciousness plays a much more active role in perception than the one thought by empiricist philosophers.

At the level of intellect, reason plays an active role. By the term "reason," Kant and his followers mean a pre-existent (*a priori*) structure within the framework of which there exist various functions of categories, which, when they are adequately activated, can connect isolated segments of sensation (empirical data) into a whole, thus allowing and underpinning the formulation of synthetic statements and enabling consciousness to creatively transcendent the level of experience. Following Kant's philosophy, Gestalt psychology showed experimentally that consciousness does not respond to isolated segments of sensation but to the whole (*Gestalt*) of the situation and argued that, in perception, there are many organizing principles called gestalt laws.[51] Thus, consciousness perceives and thinks in nonlinear ways, and it influences perception. Furthermore, Gestalt psychology has shown that, in perception, the method of trial and error coexists with intuition.

The French philosopher Henri-Louis Bergson (1859–1941) attempted to overcome the antithesis between realism and idealism by resorting to the distinction between intuition and intellect. Bergson argues that there are two ways in which an object can be known: absolutely and relatively. According to Bergson, the method of knowing an object relatively is called analysis, and the method of knowing an object absolutely is called intuition.[52] Bergson calls intuition "sympathy," which consists in putting ourselves in the place of others.[53] In other words, Bergsonian intuition consists in *entering into* the object of consciousness, and, thus, it differs from the analytical method, which consists in dividing the object of consciousness into different parts, according to a chosen viewpoint, and translating these parts into symbols in order to reconstruct a spectrum of the original object. This "entering into," which reveals the object's meaning, for Bergson, gives us absolute knowledge.

At the level of intelligence, consciousness transcends reason in order to develop and apply intuition. Therefore, at the level of intelligence, reason coexists with intuition in Bergsonian fashion. However, at the highest level of intelligence, this combination of reason and intuition is enriched with mysticism, specifically, with a mystical process of psychic cleansing, thus enabling the human being to *enter into* the deity itself. At the highest level of intelligence, a tri-synthetic mixture of reason, intuition, and mysticism enables consciousness to enter into the source of the significances of the beings and the things that exists in the world, namely, into what we call "God," and, in this way, the human being can live according to God's mode of being. In fact, this spiritual pursuit is the essence of the Ancient Mysteries, Plato's philosophy, and mystical ("esoteric") Christianity.

The aforementioned tri-synthetic mixture of reason, intuition, and mysticism can underpin the overcoming of the antithesis between realism and idealism as follows:

> *It justifies philosophical realism in the following way:* it recognizes and admits a consciousness-independent reality, specifically, the realm of the absolute spirit, or the good-in-itself (which is the source of the significances of the beings and the things that exist in the world) and the reality of the natural world. Hence, from this perspective, the aforementioned tri-synthetic mixture of reason, intuition, and mysticism is in agreement with philosophical realism. In fact, if the world were not different from consciousness, then the latter would not need to try so hard to know the world. In other words, if the world did not differ from consciousness, then the knowledge of the world would be exhausted in the self-knowledge of humanity. Similarly, if the deity were not different from consciousness, then the latter would not need to try so hard to be spiritually developed in order to ascend to and be united with the divine Spirit.
>
> *Simultaneously, it justifies idealism in the following way:* the aforementioned tri-

> synthetic mixture of reason, intuition, and mysticism implies that the transcendent, consciousness-independent reality of the absolute spirit, or the good-in-itself (specifically, the uncreated divine energy) is accessible to and, indeed, can be participated in by the human mind (through enlightened intuition), and that the physical, consciousness-independent reality of the material world is also knowable by the human mind. Hence, from this perspective, the aforementioned tri-synthetic mixture of reason, intuition, and mysticism is in agreement with idealism. In fact, if the structure of the world were absolutely different from the structure of consciousness, then it would be absolutely impossible for consciousness to obtain even partial knowledge of the world. Similarly, if the structure of the divine Spirit were absolutely different from the structure of consciousness, then it would be absolutely impossible for consciousness to theologize.

