

THE ROLE OF REFLEXIVITY IN PHILOSOPHICAL SYSTEMS

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ABSTRACT

An analysis of the nature of reflexivity--a relation which relates a thing to itself although it is regularly used to relate two different things--is followed by specific discussions of its place and functions in the writings of various philosophers. These discussions substantiate the following theses: reflexivity is a basic structure common to different phenomena; although traditionally unacknowledged, it is a useful and important concept in philosophy as well as in other disciplines; acknowledging its existence and understanding its structure deepens our understanding of philosophical systems; since, like any other philosophical tool, reflexivity can be used either legitimately or illegitimately, nothing in it is inherently flawed; a structural analysis of different types of reflexivity and the relations between them can be presented; the history of its use is marked by a tendency towards its "normalization". These discussions are intended to raise awareness and generate future studies of this important but neglected philosophical structure.

SOMMAIRE

Une analyse de la nature de la réflexivité--c'est-à-dire une relation reliant une chose à elle-même quoique'elle soit d'habitude employée pour relier deux choses différentes--est suivie par un examen de sa place et de sa fonction dans les écrits de divers philosophes. Cet examen soutient les thèses suivantes: la réflexivité est une structure de base commune à des phénomènes variés; quoique'elle ne soit pas reconnue par la tradition philosophique, il s'agit d'un concept utile et important en philosophie ainsi que dans d'autres disciplines; reconnaître son existence et comprendre sa structure approfondit notre compréhension des systèmes philosophiques; puisqu'elle peut être employée aussi bien de façon légitime qu'illégitime, comme tout autre outil philosophique, il n'y a rien en elle qui soit imparfait de façon inhérente; il est possible de développer une analyse structurale des types divers de réflexivité et de leurs relations; l'histoire de l'emploi de la réflexivité est marquée par une tendance à sa "normalisation". Cet examen vise ainsi à signaler à l'attention cette structure philosophique importante mais négligée. On espère par là encourager des études futures.

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chapter one

INTRODUCTION

I. A NEGLECTED TOPIC

Imagine a possible world which is similar to ours in all respects except one: although people in it use transcendental arguments, they are not aware that they are doing so. In this world too we would find all of the transcendental arguments from Kant's first *Critique*, the argument from design,¹ etc., yet no one in this possible (but not very probable) world would be aware of the fact that these are transcendental arguments.

Let us further imagine that at a certain point this unique form of argument is noticed, and a study about it is written. What would we expect such a study to consist of? After naming the form of argument (e.g. "transcendental") the study would probably show how it is unique, and explain why it had gone unnoticed. If there were different sorts of this argument, the study would include a typology of them. Further, the study would demonstrate the extensive use of this argument in the history of philosophy, as well as specify whether there are characteristic purposes, contexts and ways in which transcendental arguments were used. Furthermore, such a study would attempt to follow the developments in the use of transcendental arguments through history. Moreover, we would want the study to determine which are the correct and legitimate uses of transcendental arguments and which are not. Finally, such a study would probably try to posit the transcendental argument as a useful philosophical tool,² which can and should be used in various philosophical contexts.

¹ I use the expression "transcendental argument" in its most general sense, i.e. an argument that shows something to be a necessary condition for the existence of a phenomenon which we take to be the case.

² In section VII below I explain what I mean by the term "a philosophical tool".

This study will do for reflexivity what the imaginary study would have done for transcendental arguments. I contend that the standing of reflexivity in our actual world is similar to that of transcendental arguments in the imaginary, possible one. Reflexivity, too, has gone unnoticed although it fulfills important functions in philosophical systems, is used extensively, and has characteristic features and uses. Moreover, like transcendental arguments in our imaginary world, there are different types of reflexivity which can be organized into a typology, there are legitimate and illegitimate uses of reflexivity which can be distinguished from one another, and there is a reason why reflexivities have been little recognized and discussed up to now. I will discuss reflexivity, then, just as transcendental arguments would have been discussed if they had not already been recognized.

But what is reflexivity? The term will be defined more precisely below, but provisionally it may be said that reflexivity is in many ways similar to recursivity or self-reference. Reflexivity is that structure common to the Liar's Paradox, Gödel's Proof, Aristotle's "unmoved mover", Spinoza's "*causa sui*", circular arguments, self-consciousness and feedback mechanisms. It is very pervasive; it can be found also in Plato, Plotinus, Augustine, Aquinas, Maimonides, Meister Eckhart, Descartes, Kant, the German Idealists and Hegel, Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Derrida, and in logical paradoxes--and this is only a partial list. Outside of philosophy it is found in literature (e.g. in Beckett's self-referring plays), biology, technology and cybernetics (feedback mechanisms), law, psychology and psychotherapy,

sociology and political science.³ The use and importance of reflexivity has been progressively growing, particularly in this century. The increased prominence of reflexivity is evidenced by its having become a predominant feature of modern visual arts as well as an important element in contemporary literature; by the growing acceptability of coherence theories of truth, in place of correspondence theories of truth, in science, epistemology and linguistics; and by its having become an essential theme in modern continental philosophy.⁴

In view of the pervasiveness of the reflexive structure and, as I hope to show in this study, the importance of its functions, it is surprising to find that almost no methodical study of its nature, functions, and types has yet been attempted. Many studies discuss, either as their primary subject or as an ancillary one, *specific* reflexivities in fields such as computer science,⁵ literature,⁶ religion,⁷ visual arts,⁸ general system theory,⁹ technology,¹⁰ etc. Likewise, Douglas

³ For examples of reflexivities in these fields (and others) see Steven J. Bartlett "Varieties of Self Reference", in Steven J. Bartlett and Peter Suber, eds. *Self Reference: Reflections on Reflexivity* (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1988) pp. 10-24. Hereafter cited as *Bartlett and Suber*.

⁴ For a discussion of some aspects of reflexivity in modern continental philosophy see Hilary Lawson *Reflexivity: The Post-Modern Predicament* (London: Hutchinson, 1985).

⁵ E.g. L. S. Penrose "Self-Reproducing Machines" *Scientific American* 200, 6 (1959):105-112, 114, 202. B. G. Farley and W. A. Clarke "Simulation of Self-Organizing System by a Digital Computer" *I. R. E. Transactions on Information Theory* 4 (1955):76-84. Norbert Wiener *Cybernetics: Or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine* 2nd ed. (New York: MIT Press, 1961).

⁶ E.g. Robert Stam *Reflexivity in Film and Literature: From Don Quixote to Jean-Luc Godard* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Research Press, 1985). Viveca Y. G. M. Furedy *The Play with a Play Within the Play: A Structural Model* (in Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Ph.D.

Hofstadter in his famous *Gödel Escher Bach*¹¹ shows how the reflexive structure appears in such different settings as Gödel's proof, Bach's music and Escher's drawings, thus suggesting that reflexivity is an interdisciplinary structure. But he does not try to investigate the structure itself,

Dissertation for the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, 1983). Steven G. Kellman *The Self-Begetting Novel* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980).

⁷ E.g. Robert A. Oakes, "Religious Experience, Self-Authentication, and Modality De Re: A Prolegomenon" *American Philosophical Quarterly* 16 (1979):217-224. Irene Lawrence, ed. *Self-Definition in Early Christianity*, Protocol of the 37th Colloquy, January 6, 1980, Centre for Hermeneutical Studies in Hellenistic and Modern Culture, the Graduate Theological Union and the University of California, Berkeley 1980. Nolan Pliny Jacobson *Buddhism and the Contemporary World: Change and Self-Correction* (Illinois: Southern Illinois University Press, 1982).

⁸ D. Carrier "On the Depiction of Figurative Representational Pictures within Pictures" *Leonardo* 12 (1979):197-200. Jean Lipman and Richard Marshall *Art about Art* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1978). Jay Shir "Symbolism and Autosymbolism" *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 37 (1978):81-89.

⁹ E.g. Richard H. Henshel "Effects of Disciplinary Prestige on Predictive Accuracy: Distortions from Feedback Loops" *Futures* 7 (1975):92-106. G. Nicolis *Self-Organization in Nonequilibrium Systems: From Disruptive Structures of Order through Fluctuations* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1977).

¹⁰ E.g. S. N. Brains, A. V. Napalkov, and I. A. Shreider "Analysis of the Working Principles of Some Self-Adjusting Systems in Engineering and Biology" *Proceedings of the International Conference on Information Processing (ICIP)* (Paris: UNESCO House, 1959).

¹¹ New York: Basic Books, 1979.

outside of the contexts in which he identifies it. Again, in his *Philosophical Explanations*¹² Robert Nozick starts to present what may be seen as a general analysis of reflexivity, but still does so in the context of questions about the self. Similarly, although in his *Reflexive Paradoxes*¹³ T. S. Champlin discusses reflexivity in several fields and, thus, is aware of its interdisciplinary character, he, too, does not yet try to present a unified theory of reflexivity. The same is true of Bartlett and Suber's comprehensive anthology *Self Reference: Reflections on Reflexivity*.¹⁴ In Bartlett's work "Varieties of Self Reference"¹⁵ reflexivities are typified according to the areas in which they are used (e.g. Music, Law, Psychotherapy) in a way which both disguises the similarities between reflexivities used in different fields, and the differences between reflexivities used in the same field. A general, methodical study of reflexivity, then, is still lacking. One of the aims of this work is to take a first step towards a general theory of reflexivity and, in the more general way, to provide reflexivity with the attention I think it obviously deserves.

In the next section of the introduction I ask whether it is worthwhile to discuss reflexivity at all. I shall try to determine why, while the transcendental argument has been used and researched, reflexivity up to now has not (section II:1). Moreover, I shall show that there are no good reasons for ignoring reflexivity and, hence, efforts to study it may be worthwhile, and

¹² Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981.

¹³ London: Routledge, 1988.

¹⁴ In the introduction to their book. See footnote 3.

¹⁵ Pp. 5-28.

opposition to its study is due to a certain prejudice (section II:2).

In section III reflexivity will be analyzed and defined as a relation which has a special structure. As such, it can appear in any field and context. To present such a structural analysis I shall also have to introduce a fragment of a general theory of relations.

But the structural analysis will also prove helpful for other purposes. First, it will immediately become apparent that there are many different types of reflexivity. The structural analysis will enable us to present a typology of reflexivities and to explain which of them will be emphasized in this work (section IV).

Second, an analysis of the structure of reflexivity will enable us to explain the general characteristics and uses of reflexivity (with necessary variations according to the philosophical systems in which they are found). The structure of reflexivities endows them with certain typical characteristics, and these characteristics enable the reflexivities to fulfill the functions they do within philosophical systems (section V). I shall end the introduction by specifying what kind of reflexivities will be dealt with in this work (section VI) and by discussing some of its presuppositions (section VI).

II. THE LEGITIMACY OF REFLEXIVITY

1. The Reasons for the Opposition to Reflexivity

Why has the transcendental argument been studied and utilized as a legitimate philosophical tool¹⁶ whereas reflexivity has not? In other words why, notwithstanding the frequent appearance of reflexivity and the important functions it fulfills, has no methodical study

¹⁶ See footnote 2.

of it yet been attempted, and have its uses in the history of philosophy been rare relative to its potential? I shall contend here that the failure to use and discuss reflexivity stems from an implicit prejudice against it. Reflexivity arouses a certain discomfort in most people, but although this discomfort can be explained in terms of its causes, it cannot be justified by reasons.

One cause of the discomfort that reflexivity arouses is that it is different from the type of relation to which we are accustomed. Most relations around us are such that the components they relate differ from one another, e.g. assumption and conclusion, subject and object, cause and effect, symbol and reality. Such relations, which are called in this work "directional" (and whose nature will be discussed more fully below) are the most common, and thus have come to be seen as the normal and correct ones. Reflexivities, which always include an element that relates to *itself*, have come to be seen, then, not only as uncommon, but also as abnormal and incorrect.

For example, according to convention, reasoning advances from a clear, known and certain basis to a hitherto unknown conclusion. Tenable arguments rest on a secure, self-evident foundation. The assumptions, which serve as a basis, differ from the conclusions, which are based on them. Thus, directional reasoning has become the predominant kind. It has pervaded and influenced our logic and mathematics (crystallized, of course, in Euclid's *Elements*, soon to become a paradigm of reasoning), philosophy and science.

Similarly, many fundamental and important processes in our life are directional--growing old, pregnancy, the consumption of food, the subjective experience of temporality. Similarly, many basic and important concepts in our culture are directional. The notion of progress, for example, is directional because it implies movement from an inferior situation to a different,

superior one.¹⁷ Hierarchy is another basic directional structure that has become intuitive for all of us. It is found or pictured in human society, the heavenly realm, the animal kingdom, and the cosmos as a whole. The concepts of cause and effect, and means and end, are directional as well.¹⁸

Likewise, most if not all of the simple, everyday relations around us are directional.¹⁹ Relations which generally enable us to understand the world directionally relate two different "things", not a "thing" to itself reflexively.²⁰ There are innumerable examples of directional

¹⁷ It is sometimes insufficiently recognized how pervasive the notion of progress is in our culture. We dedicate most of our time to efforts designed to further progress in all sorts of ways. Its embeddedness in our culture can be also detected in the fact that Aristotle's influential theory of movement and change is essentially a theory of progress; it cannot explain decay and death.

¹⁸ As will be seen in section IV:5 below, although most changes are rendered as directional relations, they can also be made sense of, at least in part, by changing reflexivity.

¹⁹ Here, of course, arises the question of *why* there is a larger number of directional relations than reflexive ones. A pragmatic account will claim that in the majority of cases directional relations serve our purposes better; they promote our survival and well-being. A realistic account will state that this is simply the way that things and relations in the world are, whereas a psychological theory may deal with the way our mind works (for example, we are built so that we perceive better what changes and differs). But I cannot even try to deal here with this interesting and difficult question.

²⁰ By "things" I mean in this work anything whatsoever, in the most general and abstract sense of the term. They can be, then, objects in the world, sentences, numbers, proportions, telephones or even other relations. However, they will be usually used in this work (interchangeably with "*relata*", in singular: *relatum*) to refer to what the relations relate. Hereafter I shall not employ quotation marks when using them.

relations: the book is on the table; I understand x; he is her son; the bus goes to the university; etc.

The overwhelming predominance of directional relations also makes reflexivity seem bizarre and unacceptable to us.²¹ Thus, when reflexivity collides with the directionality to which we are accustomed in most of the fundamental processes of life, basic structures of our culture, and modes of reasoning, we come to see it as irrational, unnatural and weird. We feel it contradicts our basic common-sensical, logical, ontological and epistemological intuitions. No wonder, then, that it arouses discomfort in us. Our inclination to generalize, both unconsciously and consciously, drives us to see directionality as appropriate not only in the majority of cases, but in all of them.

Another set of causes has to do with the paradoxical and destructive uses associated with reflexivity. Reflexive paradoxes, like the Liar's Paradox or the Barber's Paradox, produce self-contradictions which are difficult to disentangle and which challenge our regular, and usually helpful and comfortable, ways of speaking and thinking. Similarly, many famous reflexivities have been used to challenge efforts to build coherent, universally true, or logically-complete systems (e.g. in Russell's refutation of Frege's theory, Ingarden's refutation of Ayer's

²¹ The pervasiveness of directionality and the un-intuitiveness of reflexivity are well illustrated in Frege's working on his system for twenty years without even thinking of the possibility of Russell's Paradox. Likewise, Spinoza appears to have never asked himself at which degree of knowledge his *Ethics* had been written and is to be understood. Similarly, Parmenides did not seem to have asked himself how his poem could be both true and expressed in words. Again, even formally rigorous and perfectly legitimate uses of reflexivity, such as Gödel's Proof or Russell's Paradox, have to them an air of "hocus pocus" that regular *reductio ad absurdum* arguments do not.

positivism, or Gödel's proof of the incompleteness of formal systems). Since systematization, generality, universality and completeness are usually viewed as positive endeavors in philosophy, these famous uses of reflexivity again associate it with negative, destructive uses.

Likewise, the (relatively) greater popularity of reflexivity with some Continental philosophers, and its use in performing functions connected to entities such as God or Absolute Spirit, immediately arouse suspicion towards it among positivist or empirically oriented philosophers (the reflexivities that we meet in the empirical world are usually mediated, partial ones and, thus, are more likely to go unnoticed or be represented as directional relations). Similarly, the use of reflexivity in mysticism has also contributed to its being consciously or unconsciously ignored.

But not all of the discomfort with reflexivity originates from habits and associations; as we shall see below, reflexivity *has* been used in incorrect, confused and confusing ways, or as a *deus ex machina* which can solve virtually any problem. This, too, has discredited reflexivity, particularly with philosophers who did not realize that, like any other philosophical tool (e.g. a transcendental argument), reflexivity can be employed both properly and improperly. Certain incorrect applications of reflexivity, then, were generalized to be taken as characteristic of all uses of reflexivity.

In trying to explain the traditional aversion to reflexivity, we should also take into account that the opinion of previous authorities cumulatively affects that of succeeding ones. Thus, Plato's, Aristotle's and Plotinus' dismissals of reflexivity, for the reasons noted above, influenced the subsequent rejection of reflexivity. (Aristotle probably also affected the future rejection of reflexivity by his conviction that philosophy and science should proceed directionally

from assumptions to conclusions,²² and by his criticism of those who argue circularly.²³ As such he influenced the future understanding of what science should be and, by extension, the rejection of reflexivity.)²⁴ In this way, the reflexive factor has contributed to the unpopularity of reflexivity throughout the ages.

These factors explain why, for many centuries, when reflexivity was employed, it was usually to describe the nature of the transcendent, super-rational God. However, this too inhibited the use of reflexivity. Since it was important for monotheistic theologians to emphasize the difference between divine and created nature, they were hesitant to ascribe reflexivities to other entities, and reserved it only for God. For this reason, reflexivity was for generations not used to describe and explain human nature, although it can do so quite well.²⁵ For this reason too, then, reflexivity was used less than it could have been.

²² *Posterior Analytics* Book 1, chaps. 1-5.

²³ *Ibid.* Book 1, chap. 3.

²⁴ It should be noted, however, that although Aristotle criticized and rejected reflexivity in some places he accepted it in others (most notably in his discussion of the unmoved mover). Thus he affected not only the future rejection of reflexivity but also its future acceptance. The same is true, to an extent, of Plotinus.

²⁵ This hypothesis is strengthened by the history of reflexivity, which is marked by reflexivity's being used more and more frequently, and its being ascribed more and more to human beings. The two tendencies seem to be interconnected and, hence, it seems that the "divination" of reflexivity did influence its rareness.

2. Is Reflexivity Legitimate?

All of these causes explain why reflexivities, unlike transcendental arguments, have been neither methodically researched nor used as much as they could have been. But to argue that the antagonism to reflexivity is no more than a bias, I must not only show that it can be explained by causes, but also that it cannot be justified by reasons. It is interesting to note, however, that in the philosophical tradition itself arguments against the use of reflexivity are extremely rare (a fact which strengthens the hypothesis that the opposition to reflexivity stems from a bias). Probably the most famous reason, which appears in Plato's writings²⁶ and is then repeated by Wittgenstein,²⁷ is that reflexive thinking is impossible because the eye cannot see itself. But it is not clear that this argument by analogy is acceptable here. Seeing is different from thinking and so, although reflexivity is inapplicable to sight it still may be applicable to thought. In other words, the fact that the use of reflexivity is inappropriate in some cases does not entail that this is so in others; different uses of reflexivity should be examined on their own merits. The same answer can be given to Aristotle's argument²⁸ that because reflexivity is inapplicable to relations such as teaching and heating, it should be also taken to be so for the relation of thinking. Note, moreover, that Aristotle was wrong concerning teaching: one *can* teach oneself.

²⁶ *Charmides* 166-171.

²⁷ *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* 5.6333.

²⁸ *Metaph.* 257a33-258b5.

These are the only actual criticisms of reflexivity in philosophy of which I am aware. But to determine whether the opposition to reflexivity is a bias, possible criticisms which could have been made against reflexivity, even if in fact they never were made, should also be examined. One such possible criticism may be that reflexivity is inapplicable not only to some phenomena and processes, but to most of them.

But infrequency does not entail wrongness, and inapplicability to most phenomena does not entail inapplicability to all of them. In being inapplicable to many phenomena reflexivity is the same as other philosophical tools such as transcendental arguments, modal logic, phenomenological analysis etc, each useful in some cases and useless in others.²⁹ The partial inapplicability of reflexivity would be an argument against using it only if it were claimed that reflexivity should be used *always*. But it is claimed here only that reflexivity is applicable, indeed necessary, *sometimes*. I am not proposing what may be called a "reflexive chauvinism"; I am only opposing a directional one.

Moreover, it is possible that not only did the infrequent use of reflexivity contribute to prejudice against it, but that prejudice against it also encouraged its infrequent use. A change in the attitude towards reflexivity, then, may make its use more frequent.

Another accusation that may be made against reflexivity is that it can be, and has been, put to incorrect and confusing philosophical uses. Moreover, it is sometimes possible to make

²⁹ Not everyone will agree with this last sentence. Some people take logic, or phenomenological analysis, to be useful or useless for all purposes, or, at least, for all purposes which are worthwhile. I shall not argue my point further here; for my purposes here it is sufficient that the reader agree that at least some philosophical tools are useful in some, but not all, cases.

contradictory philosophical points by means of it. Further, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between different kinds of reflexivity and between reflexivities and non-reflexivities altogether. Thus, reflexivity is taken to be unclear, confused, unreliable and open to different interpretations. Hence, it should be rejected.

However, in this respect, too, reflexivity is not to be judged more harshly than other philosophical tools. In some cases it is also difficult to distinguish between arguments and non-arguments or to decide precisely what it is that they argue. Further, arguments too are sometimes used in an incorrect and confused way or employed to prove different conclusions. This, however, does not lead us to say that arguments are completely unreliable but, on the contrary, encourages us to research them more so as to improve them. I see no reason why the same should not hold true of reflexivity as well.

It is true, we know more about arguments and their proper and improper uses at the present time than we do about reflexivity. We can present, for example, a long list of types of fallacies. But it should be remembered that whereas arguments have been discussed and refined for more than two thousand years, the study of reflexivity is only at its beginning. Thus, its uses as well as abuses are still more blurred than those of arguments, and still need to be worked on.

What has been said about arguments is also true, of course, of other philosophical tools. For example, modal and quantification logic are also problematic; we are not always sure how to formalize a natural language and we sometimes end up with unsatisfactory results. However, we still think they are useful (i.e. they help us explain and understand things), and hope that they will become less problematic in the future.³⁰

³⁰ Note that there is hardly any general problem with reflexivities (i.e. a problem connected to the distinction between the different types of reflexivity and the distinction between

Another possible criticism of reflexivity is that its combination of two *relata* into one makes it self-contradictory and, as such, incoherent. Hence, by bringing it into philosophy we make philosophy incoherent, inconsistent, and contradictory as well.

However, to say that reflexivity is contradictory, or that it allows contradictions, is simply not true. Of course, reflexivities *are* sometimes used to produce, or detect, contradictions in systems. This, is the case, for example, with Ayer's criterion of meaningful sentences,³¹ or Russell's criticism of Frege's set theory.³² However, under no circumstances do these reflexivities admit contradictions into the systems in which they appear--the discovery of a contradictory reflexivity in a theory leads to the rejection of the theory, not the incorporation of the contradiction. The use of reflexivity here, then, resembles that of a *reductio ad absurdum* argument.

In other cases reflexivity merges non-contradictory elements (e.g. cause and effect, a text and what the text is about). But this use of reflexivity is no more problematic than using synthesis, which is usually taken to be a legitimate philosophical tool. Thus, those who reject reflexivity here would also, under pain of inconsistency, have to reject any use of syntheses.

Reflexivity can also be criticised on the grounds that it contradicts some of our most basic and clear intuitions. But I do not think that this criticism holds, either. In some cases

reflexivities and non-reflexivities) that is not also a problem for normal, directional relations.

³¹ The criterion itself is rendered meaningless by the standards it sets, since it itself is neither a tautology nor empirically verifiable.

³² Concerning the set of all sets which do not include themselves.

(e.g. self-consciousness) reflexivity actually seems to be intuitive and common-sensical. Moreover, some of our most common-sensical notions have been proved, in this age, to be scientifically unhelpful or wrong: we learn that matter and energy are indistinct; time is relative and not necessarily linear; and there is such a thing as anti-matter. If the fact that these notions are un-intuitive does not count against them, I do not see why it should count against reflexivity.³³ Possible criticism of reflexivity is that it disagrees with many philosophical theories. Reflexivity contradicts the basic assumptions of instrumental reasoning, computerised epistemology, empiricism, certain kinds of analytical philosophy, and any foundationalist-deductive approach to philosophical systems.³⁴ These are all basically directional. However, the superiority of these theories to competing ones, which do not exclude reflexivity, is disputable. If these directional theories are to serve as an argument against the use of reflexivity, convincing reasons for preferring them must first be forwarded. Moreover, even if these directional theories *are* accepted as correct, they do not always exclude reflexivity. Aristotle and Spinoza, for example, present a foundationalist, directional picture of the world, but still cast self-causation as its foundation.³⁵ The same is true of Descartes' directional order of reasoning, which is based on the reflexive *cogito*. At least in some cases, then, the complete

³¹ A. D. E. Naess *Skepticism* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968) pp. 1-35.

³² Of course, views concerning the affirmatory or contradictory nature of a reflexivity also depend, in principle, on views of whether the relation does or does not *contradict* the related presupposition. However, disagreements on this issue are very rare.

rejection of reflexivity originates not from any basic assumptions of these theories, but only from the prejudices of their supporters.

All in all, none of the reasons mentioned appear to justify an overall rejection of reflexivity. They only license the rejection of the use of reflexivity in specific cases; but this, of course, does not speak against reflexivity *per se*. Stronger reasons may yet be discovered; but until that happens it should be concluded that the common--and usually unarticulated--view that reflexivity is illegitimate is unfounded.

On the other hand, there are many examples of legitimate and useful employment of reflexivity.³⁶ It is true, some of them (e.g. Spinoza's self-caused God) seem legitimate only in the context of the historical philosophical systems in which they appear, and look unconvincing in a modern setting. But there are also contemporary examples of acceptable uses of reflexivity. An important example, already mentioned in section I above, is the use of reflexivity in coherence theories of truth. Coherence theories of truth, at one time negligible in their importance, have now come to be acceptable. From a foundationalist-deductive point of view these reflexive theories are circular; the basis of the theory is based on what it bases, and is justified by that which it justifies. Still, this is a successful and helpful use of reflexivity which has also come, through habit, to be seen as completely legitimate.³⁷

³⁶ A number of them were mentioned in section I above.

³⁷ I chose here a contemporary example of a successful use of reflexivity so as to make my argument more convincing to the modern reader. But besides many other contemporary examples of successful uses of reflexivity (e.g. in cybernetics, literature, etc.), there are also many examples of such successful uses in the past; as I shall show in the following chapters of

Note that the acceptance of coherence theories was accomplished by simply not accepting the general, "wholesale" rejection of any form of reflexivity. Instead of the directional assumptions, other, reflexive ones were suggested. Coherence theories of truth, then, are examples of using reflexivity "without guilt feelings", which is the general spirit in which, in my opinion, reflexivity should be used and studied. This is not to say that all uses of reflexivity are legitimate. Far from it. But in order to determine which are and which are not, reflexivity should not be disregarded, as it has largely been up to now, but, on the contrary, studied and discussed. Since the intuitive, biased antagonism towards reflexivity inhibits its study and research, it must be overcome.

In the previous section I have shown the causes of the neglect of reflexivity in research and for seeing it as an illegitimate philosophical tool. Further, I have shown that there are no serious reasons to ignore it, and thus that the antagonism towards it is a prejudice. On the other hand, there is sufficient evidence to indicate that an effort to study the nature, history and legitimacy of reflexivity may be worthwhile. But before doing that we must define more precisely what reflexivity is.

this work, many of the uses of reflexivity in the history of philosophy were, in terms of the theories in which they were used, very successful.

III. THE NATURE OF REFLEXIVITY

1. What is Unique to Reflexivities?

Intuitively, it seems to us that there is a certain characteristic shared by reflexivities which distinguishes them from other philosophical entities. But what is this characteristic? Let us start our investigation by comparing, as an example of reflexivity, a condensed form of the Liar's Paradox

(1) This sentence is false.

to some "normal" sentences, such as

(2) The table is not red.

and

(3) The sentence you uttered yesterday
at four P.M. is false.

In what way is (1) essentially different from (2) and (3)? Why do we feel that there is something "special" in (1), whereas (2) and (3) are "normal"? I think that the essential difference is that whereas (2) and (3) are about other things, (1) is about itself. In (2) and (3) the sentences are different from what they are about: (2) is about an object in the world and its colour, and (3) is about a sentence other than itself (namely the sentence you uttered yesterday at four P.M.). Sentence (1), on the contrary, says something about itself.

Similarly, in Spinoza's *causa sui*, another of the "special" cases mentioned above, a cause causes itself. In most cases of causation the cause and the effect are different from each other. However, in the case of the *causa sui* the cause and the effect are, according to Spinoza, one and the same thing. The cause causes itself. To put it differently, it is its own effect, or the effect is its own cause.

The Liar's Paradox is different, of course, from the *causa sui*; in the former case we have a relation of "aboutness", and in the latter, causation. However, in both cases a relation which usually relates two different *relata* (a sentence and what the sentence is about; a cause and effect) relates something to *itself*.

This is also true of the other reflexive cases. We are used to seeing life as the generation of one thing from another. But in the (alleged) cases of self-generation we have life generating itself. Similarly, in most arguments the premisses are more certain, or more agreed upon, than the conclusion which they support. Otherwise, they could not form a basis for the conclusion. In circular arguments, however, the assumption is *not* more certain or agreed upon than the conclusion: they are one and the same thing, and the expected difference between the proven and the proved does not exist. Finally, in the case of self-consciousness, there is consciousness not only of things different from consciousness, but of consciousness, or of being conscious, itself.

There seems to be, then, a structure common to a linguistic-logical paradox, a metaphysical entity, an (alleged) biological process, and a psychological phenomenon. Because this structure appears in such variety, I prefer to call it "reflexivity", rather than "self reference", "vicious circle", or "paradox", for example. All of the above are cases of reflexivity in a certain field (mostly logical and linguistic), whereas I would like to stress that this structure exists in different fields, both philosophical and non-philosophical.* Reflexivity, then, is a specific kind of relation (in the most general sense of "relation", which cuts across all fields).

* Using the term "reflexivity" has dangers of its own. Because of its closeness to the term "reflection", it immediately calls to mind associations limited to psychological or mental reflexivity only. I do not intend, of course, that it should be limited to this field. See also discussion in subsection III:5.

Thus, if we want to understand reflexivity, we have to see it in the context of a general theory of relations.

2. A Fragment of a Theory of Relations: Directional

Relations

Our point of departure is the most general and basic relation that we use, that which relates one *relatum* to another. This kind of relation I shall call here "dyadic relation". Of course, there are other kinds of relations too. There can also be, for example, relations that relate one thing to a few things, or a few things to each other. Discussing them as a part of a general theory of relations would be interesting and rewarding, but since they are not immediately relevant to the understanding of reflexivity I shall not deal with them here.

Almost all the relations we use in order to understand or describe the world are dyadic, and almost all of these are such that the two *relata* are different from each other. For example, in "I think about the table", "I" denotes one *relatum*, "the table" another, different *relatum*, and "thinking about" signifies the relation between the objects denoted by "I" and "the table". This would also be true of relations such as "A looks at B", "A is the mother of B", "A is the master of B", "A is the interpretation of B", "A is on B", "A is after B", "A eats B", and almost any other dyadic relation which comes to mind.

This kind of relation will here be termed a "directional" one. I chose this name in order to stress that the two things are different from each other, i.e. that the relation between A and B is not the same as the relation between B and A. We can imagine A and B as two points, and the relation as an arrow which leads from one of them in the direction of the other:



To distinguish between the two *relata* I shall call one of them "the relator" and the other "the related".³⁹

The nature of the difference between the relator and the related should be specified. They may or may not differ from each other in several ways; however, since they are related, they must differ from each other in at least one way, and one that especially interests us here: one of them is the relator of the relation, and the other, the related. To put it differently, we see the relator and the related as such (and, hence, as different from each other) in virtue of the fact that they are related.

An example can clarify this point further. Suppose that the relation is one of causing. In virtue of this relation, then, we shall see two *relata*--which we did not take to be related before--as cause and effect. Now these *relata* may or may not be different from each other in all sorts of ways. It is certain, however, that they are different from each other, by virtue of the relation, in at least one way: one of them is the cause while the other is the effect. They

³⁹ Thus, according to my terminology, the relator and the related are the things, or the *relata* of the relation, and each is a *relatum*. Hereafter, I shall not employ quotation marks when using them.

Again, I do not here have the space to discuss some important questions in the general theory of relations, such as the problem of deciding which of the *relata* is the relator and which is the related, or what is the exact relation between two relations where the relator and the related of one are respectively the related and the relator of the other. These questions are interesting and intriguing, but cannot be dealt with here and will have to be discussed in another work dedicated to relations in general.

are different from each other because there is a directional relation between them: in causation the cause causes the effect, and the effect does not cause the cause. Thus, when we ascribe a directional relation to two *relata*, we also ascribe to them, in virtue of this relation, a difference. In other words, it is not the difference between the two *relata* that makes the relation directional, it is the directionality of the relation that makes the *relata* different. The difference is introduced by the directional relation.

An objection may arise here: we first conceive of independent, separate things, and only later do we use relations to relate them to each other and thus build larger structures. Hence, the difference between the things is prior to the directional relation. However, this objection is based on an atomistic prejudice, according to which the primary units of the understanding of being are also the smallest conceivable ones. I do not accept this prejudice, and do not think that we ever conceive, except in the most radical abstraction, separated, autonomous things which are not related to each other. Hence, I do not accept the primacy of things over relations. Moreover, even if the atomistic model were true, and we did start out with unrelated things, the specific difference in which we are interested here (in our example: that between cause and effect) surely would not exist before they were related to each other by causation. The difference, then, is introduced by the directional relation.

Some relations, then, are taken by us to be inherently directional, i.e. relations that relate two different *relata*. It may be true that we came to see them as such through our experience, and that new experiences will change our mind. But still, prior to knowing what these *relata* are, we expect that they will be different from each other in at least one respect, in virtue of the directional relation which relates them.

3. Non-Directional Relations

Although the dyadic directional type of relation is the most frequent one there are, of course, other types of relation. One of them is the dyadic non-directional one. Examples of this type of relation are "is five meters away from", "is of the same height as", "is a sibling of" and "is identical to". In all these examples, two things are related in such a way that they are *not* different in virtue of the relation: the relation between the related and relator is the same as that between the related and the relator.

Of course, when I say that the relator and the related are the same I do not mean that they are the same in everything. Two poles stuck in the ground five meters away from each other, two people of the same height, or two siblings can differ from each other in many respects. But we can be sure that they are identical in at least the one respect in which they are related (and again, they are so in virtue of this relation): they are *both* five meters away from each other, or of the same height, or are siblings of one another. The only relation which endows identity in all aspects to the *relata* is "is identical to".

"Is identical to" (along with some other relations such as "is of the same height as", or "is of the same age as") is special also in another way--not only is the relation between the relator and the related the same as that between the related and the relator, as in all dyadic non-directional relations, but the relator and the related can also be one and the same thing. Jones and Smith can be of the same height and of the same age, but Jones is also of the same height and age as himself. However, Jones and Smith can be five meters away from each other and be each other's relatives, but Jones cannot be five meters away from himself or be his own relative. In some non-directional relations, then, the relation between the relator and the related is identical to that between the related and the relator because the relator and the related are one

and the same thing.

Thus, directional relations are always dyadic. Some non-directional relations are only dyadic (such as "is five meters away from"), others can be dyadic in some instances and monadic in others (such as "is of the same height as"), while others are monadic only (such as "employs exactly the same place and space as" or "is identical to").

Note that when a relation is monadic the relator and the related are one and the same thing, i.e. the same in all respects, even if the relation relates the thing to itself in only *one* of its respects. There are no longer two things, which are related in this or that aspect, but one thing which relates to itself in one of its aspects.

4. Reflexive Relations

Up to now we have met three types of relations: dyadic directional relations, dyadic non-directional relations, and monadic non-directional relations. These three types are combinations of two pairs of characteristics, obtained by dividing relations according to two criteria: being directional or non-directional, and being dyadic or monadic. The three types and their characteristics can be presented in a table:

	DYADIC	MONADIC
NON-DIRECTIONAL	"is five meters away from"	"is identical to"
DIRECTIONAL	"causes"	

Note that one space in this table is empty. Can we find an example of a relation which is both directional and monadic? Our immediate, intuitive response is "no". But let us look, again, at sentence (1):

(1) This sentence is false.

The relation exemplified here is "about" or "refers to". As such, it is a dyadic directional relation, i.e. one in which the relator is different from the related: we cannot exchange the related and the relator without at the same time changing the relation. To put it differently, the relation makes the *relata* it relates different from each other.

However, the two *relata* in (1) are one and the same thing. The sentence refers to, or is about, *itself*. In this respect, then, we seem to have a monadic non-directional relation.

So, on the one hand we have a directional relation, but not a dyadic one, while on the other we have a monadic relation, but not a directional one. Now what do we have here?

It seems that in sentence (1) we have a synthesis which at first sight looks impossible: that of directionality with being monadic. Sentence (1) is both directional and monadic. Thus, it fits, with other reflexivities, the fourth, empty slot in the table above. Reflexivities, then, are those relations which are both directional and monadic.

Realizing this is necessary not only in order to see how reflexivities are related to other kinds of relations and to put them within context of the general theory of relations, but, as we shall see, it is also necessary in order to understand their ramifying into different types, their characteristics, and their uses.⁴⁰ In the next part we shall see how this analysis helps deal with an even prior question, which still belongs to the discussion of the nature of reflexivity: "How can we tell reflexivities from non-reflexivities?" or "How can we deal with penumbral cases?".

⁴⁰ Perhaps this is the place to point out that although I started with a discussion of directional relations, and only then proceeded to discuss reflexivities, I do not think that directionality is necessarily prior to reflexivity. The order of presentation, which is motivated by didactic considerations, should be distinguished from the logical order. Priority in exposition does not necessarily suggest a logical priority. It is arguable that, notwithstanding our contemporary intuitions, reflexivity is logically prior to directionality. I shall not make the case here for the primacy of reflexivity (such a case would be strongly based on and influenced by Heidegger's philosophy). But I do want it to be noted that, although throughout this exposition the discussion of reflexivity is based on the discussion of directionality, this does not necessarily mean that directionality is more fundamental.

5. Reflexivities and Non-Reflexivities

It is clear that sentence (1) is reflexive. It is also clear that sentence (2) is not. It is unclear, however, how to deal with sentences such as:

(4) I think about my toe.

or

(5) I feel pain.

Understanding the structure of reflexivity will explain why it is difficult to decide in some cases. Moreover, it will help analyze such cases, even if it does not give a definite answer.

In reflexivity the two *relata* in the directional relation are identified with each other and are seen as one. Hence, those cases in which the relator and the related are clearly one and the same would be clear cases of reflexivity. Those in which the relator and the related are clearly two different *relata* would be clear cases of a directional relation. The penumbral cases would be those in which it is unclear whether the *relata* are or are not the same. The criteria for deciding whether a relation is or is not reflexive, then, are the same as those for deciding whether we have one or two things. What are these criteria? One factor will be the number of identical aspects of the *relata* compared. Another is the importance, or essentiality, of these aspects for the *relata*. A third criterion is the extent to which the identical aspects are related to each other directly. A Fourth is the extent to which the identical aspects which are not directly related in the relation are linked to the directly related ones. The more these criteria apply, the more we shall be bound to say that we are dealing with a reflexivity.⁴¹

⁴¹ I have in this part discussed the difficulty in distinguishing between reflexivities and non-reflexivities, only as relevant to the difficulty in evaluating the sameness of the two *relata* when

Besides depending upon the criteria above, the decision will also depend upon the context of the discussion, and upon our general purposes and habits. We should not overlook, in an *ad hoc* way, the differences between the intentionality and the intentional object, if they are always seen as different from one another. We should not overlook the importance of a certain element in our discussion--e.g. the self, or time--if in that particular context we would usually stress it. We should not stress the minute details which distinguish the things, if in our general discussion we see fit to deal with those things in a more sweeping way. We should not be very strict in our criteria for a similarity between the two things if we are otherwise usually less strict.⁴²

But each of these criteria establishes a difference of degree, not of kind. Further, in certain cases some of the criteria will apply to a high degree while others to a low one, and it will be difficult to evaluate the degree of reflexivity of the relation as a whole. Moreover, relations in general (and hence also reflexivities) can be described in a number of ways. Thus,

the relation is directional. This, indeed, will be the main cause of penumbral cases. However, the difficulty in distinguishing between reflexivities and non-reflexivities can also originate from cases in which the two *relata* are identical, and it is difficult to evaluate whether the relation is or is not directional. In such cases we will not have difficulty in distinguishing between reflexivities and binary directional relations, as was discussed up to now, but between reflexivities and monadic non-directional relations (such as "is identical to"). Although I have not yet run into such cases, they are structurally possible and may perhaps be found.

⁴² Descriptively, if not prescriptively, the decision as to whether a certain structure is reflexive will depend, besides the criteria above, on pragmatic considerations. In many reflexivities in social sciences, cybernetics, and nature the identical aspects in the *relata* are relatively few, unimportant and mediately-related. Thus, these reflexivities are open to be described both as reflexivities and as directional relations (especially partial and mediate reflexivities--see subsections IV:1 and IV:4 below). Nevertheless, scientists in these areas frequently prefer the first alternative, seeing it as the more practical and useful one.

it is possible to describe the *relata* in the reflexivities as closer to or farther from being identical. For all these reasons there is no clear demarcation line between reflexivities and non-reflexivities. Although in some cases it would be clearly absurd to maintain that a certain relation is or is not a reflexivity, there would be a place for uncertainty in others.

We can exemplify the above in Tarski's effort to avoid the problems that sentence (1) presents to his theory of truth. Although the *relata* ("this sentence is false" and "this sentence is false") seem identical, Tarski argues that they differ importantly: one of them belongs to the meta-language, whereas the other belongs to the object-language. He takes this difference to be directly related to the relation and to be an essential and important one, which supersedes the affinity of the *relata* in other respects. Thus, Tarski introduces a difference between the two sentences, and the relation between them becomes, again, a directional, dyadic, unproblematic one.

Take, again, "I think about my toe". One way to describe the *relata* of this relation is as a mind on the one hand, and as a physical toe on the other. What is common to them, according to such a description, is that they are both mine. However, the fact that both this mind and this toe belong to me does not seem essential here: they could have remained a mind and a toe even if they belonged to someone else. Moreover, the aspect in which they are identical (their belonging to me) is unessential for the relation and not directly related to it. My mind could have thought about other people's physical toes, and other minds could have thought of my toes, and both cases seem more or less similar to the case in which my mind thinks about my toe. Thus, the common aspects of the two *relata* are not directly related and do not even seem to be linked very strongly with those aspects which are directly related.

If we describe, on the other hand, the *relata* in "I think about my toe" as a mind and an intentional object, they share another aspect (i.e. being "mental") and, therefore, there is

more sense in seeing the relation as reflexive. "Being mental" is essential for the two *relata*. In some ways it is also essential for the relation. Moreover, it can also be seen as related to itself in the two *relata* directly.

However, the differences between the two *relata* can also be seen as important: one of the *relata* is a mind or an intentionality, and the other a mental or intentional object. This difference can also be seen as essential for the two *relata* as well as for the relation, perhaps even more essential than the aspect in which they are identical. Thus, emphasizing some aspects rather than others will influence the extent to which we ascribe reflexivity to this relation. In most contexts, however, one would not have seen it as reflexive.

It is interesting to see how this analysis can relate to Charles Taylor's distinction between "simple reflexivity" and "radical reflexivity".⁴³ An example of simple reflexivity is my bandaging my wound, whereas an example of radical reflexivity is my feeling the pain. In both cases something appears to be related to itself: we bandage *our* arm, or feel *our* wound. However, in the first case we can bandage both our and someone else's wound, and other people can bandage ours. In the second case, that of radical reflexivity, only we can feel our pain.

A "simple reflexivity", according to the analysis above, will be one in which there are only a few identical aspects, and those which are identical will not be essential to the related things and the relation. With "radical reflexivity", on the contrary, there are more, and more important, identical aspects which are essential to the things and the relation. When we analyze the case of "my bandaging my wound" we see that there seem to be a lot of different aspects in the *relata*, and the aspect in which the two are identical--the "I" which bandages and the "I"

⁴³ E.g. in *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989) chap. 7.

which is wounded--are unessential to the relation: other people could have bandaged my wound and I could have bandaged theirs. It is a mere coincidence to the relation that this identical aspect exists. In "my feeling my pain", however, the identical aspects are essential to the relation. The common "I" is essential in this case because it is *not* coincidental that *I* feel *my* pain. Only I can feel it, and I cannot feel other people's pain, nor can they feel mine. (There also seem to be some other identical aspects shared by what feels and what is felt, which do not exist in "my bandaging my wound").

But, it may be asked, if there is no clear demarcation line between reflexivities and non-reflexivities, is the concept of reflexivity tenable at all? I think that the answer is affirmative. Take, for example, the utilitarian concept of "good". Utilitarians may agree about the criterion that should be used in order to determine whether a certain activity is morally good or bad, but still disagree on its specific applications. To judge whether an activity is good or bad, one has to take into account, among other factors, the number of people involved, the intensities of happiness and suffering they experience, and sometimes the value of the happiness experienced. Computing all those factors together is very difficult, and most utilitarians would agree that judgments would be influenced, descriptively if not prescriptively, by cultural background, psychological make-up, and perhaps even personal interests. Further, they would agree that although there are many clear paradigm cases of both good and bad, there are also many border cases which are indecisive. Still, they would take the utilitarian criterion both to give an insight to the nature of the morally good and to be helpful in distinguishing it from the morally bad. The same is true of other concepts in other fields, e.g. the concepts of "the Middle Ages" and "the Modern Era". But if all these concepts are accepted and used I do not see why "reflexivities" and "non-reflexivities" should not also be applied.

Now that we know what reflexivity is, we can also determine what it is not. Not every reflection (notwithstanding the etymological connection), introspection, self-consciousness, looking within, or discussing one's self would be reflexive. Sometimes these activities will contain a reflexive element, but this element may pertain only to very specific and limited aspects of the relation, or even be completely insignificant. Again, reciprocal or mutual relations are also not necessarily reflexive; in many cases they are, or are used and discussed as, dyadic non-directional relations.

Understanding the general structure of reflexivity has helped us see its uniqueness, place it within the context of other relations, and analyze cases in which its status as reflexivity is unclear. But this analysis will also be helpful in explaining the general, structural typology of the different kinds of reflexivity, their natures and interrelations. Let us now turn and see how this is done.

