CHAPTER III

THE PROBLEM OF BEING

The problem of consciousness and the problem of knowledge both point beyond themselves: consciousness is a part of Being, and it is the task of knowledge to understand Being. Here arise quite naturally the questions: what place consciousness holds in Being, and what picture of Being knowledge can give us. The problem to which we are thus introduced may be called the *cosmological* one, being the problem as to how far a final world-view is possible. *Cosmos* means Being considered as a totality, and *logos* means doctrine, or view. It would also be proper to use here the word 'metaphysic,' although it has been used in a great many different senses and is thus less exact.
The cardinal difficulty of this problem lies in the fact that the cosmological principles — the principles which should underlie our view of the world — cannot be simply drawn from some particular empirical realm, for the whole undertaking is to unite all empirical realms into a totality and to give that totality a positive character.

Any attempt to treat the problem of Being must bear a formal as well as a real character. On the one hand, it must be asked what demands are to be made on the concept which assumes to be able to comprehend Being in its totality, and whether it is possible to satisfy these demands; on the other hand, it must be asked, what positive characters of such a totality can be specified, so far as we are able to conceive it.

The formal motives of speculation as to the nature of Being lie deep in the constitution of consciousness and knowledge. They are connected with the demand for continuity, a demand in which both personality and science coincide. The nature of thought
manifests itself at all stages and under all forms as a connection, a synthesis, and it is therefore not to be expected that thought will voluntarily give up the attempt to knit its sporadic data together. This effort has a peculiar and practical importance because firm and continuous connection is the only criterion that we have in doubtful cases, if it comes to a matter of distinguishing dreams or illusions from Reality. The more comprehensive and internally connected the concept of Reality we could form, the greater would be its trustworthiness. Hence, on both theoretical and practical grounds, there will be an inclination to go to the limit, to seek out the continuation and the conclusion toward which theoretic and practical explanations already tend. The ideal would be reached if we could establish a complete harmonization of all our experiences—a continuous totality, with which all particular empirical realms, each according to its own laws, would connect themselves.
But the discussion of the problem of knowledge must already have taught us that such a finished world-view is impossible and, to a certain degree, would be self-contradictory. None of the particular empirical fields lies before us all complete and closed; there are always new experiences and new riddles; our coördinating thought constantly has to undertake new tasks. Since our knowledge always works by means of combination and comparison, every totality—if it is to be the object of complete knowledge—must be held or placed alongside of something different from itself: only thus can it be given complete determination; but if there were anything different from itself, it would not be a totality! It is a matter of indifference whether we hold fast to the first empirical totality which we attempt to construct, or whether we go back to the principle of such a totality and give to it the name 'God,' in contrast with the totality itself, the 'world'—the antinomy is the same in both cases.52 The
irrational meets us here as it did in the problem of knowledge, and herein we find a certain inner connection between the two problems. The fact that knowledge is forever unfinished may perhaps be connected with the fact that Being itself is not ready-made, but still incomplete, and rather to be conceived as a continual becoming, like the individual personality and like knowledge. Perhaps Being also conceals simultaneous discords in itself, which make it impossible to construct an harmonious whole. If so, the analogy between the different problems would be peculiarly plain. In their different systems of thought, the philosophers have been too sure that Being in itself was a closed and constant totality, and that it was only our wills and minds that had to battle incessantly to exist and to attain harmony.

A practical motive of speculation springs from the prominent part which some one phenomenon, some one department of experience or side of Being may assume for
us. The tendency may then arise to use this phenomenon or aspect as a basis for interpreting the meaning of all Being, and deriving the other phenomena from this, or tracing them back to this. The different cosmological systems are just so many attempts to sound the depths of Being, to test how wide a searchlight one thought can throw over the whole of it. They are a series of thought-experiments, by means of which the carrying power of our largest thoughts, their capacity to serve as the groundwork of a comprehensive worldview, has been tested.