In conclusion, reality consists of both the reality of consciousness and a consciousness-independent reality. This thesis, which follows from and is underpinned by my aforementioned philosophical synthesis between reason, intuition, and mysticism, is corroborated by modern science, too. Apart from the real objects of which the natural scientist has direct knowledge, there are (for, instance, at sub-atomic level) behaviors that oblige modern physics to use concepts that are formulated in a subjective manner.[54] Such terms as ions, photons, gravitons, strings, etc. do not correspond to any indisputable form of reality; instead, they are elements of systems that have been articulated in a nominalistic fashion, and they are used for the formulation of scientific hypotheses. Moreover, the synthesis between realism and idealism has been promoted by cybernetics. The term cybernetics comes from a Greek word meaning "the art of steering," and it is about having a goal and taking action to achieve that goal. Cybernetics as a social-scientific concept has been used by Plato in order to refer to government ("cyber" is a Greek word for governor). Norbert Wiener, a gifted Harvard mathematician, coined the term "cybernetics" around 1948 in order to denote the study of "teleological mechanisms." Thus, by the term cybernetics, we refer to the interdisciplinary study of the structure of regulatory systems. Within the framework of cybernetics, epistemologists focus on the observer in addition to what is observed, and they highlight the dynamic relationship between the individual and reality. In general, consciousness-independent reality differs from the reality of consciousness with respect to the degree of their integration and completion.

Truth emerges from the contact between consciousness and reality. Truth is the consequence of the contact between consciousness and reality, and it implies the ontologically grounded freedom of consciousness and the possibility that reality can be reconstructed by the intentionality of consciousness. However, the reconstruction of reality by consciousness, according to the latter's intentionality, is not the result of arbitrary idealistic activity, but it is the result of a critical kind of activity that is founded on the aforementioned philosophical synthesis between reason, intuition, and mysticism. I shall use the term "intelligent activity" in order to refer to the critical kind of activity that is founded on the aforementioned philosophical synthesis between reason, intuition, and mysticism.

In practice, the intelligent activity of humanity consists in the following fivefold dialectical process:

(i) First, consciousness is united with the source of the significances of the beings and the things that exist in the world, namely, it is fully aware of the teleology of reality, and, therefore, it has a clear, strategic existential vision and clear values.

(ii) Second, consciousness aims at acting upon the reality of the world and upon itself, according to its teleology, in order to transcend the established state of the world and of itself and, thus, to improve its existential conditions.

(iii) Third, consciousness aims at acting upon the reality of the world and upon itself in such a manner that it will not cause uncontrolled turbulence, which could jeopardize the continuity of existence.

(iv) Fourth, when the turbulence that is caused by the action of consciousness upon the world and upon itself tends to get out of control, then consciousness tries to reduce the negative effects of its action by undertaking new action that counterbalances its previous action, thus deterring both the total elimination of the previous state of the world/of consciousness and the emergence of a totally unknown new state of the world/of consciousness.

(v) Fifth, the action of consciousness upon the reality of the world and of itself aims at forming the necessary conditions that will allow consciousness to continue acting upon the reality of the world and of itself in the future.

From the perspective of my philosophical research work, being "intelligent" means following the aforementioned fivefold dialectical method.

Conclusion

According to the aforementioned dialectic of intelligence, history is a manifestation of humanity's ontological potential. Humanity is in the process of an increasingly intensified confirmation of its presence in the world, by becoming increasingly aware of its presence in the world. However, due to humanity's intelligent activity (as I defined it above), the continuity of the historical becoming is not completely substituted by the discontinuity that is caused by the action of consciousness upon the world; instead, the continuity of the historical becoming is reconstructed by the imposition of the intentionality of consciousness on time. To conclude, instead of being defeated in their struggle against a necessary historical becoming, humans overcome natural necessity due to their freedom, which enables them to reconstruct the world through intelligent action.

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1 The protagonists of the earliest Greek philosophy are the Ionian physicists, the Pythagoreans, Heraclitus, the Eleatics, Empedocles, the Atomists, and Anaxagoras, who attempt to explain phenomena by natural causes and without appeal to spiritual beings. They ask the question: "What is the basal stuff of which the world is composed?" and answer in terms of such concrete objects of sense perception as water, air, fire, or a hypothetical undifferentiated mass from which sense objects are derived. In other words, by means of a single material principle (monism of the materialistic type), they endeavour to account for the qualities of different bodies and their changes which are considered to be transformations of the primal stuff. The reasoning behind the cosmological models of these Greek philosophers is the following: observation shows that substances are changed into other substances (for instance, water becomes vapor), and, by similar process, the primal stuff must have been transmuted into the different substances found in our present world of experience. See: Kathleen Freeman, *Companion to the Pre-Socratic Philosophers* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1953).

2 It is wrong to think that Plato's philosophy is idealistic simply because it is focused on ideas; for, Plato argues that ideas are real entities and not creations (abstractions) of the human mind. See: Richard Kraut, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Plato* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); and Gail Fine, ed., *Plato 1: Metaphysics and Epistemology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

3 Parmenides of Elea (early fifth century BCE) was an ancient Greek philosopher born in Elea, a Greek city on the southern coast of Italy. He was the founder of the Eleatic school of philosophy.

4 By the term "being," we should always understand a self-sufficient reality that exists either by being closed or by tending to

transcend its nature expanding beyond its normal limits.