IV. A TYPOLOGY OF REFLEXIVITIES

1. Complete and Partial Reflexivities

One way to divide reflexivities is according to their completeness and partiality. We take reflexivities to be complete when the whole thing or relation relates to the whole of itself, and we take them to be partial when only part of the thing or relation relates to itself. This division has already been discussed, even if not in so many words, in the previous section, and all that applies to the distinction between reflexivities and non-reflexivities also applies to the one between complete and partial reflexivities. The distinction between complete and partial

reflexivities is also one of degree and not of kind, as is the distinction between partial reflexivities and what is not taken, anymore, to be reflexivities at all.⁴⁴

2. Cohesive and Non-Cohesive Reflexivities

Compare the following sentences:

(1) This sentence is false.

and

(6) This sentence is not in English.

According to the definition above both sentences are reflexive, since in both of them a directional relation relates something to itself. In (1) "this sentence is false" is related to itself by means of the directional relation "denial of truth" and, in (6), "this sentence is not in English" is related to itself by means of the directional relation "denial of being in English". Both (1) and (6), then, seem to be reflexivities. Nevertheless, it seems that they differ from each other in something: (6) seems to be, somehow, "less reflexive" than (1). Why?

I think that (6) seems to be less reflexive than (1) because in (6) the "Englishness" of the sentence is denied, not the denial itself. In (1), on the contrary, it is the denial itself which is denied. In (6) the *relation* relates two things, or a thing to itself, but does not relate to *itself*. In (1), on the contrary, the relation relates to itself.

⁴⁴ Here, too, the question arises whether we should not reject the whole distinction between complete and partial reflexivities, if no clear demarcation line between them can be found. I will deal with this question in section III:5 below.

In other words, in (6) a thing relates to itself by means of a relation which is different from the thing. The sentence relates to itself by means of a denial of Englishness, which is different from the sentence itself. (1), on the contrary, can be seen as a case in which a relation itself relates to itself, and there is no difference between the relation and the things, since the relation is also the things. The denial of truth is itself denied.

(1) and (6) belong to two different groups of reflexivities. To the one group (including [1]) also belongs Maimonides' self-thinking God, which is a thinking that thinks itself, or about itself. The thinking is what thinks, what is thought about, and the process itself. God does not relate to Himself by means of a relation which is different from Himself. This is why Maimonides discusses God as the thinker, the thought-of and the thinking at the same time.⁴⁵ To the same group also belong

(7) This sentence is true.

and

(8) This sentence has no meaning.

and other similar cases in which what is related is the relation itself.

To the second group (including [6]) belong sentences such as:

(9) This sentence has five words.

So does sentence (4) ("I think about my toe.") from the previous part, if it is taken as a reflexivity, and other relations in which the *relata* are different from the relation.

I call the first group of reflexivities, to which (1) and Maimonides' God belong, "cohesive reflexivities". The second group of reflexivities, to which (6) and (4) belong, I call

⁴⁵ *The Guide of the Perplexed* Part One, chapter 68.

"non-cohesive reflexivities".⁴⁶ A large number of notorious reflexivities met in philosophy are of the cohesive type. We find them, among others, in Aristotle's unmoved mover, Descartes' *cogito*, Spinoza's *causa sui*, Kant's moral theory and Hegel's Absolute Spirit. This is reflexivity in its most radical form. In this work I shall survey some of these reflexivities and their uses in philosophy.

But what are the criteria for cohesiveness and non-cohesiveness? Why do (6) and (9) seem to be non-cohesive, Maimonides' God, cohesive, and (although we described them above, for expository reasons, only as cohesive), (1) and (8) can be plausibly seen both as cohesive and non-cohesive?

Consider, again, Maimonides' God on the one hand, and sentence (9) ("This sentence is composed of five words") on the other. What differences make one of them cohesive, and the other non-cohesive? First, it seems that the relation in Maimonides' God, viz. thinking, *can* relate to itself: "thinking" can think about many things, of which one is thinking. In (9), on the contrary, this is not the case; the relation in (9) is "denial of being composed of a certain number of words". Thus, it can only relate to *relata* which are composed of words. Hence, it cannot relate to itself, since, as a relation, it does not consist of any number of words. Relations are not linguistic entities and, hence, are not comprised of words and are not in any language (although they are *expressed* in sentences which are composed of words and are of a

⁴⁶ Since many cohesive reflexivities are also complete, it is easy to confuse them with each other, just as it is non-cohesive reflexivities with incomplete ones. However, complete reflexivities (i.e. ones in which the whole *relatum* or relation relates to itself) do not have to be cohesive (i.e. ones in which the relation, and not the *relatum*, relates to itself). This will be clarified further in part 12 below.

certain language). Thus, the relation in (9), unlike Maimonides' God, cannot relate to itself.

For similar reasons, the relation in (6), too, cannot relate to itself: the relation of "denial of being in English" is, itself, not in English or in any other language. Denying "Englishness" from itself would be a categorical mistake. Hence, it cannot relate to itself. Thus, one distinction between cohesive and non-cohesive reflexivities is that in cohesive ones the nature of the relation will consist of aspects to which it can relate, or, to put it differently, relating the relation to itself will not result in a categorical mistake.

The other difference between Maimonides' God and sentence (9) is that there are no things distinct from the relation in Maimonides' God. The *relata*, if we try to construct them, are indistinguishable from the relation and, hence, collapse into it. What the relation relates to is indistinguishable from itself. In (9), on the contrary, both things and relation exist, and they differ from each other. The things--in this case, sentences--are different from the relation (which, again, is non-linguistic), and cannot be collapsed into it.

Thus, the second distinction between cohesive and non-cohesive reflexivities is that in cohesive reflexivities the things do not exist, or, differently put, the things are indistinguishable from the relation. In non-cohesive reflexivities, however, the relation relates things which are different from it.

In order to decide to what extent a reflexivity is cohesive, then, we should analyze it into a relation and things, and check whether the relation can relate to itself and how close the things and the relation are to being identical.

But, again, this means that there will not be a clear demarcation line, in some cases, between cohesive and non-cohesive reflexivities, and that the difference between them will be one of degree, not of kind. It is true that when the difference between cohesive and non-

cohesive reflexivities has to do with the ability or inability of the relation to relate to itself, the demarcation line is quite clear--the difference is quite straightforward and there is no place for degrees of "ability to relate". However, when the relation *can* relate to itself and the question is one of identity or difference between the *relata* and the relation, there will be a place for degrees of cohesiveness; the more close to being identical the relation and the *relata* would seem to us, the more we will tend to see them as one thing and, hence, the reflexivity as one in which a relation relates to itself, and not to *relata* distinct from it.

This is one reason for the existence of penumbral cases, in which it is difficult to decide whether they are or are not cohesive; some reflexivities are cohesive only to an extent. Moreover, there is also a place for differently evaluating how close the relation and the things are to being identical. Furthermore, in some cases the relation and the *relata* can be described in different ways, which can render them closer to or farther from being identical.

This, in fact, is the case with sentences (1) and (8), which, it seemed, could be interpreted both as non-cohesive and as cohesive. They could be interpreted in both ways not because of their degree of reflexivity, but because they could be described both as reflexivities in which a thing relates to itself by means of a relation different from the thing, and as reflexivities in which the relation relates to itself so that there is no difference between the things and the relation. More specifically, (1) and (8) can be described as a sentence ("this sentence is false" and "this sentence has no meaning") which relates to itself with a relation which, as a relation, is a non-linguistic entity and, thus, is different from the sentences. But under another interpretation, what is related in these reflexivities is, actually, not a sentence but what is behind it, i.e. the denial of truth and the denial of meaning. If this is the case, then the *relata* are identical to the relation, they merge into each other, and we have a cohesive reflexivity.

Note that in both descriptions the relation *could* have related to itself, and the question

was only that of the identity between the relation and the things. In other cases, however, it is possible that the cohesiveness of the reflexivity will depend on how the relation is described.

Thus, both the lack, in some cases, of a sharp demarcation line between cohesive and non-cohesive reflexivities, and the ability to describe some reflexivities in more than one way, provides an opportunity for disagreement about the degree of cohesiveness of some reflexivities. Of course, the evaluation of the closeness to identity, and the description of the reflexivities and the relations, will have to be consistent with other evaluations and descriptions. Moreover, some interpretations or descriptions will be completely absurd: seeing Maimonides' God, for example, as non-cohesive (this can be done by saying that there is a difference between the thinking as a thing and the thinking as the relation) will be such a case. Of course, the context of the discussion, and our purposes in presenting and using the reflexivity, will also have a bearing on the degree of cohesiveness ascribed to it.

Cohesive reflexivities are more frequent in philosophy than in other fields, since they are homogeneous and, thus, are can answer the need in philosophy to describe homogeneous (and frequently divine) entities. But they can be found in other fields, too.⁴⁷ Usually, when it is possible to interpret a certain reflexivity as both cohesive and non-cohesive, the former alternative will be preferred since it is more concise.

⁴⁷ Take, for example, the following changing reflexivity (see subsection IV:5) in political science: the acceleration in the rise of the popularity of a certain political candidate can be taken to continue and accelerate itself.

3. Affirmatory and Contradictory Reflexivities

Another way to divide reflexivities, which cuts across the previous one, is to do so between affirmatory reflexivities and contradictory reflexivities. Compare, again,

(5) This sentence is true.

and

(1) This sentence is false.

Although both sentences are reflexive, there seems to be a difference between them. It also seems that the same difference exists between reflexivities such as Aristotle's unmoved mover (which is thought thinking itself), Spinoza's *causa sui* (a cause causing itself), and sentences like "all generalizations are true", on the one hand, and reflexivities such as "all generalizations are false", Gödel's Proof, or Russell's paradox concerning Frege's set theory (Does the set of all sets that do not contain themselves contain itself?) on the other. What constitutes the difference between these two types of reflexivity?

An analysis of the reflexivities of the two groups shows that all of them, as reflexivities, are constructed of directional relations which relate things to themselves. However, they are different in that, whereas in the first group of reflexivities (to which sentence [5] also belongs) the self-relation does *not* produce a contradiction, or a logical impossibility, in the second group (to which sentence [1] belongs) the self-relation does.

In sentence (5), which says of itself that it is true, the relation "affirming the truth of" affirms the truth of itself.⁴⁸ Nothing in the relation is denied, or contradicted, when it relates to itself. In sentence (1), however, this is not the case. We have here the relation "denying the truth of", which denies the truth of itself. However, when it does so, something in it is denied or contradicted. One of the presuppositions of this relation is that it is true. When the relation relates to itself its presupposed truth is contradicted, or denied. Thus, the denial denies what it presupposes, and a contradiction, or a logical impossibility, follows from the self-relation.

Things or relations, then, have presuppositions. Some of these presuppositions are essential to the relation or thing, in the sense that they are necessary conditions for it to be what it is or to relate at all. Some of these presuppositions can be related to the relation itself.⁴⁹ For example, in "this sentence is true", being true is a necessary condition for the sentence or the relation; if it is not true, it cannot relate at all. In "this sentence is true", this presupposition is not contradicted or denied when the relation relates to it. If anything, it is affirmed. Hence, I call this kind of reflexivity "affirmatory reflexivity".

In (1), on the contrary, this essential, necessary condition of the relation is denied by the relation itself. But since what is denied is a *necessary* condition for the relation, the relation cannot continue to exist or relate. Since we relate it to itself, it contradicts its own relating. The truth of the denial is denied and, thus, it cannot continue to deny. The self-relation, then,

⁴⁸ For simplicity's sake I shall here deal mostly with cohesive reflexivities. However, what I say should also be true of non-cohesive reflexivities.

⁴⁹ If the relation cannot relate to any of its presuppositions, then we have, again, a case of non-cohesive reflexivity. If neither the relation nor the thing, or *relatum*, can relate to any of its aspects, then we do not, of course, have a reflexivity at all, since we do not have something which *relates to itself* at all.

results in a logical contradiction. Hence, I call this kind of reflexivity "contradictory reflexivity". In the examples of contradictory reflexivity, above, these essential presuppositions are "being true" for sentence (1) and "all generalizations are false", "being provable" for Gödel's Proof, and "not being a subset of the set of all sets which are not subsets of themselves" for Russell's Paradox.³⁰ In all of these cases the relation or the thing cannot be what it is or continue to relate if these essential characteristics are altered or denied.

We can summarize, then, and say that we shall have reflexivities of the first group when relations or things relate to themselves, without denying or contradicting one or more of their essential presuppositions. This kind of reflexivity we shall call "affirmatory reflexivity". We shall have reflexivities of the second group when relations or things which relate to themselves contradict or deny one or more of their essential presuppositions. This kind of reflexivity is called "contradictory reflexivity".

But should contradictory reflexivities be seen as reflexivities at all? After all, what is special about them is that their self-relation produces a contradiction, i.e. is *not* possible. To put it differently, since contradictory reflexivities involve contradictions, the two contradictory *relata* cannot be the same. However, in a reflexivity the two *relata* must be one and the same.

However, I think that contradictory reflexivities should still be seen as reflexivities. The only difference between affirmatory and contradictory reflexivities is that, in an affirmatory reflexivity, the relation is taken to affirm its essential presuppositions, whereas in contradictory reflexivity the relation is taken to contradict them. But yet, both have the same reflexive

³⁰ Again, these assertions about Gödel's Proof and Russell's Paradox are somewhat coarse here, and will be elaborated below.

structure. The contradiction in contradictory reflexivities is not a simple logical contradiction; it is a logical contradiction which arises through a self-relation. Moreover, the two *relata* are *not* different from each other. Had they been different, the contradiction would not have arisen. As long as "all generalizations are false" relates to other generalizations, no problem comes about. The problem starts only when it relates to itself. The contradiction stems precisely from the fact that the *relata* are one and the same *relatum*, whereas the relation necessitates that they will be two different *relata*. Furthermore, as we shall see below, not only do affirmatory and contradictory reflexivities share the same structure, but some of their characteristics are also the same.

In some cases, there may be doubts whether a certain reflexivity should be counted as affirmatory or as contradictory. The decision in such cases will rely, of course, on whether the presupposition to which the relation relates is, in fact, contradicted, and whether it is essential. Different views of the nature of the presupposition will yield, then, different views of the nature of a given reflexivity.

For example, the traditional refutation of skepticism by contradictory reflexivity works only if "being certain" is taken to be an essential and necessary presupposition of the denial of certainty. In such a case, the denial of certainty of all assertions, which denies the certainty of the denial itself, incapacitates the denial; not being certainly true itself, it cannot deny this certainty of other assertions. To put it differently, the assertion contradicts itself: if the assertion is true, then it is no longer the case that *all* assertions are uncertain, and if the assertion is not taken to be true, then, again, it can no longer be claimed that all assertions are uncertain.

However, if "being certain" is not taken to be an essential and necessary presupposition of the denial of certainty, then we have affirmatory, not contradictory, reflexivity. Skepticism

is not refuted, then, by reflexivity, but is on the contrary supported by it. The skeptical thesis, in such a case, would be that all assertions, including this one, are uncertain--and the fact that this very assertion is also uncertain does not contradict the claim but, on the contrary, affirms it.

This, indeed, is the step taken by the Pyrrhonian Sceptics in order to protect themselves from the traditional refutation to which the Academic Sceptics were vulnerable.⁵¹ While the Academic Sceptics committed themselves to a denial of the possibility of knowing any truth, the Pyrrhonian Sceptics did not assert, deny, or commit themselves to anything, their non-commitment included. Since, for the Pyrrhonian Sceptics, the non-commitment principle did not assume a commitment, their non-commitment to the non-commitment principle was seen by them as its further affirmation, not refutation.

Similarly, there have been efforts to reflexively refute pragmatism by arguing that it entails that it itself is not "really" true, but should be accepted merely on pragmatic grounds. This reflexive criticism is successful, of course, only if the theory is taken to presuppose that it is "really", and not pragmatically, true. If this is the case, then the theory is indeed guilty of being contradictorily reflexive. However, if not taken this way, then the theory is reflexive in an affirmatory way. Like any other theory or assertion, pragmatism, too, is taken to be pragmatically true, and no contradiction follows.

⁵¹ A. D. E. Naess *Skepticism* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968) pp. 1-35.

Thus, views concerning the affirmatory or contradictory nature of a reflexivity depend on the views concerning the essentiality of its related presuppositions.⁵²

The only difference between affirmatory and contradictory reflexivities, then, is that in an affirmatory reflexivity the relation is taken to affirm its essential presuppositions, whereas in a contradictory reflexivity the relation is taken to contradict them. Both, then, have the same structure.

From this structure we can deduce another feature of the relation between contradictory and affirmatory reflexivities: in some cases the logical impossibility of a contradictory reflexivity would be extensionally equivalent to the necessity of the affirmatory reflexivity of the negated relation (and *vice versa*); one of them could be deduced from the other. Since a contradictory reflexivity is a relation which relates to itself, such that it opposes at least one of the presuppositions essential for its existence, we have reason to expect that the opposite of this relation would not oppose, but agree with this presupposition. Hence, we can deduce from a contradictory reflexivity an affirmatory reflexivity of the negated relation (provided, of course, that the presupposition stays as it is when the relation changes into its opposite).

Similarly, we expect that the necessity of an affirmatory reflexivity will be extensionally equivalent to the impossibility of the contradictory reflexivity of the opposite relation: a negation of the affirmation of a presupposition is the negation of this presupposition.

Take as an example, again, sentence (1). "This sentence is false" is a contradictory reflexivity since the relation (falsification) opposes one of its presuppositions (that it is not false).

⁵² Of course, views concerning the affirmatory or contradictory nature of a reflexivity also depend, in principle, on views of whether the relation does or does not *contradict* the related presupposition. However, disagreements on this issue are very rare.

We have reason to expect, then, that the opposite of this relation (truth-conferring) would not oppose, but agree with this presupposition, should the presupposition not change. Similarly, "This sentence is true" is an affirmatory reflexivity, since the relation (truth-conferring) agrees with one of its presuppositions (that it is true). We have reason to expect, then, that the opposite of this relation (truth-denial) would not agree with, but oppose this presupposition, should the presupposition not change.³³

Again, we feel that we can deduce from the impossibility of "this generalization is false" (which is the reflexive part of "all generalizations are false") the necessity of "this generalization is true". Similarly, if Russell's Paradox concerned the set of all sets which are subsets of themselves, we would have no paradox but, again, affirmatory reflexivity.³⁴

However, this extensional equivalence does not exist in all cases. In some cases it is not immediately clear what the negation or the opposite of a relation is exactly. In the cases above, the opposites were the logical contradictions of each other, but it is less easy to see what would be the relations opposite to "thinking" or "causation".

Moreover, deductions from the impossibility of a contradictory reflexivity to the necessity of the corresponding affirmatory one are much safer than deducing in the other

³³ This extensional equivalence can be also displayed in two-valued logic, since, in two-valued logic, " $A \equiv \neg B$ is false" and " $A \equiv B$ is true" are two ways of saying the same thing and imply each other. ("A" can be taken here as the presupposition, and "B" as the relation).

³⁴ Russell's Paradox is, in fact, a bit more complicated, since it is constituted of two reflexivities (one reflexivity being "the set of all sets [and, therefore, also of itself]", the other being "which are not [or are] subsets of themselves"). This will be discussed in more detail in the chapter about paradoxes.

direction. Since in contradictory reflexivities the relation always refers to its necessary conditions (otherwise there would not have been a contradiction), we can be sure that an affirmatory reflexivity would indeed be produced by its negation. However, not in all affirmatory reflexivities does the relation relate to one of its essential characteristics. In self-causation or self-thinking, for example, no essential characteristic or necessary condition of the relation is related to. Therefore, the negation of the relation (if we could be sure what it is) in such cases would *not* immediately result in a contradictory reflexivity.

In some cases the extensional equivalence of contradictory reflexivities with the negated affirmatory ones will have no philosophical import. In paradoxes, for example, the connection of the contradictory reflexivities to the corresponding affirmatory ones has no significance and is uninteresting. However, in other cases the extensional equivalence is important. As we shall see below, in Descartes' system, for example, the impossibility to doubt the doubting is tantamount to the certainty of thinking about the thinking, and Descartes uses the two kinds of reflexivity interchangeably.

4. Mediate and Immediate Reflexivities

In all the reflexivities discussed until now, partial as well as complete, cohesive as well as non-cohesive, affirmatory as well as contradictory, the thing, or the relation, related to itself without any mediation. This, however, is not the case with all reflexivities.

In *reductio ad absurdum* arguments, for example, a thing or a relation relates to itself in a way which contradicts one of its essential presuppositions. As such, it is a contradictory reflexivity. This contradictory reflexivity, however, differs from the other contradictory reflexivities met hitherto; whereas in the other contradictory reflexivities (e.g. sentence [1]) the

thing or relation related to itself directly, and thus contradicted itself immediately, in a *reductio ad absurdum* argument the thing or the relation relates to itself through a mediation. In the typical *reductio ad absurdum* argument a few propositions are inferred from the assumption and lead to its contradictory conclusion.⁵⁵

Again, in most circular arguments the assumption is led back to itself through the mediation of a few propositions, which mediate between the assumption and what seems to be a conclusion but is, in fact, essentially the assumption itself. Thus, many circular arguments should be seen as mediated affirmatory reflexivities.

Similarly, consider the case of three listeners to a performance, A, B and C, who clap their hands at its end. A can be seen as influencing (at least partially) his own clapping; B and C would have ceased clapping their hands shortly after the performance had A's persistence not given them the feeling that they should continue. But the fact that B and C continue to clap gives A, again, the feeling that he should continue to clap. He, too, would have stopped clapping his hands if B and C had, just as they would have stopped clapping their hand if he had. Thus, A (and B and C) can be seen as influencing the continuation of the other two people's clapping and, *through them*, his own. Although there are also other factors that influence the continuous hand clapping, to the extent that we consider the reflexive component, it is mediate.

⁵⁵ I am aware that this is not the case in all *reductio ad absurdum* arguments. In some arguments the *absurdum*, or contradiction, is not between the conclusion and the assumption, but between the conclusion and a third thesis held. Moreover, in some *reductio ad absurdum* arguments the conclusion can be inferred from the assumption immediately. However, all this does not change the fact that *some reductio ad absurdum* arguments are examples of mediate reflexivity.

Likewise, consider the reasons for the popularity of a candidate for the presidency. In addition to the directional factors in this popularity (e.g. views, manner of speech, appearance, social class), there is also a reflexive one. The popularity of the candidate itself influences his popularity; the fact that he is popular convinces people that there must be good reasons for this popularity. Thus his popularity subsists. The popularity, then, is mediately the cause (or, to be more exact, one of the causes) of the popularity.

Mediate reflexivities, then, are chains of directional relations, in which the last thing or relation relates to the first; the chain, then, is actually a necklace. Such reflexivities are less counter-intuitive than others, probably because they are more common and, thus, also more familiar, than other kinds of reflexivity. Further, unlike other types of reflexivity, they have directional aspects, to which we are more accustomed. Furthermore, as shall be seen below, they also tend to be partial and hence to be composed of a larger number of non-reflexive parts, to which, again, we are more accustomed. Moreover, we are more used to them. We find relatively many mediate reflexivities in nature, cybernetics, sociology, etc.³⁶

5. Changing and Unchanging Reflexivities

All the reflexivities discussed and given as examples thus far have been static. However, some reflexivities are dynamic. Consider, again, two of the examples of mediate reflexivity given in the previous part: A's hand-clapping and the candidate's popularity were presented as influencing themselves to remain at a constant level. However, they could just as well have

³⁶ Mediate (and partial) reflexivities are open more than any other kind of reflexivity to be described both as a reflexivity and as a chain of directional relations. Note, however, that scientists in the areas mentioned above still frequently prefer to see them as reflexivities.

influenced themselves to change. An escalation in the intensity of A's hand-clapping could influence that of B and C which, in turn, would influence A to clap his hands even harder (the same would be true, of course, if A's claps had become weaker and less enthusiastic). Similarly, one of the causes of the candidate's growing popularity can be his growing popularity; the growth in his popularity convinces more people that he indeed deserves it, and thus his popularity grows even more. Similarly, his diminishing popularity at other times is a partial cause of its diminishing. In both examples, then, the change influences itself, even if only in a partial way, to change further.

The last two examples are from the social sciences; indeed, this is the field in which changing reflexivities are most frequent. But we also find them in philosophy; Spinoza, for example, uses changing reflexivity in his *Ethics* to explain the rise of the soul to the third, and blessed, kind of knowledge. The more the individual knows God, according to Spinoza, the more he knows himself, and the more he knows himself, the more he knows God. Further, the more he knows God the more he loves God, and the more he loves God the more he knows Him.

Thus, like any other change, changing reflexivity, too, is a process. However, whereas regular processes are explained directionally, by the influence of other forces, changing reflexivity is explained by self-influence, or self-change. The change changes *itself*, i.e. is reflexive. Again, like any other type of reflexivity, changing reflexivity is a relation or a thing which relates to itself. However, whereas the regular reflexivities met so far have been static, changing reflexivity *changes* itself and is a process.

At this point it may be objected that a changing reflexivity is not a reflexivity at all, since its relator, which keeps changing all the time, relates not to *itself* but to something new and different into which it has been changed. The process, according to this objection, is

divided to different units, in which one relator affects a changed (and, thus, different) related, which is the relator of a further change and related.

However, I do not think that this criticism holds. It is true, we *can* see the process as composed of a series of distinct, atomic situations which influence each other. Nevertheless, I do not see why this description is preferable to the one which sees the process as one changing whole. Normally, we tend to see and describe processes according to a continuous model; we usually describe the increase in clapping, for example, or the growth in popularity, as one continuous unit, and not as a series of distinct static atoms. I do not see any reason, then, why an exception should be made when the change is explained not directionally but reflexively. It seems to me that the motivation to prefer the atomistic model has to do with an effort to avoid reflexivity, and not with a view about the correct way to describe processes,⁵⁷ and until independent reasons for preferring the atomistic model are given, I do not see why changing reflexivities should not be seen as reflexive.

It should be noted, however, that in some cases we shall not see changing reflexivities as changing. In some cases, if we take the reflexivity to be cohesive, and the relation to be one of changing, we shall simply have an unchanging relation relating to itself. For example, if the relation is "intensification in hand-clapping", the intensification could simply perpetuate, by the intensification, its own intensification. In other words, the relation would not change at all, but would be a regular affirmatory one. If, however, the reflexivity is not taken to be a cohesive one, then the *relata* can be the popularity of the candidate, the relation can be "to change" or "to influence", and the popularity will influence and be influenced by itself, changing all the

⁵⁷ I have dealt with the causes for this avoidance in subsection II:1.

time.

6. Reflexivities and Meta-Reflexivities

We have seen that in a reflexivity the relator and related are identical to each other. But can the relator and related be themselves reflexivities, too? In other words, can a reflexivity identify a relator and a related which are reflexivities on their own? Put differently, can there be a meta-reflexivity?

There is no reason why not. Since a relator and a related can be, in principle, anything whatsoever, they can also be reflexivities themselves. Moreover, the relator and related can in principle also be meta-reflexivities, or meta-meta-reflexivities themselves. Furthermore, the "higher-level" reflexivities can in principle either be of the same kind and nature as the "lower-level" reflexivities or of a different kind.

Moreover, in principle there *must* be *many* meta-reflexivities of the type in which the meta-reflexivities are of the same nature and kind as the reflexivities themselves. The reason for that is that in principle each reflexivity must issue in a meta-reflexivity, a meta-meta-reflexivity, etc; once the relator is the same as the related, and thus is taken to relate to itself, both of them, as it were, are the related, or the relator. Hence, the relator and related can together be taken to relate to themselves, too. Of course, such a process can, in principle, go on *ad infinitum*. Thus, once we have a cause that causes itself in Spinoza's *causa sui*, we must also have a self-causation that causes itself, etc. Similarly, once we have thinking that thinks itself in Aristotle's unmoved mover, we also have a self-thinking that thinks itself, etc. In principle, then, there *are* meta-reflexivities *ad infinitum* in all complete, cohesive and immediate

reflexivities.

However, because of the relations between reflexivities and meta-reflexivities, one in fact meets very few meta-reflexivities (and meta-meta-reflexivities, etc.) in philosophy. To an extent, the relation is the same as between any relator or related and the reflexivity of which they are a part. However, the difference here is much smaller. Ordinarily, relator and related are not reflexive, while the reflexivity is; but here they are all reflexive. Thus, in most cases the characteristics of meta-reflexivity will repeat those of reflexivity. In other words, since meta-reflexivity is formed because of the identity of the relator with the related (which, since they are the same, can be taken together as the relator or the related and relate to themselves again, in the meta-reflexivity), the reflexivity and the meta-reflexivity are the same in most, if not all, respects. Thus there will usually be no distinction between them, and the latter will collapse into the former.

In order for there to be meta-reflexivity in a system, then, there has to be something that makes the meta-reflexivity distinct from the reflexivity and thus enables it to be something else. This is usually conditional upon the needs of the system, which does or does not make the existence of the meta-reflexivity useful, and the conceptual framework of the system, which does or does not make the concept of such a meta-reflexivity possible in the system at all. Otherwise, the meta-reflexivity (or meta-meta-reflexivity, etc.) exists in the system only in principle, since it is completely indistinguishable from reflexivity.

Take, for example, the thinking that thinks itself in Aristotle's unmoved mover. According to what has been said above, the self-thinking should become a self-thinking which thinks itself, and again a self-thinking of self-thinking which thinks about itself, and so on. But for Aristotle, self-thinking is quite enough. Moreover, a meta-reflexivity has no meaning for him. *A fortiori*, the meta-reflexivity of this meta-reflexivity, which is the self-thinking which

thinks about itself thinking about itself, again, cannot even be constructed in a way that makes sense in the system. Thus, it completely collapses to the lower-level reflexivity.

Similarly, in Spinoza, we can still understand what it means to have not only a cause which causes itself, but also a self-causation that causes itself. But it is hard to understand what a self-causation which causes itself which, in turn, causes itself might be. Moreover, we feel that no new information is given to us in these meta-reflexivities. Although the first meta-reflexivity can at least still be conceptualized in the system, it has no functions or uses which will make it otherwise distinguishable from plain reflexivity.

Thus, although all these meta-reflexivities exist, many of them exist *only* in principle, since frequently they have no meaning of their own. Hence, we shall frequently take the reflexivity to be the end of the line, and shall not pursue the meta-reflexivities further. We shall have meta-reflexivities, meta-meta-reflexivities etc., then, only when they do have significance in the conceptual framework of the system and where they add something to the system which it needs and which does not exist in mere reflexivity. In such cases there will be in meta-reflexivity something new and different, and we can say that we have meta-reflexivity in the system. But in most cases the meta-reflexivities either cannot be conceptualized or else fulfills no function in the system. Hence, they do not have an existence of their own. For this reason, most philosophical systems which have reflexivities do not have any meta-reflexivities, those that do hardly have meta-meta-reflexivities, and infinite chains of meta-reflexivities never appear. When chains of meta-reflexivities exist at all, then, they are very short.

7. The Relations between the Different Types of Reflexivity

Can a reflexivity belong simultaneously to more than one of the types of reflexivity described above? In other words, can it be typified in several ways at the same time? And if it can, is a combination of any of these types of reflexivity possible, or do some types exclude others?

That at least some reflexivities belong to several types at the same time seems clear from the examples encountered above. Sentence (1), for example, was both complete, cohesive (under a certain interpretation), contradictory, un-mediated and unchanging. Likewise, the candidate's growing popularity was partial, non-cohesive (under one interpretation), mediated and changing. But to check the compatibility of the different types of reflexivity in a more rigorous and complete way, an examination of their structures, rather than a search for examples, should be carried out. The failure to find examples of specific combinations may be due to our lack of imagination, or maybe even to the actual inexistence of such examples, rather than to their *impossibility*. Thus, to see whether certain combinations of types are possible, we should check whether the structures of those types are exclusive or not.

It seems, first of all, that all types of reflexivity exclude those with which they form a pair; thus, changeability would exclude un-changeability, cohesiveness un-cohesiveness, completeness partiality, etc. Indeed, a relation or a thing seems to be able to relate to the same thing from the same aspect either in an affirmatory or contradictory way, but not both at the same time. Again, it can either change it or not change it, but not both at the same time. Likewise, it can relate either mediately or immediately, but again not both together. Similarly, what relates is either a thing or a relation, but not both at the same time, and it can relate

completely or partially, but one of these ways of relating excludes the other. Of course, in some cases it may be difficult to decide what is the right way to view a certain relation, but viewing it in one way excludes viewing it in another.

Some types of reflexivity, however, exclude not only those with which they form a pair. A structural analysis shows, for example, that contradictoriness excludes completeness. Since in a reflexivity the relator and the related are one thing they must share some aspects or characteristics. However, in a complete contradictory reflexivity they must contradict each other completely, in every characteristic and aspect and, hence, can share none. To put it differently, since in a complete contradictory reflexivity everything is contradicted, it cannot be a reflexivity at all. Thus, we shall never have complete contradictory reflexivities. Complete reflexivities will be affirmatory, and contradictory reflexivities can be only partial.

Similarly, a structural analysis shows that no reflexivity could be typified at the same time as changing and contradictory, or as changing and affirmatory. Generally, when something changes, some parts of it must be denied and replaced by others, while other parts must remain as they were. If the former did not happen, we would have stability rather than change. If the latter did not happen, we would have no change but rather the complete disappearance of this thing and the appearance of another.³⁸ This is also true when a relation (or a thing) changes itself or a certain number of its aspects. Some aspects must be denied and replaced by others, while others must remain as they were. Hence, the same set of aspects cannot at the same time be denied or affirmed; it cannot be denied, since some of the aspects must be affirmed for there

³⁸ I have been greatly influenced in this analysis, of course, by Aristotle's analysis of change in *Phys. I*, 191a-b.

to be change. Similarly, it cannot be affirmed, since some of the aspects must be denied for there to be change. Hence, a reflexivity cannot be changing and affirmatory, or changing and contradictory, at the same time and in the same respect.⁹

For analogous reasons, a changing reflexivity can never be complete. When a reflexivity is complete all the aspects of the relator are identical to those of the related, and there is nothing that can initiate change or be changed. Hence, a complete reflexivity will always be the way it was; it is static in essence.

There is, however, an exception to the above: we can have a complete changing reflexivity if it is also a mediate one. The reflexivity can be complete and changing if the relator changes a second, different thing which, in turn, changes the relator. In such a case a complete changing reflexivity is structurally possible. We can conclude, then, that of these three characteristics a combination of any two is possible, but such a combination excludes the third. If a reflexivity is both immediate and complete it cannot be changing; if it is changing and complete it cannot be immediate; finally, if it is changing and immediate it cannot be complete.

Further, we see that the combination of cohesiveness and mediation is structurally equivalent to non-cohesiveness. When a reflexivity is cohesively mediated--i e the relation relates to itself through another relation or thing--it is not different from a non-cohesive reflexivity, where a relation (which, like any relation, can also be seen as a thing) is related to

⁹ Of course, a very minor change may be interpreted as an affirmation, and a very radical change as a contradiction. However, viewing a reflexivity in one way will exclude, again, viewing it in another, and the lack of a sharp demarcation line between changing reflexivities and affirmatory and contradictory ones only strengthens the correctness of the analysis above.

itself through another relation or thing. Hence, although called different names, non-cohesiveness and mediated cohesiveness are structurally the same.

But, since cohesiveness and non-cohesiveness are exclusive, the combination of cohesiveness and mediation will be impossible; a mediated cohesiveness will be non-cohesiveness.

So, does this mean that the only difference between cohesiveness and non-cohesiveness is the mediation? If this is the case, then we can dispense with cohesiveness and non-cohesiveness altogether, and use only immediacy and mediacy. However, this is not the case; mediate and immediate non-cohesive reflexivities are distinct from each other, and so are immediate cohesive and non-cohesive reflexivities. It seems, therefore, that the two pairs of types of reflexivity cannot be collapsed into one another.

These, then, are the combinations of the types of reflexivity which are *not* possible. Hence, all other combinations are structurally possible. The number of the legitimate possible combinations (i.e. those which include none of the combinations above and no pair of types of reflexivity) is, of course, large; we may fail to find actual examples of all of them. However, we shall still know that they are structurally possible, and hence can exist in principle. Even if we have never encountered them up to now, we may yet do so.⁶⁰

⁶⁰ In some cases we can even detect the reasons for the scarcity, or nonexistence, of certain combinations which are structurally possible. For example, the nonexistence of examples of complete, mediate reflexivities, notwithstanding their structural legitimacy, is explained by the uses to which complete reflexivities and mediate reflexivities are put. Complete reflexivities are usually used in metaphysical systems as pure, perfect entities (e.g. the unmoved mover, the *causa sui*). Part of being perfect, in such contexts, is being homogeneous, too; this, in turn, involves immediacy. Hence, it will be difficult to find complete reflexivities which are also

In this section we have distinguished ten types of reflexivity according to their structure: complete and partial; cohesive and non-cohesive; affirmatory and contradictory; mediated and un-mediated; and changing and unchanging. By means of these types we should be able to classify all reflexivities we meet, notwithstanding the diverse fields in which these reflexivities are found and the diverse purposes for which they are used.⁶¹

But the structural analysis of reflexivity can help explain also the nature of these different purposes and uses of reflexivity. Let us turn and see, in the next section, how.

mediate. Similarly, in the empirical world we rarely meet things which are complete and simple. Hence, all the reflexivities we shall meet in the empirical world will be both incomplete and mediate. Again, there is very little likelihood that a complete, mediate reflexivity will be met, although structurally such reflexivities are possible and may yet be encountered.

⁶¹ According to the analysis above, if a reflexivity is typified by a type that excludes two others it can be typified in three ways. If it is typified by a type that excludes one other type, it can be typified in four ways. All other reflexivities can be typified in five ways. No reflexivity can be typified in more than five ways, since this will mean that it is typified by two types of the same pair.

V. THE CHARACTERISTICS AND USES OF REFLEXIVITY

Since this is an introduction, the typical uses and characteristics of reflexivity will be discussed here only generally.⁶² More specific discussions will appear in the different chapters of this work, in which some actual examples of reflexivities in the history of philosophy will be studied.

Just as the structure of reflexivity has so far been understood against the background of directionality, so should the characteristics and uses of reflexivity be understood against those of directionality. This is so, not only because reflexivity is structurally connected to directionality, but also because reflexivity is used, in many cases, in the context of directional relations, and is intended to perform functions that they cannot.

The most essential characteristic of directional relations, of course, is that they relate two *different relata*. The directional relation constitutes a difference between the relator and the related, in the sense that there is something in the relator not found in the related. This essential characteristic is usually beneficial (otherwise we would have not used it) since many times we need a distinction between things. At other times, however, we may want the distinction between certain things *not* to obtain. It is here that reflexivity is very useful, for its most general and essential characteristic is precisely the opposite of that of directional relations: it makes the relator and the related become one thing.

For example, since the two *relata* in the directional relation are different, they are also partial; each of them is either the relator or the related, but not both. In other words, if the

⁶² For reasons explained in the next section, I discuss here mostly, even if not only, the characteristics and uses of the more cohesive, immediate and complete reflexivities.

relator and the related are different, there is something which each of them lacks. Reflexivity, on the other hand, can join the two different, partial things into a single but complete thing, and thus provide a system with the completeness needed in it. This is the way reflexivity is employed, for example, in Aristotle, Maimonides, and Spinoza.⁶³

Likewise, reflexivity can be used to combine in one thing the natures or characteristics of two. Thus, it can merge a philosophical system and reality (Hegel) or, in literature, fiction and reality (Marquez, in the last chapter of *A Hundred Years of Solitude*)⁶⁴; means and ends; theory and practice; the thinking subject and the world; the basis and what is based upon it, etc., when the distinction between those concepts obstructs, rather than furthers, the aims of the theory.

But reflexivity can be used not only to provide an entity having two different characteristics, but also to provide an entity having neither. The destruction of the distinction between the two *relata* can result in the complete dissolution of their individual nature. Thus, Derrida uses reflexivity not in order to have something which retains the characteristics of both reality and consciousness, but in order to destroy the meaning of these terms. The same use of reflexivity can be also found in some of Beckett's plays. Similarly, in certain forms of

⁶³ Of course, I do not claim that this is the only way to overcome the incompleteness problem. Another possibility is to maintain that one of the *relata* (e.g. the related) is complete, while the other is not, and that this is the difference between them. Another way to overcome this problem is to posit the existence of an entity which is neither the relator, the related, the relation, nor a reflexivity, but rather a simple, complete entity which is unreflexive. This is the solution of the "One" which will be discussed in chapter three of this work.

⁶⁴ Gabriel Garcia Marquez *A Hundred Years of Solitude* trans. Gregory Rabassa (New York: Avon, 1970).

mysticism reflexivity is used to provide a system not with completeness but, on the contrary, with nothingness.⁴⁵

When reflexivity is complete and affirmatory, it can also be taken as homogeneous or simple; if something relates to itself completely, then the relator and the related are exactly one and the same thing, and there is no place for a distinction between them. The reflexivity, in such a case, is simple. Thus, the reflexive structure can answer the demand for such a homogeneous entity or entities within some philosophical system.

Similarly, there could hardly be autonomous or free entities in an exclusively directional world. One entity could, of course, cause or regulate others, but then, if it did not cause or regulate itself, some other entities would have to do so. The basic quality of reflexivity, on the other hand, enables the relator and the related to merge via self-relation, and thereby produce entities which cause, rule or regulate themselves. Thus, reflexivity endows certain entities in the system with autonomy, freedom or self sufficiency (e.g, in Kant's moral philosophy, Spinoza's *causa sui*, Aristotle's unmoved mover, and feedback mechanisms in biology, technology and computers).

In the same way, reflexivity can help close linear, never-ending chains of directional relations. Directionality commits us to chains of things, each of which is related both to a previous and a following one, all together in an infinite regress. Reflexivity can serve to end such undesired infinite regresses by insuring that the last link in the chain relates to *itself*.

⁴⁵ This affirmatory reflexivity should be distinguish from contradictory reflexivity--which is also used by Derrida for his philosophical deconstruction. Both kinds of reflexivity are present in his philosophy. However, they are still distinct and operate in different ways. More elaborate discussion of Derrida's use of reflexivity will be given in chapter 8, below.

Since, being reflexive, it is both a relator *and* a related, it too is linked, but not to anything outside it--rather it is linked to itself. This is the way reflexivity is utilized, for example, in Aristotle's unmoved mover and Spinoza's *causa sui*, where the chain of movers or causes would continue endlessly (everything must have a mover or a cause) if there were no self-mover or self-cause at the end of the chain. Similarly, Descartes' *cogito* satisfies the need of the system for a truth on which all others are based, but which itself is not based on anything; the *cogito* act is based on itself.

The ability of reflexivity to merge the relator with the related can also be utilized to make something contradict itself--thus forming a contradictory reflexivity. In a world where only directional relations existed this could not happen. Relators could only contradict other things, but never themselves. These reflexive contradictions can be used to upset the universality of generalizations in otherwise contradiction-proof formal and philosophical systems, which were built with only directional relations in mind.

It is true that finding contradictions and upsetting the universality of generalizations within systems can be viewed as a destructive enterprise; however, it is still a way in which reflexivity, thanks to its basic characteristic, is used, and therefore it should be discussed as such. Moreover, the "usefulness" of reflexivity in such cases depends upon one's views concerning the generalizations and the system. For example, Descartes considered the upsetting of the universality of doubt through the use of contradictory reflexivity in his *cogito* to be a constructive step. A skeptic, of course, would consider it a destructive one. Similarly, the use of contradictory reflexivity to undermine relativism could be evaluated as both destructive and constructive, according to one's aims and philosophical sympathies.

This is also true of other contradictory reflexivities (e.g. Russell's Paradox, Tarski's

effort, Gödel's proof). However, because contradictory reflexivity is commonly used to overturn generalizations, and thus philosophical and formal systems, and since the standard philosophical intention is to build such generalizations and systems, contradictory reflexivity is usually viewed as playing a destructive role.

Moreover, the basic characteristic of reflexivity enables it to explain some radical social changes. Explaining the enormous success of some religious, political or cultural movements only directionally, by external factors alone, does not usually, in my opinion, make sense. Part of the explanation of their tremendous success is the success itself; it propagates itself in a virtuous circle, similar but opposite to the better-known vicious one. In my view, the importance of this factor sometimes exceeds all the others and should be recognized.

It should be added, however, that the basic characteristic of reflexivity will often make reflexive entities, if they are complete, closed in themselves. When a thing or a relation relates to itself completely, in each and every way, it cannot relate at the same time to things outside itself. Thus, it could not relate to or influence anything outside of itself, nor could anything outside of it relate to or influence it. As we shall see, this characteristic of reflexivity impedes the use of its other characteristics.

VI. THE REFLEXIVITIES DISCUSSED IN THIS WORK

In section III above it was claimed that, although there is no clear demarcation line between reflexivities and non-reflexivities, the distinction still holds. According to the criteria provided in that section, looking within in order to avoid the sensible world,⁶⁶ for example, is not a kind of reflexivity, and hence will hardly be discussed in this work.

But some kinds of self-knowledge (or self-consciousness, or introspection, or looking within) do seem to contain a reflexive component. Take, for example, the self-knowledge which is taken to produce knowledge of the divine element in the knower. If to be specific, the relator and the related--the knower and the known--are not one and the same thing in this case. But in some philosophies the fact that they are part of the same individual is in this case--unlike the previous one--significant.⁶⁷ One cannot know God in the same way by looking outward--e.g. at the soul of someone else or at a tree. One can discover the divine element only by searching one's *own* soul. Similarly, Locke and Hume⁶⁸ call on us to learn about our mental and intellectual faculties by introspecting, not by inspecting other minds. Their assumption is that we have some kind of privileged insight into our *own* minds. Likewise, in Dilthey's opinion what makes the historical knowledge possible is the fact that those who study history are also

⁶⁶ As people were asked to do in the Hellenistic period and Middle Ages. See chapter three below.

⁶⁷ E.g. Meister Eckhart's. See chapter three below.

⁶⁸ John Locke *An Essay concerning Human Understanding* I, i, 1-2; David Hume *A Treatise of Human Nature* Book I, Introduction.

those who make it."⁹ Again, the similarity between the relator and related--even if partial--is significant.

All these relations are reflexive. They consist of a directional relation, i.e. one that usually relates two different *relata*, which is special because its relator and related are not different from each other, but, at least in a certain sense, are one and the same. The privileged knowledge, which is different from ordinary knowledge, in these cases stems from the fact that the relator and the related--the knower and the known--are the same. Put differently, the most general characteristic of reflexivity--that it identifies the relator and related of a directional relation--permits one to know, in some types of self-knowledge, self-consciousness, etc., things that one normally would not know.

These uses of reflexivity can be seen as forming a group of their own. It is no coincidence that these types of self-knowledge have rarely been associated with the other kinds of reflexivity in either historical or thematic research. Reflexive self-knowledge seems more acceptable and common-sensical than other kinds of reflexivity, since the relator and related in it--just as in non-reflexive self-knowledge--still seem sufficiently different from each other, notwithstanding their necessary similarity. Hence, relating them through a directional relation does not seem as peculiar as it does in other, more cohesive, complete and immediate kinds of reflexivity. Consequently, the typical problems that arise in the use of more cohesive, complete and immediate reflexivities do not arise in the use of reflexive self-knowledge. Likewise, the purposes for which more cohesive, complete and immediate reflexivities are used are different from the ones for which reflexive self-knowledge is used. Reflexive self-knowledge is typically

⁹ Wilhelm Dilthey *Der Aufbau der geschichtlichen Welt in den Geisteswissenschaften* ed. Bernhard Groethusyen *Gesammelte Schriften* vol. 7 (Stuttgart and Göttingen: B. G. Teubner and Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979) pp. 278, 320.

used for only one purpose: emphasizing a privileged access or relation. Moreover, in many cases the privileged access or relation given by the reflexive self-knowledge is not very important or emphasized in the theory in which it appears.⁷⁰ Reflexive self-knowledge is frequently employed, then, in the same way as non-reflexive self-knowledge, and the reflexive component in it frequently seems accidental. In terms of structure, uses, problems and history, then, reflexive self-knowledge and the other, more cohesive and complete types of reflexivity, can be dealt with independently.