Every attempt of that sort necessarily makes use of analogy, as Leibniz first discerned with the clear eye of genius. In all science analogy may occupy a significant place. All designations of psychical phenomena have originally been formed on the basis of an analogy with physical phenomena, and in psychology we are constantly compelled to work with physical analogies. It, therefore, becomes an im-
important question, how far they are valid. According to Kant, the doctrine of causality expresses the idea that a relation exists between the real data of the world, analogous to that between reason and consequence in our thought. The atomic theory and the so-called mechanical conceptions of Nature have very recently come to be considered as so many vast analogies, by means of which the qualitative changes of Nature can be described and calculated. Also, in discoveries, analogy is of great importance. The analogy between chemistry and physics helped Robert Mayer to his discovery of the conservation of energy. But if analogy is employed metaphysically, or cosmologically, it is not a single realm of Being serving to illuminate another single realm; it is a single realm that is used to express Being as a totality. This symbolism is of a different kind and has different validity from that brought to bear between particular fields; it cannot be carried out to its full consequences, and it cannot be
verified. Neither the justification nor the limits of analogy can here be strictly shown. In these respects cosmological or metaphysical symbols are different from scientific ones. As I have attempted to show in my 'Philosophy of Religion,' religious symbols share the fate of the metaphysical. In both cases the attempt is made to create absolutely valid final concepts; the only difference lies in the motive.

In the problem of knowledge, likewise, we came upon an irrational relation between part and whole. There it was connected with the question how far the whole could express itself through and in a single part. Here in the cosmological problem, the question is how far determinations can be deduced from a single part which are true of the totality as such. It is one and the same question that meets in both problems, only from different directions.

The character and value of a theory of the world depend not only on how clearly and logically the analogy is worked out, but
also on where the analogy is drawn from. The phenomenon (the part or aspect of experience) on which the analogy is based may be called the *type-phenomenon* (Urphänomen). We are indebted to Göthe for this expression. But Göthe understood by the word *Urphänomen* not only a phenomenon of a typical kind that might serve to illuminate other phenomena; to him it signified a fact that is at the same time a law; so that one only needs to mention it, in order to see through it; a fact, moreover, that need not be considered as composite, since, being itself, as it were, the symbol of everything else, it sets bounds to our view, and stirs up not only deep wonder and awe, but also the feeling that we stand at the limit of our powers.\(^5^3\) How unfortunate this concept was for Göthe’s theory of colors, is well known. By the very definition itself he wanted to exclude every further examination and explanation of the phenomenon chosen by him as type. But this defect need not of necessity cling to the type-phe-
nomenon. The term may well denote the point of our experience from which we attempt to take our bearings in all directions, but it may none the less remain an object of farther investigation and explanation. The chief point is whether the phenomenon chosen is so individual and significant that it can possess typical character for us. The interpretation of Being must always issue from a single place in experience, and it may so issue without exempting that place from special scientific treatment.

But now where shall we look for the type-phenomenon? Around this point the battle of the different world-views revolves. Now life, now thought, now matter is taken, and made the basis of the interpretation. Before proceeding to the consideration of the most important of the type-phenomena which cosmological interpretation has pressed into its service, let us linger a while over the interpretation itself.
The practice of this art will become constantly more difficult. For hereafter it will not only presuppose a wealth of material to be arranged and connected together with constructive power, but it will also presuppose the ability to avoid dogmatizing, and to preserve to ideas their significance, and their importance to ideal constructions without confounding them with absolute truths. It requires one, as Lessing said, to think gymnastically, not dogmatically. The art will consist in coupling bold creative thought with watchful critical consciousness. In my essay on 'Philosophy as Art,' I have especially emphasized this aspect of the matter. The artistic element in philosophic thought was early brought into prominence by Schopenhauer; but he had rather in mind the involuntary origin of the various systems of thought, which displaces the 'why' of science with the 'what' of art. When Albert Lange called philosophic construction an art, he was thinking primarily of the idealizing ten-
dency, of the demand to see in ideal images an expression of the highest reality. In the religious problem, we shall run upon a relation that is akin to the just-mentioned transition from science to art; only it will in the case of religion be concerned with the settlement of a view of life, while here it is concerned with a view of the world.