5 *Plato's Sophist: The Professor of Wisdom* (with translation, introduction and glossary by Eva Brann, Peter Kalkavage, and Eric Salem, Newburyport: Focus Publishing, 1996), 11–12.

6 Ibid, 12.

7 See: Lloyd P. Gerson, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); and Dominic J. O'Meara, *Plotinus: An Introduction to the Enneads* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993).

8 Proclus, *In Platonis Timaeum commentaria* (ed. E. Diehl, trans. T. Taylor, Amsterdam: North-Holland, 1965).

9 Ibid.

10 Everett Ferguson, "Proclus," *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity* (edited by Everett Ferguson, second edition, New York: Garland, 1999), 951.

11 See: Jonathan Barnes, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Georgios Anagnostopoulos, ed., *A Companion to Aristotle* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2009); and Christopher Shields, ed., *The Oxford Handbook on Aristotle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

12 See: *Porphyry's Introduction* trans. with a Commentary by Jonathan Barnes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); and *Porphyry: On Aristotle's Categories*, translated by Steven K. Strange (New York: Ithaca, 1992).

13 See: Boethius, *Commentaries on Isagoge (*ed. Samuel Brandt, Vindobonae: F. Tempsky; Lipsiae, DEU: G. Freytag, 1906).

14 Ibid., 234.

15 See: Nicolas Laos, "The Rediscovery of Byzantine Orthodox Mysticism: An Introduction to the Medieval Hesychasts' Theory of Humanity's Deification" (*Esoteric Quarterly*, Vol. 15, number 2, Fall 2019), 47–57; online: https://www.esotericquarterly.com/issues/EQ15/EQ1502/EQ150219-Laos.pdf#page=1(accessed March 12, 2020).

16 See: Adrian Guiu, ed., *A Companion to John Scottus Eriugena* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2020); and Bernard McGinn and Willemien Otten, eds, *Eriugena: East and West* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994).

17 See: Marcia L. Colish, *The Mirror of Language: A Study in the Medieval Theory of Knowledge* (revised edition, Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1968).

18 See: François Picavet, *Roscelin: Philosophe et Théologien, d'après la légende et d'après l'histoire* (Paris: F. Alcan, 1911).

19 See: Jeffrey E. Brower and Kevin Guilfoy, eds, *The Cambridge Companion to Abelard* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

20 See: Gillian R. Evans, *Bernard of Clairvaux* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

21 See: Heinrich Gelzer, *Byzantinische Kulturgeschichte* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (P. Siebeck), 1909).

22 See: Kieren Barry, *The Greek Qabalah: Alphabetic Mysticism and Numerology in the Ancient World* (York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser, 1999); Elias J. Bickerman, *The Jews in the Greek Age* (USA: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1988); and Lenn E. Goodman, ed., *Neoplatonism and Jewish Thought* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1992).

23 See: Ernest Moody, *The Logic of William of Ockham* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1935).

24 See: Alessandro P. D'Entrèves, ed., *Aquinas: Selected Political Writings* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1948).

25 See: Arthur S. McGrade, *The Political Thought of William of Ockham* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974).

26 Laos, "The Rediscovery of Byzantine Orthodox Mysticism. Moreover, see: Nicolas Laos, *Methexiology: Philosophical Theology and Theological Philosophy for the Deification of Humanity* (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick/Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2016).

[27] See: Alan Nelson, "Descartes's Ontology of Thought" (*Topoi, Vol.* 16, 1997), 163–78; and Stephen Menn, *Descartes and Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

[28] See: John Searle, *Minds, Brains and Science* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984).

[29] See: Don Garrett, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Spinoza* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

[30] See: John Searle, *The Rediscovery of the Mind* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), 50–54.

[31] See: Oxford University Press, "New Study Reveals Life's Earliest Evolution Was More Complicated than Previously Suspected" (*Phys.org*, April 22, 2020), no pages; online: https://phys.org/news/2020-04-reveals-life-earliest-evolution-complicated.html (accessed March 13, 2020).

[32] Ibid.

[33] See: Kimbra Cutlip, "DNA May Not Be Life's Instruction Book—Just a Jumbled List of Ingredients" (*Phys.org*, April 22, 2020), no pages. (online: https://phys.org/news/2020-04-dna-life-bookjust-jumbled-ingredients.html).

[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibid.

[36] See: Jonathan Bennett, *Locke, Berkeley, Hume: Central Themes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971).

[37] Ibid.

[38] Thomas Nagel, *The View from Nowhere* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 93.

[39] See: Jonathan Bennett, *Locke, Berkeley, Hume: Central Themes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971).