Notwithstanding the importance of reflexive self-knowledge in the whole history of Western philosophy and culture, and especially in the Modern Era, I shall hardly discuss it in this study. There are several reasons for choosing to concentrate on more cohesive, complete and immediate kinds of reflexivity. First, reflexive self-knowledge has already been widely studied, even if without usually linking it, either thematically or historically, to other kinds of reflexivity. Second, as noted above, reflexivity and the privileged access it endows are accidental and insignificant in many of the uses of self-knowledge. Third, since this work aims at studying the uses, legitimacy and problems of reflexivity in general, it is more appropriate to consider the purer, more radical and less palatable forms of reflexivity in it.

Thus, unless otherwise specified, the term "reflexivity" is used in the various chapters of this work to refer only to the rarely studied, unpalatable, more cohesive, complete and immediate reflexivities. Perhaps they should be called "stringent reflexivities", in order to emphasize that I am dealing here only with a special kind of reflexivity; but for reasons of style I refer to them in this work simply as "reflexivities". The division suggested here resembles,

⁷⁰ Take as examples, again, Locke and Hume's theories. Although there is in them a reflexive element of privileged access, it is mostly technical and does not play an important part.

in some ways, the one suggested by Charles Taylor in his *Sources of the Self*.⁷¹ What I call here non-reflexive self-knowledge, self-consciousness, looking within, introspection, reflection, etc., is called by Taylor regular reflexivity. What is named here reflexive self-knowledge etc. is called by Taylor radical reflexivity (although he may not include in this group some cases in which the reflexive element in the self-knowledge is insignificant and irrelevant for the context in which this reflexive self-knowledge appears). The "stringent" reflexivities discussed in this work (or simply "reflexivities", as they will be called here) are not discussed as such by Professor Taylor, but in his terms they should be seen as a sub-group of radical reflexivities.⁷²

The history of the use of reflexive self-knowledge and non-reflexive self-knowledge is, however, relevant for the history of the use of reflexivity. There are good reasons to believe that thinking in terms of reflexive and non-reflexive self-knowledge influenced the use of stringent reflexivity. Thus, although I shall concentrate in this work on stringent reflexivity, I shall sometimes refer to reflexive self-knowledge and even to non-reflexive self-knowledge as well.

⁷¹ Chap. 7.

⁷² This is not completely correct, since the reflexivities discussed in this work--being typified by their structure only--can include, for example, self-causation, which does not have a place in Taylor's division. Since Taylor discusses reflexivity in the context of different interpretations and self-interpretations of the Self, he limits his discussion to states of consciousness and activity.

Of course, according to the division of reflexivities suggested in this work, "stringent" reflexivities (i.e. more cohesive, complete and immediate ones) are not a subgroup of Taylor's radical reflexivities (i.e. less cohesive and complete ones), but merely another type of reflexivity.

The same is true for the topic of "self". Since it is a separate topic from the one I examine in this work, I shall not be able to discuss it here, notwithstanding the fact that it is important and interesting. Nevertheless, since the changes in the reactions towards the concept of "self" influenced the uses of reflexivity, I shall sometimes refer to it.

VII. CONCLUDING REMARKS

My aim in this study is threefold. First, I want to bring about a recognition of the ignored but nevertheless significant reflexive structure. Second, I want to make a contribution to the history of philosophy by highlighting the history of an overlooked philosophical tool and by concentrating on some neglected aspects of philosophical systems. Third, I want to elucidate the general structure, uses and characteristics of reflexivity.

Thus, although this study is primarily historical, it is also thematic. Each of these two dimensions is both valuable in itself and instrumental for the study of the other. Thematic discussion of the characteristics of reflexivity is necessary for making sense of its actual uses, and discussion of actual uses in the history of philosophy reciprocally helps elucidate a general theory of reflexivity.

Furthermore, I intend this study to be a prolegomenon to a larger project--viz. the research of the reflexivity in all its different aspects. Thus, I discussed in this introduction the structure of reflexivity, its typology, the functions it can fulfill, its characteristics and the legitimacy of using it in a way which fits reflexivities in all areas. Furthermore, even my discussion of reflexivity in philosophical contexts is illustrative, in some ways, of reflexivity in general. It is true that this study concentrates on philosophical uses of reflexivity, but they are frequently the most instructive ones for evaluating the legitimacy of reflexivity in general. Reflexivities in the visual arts and literature are unhelpful in this respect because the criteria for legitimacy in these fields are too lax (if they exist at all). In biology, technology and computer sciences, on the other hand, criteria are strict, but reflexivities are frequently mediate, incomplete and incohesive, and hence can be viewed as directional and accepted on this basis. It is only in philosophical systems that reflexivities tend to be immediate, complete and cohesive,

and at the same time the criteria for their legitimacy tend to be strict. Thus, reflexivities in philosophy pose the best challenge for those who argue that reflexivities can be a legitimate philosophical tool. Likewise, it is true that what I present here is an outline of the history of reflexivity in philosophy and not of the history of reflexivity in general. But for many generations reflexivities have been used only in philosophy and adjacent areas.⁷³ Again, then, the discussion of reflexivity in philosophy is more illustrative of reflexivity in general than a discussion in any other specific field could be.

In each of the following chapters I discuss the place and functions of reflexivity in a certain philosophical system. In each I point to the existence of a reflexivity in that system (a fact that frequently has not received sufficient attention in the literature), try to determine its functions in that system, and evaluate its necessity. Moreover, I try to assess how legitimate is the use of reflexivity in the framework of the system in which it is found.

A few presuppositions have been adopted in the following analyses. First, it is supposed that a methodical and concentrated study of reflexivity will permit us to understand the characteristics and uses of reflexivity better than the philosophers who actually used it. It is assumed, then, that philosophers can use reflexivity (just like transcendental arguments or *modus ponens* syllogisms) without being aware of the exact nature or philosophical implications of this use. In other words, the analyses provided in this work are not intended to reconstruct what actually went on in the minds of philosophers who used reflexivity.

⁷³ Particularly theology. The appearance of reflexivity in visual arts, literature, technology, biological research etc. came later.

Second, my analysis of philosophical systems is influenced by General System Theory⁷⁴ and Structuralism. I see philosophical theories as systems made up of explicit and implicit constituents, e.g. theses, pre-assumptions, structures,⁷⁵ convictions, concepts, arguments and intuitions. The constituents are interrelated and substantiate one another and the system in their coherence (I take this to be the case even in foundational-deductive systems). Thus, they can be seen as means or tools which do certain jobs in the system.

Therefore, it makes sense to ask of each constituent what job it fulfills in the system. In this study I shall frequently ask this question about reflexivity, trying to determine its place and functions in the philosophical systems in which it appears. Of course, some constituents may be arbitrary in the system and not be called for by any intuition, dogma, conviction or view, nor by the necessity to prove that they cohere with each other. Since such constituents do no jobs in the system, nothing would be amiss in it if they were removed. But most systems contain very few arbitrary constituents, and frequently none at all. In several systems (e.g. Derrida's theory) some constituents seem arbitrary but, in fact, are not. They have a job to

⁷⁴ As presented in e.g. Ludwig von Bertalanffy *General System Theory: Foundations, Development, Applications* rev. ed. (New York: George Braziller, 1968). Ervin Laszlo *The Systems View of the World* (New York: George Braziller, 1972). Charles W. Churchland *The Design of Inquiring Systems: Basic Concepts of Systems and Organization* (New York: Basic Books, 1971). I have also been influenced by Jacques Schlanger's application of principles of General System Theory to philosophy in his *La Structure Metaphysique* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1975). For another example in which some of the principles of General System Theory have been applied to a philosophical system see Abraham Edel's *Aristotle* (New York: Dell Pub. Co., 1967).

⁷⁵ For example hierarchy (e.g. in Neoplatonism), symmetry (e.g. in Manicheism), directionality, reflexivity.

perform in the system--viz. making the system arbitrary. But it is clear that some constituents are more important in the system than others. Whereas some (primarily convictions and principal philosophical intuitions) are valued for their own sake, others are not important in themselves and could be replaced if their job could have been better performed by other constituents. Of course, it will sometimes be difficult to decide, let alone to prove, that a certain constituent belongs to one group rather than another. Still, the distinction between them, even if it is relative, can be maintained. It will be seen in this study that through most of the history of philosophy, reflexivity was used as a constituent of the second type, i.e. was not valued in itself and was employed only because no other philosophical tool could fulfill the functions it did. This has begun changing only in some of the later uses of reflexivity.

Of course, analyzing a complete system according to the guidelines outlined above is very a difficult task. I have not taken it up in any of the systems I deal with below. Systems have been described here only to the extent necessary to understand the place of reflexivity in them. I have refrained from presenting systems in full not only because I do not have the time and space for this task, but also because it is not necessary for the purpose of this study, which is to supply a better understanding of reflexivity. Thus, discussion of systems in this work will be only partial and will assume the reader's prior acquaintance with them.

Another problem must be met here: the "functional" mode of analysis I present here is totally alien to some systems (e.g. Hegel's, Heidegger's and Derrida's). Indeed, the reader should keep in mind that in order to delineate the place and function of reflexivity I distort, to an extent, the character of the system about which I write. However, my discussion should not be seen as a presentation of the different systems, but as a certain mode of analysis of them, aimed at isolating and highlighting some of their characteristics.

The decision about which of the numerous uses of reflexivity within the history of philosophy--even the more cohesive, complete and immediate ones--to focus on was an arduous one. I have tried to present uses which are philosophically interesting, are significant for the history of the use of reflexivity, and appear in important philosophical systems. I am sure that the reader will feel that a discussion of other uses of reflexivity should not have been omitted. I think I can defend my selection, but such a reaction would show that the frequency, importance, and neglect of research on reflexivity is gradually being recognized, and interest in it is gradually being aroused. I can only hope that further research, both on the general nature of reflexivity, on the uses of reflexivity in other fields, and on the uses of reflexivity in philosophy, will fill the gaps I have left.

chapter two

ARISTOTLE'S USE OF REFLEXIVITY IN THE UNMOVED MOVER

I. ASSUMPTIONS OF THE DISCUSSION

In this chapter I shall concentrate on one of the first uses of reflexivity in the history of philosophy: Aristotle's unmoved mover.¹ In my discussion I make a few assumptions. First, I assume that the Aristotelian texts should be interpreted as one coherent system. This is an important assumption, since its rejection or acceptance can completely change the understanding of what Aristotle wrote. For example, if Aristotle's Theology is taken to be related to his Ontology, we would understand the unmoved mover differently than if it were not. Likewise, if the accounts of the unmoved mover in *Metaphysics* XII and *Physics* VIII are seen as related, its nature would be understood differently than it if they were seen as independent of each other.

This assumption contrasts with one that places less emphasis on the unity of Aristotle's various treatises,² or even sees Aristotle as going through different stages of intellectual

¹ Plato does use reflexivity in *Charmides* 166-171, *Phaedrus* 245, and *Laws* 894. In the *Charmides* he brings it up only to dismiss it, but in the later *Laws* and *Phaedrus* it plays an important part in the proofs for the immortality of the soul. I do not have space here to discuss these proofs in the detail they deserve, but I do think that the current interpretations misunderstand them. I see these proofs as based on the nature of reflexivity, not very differently from the way Aristotle bases the eternity of the unmoved mover on reflexivity (see below). However, even if I am right here, reflexivity does not play an important role in Plato's theories.

² E.g. Jonathan Barnes in his notes to his *Aristotle's Posterior Analytics* Clarendon Aristotle Series (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975) or in his *Aristotle Past Masters Series* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982).

development, in each of which he has different views.³ It is hard to decide between the two. Whereas Joseph Owens and Philip Merlan,⁴ for example, assume the former view as a basis for their discussion, and do not even try to prove it at all, Werner Marx and especially Giovanni Reale,⁵ argue for it. But in their arguments anything that can be seen as coherent is seen as such; contradictions are taken to be unimportant; congruencies and parallels are found even in the contradictions; and some contradictions are explained away by the fact that our texts are no more than excerpts of students' notes or by the damaged form of the manuscripts. Thus, on the assumption that their view is the correct one, dubious passages are interpreted so as to provide further proof for it. This only strengthens their conviction (which I share) that Aristotle presents us with a system.

³ Most famously Werner Jaeger in his *Aristotle: Fundamentals of the History of his Development* trans. R. Robinson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968) pp. 342-367. See also e.g. Geoffrey Ernest Richard Lloyd *Aristotle: The Growth and Structure of his Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968) and concerning Aristotle's psychology, François Nuyens *L'Evolution de la psychologie d'Aristote* trans. Theo Schillings (Louvain: Editions de l'institut supérieur de philosophie, 1973).

⁴ Joseph Owens *The Doctrine of Being in the Aristotelian Metaphysics* 2nd ed. (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1963) pp.438-440; Philip Merlan *From Platonism to Neoplatonism* (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1960) pp. 160-220.

⁵ Werner Marx *Introduction to Aristotle's Theory of Being as Being* (The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1977) pp. 43-59; Giovanni Reale *The Concept of First Philosophy and the Unity of the Metaphysics of Aristotle* trans. J. R. Catan (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1980).

Similarly, when supporters of the other working assumption (i.e. the one that interprets Aristotle's writings in a more atomistic way) argue for it at all⁶ they emphasize the differences rather than the similarities in the Aristotelian texts and take what members of the former group saw as technical incoherences to be essential ones. Thus they too are able to supply evidence for their views.

All these "proofs", then, beg the question to some extent. In choosing the first working assumption (i.e. that the Aristotelian texts should be interpreted as one coherent system) I relied on another criterion: the fertility and interest of the texts when viewed under a certain assumption. It seems to me that the first assumption yields a richer, more fertile and more interesting understanding of Aristotle than the second one. Moreover, notwithstanding variations in his views, I think that Aristotle was actually trying to present us with a system. Our job as philosophers, then, is to make sense of his writings by looking for the system behind them. We should show the coherence whenever we can, and explain contradictions and discrepancies in them as well as we can.

II. ARISTOTLE'S SYSTEM

In order to discuss the roles that reflexivity plays in Aristotle's theory I must briefly discuss the theory itself. Since the main reflexive component in Aristotle's system--the unmoved mover--plays mostly ontological and physico-astronomical roles for Aristotle, these will also define the limits of the outline.

⁶ Jonathan Barnes, for example, seems to take it for granted.

Aristotle disagrees with Plato's theory that the changing particulars in our world are not substances. Plato thought that the substances, which are eternal and unchanging, exist as "Ideas" or "Forms" only in another, pure, disconnected world. The particulars of this world do not exist independently, but only in virtue of their "taking part" in the Being of the real substances, the Forms. Aristotle, in contrast, thinks that the particulars around us are the substances. We can *think* the forms common to groups of them in abstraction from the particulars in which these forms exist, but the forms do not really exist independently of the particulars. Therefore, they are not substances. It is only the many changing, becoming, perishing, individual particulars around us that really exist, and thus are really substances.

Every such substance has two important aspects. One of them is general: when we want to know what the substance is, we concentrate on that aspect which makes it what it is. This aspect is also common to it and some other things, which together belong to the same kind or species.

The other aspect is responsible for both the individuality of the substance and the differences between it and other individuals of the same species. While the former element made them particulars of the *same species*, the latter one makes them *particulars* of the same species.

Aristotle calls the former aspect "form" and the latter "matter". In some cases, these terms can be understood literally. What is similar in different building blocks, or Apollo statues, or frogs, what accounts for their membership in a certain species and makes them be what they are (and therefore is also their essence), is their form. And what differentiates between them is the fact that they are made of different matter. However, these terms cannot always be taken literally. The form of a human being, for example, is not the physical outline of the human body, but the human soul.

Form, species and essence are also linked with actuality, while matter is linked with

potentiality. Substances change from potentiality to actuality, the state in which they fully bear the marks of their species. Matter has the potentiality to develop and be actualized by being linked with this or that form (but not any form). But actuality and potentiality are relative rather than absolute terms. A letter, for example, can be seen as the form of its matter, the ink, and as the matter of the word in which it occurs. The word in its turn will be the matter of the sentence, and so forth.

Aristotle sharply disagrees with Plato's intuitions on change and movement; he thinks that change and movement are real and essential processes, and thus must be philosophically acknowledged and explained. He links change to form and matter, and especially potentiality and actuality. A tree, for example, develops out of a seed, through the shoot, to its mature form. Each and every stage of this development is the form of the previous stage and the matter of the next one. The tree changes in a certain direction and towards a certain end and form.

This is the movement or change from potentiality to actuality. But the actuality which guides the development and the change is, in a certain sense, prior to the matter. Since the form of a substance is both the end towards which it strives and what moves it, understanding the form of a substance, which is also its essence and "principle" (*logos*), gives us an understanding of its activity as well.

This also explains how form, essence, species and actuality are linked for Aristotle with completeness, function and end: matter is sometimes related to form as part to whole; when a substance has its form it can fulfill its function in the best way; and its end is to reach this stage of highest development.

Thus, Aristotle thinks that there are four aspects by which a substance should be understood. The first is its material aspect, which establishes what enables the substance or what it is made of (the material cause). The other three aspects are related to each other: In order

to understand the nature and quality of the substance we have to know its end or function (the final cause). We also have to know what affects it to make it what it is (the efficient cause). And we also have to know its form (the formal cause).

Since all four aspects determine the substance, only the knowledge of all of them allows a complete understanding of it. To take a statue as an example of an artificial substance, its material cause is the stone or marble, its final cause is religious or ornamental, the efficient cause is the sculptor, and the formal cause is its form as it existed in the consciousness of the sculptor. In a living substance, such as a tree, the material cause is the material from which the tree is made, the final cause is its mature form, the efficient cause is the mature tree that made the seed from which the tree grows, and the formal cause is, again, its form. We can see a link among the causes: in a living substance the formal, efficient and final causes can be identified with one another. There is a connection between them in the artificial substances as well. And since the form in natural substances passes through the species from generation to generation, Aristotle sees it as eternal and unchanging.

Aristotle's universe, then, is made of specific substances which change all the time. All substances include potential and material components as well as actual and formal ones. Aristotle's picture of the world is thus more common-sensical and non-transcendent than Plato's or Parmenides'. However, there is still one Platonic entity in this Aristotelian world: the unmoved mover. Aristotle describes it as pure, completely formal, wholly actual, unchanging and uncaused by anything outside it.

Having these characteristics, the unmoved mover is somewhat foreign to the Aristotelian world. Indeed, Aristotle is not completely clear on how it fits in. Most of his suggestions seem

to assume that the unmoved mover is transcendent to the world.⁷ Thus, Aristotle in one place specifies that the unmoved mover is connected to the world by being loved by it.⁸ According to another suggestion, the relation is one of dependence.⁹ In another passage Aristotle simply suggests that the unmoved mover initiates motion in the world,¹⁰ and in yet another that the unmoved mover thinks about things in the world.¹¹ Other suggestions are to see the connection either as imitation¹² or analogy.¹³ On the other hand, when Aristotle takes the unmoved mover to be a quality of the world,¹⁴ he seems to see the unmoved mover as inherent to it. The two alternatives are brought up in a famous passage in *Metaphysics* XII 10, where the world is compared to an army. The Good relates to the world either as the general is related to the army he leads, but from which he is separate, or, inherently, as the order is related to the army. Aristotle thinks that both alternatives are correct, but perhaps the former is better.¹⁵

⁷ 256a5-10, b6-12, 267b1, 6-8, 259a3.

⁸ 1072b3-5.

⁹ 1072b13-14,

¹⁰ 256a27, 258b29, 260a3, 1071a35, b35.

¹¹ 259a3.

¹² 1050b28.

¹³ 1070a31-33.

¹⁴ 250b13-14, 279b17-30.

¹⁵ 1075a12-24.

But where, in all this, is Aristotle's theory of being? To some extent, great parts of it have already been discussed above; everything said about substances--their forms, causes, movements etc.--is also part of his theories about the way being is. But some of the important discussions on this subject are brought in other books of the *Metaphysics*.

Of these discussions, following Werner Marx, I shall especially emphasize three.¹⁶ The first one, in *Metaphysics* IV, is called by Marx "Ontology". It deals with the "science of being as being", thus investigating being mostly as a quality of all existing things. The second, in book VII, is termed by Marx "Ousiology". Its business is to examine substances, which Aristotle sees as the basic existing things. The third, in book XII, the Theology, is concerned with a special kind of Being, the unmoved mover, which is said to be God or the prime mover of the universe and--which is most important for this work--thought thinking itself.

Following Marx and Reale, and according to my assumption stated above, I see Aristotle's Theology as connected with his Ontology and Ousiology, and I consider the accounts of the unmoved mover as self-thinking in the *Metaphysics* to be connected with the accounts of it as self-causation in the *Physics*. This view can also find support in the text: Aristotle says that the unmoved mover is an object of desire (as an end or aim) in a way similar to that in which it is an object of thought (1072a25-29). He also says in *Physics* VIII (256a20,b1-3, 257a27-32) that the unmoved mover is self-motivating, thus seeing it as a reflexivity. It therefore seems that when the unmoved mover thinks itself it is also the final cause of itself. Moreover, in

¹⁶ See note 5 above. Of course, there is much more to Aristotle's theory of being than what has been or will be presented here. There are important topics that I do not touch upon since I limit myself here only to those parts which are related to the question of the nature and the roles of the unmoved mover in the theory.

Metaphysics VI 1,¹⁷ Aristotle says that if there is something eternal, unconnected and unmoved, the knowledge of it belongs to the theoretical sciences, yet not to physics or mathematics, but only to a science which precedes them. This would be the highest science, the science of being as being, or Theology. The link between the Ontology and Theology is made through the fact that "the divine is present everywhere". Similar things are said in *Metaphysics* XII.¹⁸

If Ousiology too is connected to the science of being as being (which seems to be the case according to *Metaphysics* Z1), it is also linked to Theology. These connections seem plausible for the additional reason that if there is anything which is being as being, and not being as something else, it is the unmoved mover. Moreover, the unmoved mover has the marks of a substance more than anything else in the theory.

But why is reflexivity needed at all in the system as it has been outlined above? In other words, what would be amiss in Aristotle's theory if there were no reflexivity in it? To see that, let us examine what the theory would look like *without* the Theology and the unmoved mover.

¹⁷ 1026a10-34.

¹⁸ 1064b6-13.

III. ARISTOTLE'S SYSTEM WITHOUT THE UNMOVED MOVER

1. Ontological Needs

Consider the following thought experiment: we know that great parts of what Aristotle wrote were lost during the Middle Ages. Imagine, then, that some other parts were lost as well. Assume that members of a secret sect of monks tried to erase from the Aristotelian manuscripts any sentence in which the term "unmoved mover" appeared. Because all the manuscripts existent at the time were available to them, they succeeded in this endeavour. We would thus have the Aristotelian corpus exactly as we have it today, except for *Metaphysics* XII, *Physics* VIII, *Nicomachian Ethics* X, and some sentences in other writings such as *De Caelo*. What, if this were the case, would we be missing in the Aristotelian teachings (if anything at all)?

First, without the unmoved mover the Aristotelian world would lack a satisfactory ontological status. It would lack Being and reality in the traditional Platonic and Parmenidean sense of these concepts. Since the time of Parmenides, and through the influence of Plato, Being came to be characterized as simple, cohesive, unified, complete, necessarily existing, independent, unchanging--therefore not perishing or becoming--and eternal. But without the unmoved mover, the Aristotelian world has none of these characteristics. It is true, substances exist in Aristotle's world. But they constitute a manifold of private, different, changing, becoming and perishing particular things. Except for being called by that name, they have none of the traditional qualities of substances.

Further, without the unmoved mover there would be nothing in the theory that guarantees the world's being more than just an aggregate of atomic events and movements. There would be no element that unifies the manifold of movements and substances into one cohesive thing. Or in more particular terms: nothing would guarantee the continuity among

things and movements, and vouch against vacuity.

Moreover, although Aristotle takes the world and movement to be eternal, nothing in the theory deprived of the unmoved mover would guarantee this. Nor would anything ensure the completeness or wholeness of the world. Finally, the connection between Being and activity, a revolutionary innovation of Aristotle, would also not be accounted for by the theory without the unmoved mover.

Without the unmoved mover, then, Aristotle's system would not be very different ontologically from many Pre-Socratic systems.¹⁹ Of course, it would be much more elaborate and rich than they were, and would discuss not only physics but also ethics, politics, poetics, psychology, biology, and other fields. But it would not discuss Being and the Real in the way these terms came to be understood after Parmenides and Plato.

But does Aristotle really want all these Parmenidean-Platonic qualities in his theory? From various passages in his writings (especially in *Metaphysics* XII and *Physics* VIII), the answer seems to be yes. He says that movement and happenings in the world have to be unified, continuous and non-episodic,²⁰ ordered,²¹ and eternal.²² He also says both that there has

¹⁹ Of course, Presocratic philosophers, too, were concerned about unity in the world and other Parmenidean qualities. But these were still very far from Parmenides' Ideal.

²⁰ 258b27-30, 259a3, 259b27, 1071b8-11, 1075b28-30,36, 1076a1-4.

²¹ 252a11-13, 1075b25.

²² 252a3-4,35-b5, 1071b6-7, 1075b33.

to be necessity in the movements²³ and that the fact that there is movement has to be necessary.²⁴ Further, the process has to be whole or complete and not infinite.²⁵

But why does Aristotle not let the forms fulfill these functions in his system? After all, they too are eternal and unchangeable, and they are incorporated in every substance. The answer is that the forms could not give Aristotle the unity, continuity, order, completeness and necessity in the world which he was seeking. Further, their status is problematic: according to Plato's and Parmenides' notions of Reality, what really exists is wholly independent. But forms do not exist independently of the particulars, as Plato would have it, but only in them. In themselves alone they are not real; only substances are. Thus, Aristotle needs something over and above the forms to fulfill the ontological functions.

Parmenides and Plato had changed the history of philosophy. It was impossible to ignore their powerful opinions, return to the Presocratic period and continue to philosophize as Empedocles or Anaxagoras had. Aristotle wanted to ascribe to his world, too, the qualities of what was taken to be Real. This made him introduce into his method--which is basically non-Parmenidean or Platonic--a foreign, Parmenidean-Platonic element.

²³ 258b30.

²⁴ 1071b13.

²⁵ 258b29, 259a4.

2. Non-Ontological Needs

But even if these ontological problems are disregarded, the theory without the unmoved mover runs also into some specific difficulties. First, the need for an unmoved mover also emerges from what the Greeks saw as the unceasing and circular movement of the stars, which does not reach a summit or end. But according to the regular Aristotelian account, motion goes from potentiality to actuality, and thus must be directional. The Greeks in general, and Aristotle as an empiricist in particular, were too aware of the movement of the stars to disregard it. Hence, the theory without the unmoved mover had to be changed.²⁶

Second, Aristotle thinks that the movement of substances cannot originate in themselves alone. This movement originates, and therefore should also be explained, by an external origin as well. Aristotle offers several reasons for this: (a) Without this supposition the coming into being and perishing of substances cannot be explained.²⁷ (b) The stopping and starting to move of substances is unexplainable without this supposition.²⁸ (c) If a substance could have been the

²⁶ *Physics* VIII, 3-4. Aristotle describes the problem in more general terms and as a part of a larger context: he asks how is it possible that some substances sometimes move and sometimes do not, others always move, and yet others never do. He explains this fact by presenting the unmoved mover which moves the Spheres. They, in turn, transmit only part of their movement to the rest of the world, parts of which are moved some of the time, and part of which are not moved at all. Thus, because of the direct relation of the unmoved mover to parts of the world, and its indirect relation to others, the movement of the heavens is continuous and regular, while the movements of substances in the rest of the world is not.

²⁷ 252a1-5.

²⁸ 259b4, where he speaks of movement of animals; all *Physics* VIII,4).

sole origin of its movement, it could have been at one and the same time taught and teaching, cold and warm, moved and mover, actual and potential. But this, of course, is impossible.²⁹

But if the cause of the movement of substances has to originate (at least partially) from something outside them, where then does it come from? One alternative is the forms. But forms are part of the perishing and becoming substance. A second alternative is other substances; thus, one substance could perish or come into being in virtue of the movement of others, which, in their turn, would be affected by other, different substances. But this suggestion is also problematic, because it contradicts Aristotle's views about actuality and potentiality; the mover, according to him, always has more actuality than the moved. The effect of substances on substances, then, cannot be as in a network; it has to be directional because the substances are arranged in a hierarchy.

But why would we not think that there is an infinite linear activity, such that substances with a higher degree of actuality affect substances with a lower degree? Such an infinite regression is unpalatable for Aristotle because it renders the world incomplete, whereas he believes that it is complete.

Third, without the unmoved mover, entities such as God, or some transformation of the Platonic Good, cannot fit into Aristotle's theory. But Aristotle seems want a place for such entities in his system.³⁰ For this reason, the theory without the unmoved mover, again, does not suffice.

Finally, Aristotle's expresses a need for the unmoved mover in his Ethics. It is true, he can substantiate his claim that thinking is the highest human function in other ways, too. Since

²⁹ 257a33-258b5.

³⁰ 1072b24-29, 1074a38-b14.

thinking is unique for human beings, it is their essence, what makes them be what they are, and what fits them best. But according to Aristotle himself, thinking as the highest human function is also justified by its affinity to the unmoved mover.³¹

Without the unmoved mover, all these problems remain unanswered in the system. In virtue of its reflexivity, however, the unmoved mover can solve them. Let us see how.

IV. HOW DOES THE UNMOVED MOVER ANSWER THE NEEDS OF THE SYSTEM?

What should be the characteristics of the unmoved mover if it is to answer the needs of the system, and how does reflexivity endow it with them? First, since the unmoved mover is supposed to give the world and the events in it an ontological status, it must be a paradigm of being and a substance.³² Moreover, in order both to have the traditional characteristics of Being and to guarantee the continuity of beings in the world, it must be simple and homogeneous.³³ Further, it must be completely immaterial and actual. And as connected to this, and as the principle of activity in the world, the unmoved mover must be totally active.³⁴ Furthermore, it has also to be eternal (without being at the same time infinite).³⁵ And to be eternal, unmover,

³¹ *Nicomachean Ethics* X, 7-10, esp. 1072b16-17.

³² 1072a25-26.

³³ 1072a26-b1.

³⁴ By activity I mean here *energia*, not *kinesis*.

³⁵ 1072a25, 1072b26-29.

and an element of stability in change, it must also be unchanging.³⁶

And indeed, the reflexivity enables the unmoved mover to have all these traditional characteristics of Being. Since in its reflexivity--i.e. thought thinking itself and cause causing itself--the relator and related are one and the same, the unmoved mover is simple and homogeneous. Similarly, since the unmoved mover is a final cause causing *itself*, it can be only immaterial and actual (for Aristotle the final cause is always immaterial and actual). The unmoved mover is endowed by reflexivity with immateriality and actuality not only directly, but also *via* its homogeneity: in the Aristotelian context, what is simple and homogeneous, i.e. has no distinction, is also totally actual and immaterial.

Likewise, reflexivity makes the unmoved mover totally active. When, in the self-relation, causing causes itself and thinking thinks itself, they are not restricted in any way and do not stop at any object. When the active element in the relation is reflexivized, it becomes homogeneous or pure, and thus pure activity. Again, reflexivity can be seen as giving the unmoved mover activity indirectly as well, in the Aristotelian context: For Aristotle, immateriality and actuality are also activity.

Again, since the unmoved mover is totally related to itself, i.e. is a cause which completely causes itself and is completely caused by itself, nothing outside of it can make it start to be, nor can anything make it cease to. Thus, it is eternal. However, it is so not because it resembles an incomplete, infinite line which stretches out on and on without stopping, but because it is circular. In other words, the unmoved mover is eternal not because nothing else ever caused it to be or will cause it to cease to be, but because it causes itself.

³⁶ 258b10-16, 1072b4-13.

Likewise, since the reflexivity is total, i.e., the unmoved mover itself is both its only cause (and causes itself in its totality) and its only effect, and since it is identical with itself, there is nothing that can cause it to change from its inside. But, since there is also nothing outside it that can affect it, there is no possibility for it to change at all. The same reasoning holds when we see the unmoved mover as totally reflexive thought; again, since the thinking thinks only the same thinking itself, it cannot change. It is somewhat counter-intuitive to have something which at one and the same time is both exceedingly active and totally changeless. But both characteristics originate from the same source, which is the reflexivity of the unmoved mover.

Having these characteristics, and being both the paradigm of being and connected to all beings, the unmoved mover guarantees the unity of the manifold of movements and substances in the world and does not let them be just an aggregate of atomic entities and events. Similarly, it guarantees that the world and movement in it are eternal, that the world is whole and complete, and that there is a connection between being and activity, and between being and actuality.

Since many of the characteristics mentioned above are traditionally associated with Being, ascribing them to the unmoved mover is ascribing to it--and the world--an ontological status as well. But I think reflexivity endows the unmoved mover and the world Being or existence in another way, too: when we think about something, we are never certain whether it really does or does not exist outside the mind. But can we not be sure that the *thinking* of it exists? Usually not, because we are aware only of the "content" of the thinking, but not of the thinking itself. It is, so to say, "transparent".

But if we try to turn and "look" at our thinking, because we want it to become non-transparent, we are immediately carried from our thinking to the object of our thinking. But,

as an object, it is not different from its object before; it is no more than a regular object of the mind, about whose existence outside the mind we are not sure. There is nothing rigorously inherent and necessary in its supposed existence; it is no more than one of the many other things that we take to happen and exist outside us.

To use another set of terms: previously the thinking was the meta-x, and the object was the x. Now when we want to look at the meta-x, at the thinking itself, it immediately turns into the x, the object, and another thinking, through which we look at the previous thinking, is the meta-x.

In normal directional thinking, then, the fact that the thinking exists is not taken notice of, because when we think we are not aware of the thought in us which thinks, but only of its object. On the other hand, since in reflexivity thinking is about itself, an awareness of the thinking itself is possible. We do not have to look at thinking only as an object, or only as an x, but can look at it as the subject or the meta-x as well. This is because it can be subject and object, meta-x and x, at one and the same time.

Since we can think the thinking and think about it at the same time, its existence is necessary for us when we think. Its certain existence as a meta-x, as a subject in the act of thinking, is now also its object. When it is about itself as a thing, it is impossible for it not to exist. When it thinks about itself, it is apparent to it that when it thinks it *does* think, and as such it is something.

The reasoning which I take to have guided Aristotle here is to an extent analogous to that of Descartes' *cogito*. This is no accident; I shall later argue that there is a connection between the two.

Furthermore, Aristotle needs the unmoved mover both not to be moved by anything else,

and to be moved by something. As noted above, Aristotle must have a hierarchy of movers that do not regress infinitely. There must be at the end of the chain, then, an entity which moves all other entities but is not moved by another entity itself.³⁷ Still, it has to be moved by something, since everything in the Aristotelian world must have a cause. Reflexivity, again, solves this problem: the unmoved mover moves everything in the world, including itself. The chain of causes ends, but without breaking the rule that everything must have a cause. The last link in the chain is caused, but by itself.

Likewise, the unmoved mover must think itself. God's typical activity, according to Aristotle, is thinking.³⁸ But what would be the object of this thinking? It cannot think nothing, because then its thought would be like those of the sleeping. Nor can it be of other things, since then it would be about things inferior to itself. Moreover, since this would make thinking into a process which goes from potentiality to actuality, sublime thinking would become not only difficult and tiring, but also inferior to its object.³⁹

Hence, the unmoved mover has to reflexively think itself. Aristotle admits that, at first sight, this solution too is somewhat problematic; usually, thoughts are about other things, and are of themselves only incidently. Yet, if the object of thought is completely immaterial, then a self-thinking thought is in Aristotle's opinion possible.⁴⁰ Hence, in this kind of thought the

³⁷ 1073a3.

³⁸ *Metaphysics* XI 9.

³⁹ According to Aristotle's account, thinking is a process which ends in the union of the thought with its object, i.e. actualizes itself as the object. Hence, before the unification it is less actual than or inferior to its object.

⁴⁰ 1072b18-24, 1074b34, 1075a1-5,10.

subject is identical with the object.⁴¹

Reflexivity also enables the unmoved mover to solve some of the specific problems of the system. Thus, the circularity of reflexivity explains the rotating, regular and unchanging movement of the heavens. Further, by endowing the unmoved mover with some of the characteristics traditionally deemed sublime, reflexivity enables Aristotle to give an account of God or a similar entity (such as the Good) in his system. And again, since Aristotle himself explains that one reason for holding that thinking is the best human activity is that it resembles God's, it should be noted, once more, that God's sublime nature is achieved thanks to reflexivity.

V. ALTERNATIVES TO THE UNMOVED MOVER. IS ARISTOTLE'S DECISION TO USE REFLEXIVITY A GOOD PHILOSOPHICAL CHOICE?

It has been shown here how reflexivity can answer some needs of the Aristotelian system. But could Aristotle not have used other philosophical means just as well to answer these needs in his system? Why did he pick reflexivity rather than some other philosophical tool?

In terms of both endowing the world with the characteristics of the Real, and solving specific problems, reflexivity is the best philosophical alternative Aristotle could have picked. The alternatives here could be only the Parmenidean One and the Platonic Idea, or variations of them. But such entities would have been inferior to reflexivity in both embeddedness in the environment and intelligibility; introducing and using them in the system, then, would have been

⁴¹ 1074b33-35.

more unnatural and arbitrary.

Consider, for example, the total actuality, immateriality, and activity of the unmoved mover. It has been shown above why a reflexive unmoved mover would have these characteristics. In other words, when reflexivity is used in the system these characteristics are seen to make sense. But if other entities—e.g. the Parmenidean One or the Platonic Idea—had been used, these characteristics would have not been made sense of. They would have to be simply *posited*. Such a positing would be, of course, highly arbitrary. The characteristics of the unmoved mover would not be explained by the nature of the entity, and it would not be really incorporated into the system. Thus, the choice of the reflexive unmoved mover is preferable.

Again, consider the use of the unmoved mover to end the chain of causes. As said above, Aristotle wants to avoid an infinite chain without breaking the rule that everything must have a cause. Thanks to reflexivity, he can present an entity which causes itself, and thus ends the chain without breaking the rule. A Parmenidean One or a Platonic Idea would also, of course, end the chain, but not without breaking the rule that everything must have a cause.

But is Aristotle's reflexive solution really better than Parmenides' or Plato's non-reflexive ones? Aristotle, let us remember, does not only think that everything must have a cause, but that everything must have a cause *outside* itself. Why would self-causation be a better exception to the rule than non-causation?

Although both alternatives are problematic, the former is still preferable to the latter. Self-causation is more intelligible than the Platonic Idea in the context of the system. Because the Aristotelian world is so full of causation, a totally actual self-caused entity is less strange in it than a parallel actual entity which is not caused at all. Of the alternatives Aristotle had, he

chose, again, the preferable one.

Similarly, take the circular motion of the stars. Since this phenomenon is already an exception to the rule, would it not be better just to leave it unexplained than to try to explain it by another exception? And if it is explained by another exception, is the reflexive one really the best?

Again, of all the alternatives, the reflexive exception seems to be the best. Although it does "break the rules" of the system, it still complies with them much more than a Parmenidean-Platonic exception would. Leaving the motion of the stars undiscussed would even have been worse: an important phenomenon, which seems to contradict Aristotle's views on the directional nature of motion, would have not been subsumed and explained by the system at all. Explaining this motion by a Parmenidean-Platonic entity would again not have made much sense. The self-moving reflexivity, on the other hand, permits Aristotle to explain the circular motion of the stars more intelligibly.

It is true, even the use of reflexivity does not succeed in embedding the unmoved mover completely in the system. One indication of this is the difficulty, described in section II above, that Aristotle has in explaining what exactly the relation of the unmoved mover to the world is. But it should be remembered that the unmoved mover is basically a Parmenidean-Platonic element in an un-Parmenidean-Platonic system. In Aristotle's non-transcendent, common-sensical, directional world, where everything is made of both form and matter and incorporates both actuality and potentiality, the somewhat-transcendent, purely actual and immaterial, circular unmoved mover must remain somewhat foreign. But, as shown above, Aristotle needs a Parmenidean-Platonic element in his un-Parmenidean-Platonic system. The question, then, is

how to make this element the least foreign and arbitrary. I have tried to show here that Aristotle picked the best alternative he had.

Since almost any philosophical step is somehow problematic, there is always a price to be paid when it is taken. But considering what was before him, Aristotle--to continue with the financial metaphor--made the best deal. His recognition of the power and intelligibility of reflexivity is probably what urged him to pick it as the most elegant solution to the philosophical problems he was facing.

VI. POSSIBLE OBJECTIONS

Two rejoinders can still be brought against the account of the unmoved mover I have been presenting here. First, some passages contradict the ones cited above by saying that there are many unmoved movers, rather than one.⁴² If this indeed is the case, then the unity of the substances and movements in the Aristotelian world is again unvouched for, notwithstanding the simplicity and homogeneity that each of these unmoved movers may individually possess. But this contradiction is solved by H. A. Wolfson,⁴³ who distinguishes between the "First Unmoved Mover", on the one hand, and the "General Unmoved Movers", on the other. According to Wolfson, when Aristotle speaks about several unmoved movers, he does not refer to the entity which was discussed above (which Aristotle calls the "First Unmoved Mover"), but only to other, secondary, entities. In Wolfson's opinion, this is the case not only in *Metaphysics* and

⁴² 258b11, 259a6-13, 259b28-31, *Metaph.* XII 8.

⁴³ H. A. Wolfson "The Plurality of Immovable Movers in Aristotle and Averroes" *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 63 (1958):233-241.

Physics, but also in *De Caelo*, where there is a parallel distinction between "unmoved movers which are not moved essentially" and an "unmoved mover which is moved neither essentially nor by chance".

The second problem arises from certain passages in *Physics* VIII 5⁴⁴ where it seems that Aristotle thinks the unmoved mover cannot move itself. This contradicts the passages previously relied upon in the *Metaphysics* and the *Physics*, according to which the unmoved mover does move itself, and thus can be reflexive.

But this problem can be solved if two senses of "unmoved", which are parallel to two possible senses of "not moving itself", are distinguished. "Unmoved mover" in English, as well as *kinoun akinetos* in Greek, can be understood as both:

- (a) A mover which is not moved by anything else.
- (b) An unchanging mover.

Both senses are compatible and are true of the Aristotelian unmoved mover: it is both unmoved by anything else and unchanging. Similarly, the sentences which deny that the unmoved mover moves itself can also be interpreted in two ways:

- (a) the unmoved mover is not moving itself, and therefore is not reflexive.
- (b) The unmoved mover is not changing itself in one of the regular modes of change (i.e. quality, place or size).⁴⁵

The contradiction arises only when we understand these passages according to (a). But no contradiction follows when we understand them as in (b), since not changing itself is not only

⁴⁴ 257b9-259b2.

⁴⁵ 260a26.

compatible with the unmoved mover's nature, but is also entailed by it.

It can also be seen that (b) is the correct interpretation from the fact that Aristotle discusses in this context only movement of the second type, i.e. change. He says that movers must have, in general, width and parts, because otherwise they could not be in movement.⁴⁶ Since extension and parts are not typical for the unmoved mover, but only for physical objects, whose movement is change, it seems that when he denies that the unmoved mover moves itself, he only denies self-change, and not self-movement of all kinds. Moreover, the examples of movement brought up in this section (e.g. heating⁴⁷) do not fit the movement of the unmoved mover, but only movement of the second type, i.e. change. Thus, it seems that the denial of movement of the unmoved mover in this passage is not a denial of reflexivity.⁴⁸

VII. IS ARISTOTLE'S USE OF REFLEXIVITY LEGITIMATE?

But are these particularizations of reflexivity in the Aristotelian system legitimate? The only accusation against Aristotle's use of reflexivity I can think of is that although none of the particularizations of reflexivity in his system are wrong and unacceptable, they are all *ad hoc* and arbitrary. Aristotle could just as well have particularized reflexivity in his system in other ways. For example, nothing in the nature of reflexivity necessitates that it should be particularized as active rather than inactive. Similarly, the disappearance of distinctions in the

⁴⁶ 258b24-26.

⁴⁷ 257b9

⁴⁸ See also the use of 'unmoved' in 267a23-b8.

total reflexivity could have been particularized as nothingness just as easily as homogeneity. The argument against the use of reflexivity may be, then, is that its general characteristics can be particularized in too many different ways, and hence that there is something arbitrary and *ad-hoc* in the way it is used in this particular context.

But it is difficult to see why the same argument cannot be made against Aristotle's use of the category of means and ends. Nothing in the category itself prevents Aristotle from deciding that the seed is the end of the tree or that the stone is the end of the statue. Similarly, nothing in the notion of atoms necessitates that they would be particularized in Leibniz' system as "monads without windows" rather than "monads with windows". The particularization of these general categories is done in a certain context and is influenced (or may even be seen as deduced) by both the general convictions of that system and the general characteristics of category used. The particularization is not performed by some kind of a pure deduction from the general qualities of the categories to the more specific ones. Thus, the fact that reflexivity could in general be used in a different way than it is in Aristotle's system is not an argument against its use in the system or against it in general. To argue that the particularization of reflexivity in a certain system is arbitrary and *ad-hoc*, it would have to be shown that even when both the convictions of that system and the qualities of reflexivity are taken account of, the particularization could still have been done in a different way than it was.

In other words, once the suppositions of the Aristotelian system are not seen as arbitrary but logical (as Aristotle, of course, saw them), then the way reflexivity is used in the system becomes non-arbitrary as well. Once the Aristotelian context and content is accepted, i.e., once we accept the Aristotelian system and the fact that the unmoved mover's thought or causation

is reflexive, Aristotle's moves make good sense. Aristotle's God is not a *deus ex machina*.⁴⁰

Except for this, I cannot think of any other plausible accusation that can be made against Aristotle's use of reflexivity. All in all, then, I have to conclude that I cannot see why Aristotle's use of reflexivity in his system is in any way wrong or illegitimate.

I have tried to explain in this chapter why, if Aristotle wants a Platonic element in his un-Platonic system, reflexivity is his best choice and, therefore, his use of reflexivity in his unmoved mover is a rational one. Further, I have tried to substantiate the thesis that the unmoved mover, as reflexivity, can be made sense of. It is not unpalatable and incomprehensible as it seems at first sight to be. As a matter of fact, if there are any difficulties in its use they do not come from defects in its inner coherence, but from its still being foreign to the system—even if to a lesser extent than is any other alternative. By doing all this I have tried to show an example of the way in which reflexivity plays an important role in a philosophical system, and that understanding its nature can help understand better the system.

Aristotle was thus the first to use reflexivity as an important philosophical tool in his system. Aristotle is usually credited as a philosophical innovator. However, perhaps because the importance and value of this innovation escapes many commentators, he is not sufficiently credited for this first important use of reflexivity. One of the points of this dissertation is that this achievement does have a value and is important.