As the history of philosophy shows, the conditions for the exercise of the above-mentioned art are not present on a large scale at all times. Long accumulation of material and of historic points of view, intense concentration of spirit, and an energy of thought born of the severity of the problem are all demanded. We find in the history of philosophy that systems lie closely grouped together, sometimes confined to single localities. The fifth and fourth centuries before Christ gave birth to the great Greek systems, and Athens was the centre. In the seventeenth century arose the chief systems of modern
times, which grew up on the basis of the manifoldness of matter, of the new thoughts of the Renaissance, and of the sciences of Nature just begun. In all this, Holland held the central place. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the systems of philosophical idealism were all founded in Jena, where Kant’s pupils fell in with Göthe’s disciples and with the vanguard of romanticism. At such epochs philosophy appears as one of the symptoms of intellectual progress; while, in the intervals, the particular discussions of psychological, epistemological, and ethical problems go their more leisurely gait.

I now proceed to call attention to the more important type-phenomena which may serve as systematic foundations of cosmology, and which have historically performed such service.

3

The first fact, whose consideration as a type-phenomenon of Being closely concerns
The Problem of Being

philosophy, is that Being is to a great extent *intelligible*: we can recollect phenomena, infer from one phenomenon to another, and find continuity between them. And if our hypotheses are proper working hypotheses, and also if the old, naïf concept of truth is compelled to yield to the dynamic or symbolic concept of truth (see III, 2), then the very fact that we are able by our powers and our methods to penetrate to a certain degree into Being must be connected with the essence of Being itself. The applicability of a method always constitutes some evidence as to the constitution of the matter to which it is applied. The fact that Being is intelligible to us indicates an inner unity in Being itself, coming to light in the conformity to law that characterizes the course of phenomena. Our criterion of reality consists, indeed, only in a firm connectedness; and it is but a natural extension of this principle when we read into Being a *unifying power* that binds single elements and events together.
Philosophy has a natural tendency to ascend to such a principle. Plato and Giordano Bruno, Spinoza and Hegel, Fechner and Lotze, worked in that direction; and even Kant, in spite of his great critical circumspection, testifies to the importance of this idea. While popular thought is inclined to seek a final solution by mounting up the ladder of causes until it ends with a first cause, — a way which only leads to an endless series, — philosophic thought prefers to seek a solution in depth rather than in breadth, and to ask what the presupposition is on which a rationally connected world can somehow be built, however hypothetically this may be. Here causation stands as the type-phenomenon, and not least on this account do discussions about the principle of causality lay claim to so large a place in the history of modern philosophy.

In opposition to Monism, which suggests itself to us in this way, we may point out that the essential condition for the scientific understanding of phenomena is not
only the assumption of an inner connection between them, but also the assumption of that plurality of them between which the connection takes place, and to which the laws discovered by science apply. Why not then consider this plurality as the type-phenomenon, so that our metaphysics should be pluralistic, not monistic?

The answer to this question is given in the fact that we draw all the properties or forces with which we endow the elements of being (whether we conceive them as material atoms or as psychical monads) from the law-abiding connected whole whose components these elements are. The properties of things are the constant ways by which they influence, or are influenced by, one another. • 'Force' is here the element that for our mind contains the reason for the change of one or more of the other elements. The case is just the same with the related concepts of energy, possibility, and individuality. All these concepts are secondary, in comparison with the concept
of law. In the case of individuality, for instance, we must not only think of the law defining the behavior of the individual phenomenon toward its surroundings, but also of the law that its inner relations obey.

Another consideration points in the same direction. All knowledge begins with the analysis of given observations (perceptions or recollections). In order that such a perception may become the object of analysis, it must first appear as a totality, embracing a sum of elements (parts or properties). Every cognition starts from a something cut out from a greater whole. Every definition is a limitation. Every judgment makes use of presuppositions which lie beyond the act of judgment. Every conclusion presupposes several premises whose validity must often be established in very diverse ways. We always move within a more inclusive whole, in which are to be sought the conditions for the particular results that we are striving after.

Consequently, if in the world of reality
as well as in the world of pure thought, the particular gets its nature and its validity from the connected whole in which it appears, it would seem as though Monism were a more fundamental point of view than Pluralism.

But the theory of knowledge shows that reason has its limits. The empiricist and the sceptic will always be able to check the monistic metaphysician, because they can taunt him with the actual limitations of knowledge. We cannot even use fact as a criterion in a thoroughgoing manner, or carry out with strictness the distinction between dreaming and reality. With the same right with which we reason from the possibility of rational knowledge to a unifying force in Being, we might, apparently, reason to an irrational power in Being, to a cosmological principle that prevented the elements of Being from standing in a rationally determinable relation to one another.