[40] Hilary Putnam, "After Empiricism," in *Realism with a Human Face: Hilary Putnam*, edited by James Conant (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1990), 46.

[41] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (edited by Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

[42] Schemata are determinations of objects in general, not specific individual objects, and, therefore, they are not particular images. A schema is a procedural rule that prescribes the way to relate a pure concept to an object in general. In other words, schemata are ways of applying pure concepts (categories) to sense impressions. These twelve kinds of judgment (schemata) are arranged in four groups of three each. The first group expresses the categories of quantity: totality, plurality, unity. It includes the following judgments: (1) the universal judgment (e.g., all dogs are animals), (2) the particular judgment (e.g., some fruits are sweet), and (3) the singular judgment (e.g., Isaac Newton was a natural scientist). The second group expresses the categories of quality: reality, negation, limitation. It includes the following judgments: (1) the affirmative judgment (e.g., electrical energy is a form of potential energy), (2) the negative judgment (e.g., the intentionality of consciousness is not extended), and (3) the infinite judgment (e.g., the intentionality of consciousness is unextended). The third group expresses the categories of relation: inherence and subsistence (or substance and accident), causality and dependence (or cause and effect), community/reciprocity between the active and the passive. It includes the following judgments: (1) the categorical judgment (e.g., the body is heavy), (2) the hypothetical judgment (e.g., if temperature increases, then entropy increases), and (3) the disjunctive judgment (e.g., energy forms are either potential or kinetic). The fourth group expresses the categories of morality: possibility and impossibility, existence and nonexistence, necessity and contingency. It includes the following judgments: (1) the problematical judgment (e.g., this may be hot), (2) the assertory judgment (e.g., this is hot), and (3) the apodictic judgment (e.g., every effect must have a cause). These twelve rules function like a filter between our minds and the external world. They are like intellectual sunglasses through which we see the world, but they alter the way that the external

world really looks to create the world that exists inside our minds (i.e., the phenomenal world).

[43] See: Rudolf A. Makkreel, *Imagination and Interpretation in Kant* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

[44] In an analytic judgment, the predicate merely elucidates what is already contained in the subject; e.g., the judgment "body is an extended thing." Therefore, such judgments are by definition true and cannot qualify as genuine knowledge. Only synthetic judgments qualify as genuine knowledge, because they add something to the predicate; e.g., the judgment "every material body has specific gravity." But, as Kant maintains, not all synthetic judgments give us genuine knowledge. Some synthetic judgments are derived from experience, i.e., they are *a posteriori*, and, therefore, they are lacking in necessity and in universality; e.g., the judgment "the horse is white." According to Kant, to be genuine knowledge, a synthetic judgment must be necessary and universal, i.e., *a priori*. Universality and necessity have their source in reason, i.e., in the understanding itself. According to Kant, we find synthetic *a priori* judgments in the foundations of physics and mathematics.

[45] See: Herbert J. Paton, ed., *The Moral Law: Kant's Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* (London: Hutchinson University Library, 1948), 67.

[46] Ibid, 91.

[47] Frederick C. Beiser, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

[48] See: Robert C. Solomon and Kathleen M. Higgins, eds, *Routledge History of Philosophy, Vol. VI: The Age of German Idealism* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993).

[49] Ibid.

[50] Gestalt psychology was founded by Max Wertheimer (1880–1943). Wertheimer noted that we perceive motion where there is nothing more than a rapid sequence of individual sensory events. This argument is based on observations that he made with his stroboscope at the Frankfurt train station, and on additional observations that he made in his laboratory when he experimented with lights flashing in rapid succession (like the Christmas lights that appear to course around the tree, or the fancy neon signs in Las Vegas that seem to move). Wertheimer called this effect "apparent motion," and it is actually the basic principle of motion pictures. According to Wertheimer, apparent motion proves that people do not respond to isolated segments of sensation but to the whole (Gestalt) of the situation. See: Wolfgang Köhler, *Gestalt Psychology* (renewed by Lili Köhler, New York: Liveright, 1992).

[51] *Examples of Gestalt Laws of Perceptual Organization:* (1) The law of closure: if something is missing in an otherwise complete figure, we shall tend to add it (e.g., a triangle with a small part of its edge missing will still be seen as a triangle, and, also, we shall "close" the gap). (2) The law of similarity: we shall tend to group similar items together, to see them as forming a whole (*Gestalt*), within a larger form. (3) The law of proximity: things that are close together are seen as belonging together. Therefore, according to Gestalt psychology, the whole is different from the sum of its parts.

[52] Henri Bergson, *The Creative Mind* (translated by Mabelle L. Andison, New York: The Citadel Press, 1992).

[53] Ibid.

[54] See: Jacob Bronowski, *The Ascent of Man* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1973).