In the next section, some of the subsequent developments in the use of reflexivity will be briefly sketched.

⁴⁰ Unlike Aristotle's criticism of Anaxagoras' use of *Nous* in 985a18-21.

VIII. ARISTOTLE AND THE HISTORY OF THE USE OF REFLEXIVITY

Aristotle exhausted the possible uses of reflexivity in almost all fields of his system. But in one field--Ethics--it seems that he could have used reflexivity much more. He could have seen human thought as reflexive, and thus similar to divine thought, so as to ground and explain many of his ethical theses. However, although Aristotle does say that the human thinking resembles divine thinking (this is one of the reasons why it should be practiced), he also states very clearly that human thought is different in principle from divine thought.³⁰

It is true, human reflexivity is not needed to ground the thesis that thinking is the highest activity. Aristotle does not need to see human thinking as reflexive to make it the most continuous, complete and immaterial of human actions, since for this the resemblance between human un-reflexive thinking and divine reflexive thinking is sufficient as it is.

But, on the other hand, he could have used the sameness of human and divine reflexive thought to ground the connection between thought and morality, which is not completely supported elsewhere in his system. If a human reflexive thinking existed, there would not have been any place in it for *akrasia* (weakness of will), as there is in ordinary human thinking, because there would be no place in it for sensual desires and mistakes. Thus, people in the sublime state would not have committed akratic, or immoral, deeds.

Moreover, this could have also linked Aristotle's contemplative moral ideal to his political ideal. Although he takes the *Ethics* as only an introduction to the *Politics*, the connection between ideals of the two treatises is unclear. But if human thought were like reflexive Godlike thought, then the contemplative human would be a perfect citizen. First, he

³⁰ 1072b23-26.

would be, again, non-akratic, and thus would not have been impelled to act against his fellow citizens out of base desires; second, contemplative individuals would be quite similar to each other, and thus would have had no different private aims that could injure the harmony of society. Finally, by being reflexive, human thinking would become identical to or part of reflexive Universal Thinking. As part of it, and thus of the rest of the world, the reflexive human being would not want to harm the world in any way; since the individual would be totally non-alienated from the rest of the world, he would not want to manipulate it for his own personal benefit. Thus, again, the solitary moral ideal could have been connected with the social political one.

Now some expressions of Aristotle (and quite unique ones) in *De Anima*⁵¹ and *De Generatione Animalum*⁵² strengthen the impression that this is in fact what Aristotle thinks. But on the whole this view should be rejected. This is not only because it contradicts other passages, but also because it is alien to Aristotle's general philosophical temperament and intuitions, which are empirical and of-our-world. This is also true of the political aspect of his thinking. A community of people who contemplate reflexively and therefore live in harmonious relations would have been more appropriate (with important variations) to Spinoza's third degree of knowledge, or Kant's Kingdom of Ends, than to Aristotle's picture of political life. This is also true of Aristotle's moral intuitions. The picture of the moral reflexive person described above is more appropriate to an ascetic, detached morality than to Aristotle's; his morality has to do with this world and this life, which include elements of egoism, desire and

⁵¹ 430a

⁵² 736b.

the mundane. Equally important, the mystical element in this suggestion is also far from Aristotle's sober rationality. To attribute these characteristics to the unmoved mover--an immaterial, non-empirical God somewhat foreign to Aristotelian theory--was probably difficult enough for Aristotle, but the best solution under the circumstances. To ascribe these characteristics to human thought would be totally unfitting.

Finally, there are metaphysical reasons for this, too: since human beings are partially material, it would be impossible for them to think reflexively and hence in a completely actual and immaterial way. Moreover, this would contradict Aristotle's opinion that regular substances are not self-movers, which is one of the motivations for introducing the unmoved mover in the system.

This step, which Aristotle could but did not take, remained suggestive--and at the same time problematic--for future generations as well. In the Middle Ages it remained problematic not because of empirical convictions--most Medieval thinkers did not share Aristotle's intuitions in this matter--but from religious ones. Ascribing reflexivity to human beings is to ascribe to them an almost divine nature. But this would contradict Monotheistic intuition and dogma.

Still, reflexivity was sometimes ascribed to human beings even in the Middle Ages and, starting with Descartes' *cogito*, in the Modern Era. Some of the stages in the development of its use, digressions from it, and later changes will be discussed in the next chapters.

chapter three

THE USES OF REFLEXIVITY IN MEISTER ECKHART'S MYSTICISM

I. THE INFREQUENCY OF HUMAN REFLEXIVITY IN THE HELLENISTIC PERIOD AND MIDDLE AGES

In the Hellenistic period and Middle Ages reflexivity was ascribed to two kinds of entities: human beings on the one hand, and God and His parallels (e.g. Cosmic Spirit) on the other. Although reflexive divine entities appear in important systems such as Plotinus',¹ Ibn-Sina's,² Thomas Aquinas',³ Maimonides',⁴ or Duns Scotus',⁵ I do not have space to discuss them here. The changes that reflexivity as the divine entity went through in these times will have to be passed over in favour of the even greater changes it went through in the Modern Era. I shall only briefly note here that the uses of reflexivity as the divine entity in these systems seem to follow, at least in their most general lines, Aristotle's use of reflexivity in the unmoved mover.

From the point of view of the history of the use of reflexivity, the more interesting and innovative uses are those in which reflexivity was ascribed to human beings. Nevertheless, such cases are also rather infrequent; reflexivity was only rarely ascribed to human beings. Instead, the period is full of calls for humans to perform non-reflexive or semi-reflexive

¹ *Enneads* II, 9, 1; III, 7; III, 8, 8; V, 1, 4.9; V, 5, 2; V, 6, 1.

² *Metaph.* IX 4.

³ *Summa Theologiae* I, 29-30.

⁴ *Guide for the Perplexed* LXVIII.

⁵ A Treatise on the First Principle (*Tractatus de Primo Principio*) IV.

activities of self-knowledge.⁶ Such calls were influenced by those that already existed in the Greek period, most famously in Socrates' philosophy⁷ and in the inscription on Apollo's temple in Delphi. There were a few token explanations for the importance of self-knowledge in the Hellenistic and Medieval periods. One was that self-knowledge brings consciousness of one's limits. This consciousness can be instrumental for developing moral virtues such as humility and non-envy of one's superiors or for developing an understanding that one is merely a mortal, created being, which is instrumental for religious consciousness and sentiment.⁸ Another explanation sees self-knowledge and the turning towards oneself as essentially examining one's conscience which, again, can produce moral benefits.⁹ A third explanation is built on the microcosm-macrocosm assumption. The human being is taken to be a microcosm, i.e. a minute model of all of Nature--the macrocosm. Thus, knowing one's nature enables one to know the

⁶ On the difference between reflexivity as it is usually used in this work (i.e. stringent reflexivity), semi-reflexivity (i.e. non-stringent reflexivity), and non-reflexivity, see Introduction sections III:5 and VI.

⁷ *Apology* 20e-23c. Most of what is written here about non-reflexive and semi-reflexive self-knowledge in Greek, Hellenistic and Medieval philosophy is taken from Pierre Courcelle *Connais toi toi même: de Socrate a Saint-Bernard* (Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1974) and Alexander Altmann "The Delphic Maxim in Medieval Islam and Judaism" in *Studies in Religious Philosophy and Mysticism* (London: Routledge Kegan Paul, 1961) pp. 1-40.

⁸ Marcus Aurelius *Meditations* VII 67 i. Epictetus *Discourses* II 6 iii. Epictetus places more emphasis on developing humility and non-envy, whereas Marcus Aurelius stresses the consciousness of being merely mortal.

⁹ According to Cicero's *On Old Age (De Senectute)* XI 38, this view was held by the Pythagoreans.

nature of the whole world.¹⁰ Yet another explanation is that self-knowledge produces a distance from the sensible and material aspects of life.¹¹

A fifth explanation is that looking within enables one to detect the divine element in one's soul and thus to be more in contact with the divine. This element can either be simply a divine part within each human being, or the image of God in which, according to the book of Genesis, all humans were created.¹²

Another view is that self-knowledge is, in effect, a by-product of knowing God. Since knowing the cause involves knowing its effects, knowing God necessitates that the knowing soul will also know itself, as one of the effects of God.¹³

¹⁰ Proclus *On Providence and Fate (De Providentia et Fato)* XVIII 1; XXIII 11; It also exists in the Cabala, in *Tikunei Hzoahar* 130 b.

¹¹ Philo *On the Migration of Abraham (De Migratione Abrahami)* 8; 13. Augustine *Confessions* X 8, 10, 15; *The Immortality of the Soul* X 17.

¹² Plato *Alcibiades I* 133b-c; Cicero *Laws (De Legibus)* I 23; Philo *On the Account of the World's Creation According to Moses (De Opificio Mundi)* 69; Epictetus *Discourses* III 1 xxiv; Marcus Aurelius *Meditations* II 13 i; VI 14 xx; VII 67 i; Augustine *Soliloquies* I 2, 7; *The Immortality of the Soul* II 16 41; Proclus *Platonic Theology* I 3; John Scotus Eriugena *Periphyseon* II 31; Anselm of Canterbury *Monologion* 66-7; similar opinions are expressed by Ibn-Sina (quoted in Altmann, *op. cit.* 2); Al-Ghazzali (*ibid.* 2, 8, 10) and Ibn-Rushd (*ibid.* 3).

¹³ Proclus *Elements of Theology* 167; 188.

But all these calls for self-knowledge are not calls for reflexivity in the way this term is used in this work (i.e. as stringent reflexivity).¹⁴ Consciousness of one's limits, looking within one's conscience, or learning one's microcosmic nature in order to know the macrocosm are not reflexive. It is true, since the relator and related in these areas are the same in a general sense, these activities are reflexive in a general sense. Both consciousness of one's limits and the limits themselves belong to the same individual. But in a more precise sense the relator and the related are different from each other in such a relation; they are different parts of the individual. Likewise, although self-knowledge which produces knowledge of the divine element in the knower is reflexive (the fact that they are part of the same individual is significant in this case, since one cannot know God in the same way by looking at other peoples' souls) it is not reflexive in the way discussed in this work. Of the kinds of self-knowledge discussed above, the only reflexive one is that which originates from the fact that knowing God entails knowing its effects—one of which is the knowing soul itself. In such a case the part of the soul which knows God must also know itself. But the reflexivity formed here is completely insignificant in this context. It is wholly a by-product of another process and is not used to fulfill any functions.

Why are cases of ascribing stringent reflexivity to human beings (in a significant way which fulfills functions in a system) so rare in Hellenistic and Medieval philosophy? The reason is that the characteristics that reflexivity would bestow on human beings seemed to Monotheistic authors too close to the characteristics which traditionally had been only God's. But this contradicts the Monotheistic dogma that created beings are essentially different from God. The

¹⁴ See note 6.

same is true for many non-Montheistic thinkers; for them, too, it was almost self-understood that the nature of human beings essentially differs from that of the divine entity.

However, such cases can sometimes be found in a neighboring field, which both influenced philosophy and was influenced by it: mysticism. This is no coincidence. Mystics were traditionally less respectful of accepted dogma than theologians. Moreover, many mystics thought that a mystical union between God and human being takes place during the mystical experience, and hence thought that human nature can at least be analogous in some situations to God's.

Nevertheless, even mystics frequently preferred to describe and call for the mystical experience without mentioning reflexivity at all. Instead, they discussed oneness with God. It is true, both contain the danger of identifying human beings with God and thus threatening the distinction between Creator and created, with the piety and reverence attached to it. But with reflexivity the danger is even greater. The reflexive activity is performed in a self-sufficient way, autonomously of God and with no relation to Him. One can achieve the reflexive exalted mystical state without any reference to the existence of God. On the other hand, in the effort to achieve oneness with God there is a constant relation to Him and it is thus easier to point to the differences that may still exist between Him and human beings and to feel that the mystical experience is still being performed within a theistic framework. Further, whereas there seems to be an affinity between oneness with God and the non-mystical religious ideals of devoutness, piety and worship, there seems to be no such affinity between reflexivity and any non-mystical religious ideals ¹⁵

¹⁵ Indeed, the higher frequency of reflexivity in Far-Eastern mysticism probably has to do with the fact that in some Far-Eastern religious systems (and especially mystical ones) deities

Thus, many mystics do not mention reflexive mystical activity at all, whereas others, such as Plotinus, are indecisive about it. From some passages in his writings it seems that he adheres to it,¹⁶ and he argues against those mystics who think that when we turn away from the sensible world we turn to God and not to ourselves.¹⁷ On the other hand, he also says that the soul does not reach the end of the journey by "entering to itself"; the image of the One has yet to take shape in it.¹⁸ The self-relation, then, does not yield ecstasy.

Likewise, Proclus in one place says that through reflexivity human beings become divine and unite with God,¹⁹ and in another that the self-knowing spirit understands that it is not corporeal but, at the same time, also knows that it is not divine.²⁰

Yet other mystics do seem to ascribe reflexivity to human beings and do say that there is a direct connection between reflexive humans and divine entities. Such is the case for

do not exist at all, and in many others the deities are non-transcendent. See, for example, *Brahdaranyaka Upanishad* IV, 5.15; Shankara's commentry on the *Brahmasutras* I, 2, 21, trans. George Thibaut in Eliot Deutsch and J. A. B. Buitenen, eds. *A Source Book of Advaita Vedanta* (Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii, 1971) p. 164. See also Levia Cohn, ed. *Taoist Meditation and Longevity Techniques* Michigan Monographs in Chinese Studies Series 61 (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 1989); Robert Allinson *Chuang Tse for Spiritual Transformation* (New York: SUNY Press, 1989).

¹⁶ *Enneads* IV, 8, 1; V, 3, 4; V, 3, 6; V, 8, 10-11; VI, 7, 41; VI, 9, 10-11.

¹⁷ *Enneads* V, 3, 7.

¹⁸ *Enneads* IV, 8, 1; VI, 9, 10-11.

¹⁹ Proclus *On Providence and Fate* XXXI 9.

²⁰ *Ibid.* XXIII 11; XXX 11.

Porphyry,²¹ John Scotus Eriugena²² and Meister Eckhart.²³ That there were tendencies towards this kind of mysticism in mystical circles can be seen also from St. Augustine's warning that finding the introspective trinity of the reflexive self is not enough²⁴ and from John Ruysbroeck's strong condemnation of reflexive mysticism in his *Little Book of Enlightenment*.²⁵

It seems clear, then, that reflexivity is ascribed to human beings in some mystical teachings of the Hellenistic period and Middle Ages and does play a role in them. But, to the best of my knowledge, this role has never been clarified. I shall try in this chapter to elaborate on the function of reflexivity in mysticism and to show that understanding the nature of reflexivity can help understand the nature of mystical experiences. As an example of a mystical teaching in which reflexivity is used I shall take Meister Eckhart's.

II. THE MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE: METHODOLOGICAL PRESUPPOSITIONS

An effort to understand the place of reflexivity in mysticism, however, must first cope with view that the mystical experience is totally irrational, and thus ineffable and incommunicable.²⁶ Hence explaining a mystical experience with words can, at best, distort it.

²¹ *Aids to the Study of the Intelligibles* 40.

²² *Persphyseon* IV 9.

²³ Latin Sermon XXIX.

²⁴ *On Trinity (De Trinitate)* 15.

²⁵ Chap. IV.

²⁶ See, for example, William James *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human*

In fact, many mystics themselves characterize the experience as unexplainable and, moreover, sometimes see its un-explainability as one of its central characteristics.²⁷

Nevertheless, the supposition of this chapter is that mystical experiences, at least to some degree and in some way, are explainable and communicable.²⁸ Moreover, this also seems to be the supposition of even the aforementioned scholars and mystics; when they write a study or preach a sermon they seem to admit that mystical experiences can, at least to some extent, be communicated and understood. When Meister Eckhart preaches his sermons, or St. John of the Cross writes his poem, they want to give their audience and themselves a glimpse, an understanding—even if not a full one—of the experience which they have had. Similarly, when William James or Evelyn Underhill discusses mystical experiences they, too, want to communicate their understanding of it to their readers.

It is true, then, that the only way to understand a mystical experience *fully* is to experience it. Moreover, it is also true that one of the characteristics of the mystical experience is that it is irrational and incommunicable. But even if the mystical experience cannot become

Nature (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1929) p. 380. Evelyn Underhill *Mysticism: A Study in the Nature and Development of Man's Spiritual Consciousness* (New York: Meridian Books, 1955) pp. 48, 335. F. C. Happold *Mysticism: A Study and an Anthology* (London: Penguin Books, 1963) p. 45. D. T. Suzuki *An Introduction to Zen Buddhism* ed. Christmas Humphreys (London: Rider and Company, 1969) chap. IV.

²⁷ E.g. the author of *The Cloud of Unknowing* ed. James Walsh (New York, Paulist Press, 1981); Plotinus *Enneads* V 5, 6; VI 7, 34-35; VI, 9, 7; VI, 9, 4.

²⁸ I use in this chapter the verb "to explain" and the words derived from it in their regular sense in English, i.e. what we seek when we want to understand something, and not as a translation of Dilthey's technical term *erklären*.

completely transparent, it does not have to stay completely opaque. On some level, and to some extent, it can still be grasped and made sense of.

In this chapter we shall try to make sense of the mystical experience by using a hermeneutical interpretation close to the one outlined by Dilthey. It is characterized, first, by understanding the phenomenon under question through the use of empathy, and not by reducing it to another set of terms (e.g. physiological, psychological, etc.) which is supposed to be more basic or understandable.²⁹ The mystical experience is taken to make sense in itself, and the interpretation helps the readers understand the mystic by helping them come closer to the mystic's state of mind while experiencing the mystical union. In other words, the interpretation enables readers to grasp the mystical experience by arousing in them feelings analogous, in some ways, to those of the mystic.

In choosing this method I am following a tradition. It is true, no hermeneuticists--not even those who are interested in religion, such as Schleiermacher or Bultmann--have used their method to interpret mystical experiences. But here I follow the method that mystics themselves use in order to convey their experience to their audience. When they preach, present parables and analogies, or even say that the experience is irrational, they do not lecture about the mystical experience academically. Rather, they try to arouse in their audience a state of mind close to the one they had, and thus both make the experience less opaque and facilitate its happening to their hearers.

Scholars of mysticism also use this method, even if not always fully and consciously.

²⁹ Wilhelm Dilthey *Die Geistige Welt: Einleitung in die Philosophie des Lebens* ed. Georg Misch, Part One, *Gesammelte Schriften* vol. 5 (Stuttgart and Göttingen: B. G. Teubner and Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979) p. 277.

It is true, authors such as Underhill or James do discuss the mystical experience academically when they rate different mystical experiences on a scale or describe the structure of the ascent to the mystical experience. But they too try at least partially to make sense of it by arousing through their descriptions a state of mind which resembles that of the mystics to an extent.

The hermeneutical interpretation employed here, then, uses empathy in order to come as close as possible to the actual mystical experience that Meister Eckhart underwent. Unlike some modern types of hermeneutical interpretations, it tries to minimize as much as possible the projection of the interpreters' historical, cultural and personal profiles on the interpreted and sees them as an interruption. Their projection on the interpreted is not welcomed.

The interpretation of the mystical experience presented here is hermeneutical in a second sense as well: it supposes some kind of pre-understood intuition of the nature of the mystical experience and sympathy towards it on the part of the reader.³⁰ This hermeneutical characteristic is tied to the previous one; without this pre-understanding, efforts to clarify the mystical experience by evoking a state of mind which has affinity to it cannot work. The interpretation, then, elaborates some kind of pre-understanding of the mystical experience, even if a very vague one, rather than providing new information. Because the interpretation relies on this pre-understanding, it is somewhat circular.

The following explanations are thus not aimed at everyone. They are not intersubjective in the sense that it is impossible for any rational being not to understand them. People with a total disregard towards the mystical experience cannot understand it, just as not all people can empathize with Chinese or Bantu culture and thus understand it. Those who are left completely

³⁰ Compare Evelyn Underhill: *Mysticism* pp. 73-4.

"cold" by mystical culture, then, will not find the following explanations of any help.

The method of interpretation used here, however, is different from Dilthey's in at least one respect. In the method of interpretation used here the understanding of the mystical experience is also taken to be facilitated by pointing to the interrelations that exist between the characteristics of the mystical experience. Showing how the different characteristics cohere with each other makes them, and thus the whole mystical experience, less opaque.

To be sure, Dilthey also discusses this characteristic of the hermeneutical explanation to some extent. He observes the circularity in the fact that in order to understand the whole the parts must first be understood, but that the parts, again, cannot be understood if the whole is not understood first. This whole/parts circularity exists (even if not emphatically) in the present method of interpretation as well. But Dilthey does not put as much emphasis on another circularity, viz. that which exists between the parts, which is stressed here.

Since each characteristic is both *explicans* and *explicandum*, there is no one correct starting point for the explanation; we can start off with any of the characteristics and show, from its viewpoint, how it is related to the others. Then we can pick another characteristic and discuss its relations to all other characteristics, including the first one. A complete explanation is one in which the interrelations between all the characteristics are discussed. Graphically, such an explanation would look like a collection of dots, where all the dots are connected with lines to all others, such that there is no dot which is not interrelated to all other dots, both directly and indirectly.

This would be true, however, only of a full explanation or understanding of a phenomenon. I shall not be able to provide here such a complete account of the mystical

experience, and shall limit myself to discussing it only from the viewpoint of one of its characteristics, which is also the general topic of this work--reflexivity. Thus, I shall not explain how all the characteristics are interrelated, but only how reflexivity is related to a selection of the most important of them. It should be remembered, however, that this emphasis on one characteristic is not due to an effort to provide a reductive account, but to an effort not to digress from main theme of this work.

Another way in which the present hermeneutical interpretation differs from Dilthey's is that Dilthey saw the "leap" between the interpreter and the interpreted as mostly an historical one. However, it seems that in the case of mysticism the historical difference between Meister Eckhart and the reader is relatively unimportant; the reader would have similar difficulties in understanding the sayings of a contemporary mystic who, except for his mysticism, belongs to the reader's culture. Even contemporary, "nearby" mysticism would be "far away" for the reader, and thus would call for a hermeneutical interpretation.³¹

The present account of the mystical experience is influenced not only by the hermeneutical, but also by the phenomenological tradition; it discusses the way we feel and appear to ourselves in the mystical experience. Moreover, it is influenced by the

³¹ Thus, I see mysticism as some kind of a cosmopolitan culture which, notwithstanding its being cosmopolitan and in some cases contemporary, can still be foreign to us, and hence requires, like any other foreign culture we want to understand, a hermeneutical interpretation. This can also be true of other cosmopolitan cultures (e.g. the "technological culture" or the "sportsfan culture").

phenomenological accounts of temporality presented by Heidegger³² and Merleau-Ponty.³³ These authors show how a temporal analysis can be a powerful and insightful tool for the understanding of our being. Thus, this account stresses a second characteristic of the mystical experience besides reflexivity: the *nowness* of the mystical experience.³⁴

Nevertheless, the present analysis also differs in some points from that of Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty. One of them is that Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty's elaborate terminology is neither needed nor used in the present analysis. For the present discussion, which mostly consists of a rejection of temporality in the *nowness* of the mystical experience, the general phenomenological account of the nature of our being in the future and in the past suffices.

A second difference is that the present account is in disagreement with Heidegger's and Merleau-Ponty's analyses. Neither provides a place in his analysis for the phenomenon of the mystical experience, which, indeed, as un-temporal and un-linguistic, refutes some of their assumptions about being. (Indeed, the very term that is used by Heidegger to refer to the three dimensions of temporality, "ecstases",³⁵ would in Meister Eckhart's teachings denote an un-temporal state.) However, all in all what is presented here serves as an affirmation and supplement to Heidegger's and Merleau-Ponty's phenomenologies. It shows that even if they

³² Martin Heidegger: *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen, Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1951) pp.301-372. *Being and Time* trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (London, Basil Blackwell, 1962) pp. 349-423.

³³ M. Merleau-Ponty: *Phénoménologie de la Perception* (Paris: Gallimard, 1945) Part III chap. 2.

³⁴ I shall explain what I mean by "nowness" below.

³⁵ *Sein und Zeit* 329; *Being and Time* 377.

did not explicitly discuss the phenomenon of the mystical experience, their method of analysis can serve, with some modifications, as an excellent tool to explain it.

III. UNDERSTANDING THE MYSTICAL EXPERIENCE: MEISTER ECKHART'S USE OF REFLEXIVITY

Meister Eckhart says baffling things about the mystical experience. He says that when we are in the sublime state we are reflexive;³⁶ that we are in a perfect now, and time does not exist for us at all;³⁷ that this now is an unceasing now;³⁸ and that although nothing changes during the sublime state, every second is new for us.³⁹ Further, he typifies the mystical experience as complete, homogeneous, real and certain.⁴⁰ He tells us, paradoxically, that if we want to achieve the mystical experience we should *not* try to achieve it.⁴¹ Furthermore, he says

³⁶ See note 25.

³⁷ Meister Eckhart *The Essential Sermons, Commentaries Treatise and Defence* trans. E. Colledge and B. McGinn (New York: Paulist Press, 1981) pp. 177-9. Hereafter cited as *Colledge and McGinn*. *Meister Eckhart: A Modern Translation* trans. R. B. Blakney (New York: Harper and Row, 1941) pp. 136-7, 167. Hereafter cited as *Blakney*.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ *Colledge and McGinn* pp. 177, 179; *Blakney* pp. 212-4.

⁴⁰ *Colledge and McGinn* p. 179, 183, 188, 191, 282, 288; *Blakney* p. 119-20, 122-3, 140-1, 188.

⁴¹ *Colledge and McGinn* pp. 168-9, 172-3, 178, 183-4, 264-265; *Blakney* pp. 136-7.

that the mystical experience is achieved at once and immediately.⁴² Moreover, he says, in effect, that the real self is no self,⁴³ and he sees rationality and language as obstacles to the mystical experience.⁴⁴

How can we make sense of these statements? They seem to be quite puzzling, if not completely nonsensical or straightforwardly wrong. It is impossible, for example, that time should cease to exist. Similarly, it seem to be a contradiction that although nothing changes during the sublime state, every second will still be new. Moreover, why, in order to achieve the mystical experience, should we *not* try to achieve it? How can these and other expressions be explained?

Let us start with what Meister Eckhart says about being in the now. To understand his expressions about time we should remember that he does not refer to objective time but to our phenomenological temporality, i.e. our being in time. How are we phenomenologically in time? We can be in our past, for example, when we regret that we did things the way we did and wish we had done them otherwise. Further, we can be in the past by having memories and being happy, or being sad, because in the present things are not the way they were. Similarly, we can be in the future when, for example, we worry about what will happen. Likewise, we are in the future when we have ambitions, plan how to achieve them and speculate about different possibilities.

Although I have discussed our being in the past and our being in the future separately,

⁴² *Blakney* p. 121.

⁴³ *Colledge and McGinn* pp. 184, 190, 248, 260; *Blakney* pp. 107, 131, 189, 191.

⁴⁴ *Colledge and McGinn* pp. 177, 182-4, 204, 206; *Blakney* pp. 107, 118-9, 165, 197-200, 215.

they are, as Heidegger and others have shown so elaborately, intermingled with each other. When we plan for the future, for example, we rely on past experience. Similarly, what we remember is usually relevant for our future activity. Moreover, they are also intermingled with what is usually called our being in the present; we are doing in the present things which are relevant for the possibilities in the future and influenced by what happened to us in the past⁴⁵

Furthermore, we are always in the present in another way, too. When we are in the past and future we are also aware that we are thinking about them in the present. When we are conscious that the future will come and is ahead of us, and that the past is gone and is behind us, we are necessarily also conscious of the fact that we are conscious of them *now*. If we did not know that we are conscious of them now, we could not know that they are past and future. Our consciousness of the future or of the past, then, is always relative to our consciousness of the now.

Now when Meister Eckhart calls on us to be only and completely in the now in the sublime state, he does not refer to the now or the present in the regular sense. The present in the regular sense (which is also the sense used by Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty) is nothing more than what has just been in the very near past, or what is just starting to happen in the very near future. Even if we try to narrow down what we usually call the present, we shall find ourselves busy with what is actually the very near past and future, and not the present. Further, as was explained above, Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty show us that when we are in this so-called "present", we are never *only* in it; this "present" (or close past plus close future) is always connected and experienced in view of the further future and past.

⁴⁵ What has been presented here is, of course, an incomplete and rather simplified account of Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty's views on this subject.

Thus, if by "being in the now" we mean being completely on this "razor's edge" second of what we are doing now, and not what we have just done or are about to do, we are very rarely in the now. We are usually *also* in the now, because we are always conscious that what we are doing we are doing now; but we are not, in all these cases, *only* in the now.

In order to be only in the now, completely purified from any future and past, we should have awareness that what we are doing, we are doing now. In other words, we should not be thinking about anything else except the fact that we are thinking. Thus, in such a state, there will be consciousness of being conscious now. In other words, the awareness will be about the fact that it is aware while it is aware. Thus, it will be always in the now.

To put it differently, we saw above that we are regularly in the past and in the future (and in the near past and near future, which is sometimes called "present") and, since we are also conscious of the fact that we are thinking now, we are also in the now. But we are not only and fully in the now in such a state, since we are also in the future and past, i.e. have regrets and memories, worries and aspirations, which are attached to everything we see and do. Hence, in order to be only and fully in the now we should eliminate completely our being in the past and in the future. What will we be left with, then? Only with a consciousness of the fact that we are conscious now. Only when we succeed in concentrating on nothing but the fact that now, at this very moment, we are thinking, do we succeed in being now. Thus, in the complete now we are thinking about our thinking, i.e. we are reflexive.

When we are not reflexive, on the other hand, we are not completely in our being-now, since when the thinking is not about itself, but about an object, the object is associated, either directly or indirectly, with what was or shall be. Thus, the only thing we can think about which is neither past nor future is the fact that at this very moment we are thinking. In this way, then, we can understand why reflexivity, for Meister Eckhart, is connected with the

nowness in the mystical experience.

This reflexive nowness, however, does not change from one second to another; every now is identical to the others before and after it, and thus there are no changes when the I is in this state. Hence the feeling of the "unceasing now", "unchanging now", or "eternal now" about which Meister Eckhart speaks.

Notwithstanding the fact that the reflexive now is unchanging, it is, paradoxically, also always new. Since it is reflexive, we have in it consciousness of consciousness; in other words, in each and every second we are conscious only of the thinking that happens in that very second, and of nothing else, including the thinking of the previous or coming seconds. Hence, the nowness in every second cannot be compared to the previous one. If there were a comparison and continuity between these now-points, we would not be thinking only about the thinking which thinks now, but also about previous thinking, and thus we would stop being reflexive and in the now but would become non-reflexive and in the past. In this way, reflexivity can explain the disconnectedness of every second, or of every now, from all other seconds and nows, which in turn can explain Meister Eckhart's saying that although there is no difference between the nows, being in the now is always new.

The sublime state is also complete. Our regular future and past temporalities are of incompleteness; when we are in the future, typified by our ambitions and plans, we feel we lack something we hope to achieve. Similarly, when we are in the past, typified by memories, we feel that something is past and gone. These two temporalities of our everyday life, then, are characterised by a feeling of striving and lack.

However, since in the reflexive nowness the only thing we think about--viz. the thinking itself--is fully present, we do not feel we lack anything. To put it differently, when the subject and object of thinking are different, the object can either exist or not exist, and when it does not exist it can be missed. When the subject and object are the same, on the other hand, the object is necessarily there, and thus cannot be missed. Hence, the state of being-now is a state of non-striving.

For similar reasons, the experience of reflexivity and nowness is also an experience of reality and certainty. Part of our consciousness of what will come--our future--is that in the present it is unreal and uncertain. Similarly, part of our consciousness of what is gone and does not exist anymore--our past--is, again, that now it is somewhat unreal. Moreover, we are also not completely beyond doubt that the past was exactly as we remember it. In the reflexive nowness, on the contrary, it is impossible for the object of thinking not to exist, since it is also the subject of thinking. In other words, in the future and in the past, when the subject and object of thinking are different, there is a possibility that the object will not be or has not been as we think it. But when the subject and object are identical in the nowness, the consciousness which happens now is completely present to itself. Thus, again, we experience in the reflexive nowness reality and certainty.

One of Meister Eckhart's most paradoxical sayings is that we should not try to be in the reflexive nowness if we want to be in it.⁴⁶ In light of the previous characteristics, however, this

⁴⁶ Eckhart's recommendation not to try is also connected to his discussions on detachment, e.g. in *Colledge and McGinn* pp. 177-8, 285-7.

exhortation sounds less bizarre. The more we try, the more we have before us an object and thus the further we are from the state in which the subject is its own object. To explain the same thing in another way, the more we try, the more we enter the future and, thus, the less we are in the now. To try to clarify this from yet another angle, the more we try to achieve something, the more we are in a state of incompleteness and thus the further we get from the possibility of feeling the completeness of the mystical experience.

Thus, if we want to get to the state of the complete reflexive nowness state, we should just let ourselves be and not try; we should just let it happen, or not-try. Put differently, we should not be or do for the sake of anything, but simply be or do for the sake of being or doing.

Hence, we cannot decide by any technical means when the mystical experience will happen to us and how long it will last. The only thing we can do is to avoid what we know would hinder it, such as intending strongly to reach it or concentrating on particulars. Reaching the mystical state and staying in it is accomplished with complete effortlessness and acceptance, without intending to reach it and without clinging to anything.

In the sublime, reflexive state we also experience homogeneity. Our awareness in itself is taken by Eckhart to be simple, once the most basic distinction there is, that of subject and object, disappears, there is no room for other distinctions, either; If there were any particulars before the mind, it would not be about itself. In other words, since awareness itself is simple and homogeneous, as long as it is aware of the awareness only, and not about anything else, there is no place for distinctions in it. Thus, if there were any particular objects before the mind, it would not be in its reflexive nowness, but in its non-reflexive future or past.

This explains also why entering the mystical experience can be done only

instantaneously, and not gradually and partially. Since our experience in the reflexive state is of completeness, experiencing partiality will bring us not nearer to the reflexivity but further away. Moreover, experiencing partiality is also experiencing an object before the mind. But such an experience again takes us further from the reflexive consciousness. Thus, one can reach the reflexive nowness only suddenly and completely, and not gradually, bit by bit.

Meister Eckhart also calls on those who want to attain the mystical experience to let go of their ego, get rid of their phenomenal self and thus reach their true self. In the reflexive state we can be seen as thinking about ourselves. But this reflexive "self" is very different from the future-and-past self which we experience in our everyday life. While our everyday self is made up of regrets and memories, plans and aspirations, the reflexive self is completely homogeneous. Thus, none of the things that make up our normal personal self and life exist in our real self. For this reason it makes sense to say that in the reflexive nowness, in the mystical experience, we have no self. Moreover, since we experience reality in the reflexive nowness, we feel that there is more reality in this "no-self" than in the regular future-and-past one. For this reason Meister Eckhart thinks that our everyday self is a self of lies and appearances, and calls on us to get rid of it. For the same reasons Meister Eckhart also recommends the virtue of humility.⁴⁷

It should be noted that we do not know the self (or any other thing in the reflexive nowness) in the third person, but only in the first person. As shown above, objects are connected with past and future consciousness, not with now-consciousness. When we think

⁴⁷ E.g. in *Colledge and McGinn* pp. 156, 190, 280-281, 294.

about anything, including the self, in the past or the future, we "objectify" it, think it in the third person. But in the now the self is known in the first person. To put it differently, in the nowness we are not aware of the self as an object, but rather live it as a subject. To convey it in yet a third way, in the nowness we do not know the self, we are not even aware of it, but it is our very awareness.

Like many other, mystics Meister Eckhart takes language and rational thinking to be an obstacle to the mystical experience and therefore recommends that we try to free ourselves from what he sees as our obsessive habit of using them. For the same reasons he thinks that if the mystical experience is achieved it is useless to try to understand it rationally and to communicate it. The communication of the mystical experience, in Meister Eckhart's opinion, can only distort it.

There are several reasons for this aversion to language and rational thinking, all of which have to do with the difference between the nature of the mystical experience and the nature of language. First, in the mystical experience we are in a subjective mode of being. The language which we must use to communicate, on the other hand, is by nature intersubjective. Moreover, rational thinking and language advance step by step; they are discursive. But in this they are alien to the mystical experience, which is achieved immediately and all at once. Further, the discursiveness of language and rationality is also connected with their temporal character. Language and thinking take time and are done in time. Every sentence and every reasoning process (even $2+2=4$) occurs in time, and what has been and what will be are combined in it. From this aspect too, then, language and rationality can only be obstacles to the achievement of the mystical experience. Moreover, as shown above, there are no distinctions in the reflexive nowness; it is completely homogeneous. However, language and rational thinking are built on

distinctions, comparisons and categories.

In all these ways it can be seen that language and rationality are inappropriate for achieving, being in, conceiving of, and communicating the mystical experience. The mystical experience is irrational in its essence and hence, if we want to achieve it, we must let go of our rational prejudice. For this reason Meister Eckhart and other mystics use paradoxes, plain contradictions and nonsense when they discuss the mystical experience.⁴⁸ These are meant to convey the nature of the mystical experience and to help the audience achieve it.⁴⁹

Partiality, dubitability, change and diversity--the characteristics of our being in the future and the past--are associated with false or inferior being in the philosophical and Christian tradition in which Meister Eckhart lived and created. Completeness, reality, and homogeneity, on the other hand, are associated in this tradition with God and true being.⁵⁰ Hence, Meister Eckhart sees our being in the future and the past, which seems--to the uninitiated--as real being, as inferior being or non-being. In the reflexive nowness, in contrast, we have the characteristics of true being or Being, which are also the characteristics of God. Meister Eckhart makes a big step here: since we have the characteristics which are usually attributed to God when we are reflexive, in that state we are indeed the same as Him. Thus, through reflexivity, we find

⁴⁸ And in some cases (such as Zen-Buddhism) humour, which is also built on breaking and confusing categories.

⁴⁹ Note, however, that some of the seeming paradoxes and contradictions can, in fact, be made sense of, as has been done in this chapter concerning the necessity to try not to try, the unceasing now, the true self which is no self, or the now which is always new.

⁵⁰ *Colledge and McGinn* pp. 178, 183, 188, 190, 197, 288; *Blakney* pp. 120, 213.

ourselves in God, and the *unio mystica* with Him is achieved.

IV. LEGITIMACY AND DESIRABILITY OF ECKHART'S USE OF REFLEXIVITY. IS ECKHART'S DECISION TO USE REFLEXIVITY A GOOD PHILOSOPHICAL CHOICE?

In the previous section it was shown how reflexivity can endow Meister Eckhart's mysticism with some of its characteristics. The basic characteristic of reflexivity, that its relator is its related, is interpreted by Eckhart also in a temporal way, and thus the relation of consciousness or thought to itself is taken to produce and explain the reflexive nowness-newness without change. It also enables Meister Eckhart to have an experience in which the subject is identical to the object, and hence there is a feeling of homogeneity, completeness, reality and certainty. Understanding the nature of reflexivity can also explain Eckhart's paradoxical statement that in order to achieve the mystical experience one should not try to achieve it, his saying that the mystical state can be entered only all at once, and his aversion to language and rationality.

But how necessary is reflexivity in Meister Eckhart's teachings? If all the passages in which Meister Eckhart discusses reflexivity were erased from his writings, the writings would still make sense. At least most of what he says could also be made sense of by referring only to the awareness of oneness (a philosophical tool besides reflexivity which Meister Eckhart does indeed bring up and use). On the other hand, even if reflexivity does not have to be part of the explanation of such mystical experiences, it must still be part of the mystical experiences themselves. These two ways to achieve a mystical experience entail rather than exclude each other. A mystical experience which is based on an awareness of oneness necessarily involves reflexivity, since there cannot be awareness of complete oneness in which the awareness is aware

of something different from itself. Likewise, awareness of reflexivity necessarily involves awareness of oneness. Thus, reflexivity may or may not be described in a mystical experience based on oneness, but is still a necessary part of it.

But was Eckhart's decision to use reflexivity a wise and rational philosophical choice? I think it was. Once the mystical context in which reflexivity is used is accepted, I can see nothing weird or illegitimate about it. Further, the discussion of reflexivity is not meant to replace a discussion of any other possible component of the mystical experience, but only to supplement them. Moreover, it seems that compliance with accepted dogma is indeed not one of the ends of Eckhart's system. In 1326 he was summoned by church authorities for trial on the charge of heresy on many issues. He died at the midst of that trial, but in 1329 twenty-eight of his propositions were condemned by the church. In this respect too, then, using reflexivity does not involve any philosophical disadvantage for Meister Eckhart.

On the other hand, when Eckhart saw that reflexivity is a necessary part of the mystical experience he probably wanted this truth to be known. Furthermore, he might have been looking for new ways to facilitate the understanding of the mystical experience. Moreover, discussing reflexivity adds another dimension to the description of the mystical experience, and thus enriches it. In all these ways, bringing up the reflexive component in the mystical experience could only contribute to the discussion of it. Taking this step had no disadvantages but only advantages for Meister Eckhart's system. Meister Eckhart's choice to use reflexivity, then, was a correct and worthwhile philosophical decision.

V. MEISTER ECKHART AND THE HISTORY OF THE USE OF REFLEXIVITY

In this chapter I have tried to show how understanding the structure of reflexivity can help understand the nature and characteristics of the mystical experience⁵¹ and why, notwithstanding this fact, reflexivity was hardly used in the mystical writings of the Hellenistic period and Middle Ages. Indeed, Meister Eckhart's use of reflexivity was not repeated even by mystics who were highly influenced by him, such as Tauler, Suso and Ruysbroeck.⁵² He remains, with John Scotus Eriugena, Porphyry, Plotinus, Proclus and a small number of other mystics or mystical philosophers an exception in Western mystical tradition.

But this exception is important in the history of the use of reflexivity. As will be shown in this work, reflexivity has undergone a process of "normalization" through the generations; from a transcendent and divine activity or entity it has become an everyday, human one. In this process, Eckhart's use of reflexivity has an important place. It is true, reflexivity is still used in his writings for an exalted and religious activity and is only achieved as part of a union with God. However, unlike many other philosophers and mystics of his time, Eckhart does not take reflexivity to be an exclusively divine activity and dares to ascribe it to human beings as well. In the next chapters we shall see how this move of Eckhart has been taken up by other philosophers and reinforced even more.

⁵¹ Although the analysis in this chapter related directly only to Meister Eckhart's mysticism, it can also be employed to clarify and make sense of other mystical teachings in which reflexivity is used, both in the East and in the West.

⁵² Ruysbroeck went as far as to condemn these tendencies and similar ones. See note 25 above.

chapter four

**DESCARTES' COGITO AS CONTRADICTORY AND
AFFIRMATORY REFLEXIVITY**

I. DESCARTES' SYSTEM: WHY DOES DESCARTES NEED THE COGITO?

In comparison to that of other philosophers, Descartes' use of reflexivity is limited. He employs it to achieve one purpose only: to prove the indubitability of the existence of thinking.¹ However, his use of reflexivity is original and marks a transition in the way reflexivity has been used in philosophy.

But why does Descartes need reflexivity in his system at all? The series of moves which initiates the need for reflexivity starts with Descartes' calling in question the indubitable truth of all his previous beliefs.² To do this, he uses powerful skeptical arguments: he mentions that his senses have sometimes previously deceived him and consequently some things which he initially took to be true have turned out to be false.³ Further, it is conceivable that he is dreaming, mad, or deceived by a powerful Evil Spirit.⁴

¹ As can be seen from the First Set of Replies p.79 (VII 109) Descartes also ascribes reflexivity to God, taking Him to cause himself. However, this use of reflexivity is not very significant for his philosophy and will not be discussed in this chapter.

Unless otherwise indicated, all references are from *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes* trans. J. Cottingham, R. Stoothoff and D. Murdoch, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), Vol. I-II. Citations hereafter are by name of Descartes' work; page number in the relevant volume of the English translation; and, in parentheses, volume and page number according to the Adam and Tannery edition (Paris: Librairie Philosophique J. Vrin, 1973).

² *Meditations* p.16 (VII 24).

³ *Meditations* pp.12-13 (VII 17-18); *Discourse on the Method* Part Four, p.127 (VI 31-32).

⁴ *Meditations* p.12-15 (VII 18-23).

Therefore, Descartes finds it conceivable that all his beliefs are wrong. This, in turn, renders them dubitable. But dubitable beliefs should not be accepted in what Descartes sees as the satisfactory--that is, absolutely certain--science.⁵

This, of course, is not the first time that skeptical arguments have been used in philosophy; Descartes follows the arguments of classical skepticism which were widely discussed in his time and with which he was well acquainted.⁶ However, while the traditional skeptics saw their arguments as leading to unperturbedness (*ataraxia*), Descartes sees skepticism as leading to confusion. Therefore, while traditional skeptics were content, after the destructive work had been done, to leave things as they were, Descartes wants (and believes it possible) to build a new system of real, invulnerable knowledge.⁷ For him universal doubt is only a necessary means to clear the terrain and show the necessity for a new and indubitable science.⁸

⁵ *Meditations*, p.17 (VII 18); Second Rule in the *Rules for the Direction of the Mind*, p.10 (X 362); *Discourse on the Method* pp. 114-116 (VI 8-10).

⁶ According to Richard Popkin *The History of Skepticism from Erasmus to Descartes* rev. ed. (Assen, Netherlands: Koninklijke Van Gorcum and Co., 1964) chaps. 2, 4, 9, 10, skeptical arguments were widely used in religious and intellectual disputations after the discovery and publication of Sextus Empiricus' *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* in 1569 and were an important component of Descartes' intellectual *milieu*. Scholars such as Gassendi and Mersenne discussed skepticism and François Veron, teacher of philosophy and theology at College La Flèche when Descartes was a student there, was especially famous for his use of skeptical arguments against the Calvinists.

⁷ *Discourse on the Method* p.127 (VI 32).

⁸ It is thus ironical that Descartes' fame is associated to such an extent with his skepticism, since his intention was to put an end to skepticism. Only for this reason did he start off by presenting (what he saw as) skepticism's strongest arguments.

Descartes bases the new science on the *cogito*. But to explain why he needs it the exposition will start with another and later means he uses to provide an indubitable basis for his system: internal ideas. In the use of this expedient Descartes is again influenced by classical skepticism. Pyrrhon distinguished between extra-mental objects, whose existence can be doubted, and internal ideas (or, as they have also come to be called, intentional objects) whose existence cannot be doubted.⁹ Although the "real" extra-mental world is dubitable, the internal mental one is not.¹⁰ Therefore, as human beings abstain from ascribing extra-mental reality to their ideas (in Pyrrhonian terms, as long as people use *epoché*), they cannot be wrong about the existence of these ideas in their minds.

Thus, although the Pyrrhonian skeptic would not be amenable to a statement such as "there is a book there", he would assent to "it seems to me that there is a book there" or, even better, "it seems to me that I see a book there". Similarly, although the Pyrrhonian skeptic is not certain that he remembers *correctly* that he thought he saw a coat there a moment before, he would think it uncontested that he *thinks* he remembers that he saw a coat there a moment before. Although one can be wrong, then, about what one thinks or sees, one cannot be wrong about the fact that it *seems* to one that one thinks or sees.