But hereupon the monistic party might rejoin that the consideration that the unify-
ing force does not prevail everywhere, may indicate that Being itself is to be conceived as in process of becoming, of evolving, and that what appears to us as law and order and connection, is the result of a development in the interior of the existent that is not yet complete. From this point of view, therefore, it would be time that conditions the irrationality. So long as the thought, as knowledge, is not completed but still becoming, just so long Being as a whole cannot be complete. Thought and knowledge are themselves a very part of being! And if they are in process of becoming, there may well be more that is also becoming. It is a strange contradiction in the grand rationalistic systems, that, although they may be able to explain everything else, yet they are powerless to explain the striving, laboring nature of the thought which produces them. In Plato and Spinoza, Hegel and Boström, this contradiction appears.

Critical Monism, as I call it, which asserts the reality of time, and hence the perma-
nent unfinishedness both of Being and of knowledge, can nevertheless still quite properly make of causality and rationality the type-phenomena of its view of the world. It finds, then, in Being a force struggling towards unification, which, by progressive evolution, overcomes the sporadic and hostile elements. Perhaps even new elements may perpetually arise, which are only to be worked together in the same fashion, so that the development must begin all over again. Thought's own work appears thus in a cosmic light. The goal that thought sets before itself (even if it replace the static with the dynamic concept of truth) is to establish a constant connection between our methods and hypotheses and the real processes of Being. If thought succeeds in approaching this goal, then Being itself becomes more rational than it was before, because a new constant and harmonious relation has been wrought out, and now is realized. The thinker to whom it is given to advance in this direction can rightly say:
"From place to place we are inside of things," no matter how far off and sublime the supreme ideal of thought may loom up before him.

4

Can we not now attempt a real, positive determination of the unifying principle which, according to the hypotheses thus developed, holds Being together in its innermost nature? Every attempt in this direction must to an especially high degree bring analogy into requisition. Here we have no fundamental fact to which we can refer, such as we had connecting the problem of Being with the problem of knowledge (p. 131). In attempting to determine the principle of Being, our thought turns to the most fundamental distinction which familiar phenomena present, viz. the distinction between the psychical and the material; but here it seems as though every attempt in a cosmological direction must run against a deadlock.

The position which I adopt, purely methodically and empirically, for the problem
of mind and matter, has been already developed in Chapter II, section 3. But the problem comes upon us now from another angle. For, whether we be, from the methodical and empirical point of view, dualists, materialists, or monists, the question still remains, What do we think of the fundamental essence of Being? — what sort of an attribute lies at the bottom of the way we finally think — if we think our final thoughts — of Being.

If I take the analogy with the spatially extended and moving as my basis, not only my method but my metaphysics will be materialistic. As an absolute hypothesis, Materialism possesses the advantage of giving us the picture of a great continuity, and does not compel us to abandon the immediately perceived. But Materialism is a childlike and naive conception. It is the first philosophy of man. The impression of the connectedness and sweep of the material world exercises such overwhelming power, that ever and again essays
are made in the materialistic direction, although—since the advent of the critical philosophy—not with such dogmatic assurance as formerly. They will always be shipwrecked either by the impossibility of tracing back the psychical to the material, or by the epistemological reflection that we have matter only as the object of consciousness, and that, if materialism were true, nothing could exist to which the material object or phenomenon could be presented. Hobbes, whose thinking tended decidedly toward materialism, came to a halt before the consideration that among all phenomena the most important is just this, that something can be a phenomenon to us at all.

In contrast with materialism, metaphysical Idealism makes analogy with psychical phenomena its basis. It may meanwhile pay homage, empirically, either to dualism (so Lotze), or to materialism (so Schopenhauer), or to Spinozistic monism (so Leibniz, Fechner, and Wundt). The last word of all these forms of Idealism is that only the
analogy with mental conditions which we find in ourselves can give us a key to the understanding of the innermost nature of Being. Only ourselves do we know from within, everything else only from without!