With a few changes,¹¹ Descartes adopts this skeptical strategy. Thus, he too admits that

⁹ Diogenes Laetius *Lives of Eminent People* book IX 78-9, 103, 105.

¹⁰ Thus, skeptical considerations can be seen as one of the incentives for the development of the concept of mental inwardness both in late Antiquity and, through Descartes, in the Modern Era.

¹¹ The most important difference is that Descartes talks of an indubitable acquaintance with ideas and sensations but not, as the skeptics did, with propositions. This is because he had an

it is conceivable that his perception is false. However, Descartes thinks that this is the case only when sensations or concepts are taken to be more than they really are, that is, more than *mere* sensations and concepts in the mind; as long as one does not commit oneself to the extra-mental reality of sensations and concepts, one can be certain of them. Thus, he says that

as far as ideas are concerned, provided they are considered solely in themselves and I do not refer them to anything else, they cannot strictly speaking be false...As for the will and the emotions, here too one need not worry about falsity...the chief and most common mistake consists in my judging that the ideas which are in me resemble...things located outside me...without referring to anything else, they could scarcely give me any material for error.¹²

Thus, the skeptical heritage influences Descartes not only in creating the problem, but also in finding part of its solution. For him, just as for the skeptics, there is certainty in the existence of the internal, mental world. Unlike the skeptics, however, he tries to use the indubitability of the existence of these ideas as a springboard to the objective, external world. To do this, he argues that there is a correspondence between at least some indubitable sensations and ideas, and the real, extra-mental world.

To proceed from the indubitable internal ideas to the external world, Descartes maintains that some of these ideas are clear and distinct.¹³ Further, clear and distinct ideas, in his opinion,

atomistic bias, which led him to see sensations and ideas as the basic units of cognition.

¹² *Meditations* p.26 (VII 37). See also *Meditations* p.19 (VII 29).

¹³ *Principles of Philosophy*, Part One, principles 45-46, p.207-208 (VIII 21-22).

are true¹⁴ and therefore correspond to the essence of the external world. Moreover, the mind has, with some difficulty, the capacity to distinguish between those ideas which are clear and distinct and those which are not.¹⁵ Finally, Descartes also tries to prove the existence of the veracious God¹⁶ by proceeding from the internal idea of God to His extra-mental reality.¹⁷ This proof is necessary for Descartes' refutation of the Evil Deceiver hypothesis, which is the most

¹⁴ *Discourse on Method*, Part Four, p.127 (VI 33); *Meditations* p.54 (VII 78).

¹⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁶ Third Meditation.

¹⁷ This account, based on the Second and Third Meditations, is problematic, since in the Fifth Meditation Descartes says that the truth of the clear and distinct ideas is vouched for by God (p.49 [VII 71]). Since the proof of the existence of God relies on the truth of the clear and distinct ideas, the argument seems to be circular. Descartes answered the accusations of circularity by saying that he meant that God guarantees only the reliability of memory, and not of all the clear and distinct ideas (pp. 100, 171 [VII 140, 245-6]). This answer, however, is not completely satisfactory.

Another problem arises here concerning the legitimacy of Descartes' proof: although the reliability of reasoning has yet to be proven, he seems to use it in the proof of the existence of God. Perhaps Descartes took the analysis of clear and distinct ideas to be different from regular reasoning, and thus to be a legitimate means to prove the existence of God.

It is true, these moves of Descartes are vulnerable to criticisms. However, discussions of their soundness would carry us beyond the scope and subject of this work. Hence, I will accept them at their face value.

dangerous threat to the reliability of reasoning.¹⁸

However, before Descartes can use internal ideas and clarity and distinctness as legitimate instruments to move from the internal to the external world, a few more things have to be established. First, before he can really be sure of the existence of internal ideas in the mind, he has to prove that the mind, in which they are supposed to exist, indubitably exists as well. Second, he still has to prove the validity of clarity and distinctness as a criterion for the correspondence between some of his internal ideas and objects in the external world. Only after these two things are proven can he go on assuredly to base the proofs of the rest of the system on them.¹⁹

However, proving the existence of the mind and the credibility of the clarity and distinctness criterion seems a difficult thing to do. Any proof of the existence of the mind that would start off from a *content* in the mind would be circular, since it would thereby presuppose such existence. In the same way, a proof of clarity and distinctness would already presuppose them and would, again, be circular. A circular proof is problematic for Descartes because it would accept as true what is at stake and not yet proven. In other words, it would involve a dubitable, dogmatic acceptance which Descartes wants to avoid. Thus, Descartes cannot rely on the indubitability of internal ideas or on the validity of the criterion of clarity and distinctness

¹⁸ In Descartes' opinion, this is the only skeptical argument that can make even our mathematical propositions dubitable (*Meditations*, p.14 [VII 20-21]). It is also the last in a series of skeptical arguments which ascend in strength.

¹⁹ It is for this reason that Descartes had to prove the existence of the human mind before the existence of God. The revolutionary significance of this move will be discussed below.

in order to prove the existence of the mind and the credibility of the clarity and distinctness criterion.

But nor can Descartes rely on previously held propositions. His methodical doubt has proven that they, too, are dubitable and hence cannot be trusted. Similarly, neither could an arbitrary postulation of any axiom as the basis for the new science stand up to the thrust of the skeptical arguments. It, too, would be dogmatic and, hence, dubitable. Thus, after the old science has been destroyed in *such* a thorough manner, it seems almost impossible to build a new, indubitable one. At least at first sight, Descartes' doubt seems to be too radical even for himself.

To solve this problem, Descartes uses reflexivity. The mind will prove its own existence without relating to any content but itself.²⁰ Let us now see how this is done.

II. THE COGITO AS REFLEXIVITY

1. The Cogito as Affirmatory Reflexivity

Usually we are aware only of the "content" of consciousness, while consciousness itself remains "transparent".²¹ The effort to turn and "look" not at the object of consciousness but at

²⁰ Descartes is mostly influenced here by an almost similar argument of St. Augustine. St. Augustine, once a skeptic himself, says that he knows his existence as an indubitable inner fact and that the skeptical argument refutes itself when it relates to itself (*On Free Will*, II, iii, 7; *The City of God* XI, 26). However, St. Augustine does not discuss the indubitability of the reflexivity of the mind as a necessary background for the indubitability of internal ideas, as Descartes does. To construct an indubitable basis for his system, then, Descartes joins an Augustinian anti-skeptical argument to a Pyrrhonian one.

²¹ Descartes uses *penseé* or *cogitatio* similarly to refer to what is usually covered in English

consciousness itself would usually unsuccessfully result in "looking" at a new object, which consists of the previous consciousness. The actual and present consciousness of the object, however, continues to be "transparent". We would be thinking about the "object thought" in such a case and not, as we would want, about the "subject thinking", or the "consciousness of-", proper. Our normal thinking, then, is directional. What thinks and what is thought about are different.

But such consciousness is useless for Descartes at this stage since, as shown above, he does not yet have any reliable method of inferring external existence from internal ideas. Moreover, he cannot rely on internal ideas until he has proven the existence of the mind, since whatever he proves would presuppose the existence of the mind, which is the very issue.

But Descartes thinks that it is possible to overcome the directional relation in thinking by making consciousness become conscious of *itself*²² in the *cogito* act.²³ When this happens, the mind is no longer only an internal object which cannot be relied upon until the existence of the mind and the validity of the inference procedures are proven. When the mind reflexively relates to itself it is also the internal subject, and no inference procedures are necessary to prove

by "consciousness". (Second Meditation p.19 [VII 28]; *Principles of Philosophy* Part One, principle 32 p.204 [VIII 17]; *Second Set of Replies* p.113 [VII 160]). Hence, although the usual translation of *penseé* and *cogitatio* is the English "thought", I use "consciousness", "mind", "thought" and "thinking" interchangeably, as I do "to think", "to be conscious" and "to be aware".

²² E.g. *Meditations* p.7, 17 (VII 8, 25).

²³ By "*cogito*" I mean the whole act by which Descartes proves that he (or his thinking) exists. Thus, it also stands for other formulations of this act (for example: "I am, I exist" in *Meditations* p.17 [VIII 25]) and not only for the famous *cogito ergo sum*.

its existence. When the mind reflexively relates to itself, the fact that it necessarily and indubitability exists when it thinks becomes clear to it. The reflexive act enables the awareness to be aware that it is aware, and thus the supposition that it does not exist (i.e. that there is no awareness) becomes impossible.

In other words, if the existence of mind (or anything else) were to be proven from an internal object-idea in the mind--a move which would assume the existence of the mind--the proof would presuppose what is at stake and, thus, harbour a dubitable prejudice. As long as anything is proven by relying on an "object thought", the "subject thought" must simply be presupposed. However, in the *cogito*, the mind is immediately aware of itself in its affirmatory reflexivity; the mind, or "subject thought", is not presupposed but simply shown and clarified to itself. Since it is both thinking and what is thought about, subject and object, meta-x and x, the reflexive thinking does not dogmatically harbour a prejudice but realizes, by relating to itself, its indubitable existence.

Further, when the mind is immediately aware of itself, and therefore of its existence in the *cogito* act, no method of proof is necessary. On the contrary, since the mind's own existence is both indubitably true for itself and clear and distinct, Descartes concludes that in the future, too, what is clear and distinct must also be true, and thus clarity and distinctness become a criterion for truth. By this affirmatorily-reflexive move, then, Descartes proves the existence of the mind itself without using a strategy whose validity is not yet proven.

2. The Cogito as Contradictory Reflexivity

Up to this point the *cogito* has been understood as affirmatory reflexivity. Descartes has been shown as trying to prove the existence of the mind from itself without holding any

presuppositions. Consciousness has been taken as making an effort to ascertain the existence of many things, but as succeeding in ascertaining only the existence of itself. However, as the analysis of the relation between affirmatory and contradictory reflexivities in the Introduction shows, the necessity of an affirmatory reflexivity is extensionally equivalent to the logical impossibility of a contradictory reflexivity of the negated relation (and *vice versa*).²⁴ In other words, one of them could be deduced from the other. Hence, the *cogito* can also be seen as a contradictory reflexivity in which Descartes tries to show that an effort to doubt everything is necessarily unsuccessful. Conversely to the previous case, consciousness is understood as an effort to *doubt* all existence, and this effort *succeeds* concerning everything except its own existence.

The *cogito* as a contradictory reflexivity can be understood thus: we can doubt almost everything--using the skeptical arguments described above, we can doubt the truth of our scientific beliefs, our memories, and the information we receive through our senses concerning external objects. Since it is conceivable that we are dreaming, mad or deceived by an Evil Spirit, we can even question beliefs that usually seem to be certainly true, such as those involving mathematical equations or the existence of our body. In the same way, even the truth of our memory of what happened an hour ago, or even a minute or a second ago, can be doubted. Thus, even the fact that we have just doubted, even just a second ago, can be doubted.

Descartes' point is that although the existence of everything in the world can be doubted, even the existence of our previous doubt, the existence of our *present* doubt, while we doubt,

²⁴ Section IV:3.

cannot be doubted.²⁵ That is, the doubting itself, when it takes place, is indubitable. Again, when consciousness is doubting and it refers to itself, it cannot doubt that while it doubts it actually exists. Thus, universal doubt contradicts itself.

This will also be the case if "doubting" is replaced by parallel conscious activities. If I am *deceived* by an Evil Spirit such that I am wrong about everything, there is necessarily the act of being deceived. There cannot be a deception about the fact that there is a deception. Likewise, everything can be merely dreamt, except the dream, that cannot be *only* dreamt. If it is a dream, it must also exist as a dream. Again, even if I only *imagine* all sorts of things, the act of *imagining* itself exists. The imagination cannot be only imagined, because if its existence is only imagined, it is by that fact affirmed. Similarly, to use "thinking" in one of its senses, even if all the things I take to exist in the world actually do not exist, and I only *think* that they do, I cannot think that this thinking is only *thought* to exist without its really existing in fact. Thus, without employing any presuppositions and methods of reasoning which are not yet proven, and with no problematic reliance on the content of the mind, the existence of the mind is proven through the use of contradictory reflexivity. The proof shows the indubitable existence of the mind only when the difference between consciousness and its object is eradicated, i.e. when the mind, in doubting, tries to relate to itself.

Both contradictory reflexivity and affirmatory reflexivity, then, are useful for Descartes when he wants to prove that the mind exists, yet without appealing to any presuppositions or methods of reasoning, or even to the content of the mind.

²⁵ E.g. *Principles of Philosophy Part One*, 7, p.94 (VIII 6-7); *Meditations* p.9, 17 (VII 12, 25); *Discourse on Method* p.127 (VI 32).

III. OBJECTIONS AGAINST THE WAY THE COGITO HAS BEEN PORTRAYED IN THIS CHAPTER

Several objections can be raised against the way the *cogito* has been portrayed here. First, an objection can be made against understanding the *cogito* as both affirmatory and contradictory reflexivity. It may be argued that since Descartes saw "thinking" as almost any mental state,²⁶ the passages dealing with doubting and portrayed as contradictory reflexivity should not be treated separately from the ones concerning thinking and portrayed as affirmatory reflexivity. This objection can be strengthened by Descartes' equating thinking and doubting in the *cogito* ("I am doubting, therefore I exist", or what amounts to the same thing, "I am thinking, therefore I exist").²⁷ Moreover, in various passages Descartes deals with both kinds of reflexivity together.²⁸ Furthermore, both senses of the *cogito* have the same structure and prove the same thing, and Descartes nowhere tries to distinguish them.

Indeed, it is probable that Descartes was not aware of the distinction between contradictory and affirmatory reflexivity in his *cogito* at all. Whereas in other cases in which the impossibility of the contradictory reflexivity entails the necessity of the affirmatory reflexivity and *vice versa* (e.g. "this sentence is true" and "this sentence is false") the difference between the relations (here: truth-conferring and denying) is clear, in Descartes' case (thinking and doubting) it is not; Descartes takes doubting to be a kind of thinking. Thus, since both

²⁶ *Meditations* p. 19 (VII 28).

²⁷ *The Search for Truth* p. 417, (X 523).

²⁸ E.g. *Meditations* p.17 (VII 25).

reflexivities yield the same result, and since the relations used in them seem similar to Descartes, he could easily overlook the difference between them. However, I think that the distinction between contradictory and affirmatory reflexivity should be retained even if Descartes himself was not aware of it. As mentioned in the Introduction,²⁹ the analyses provided in this work are not supposed to reconstruct what actually went on in the minds of the philosophers who used reflexivity. Noting Descartes' use of two kinds of reflexivity will enable us to understand better Descartes' daring to prove his own existence before that of God, a move that had important historical significance (see section V below).

A more difficult problem is posed by some passages suggesting that the *cogito* is not a reflexive act, as it has been presented here but an inferential one: in the *cogito* Descartes uses the word "therefore",³⁰ which is typical of inferences; calls it "inference";³¹ refers to the *sum* in it as a conclusion;³² and says that existence in the *cogito* follows from thinking.³³ Further, according to my interpretation of the *cogito*, it must be mental, but Descartes explicitly says that

²⁹ Section VII.

³⁰ *Discourse on the Method* p. 127 (VII 32); *Principles of Philosophy* p.196 (VIII 8). My discussion of this point relies heavily on Jaakko Hintikka "Cogito, Ergo Sum: Inference or Performance?" *Philosophical Review* 71 (1962):3-32.

³¹ *The Search for Truth* p.417 (X 523).

³² *Principles of Philosophy* Part One, 9, p.195 (VIII 8).

³³ *Discourse on the Method* Part Four p.127 (VI 32).

it is sufficient to pronounce it in order to see that it is true.³⁴

To answer these points, protagonists of the reflexive interpretation can stress that some of the formulations of the *cogito* are clearly non-inferential (e.g. "I am, I exist" in *Meditations* p. 17 [VII 25]). Further, a non-literal understanding of the "pro-inference" passages can be suggested; accordingly, Descartes' use of "therefore", "inference" or "follows" should be read as no more than inexact and figurative expressions. Moreover, when Descartes says that the *cogito* can be pronounced he cannot mean to say that the *cogito* could *merely* be pronounced. Under both the reflexive and the inferential interpretations words which are merely uttered without expressing a mental process are useless, and under both interpretations Descartes must mean that behind the uttering there is a thought.

These "anti-inferential" or "pro-reflexive" points are strengthened by Descartes' saying that the *cogito* is not a syllogistic inference. Thus, in the *Meditations* Descartes says: "...when somebody says: 'I am thinking, therefore I am or exist', he is not using a syllogism to deduce his existence from his thought, but recognizing this as something self-evident, in a simple mental intuition".³⁵

However, protagonists of the inference interpretation can try to explain away this "pro-reflexive" passage by interpreting Descartes as saying that the *cogito* is simply not an "All A's are B's" kind of inference. According to this reading, the *cogito* can still be an inference of another type.³⁶ Furthermore, when Descartes says that the *cogito* is an intuition he can still be

³⁴ *Meditations* p.17 (VII 25).

³⁵ *Replies to the Second Set of Objections* p.100 (VII 140-141).

³⁶ Bernard Williams *Descartes: The Project of Pure Enquiry* (New York: Penguin Books, 1978) p. 89. Hereafter cited as *Williams*.

taken to mean that the *cogito* is an inference, since in his opinion inferences involve intuitions.³⁷ Moreover, it is possible to reconstruct what Descartes says so that only the "I think" portion of the whole *cogito* dictum is self-evidently intuited (and thus not inferred), while the passage in the dictum from "I think" to "I am" is still an inference.³⁸ Another possibility is to interpret the whole *cogito ergo sum* dictum as intuited and thus not inferred, yet the movement from *cogito* to *sum* as an inference.³⁹

Although the arguments of both sides seem at first sight to balance each other, I think that the non-inferential view has advantages over its rival. When Descartes says that "he is not using a syllogism to deduce his *existence* from his *thought*" (my emphasis) he cannot mean, as the inferential view interprets him to do, that it is only the whole dictum which is not deduced by a syllogism, while the movement from the "I think" to the "I exist" is. Nor is it possible that he means that it is only the "I think" which is not deduced by a syllogism, while the passage from the "I think" to the "I exist" is. It seems to me that Descartes' statement that his *existence* is not deduced syllogistically from his *thought* undermines these pro-inferential readings.

The only pro-inferential interpretation of this passage which is not yet undermined is that of Williams, according to which the inference from thought to existence is not of the type of "All A's are B's", but of another type. Under this interpretation the *cogito* is an argument (*modus ponens*) whose first premise is "I cannot think without existing", the second "I think",

³⁷ *Rules for the Direction fo the Mind* p.14-15 (X 368-370). See Anthony Kenny *Descartes: A Study in his Philosophy* (New York: Random House, 1968) p. 55. Hereafter cited as: *Kenny*.

³⁸ *Kenny* p. 55.

³⁹ *Kenny* p. 53-54.

and the conclusion "I exist". It is possible to see the *cogito* as such an inference; however, at least the knowledge that "it is impossible that that which thinks should not exist" is given by Descartes as an example of what is known in the *cogito* only *implicitly*, without any need of explicit formulation.⁴⁰

The most important argument against the "inferential" view, however, is that seeing the *cogito* as an inference goes against the whole logic and purpose of Descartes' programme. Descartes cannot allow the *cogito* to be an inference at this stage, since neither the existence of the mind, in which inferences should take place, nor the reliability of logical reasoning (even mathematical propositions are dubitable at this stage)⁴¹ has yet been proven. Thus, allowing the *cogito* to be an inference would, again, render it circular and thereby vulnerable to skeptical arguments. For these reasons, then, I think that all in all the *cogito* should not be seen as an inference.⁴²

⁴⁰ *Principles of Philosophy* Part One, 10, p.195-196 (VIII A 8).

⁴¹ *Principles of Philosophy* Part One, 5, p.194 (VIII 7). See also *Discourse on Method* p.127 (VI 32). Of course, the *cogito* does assume some logical assumptions, such as Aristotle's three basic rules of logic. But these are necessary assumptions for any sensible discussion, and should not be characterized as "logical reasoning".

⁴² Some of the arguments Kenny and Williams make against the non-inferential interpretation, such that Descartes thinks that the *cogito* is successful for any kind of consciousness, and not only intellection (*Kenny* pp. 44-45), or that the *cogito* cannot create itself (*Williams* pp. 75-76), have force only against Hintikka's interpretation of the *cogito* as a performance, but not against mine. Hence, I do not discuss them here.

IV. LEGITIMACY AND DESIRABILITY OF DESCARTES'S USE OF REFLEXIVITY. IS DESCARTES' DECISION TO USE REFLEXIVITY A GOOD PHILOSOPHICAL CHOICE?

I have shown in this chapter how reflexivity is functional in Descartes' system. Its basic characteristic--the ability to combine two traits into one--bases the indubitability of the existence of the mind in the *cogito* act. But is it also necessary? I think it is. I can think of no other means or philosophical tool that Descartes could have used to solve the problem that his own suppositions about methodical doubt put him in the beginning of his system. In other words, once the presuppositions of the system are accepted, reflexivity becomes indispensable to it.

Moreover, within the context of the system Descartes' use of reflexivity is correct. He does not combine in one use of reflexivity types which exclude each other, nor does he particularize the reflexivity in an inconsistent way (i.e. sometimes in one way and sometimes in another), nor does he use it inconsistently. Descartes' use of reflexivity is perfectly legitimate.

It is true, there is yet another way in which it may be claimed that reflexivity is being used illegitimately in Descartes' system. It may be claimed that the consciousness in the *cogito*, being reflexive (i.e. relating to itself), is consciousness of *itself* only; it is indubitable only while *it* is taking place, whereas previous, remembered *cogito* acts (which are mere contents of the mind) are not immune to skeptical arguments. Because of its reflexive nature, then, the *cogito*--just like Meister Eckhart's mystical experience--can be performed only in the present.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ It is interesting to note that, for the same reason, the *cogito* can be performed only in the first person; again, since the consciousness or *cogito* act of another person is different from my consciousness, the indubitability which was achieved by the reflexive identity of consciousness and its object is lost. Hence, although I can *understand* other peoples' *cogito* acts--i.e., how they prove to themselves that their consciousness exists--I can never be *certain* that they exist or that they have proved themselves to exist. I can be sure only of the existence of *my* thinking.

Likewise, reflexivity makes the *cogito* "empty", homogeneous and unspecific. The usual objects of consciousness--e.g. ideas, memories, ambitions, sensations--are specific. "Subject consciousness", on the other hand, is unspecific, and stays so when it relates to *itself* only. Thus, it is "empty" and homogeneous.

But, it may be claimed that if these are the characteristics of the *cogito*, then it is used in Descartes' philosophy in a wrong and illegitimate way. As shown above, the function of the *cogito* in Descartes' philosophy is to guarantee the existence of the mind, in which the internal ideas, which base the existence of God and the external world, exist. But if the *cogito* can be performed only in the present, it is indubitable only while it is performed. Thus, it cannot be relied on while it is not actually being performed but merely held in the memory. In other words, one cannot satisfactorily prove the existence of God and the external world on the basis of internal ideas if the *cogito*, which guarantees the existence of the mind in which the internal ideas exist, is not performed at the very same time. However, if the *cogito* is empty and homogeneous, the internal ideas cannot be part of it. Thus, it may seem that Descartes uses the *cogito* in a wrong and illegitimate way.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ These features can also be arrived at from another route. As shown in the Introduction, cohesive, complete and immediate reflexivity is also characterized by closedness. Thus, what is proven about the *cogito* is proven only about the reflexive conscious activity itself.

It is interesting to note that some of these characteristics are also useful for Descartes' purposes in the system. For example, homogeneity and non-specificity are useful for the impersonality and intersubjectivity that Descartes wants to ascribe to his *cogito*, so that it can be a proof of the existence of the consciousness of any person (or any conscious being) at any time. We see, then, that the very same characteristics of reflexivity can make the *cogito* functional in the system on the one hand, but difficult to take advantage of on the other.

But there is no need to assume that the *cogito* either includes other mental activities (e.g. proving the existence of God or the external world) in it or is performed antecedently to them, and that no other relation between it and other mental activities is possible. The *cogito* and other mental activities can be simply performed simultaneously, side by side, in the same mind. Indeed, what Descartes writes indicates that he thinks this as well. In the *Meditations* he says: "I am, I exist--that is certain. But for how long? *For as long as I am thinking*. For it could be that were I totally to cease from thinking, I should totally cease to exist".⁴⁵ Thus, he seems to take the *cogito* to be a prolonged process that can continuously accompany at least some of our mental operations. Likewise, in almost all explanations of the *cogito*, thinking or doubting relate to themselves while internal ideas are being thought. Thus, in the *Meditations* Descartes says: "For even if, as I would have supposed, none of the *objects of imagination* are real, the power of imaginations is something which really exists and is part of my thinking."⁴⁶ Similarly, Descartes explains that any consciousness, even consciousness of one's (supposed) breathing, is a good starting point for the *cogito* and, thus, even "I breathe therefore I am", when understood as "I am conscious of my breathing, therefore I am", can serve to prove the *cogito*.⁴⁷

From this aspect too, then, there seems to be nothing wrong with Descartes' use of reflexivity in the *cogito*. The use of reflexivity, then, is both necessary and legitimate in Descartes's philosophy. Descartes' decision to use reflexivity in his system is the correct and rational philosophical move to take.

⁴⁵ My emphasis. p.18 (VII 27). See also p.19 (VII 28-29).

⁴⁶ My emphasis. p.19 (VII 29).

⁴⁷ II 37, in *Williams* p.94.

V. DESCARTES AND THE HISTORY OF THE USE OF REFLEXIVITY

Descartes' use of reflexivity in the *cogito* is innovative. In the previous chapter we have seen that when reflexivity was used in the Middle Ages it was usually ascribed only to God. It was ascribed to human beings very rarely and only within the mystical tradition. The reason for that was that becoming reflexive enabled one to become, at least partly, the same as God. But since such an identity--even if it is only in some of the aspects--contradicts Monotheistic convictions concerning the qualitative difference between created, limited humans and God, many philosophers and mystics preferred not to use reflexivity.

In Descartes' writings, the parallel structure to "looking within" or mystical reflexivity is the *cogito*. By performing the *cogito* act individuals become conscious of themselves and know unmistakably that they exist. Shortly afterwards they find refuge in God from all other possible mistakes.

However, when Descartes' reflexivity in the *cogito* is compared to the Hellenistic and Medieval "looking within", two differences become conspicuous. First, Descartes' use of reflexivity is epistemological rather than religious. It is epistemic uncertainty that he wants to get rid of, not religious disbelief. It is true, the non-reflexive, non-mystical looking within has a cognitive aspect for the medievals as well: one *knows* one's true nature, limitations, and perhaps (even if never fully) God. But whereas in the Middle Ages this knowledge is usually identified with a religious or a moral realization, for Descartes it is not. It is true, the whole epistemological system has, perhaps, a moral aim for Descartes; but while his system is being constructed moral considerations do not play any role in it.

The second difference is that while in the Middle Ages human reflexivity was always connected to God, Descartes proves his existence or being by reflexivity before and

independently of God's being. The reflexivity used in the system is an autonomous, independent human one. It is true, Augustine's proto-*cogito* may seem to be an earlier, even if unique, case in which human existence is proved prior to God's. But this is probably not the case. Belief in God lurks in the background of all Medieval discussions⁴ and God is discussed in *The City of God* and *On Free Will* before the proto-*cogito* is mentioned. Descartes, on the other hand, seems to prove his existence with no presuppositions at all.

The epistemic and anthropomorphic characteristics of Descartes' use of reflexivity are highlighted when Descartes' use is compared with Aristotle's and the Medievals in another way, too. Just as reflexivity enables Aristotle's unmoved mover to cause itself, and thus be the first link in a chain of causes, it enables Descartes' *cogito* to prove itself, and thus be the first link in an epistemic chain of indubitable truths. In both systems, then, reflexivity is used in a similar framework to solve a similar problem. But whereas in Aristotle's system it is a first link in an ontological chain of causes, in the world, in Descartes' system it is the first link in an epistemological chain of truths, in the mind.

These epistemic and anthropomorphic characteristics of Descartes' use of reflexivity had an important impact on later generations' use of reflexivity. Descartes' *cogito* opened the way to see reflexivity not only as a divine activity but also as a human one, and not only as an exalted, beatific activity but also as a more regular epistemic one. In other words, Descartes helped "normalize" the use of reflexivity. But by doing that he also made its subsequent use more frequent and varied.

⁴ Etienne Gilson *Reason and Revelation in the Middle Ages* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1966).

But why did Descartes make this revolutionary move? Descartes *had* to prove the existence of the human mind before he could prove the existence of God. He could not have started from the existence of God, since such an existence, in order to be indubitable, had to be proven; but the proof of the existence of God assumes the thinking mind. Therefore, the proof of the existence of the human mind must, for Descartes, precede that of God.

Moreover, by disentangling human from divine reflexivity, Descartes is not making such a serious iconoclastic move, from a religious point of view, as it may first seem. First, we should remember that he transformed the theological context to an epistemological one, and therefore his innovation does not have the heretical significance that it would otherwise have.

Second, Descartes' reflexivity in the *cogito* (just like St. Augustine's in his proto-*cogito*) can be seen not only as affirmatory reflexivity, analogous to "looking within" or mystical reflexivity, but also as contradictory reflexivity. As contradictory reflexivity its independence from God or from divine reflexivity breaks with no tradition. Thus, the *cogito*, being both affirmatory and contradictory, enables human reflexivity to be independent without having the unorthodox connotations it could otherwise have.

Finally, Descartes maintains that human reflexivity is very different from divine reflexivity or Being. Descartes could have chosen to see human reflexivity, which thinks itself, as also creating itself; but taking such a step would have made humans self-subsistent and self-causing, qualities which Descartes reserved strictly for God.

Descartes restricted himself to a limited, epistemological reflexivity not merely because he wanted to avoid heresy.⁴⁹ It is possible that he genuinely believed in the distinction between human beings and God. Moreover, the distinction is important for him for methodological reasons. As a being who clearly can be wrong, it is important to him to keep a clear difference between himself and the perfect God who, later in the system, guarantees the truth of some ideas. Furthermore, in order to prove the existence of this God, Descartes needs to rely on the fact that he is limited, i.e., different from God. Therefore, although Descartes showed the way for further developments, he could not have taken them himself.

Descartes' use of reflexivity is very limited in comparison with that of other philosophers—it proves only the existence of the mind, and possesses a very limited number of characteristics in comparison to the reflexivities found, for example, in the Aristotelian and Hegelian systems. This is probably the case because the paradoxical nature of reflexivity, and the fact that it is performed in the first person, do not fit Descartes' inclination towards linear, positivistic philosophy. Moreover, it was associated for Descartes with God or Godlike entities. Therefore, he used reflexivity only to the extent that it was absolutely necessary.

However, we can now see that Descartes' use of reflexivity was an important influence on later uses in forthcoming generations and marks an important shift in the history of its uses. Descartes is well known for his influence on the development of naturalism and positivism, and impersonal epistemology and science; but now we can see that through his use of reflexivity he

⁴⁹ Descartes was careful not to go against the mainstream conventions of his days. For example, in 1633 he avoided publishing a book on Meteorology and Physics after hearing of Galileo's condemnation. This caution is also apparent in his letter to the theologians of the Sorbonne at the beginning of the *Meditations*.

also influenced some developments in German Idealism, Romanticism and Hermeneutics and, as we saw earlier, the interest in introspection and first-person intentionality.

Descartes' impact on many fields in philosophy is widely recognized. This chapter tried to show that his revolutionary and innovative impact on the development and use of reflexivity, and through it on other fields in philosophy, should be fully acknowledged as well.

chapter five

SPINOZA'S USE OF CHANGING REFLEXIVITY

I. SPINOZA'S SYSTEM

1. Metaphysics

At the background of many of Spinoza's metaphysical theses stands a strong conviction in the power of reason. He believes that reason (in contradistinction to religion, emotion, convention etc.), is the ultimate or only means for progress, happiness, and the knowledge of truth. In this conviction (which I shall in this chapter call his "rationalistic conviction"¹), Spinoza can be seen as one of the forerunners of the Enlightenment. Spinoza's rationalistic conviction can be seen, for example, in his suggestions in the *Political-Theological Treatise* for interpreting the Holy Scriptures. Further, he believes that Nature, in every aspect, is completely rational, and therefore that there is nothing which is impenetrable to reason.² Moreover, he

¹ "Rationalistic" and "rationalism" should be understood in this chapter as designating only the aforementioned belief. It should be distinguished from other ways in which these terms are used, e.g. to designate the philosophical movement which was in disagreement with empiricism.

² It is true, Spinoza says that we cannot, in principle, know any attributes except Thought and Extension (letter 64). Moreover, he admits that he cannot explain suicide (II P49 Sch [II/135/27-31]). But all these are due only to our limitations as human beings or researchers, and not to an essential metaphysical or epistemological impossibility. The difficulty arises out of the fact that while there is an infinite number of modes and attributes, we are finite. Therefore, we cannot know all of them. However, none of the modes are unexplainable or irrational in principle (see also *Political Treatise*, II, 8).

Unless indicated otherwise, all citations are from *The Collected Works of Spinoza*, ed. and trans. Edwin M. Curley, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985) Vol 1. Citations from the *Ethics* are indicated by part of the book, (e.g. III) and number of proposition (e.g. P31) or definition (e.g. D3) or axiom (e.g. A7) or demonstration of a proposition (e.g. P3 Dem) or

thinks that, if followed persistently, reason would answer all questions and would direct us to the good and happy life.³ Further, Spinoza's rationalistic conviction is detectable in his choosing to rigorously present his system by means of a geometrical method. Again, this rationalistic conviction is apparent in many of Spinoza's expressions.⁴

corollary of a proposition (e.g. P3 Cor) or scholium of a proposition (e.g. P3 Sch). Where necessary I add the volume, page and line number in the Gebhardt critical *Spinoza Opera* which appears in the margins of Curley's translation. Thus II/162/22 refers to line 22 on page 162 in volume II of the Gebhardt edition.

Citation from Spinoza's letters are indicated according to *The Correspondence of Spinoza* trans. and ed. by A. Wolf (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1928) by letter number and, when necessary, by page number in this edition or by line, page and volume numbers of the Gebhardt edition.

Citations from *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect* (hereafter cited as *TEI*) are also indicated following the Curley translation by section number and, when necessary, again by line, page and volume numbers of the Gebhardt edition.

Citations from *Theological-Political Treatise* (hereafter cited as *TPT*) and *Political Treatise* are indicated according to the R. H. M. Elews translation of *The Chief Works of Spinoza* (New York: Dover Publishing, 1951) vol. I, and are cited by chapter (and sometimes section), and when necessary, again, by the Gebhardt edition.

³ Part V.

⁴ Such as "...men, in so far as they live in obedience to reason, necessarily do only such things as are necessarily good for human nature, and consequently for each individual man" (IV P35 Dem [II/233/10-13]). "There is no individual thing in nature which is more useful to man than a man who lives in obedience to reason" (IV P35 Cor1). "...If they [people who do not respect reason] hawk about something superior to reason, it is a mere figment, and far below reason" (*TPT* 5 [III/80/21-23]). Moreover, Spinoza does not believe in the unnatural light, but only in natural light (*TPT* 7 [III/112/15 - 113/7]). Similarly, he believes that each person should use his free individual judgement, a right that cannot be alienated (*ibid* [III/117/1-10]). One can

Furthermore, this conviction is apparent in Spinoza's regarding knowledge as qualitatively indistinct from the emotions and, moreover, from his seeing rational experience in its extreme as moral and mystical-religious as well. It is true, this identification seems on the face of it to make him less of a rationalist, at least in the way we conceive of rationality today. In fact, however, this identification only points to the depth of his rationalism. The identification of morality, emotion and mystical experience with knowledge makes them identical to reason and thus not distinct and impenetrable to it, as they were traditionally taken to be.

This reliance on reason leads Spinoza to analyze some traditional concepts in a non-traditional way. Like others, he characterises substance as what is not dependent on any other thing.⁵ But he insists that if substance is really not dependent on any other thing, then it must be God. Moreover, since any other substance or God would have to be identical to God, there can be only one God or substance and not, as tradition had it, many.⁶

Likewise, rational analysis shows that if substance, or God, is infinite,⁷ whatever is not God must be part of Him.⁸ Hence, the things around us are parts--or, as Spinoza calls them, modes--of God. Thus, their totality is God Himself. In other words, God is not transcendent

see Spinoza's aversion to prejudice and superstition in I Appendix (II/279/20-29) and in the introduction to the *TPT* (III/6/18 - 7/6).

⁵ I D3.

⁶ I P5; I P14 Cor1. Admittedly, Spinoza is influenced here by Descartes.

⁷ I Def 6; I P8.

⁸ I P15.

to the universe--or as Spinoza prefers to call it, Nature⁹--but identical with it. The rational analysis of the concept of substance or God leads Spinoza, then, to pantheism.

God and His modes are expressed in an infinite number of attributes,¹⁰ which have, for Spinoza, both an ontological and an epistemological role. Of these attributes, however, we can perceive only two: Thought and Extension.¹¹ Spinoza takes the two attributes to be completely parallel; each attribute is an exhaustive and exclusive expression of Substance and all its modes. Thus, God's essence is equally represented or expressed under the attribute of Extension or Thought. Consequently, so are God's modes.¹² Thus, the lamp and my idea of the lamp are exactly the same mode, conceived once under the attribute of Extension and once under the attribute of Thought. Similarly, my body and its idea, i.e. my mind, are again exactly the same mode, conceived once under the attribute of Extension and once under the attribute of Thought. But Extension and Thought are incommensurable;¹³ since they express everything exhaustively, nothing can serve as a mediator between them. Moreover, since each one of them expresses in itself all modes and their totality--i.e. substance, which is conceived through itself¹⁴--they also

⁹ I Def5.

¹⁰ I Def4.

¹¹ Letter 64 to Schuller pp. 306-307.

¹² II P7 Sch.

¹³ I P10; I P19 Dem; I P10 Sch; II P1 dem; II P1 Sch; II P2.

¹⁴ I D3. See also D6.

must be conceived through themselves only.¹⁵

But why did Spinoza choose parallelism? First, he probably found it helpful as an answer to the psycho-physical problem, which he took very seriously.¹⁶ Moreover, Spinoza is committed to seeing the attribute of Thought, which gives reasons and explanations, as completely parallel to the attribute of Extension due to his rationalistic conviction. Since he thinks that *every* material, or extended, thing can be explained, and since all explanations are done under the attribute of Thought, he is committed to a complete parallelism between the two attributes.

Again, his rationalistic conviction leads Spinoza to see the world as completely deterministic. If everything can be explained, then there is no place for arbitrary, possible events that could have been otherwise or have no reason. Further, the parallelism thesis leads him to hold that the necessity which we ascribe to a system of reasons (under the attribute of Thought) would exist just as strictly in the material world (i.e. under the attribute of Extension). Thus, there is no place in the system for freedom in the ordinary sense of the word¹⁷ and everything is as it is because it *must* be that way.¹⁸

Likewise, because of his parallelism, Spinoza also rejects time, temporality and duration.

¹⁵ I D4.

¹⁶ See his angry expressions when he rejects Descartes' solution to the problem in V Introduction (esp. II/235/16-24).

¹⁷ Spinoza defines freedom as self-causation (I D7), which is, again, totally necessary. Since God is the only thing that causes itself, He is the only free entity--again, in Spinoza's special understanding of "free"--in the system (I P17, Dem, Cor1-2, & Sch).

¹⁸ I P17, P26-29, P32-33 (esp.II/74/6-19), P35-36, Appendix.

Since logical reasons are a-temporal, and since whatever is true of Thought is also true of Extension, he sees time, temporality and duration as unreal in both attributes. A true understanding of the world, in his opinion, would show that they are only imaginary.¹⁹

Similarly, rationalistic intuition and parallelism lead Spinoza to admit only mechanistic causes into his universe, with no place for teleological ones.²⁰ Parallelism excludes teleological notions such as potentiality, actuality, final cause and end. They are rooted in the traditional distinction between matter and form, which Spinoza rejects. In other words, Spinoza cannot accept the notion of the unrealized end into his system, since although the unrealized end can be *thought* about, or can exist somehow in an immaterial form, it is very difficult to think of an analogue to it within the attribute of Extension. These reasons also rule out the possibility of limiting teleology to the human sphere alone, as Descartes did. Such a step would also contradict Spinoza's parallelism, because it limits causality to matter and teleology to mind.

¹⁹ I D8 Explanation. See also II/75/12-13. Moreover, in V P23 Sch (II/296/9-15) we learn that time is associated only with knowledge of the first degree which, as we shall see below, is false. See also II P30 & Dem, P31 & Dem; IV Preface (II/209/1-3,6-7); II P44 & Dem & Sch & Cor1-2.

²⁰ I Appendix (II/80/3-6); IV Preface (II/206/23-II/207/17). It is true, Spinoza uses terms such as striving (*conatus*), desire (*cupiditas*), appetite (*appetitus*) and will (*voluntas*). Nevertheless, he redefines them so that they do not convey their usual meaning. Thus, striving is "nothing but the actual essence of the thing" (II/146/20-21), desire is human essence "insofar as it is conceived to be determined, from any given affection of it, to do something" (II/190/3-4), appetite is "the very essence of man, from whose nature there necessarily follows those things that promote his preservation" (II/147/29-31), and causes determine the will totally (II P48 & Dem). Things are able to produce nothing but what follows necessarily from their determinate nature (II/146/23-25).

Thus, while Descartes did not dare to extend mechanical causality into the realm of human activity, Spinoza's rationalistic ideals are strong enough to extend this causal understanding of the world into the domain of human activity as well.²¹

I shall argue below that Spinoza needs to use changing reflexivity in his system in order to render his metaphysics compatible with his philosophy of mind or, more specifically, his adherence to mechanistic causality with his theory of epistemological redemption. Having surveyed some features of Spinoza's metaphysics, let us now examine some aspects of his philosophy of mind.

2. Epistemology and Theory of Redemption

The ascent from everyday life to redemption is made through three stages of knowledge,²² which are also stages of moral behaviour, emotional status, and spiritual life. Further, since, for Spinoza, the epistemological aspect is tightly linked with the ontological one,

²¹ Another reason for Spinoza's rejection of teleological explanations is that the notion of potentiality implies imperfection. Yet, according to Spinoza's theory, there is nothing imperfect because "things have been produced by God with the highest perfection, since they have followed necessarily from a given most perfect nature" (I P33 Sch2 [II/74/20-22]). It is true, in other places Spinoza does talk of different degrees of perfection (e.g. II/80/14-22), but these modes are compared with the essence of God which, of course, is more perfect than they are. In comparison with their *own* essence, they are perfect (II/207/25-II/208/4).

²² In the *TEI* Spinoza talks of four degrees, the lower two of which are included in the first degree of the *Ethics*.

the stages of knowledge are also stages of being: when we are in a higher stage of knowledge we also have a higher ontological status.

In his description of the first stage of knowledge Spinoza is highly influenced by Hobbes. As he describes it, our images are formed by other bodies which affect ours, leaving their marks on us and thus slowly changing our form.²³ Since the space in our cortex is limited, the marks which the particular bodies (e.g. cats) leave on our body can merge and, hence, so can their images. Thus, universals (e.g. of Cat) are formed.²⁴ Moreover, this explains our memory and mental associations; when one sensation follows another a few times we find it difficult to think of the first without thinking of the second.²⁵

However, while Hobbes knows no alternative to this kind of knowledge and accents it as explaining all our dreams, sensations, emotions and thoughts, Spinoza thinks that there are superior alternatives to which we should strive. The deficiencies in this kind of knowledge stem, mostly, from the way it is acquired. Since it is formed from other bodies repeatedly affecting ours, we cannot know whether the information we get is about our bodies, other bodies, or both at the same time. We end up, then, with a confused and partial idea of both bodies together, but without a clear, complete and precise idea of either.²⁶

²³ II P13 Ax 3 (II/100/7-15); II P13 Postulates 1-5.

²⁴ II P40 Sch1.

²⁵ II P18 & Dem & Sch; II P44 Sch.

²⁶ II P16 & Cor2; II P28 & Dem; II P29 Cor; II P30-31; II P47 Sch.

Further, in this kind of knowledge we can conceive only the idea of bodies which affect us, i.e. only the proximate causes of our affections; in reality, however, there is an infinity of causes which affect us (and are affected by us). Moreover, there is an element of chance in the formation of this knowledge, since it depends on the bodies that happen to come into contact with and affect ours. But real knowledge, for Spinoza, cannot have any element of chance in it. Likewise, since knowledge at this stage is affected by chance, different souls and bodies can be affected in different ways.²⁷ Hence, it is also subjective. However, true knowledge, according to Spinoza, has to be inter-subjective. Furthermore, this kind of knowledge also gives rise to--indeed, is responsible for--the formation of universals of essences and species. But Spinoza, being a parallelist, cannot accept universals into his theory, since they have no counterpart under the attribute of Extension.²⁸ Similarly, in this kind of knowledge the soul is partly passive. This, however, is a mark of inferior knowledge for Spinoza.²⁹

Knowledge in the first stage, then, both lacks the marks of what Spinoza would consider to be real knowledge, and gives an untrue picture of the world.³⁰ These theoretical deficiencies, moreover, are combined with practical ones; because of the subjectivity characteristic of this stage, people confined to it have different personal views of the same object and hence different

²⁷ I Appendix (II/82/33-II/83/10).

²⁸ It is odd, therefore, that Spinoza himself sometimes uses language which suggests the acceptance of universals. The very example he gives of a wrongly constructed universal, man (II/121/13-33), is used in other parts of the *Ethics* (e.g. in II Ax 1-2; D1 of the Affects (II/190/2)).

²⁹ III D 1-2; III P1 & Cor; III P3.

³⁰ II P18 Sch.

desires and emotions concerning it. Therefore they have different (and probably egocentric understandings of what is good and bad. This, in turn, tends to produce disagreements and quarrels.

Moreover, in the first stage individuals cannot perceive their place in Nature or God. Consequently, for Spinoza, they cannot be really happy.

The second stage of knowledge is supposed to cure the deficiencies of the first stage, by giving no place to subjectivity, chance or mistakes. In the second stage of knowledge--"rational", as Spinoza calls it--we look for what is common to all parts of our body, our body as a whole, other bodies in Nature, and Nature as a whole. This frees knowledge from the problems of the first stage; since the common notions are common to all things, there is no possibility of confusion, as there was in the first stage, between what belongs to our body and what belongs to others. Since the common notions are the same for all bodies, we can only perceive them correctly.

Similarly, the element of chance is cancelled in the second stage of knowledge, since it no longer matters which bodies happen to affect our body and which do not. Thus, the cause of subjectivity in knowledge is eliminated as well. Moreover, the second stage of knowledge does not admit of universals, since universals designate what is common only to a group of things, and not to all of them, as common notions do. Further, the mind is not passive when we discover common notions. Again, common notions are more than just proximate causes. Moreover, the second stage of knowledge starts giving us a correct understanding of the world around us. Nature is conceived now as it really is: ordered, necessary and eternal. As we shall soon see, this second stage of knowledge does not give us a full picture of the world; for a complete picture we have to attain the third stage of knowledge. But unlike the first stage, the

second stage does give us a true picture, even if not yet a complete one.

The second stage of knowledge is also morally superior to the first. The influence of individual emotions and desires and, thus, disagreements between different people, diminishes, and there is more understanding of the real nature of the world and the good.³¹

Notwithstanding its advantages, however, the second stage of knowledge has an important deficiency: *common* notions do not leave a place for conceiving individuals in the whole. This important feature, which exists in the first stage of knowledge, is lost when we rise from it to the second stage of knowledge; it is supposed to be regained only in the third.

The third stage of knowledge, whose nature is not completely clear in Spinoza's writings, is the most developed one. Having reached this stage, we come close to grasping, even if only from a limited, human point of view, the whole of Nature, or God. This also enables us to know the modes, which are contained in God and caused by Him.³² Thus, we have knowledge not only of common notions, but also of individual things.

In this stage of knowledge human beings achieve blessedness, freedom and perfection. Closeness to God involves love of God and of the knower himself in God;³³ this is Spinoza's famous "Intellectual Love of God". Individuals in this state transcend ignorance, sorrow and immorality, and become as close to God as human beings can ever get. This concludes the epistemological-religious journey from everyday life and knowledge to perfection.

³¹ IV P35.

³² II P40 Sch2 (II/122/18-19).

³³ V P32; P32 Dem; P32 Cor; P33; P33 Sch; P35; P36; P36 Dem; P36 Cor; P36 Sch.

II. THE DIFFICULTY OF RECONCILING THE NEW METAPHYSICS WITH THE OLD EPISTEMOLOGY

Spinoza needs to reconcile his metaphysics and "redemption epistemology" in one system. As we shall see, however, this is not an easy task. His metaphysical assumptions concerning determinism and mechanistic causality³⁴ make his epistemology impossible to explain without using changing reflexivity.

But what is so singularly difficult about constructing such a causal epistemology? After all, Spinoza is neither the first nor the last to propose one; Hobbes' causal epistemology both preceded and influenced Spinoza's, while Locke's, Hume's and many twentieth-century causal epistemologies follow it. In none of these causal epistemologies is there a need for changing reflexivity. What, then, makes Spinoza's epistemology so unique?

Spinoza's epistemology is special in that whereas Hobbes, Hume and Locke describe with the new concept--viz. cause³⁵--a new picture of mental life, Spinoza uses this new concept to depict the *old* one. Whereas the other epistemologists use causes to describe scientific and common knowing, remembering and understanding, Spinoza uses them to describe a picture similar in outline to the traditional religious theories of progress towards salvation and perfection (frequent, for example, in Neo-Platonism). In this respect Spinoza's epistemology is special and different from other causal epistemologies.

³⁴ From here onwards in this chapter I shall use "cause" for "mechanistic cause".

³⁵ When I refer to the mechanistic cause as a new concept I mean, of course, that mechanistic causes were not widely used before the Modern Era. They were already recognized, of course, in the Greek period (e.g. by Aristotle).

But why does Spinoza try to reconcile his causalism with an old epistemology, rather than with a new, Humean one? I think that the reason has to do with Spinoza's view of rationality. As can be seen from his letters,³⁶ the *Political Treatise*³⁷ and the *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*,³⁸ Spinoza thinks that what is rational (and thus true) must not only correspond with reality but also cohere with all other truths.³⁹ But Spinoza found an element of truth in many of the views prevalent in his time and, after amending them a bit, tried to bring all of them together in one system.⁴⁰ Thus, for example, his epistemology is also an ethics, a psychology and a religious theory. Likewise, he has and uses at the same time a correspondence, a coherence, and self-evidence theories of truth.

But many of these combinations are very unusual, since Spinoza brings together convictions that normally belong to two different philosophical and cultural worlds. Spinoza lived in a transitional time in which a new, Modern understanding of the nature of knowledge and the world was emerging while the old, Medieval one had not yet vanished. Hence, whereas some of the views held to be true at his time were typical of the Medieval world, others were

³⁶ Letter 30 (IV/166/11-18) and letter 32 (IV/169/15 - 174/11, esp. IV/172/18 - 173/9).

³⁷ II 8 (III/279/29-35).

³⁸ End of section 91.

³⁹ See letter 30 (IV/166/11-18); letter 32 (IV/169/15 - 174/11, esp. IV/172/18 - 173/9); *Political Treatise* II 8 (III/279/29-35); end of section 91 in the *TEI*.

⁴⁰ It is often overlooked that the function of the geometrical method is not only to provide a precise and clear way of presenting Spinoza's views but, and more importantly, to enable Spinoza through its definitions to semi-stipulatively and semi-descriptively re-define concepts so that they or their derivatives would afterwards be identical or coherent with each other.

typical of the Modern one. Since Spinoza wanted to combine in one system all views that seemed to him to include an element of truth, he had to formulate some unusual combinations. Thus, on the one hand, he does not distinguish between metaphysical and practical considerations--which is typical of the older systems--yet, on the other, he uses mechanical causes to explain everything. Similarly, he treats human nature as unexceptional (it is governed by the same rules governing stones)--which is characteristic of older systems--but on the other hand presents elaborate and sometimes irrelevant psychological discussion which betrays an interest in human nature, characteristic of modern systems. Likewise, his moral philosophy is based on modern Ethical Egoism reminiscent of Hobbes, but yields traditional consequences: it prescribes suspicion of worldly and material pleasures and goods, is unimpressed with social honour and with the opinions of others, praises the spiritual and contemplative life, is aversive to war and violence, and accepts the immortality of the soul after a virtuous life.⁴¹ Again, Spinoza uses modern, Cartesian, mechanistic causality, but, in a way reminiscent of traditional teleology, takes the mechanistic causes to *include* the effects. Similarly, Spinoza's epistemology combines modern and traditional themes even before he tries to accommodate it to his metaphysics: the first stage of knowledge is a modern one, while the second and third are traditional.

Of course, all the systems bring together themes that appeared in previous ones. But such a wide synthesis of views that belong to different cultural worlds is distinctive for Spinoza's philosophy. It is true that Medieval philosophers who tried to accommodate Monotheistic dogma

⁴¹ Of course, despite these affinities, there are still many differences: for Spinoza the immortality of the soul is not a reward for a virtuous life; a virtuous life does not include prayer; material pleasures should not be pursued, but neither should they be rejected, etc. But notwithstanding these differences, the general outline and spirit are alike.

to Greek philosophy also combined themes from two different cultures. But the number and variety of the themes they combined does not match Spinoza's. Likewise, Aristotle's and Kant's systems can, perhaps, match Spinoza's in the number and variety of themes they combine. But these themes do not belong to two different cultures as Spinoza's themes do. It seems that the breadth and richness of views combined in Spinoza's system is matched (and furthermore, superseded) only in Hegel's.

Thus, Spinoza's coherentist intuition, which is another aspect of his rationalism, is responsible for combining, among other convictions belonging to different philosophical worlds, a causal metaphysics with an epistemological theory of redemption. However, combining convictions that belong to different cultural worlds in a harmonious way which makes sense can be difficult. In the next section we shall follow Spinoza's efforts, and failure, to do so for his causal epistemology of redemption.

III. UNSUCCESSFUL POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Spinoza's metaphysics is unhelpful in accounting for the ascent towards redemption. He cannot rely on his regular causal theory because in this view being caused entails passivity, while in his theory of redemption, as in the other traditional ones, the way up is characterised by an increase in activity.

Nor can Spinoza rely on the fact that in his metaphysics any epistemological change is also an ontological change. It is true that his parallelism entails that when the soul knows more things it also changes ontologically. However, this account does not explain the rise through the stages of knowledge. It shows that both the epistemological and ontological aspects of the

soul change together, but does not clarify what *brings about* this change.

But not only does Spinoza's metaphysics not help to explain the rise through the stages of knowledge, it also blocks the way for the traditional explanations which accounted for the ascent towards redemption in older systems. For example, the rise towards perfection could have been explained in teleological terms. Such an explanation would have probably been the best here; the nearer one gets to one's *telos* the more one becomes like it and realizes it in oneself. However, a teleological explanation is ruled out for Spinoza by his metaphysical theory.

Another possibility could have been to cast God as the mover of the mind towards perfection (either teleologically or even in a vague causal manner). On the face of it, this seems to be a good explanation, since God, for Spinoza, *is* the cause of everything.⁴² Moreover, He is an immanent cause.⁴³ But God, for Spinoza, does not have an irrational will or causal power to which everything that happens can be ascribed.⁴⁴ Spinoza intuited correctly that explanations that merely refer us to God's power or will causal activity are no more than *deus ex machina* solutions; since they explain everything, they explain nothing. Thus God, or Nature, operates by rational, natural laws. Explaining the rise through the stages of knowledge by God's will or power, therefore, is unacceptable for Spinoza.

A third alternative could have been to use a theory somewhat influenced by Aristotle's

⁴² I P25; P26; P27.

⁴³ I P18. Although, as has been shown above, regular causation entails passivity and thus is ruled out for Spinoza, immanent causation does not and thus is legitimate for him (II P29 Sch).

⁴⁴ I P32; P32 Cor1-2; P33; P33 Cor2.

theory of education:⁴⁵ the individual is motivated (externally or inwardly) to perform certain activities, which form habits; these, in turn, change one's character; consequently, they enable one to continue to act in the new way more easily and, again, change one's habit and character further.

However, Spinoza cannot use this alternative either. A mind at a lower stage cannot initiate the activities of a higher order. Nor can the activities of a higher stage be initiated by external causes, since this, again, would make the soul passive and thus would violate the principle that the soul becomes more *active* when it rises through the stages of knowledge. Nor can the activities of the higher stage "just happen", of course, since this would violate the principle that everything has a cause. The activities of the soul, then, cannot change before the soul does.

But, similarly, neither can the soul change before its activities do; this would suggest that there is an ability or potentiality in the soul which is not actualized and fulfilled, and Spinoza, again because of his metaphysical principles, is barred from accepting this alternative.

Thus, in order to have certain ideas the soul must change, and in order to change it must have certain ideas. None of them can precede the other; both the nature of the soul and its activities must rise through each stage together.

All in all, then, none of the previous solutions can account for the ascent of the mind through the stages of knowledge. The traditional accounts contradict Spinoza's metaphysical suppositions, and the new accounts, which agree with the metaphysical suppositions, do not fit the traditional character of the theory of redemption. An acceptable account for ascent towards

⁴⁵ *Nichomachean Ethics* 1103a14-b26; 1105a17-b18.

redemption would have to be one in which the activity of the soul is enhanced when it rises through the stages of knowledge. Furthermore, the changes in the nature of the soul would have to be synchronized with the changes in its activities; changes in nature and activity must completely coincide. To this restriction, moreover, another one can be added: the change, like everything else in Spinoza's system, must be necessary.

Spinoza thought that all these requisites can be answered by the use of reflexivity. Let us see how.

IV. CHANGING REFLEXIVITY

The soul rises from the first to the second stage of knowledge by finding what is common to all things, including itself.⁴⁶ These common notions cannot be passive and partial, and are always adequate and true.⁴⁷ In this way the ideas known by the mind change from ideas of the first stage to ideas of the second stage of knowledge. But at the same time the soul itself changes, since the more adequate, common notions the mind possesses,⁴⁸ the more it is composed of such ideas.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ II P38 Dem (II/119/1-3).

⁴⁷ II P38 Cor; V P4, P4 Dem and P4 Cor.

⁴⁸ II P39 Cor.

⁴⁹ II/293/28-33.

Spinoza's theory here becomes clearer if it is seen in light of his understanding of the nature of the mind. Spinoza thinks that the mind is an idea composed of several ideas,³⁰ some of which it can know.³¹ When the mind knows an idea, then, it acquires or includes it, and thus changes.

The mind's knowing ideas of the second stage, both in other things and in itself (and, thus, having those ideas and changing), is useful to Spinoza for two purposes. First, by being composed of more such ideas, the mind can change further, since the more necessary and adequate ideas it contains, the more power it has over its affects and thus the better able it is to form more clear and distinct ideas.³² The rise and change of the soul can initiate further rise and change. Secondly, this enables the rise in the ontic-epistemic status of the mind to be congruous with the rise in the kind of ideas that the mind knows. Thus, there is never a discrepancy between the status of the mind and the status of its ideas.

The rise to the third stage of knowledge is, in fact, a special case of the rise to the second stage. It is effected by the soul's concentrating on a specific common notion: the eternal and infinite essence of God.³³ Like any other common notion, the eternal and infinite essence

³⁰ II P15.

³¹ II P19; P23.

³² V P4 Sch (II/283/6-11); V P6; V P20 Sch (II/293/28-34); V P10, translating *quamdiu* as "inasmuch as" instead of Curly's "so long as". "Affects contrary to our nature" means (by IV P23, P26, P27 and P30) inadequate and untrue ideas. See also V P10 Dem (II/287/12-16).

³³ II P45; II P45 Dem.

of God can (and must) be known adequately and truly.⁵⁴ From it some of the ideas of God's modes can be deduced.⁵⁵ Thus, in the third stage of knowledge, a knowledge of individual things is possible.⁵⁶

It has been shown above that when the soul knows a common notion in other things, it knows the common notion in itself as well. Thus the change in the way it sees the world is tied-up with a change in itself; the more necessary and complete ideas the soul has, the more it conceives of itself as necessary and complete. This is also true when the common notion is the eternal and infinite essence of God; just as before, when the soul knows the eternal and infinite essence of God in all things, it finds the essence of God in itself too,⁵⁷ and thus when it conceives things eternally it too becomes eternal.⁵⁸ Again, the more progress it makes in this kind of knowledge, the more progress it can make further.⁵⁹

⁵⁴ II P46; II P46 Dem; II P47; II P47 Dem.

⁵⁵ II P40 Sch2 (II/122/15-19); II P47 Sch (II/128/12-18); *TEI* section 42.

⁵⁶ V P36 Sch (II/303/17-25).

⁵⁷ V P30; V P30 Dem; V P31 Dem; II P47; II P47 Dem (II/128/6-7).

⁵⁸ Compare "insofar as it [the soul] is eternal, it has knowledge of God" (II/299/24) to "the mind is eternal insofar as it conceives things under a species of eternity" (II/300/6-7).

⁵⁹ V P26: "The more the mind is capable of understanding things by the third kind of knowledge, the more it desires [i.e. is determined by one of the affections of the human essence (II/190/1-3)] to understand them by this knowledge. [Dem:] This is evident. For insofar as we conceive the Mind to be capable of understanding things by this kind of knowledge, we conceive it as determined to understand things by the same kind of knowledge." See also V P38: "The more the Mind understands things by the second and third kind of knowledge, the less it is acted on by affects which are evil [which prevent us from approaching our model of human nature

Thus, Spinoza uses reflexivity, because it helps him to account for the rise through the stages of knowledge without contradicting the assumptions of the system in any way. Since the rise is effected by changing reflexivity, there is no discrepancy in it between the ability of the soul and its actualization, or between its desires and what it does. Consequently, there is no discrepancy between the stage of the soul and the stage of its activities.

Moreover, the use of changing reflexivity enables Spinoza to explain, without having to use teleological terms, how the soul can rise through the stages of knowledge without being passive or motivated from the outside. The soul changes through causation, but it is self-causation and thus an immanent causation which does not make the soul passive. On the contrary: as shown above, the soul changes itself to a state in which it can change itself even more, i.e. it becomes more and more active through the change.

Furthermore, since the soul activates the change, and at the same time is completely activated by it, it is at the same time the sole originator of its change and unfree to decide whether it will change or not. Thus, although *it* causes the process, there is no place in it for free will and the change in it is necessary.

V. THE ILLEGITIMACY OF SPINOZA'S USE OF REFLEXIVITY

But although Spinoza's use of changing reflexivity does seem to make the rise through the stages of knowledge more compatible with the rest of the system than it would otherwise

(II/208/17-24)...” Moreover, according to V P40 “The more perfection each things has [i.e. the more it approaches this model (II/208/23-24)], the more it acts and the less it is acted on; and conversely, the more it acts, the more perfect it is.” See also V P27 Dem.

be, I think that his use of it is wrong. The difficulties in Spinoza's use of reflexivity already a rise in the particular use of reflexivity in his system, which leaves some problems unanswered; however, these particular problems are only the expression of Spinoza's deeper, fundamental mistake in his use of changing reflexivity.

One such particular difficulty⁶⁰ is that although Spinoza's changing reflexivity explains the rise of the soul in many ways, it does not explain what starts the rise, i.e. what makes the soul start being reflexive and thus change itself.⁶¹ Similarly, it is unclear from Spinoza's explanations why the process of changing reflexivity starts in some people and not in others. Again, it is unclear why it stops at different levels for different people.

But most importantly, it is unclear why Spinoza's changing reflexivity changes itself at all, rather than stay the way it is. It is unclear what makes his reflexivity dynamic. According to Spinoza there are more complete and true ideas in the mind at a certain point; thus, the mind has a larger active part and lets this active part relate to itself. But why does this lead the mind to acquire *more* true and complete ideas, rather than stay the way it is? What makes this self-relation dynamic?

⁶⁰ I shall refer here only to problems in the ascent of the soul which are connected to the use of changing reflexivity. Besides these there are, of course, others; the most troublesome of these is, of course, Spinoza's denial of time and temporality, which renders the rise through changing reflexivity, like any other explanation of the rise, impossible. I cannot think of any way of solving this difficulty in Spinoza's theory.

⁶¹ What stops the process is clearer: changing reflexivity becomes a full affirmative reflexivity, and thus becomes a part of the affirmative reflexivity of God, who loves and knows Himself (V P36), although, in a traditional theistic manner, Spinoza does leave a difference between God and human beings (*ibid*). Making changing reflexivity into a regular affirmative reflexivity would probably always be the best way to stop the process.

Spinoza's essential mistake, which lurks behind these particular difficulties, is that he treats the changing reflexivity as if it were a stringent reflexivity, i.e. a complete affirmatory one.⁶² However, as the structural analysis presented in the Introduction shows, changing reflexivities cannot be affirmatory and complete (unless they are mediate, which is not the case here).⁶³ If the relator and the related are identical, if a thing relates immediately and completely to itself, there is nothing in the reflexivity that can start the change in it, continue the change, and eventually stop it. It can only stay the way it is. In essence, complete reflexivity is static. Similarly, in order for there to be a changing reflexivity it is necessary that the relator change the related. But this means that there cannot be a complete identity between them. Since they are both parts of the same thing, the thing, in an imprecise way, can be seen as changing itself. But if it is examined more minutely, it is seen to be a case in which the relator and related are not completely identical, i.e. it is not reflexive in a complete way.

However, Spinoza uses reflexivity as if it were both changing and stringent. Indeed, in order to fulfill its functions, his reflexivity must be both. It must be changing because he wants to use it as an account of a process. But it must also be stringent because, as we saw above, the nature of mind and its activities would otherwise not change simultaneously. This would imply that the mind changes before its activities do, or that the activities change before the mind does, which would raise, again, the problems of potentiality and actuality.

Thus, to satisfy the needs of his system, Spinoza uses a complete changing reflexivity,

⁶² For the meaning of "stringent reflexivity" see Introduction section VI.

⁶³ Section IV:7.

without noting that it is incoherent. His choosing to use this philosophical tool is a rational philosophical choice, but a wrong one. It breeds unclarity in his system as to why the reflexivity is dynamic: what makes it change, why it starts to change, and why it does not continue to the end in all people. All these questions cannot in principle be answered in Spinoza's system. In order to answer them, some of the assumptions of the system would have to be changed.

Thus, the effort to reconcile in one system a theory of redemption with a causal metaphysics, or more generally a traditional conceptual world with a modern one, fails. Spinoza's use of changing reflexivity is wrong and illegitimate. However, the systematic reasons that led him to choose changing reflexivity as a solution to his problems, the fact that he did, and the reasons for his failure, should be acknowledged; they are instructive for the understanding of both Spinoza's system and the nature of changing reflexivity.

chapter six

THE REFLEXIVITY IN KANT'S MORAL THEORY

I. KANT'S VIEW OF THE MORAL THEORY

An acceptable moral theory must have, according to Kant, certain characteristics. First, the moral judgments used in it must be intersubjective and universal. Kant does not accept the view that moral judgments can differ from culture to culture or era to era. The fact that different people, in different eras and in different cultures, judge differently what is moral stems, in his view, not from a variety of so-called moralities, but from the variety of mistakes and confusions about what morality really is.¹

Second, the judgments used in the moral theory must be autonomous. A judgment which is determined by external forces cannot be moral, according to Kant. Where there is no possibility of choosing autonomously, there is no sense in talking about morality at all.

Third, Kant thinks that moral judgments must be certain² and necessary.³

Fourth, following in the footsteps of classical moral philosophers, and typical of a man of the Enlightenment, Kant thinks that morality must be connected with reason.⁴ But this does

¹ From *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* p. 406 ff. (hereafter cited as *Gr* followed by the page number in volume 4 of the *Kants Werke: Akademie-Textausgabe* [Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1968]) it can be deduced that Kant wants his morality to be true not only for all *human* beings, but even for all *rational* beings. See also *Gr* 442.

² See *Gr* 406 ff. where Kant rejects the possibility of deriving moral judgments from examples culled from experience, saying that such a procedure would not allow for sufficient certainty.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Gr* 408. Kant's respect for rationality can also be seen in the first *Critique* A835=B863 (references to the first and second editions of the *Critique of Pure Reason* are hereafter cited in

not mean that morality is similar to science; the moral sphere should be clearly distinguished from the scientific one.⁵ Human beings must be shown to be radically different from objects, and moral judgments cannot be decided by appealing to empirical, factual examples.⁶ Thus, they must be *a priori*.⁷ However, notwithstanding their a-prioricity, moral judgments are synthetic, not analytic. Something new is added to our knowledge when we make a moral judgment, and it does not consist in merely analyzing known facts. They are synthetic *a priori*.⁸

Fifth, Kant thinks that moral judgments must also be absolute.⁹

Finally, the moral theory must accord with what Kant sees as the general nature of activity, as portrayed in his theory of action. In many of its parts, his theory sounds

the standard fashion). There Kant sees reason as the higher faculty, and opposed to the lower faculties of sense, imagination, and (although he does not say so explicitly there) probably also emotion.

⁵ It is typical of the Enlightenment movement, which both influenced and was influenced by Kant, to try to disentangle scientific from moral, aesthetic, or religious considerations. What is interesting here is that Kant also makes the same move in the other direction: morality will be disentangled from science.

⁶ Of course, Kant does not mean that empirical, *a posteriori* data are irrelevant to moral judgments. In order to judge whether I can lie in this or that case, there must be a me, other people, something about which I can lie, etc. But the *determining factor* cannot be derived from the empirical world, and must be *a priori*.

⁷ *Gr* 406ff.

⁸ *Gr* 420.

⁹ See also *The Metaphysic of Morals (Die Metaphysik der Sitten)* pp. 446-7. Hereafter cited as *MM* followed by the page number in volume 6 of the Berlin Academy Edition (see note 1).

surprisingly utilitarian; according to Kant, "a rational agent always separates himself out from all other things by the fact that he sets himself an end".¹⁰ An end is "an object of a free will the idea of which determines the free will to an action whereby the object is produced."¹¹ Each action, then, must have an end.¹²

The ends are "the determining grounds of the will in accordance with principles".¹³ These principles find the best possible means to achieve a desired end. The choice of the means is rational and universalizable; on any similar occasion reason will again choose the same means to achieve the same end. Kant calls these universalizable principles "maxims".

Thus, all actions involve sought-after ends and instrumental reasoning, constituting a maxim, of the best means to achieve these ends. Action involves rational judgement-formation or decision-making. We may not be conscious of the maxims, but they are still there. There is no place in Kant's theory, therefore, for actions guided by immediate impulses and reflexes.

Such maxims can be: "I shall use the most effective means to any end I may have"; or "I will aim at the satisfaction of my desires in a whole, organized and systematic life"; or "I will

¹⁰ *Gr* 437. Immanuel Kant *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* trans. H. J. Paton (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1964). All other citations from the *Groundwork* are taken from this translation. See also *MM* 385 and *Critique of Practical Reason* pp. 58-9. Hereafter cited as *CPR* followed by the page number in volume 5 of the Berlin Academy Edition (see note 1).

¹¹ *MM* 381; 384.

¹² *MM* 381; 385; *Gr* 427.

¹³ *CPR* 59.

seek my own happiness"; or "I will use the means to secure the maximum of pleasant feeling".¹⁴ In all these common everyday actions, reason is used to achieve an end which is the satisfaction of an inclination. Inclination, then, determines what shall be done, and reason is subservient to it.¹⁵

¹⁴ See *CPR* 22, 61, 67, 79; *Gr* 399, 405, 413n, 418, 460n; *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone* p.58. Hereafter cited as *Relig* followed by the page number in volume 6 of the Berlin Academy Edition (see note 1).

¹⁵ These characteristics of moral judgments are, of course, interconnected. If morality is autonomous, necessary, unconditioned and pure (i.e. free from considerations which have to do with aesthetics, religion, pleasure, public opinion, etc.), it must also be absolute. *A priori* activity, for Kant, is also necessary (since necessity cannot be derived from nature itself), certain and universal. As *a priori*, it also cannot be caused by any forces and, as such, is unconditioned and independent (*Gr* 426; 439-40). Moreover, it cannot be part of the physical world, and thus morality cannot be one of the natural sciences. Further, only rational beings can act in accordance not only with the laws of nature (as natural objects do), but also with *their own* conception of law and principle (*Gr* 412). Inanimate, irrational things do not have an *a priori* side to them. Thus, as long as human beings act morally, i.e. by their *a priori* ability and not by their physical and psychological tendencies, their uniqueness as human beings is emphasised. Moreover, morality cannot be based on our tendencies because it is universal, while our inclinations, according to Kant, are not. Moreover, as universal, morality should be the same for all rational entities—even, for example, for angels, who do not have bodies. Therefore, there again is no place for a psychological, *a posteriori*, or empirical element in morality (*Gr* 406ff).

II. THE NEED FOR REFLEXIVITY

These stringent requirements for a moral theory already necessitate the use of reflexivity. As long as inclination determines, even to an extent, our moral judgement, i.e. as long as reason in our moral judgment is subservient in any way to inclination, then morality will not be autonomous, disinterested, absolute, rational, universal and *a priori*, as Kant wants it to be. We shall not be autonomous in such a judgment since our rational side--which Kant takes to be what we essentially are¹⁶--will be subordinate to inclination. Similarly, since inclination is not rational, absolute, *a priori* and universal, nor can the judgement it directs be. Likewise, when the judgement is directed towards the satisfaction of an inclination, it cannot be disinterested.

To what, then, can reason be subservient, so that moral judgment will be autonomous, disinterested, absolute, rational, universal and *a priori*? To nothing other than itself. Thus, moral decision must be reflexive. In the moral activity reason will deliberate the means to an end which is itself--therefore reason must be its own end.

Less technically, the need for reflexivity arises from Kant's understanding of the essence of human nature and from his emphasis on autonomy, absoluteness, universality, etc. Kant, along with the entire Western tradition, thinks that what is essential to man is reason. We *are* our rational capacity. Hence, when we act, it is essentially our rational side that acts. Therefore, if we follow reason (i.e., if reason follows reason, and thus is reflexive), we are

¹⁶ "Only morality, and humanity so far as it is capable of morality, can have dignity or worthiness or inner worth" (*Gr* 435; 440; *MM* §11 434ff. and §§38-9, 462ff). Further, Kant takes "humanity" to be the *differentia* between humans and animals, i.e. reason. Moreover, he thinks that his moral theory should apply also to intelligent non-human beings, and the only thing that they are sure to share with humans is their rationality.

autonomous; but if we follow anything but our reason (e.g. our desires), we are heteronomous. Similarly Kant, again along with the whole of Western tradition, thinks that what is absolute, universal etc. is reason. Thus, if we follow our reason (i.e., if reason follows reason, and thus is reflexive) our activity is absolute and universalizable; but if we do not follow reason, it is not. Now reason, in a way which will be elaborated below, issues imperatives. But to what end? Again, to reason itself. Reason is situated at both ends of the decision making process, as both its end and its means, as both that which directs action and that which receives this direction. Let us see how Kant does that.

III. REFLEXIVE MORAL ACTIVITY

To determine what the moral way to behave is, Kant suggests several guidelines, or categorical imperatives, which he takes to be different formulations of the same principle. The first is to ask oneself whether one can will that the maxim of the action under question would become a universal law.¹⁷ The second way to determine the morality of a certain action is to ask oneself whether the humanity of all persons is treated also as an end and not only as means in it.¹⁸ A third way of determining the morality of an action is to ask oneself whether the will of all rational beings is treated as a universally legislative will in that action.¹⁹ And a fourth is to ask oneself whether the action fits a maxim of an action of a law-making member in a

¹⁷ *Gr* 421.

¹⁸ *Gr* 429.

¹⁹ *Gr* 434.

universal kingdom of ends.²⁰ Kant gives examples of how, by using these formulations of the categorical imperative, one can reach moral conclusions. He shows, for example, how using the categorical imperative can show the moral wrongness of suicide,²¹ borrowing money while knowing that it could never be paid back,²² neglecting one's natural gifts²³ or not helping others in distress.²⁴

But thanks to the reflexivity in these formulations of the categorical imperative, they can legitimately be seen as part of what Kant considers a moral theory. In other words, since they have a reflexive component in them they can be seen as absolute, *a priori*, universal, autonomous, certain, necessary and intersubjective. The reflexivity in the first formulation of the categorical imperative can be seen in its calling for universality. In section I it has been shown that, according to Kant, reason chooses the means to achieve an end. Hence, the choice is universalizable; reason will again choose the same means to achieve the same end on any similar occasion. The end of most decision processes, however, is not rational and universalizable; it is to satisfy inclinations which are in principle individual and subjective.

But the end of the decision process in the first formulation of the categorical imperative is universalizable. Hence, it must also be rational (Kant thinks that a thing is rational if and only if it is universalizable). Thus, in the moral decision process both means and ends of the

²⁰ *Gr* 438.

²¹ *Gr* 421.

²² *Gr* 422.

²³ *Gr* 422-23.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

decision process are rational. It is reflexive.

Similarly, the second formulation of the categorical imperative is reflexive both in its universality and in its calling for the humanity in each person to be also the end of the activity and not only its means. But in Kant's view our humanity is our rationality. Thus, again, reason is both means and end of the moral decision.

Likewise, the third formulation of the categorical imperative is reflexive both in its universality and in its calling for autonomy. But again Kant takes this autonomy to be rational²⁵ Again, then, both means and end of the activity are rational. And the same is true for the fourth formulation of the categorical imperative, which discusses the Kingdom of Ends.

This reflexive element in the categorical imperative can also be seen in the fact that the categorical imperative prescribes, in fact, to perform the categorical imperative. The first formulation of the categorical imperative prescribes acting only on judgments that can be universalized.²⁶ However, the only judgments that can be universalized are judgments reached when performing the categorical imperative. Thus, the categorical imperative prescribes performing itself.

²⁵ Compare *CPR* 87: "It is nothing else than personality, i.e., the freedom and independence from the mechanism of nature regarded as a capacity of a being which is subject to special laws (pure practical laws given by its own reason), so that the person as belonging to the world of sense is subject to his own personality so far as he belongs to the intelligible world...every will, even the private will of each person directed to himself, is restricted to the condition of agreement with the autonomy of the rational being, namely, that it be subjected to no purpose which is not possible by a law which could arise from the will of the passive subject itself."

²⁶ *Gr* 421.

Similarly, the second formulation of the categorical imperative prescribes being an end,²⁷ but the only situation in which we are ends occurs when we perform the categorical imperative. Again, then, the categorical imperative prescribes itself.

Likewise, the third formulation of the categorical imperative tells us to be autonomous.²⁸ But the only situation in which we *are* autonomous occurs when we perform the categorical imperative. Thus, the categorical imperative tells us again, in fact, that we should perform the categorical imperative.

Thus, when one makes moral decisions according to the categorical imperative, one is acting reflexively. Kant succeeds in suggesting a moral reflexive activity. Thus he can say, for example, that reverence for the Law is "self-produced through a concept of reason", that duty is "law in and for itself",²⁹ and that in moral actions the will must function in accordance with its own principles.³⁰ Moreover, freedom of the will--which we all must have when we act morally, according to Kant--is conceived as an *agreement of the will with itself* in accordance with universal laws or reason.³¹ Likewise, to act out of respect for the law is to act for the sake of the law itself, which is similar to acting out of duty for the sake of duty.³² Further, when he

²⁷ *Gr* 429.

²⁸ *Gr* 434.

²⁹ *Gr* 400.

³⁰ *Gr* 454.

³¹ *Critique of Judgment* section 59, p. 354. Hereafter cited as *CJ*, followed by the page number in volume 5 of the Berlin Academy Edition (see note 1).

³² *CPR* 81.

discusses the difference between the two kinds of causality, Kant says that in natural causation the cause is always caused by something else. It is not self-caused, spontaneous, or self-imposed. Therefore, it is heteronomous. Conversely, moral law is self-caused and self-imposed. Therefore, it is autonomous.³³ Moreover, the good will, according to Kant, has an end in some sense, but this end must already exist and *has to be the good will itself*.³⁴ Similarly, in *CPR 32*, for example, he says:

Pure reason is practical *to itself alone*, and it gives (to man) a universal law, which we call the moral law...One need only analyze the sentence which men pass upon the lawfulness of their actions to see in every case that their reason, incorruptible and self-constrained, in every action holds up the maxim of the will to the pure will, i.e., *to itself* regarded as *a priori* practical...(my emphasis)³⁵

And again, he says in *CPR 48-51*:

The determination of the causality of beings in the world of sense as such can never be unconditioned, and *yet for every series of conditions there must be something unconditioned, and consequentially a causality which is entirely self-*

³³ *Gr 447*.

³⁴ *Gr 437-8*.

³⁵ I follow here, and in any other citation made from the second *Critique* the translation of Lewis White Beck (Indianapolis: Bobbs Merrill Company, 1956).

determining. Therefore, the idea of freedom as a faculty of absolute spontaneity was not just a desideratum but...an analytical principle of pure speculation...But the concept which reason makes of its own causality as noumenon is significant even though it cannot be defined theoretically for the purpose of knowing its super-sensuous existence. Regardless of this, it acquires significance through the moral law, although only for practical use. (My emphasis.)

However, is all this evidence of reflexivity not contradicted by the fact that the most frequently used terms in Kant's moral writings--viz. "duty", "good will", "moral law", and "reverence"--do not convey any reflexivity at all?³⁶ Closer scrutiny shows that in fact there is no contradiction here since, as already shown above, Kant takes these seemingly un-reflexive terms to include a reflexive element.³⁷ Reverence for the law, duty, for Kant, is "self-produced through a concept of reason", and duty is "law in and for itself".³⁸

Similarly, the evidence for the existence of reflexivity in Kant's moral theory is not contradicted by his statement that acting from duty, law or good will is not performed with an interest nor for the sake of something.³⁹ When Kant says these things he probably means that

³⁶ Indeed, the fact that these frequent and important terms do not convey any reflexivity at first glance explains why the reflexivity in Kant's writings has remained unnoticed for such a long time.

³⁷ See notes 29, 32 and 33 above.

³⁸ See note 29 above.

³⁹ E.g. *CPR* 34; 58ff esp. 62-3; *Gr* 400; 437.

the activity should be done with no *ulterior* interest, but not that it cannot be done for the sake of itself.

Seeing how reflexive activity lays the foundation of the moral theory, we can now better understand how the moral theory can be, for Kant, independent of and unconditioned by anything outside it. Similarly, we can see how Kant can call the moral imperative a categorical, and not a hypothetical, one. Likewise, it can now be understood why Kant says that moral activity is engaged in for its own sake, and should have neither interest nor aim; like all actions, this one too must have an end, but its end is itself. Moreover, we can now better understand why Kant says that reason is not subjected to anything in moral activity, and that "reason itself is the real upper ability to will, but then only to the extent that it determines the will for itself (and is not in the service of the inclinations)".⁴⁰ Or: "Only to itself is the pure reason practical, and gives man a general law, which is the law of morality...Reason looks at itself as determined by itself as practical *a priori*...The reason is determining itself morally, it is sufficient to itself in everything...it is *holy*."⁴¹

Reflexivity also enables moral activity to be autonomous, as Kant indeed intends it to. As we saw above, reason in the reflexive, moral action acts according to the rules of *itself*, without being subjected to anything else.

Further, thanks to reflexivity, moral activity is completely free, unconditioned and absolute. These features of reflexive activity are already discussed in the first *Critique*. According to the first *Critique*, we have some kind of introspective sensation of ourselves--i.e.

⁴⁰ CPR 24-5.

⁴¹ My emphasis. CPR 32-3.

our inner self⁴²--by which we know our feelings, desires and thoughts.⁴³ But this is an empirical, conditioned knowledge of our phenomenal self, similar in principle to any other empirical knowledge we may have. Besides this conditioned knowledge, however, we also have "pure apperception",⁴⁴ in which our pure (i.e. unmixed with sense) activity as rational agents can be known to itself "immediately and not through the affection of the senses".⁴⁵ Such activity will be timeless, as distinct from the empirical-phenomenal consciousness, which will always be in the context of temporal sequence.⁴⁶ In this pure activity we belong not only to what Kant calls the intelligible world, but also to what he calls the intellectual world.⁴⁷ Kant usually discusses this ability in the context of theoretical reasoning. He states that reason cannot be conceived as being directed from the outside when it forms its theoretical judgments.⁴⁸ It should regard itself as the author of its own principles and as functioning in accordance with them. As such, it can be seen as completely free.⁴⁹

But this is the same ability which is discussed in the moral theory, pertaining to reflexive

⁴² *Gr* 451.

⁴³ A 357-8; B 67; Bxxxixn; A34=B50

⁴⁴ A115-6; B153.

⁴⁵ *Gr* 451.

⁴⁶ A210=B255.

⁴⁷ *Gr* 451.

⁴⁸ *Gr* 448.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

practical reason. Kant says that there is a sense in which when we pass moral judgment we look within ourselves to the laws of reason or morality, and again see ourselves having these laws, as free.⁵⁰ Thus, practical reason is neither receptive to nor conditioned by anything at all, not even by the forms of intuition. Hence, it is completely free and absolute and, as absolute, relates to the noumenal world.

Similarly, reflexivity, which lies at the base of the moral activity, enables it to be synthetic without ceasing to be *a priori*. Since reason in reflexive activity relates only to itself, and not to any empirical facts, it is *a priori*. However, when it becomes reflexive something that did not previously exist (i.e. when it plainly found the best means to achieve a certain end according to a maxim) is added to it; for example, autonomy, freedom, absoluteness, its prescribing its own performance, and the particularization of this reflexivity in the different formulations of the categorical imperative (the call to treat the humanity in yourself and others also as an end, the call for autonomy, etc.). This addition makes the moral theory and the moral judgments included in it synthetic as well as *a priori*.

Moral theory has, then, two facets. One of them shows us how to judge what is morally correct. The other sees to that these moral judgments have what Kant takes to be the necessary characteristics of a moral theory.

⁵⁰ *Gr* 451; 454; *CPR* 43.

IV. LEGITIMACY AND DESIRABILITY OF KANT'S USE OF REFLEXIVITY: IS KANT'S DECISION TO USE REFLEXIVITY A GOOD PHILOSOPHICAL CHOICE?

In the previous section we have seen how the basic trait of reflexivity--its ability to identify the relator with the related--is used to achieve purity, syntheticity which does not contradict a-prioricity, autonomy and more. But is this use of reflexivity legitimate?

It may be objected that the reflexivity in moral theory is not real, since the rationality in the means is different from the rationality in the end. But I do not think that this is the case. As Kant portrays the categorical imperative, the same universalized rationality exists in both means and end. This can also be seen from the fact that the categorical imperative prescribes, in Kant's view, its own performance.

But it may be further objected that although Kant portrays rationality in the means as the same as the rationality in ends, the actual way he uses the categorical imperative shows that, in fact, they are not the same. If rationality in both means and ends were the same, the categorical imperative would be an empty formula that could have prescribe nothing.

However, I think that a large number of the examples brought in the previous section shows that Kant does, in fact, use the categorical imperative reflexively or, in other words, in a way which identifies the rationality in the means with that of the end. It is true, in some of the particularizations of this reflexive rationality, i.e. the specific formulations of the categorical imperative, the Kant stresses different aspects of it: the autonomy in it, its being an end, its universality, rationality as humanity, etc. But these are only different aspects of rationality.

Another objection may be based on the fact that it is sometimes difficult to use the categorical imperative in order to decide the morally correct way to behave. But I think that this is a pertinent criticism against Kant's moral theory as a whole, not against the legitimacy

of his use of reflexivity.

In other ways, too, there seems to be nothing illegitimate in Kant's use of reflexivity. It does not particularize reflexivity in an inconsistent way, does not use it inconsistently, nor does it combine types of reflexivity which are mutually exclusive. It seems, then, that Kant uses reflexivity in his ethical writings in a perfectly legitimate way.

But is reflexivity necessary in Kant's writings? In the previous sections it has been shown how, once the presuppositions of Kant's moral theory are accepted, reflexivity is needed and fulfills important functions in it. But could no other philosophical tools have fulfilled the same functions? I think that the answer is negative. The only other philosophical tool which can come close to fulfilling these functions in that context is non-reflexive reason, which could somehow be posited, perhaps, as what non-reflexively dictates the moral imperatives. Granted, it too would be *a priori*, universal, certain and necessary. However, it would contradict Kant's theory of action, which he saw as very important. Further, it is not clear how such a model could allow moral judgments to be synthetic. Moreover, in such a theory reason would probably have to impose the forms of moral action on the empirical world, analogously to the way in which the "I think" imposes the categories. Alternatively, reason would calculate what is moral analogously to the way in which we add numbers. But this would clash with Kant's conviction that the moral and scientific-speculative spheres are radically different from each other. Moreover, such an activity would not be based on reason alone and, thus, would render

morality neither completely unconditioned and free nor absolute, as Kant wants it to be.⁵¹

This is not to say that the characteristics of reason do not play a prominent role in the system. It is due to the a-prioricity of Kantian reason that moral judgments are *a priori*. Further, it is probably the necessity, universality and certainty of reason which makes moral judgments necessary, universal and certain for Kant.⁵² One function of reflexivity in the system is simply to keep reason unmixed with any inclination and thus enable it to be *a priori*, necessary, universal and certain. But even if this were the only function of reflexivity in the system, it would still be necessary. And as has been shown above, reflexivity is necessary in the system for other reasons as well.

All in all, then, once the presuppositions of Kant's moral philosophy are accepted, reflexivity is both necessary and legitimately used. Kant's decision to use it in his system, then, was a wise and correct philosophical move.

V. KANT AND THE HISTORY OF THE USE OF REFLEXIVITY

1. Technical Innovations

Kant's use of reflexivity is innovative both in its technical aspects and in the uses to which reflexivity is put. On the technical side he is innovative, first, in making the *whole* moral

⁵¹ Thus, Kant's theory of action does not restrict his moral theory, as at first it may seem, but, on the contrary, serves it; it enables the moral theory to have the characteristics Kant thinks it must. Thus, even if he did not have independent reasons for accepting his theory of action, he would have had to use it.

⁵² Although it is possible to deduce these characteristics from reflexivity, too.

system reflexive. Up to his time, reflexivity was ascribed to only one of the entities--even if an important one--in the system. But Kant made not only one entity in the system reflexive, but the entire system. He was the first to put, so to speak, not the reflexivity into the system but the system into the reflexivity.

Secondly, Kant, to the best of my knowledge, is the first in the history of reflexivity to use meta-reflexivity. We said above that in every decision there are two parts: the end sought after, and the determination of the best means to achieve it. In most practical decisions the end is the satisfaction of some kind of inclination. Thus, it is different from the part which determines the best means to achieve it. Hence, the relation between them is directional. However, in the *moral* practical decision the two parts are the same--both are reason. Thus, the relation between them is reflexive.

Now this identity also means that the end is already achieved in the operation which determines the best means to achieve it. Similarly, it means that this operation is the end.

But further, because the two parts of the reflexive relation are the same, the end can be seen as embodying *both* parts of the decision process--i.e. the whole decision process. Thus, the end of the moral, reflexive decision is the moral, reflexive decision itself. (For the same reasons, the whole moral, reflexive decision is also the determining part of itself.)

Thus, not only the part which determines the best means to achieve the end is its own end, but so is also the whole moral decision. The moral decision, then, is self-prescriptive. The reflexive activity relates back to itself by prescribing itself, i.e. by prescribing to itself the performance of reflexive activity--which it thereby performs anyway. By prescribing itself it prescribes what it anyway does. For this reason, Kant can say that the end of the moral decision is the act out of reason itself--i.e. the making of the moral decision, and that the moral

decision has no ulterior interest.

However, as already shown in the Introduction to this work, *all* reflexivities issue meta-reflexivities in principle.³⁹ Why, then, does meta-reflexivity "materialize" itself (i.e. become apparent) for the first time in the history of reflexivity only in Kant's moral system? As shown in the Introduction, the meta-reflexivities "materialize" themselves only in cases where they have significance in the conceptual framework of the system, and where they add to the system something it needs and which does not exist in ordinary reflexivity. In all uses of reflexivity before Kant's the meta-reflexivities either could not be conceptualized in a significant way in the framework of the system, or could fulfill no function in the system, or both. However, in Kant's system reflexivity has both significance and function. It can be immediately conceptualized as the whole decision relating to itself, in contra-distinction to its parts. Further, it adds to the existing reflexivity and has a role in the system because it enables us to see that to have reason as our end in the moral decision is to make the moral decision itself.

In these two ways--making the whole system reflexive and employing meta-reflexivity--Kant's use of reflexivity is technically innovative. In both these ways, he also influenced the future use of reflexivity and, as we shall see in the next chapter, especially Hegel's.

2. Innovations in the Use of Reflexivity

But Kant's use of reflexivity is also innovative in the uses to which he puts reflexivity in his system. Most have to do with the "anthropocization" of the use of reflexivity in the

³⁹ Section IV:6.

system. In the chapter on Aristotle it was explained how allowing human beings to participate in the divine reflexive activity would have enabled Aristotle to found many ethical theses. Such an activity would be necessary, certain, pure, complete, continuous, and completely rational. There would be no place, in such activity, for the senses and for mistakes, and thus for *akrasia*. Since one instance of reflexive thinking would not differ from another, social harmony among reflexive agents would never be disrupted. In this way, the connection between the reflexive *vita comtemplativa* and the political life could also be explained.

But, for the different reasons discussed in that chapter, Aristotle chose not to ascribe reflexivity to humans. Reflexivity, for him, is reserved for God only, and human beings, even at the most elevated level, are part of the world in which means and ends are different from each other.

Further, in the chapter on Meister Eckhart it was shown how many Hellenistic and Medieval philosophers accepted this conviction and took reflexivity to be performed by supernatural entities only, and never by human beings. However, some mystics did take human activity in its most sublime degree to be combined with the reflexive activity of the supreme entity, and thus ascribed to it, to an extent, some of the aforementioned characteristics.