Psychological experiment has taught us that there are many degrees and kinds of psychical being, and if we wish to utilize them in the exegesis of all Being, we must naturally assume that these series of degrees and qualities are continued indefinitely. Thus, idealistic cosmology may vary greatly, and historically it appears under many forms, which have been conditioned by other motives determining the world-view (e.g. by the tendency to optimism or pessimism, by the special emphasis on thought or on will, etc.). As far back as the Indian Upanishads it appeared in the doctrine that Brāhman (the world-principle) is Atman (soul).

Sometimes idealists deny that they are using an argument from analogy, and assert that their metaphysical Idealism (or idealistic cosmology) has been reached by
the straight path of logical construction, of dialectical method. But the very proudest structure of thought that a man ever flattered himself to have successfully erected, namely Hegel's system, really only seeks to show that everything in Being is connected just as thoughts are in the mind of man; in point of fact, the human mind is used by Hegel as the basis of an analogy, simply because it is the best example of an internal totality which we possess.\textsuperscript{55}

The idealistic reasoning by analogy could only lead to a final solution if we were vouchsafed the means of positively determining the different degrees and kinds of psychical existence which must be met with in the world, so far as metaphysical idealism holds good. But, as I have shown in a former connection (II, 3), we are not in a position to go farther than an indefinite notion of potential psychical energy. A verification of Idealism is impossible. Even if Idealism could be thoroughly carried out, yet the difficulty would remain that matter could
no more be derived from the psychical than the psychical from matter.

But it is by no means certain that we are forced to preserve a neutrality between the materialistic and the idealistic solutions of the problem of Being. The distinction between mind and matter is to be sure a cardinal one in the content of our experience; but, there is no proof that there is no other attribute in being besides these two. If the problem of Being had to be solved by human experience, then one of the two possibilities would have to be chosen. But the question is whether our experience furnishes us with sufficient elements for a real solution. The empire of Being may be much vaster than the possibilities of our experience. Here, again, it is true that the world is great, but our mind is small; again we come upon the irrational. If it could be proved that the distinction between mind and matter were a contradictory, not a contrary, that consequently there was in things an absolute "either—or," then the problem of Being would be
simpler than it is; and yet it would be more complex than human thought — inclined, as that is, to think itself fully accoutred for religious and metaphysical speculation — has often supposed. *Critical Monism*, which strives to maintain the thought of unity without dogmatizing, must perceive that it is lacking in the prerequisites for a complete solution. The possibility that there are more forms than our experience exhibits may signify that the whole problem lies deeper than has been supposed. There might, for example, be a tap-root of Being from which both mind and matter sprang, and the insolubility of the problem might be due to our ignorance of this tap-root.

5

A third type-phenomenon has to be chosen when we make our choice between conservation and development (being and becoming). Ancient thought was throughout inclined to hold fast to unmoved Being; it was a conceptual philosophy, which first and
foremost sought to trace back phenomena to fixed generic concepts. Plato's doctrine of ideas formed the pinnacle of this attempt (cf. II, 1). This tendency—or the same psychical bent which it exemplifies—not infrequently comes to the front in modern research, and, for that matter, not only in philosophy, but in science generally where fixed, unchangeable modes or types are striven for. Even when ancient thought accepted the idea of evolution, it was still peculiarly prone to believe in a rhythmical process which would repeatedly bring around the same conditions and events. Evolution as a constantly advancing series of changes is a modern idea, for which we are indebted to wider experience in the realms of both history and nature, but which has been formed under the influence of the Perso-Christian type of religion.  

The leading part played by the concept of evolution in modern thought is connected with the fact that the concept of causality has been so prominent. The more the elementary concept of causality is approxi-
mated, by continued research, to the ideal concept of causality, the more will the causal relation betoken a continuous process in which the succeeding members are determined by the preceding. The concept of evolution involves, as soon as it is proved, the idea that *direction* is an essential fact, so that successions cannot be reversed (III, 4). While formal science, which rests upon the principle of identity, can move forward or backward in its trains of thought, the time-relation, that is, the direction of time, has a different importance for *real* science, which on this account possesses an historical character. In it the concept of 'event' is a type-phenomenon. But in the concept of evolution the idea is involved that something not only happens, but also that, through the series of events, results are reached which bear a certain wholeness of character, because a multiplicity of elements have been so united that, in spite of their differences, they operate jointly and with a certain finality upon their environ-
ment. Above all others, Herbert Spencer has copiously illustrated and analyzed the idea of evolution, and has maintained that its essential earmark is the union of differentiation with integration. With this conception as a measuring rod, we determine which—from a purely theoretical point of view—are to be called 'lower' and which 'higher' states or forms in a changing series.