Now Kant, of course, is closer to the second group. Just as in the reflexivities used in the Hellenistic and Medieval periods, so too in his reflexivity the individual is asked not to look at things outside of himself but only at those within. What is within is taken to be absolute, divorced from and free of the senses (i.e. *a priori*), unlimited, the same for all human beings, complete and necessary. Further, looking within is again associated with the mental sphere, not the physical-empirical one, and with intentionality, not activity. Reflexivity does not convey anything about the personal, private self. And just as in older systems being reflexive was identified with finding the presence of supernatural powers (such as God, the Cosmic Spirit,

etc.) in oneself, here, too, reflexivity makes people special by giving them freedom, making them not merely a *thing* any more.⁴

However, Kant goes much beyond this. For him, not only the highest part of moral activity, but all of it is, figuratively, put into Aristotle's unmoved mover. And more importantly, the reflexive human mind becomes autonomous and does not partake in divine reflexivity. Again, speaking figuratively, there is no divine reflexivity any more in the unmoved mover, only a human one. The unmoved mover becomes human.

In making reflexivity both human and autonomous, Kant is part of--and an example of--a tendency in the history of the use of reflexivity. As has been shown in previous chapters, the history of the use of reflexivity is marked by the tendency to allow human beings to be more and more involved and identified with this God-like, supernatural activity. Later, an even more radical tendency appeared: what used to be divine activity, which humans could sometimes participate in and sometimes not, started to become a completely human activity. Human beings were reflexive not only by being involved in divine reflexive activity--a major change itself in the history of reflexivity--but also by being reflexive independently of God. The beginning of such a tendency can already be seen in the writings of some mystics (where, because of accepted Monotheistic dogmas, this tendency was suppressed), and somewhat more fully in Descartes' revolutionary step in the *cogito*.

Kant continues and completes this anthropocentric progression. Just as for Descartes, so for him, too, human beings can be reflexive independently of God. But for Descartes human reflexivity was still very different from divine Reflexivity. He was afraid of giving it the

⁴ Of course, Kant may have been partly influenced here also by the Hellenistic and Medieval calls for self-consciousness and "looking within".

characteristics reflexivities usually possess, and kept it epistemological only. Cartesian reflexivity lets us *know* that we exist before, and hence independently of, the proof of God's existence. But unlike God's reflexivity, for Descartes ours does not *make* us exist. Cartesian reflexivity, then, still has only a few of the traditional divine characteristics.

For Kant, on the contrary, the reflexive human being is--just as God once used to be--unlimited and independent (in the moral sphere) of anything, absolute, completely free, pure, necessary, certain, impersonal, divorced from the senses, active, autonomous in dictating his own rules, and the creator of his own (moral) world.⁵⁵ Further, the term "kingdom of ends" is reminiscent of the term "kingdom of God", and Kant says that the moral imperative can also be pronounced as "be perfect" and "be holy".⁵⁶

Kant's innovative and daring use of reflexivity influenced his own philosophy as well as philosophy in general. The use of reflexivity in moral theory made it more "religious" in several ways. Due to it, morality became pure, certain, necessary and absolute.⁵⁷ Further, it

⁵⁵ The analogy seems even stronger when we remember that Kant continuously compares the laws of morality to the laws of nature (e.g. in the first formulation of the categorical imperative). It should be conceded, however, that Kant does not take the moral world to be real (A808=B836).

⁵⁶ *MM* sections 21-22, 446-7. It is true, Kant simply means here that we should strive to be like the holy will, which is only a technical term. On the other hand, it is no coincidence that Kant picked this term rather than another.

⁵⁷ It is true, some of the religious--mostly Protestant--characteristics of Kant's moral theory are not connected with its being reflexive: e.g. the emphasis on the importance of duty; the stress put on intention in contradistinction to deeds (which reminds one of the doctrine that one is saved by faith, not works); the belief in the inherent morality of any human being,

sustained the conviction that each individual has infinite worth. Similarly, it provided the basis for the belief, typical of Protestantism, that each individual should discover for himself the moral law, without appealing to either authorities or intermediaries.

However, by giving his morality religious characteristics through reflexivity, Kant also influenced another tendency of the Modern Era: the development of a religious sentiment towards morality. A new type of mentality emerges, one which, so to speak, worships morality. Changing the moral situation is yearned for, sometimes fought for, and with the same fervour that was previously reserved for religious matters. Morality is taken to give meaning to life, to have its martyrs, its unquestionable, sacred truths, and its malicious enemies. In conferring of reflexivity on morality, then, Kant not only influenced the tendency to make morality free from religion, but also substitute it for religion altogether.⁵⁸

Further, the other facet of the anthropocization of reflexivity in Kant's moral theory is, of course, the deification of man. It is now the human being who is reflexive, not God. And, thanks to his reflexivity, the human being can now find in himself some of what he previously could find only in God.⁵⁹ This new use of reflexivity was influenced by, and could not have

notwithstanding his evil qualities (which is probably a metamorphosis of the doctrine that we can always turn to "the image of God", or God Himself, who is in all of us); and the call to turn inward and away from our inclinations (in the religious context—evil desires). But the other religious characteristics of Kant's moral theory are connected with its being reflexive.

⁵⁸ Moreover, not only is ethics no longer based on religion, and not only does it replace religion, but religion is now based on ethics. It is on the demands of ethics that we base our belief in God and the after-world.

⁵⁹ There is still a need and use for the concept of God, of course, in Kant's system. But the functions He fulfills are much less important than they are in other systems. Moreover, Kant's

taken place without, the anthropocentric tendencies which started to become prevalent in the Modern Era. However, the ascribing of reflexivity to human beings not only quintessentialized existing anthropocentric tendencies but also radicalized and, in turn, influenced them.

Yet Kant's innovative step also marks an important landmark in the history of reflexivity. First, by conferring reflexivity on human beings in moral theory, Kant influenced the process of secularizing, diversifying, and "humanizing" the use of reflexivity in following generations. Whereas up to his time reflexivity was usually used in religious contexts to describe the activity of the deities, we see, after Kant, the tendency to use reflexivity more and more in non-religious contexts, for diverse purposes, and in connection with human activity.

But secondly, by making human beings autonomous in their reflexivity, Kant influenced both the "subjectification" of reflexivity in future generations and, as a reaction against this tendency, its "objectification". In ascribing reflexive powers to human beings, Kant managed to synthesise these two tendencies. On the one hand reflexivity was autonomously performed by independent human beings, without any connection to an objective, super-natural reflexive entity common to all. On the other, all reflexivities were still similar to each other. Reflexivity in Kant's ethical writings, then, was neither objective nor subjective: it was intersubjective.

However, the tension between these two tendencies, which a system such as Kant's could contain, was too great to be contained in future systems. In subsequent uses, reflexivity was taken to be either shared by all people, and thus objective, or else autonomous, and thus

use of God makes his system more anthropocentric than it would have been without Him. In both the first and the second *Critiques* God is a postulate, called for almost pragmatic reasons. In a way, in Kant's system God is created by man, since He is instrumental to man's ends. In some sense, Kant can be said to have "killed" God even before Nietzsche did.

completely subjective and arbitrary. The former turns against Kant's innovative step and, from the point of view of the gradual, directional process of changes in the uses of reflexivity through the generations, is reactionary. The latter continues the process to which Kant has contributed and, moreover, takes it to an extreme. We shall deal with both these tendencies in the following chapters.

chapter seven

THE REFLEXIVITY AS ABSOLUTE SPIRIT IN HEGEL'S SYSTEM

I. HEGEL'S SYSTEM

1. The Theory of Truth

Hegel can be generally seen as accepting the basic Cartesian view of falsehood and truth. According to Descartes, the mind itself is infallible. If left to itself, it will produce knowledge which may be limited, but not wrong; what produces error is the intervention of our will, which tempts the mind to go beyond its capacities. All in all, we can avoid error by disciplining the will not to transgress the boundaries of reason. Thus, the acceptance of our knowledge as limited can deliver the certainty of its truth in return.¹

This basic intuition--viz. that assured knowledge can only be achieved through a restriction of its scope--was later accepted by Kant,² and played a prominent role in Logical Positivism. With some changes it was also accepted by Spinoza and Hegel. For Spinoza, too, knowledge is trustworthy when it does not claim too much for itself, i.e. when it remains within its proper limits. But, unlike the atomist Descartes, Spinoza as a coherentist believes that limiting falsehood, and thus making it into truth, involves knowledge which goes beyond falsehood. The other knowledge creates the boundaries of the falsehood, explains it, and thus turns it into truth. Thus, he explains that there is nothing wrong *per se* in seeing the sun as small as a coin; it does look to us to be this size. Rather, the problem lies in thinking that the sun not only looks small, but also is as small as a coin. In order to transform this falsehood

¹ Fourth meditation (Adam & Tannery edition vol. VII pp. 58-60); *Principles of Philosophy* I 35 (Adam & Tannery edition vol. VIII p. 18).

² By recommending that understanding extend beyond experience (*Critique of Pure Reason* B252, B272, B383).

(i.e. that the sun *is* as small as a coin) into a truth (i.e. that the sun *looks* as small as a coin but in fact *is* much larger) we need to invoke the laws of perspective. In this way we can explain how distant objects can *look* small but yet *be* much larger. The process of transforming falsehoods into truths, then, involves the placement of what used to be false into a wider context which both limits it and reveals it for what it really is: an appearance. At the same time this process intertwines the new truth with other truths and shows the reasons for its previously masquerading as a truth.³

To sum up, in Spinoza's view our false beliefs become true when they are understood as only partial and fragmentary, and they are seen as such when they are placed within a wider context which limits them and, thereby, explains their nature. Thus, in Spinoza's view, the truth of a fact lies in its limitation and in what is beyond it.

Hegel accepts Spinoza's intuitions about knowledge and truth. He also conflates partiality and falsehood, and suggests that falsehoods can become truths when they are placed within a wider context. Like Spinoza, he thinks that a wider context generates truths from falsehoods by limiting the latter and thereby explaining their real nature and why they were previously seen as true. Thus, for Hegel as well the truth of a phenomenon lies in its limitation and in its other, which is both beyond the limitation and creates it.

However, for Hegel complete knowledge about anything demands complete knowledge about everything. Put differently, placing a particular falsehood in a larger context may make it less of a falsehood, but in order to become a *complete* truth a falsehood must be situated in a *complete* context. And if the complete context can be seen only at the end of the system, then

³ *Ethics* IV prop. 1 and note. See also II prop. 35 note and II prop. 42 note. It is true, however, that in II prop. 47 note and II prop. 49 note Spinoza also gives other accounts of the phenomenon of error.

everything said prior to the end is false; it is true only from a particular, partial point of view.⁴

The "plot" of Hegel's system is the efforts necessary to achieve this true completeness. It begins with a category which in itself is wrong insofar as it is partial and limited, but acquires truth through its "other" by its incorporation into a larger context which negates it, adds to the understanding of its nature, and explains why it was previously wrong.⁵ Each negation-context involves another category⁶ and, through more and more categories which are ever more inclusive, completeness is finally achieved.

All these categories are different moments of absolute spirit. Thus, their dialectical development from one to the other is the development of absolute spirit in its different categories through to the final stage of the system at which, in the self-realization of its nature, its knowledge is complete and true.⁷

Thus, falsehood in Hegel's system has an urge to become truth, and particularity aspires to totality. This quest for completeness is the engine of Hegel's system. It propels absolute

⁴ *Phenomenology of Spirit* p. 74. Hereafter cited as *PhG* followed by page number in volume 3 of the Suhrkamp edition of Hegel's collected works in 20 volumes, eds. Eva Moldenhauer and Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt am Main: 1969). All references to Hegel's works in this chapter are according to this edition.

⁵ *PhG* 73-4.

⁶ It may wrongly be understood that all negation-contexts are of the same kind; however, they are divided into two types, those which later came to be known as "antitheses" and those which later came to be known as "syntheses". (Although Hegel himself does not use the Fichtean terms "thesis", "antithesis" and "synthesis", for simplicity's sake I follow many of his commentators and apply these terms to his philosophy as well.)

⁷ *PhG* 24.

spirit from one phase of its development to another, from the lesser known (abstract) to the more known (concrete),⁸ from the less inclusive to the more inclusive,⁹ from the implicit to the explicit,¹⁰ and from the partial to the complete.¹¹

Hegel can also be seen, therefore, as trying to solve the problem of falsehood from a standpoint opposite to the one taken by Descartes, Kant, and the Logical Positivists. For him as well falsehood consists in a gap between actual knowledge and the pretension to it, yet this gap is closed not by decreasing the pretension, but also by increasing the knowledge.

2. The Characteristics of the System

This urge towards totality suggests a few characteristics of the system. First, if the system is to be true, then nothing must fall outside its purview. Thus, in principle at least, the system should deal with everything.

Thus in Hegel's system, unlike many others, the main effort is not to demonstrate the unreality of some phenomena and therefore to decree that they should either be denied reality or reduced to other phenomena which are real. The Hegelian system is non-reductionistic;¹² its

⁸ *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* vol. XVIII pp. 39, 42-3. Hereafter cited as *LHP* followed by volume and page numbers in the Suhrkamp edition (see note 4).

⁹ See, e.g. in *LHP* XX 461 where Hegel says that his philosophy, as the final category and stage, includes all the others.

¹⁰ *PhG* 585.

¹¹ *PhG* 73.

¹² See Charles Taylor, *Hegel* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1975 (hereafter cited

main effort is to *include* in itself all phenomena in an ordered and rational way.

Second, the system or absolute spirit must be infinite. But this should not give way to an infinite, or actually indefinite, regress. Such a never-ending regress can neither be complete nor convey complete knowledge.

Third, the theory of truth necessitates that everything included in the system--that is, everything in the world--be explained. An unexplained category is one about which there is incomplete knowledge; it is an arbitrary, brute fact.¹³ Therefore, the system cannot rely on any axioms or self-evident suppositions¹⁴ which support everything else in the system but are themselves unsupported. Such ungrounded grounds will be precisely those arbitrary, brute suppositions that Hegel wants to avoid.

Fourth, as another mark of this complete knowledge, everything in the system should be logical and ordered, and without any inconsistency or incoherence.

Fifth, in the final stage of the system, when knowledge is complete, all categories must be completely synthesized so that the relations among them are clear. On the other hand, a complete knowledge of them also demands that they continue to be distinct from each other. This must also hold true for famous philosophical pairs such as is/ought, subject/object, or

as *Taylor*), p 84 n.

¹³ It is true, from the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences* sections 248, 250 (hereafter cited as *Enc* followed by section number) it seems that Hegel does think that some things in nature are indeterminate. Nevertheless, even they are *necessarily* so; there is a reason, then, for them to be as they are. Thus, it is still correct to say on the whole that everything in the system has a rational place and is not merely a brute, arbitrary fact.

¹⁴ *Science of Logic* vol. V p. 33. Hereafter cited as *Logic* followed by volume and page numbers in the Suhrkamp edition (see note 4).

x/meta-x, which cannot continue to stand opposed to one another as they usually are. Rather, they should be reconciled and synthesized into one thing, yet without completely losing their individual natures.

Sixth, since everything must be included in the system or absolute spirit, and since everything included must be known, there can be no place in the system for unknown things-in-themselves.¹⁵

II. THE NEED FOR REFLEXIVITY

However, by including these features within his system, Hegel pushes himself to the point where reflexivity must be called upon. Since nothing in the system can remain ungrounded and unexplained, there cannot be any "basic truths" or axioms on which the system could rest. Hegel must then use one of two kinds of reflexivity: (i) immediate, which will enable one basic entity to support itself, and afterwards all other entities; or (ii) mediate, which will enable different parts of the system to mutually support one another.

Further, reflexivity is needed in order to avoid an infinite regress in the system. In the dialectic movement something is changed and added in every step; yet this process cannot go on indefinitely.¹⁶ Somehow and somewhere, then, the dialectical chain must come to an end.¹⁷

¹⁵ *PhG* 76-81.

¹⁶ *PhG* 74.

¹⁷ I am using the terms "end" and "final link in the chain" only temporarily. They are imprecise in this context since the end and the final stage of the system are such only in a very restricted sense. The system does not stop with them, but continues forward in a richer way.

At the same time, though, Hegel does not want the rules of the system broken, for this would contradict its rationality and order. Thus, he stands before a conflict similar to Aristotle's:¹⁸ on the one hand the dialectical movement has to stop somewhere so that the chain will not go on indefinitely; while on the other, if the dialectical movement simply stops it will violate the rules of the system.¹⁹

The same problem emerges from a different aspect insofar as Hegel wants the system to be dynamic. This dynamism should exist not only before the end of the system (i.e. the self-consciousness of absolute spirit) is accomplished, but also *afterwards*. But this dynamic activity cannot continue along a directional line with no end. Thus, Hegel has to find a way for the movement to continue without progressing indefinitely.

Similarly, and as connected to the previous point, Hegel needs reflexivity because of the kind of infinity he wants in his system. He distinguishes between two kinds of infinity: "bad" and "good". "Bad" infinity is formed by a continuous, never-ending addition of finite items to one another, as in the unending series of natural numbers. In Hegel's opinion this infinity is not a real one; in such an "infinity" the boundaries of the finite are continuously transgressed or pushed back, yet never really overcome. To say the same thing from the dialectical point of view, bad infinity only negates the finite--insofar as it pushes back its boundaries further and further--without succeeding in absorbing it. Hence, the infinite is not really infinite; there is still

¹⁸ See chapter two section III.

¹⁹ It is true that in some cases Hegel does not follow the strict dialectical movement (see *Taylor* 347: W. Kaufman *Hegel; A Re-Interpretation*, New York, 1965, Doubleday & Company, p. 167 ff.: J.N. Findlay *Hegel: A Re-Examination*, Collier Books, New York, 1962, pp. 68-73). However, Hegel does make an effort to follow it devoutly and it is certainly within his program to be committed to it. Moreover, the alternatives to the strict dialectical movement are also directional, and thus the problem which called for the use of reflexivity still exists.

something--i.e. the finite--that it does not include.²⁰ Thus, bad infinity is not really infinite, but merely unlimited. It is incomplete and, hence, inconcrete.

"Good" infinity, on the other hand, is not built from an unending series of finite, limited things, but consists of a whole new concept in which the finite is not merely negated but, by negating the negation, is absorbed as well. But how can that happen? "Good" infinity can neither continue forever, like bad infinity, nor can it ever stop.

Further, reflexivity is needed because the system must encompass everything. Hence, at one of its stages the system must also encompass itself. Put differently, since the system must account for everything, it must account for itself as well.

Moreover, the system must somehow deal with reflexivity because it is so vulnerable to the traditional charge of contradictory reflexivity. Hegel has to point to something unique in his system which distinguishes it from all the other, partial systems which his system discusses. After all, previous philosophers also thought that their systems were the correct ones. Hegel must justify, then, his claim that his system is indeed the final stage in the development and self-realization of spirit, and not merely another stage in the process. Therefore, there must be something unique about the Hegelian system which radically distinguishes it from the others.

III. THE APPEARANCE OF REFLEXIVITY IN HEGEL'S SYSTEM.

1. The Non-Reflexivity of the Dialectical Movement

Indeed, to satisfy these needs Hegel does use reflexivity. However, the reflexivity does not consist in the dialectical movement, as it may at first seem. It is true that each triad of the

²⁰ *Logic* V 150.

dialectical movement is comprised of a category which goes out of itself into its other and then, through a mediation, returns to itself in a synthesis. Moreover, all such syntheses go out of themselves into their other, only to return to themselves through more syntheses.²¹ This dialectical "going out to the other" can be described as *self-negation*, while the returning to *itself* is a *negation of the negation*.²² However, closer examination reveals that in fact these are not reflexive processes. As already shown in the Introduction to this work, if reflexivity (as the term is understood in this work) is to arise, it is not sufficient that an entity be related to itself merely in any way whatsoever, or simply be in any kind of mutual relation, or just be reflective.²³ Reflexivity arises only when the relator and the related of a directional relation are the same. The more they are so, the more reflexive the relation.

However, in Hegel's dialectic the relator and the related differ from each other. Although he frequently refers to the relator as returning to *itself* through the mediation of the other, the relator is in fact *changed* by the mediation, and as such is different from what it previously was. This difference is revealed, for example, in the fact that the synthesis (the related) calls for a different antithesis than did the thesis (the relator). Similarly--in contrast to what is expected in a regular reflexivity--the relation between the relator and the related differs from that between the related and the relator. Indeed, the spatial model by which the dialectic is usually illustrated is a spiral rather than a circle. Hence, although there is some element of reflexivity present in the dialectical movement (i.e. the relator and the related *are* taken to be

²¹ PhG 72-5.

²² E.g. *Logic* V 150; VI 563-4; PhG 590; Enc 303.

²³ Sections III:5, VI.

similar in some way), it is neither sufficiently large nor sufficiently significant to make the dialectic reflexive. Thus, the dialectical movement, which is the main process in Hegel's system,²⁴ is not reflexive.

2. The Appearance of the Reflexivity at the End of the System

Reflexivity exists, however, at the end of the system. The system describes how the dialectic carries absolute spirit from various starting points and through different phases to its end. Each of these starting points and phases is spirit itself in its various manifestations. Since, in principle, there is no sphere in which absolute spirit does not manifest itself, the system discusses sociology and physics, psychology and history, politics and art, metaphysical notions and botany. This gives Hegel the opportunity to express his views about particular issues in these fields.

Further, the system deals with the general nature of reality. It demonstrates, for example, that there is a necessary dialectical movement, that absolute spirit strives through its different manifestations towards self-realization, that the system embodies different manifestations of absolute spirit, etc. Similarly, it shows that there are no things in themselves, that the

²⁴ I use "system" a bit loosely here. For my purposes in the present chapter I shall treat the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, the *Science of Logic*, the *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences in Outline*, and the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* as different facets of the same system.

rational is actual and the actual rational,²⁵ that the self-realization of absolute spirit will be achieved through self-consciousness, etc.

The different fields are related among themselves by means of the dialectical necessity and are synthesised into more and more inclusive categories. Near the close of the system absolute spirit itself is discussed. The system first encompasses art, then religion, and finally philosophy. As in other fields here, too, the system outlines the development of philosophy from its earliest and most primitive forms. Thus, the discussion begins with ancient philosophy and progresses gradually through the generations up until the Modern Era. After handling Kant, the system discusses German Idealism and shows how absolute spirit expresses itself yet more fully with each successive philosopher. But then, at the end of the system we realize that the completed development of absolute spirit and of philosophy constitutes the system we have been reading up to now.²⁶ The end of the system, then, is the system itself.²⁷

Although we did not realize it at the time, when reading through the system we were already reading it from the point of view of the final truth. Our ignorance of this fact was part of this truth--just as the ignorance of pagans, architects, statesmen and previous philosophers of the fact that what they had been doing was part of the truth--was part of that very same truth.

²⁵ *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* p. 24-5. Hereafter cited as *GPR* followed by page number in volume 7 of the Suhrkamp edition. *Enc* 6.

²⁶ *PhG* 80, 582-3, 589, 591; *Logic* VI 549-50, 567-9, 573; *Enc* 577.

²⁷ *PhG* 14.

The goal of all these efforts, then, is a realization²⁸ that the efforts are part of a plan; that there is a rational and necessary dialectical order in this plan;²⁹ and that the efforts are different manifestations of absolute spirit coming to self-realization.

All these different stages, then, were means to a certain end: viz. the realization that they are means to this end. Put differently, the end of all these efforts was the realization that they are all means to this realization itself. Thus, for each and every one of these phases there was an end which was the complete concretion of the phase and the realization of its truth. This truth is that the individual phase is part of a rational whole ordered by the dialectical movement, whose aim is to know the truth about itself--i.e. that it is a rational whole which manifests itself at different moments, etc. Hence, at the end of the system all its phases return to themselves, in the sense that the true, concrete nature of every one of them becomes realized.³⁰ And what is realized about each of them is that their true nature is this very realization, i.e. that their truth is to be realized.³¹

Expressed from a different aspect, the goal of this long dialectical movement through its different stages is the realization that it is a dialectical movement through all its different stages, and that this realization is its end. Or, alternately, the self-realization of spirit, for which it struggles so strongly, is the realization that it itself is absolute spirit which has to struggle so

²⁸ "Realization" is used here in three senses at the same time: making something real, actualizing it, and understanding it. This is not a confusion; all three are present in Hegel's thought.

²⁹ *PhG* 591.

³⁰ *Logic* VI 571-2.

³¹ *PhG* 591.

much and whose end is this very realization. Thus, the end of absolute spirit is the returning to the different categories of absolute spirit so that they are now seen in a richer, more complete way.

We see here, then, several reflexivities which occur simultaneously. All the different phases of the dialectical movement are, in a sense, reflexivized in the final stage. Likewise, the dialectical movement itself is reflexivized in the final stage, as is spirit. In some way or another they are all, it seems, means to themselves. Furthermore, however, their end also seems to be reflexive on its own account: they are all means to the realization that they are means to this very realization. We see here as well that their end is not only reflexive, but meta-reflexive and meta-meta-reflexive.

Moreover, the system itself is reflexivized: at the end of the system we realize that the system we have been reading is part of what it describes. The system, then, is part of itself. But this also gives it a sense of reality; the system before us is certainly part of reality and, since it describes itself, we have the feeling that what it describes is also part of reality.³²

However, the system is reflexive in yet another way. It not only describes itself, but also absolute spirit. But, according to the system, it *is* absolute spirit. Thus, it describes itself from this aspect as well.³³

Similarly, all the reflexive affirmations seem to be doubly affirmed, since all the reflexivities above are also meta-reflexive and meta-meta-reflexive. The system's saying of itself that it is part of itself is also part of what it says and, thus, is again reflexive. Likewise, when the system says of itself that it is absolute spirit, it is also absolute spirit saying of itself that it

³² *Logic* VI 571.

³³ *PhG* 582-3.

is the system which says so, etc. All in all, then, when the system becomes part of itself a complicated and intricate network of reflexivities and meta-reflexivities is formulated.

IV. THE FUNCTIONS OF REFLEXIVITY IN THE SYSTEM

Using reflexivity, Hegel escapes the need to rely on an unfounded and unexplained axiom in the system. The starting point of the system needs to be neither assumed nor taken for granted. It itself is grounded at the end of the system when absolute spirit relates back to it, thereby certifying its place and nature in the complete system.

Similarly, owing to reflexivity it is possible to avoid an infinite regress in the system. We ultimately learn that the end of the system is the whole system itself. The "other" of the last phase, then, is the whole system of which the last phase forms a part. And the last phase returns to itself through its other as a part of this system, being at the same time both the system and its end. The antithesis and synthesis appear sufficiently different from the thesis so that we can still see the movement as a dialectical one. But at the same time they are also sufficiently similar to each other so that the process will continue by repeating itself. The system can be seen as relating to itself again and again, returning to itself through its other in a new reflexivity or meta-reflexivity which, nevertheless, is the same as the previous one.

This is, of course, not the first time that reflexivity has been used for such a purpose; ending philosophical chains so as to avoid an infinite regress is probably the function for which reflexivity has been most commonly used. However, solving the problem of an infinite regress was usually accomplished by reflexivizing one entity within the system, which served as the first or last link in its philosophical chain. Thus, only this specific entity in the system became eternal, circular, etc. What is special about Hegel's move is that it reflexivizes the whole chain,

and not only its last link. Thus, in Hegel's use of reflexivity, the *whole* system becomes reflexive.

Likewise, reflexivity gives Hegel a system which is continuously dynamic--it relates to itself again and again--but still stable. Movement in the system does not stop once the self-consciousness of absolute spirit has been reached, but continues onward by means of reflexivity.

Again, reflexivity enables Hegel to have in his system what he calls a "good" infinity. By relating it to itself, Hegel conceives a system in which limits are not merely pushed further bit by bit, as they are in a "bad" infinity, but simply do not exist any more.

Moreover, reflexivity solves the problem of contradictory reflexivity to which Hegel's system is so vulnerable. According to the Hegelian system, all other systems are incomplete and hence untrue. They may appear true from a particular point of view, but once they are understood as no more than stages in the larger context of the dialectical movement, they are seen to express the truth from a limited perspective only. But could it be shown that what Hegel's system says of other systems is not also true of itself? After all, the authors of other systems also thought that their systems were correct, just as Hegel thinks his is.

Hegel has to find, then, some unique feature which would distinguish his system from the systems discussed in it. Only in this way can he avoid contradictory reflexivity.

But this unique characteristic must also be relevant. Many characteristics unique to Hegel's system (e.g. that it was conceived by Hegel, that it was published in a certain year, or that it is more inclusive than other systems) are hardly convincing since they are not relevant to its not being merely another partial, temporary expression of the truth. Even under the presuppositions of Hegel's system, a system could have these characteristics, yet still possess all the features which Hegel attributes to other systems, i.e. be only partly and temporarily true.

Yet this is not the case when a system relates to itself by means of affirmatory

reflexivity. Affirmatory reflexivity is unique to Hegel's system in that no previous system had related to itself in such a way. But, more importantly, it does not seem to be arbitrary. What made other systems only stages in Hegel's system and not the end of the process was precisely that they were un-reflexive (the subject in them was not part of the object) and as such were necessarily partial. Further, not being reflexive, they had an "other" which was different from them and in which the dialectical movement continued. Moreover, as non-reflexive, they could not be the absolute spirit, nor return to the other categories, nor contain all the other categories while still keeping them distinct from each other, etc.

The same things which render other systems relative and partial, then, make the system which says these things absolute. What the system says of other systems, then, *cannot* be related back to it via a contradictory reflexivity, since, in the terms of the system, it is different from them in a relevant way.

But this distinguishing feature is non-arbitrary and organic to the system in yet another respect. What blocks contradictory reflexivity is the fact that the Hegelian system is the only system which attempts to apply the criticisms it makes of other systems to itself. The main criticism which the system makes of other systems is that they are not reflexive. But when it applies this criticism to itself it immediately becomes reflexive. What makes this system absolute or reflexive is a continuation of the movement that made other systems relative and partial. In a way, then, the Hegelian system does *not* attempt to exempt itself from what it criticizes in other systems, but rather to include itself in it. However, by doing this it immediately exempts itself from contradictory reflexivity. The distinguishing feature of the Hegelian system, then, is not arbitrary because in a way it is not a distinguishing feature at all; the system *does* apply its criticisms of other systems to itself. But this very self-application of criticism is what distinguishes it from other systems; thus, the criticism does not apply to it.

Note that Hegel uses meta-reflexivity here. In all other cases of contradictory reflexivity what is contradictorily reflexivized is falsehood, dubitability, relativity, non-inclusion, etc. Hegel, however, contradictorily reflexivizes being non-reflexive. But this immediately cancels non-reflexivity by making it reflexive, and contradictory reflexivity thus becomes affirmatory reflexivity. Because of this meta-reflexivity--or, to be more specific, meta-contradictory reflexivity--this is the only case in which the content of a contradictory reflexivity (e.g. falsehood, relativity, dubitability in other systems) changes in the contradictory reflexivity and thus changes it as well.

Thus, in order to deal with possible contradictory reflexivity in his system, Hegel chooses a reflexive, or rather a meta-reflexive, solution. His solution to the problem of possible contradictory reflexivity is the most non-arbitrary one I know of in the history of philosophy.³⁴

But reflexivity fulfills other functions in the system as well. It helps synthesize all the notions contained in the system, yet without endangering their individual uniqueness. As already mentioned, Hegel does not strive to reduce some notions to others, or to exclude some of them from the system as unreal. On the contrary, his aim is to include everything in his system. There should be room in the system for both human autonomy and unity with nature, reason and desires, mind and matter, art and religion, etc. Although all these categories should be related within one unity structured by a rational principle, they should not dissolve into one another, as they do in the systems of some of Hegel's German Idealist contemporaries. If this were to happen, we would cease to have complete knowledge of these categories and of their place

³⁴ Although Hegel's solution was later imitated by Marx. It is interesting to note that almost exactly the same model of a meta-contradictory reflexivity is used--to the opposite effect--in Gödel's Proof.

within the system, as Hegel's theory of truth demands that we have.

The dialectical movement alone, however, is only partially helpful in answering this need of the system. When more concrete categories are taken to synthesize and include more abstract ones, the included categories stop being distinct from one another.

Reflexivity, on the other hand, fulfills this function fully. The final category in the system is the system itself. Thus, it includes all previous categories, but does so through the different and distinct moments of the dialectical movement. It synthesizes all previous categories, but it does so by relating to them individually.

Reflexivity also enables Hegel to combine four different traditional philosophical models in the relation between the absolute spirit and the other categories. First, Hegel wants to include in this relation the means-end model, according to which different categories are means to the achievement of absolute spirit. Secondly, there is the thinking model, by which the categories are what is thought by absolute spirit. Thirdly, there is the expression model, according to which different categories are different expressions of absolute spirit; and, fourthly, there is the whole-part model in which the categories are taken, in some sense, to be that of which absolute spirit is composed.³⁵

This co-existence of the four models already necessitates some kind of self-relation within the system. In some cases, even the combination of only two of the models makes this self-relation necessary. If the first model is combined with the third or fourth, absolute spirit is made the end of itself (since the means are itself in some sense too). Similarly, if the second

³⁵ Of course, none of these models alone is a good description of the relation between absolute spirit and the other categories, nor should the relation in Hegel's system be seen as a mere combination of them. The relation between absolute spirit and the categories in Hegel's system is accomplished according to a fifth model which combines all the previous four.

model is combined with the third or fourth, absolute spirit must again relate to itself (since it is thinking about what is in some sense itself). Again, if the third model is combined with the fourth, the categories are in some sense parts of themselves, since what they are parts of is itself expressed in them.

But thanks to reflexivity these four different models can indeed be combined in the relation between absolute spirit and the categories. Since absolute spirit is returning to itself, both it and the categories can be seen as means to themselves, parts of themselves, thoughts of themselves and expression of themselves, as the combination of these four traditional models demands.³⁶

Moreover, identifying subject and object in reflexivity also allows Hegel to argue that the system includes everything. As long as the subject is not the object, it cannot be said to include everything. Likewise, by identifying subject and object, reflexivity also enables absolute spirit to be completely free in the system. As long as subject and object differ from each other there cannot be complete freedom for absolute spirit, since the object facing it will be an arbitrary "given" for it, which would thus limit and interfere with its complete self-determination and freedom.

³⁶ In his *Cognitive Systematization: A Systems-Theoretic Approach to a coherentist theory of knowledge* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1979) Nicholas Rescher distinguishes two basic types of systems: foundationalist-axiomatic and coherentist-network. It is interesting to see that thanks to reflexivity Hegel also succeeds in combining both models in his system.

V. THE NECESSITY, LEGITIMACY AND DESIRABILITY OF REFLEXIVITY IN HEGEL'S SYSTEM: IS HEGEL'S DECISION TO USE REFLEXIVITY A GOOD PHILOSOPHICAL MOVE?

But is reflexivity used correctly and legitimately in Hegel's system? Of course, if the basic assumptions of the system are not accepted, it is possible to reject the whole system along with the reflexivity used in it; nevertheless, this would not count as an argument against the correctness of the use of *reflexivity* in the system. In order to determine whether reflexivity is being used legitimately one must check whether, once the assumptions of the system are accepted, there is anything flawed in the way reflexivity is employed.

Once this is done, Hegel's use of reflexivity seems flawless. Hegel does not misuse reflexivity in any of the many ways it could be: he does not inconsistently ascribe to the reflexive entity only some of the reflexive characteristics which it should have (those which are serviceable to the system), while at the same time avoiding all the others. Nor does he use the presence of reflexivity in the system to fulfill only some functions, while disregarding all other consequences its presence in the system might have. Nor does he ascribe reflexivity to some entities and not others with no good reason. Nor does he combine incompatible types of reflexivity in one use. All in all, then, reflexivity is used in the system in a perfectly legitimate fashion.

But is reflexivity necessary in Hegel's system? In some ways, it is. Hegel could have not solved the problem of contradictory reflexivity in the system without using reflexivity. Nor could he have escaped the need to rely on an unfounded and unexplained axiom or entity in the system without reflexivity. Likewise, without using reflexivity he could have not maintained that

the system continues to be dynamic even after it reaches its end. Nor could he, without reflexivity, have avoided infinite regress without breaking the rules of the system and achieved "good" infinity in it.

It is true, in some other ways reflexivity is not absolutely necessary in the system. The opposition of subject and object, for example, not only *can* but also *is* overcome by the dialectical movement in the earlier stages of the system. Admittedly, as the system continues they seem to differ from each other again, and hence again need to be reconciled. But this, too, could have been done by the dialectical movement at the *final* stage of the system, so that they could not become different from each other again.

Likewise, the dialectical movement (perhaps with a special feature added to it) could also synthesize all individual notions in the system without endangering their uniqueness. It is true, using the dialectical movement in this way would have been a bit more arbitrary and cumbersome than using reflexivity; nevertheless, it would still be possible. Similarly, it may be very difficult to combine four philosophical models of the relation between absolute spirit and other categories without forming a reflexivity, but it is not clear that combining these four philosophical models is so important for the system and cannot be waived.

But even if it is true that reflexivity is not necessary for fulfilling these functions in the system, Hegel was right to use it for these purposes. Once reflexivity needs to be used in the system anyway, it might as well be used to fulfill all the functions it can, and not only those for which it is necessary. Moreover, although in many cases these functions could also be performed by other philosophical tools, reflexivity handles them much more elegantly. Furthermore, using reflexivity to fulfill functions that are also performed by other philosophical tools fits Hegel's purposes and practices in the system. He wants to show, again and again, that what he says can be also proven from many other directions, since this enhances the

cohesion of the system. For this reason, Hegel also starts the discussion of each category in the system with its most minute sub-categories.

All in all, then, Hegel's use of reflexivity in his system is legitimate, absolutely necessary in some of its aspects and helpful in others. His decision to use reflexivity in his system, then, was a good philosophical move.

VI. HEGEL AND THE HISTORY OF THE USE OF REFLEXIVITY

In some ways, Hegel's use of reflexivity is conservative. For example, many of the functions it fulfills in his system (and almost all of the functions for which it is a *sine qua non*) are connected to its usual, traditional role of ending directional chains so as to avoid an infinite regress. In Descartes's and Kant's use of reflexivity, on the contrary, we see that the importance of this traditional function decreases relatively to that of other, new ones.

Similarly, Hegel returns to the old, traditional model of the relation between divine and human reflexivity; in his system, again, the most important reflexivity is that of God, and not of humans. Likewise, human reflexivity is not performed independently of divine reflexivity, but can exist only through and jointly with God's. In this, Hegel's use of reflexivity does not continue the modern tendency, found in Descartes's and Kant's writings, of allowing human beings to perform the reflexive activity independently of God.

Nevertheless, although Hegel returns to the conservative model of the relation between divine and human reflexivity, he at the same time makes some important changes in this traditional model--changes which are typical of modern uses of reflexivity. First, although in Hegel's system human beings cannot perform reflexivity independently of God, neither can He

perform reflexivity independently of them. Whereas in the traditional systems God can be reflexive independently of human beings, who either can or cannot be reflexive themselves, in Hegel's view God can be reflexive only through His vehicle, human reflexivity. In the Hegelian system, then, human reflexivity is essential to divine reflexivity.

Second, God has to behave within Hegel's system just as humans had to behave in traditional ones; He has to *work* in order to achieve his reflexivity. Like them, He is a conscious subject who "looks" into different possibilities in order to find completeness and truth. After a long process He succeeds in finding it in reflexivity. Since God is a subject on such a grand scale, the search does not take merely a lifetime, but the whole of history. Similarly, He considers not only some aspects of nature and ideas, but all of them. But although the Hegelian God is a total person, in the terms of the traditional models of reflexivity He is still only a person.

But more so than in the changes Hegel makes in the traditional model of the use of reflexivity, or in the functions for which he uses it, the modernity in Hegel's reflexivity can be seen in the ways he uses it. First, like Kant, he also chooses not to attribute reflexivity solely to one entity within his system--be it even an important one like the *cogito* or unmoved mover--but to make the *whole* system reflexive. It is as if the entire system is condensed into what in the previous systems used to be only one entity. Put differently, for Hegel as well reflexivity is not in the system, but *vice versa*, the system is in reflexivity.

Secondly, unlike previous philosophers, Hegel uses reflexivity not only to fulfill functions for which it is a *sine qua non*, but also others which could also be fulfilled with other philosophical tools.

Thirdly, Hegel uses reflexivity more profusely than any other philosopher before him,

and perhaps after him as well. The number of Hegel's reflexivities and the intricacy of their meta-levels and inter-relations probably has no equal in the whole history of philosophy. Likewise, he uses reflexivity in his system openly and consciously. One cannot miss the fact that reflexivity exists in the system and that it plays such a major role.

In all these ways, Hegel accepts and, moreover, enhances a modern tendency in the use of reflexivity: that of making reflexivity a more legitimate, normal philosophical "creature".³⁷ Reflexivity can now have a more central place in a system, be employed profusely and openly, and be used to fulfill all sorts of functions, not only those for which it is absolutely necessary. Although one aspect of this modern process--viz., ascribing reflexivity to human beings--is de-emphasized in the system, other facets of this process are very much present and stressed. Hegel does not, then, return to the old model of the use of reflexivity while neglecting the new one, but combines the two together.³⁸

³⁷ Hegel also influenced the legitimacy and profusion of the use of reflexivity in subsequent generations with his dialectical movement. The reflexive element in the dialectic; the synthesis of oppositions which continually occurs in it; its non-linear progress--all these broke down directional-linear prejudice and thus opened up more space in the history of philosophy for the emerging use of reflexivity.

The effect of Hegel's use of the dialectic resembles that of the Medievals' use of self-knowledge. For although this self-knowledge was not reflexive outright, it did open up space for the use of reflexivity by making it more plausible.

³⁸ In part I of his *Hegel*, Charles Taylor sees as a basic aim of Hegel's epoch the striving towards integral expression, on the one hand, and the striving towards radical human autonomy, on the other. According to Taylor, it was Hegel's purpose to satisfy both these strivings in his system.

It seems that nowhere can this be exemplified better than in the different models of reflexivity and their combination in Hegel's system. The traditional model (in those cases where

reflexivity was not taken to be exclusively divine, and humans were allowed to participate somehow in God's reflexivity) satisfies the first striving. The modern model, developed in Descartes' and Kant's use of reflexivity, where the divine activity is bequeathed more and more to human beings who perform it autonomously, as if they were God Himself, satisfies the second striving. In Hegel's use of reflexivity, both are combined.

Had Hegel written his system a century or two earlier, the modern characteristics of the use of reflexivity which he incorporated into the traditional model might have influenced this process of ascribing to human beings the ability to be reflexive independently of God. In Hegel's time, however, these steps had already been taken by Descartes and Kant; Hegel's step was only to combine the already existing tendencies with the traditional model. Perhaps, in a way typical of Hegel's dialectic, the two models had to be fully developed before being synthesised together into a third one.

chapter eight

THE NORMALIZATION OF REFLEXIVITY IN HEIDEGGER'S TEACHINGS

I. THE THEORY

Heidegger's major theme is being and, thus, the theory¹ he presents is ontological. But Heidegger thinks that all theories are primarily ontological, even when their ontology is implicit. They all include, whether explicitly or implicitly, views about the nature of being. But these views are almost invariably distorted. Heidegger's philosophical aim, then, is to point out the presence of these implicit ontologies, to show in what ways they are distorted and, most importantly, to suggest an undistorted ontology.²

To study being in an undistorted way Heidegger has to avoid the mistake made in other ontologies. They implicitly or explicitly assume that being should be identified with certain entities or kinds of entities. Heidegger, on the contrary, thinks that being should be identified with the *appearing* of these entities. Thus, he turns to the research of Dasein--the existence of human beings.³ What is special about Dasein is that, unlike entities, its being is an issue for

¹ The terms "theory", "philosophy", to some extent "teachings", and the other terms I use here are somewhat inappropriate to portray Heidegger's views since they suggest a body of fixed opinions. Nevertheless, for lack of better terms and for the sake of variety I shall use these terms, asking the reader to bear their inappropriateness in mind.

² In this chapter I shall concentrate mainly on Heidegger's "early" philosophy, i.e. his work written before the "turning" (*die Kehre*) of the mid-thirties. As in other chapters, I do not aim to present a comprehensive picture of an entire philosophy but only those aspects which are relevant to the use of reflexivity.

³ Martin Heidegger *Sein und Zeit* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1960) p. 183. Translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson as *Being and Time* (London: Basil Blackwell, 1962) p. 227. Hereafter cited as *BT* followed by page numbers in the English translation and (in parentheses) the German original.

itself.⁴ Thus, the studying of Dasein (in distinction from the study of human beings who are, again, substances) is the study of the different ways of appearing. Some of these ways of appearing are taken by Heidegger to be primordial and authentic, while others are taken to be less so and as contributing to the formation of distorted ontologies (e.g. empiricist and Platonist ontologies).

Heidegger, then, does not think that his discussion of what makes entities appear as they do, or what makes Dasein what it is, is epistemological in nature. He is discussing ontology. He is concerned with being.

The way Heidegger sees Dasein's primordial ontological activities differs from the way most philosophers see human epistemological activities. One difference is that philosophers habitually take the epistemological activity to supply answers to questions. Questions are taken to be unimportant in themselves, since they are merely means to getting answers. The aim of cognitive activity is to dispense with questions by replacing them with answers. Answers constitute "knowledge", which is distinguished from non-knowledge by being certain, definite, stable, intersubjective and final. Knowledge answers, and thus ends questioning.

In contrast, Heidegger takes Dasein's primordial ontological activity to be questioning, not answering. This questioning is not merely epistemological and theoretical. We are questioning, for example, when we look around us, harvest, swim, inspect a work of art, or build a kite in a wondering, open way. Conversely, we are answering if we do the same activities in a closed, mechanical way. This questioning activity is also called by Heidegger

⁴ Heidegger calls Dasein's mode of being "existence". I shall use here, however, "Dasein's being" and "existence" interchangeably.

coping-with, handling, dealing with, being involved in, interpreting, understanding, letting be, clearing, and more.⁵ None of these activities are taken by him to be primordially theoretical or cognitive.⁶

As long as Dasein questions, its activity does not come to a halt. Although some problems are solved and some achievements are made (e.g. we understand that we treated Jeff wrongly; we cross the lake; we build a kite), they are not final. Dasein continues to cope-with a wondering attitude concerning different aspects of what is around it, yet without reaching definitive views. It sees what surrounds it not as actualities but as potentialities. Thus, its interpretation is unfixed and dynamic.

It is true, Dasein has a dangerous tendency to end questioning with definite answers. Indeed, this tendency is the driving force behind the creation of so many definite ontologies throughout history. But this tendency should be avoided. Dasein should "de-answer" the definite answers it has by questioning them, too. Its attitude should be one of the continuous questioning of everything. Thus, questioning should be neither avoided nor tolerated, but

⁵ I shall use these terms interchangeably although there are some minor differences between some of them (see, e.g. *BT* 188 (148)). Note, moreover, that some of these terms appear only in Heidegger's later writings.

⁶ *BT* 183, 385. *Die Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1975) p. 391. Translated by Albert Hofstadter as *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* rev. ed. (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988) p. 276. Hereafter cited as *BP* followed by page numbers in the English translation and (in parentheses) the German original. In *BP* 276 (392) Heidegger says that this coping-understanding is not practical, but the basis for the possibility of having either a cognitive or a practical comportment.

cherished. Aristotle held that philosophy begins with wondering;⁷ Heidegger that it (and every other enquiry) should also continue that way. He wants to keep philosophy as *philo-sophia*.