In spite of its connection with the concept of causality, the notion of evolution is an independent concept, underivable from the general causal concept, although it presupposes the latter. The doctrine of causality would be valid even if there only took place a rhythmical fluctuation without the progressive formation of new totalities. Evolution stands as an empirical fact that throws light over the nature of being. Abstractly considered, it would be quite possible that the different causal series of beings should either not unite with one another at all, or should only coincide so as to bring about
discordant collisions. But experience shows how they can, under certain conditions, so come together that they unite in more composite processes and beget peculiar totalities. The formation of star-systems; the origin, organization, and unfolding of life, the existence of the spiritual life, and of the social and historical life of man; all bear witness to an individualizing and totalizing tendency in Being. These phenomena set before research the greatest of problems; if we point to them as type-phenomena, we decide nothing whatever as to whether the problems are soluble or not; we consider them only as characteristics of Being, given once for all. It is to be added here, that it is surely a grave misunderstanding to think, as not a few do think, that these phenomena would be more worthy of note, if they were not explicable by laws discoverable by science. On the contrary, if a 'natural' explanation could be found, we could then with greater assurance than before draw the inference that the individualizing and
Totalizing tendency is grounded deep in the bedrock of being.

But how deep? Experience often shows us not only a purely external and indifferent relation between different causal series, but often collisions or, at least, inharmonious conditions between such series, which hinder the origin or upbuilding of individualities and totalities. On evolution follows dissolution; and the question arises, whether the rhythmic change of these processes leaves traces of any general progressive course of development, or whether we must hold by the ancient idea of a recurrent rhythm as the last word on the problem.

Here, once more, the irrational crops out; but in more acute form than at the earlier points where we met with it. Here it indicates arrest and dissolution, the tendency to remain at the most elementary forms of Being, or to go back to them. Being has here, the deeper our investigations penetrate into it, the form of a conflict, of a great battle, which all forms that bear
the impress of individuality or totality must fight for their very existence. The battle itself is two-sided: it may be a means of development, but it may also lead to death. Which of the two possibilities is predominant?

With this we see more clearly than at the earlier points the impossibility of forming an absolutely final concept of Being as a whole. If conflicts between elements and between finite wholes be an essential characteristic of Being, then it must be a trait which is to be found only in limited sections of Being, but not in Being considered as a totality; because an absolute totality can encounter no external opposition, and can wage no battle for existence. So we must content ourselves with saying that wherever we find Being, we also find within it such a strife going on between elements and totalities. The great question is whether out of this strife the elements or the totalities (the solar systems, organisms, souls, human societies) will come off victorious. Em-
The Problem of Being

pirically, we stand in the midst of the vast world-process and can go no farther than to assert that we apply no purely subjective standard when we designate one form of Being as higher or lower than another, because evolution, which involves this distinction, is a phenomenon characteristic of all the Being known to us,—is, in short, a type-phenomenon.

This result, with which we are now about to leave the problem of Being, enables us to pass naturally to the last of our problems, the problem of ideal goods.

If Being were finished, harmoniously and unchangeably, Ethics would be impossible. All Ethics demands that there be effort. But there would be no room for effort, if everything were in eternal and actual completeness. The necessity devolving upon all individualities and totalities to fight for their existence, the fact that there are always discords to overcome, discordant tendencies to unite,—it is precisely that that makes Ethics possible. In other words, Ethics investi-
gates the principles of an *extension* of the individualizing and totalizing tendency of Being, of which experience gives evidence. Ethics rests upon a self-contradiction, unless the course of the world is, or may be, partially conditioned by human will, just as it is, or may be, partially conditioned by human thought (p. 137). So Ethics takes up the problem of continuity where the first three problems laid it down.

The religious problem is even more closely connected with the foregoing considerations, because, as I shall try to point out, it is concerned with the continuance of values during the struggles for existence that Being seems to involve.