Understanding the nature of questioning can generate further insights into the nature of Dasein's activity and being. Questions include the following two essential elements: first, they must include something known; second, they must include something unknown.⁸ If the question does not include something known then questioning is impossible; we would not know about what to ask. If the question does not include something unknown, again questioning is impossible; if everything about the issue were known, there would be nothing to ask. Hence, both of these components are necessarily present in every question.⁹

But this means that questioning always *assumes* something. Dasein can never question, or approach the world, completely afresh and anew. It must always have some background knowledge. This background knowledge may be tacit. In fact, it must be partly tacit, since if we try to make it explicit by questioning the questioning itself, there will still be some tacit knowledge in this questioning of the questioning. But even when this background knowledge

⁷ *Metaph.* A. 2. 982b11-21.

⁸ Cf. Friedrich Löw "Logik der Frage" *Archiv für die Gesamte Psychologie* 66 (1928):357-436.

⁹ This understanding of the nature of questioning is already implicit in Plato's writings (*Meno* 80). Plato accepts the Parmenidean "all or nothing" view according to which one can either know completely or not know at all, but not partially. Hence, he finds it difficult to make sense of the phenomenon of questions; they assume both knowledge and ignorance at the same time. For the same reason, Plato also finds it difficult to explain how is it possible to have a false opinion about anything (*Theaetetus* 180).

or prejudice is tacit, it is always there.¹⁰

Furthermore, it is because background knowledge differs from one society and tradition to another, and even from one individual to another, that questionings vary. Moreover, since background knowledge changes during questioning, the same Dasein can question differently at different times, but without individually and consciously determining its interpretation anew each time.

Thus, a certain way of interpretation is not consciously "invented" by an individual or group of individuals. Dasein's interpretation or questioning (and, as will be seen below, its self-interpretation or self-questioning) is performed within a tradition¹¹ and a community.¹² Dasein can to an extent change the traditional, communal way in which being appears before it and of which it is part. But even then it does so as part of a community and tradition which cope-with and question.¹³

Although the analysis above emphasized theoretical, cognitive questioning, it is also true of Heidegger's concerned questioning. One cannot try to build a kite, swim across a lake, or look at a work of art completely afresh and anew. When one performs these activities one must

¹⁰ Moreover, since this prior knowledge can be false, there can be not only wrong answers, but also wrong questions (e.g. Why do elephants never reach the age of five? How long does it take for the sun to make one rotation around the earth?).

¹¹ *BT* 42 (21).

¹² *BT* 153-7 (117-21).

¹³ *BT* 168 (130); 330 (284).

have some prior, partly tacit, understanding of what one is doing.¹⁴

Since what is interpreted is not completely new to us, Heidegger talks about the process of interpretation as a "hermeneutical circle". The circle is not a closed circle where the beginning merely repeats the end, and hence no progress is made. However, neither is it completely new. When Dasein questions or interprets, it already has views concerning the way the question should be put, what would count as an answer, and what a possible answer would be. Much of what is realized, then, is already known beforehand and, moreover, determines what will be realized subsequently.¹⁵

Since Dasein's attitude is not theoretical, it does not primordially relate to entities in the world according to the accepted subject-object model.¹⁶ According to the conventional theoretical model, we primarily have in our *mind* (i.e. our "inside") a disinterested representation of the "real" objects in the *world* (i.e. the "outside"). Heidegger's view, on the other hand, stresses the concerned usefulness of entities.¹⁷ Take, for example, a hammer used to hammer a nail, or a doorknob used to open a door. They are both usually manipulated without being represented

¹⁴ Furthermore, even in these activities one can be wrong in one's "background knowledge". This can be seen in people who continuously perform certain activities in a awkward way. (Sometimes they are said to have a wrong "attitude" to the activity.) It is frequently the mark of non-improving, wrong questioning that it is mechanical and closed. An open, wondering attitude towards the tacit and explicit assumptions of the questioning would improve it.

¹⁵ *BT* 191.

¹⁶ *BT* 98 (69); 185 (145); 233 (188).

¹⁷ *BT* 102-3 (73).

as distinct objects, without being contemplated, and, for that matter, without being given much attention. Thus, when they are manipulated both we and they are "transparent".¹⁸ Further, they are not seen as part of an "outside", mirrored in a representation found in our "inside".¹⁹ Moreover, they are related to interestedly and are part of a context.²⁰

It is true, Dasein's concerned mode of relating to the doorknob and hammer can be disrupted. When this happens, a theoretical attitude evolves and the subject-object model appears. We take ourselves to have in our mind (i.e. our "inside") a disinterested (or seemingly disinterested) representation of an independent hammer found in the "outside". Nevertheless, our primary undistorted attitude, according to Heidegger, is still one of coping-with transparent entities, which are part of their coped-with context, according to our interests.

For Heidegger entities are always part of a "world" ("world" here being used as in the expressions "the world of the Inca" or "the world of the child").²¹ The world is the context in which entities appear. It too is ever-changing and unfixd, is not consciously invented by any one individual, and is part of a tradition and a community which evolves through time and of which Dasein forms a part. For the sake of clarity, Dasein, the entities which appear before it, and the world of which they are a part have been presented here separately. However, they are in fact all different dimensions of Dasein's being. Dasein is its interpretation in the same way as it is its world and the entities which appear in this world. They are all different aspects of

¹⁸ *BT* 99 (69); *BP* 163 (232-3).

¹⁹ *BT* 176.

²⁰ *BT* 95-8 (66-9).

²¹ *BT* 93 (64-5).

what Dasein is.²²

But what is the relation between Heidegger's ontology and other ontologies? Put differently, what is the relation between Dasein's being, as it has been described here, and Dasein's being when Dasein interprets itself as having another kind of being?

Heidegger thinks his analysis of Dasein's being is true regardless of the way Dasein sees itself. For example, empiricists too live in a world, are prejudiced (by empiricist prejudices), are influenced by a community and a tradition (the empiricist ones) and are part of them. Further, their existence, too, has changed and will continue to change. Likewise, their view of the nature of entities is merely the way entities appear to them. The clearing (or questioning, or interpreting) of Dasein does not stop being one when it is empiricistic. It is merely done in a specific, closed and distorted way. All in all, then, the analysis of Dasein's existence is true even of those kinds of existence which--as an expression of their characteristic nature--deny and distort it.²³

When Dasein sees its being in its primordially, i.e. as it has been described above, it is authentic. It can become authentic through a state of great anxiety²⁴ which can be aroused by fear of death. This awakens what Heidegger calls Dasein's conscience.²⁵ When this happens, Dasein's closed, answered and satisfied world falls apart and it is brought "face to face with

²² *BP* 159-60 (226-7); *BT* 186 (146).

²³ *BT* 168 (130); 232 (188).

²⁴ *BT* 232-3 (187-9).

²⁵ *BT* 277 (234); 313 (268).

its world as world, and thus bring it face to face with itself as being-in-the-world".²⁶ Thus Dasein is able to seize "upon the full disclosedness of being-in-the-world throughout all the constitutive items which are essential to it...with understanding".²⁷ Dasein can see, in such a situation, its world as possibilities. Usually, however, Dasein sees its being in a closed, distorted and inauthentic way.

Authenticity and inauthenticity, then, are attitudes and not specific activities. It is true, however, that some activities, e.g. working on a production line or building an AI model, are more liable than others (e.g. walking in the woods) to produce what Heidegger sees as the inauthentic attitude.

But Heidegger thinks that there is no pure authenticity or inauthenticity²⁸ and that the difference between the authentic and the inauthentic is one of degree, not of kind. When Dasein becomes authentic it does not leave behind the world in which it has been in order to enter a paradise-like world of genuine, changing being.²⁹ Dasein "comes face to face with itself as

²⁶ *BT* 233.

²⁷ *BT* 186-7.

²⁸ *BP* 171 (243).

²⁹ Although he was born a Catholic, Heidegger's views here are closer to the Protestant model, according to which piety consists in bearing the guilt for the Primal Sin, than to the Catholic one, according to which piety can absolve one of sins and deliver a blissful life. Heidegger's philosophy seems closer to Protestant than to Catholic intuitions in other issues, too. It is worldly, un-authoritative, decentralized, concentrates on the "simple person", is "anti-establishment" and calls for direct experiencing.

being-in-the-world" or even with the fact that its existence is a totality of possibilities³⁰ in the specific world and mode of interpretation in which it is. Moreover, in some places Heidegger even tries to deny that authenticity is more advantageous than inauthenticity.³¹

It is interesting to note that Heidegger portrays Dasein's being as by and large non-dichotomic. The traditional distinction between means and ends, for example, loses its point in Heidegger's philosophy since, as mentioned above, Dasein's activity is not directed towards any fixed goal. Likewise, Heidegger does not accept the traditional distinction between epistemology and ontology. Similarly, Heidegger eliminates other dichotomic distinctions which frequent traditional ontologies, such as theory and practice, mind and language, *x* and meta-*x*, language and world, symbol and symbolized, fact and value, inwardness and outwardness, private and public.³² Even in the one case where a dichotomic distinction is emphasized--viz. that between the authentic and the inauthentic--the difference is one of a degree, not of kind and, moreover, the advantage of the authentic over the inauthentic is denied.

Moreover, Dasein's being is also by and large non-directional. There are very few hierarchies in Heidegger's philosophy, and the very few that there are (e.g., again, that of authenticity and inauthenticity) are only two levels high. Again, Heidegger uses neither chains of proofs nor arguments. On the contrary, Dasein's primary activity consists in the non-

³⁰ *BT* 276 (233).

³¹ *BT* 68 (43); *BP* 160 (228).

³² This fact can be appreciated even more once it is remembered that, unlike most non-dichotomists, Heidegger is no reductionist.

directional activity of disclosing to itself the different aspects and possibilities of its being.³³

II. THE EXISTENCE OF REFLEXIVITY IN HEIDEGGER'S THEORY

Up to this point, Heidegger's account of Dasein's being has been presented without any mention of reflexivity. Indeed, the reflexivity in Heidegger's teachings is frequently passed unrecognized. Nevertheless, it does appear. In a frequently quoted passage from the beginning of *Being and Time* Heidegger says:

Dasein...is ontically distinguished by the fact that, in its very being, that being is an *issue* for it. But in that case, this is a constitutive state of Dasein's being, and this implies that Dasein, in its being, has a relationship towards that being—a relationship which itself is one of being. And this means further that there is some way in which Dasein understands itself in its being, and that to some degree it does so explicitly. It is peculiar to this entity that with and through its being, this being is disclosed to it. *Understanding of being is itself a definite characteristic of Dasein's being.* Dasein is distinctive in that it *is* ontological.³⁴

In itself, the passage does not prove that there is reflexivity in Heidegger's teachings. Being an issue for itself can be both reflexive and non-reflexive. In those cases in which the relator and the related of the "having one's being an issue for oneself" are the same, the relation and Dasein will be reflexive. In those cases where its relator and related are only different aspects of the same being and, as such, are not the same, the relation and Dasein will not be

³³ *BT* 276 (233).

³⁴ *BT* 32 (12).

reflexive. Indeed, when Dasein relates to its possibilities as part of its fore-structure, for example, it has its being as an issue for itself in a non-reflexive way.

But it seems that Dasein also has its being as an issue for itself in a reflexive way. For example, in *Introduction to Metaphysics* Heidegger says:

Our question is the *question* of all authentic questions, i.e. of all self-questioning questions, and whether consciously or not it is necessarily implicit in every question. No questioning and accordingly no single scientific "problem" can be fully intelligible if it does not include, i.e. ask, the question of all questions.³⁵

And again:

This question and all the questions immediately rooted in it, the questions in which this one question unfolds--this question "why" is incommensurable with any other. It encounters the search for its own why. At first sight, the question "why the why?" looks like a frivolous repetition ad infinitum of the same interrogative formulation, like an empty and unwarranted brooding over words...The question is only whether we wish to be taken in by this superficial look and so regard the whole matter as settled, or whether we are capable of finding a significant event in this recoil of the question 'why' upon itself.³⁶

³⁵ My Emphasis. *Einführung in die Metaphysik* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klosterman, 1983) p. 8. Translated by Ralph Manheim as *An Introduction to Metaphysics* (New York: Doubleday, 1961) p. 5. Hereafter cited as *ItM* followed by page numbers in the English translation and (in parentheses) the German original. Note, however, that what Manheim translates as "authentic" is in the German original *wahrhaften* (which could have been perhaps better translated as "true") and not *eigentlich*.

³⁶ *ItM* 4-5 (7).

Similarly:

In this questioning we seem to belong entirely to ourselves. Yet it is this questioning that moves us into the open, provided that in questioning *it transforms itself* (which all true questioning does), and casts a new space over everything and onto everything.³⁷

Likewise, Heidegger uses reflexivity in *Being and Time*, when he discusses anxiety and authenticity:

That *about which* anxiety is anxious reveals itself as that *in the face of which* it is anxious--namely, being-in-the-world. The selfsameness of that in the face of which and that about which one has anxiety, extends even to anxiousness itself. For, as a state of mind, anxiousness is a basic kind of being-in-the-world. *Here the disclosure and the disclosed are existentially selfsame in such a way that in the latter the world has been disclosed as world, and being-in has been disclosed as potentiality-for-being which is individualized, pure, and thrown.*³⁸

Or again, when he discusses, in *Being and Time*, authentic, genuine understanding, Heidegger says that knowledge of the self in such a state "is not a matter of perceptually tracking down and inspecting a point called the 'Self', but rather one of seizing upon the full disclosedness of being-in-the-world *throughout all* the constitutive items which are essential to it, and doing so with understanding".³⁹ However, one of the constitutive items which are essential to being-in-

³⁷ My emphasis. *ItM* 24 (32). Here Manheim translates *echte* as "true".

³⁸ *BT* 233 (188). Emphasis in the original.

³⁹ *BT* 186-7 (146). Emphasis in the original.

the-world is this very same disclosedness itself.⁴⁰ Hence, in the authentic genuine understanding, the disclosedness is both relator and related at the same time.

Similarly, in *Being and Time* 53 Heidegger says that "Dasein always understands itself in terms of its existence--in terms of a possibility of itself: to be itself or not itself". But "itself", for Heidegger, is again the very existence and understanding of Dasein.⁴¹

All in all, these citations show that Dasein has its being an issue for itself not only in a non-reflexive but also in a reflexive way. Thus there is reflexivity in Heidegger's philosophy. Let us now see in what ways it is and is not functional there.

III. WAYS IN WHICH REFLEXIVITY IS UNFUNCTIONAL IN HEIDEGGER'S THEORY

In many respects, reflexivity is not functional in Heidegger's philosophy. Many of the functions for which reflexivity is essential in traditional systems can either be fulfilled by other philosophical devices in Heidegger's theory or do not need to be fulfilled at all. For example, in some theories reflexivity is needed to close the "gap" between thoughts and what thoughts are about. But, as mentioned above, Heidegger analyzes our intentionality without having to use the concept of aboutness at all. Thus, the gap between thoughts and what thoughts are about does not exist in his theory, and hence reflexivity is not needed in order to overcome it.

Again, there is no need in Heidegger's theory to dissolve the difference between means and ends, since he avoids this dichotomy completely. The same is true for many other

⁴⁰ BT 274 (231).

⁴¹ BT 152-3 (117).

dichotomic distinctions, such as theory and practice, person and world, private and public, language and mind, fact and value, or symbol and symbolized. The scarcity of dichotomic distinctions in Heidegger's theory eliminates the need to dissolve them and thus the necessity for reflexivity to meet this need. Similarly, there is no need in Heidegger's theory, as there was needed in so many other theories, to end infinite regressions by using reflexivity. Heidegger's philosophy, which is by and large non-directional, does not give rise to these problems in the first place.

Reflexivity is a traditional philosophical device used to answer traditional problems in traditional systems. If a system is not traditional and does not pose traditional philosophical problems, there is less of a need for reflexivity in it. Put differently, reflexivity has been useful in philosophical systems because its unconventional nature enabled it to solve problems posed by the use of conventional structures. But once the system itself has become unconventional, there is less of a need for reflexivity in it.

IV. WAYS IN WHICH REFLEXIVITY IS FUNCTIONAL IN HEIDEGGER'S THEORY

In some other ways, however, reflexivity is functional in Heidegger's theory. Moreover, in correspondence with what we saw in the previous section, some of the ways in which reflexivity is functional in the theory are related to traditional aspects. It is true, Heidegger's theory is extremely innovative in many respects. Nevertheless, it also includes traditional aspects. For example, like other philosophers Heidegger finds an element (the existential analytic of Dasein) common to diverse phenomena (other ontologies).⁴² Thus, the

⁴² "Element" and "phenomena" should here be understood in their most general sense.

relation between Dasein's existential analytic and other ontologies in Heidegger's theory is reminiscent of the relation between essence and accidents, or substance and attributes, or general laws and particular instances in other theories. Heidegger takes this common element to underlie other ontologies and to partly make them be what they are (i.e. changing self-interpretations and interpretations). To an extent, then, the diverse phenomena should be understood in terms of the common element.

Further, Heidegger partly determines the superiority of one account over another according to the traditional scientific and epistemological criteria. He takes one ontological interpretation to be more primordial than others if it shows "the *unity* of those structural items which belong to it [the theme of the interpretation]"⁴³ and if "the *whole* of the entity which it [the interpretation] has taken as its theme has been brought into the fore-having".⁴⁴ Again, one of the reasons for preferring authenticity to inauthenticity (although, again, Heidegger also denies that there is such a preference)⁴⁵ seems to be that in authenticity the totality of its possibilities are disclosed to Dasein, whereas in inauthenticity only a limited number of definite possibilities are.⁴⁶

At least in part, then, Heidegger is interested not only in describing but also in substantiating his description. Like other thinker, he performs this substantiation by presenting a substructure which is taken to be more primordial than the superstructures, and explains and

⁴³ *BT 275* (232). My emphasis.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* My emphasis.

⁴⁵ *BT 68* (43); *220* (176).

⁴⁶ *BT 276* (233).

unites them with one another.⁴⁷

Likewise, there is a tendency towards totalism in Heidegger's teachings. The preference for authenticity because of the totality of possibilities disclosed in it has been already mentioned above. Moreover, Heidegger wants what he says to be true of everything. His account, then, is supposed to be *all-pervasive*.

Similarly, there is an element of necessity in Heidegger's philosophy. Whatever Dasein does and thinks of itself, it will necessarily be part of a community, will have prejudices, will be influenced by tradition, will change, will have a world (and will have its world as part of its existence), etc.

Again, although Heidegger thinks that it is impossible to forgo any kind of prejudice completely, he still has the traditional Enlightenment urge to note prejudices and make them explicit.

Further, there is an interest in purity in Heidegger's philosophy. Heidegger wants there to be purity in the authentic state. He says:

...the disclosure and the disclosed are existentially selfsame in such a way that in the latter the world has been disclosed as world, and being-in has been disclosed as a potentiality-for-being which is individualized, *pure* and thrown.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Although Heidegger himself does not say so, a possible reason for preferring his theory over inauthentic ones is that it can make sense of them, while they cannot make sense of it.

⁴⁸ My emphasis. *BT* 233 (188).

It is surprising that Heidegger wants to see authenticity as pure, since his philosophy is a worldly, moderate one.⁴⁹ Further, this purity almost gives the authentic state, and thus the theory, religious undertones which Heidegger in other places emphatically denies. Notwithstanding this, there is still an element of the quest for purity in Heidegger's theory.

All this is not meant, of course, to down-play Heidegger's innovativeness. Complete innovation or a break with the tradition is impossible (and who but Heidegger should have known that). It is hardly even possible to say anything for which no parallels can be found in the history of philosophy. But it should be noted that there is a tension in Heidegger's thought between non-traditional elements (which may very well be the more important and essential ones) and traditional ones. And some of these traditional elements create needs which call for the use of reflexivity.

The first of the traditional aspects which makes reflexivity functional in the theory is the theory's tendency towards totalism. Since Heidegger wants the interpretation, questioning, clearing, etc. to be of *everything*, it must also interpret, question and "clear" itself. Put differently, Heidegger discusses a state of complete openness in his theory. But in order to be in such a state it is necessary to question even the questioning itself. Even it or, rather, especially it, should be seen as unfixed, non-definite and unnecessary. Only when this happens can complete openness be achieved. Thus, in Heidegger's theory, as in so many others, reflexivity answers the requirement of totalism that relator should relate to everything and hence

⁴⁹ E.g. in *BT* 220 (176): "So neither must we take the fallenness of Dasein as a 'fall' from a purer and higher 'primal status'."

also to itself.³⁰

Purity is the second traditional aspect which makes reflexivity functional. As shown above, Heidegger seems to want at least certain aspects of authenticity to be pure. The self-relation in reflexivity is useful to him for this purpose.

The third traditional aspect which makes reflexivity functional in the theory is Heidegger's wish to substantiate, explain and cohere what he includes in his philosophy. Reflexivity substantiates, for example, the hermeneutical circle. Since Dasein has its being as an issue for itself, it is already acquainted, in some sense, with the things it interprets. It is "already there".³¹

Likewise, reflexivity helps explain how Dasein partly changes itself. According to Heidegger, Dasein's interpretive activity interprets not only other things, but also itself.³² But interpreting the interpretation differently partly *makes* the interpretation different and thus transforms it.³³ Of course, interpretations and self-interpretations do not merely remake us in conformity to them, but also disclose. Hence, they never remake and transform us totally. But still, they do so to an extent. Suppose, for example, that interpretation interprets itself as a rational activity according to the positivistic model. Such a self-interpretation will indeed partly

³⁰ *ItM* 4-5 (7-8).

³¹ *BT* 32-7 (12-6); 195 (153); 241-4 (196-200).

³² *BT* 233 (188); *ItM* 4-5 (7-8).

³³ *ItM* 24 (32).

change the nature of the interpretive activity. The interpretation will come to be of such a nature, i.e. it will function as positivistic rationality. In a similar way, if the interpretation interprets itself as a *verstehen* activity, it will partly become that. Reflexivity is especially helpful in explaining these changes, since in Heidegger's view change is not motivated or determined by an external force.

Likewise, reflexivity can substantiate the unfixeness of Dasein's being. Since part of the self-interpretation can transform itself in entirely different ways, Dasein can change considerable parts of its nature. Moreover, reflexivity thus also substantiates the claim that Dasein's being, or the process of interpretation, is never conclusive and final.

Furthermore, reflexivity helps explain how Dasein comes to its authenticity, openness, and potentiality for being. When the interpretation discloses itself as authentic, it discloses itself as being, among other things, self-interpretation and self-disclosure. When this happens Dasein is brought "face to face with its world as world" and "face to face with itself as being-in-the-world".⁵⁴ But part of Dasein's being-in-the-world is self-interpretation and self-disclosure. Hence, when Dasein's interpretation in the authentic state is brought face to face with itself as being-in-the-world, it is also brought face to face with itself as self-disclosure and self-interpretation. In both cases Dasein recognizes itself as a potentiality-for-being and as its totality of possibilities, i.e. as completely open and unfix. This coming face to face with itself as being-in-the-world and as self-disclosure and interpretation is not, of course, necessarily

⁵⁴ BT 232-3 (188).

thematic.⁵⁵ Authenticity is lived, not thought about.⁵⁶ But still, in a non-thematic way, authentic Dasein has a grasp of itself as being-in-the-world and, as part of its being-in-the-world, of the fact that its being-in-the-world involves self-interpretation and self-disclosure.⁵⁷

But this also means that authentic Dasein discloses its being to itself more than inauthentic Dasein does; most parts of the inauthentic, empiricist Dasein remain undisclosed to itself. In other words, whereas the inauthentic, empiricist Dasein does not disclose itself to be what it primordially is (viz. self-interpretation, being-in-the-world), authentic Dasein does. Thus, more parts of Dasein's being are disclosed to it when it interprets itself to be what it is, viz. self-interpretation, than when it interprets itself according to the empiricist model. Authentic Dasein relates less to entities and more to its self-disclosure and self-interpretation than does inauthentic Dasein.

But coming face to face with the fact that its being involves self-interpretation and self-

⁵⁵ *BT* 185 (145).

⁵⁶ *BT* 232 (187).

⁵⁷ Note also that when Dasein (which is basically being-in-the-world) comes face to face with itself as being-in-the-world, it is reflexive as well. Its being-in-the-world relates to itself.

But what is the exact relation between the reflexive self-interpretation and the reflexive being-in-the-world? It may seem that since Dasein's reflexive self-interpretation is part of Dasein's being-in-the-world, the self-interpretation is meta-reflexivized when being-in-the-world is reflexivized. Nevertheless, in the authentic, reflexive state Dasein's self-interpretation and Dasein's being-in-the-world are in fact one. Since interpreting, questioning, etc. are not thematic, bounded procedures but are more akin to attitudes (especially when they become more authentic), when Dasein becomes authentic the different levels of self-disclosure are not demarcated from each other but, as in so many other meta-reflexivities and reflexivities, are integrated and become one.

disclosure makes authentic Dasein open. Dasein can now see its possibilities, since it grasps that it could have interpreted itself differently and thus could have transformed itself in many ways. Since it grasps that even the questioning itself is questioned in the authentic state, it can grasp itself in this state more than in any other as a possibility and a potentiality for being, which Heidegger also views as freedom,⁵⁸ truth,⁵⁹ openness, un-fixedness and changeability.⁶⁰

We see, then, that reflexivity is functional in Heidegger's philosophy in several ways. It answers the need created by the tendency towards totalism in the theory; the interest in purity; and the wish to explain, substantiate and cohere the views concerning the hermeneutical circle, Dasein's ability to change, its un-fixedness, the inconclusiveness of Dasein's being, and the nature and road to its authenticity. It remains to be determined, however, to what extent reflexivity is necessary for fulfilling these functions.

⁵⁸ *BT* 232 (188).

⁵⁹ *BT* 269-73 (226-30).

⁶⁰ It may be objected that many of the things Heidegger says of the authentic state do not seem to touch on reflexivity at all. For example, when Heidegger discusses temporality as the most primordial analysis of being-in-the-world, reflexivity is not even mentioned.

But although Heidegger thinks that Dasein in the authentic state is reflexive, he does not think that it is *only* reflexive. Being-in-the-world can relate to itself and interpret itself in the authentic state, but this does not mean that it has no other dimensions--e.g. a temporal structure. The different dimensions of Dasein's being are taken by Heidegger to be complementary, not exclusive. Note, for example, that in sections 9-65 of *BT* Heidegger presents Dasein's existential analytic which he repeats, issue by issue, in sections 66-83 (the "temporal analysis"), this time stressing the analytic's temporal sense. But the later temporal analysis does not in any way invalidate the former existential analytic. It merely adds another dimension to it.

V. IS REFLEXIVITY NECESSARY IN THE THEORY?

Reflexivity is necessary in Heidegger's theory for fulfilling one function only--viz. that created by Heidegger's totalism. Since Heidegger wants interpretation or questioning to relate to everything, it must also relate to itself.

In all other respects reflexivity is not a *sine qua non* in Heidegger's theory. Heidegger *could* have described the authentic state as involving pure interpretation or being-in-the-world which does not relate to itself without substantiating this description with reflexivity. Similarly, he could have simply stated that interpreting, dealing-with, etc. are basically unfixated. It is true, merely stating this view would have made it arbitrary and would have left a place for the objection that fixed laws governing Dasein's conduct do exist even if they have not yet been found. But this objection notwithstanding, Heidegger's theory would have still made sense.

In the same way reflexivity is not *needed* to explain the change from one way of being to another. The changes could have simply been postulated. The change from inauthenticity to authenticity, moreover, could have been explained by using the concept of anxiety which, by bringing Dasein face to face with its future death, shows Dasein that it is merely possible and thus opens up for Dasein the totality of its possibilities.

Likewise, the hermeneutical circle can be made sense of by relying on the logic of questioning alone (as indeed it was in section I above), without reflexivity. In fact, much of

Heidegger's discussion of the hermeneutical circle does not rely on reflexivity at all.⁶¹

Nevertheless, although reflexivity is not *necessary* in Heidegger's philosophy in all these respects, it is still called for. I have tried to show above that there is a tension in Heidegger's philosophy between its non-traditional and traditional aspects. Because of the traditional aspects, reflexivity is not necessary to substantiate, explain and make coherent any of the different characteristics of Dasein's being (except its totalism). But the traditional aspects in Heidegger's theory--viz. the interest in greater explanatory power, common fundamental substructures, unification of the different aspects of the explanation, and purity--are sufficiently important to call for the use of reflexivity. Even if reflexivity is not necessary in the theory, it adds another enriching dimension.

VI. LEGITIMACY AND DESIRABILITY OF HEIDEGGER'S USE OF REFLEXIVITY. IS HEIDEGGER'S DECISION TO USE REFLEXIVITY A GOOD PHILOSOPHICAL CHOICE?

Heidegger seems to use reflexivity in a legitimate way. He does not particularize it in impossible ways, does not try to combine incompatible types of reflexivity in one use, and does not use it inconsistently. Nor does he seem to use reflexivity wrongly in any other way.

But is Heidegger's theory not guilty of contradictory reflexivity? It seems that Heidegger can be charged with contradictory reflexivity on four issues. First, Heidegger

⁶¹ *BT* sections 21, 45, 63. Heidegger does seem to connect the hermeneutical circle to reflexivity, however, in *BT* 195 (153): "The 'circle' in understanding belongs to the structure of meaning, and the latter phenomenon is rooted in the existential constitution of Dasein--that is, in the understanding which interprets. An entity for which, as being-in-the-world, its being is itself an issue, has, ontologically, a circular structure".

recommends openness, "hiddenness" and questioning as part of authentic existence. But the theory itself does not seem "open", "hidden" or questioning; it seems definite, explicit and providing an answer. Does this mean that what Heidegger says in *Being and Time* is inauthentic?

But Heidegger does not see his teachings as providing "answers". In the beginning of *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology* he writes:

This course sets for itself the task of posing *the basic problems of phenomenology*, elaborating them, and proceeding to some extent toward their solution...Our considerations are aimed at the *inherent content* and *inner systematic relationships* of the problems. The goal is to achieve a fundamental illumination of these problems.⁶²

In this paragraph Heidegger sees his teachings as mostly an effort to illuminate the content and interrelations of the problems, not to answer them.

Moreover, notwithstanding the traditional aspects of Heidegger's teachings, he succeeds in presenting an essay which can be read authentically. *Being and Time* and Heidegger's other writings discuss different dimensions of Dasein's being. The different dimensions are not related to each other by a directional relation (e.g. proof), but are simply uncovered.⁶³ Further, they do not become too definite, and they retain an element of hiddenness in Heidegger's writings. Again, *Being and Time* and other writings are supposed to explicate something the reader in fact already knows. Furthermore, the discussion in *Being and Time* starts with its conclusion, and thus the circular structure of the hermeneutical interpretation is maintained.

⁶² BP 1 (1).

⁶³ BT 363 (315).

Nor is the fact that *Being and Time* is expressed in assertions indicative of the text's inauthenticity. It is true, assertions can easily become inauthentic. Nevertheless, they do not have to become so.⁶⁴

Of course, Heidegger's writings *can* be read inauthentically (in fact, this is the way they are usually read, to a large extent in this work as well). When this happens, they are indeed contradictorily reflexive. But they can also be read authentically and are meant to be.⁶⁵

Second, what is said in *Being and Time* seems conscious and theoretical. But Heidegger discusses the authentic state as involving concerned, untheoretical being-in-the-world. The question again rises, then, whether what Heidegger says in his writings is *inauthentic*.

But, again, Heidegger does not think that what he writes must be read theoretically, nor does he want it to be so:

We shall be dealing not with phenomenology but with what phenomenology itself deals with. And, again, we do not wish merely to take note of it so as to be able to report then that phenomenology deals with this or that subject; instead, the course deals with the subject itself, and you yourself are supposed to deal with it, or learn how to do so, as the course proceeds.⁶⁶

Again, *Being and Time* *can* be read inauthentically and, moreover, frequently is. But it does not *have* to be read in such a way. It is possible to read and understand *Being and Time*

⁶⁴ *BT* 50; 60; 204 (161); 266 (224).

⁶⁵ See also *BT* section 63, esp. pp 358-9 (310-12).

⁶⁶ *BP* 1-2 (1).

un-theoretically, as part of our authentic, concerned, being-in-the-world. From this respect too, then, Heidegger's teachings do not contradict themselves reflexively but, on the contrary, affirm themselves so.

Third, Heidegger says that Dasein's being is never disconnected from a tradition. Nevertheless, at the same time he takes his own views as breaking with tradition. Again Heidegger's teachings seem to contradict what they themselves espouse.

But in fact Heidegger's teachings are not as unconnected to philosophical tradition as they might seem to be. It is true, according to Heidegger's own account he takes up the question of being after it had been neglected throughout most of the history of philosophy. Thus, his views do mark a sharp break with most of the philosophical tradition. Nevertheless, Heidegger is still related to a tradition. He does not take his writings to be written on a *tabula rasa* but, on the contrary, to be part of the history of being. Although he does not have a clear theory of the dynamics of this history, he is very interested in it and his writings include extensive discussions of previous philosophical figures.

Moreover, Heidegger takes his philosophy as directly connected with the pre-Socratic tradition. But it should not be seen as disconnected from the rest of the history of philosophy. Being connected to tradition does not mean that one has to be traditional. One can also relate to one's tradition by using it as a background for one's new views and thus responding to it. In this way too, then, Heidegger's teachings do not contradict what they themselves espouse.

Finally, Heidegger seems to say that *everything* is temporal and changing. Nothing, then, is true at all times. But this means that there will also be a time when this very view of Heidegger will stop being true.

But I do not think that Heidegger indeed takes *everything* to be unfixed and temporal. According to Heidegger there is an element of self-interpretation, worldhood, temporality etc. in each and every form of being. But this shows that Heidegger thinks that self-interpretation, worldhood, temporality etc. are common to all forms of Dasein's being and, thus, are fixed and unchangeable dimensions of it. Heidegger, then, takes all things to be temporal and unfixed except one: his own theory. By making an exception to the rule--which is the rule itself--Heidegger avoids relating the rule to itself and thereby avoids producing contradictory reflexivity.⁶⁷

Thus, Heidegger's theory is not guilty of a contradictory reflexivity, and his uses of reflexivity in the theory are both functional and legitimate. Heidegger's decision to employ reflexivity in his philosophy, then, seems a good philosophical choice.

VII. HEIDEGGER AND THE HISTORY OF THE USE OF REFLEXIVITY

In some ways, Heidegger's use of reflexivity is traditional. In its basic outline it follows the traditional model found, for example, in Eckhart's teachings. For Meister Eckhart reflexivity constitutes a divine element which always implicitly exists in us. In order to achieve the sublime state we have to realize this element, which thereby becomes a bigger and more significant part of our being. Similarly, in Heidegger's theory Dasein is always implicitly reflexive but, when authentic, becomes reflexive in a more complete and conscious way. When

⁶⁷ Heidegger seems to have been aware of the fact that *Being and Time* propounds an ahistorically true theory. That is perhaps one of the reasons why, in his later philosophy, he talks about being as developed in our tradition, i.e. discusses a historic destining of being.

this happens, reflexivity constitutes a larger part of Dasein's being and in some sense it achieves purity, freedom and truth.⁶⁸

However, Heidegger employs reflexivity according to the traditional model in a non-traditional, modern way. He "normalizes" reflexivity more than it has ever been before.

First, reflexivity in Heidegger's theory is not limited to a certain, specific sphere. For many generations reflexivity was ascribed only to God. But even later, when reflexivity ceased to be only divine and was ascribed to human beings as well, it was still limited to the religious sphere. Subsequently, reflexivity started functioning in other spheres, such as the religious-cognitive one (Spinoza), the purely cognitive one (Descartes) and the moral one (Kant's moral theory). This change in the spheres in which reflexivity was used is indicative not only of the "normalization" of reflexivity, but also of the place that morality and cognition came to occupy in the modern mind. Nevertheless, in all these cases reflexivity continued to be limited to a specific area which was taken to be of special importance.

But in Heidegger's theory Dasein is reflexive in its everyday existence in all its possible aspects, whether moral, artistic, industrial, emotional, agricultural, cognitive or otherwise. There is no sphere of Dasein's activity which is not reflexive. Thus, in Heidegger's theory, reflexivity becomes more normal; it is not limited to any special sphere.

Second, in some ways reflexivity does not have to be achieved in Heidegger's philosophy. For Descartes in his *cogito*, for Spinoza in his ascent in the degrees of knowledge, and for Kant in his moral theory, the reflexive structure is connected with a special effort, and its attainment is an achievement. This is the case even in Eckhart's theory, where humans are constantly reflexive even when they do not know it. As long as reflexivity is tacit in Eckhart's

⁶⁸ BT 232 (188); 233 (188); 269-73 (226-30).

theory it fulfills no function, and in order to make it explicit and functional a concentrated effort has to be made. But in Heidegger's philosophy Dasein is anyway always reflexive through self-interpretation and could not be non-reflexive even if it wanted to. It is true, in one way reflexivity is achieved in Heidegger's philosophy too. When Dasein is trapped in a false ontology it is, in a sense, "far" from itself. Understanding the right ontology by disclosing being-in-the-world as authentic self-disclosure and self interpretation which changes and liberates us and the world is a kind of achieved reflexivity, not very different from Eckhart's. Nevertheless, reflexive self-interpretation is also part and parcel of, and plays a significant role in, Dasein's inauthentic everyday life and, in this sense, does not have to be achieved. It is already there.

Third, not only does reflexivity not have to be achieved in Heidegger's theory, but nothing special is necessarily achieved because of it. For Hegel, Kant, Spinoza, Descartes, Eckhart and Aristotle reflexivity is associated not only with a special effort but also with some kind of excellence. It is true, in Heidegger's view as well reflexivity is connected to the achievement of authenticity. But it is also significant in Dasein's normal, everyday existence, where nothing is achieved. Whereas in the opinion of other philosophers the reflexive situation is special, in Heidegger's opinion it can also be trivial, normal, and a matter of fact for everyone.

Fourth and fifth, in Heidegger's writings reflexivity is used openly and consciously, without trying to hide it. Furthermore, it is also used to fulfill functions for which it is not absolutely necessary.

In all these ways, the phenomenon of reflexivity becomes acceptable and "normalized" in Heidegger's writings more than it ever has been in any other philosophy. Reflexivity is no longer special. It becomes a normal, legitimate, matter of fact, philosophical structure. The

tendency in the history of philosophy to "normalize" reflexivity here reaches to what, up to now, is its highest point.

An objection may be made by saying that in Hegel's system reflexivity is normalized more than in Heidegger's. In Hegel's theory reflexivity also plays a significant role even before the absolute spirit achieves its self-consciousness. Likewise, in Hegel's writings too reflexivity is not limited to one specific sphere. Similarly, just as in Heidegger's theory, reflexivity is used in Hegel's writings openly and consciously, and no effort is made to hide it. Again, in Hegel's theory as well, reflexivity is sometimes used to fulfill a function for which it is not absolutely necessary.

In all these ways reflexivity seems to be normalized in Hegel's system at least as much as it in Heidegger's. But Hegel seems also to normalize reflexivity in two other ways in which Heidegger does not. First, Hegel uses reflexivity more profusely than Heidegger does. Second, Hegel gives reflexivity a much more central place in his system than Heidegger does. In Hegel's theory the whole system is reflexivized. In these two ways, reflexivity seems to be normalized in Hegel's theory even more than it is in Heidegger's.

Notwithstanding the above, I think that reflexivity is still more normalized in Heidegger's philosophy than it is in Hegel's. In Hegel's system reflexivity is basically the activity of the self-positing absolute spirit. Only absolute spirit can posit itself. It is true, it does so through human beings, and its reflexivity is also theirs. However, just as absolute spirit cannot be reflexive without human beings, human beings cannot be reflexive without the absolute spirit, and it is the absolute spirit which is primarily reflexive. For Heidegger, on the other hand, Dasein posits itself reflexively with no connection to a God or an absolute spirit.

This is an important difference, since as long as the "normalized" characteristics of

reflexivity are ascribed not to human beings but to God, the use of reflexivity cannot be taken to be normalized. Ascribing reflexivity to human beings, and not only to superhuman entities, weighs against many, if not all, of the other "normal" characteristics which the use of reflexivity may have. And since in Heidegger's use reflexivity is both ascribed to human beings and has many other "normal" characteristics, it should be seen as normalized in Heidegger's philosophy more than in any other, including Hegel's.

The "normalization" of reflexivity throughout the history of philosophy was mostly done by anthropocizing reflexivity. Through Aristotle, Eckhart, Descartes, Spinoza (to an extent), and Kant reflexivity changed from a divine activity restricted only to God into an activity performed by human beings in connection to God, and then by human beings alone, independently of God's activity.

As shown above, Hegel has other ways of normalizing reflexivity which, notwithstanding anticipations, he is the first to dare to use. On the other hand, Hegel does not dare to normalize reflexivity, as his predecessors did, by anthropocizing it. But this is no coincidence; Hegel dares to normalize reflexivity in all the modern, radical ways he does only because for him reflexivity is not human as it was for his predecessors. Thus, he de-normalizes reflexivity in one way in order to normalize it in others. As far as the normalization of reflexivity is measured by its anthropocization, then, Hegel is a reactionary; he prefers the old model, according to which reflexivity is primarily divine and can be performed by human beings only in connection with God.

Whereas Hegel's predecessors dared to normalize reflexivity by anthropocizing it but not in any of his ways, Hegel dares to normalize reflexivity in his own way but not in theirs. Heidegger, who is influenced by both Hegel and Hegel's predecessors, is the first to dare and combine them. By doing this, again, he normalizes reflexivity more than any other philosopher

before him.

But why is reflexivity normalized to such an unequalled degree in Heidegger's philosophy rather than in any other? And why, notwithstanding the high degree of its "normality", is it still used in Heidegger's philosophy rather scarcely? The answer to both questions lies in the same phenomenon: the scarcity of directional and dichotomic elements in Heidegger's philosophy.

In previous chapters we have seen how the abundance of directional and dichotomic elements in traditional systems had opposite results on the use of reflexivity. On the one hand, the abundance of directional and dichotomic elements made reflexivity seem "weird" and "abnormal" in the systems and thus discouraged its use. On the other hand, since these directional and dichotomic elements had to be somehow resolved in the system, their abundance also created a need for reflexivity. The abundance of directional and dichotomic elements, then, made reflexivity at the same time both necessary and unacceptable in traditional systems. Reflexivity was used in the traditional systems, then, as a necessary evil.

In a contrary symmetry, the scarcity of directional and dichotomic elements in Heidegger's system again exerts opposite effects on the use of reflexivity. On the one hand, since reflexivity (which is non-directional and non-dichotomic) is now taken to be a perfectly normal philosophical structure, it can now be used more. On the other hand, because of the scarcity of dichotomic and directional elements in the philosophy, there is also less of a need for it. Thus, reflexivity is used unsparingly now not because of its abnormality but, on the contrary, because of its normality in the theory. It stops being an evil, but also stops being necessary.

Thus, the relative scarcity of dichotomic and directional elements in Heidegger's

philosophy answers the two questions above. It is because of this scarcity that Heidegger does not find it difficult to "normalize" reflexivity in his system to such an extent. But it is this same scarcity of dichotomic and directional elements that makes reflexivity less needed in the theory, and thus leads to its being used rather infrequently.

One could have expected that the high degree of normalization that reflexivity achieved in Heidegger's writings would repeat itself in other systems and, perhaps, even be furthered. For various reasons, however, this has not happened. First, many philosophers have not been influenced by Heidegger at all. Second, even many of those who have been influenced have overlooked the place and importance of reflexivity in Heidegger's teachings. Third, many of those who have been influenced by Heidegger and have noted the place and importance of reflexivity in his teachings were more affected by the fact that reflexivity was used in Heidegger's teachings than by the fact that it was normalized in it. Thus, they too use it--sometimes even more widely than Heidegger does--but still as an ab-normal, anarchistic philosophical structure. An example of such a use of reflexivity will be shown in the next chapter, which deals with the teachings of Jacques Derrida.

chapter nine

THE ANARCHISTIC USE OF REFLEXIVITY IN DERRIDA'S WRITINGS

I. DERRIDA'S PROJECT

It may seem at first that Derrida's main theme is other thinkers's views. He discusses, among others, Plato, Aristotle, Hegel, Heidegger, Freud, de-Saussure and Austin. But in fact Derrida uses the writings of other thinkers only as a means to demonstrate how, in his opinion, texts should be analyzed. His special way of analysis, which he calls deconstruction, is the main theme of his writings.

In Derrida's earlier work, deconstruction operates on dichotomies. There are many dichotomies, but the most important ones are: essential and accidental, central and marginal, typical and atypical, being and non-being, presence and absence, pure and impure, stable and changing, certain and dubitable, general and limited, clear and vague, simple and complicated, atomistic and compound, immediate and mediate, original and secondary, conscious and unconscious, real and apparent, serious and playful, internal and external, signified and signifier, literal and metaphorical, transcendental and empirical, spoken and written, voiced and silent, soul and body, meaning and form, intuition and expression, and nature and culture.

These dichotomies are understood by Derrida to have several characteristics. First, the two terms in each dichotomy are taken to be distinct from each other. Second, traditionally one of the terms in the dichotomy is preferred to the other. Third, the disfavoured term is conceived as the imperfect, "castrated" version of the favored one. It is taken to have the characteristics of the favored term in only a partial, imperfect way. Hence, the disfavoured term is taken to be conceptually dependent on the favored one.

Fourth, it is not accidental that some terms are preferred to others. The favored terms can be grouped together. For example, presence is traditionally associated with being rather than non-being, with consciousness rather than with unconsciousness (what is conscious seems

more present to us), with the typical, central and essential rather than with the atypical, marginal and accidental (what is typical, central and essential is more fully present to us than what is not), with voice, the real and stable rather than with silence, the unreal and the changing (for obvious reasons), with the certain, immediate and literal rather than the dubitable, mediate, and metaphorical (again for obvious reasons), and with the spoken rather than with the written (for reasons to be discussed below).¹

The existence of the dichotomies in various contexts is frequently tacit and a preference for the first term over the second is sometimes even denied. So are the connections among the favored terms. Derrida sees the uncovering of these dichotomies and the relations within and among them as part of his achievement. He calls the tendency in the history of philosophy (and in Western civilization generally)² to prefer the first-terms in the dichotomies "logocentrism". Derrida's overall project is to destroy logocentrism by means of deconstruction.

¹ See, e.g., *De la grammatologie* (Paris: Minuit, 1967) p. 23. Hereafter cited as *Gramm* followed by page number. See also "La Structure, le signe et le jeu dans le discours des sciences humaines" *L'Écriture et la différence* (Paris: Seuil, 1967) p. 411.

² To the best of my knowledge, Derrida never specifies whether in his opinion logocentrism is only or mostly a Western phenomenon. But in his view logocentrism is tied with phonetic-alphabetical writing whereas the pictographic Chinese writing is free from that bias (*Marges de la philosophie* [Paris, Minuit, 1972] pp. 119-123. Hereafter cited as *Marges* followed by page number). Moreover, in a few places (e.g. *Positions* [Paris, Minuit, 1972] p. 19. Hereafter cited as *Positions* followed by page number) he mentions that a certain logocentric phenomenon pervades all *Western* civilization. Furthermore, he deconstructs only Western texts. This is strange since other Eastern alphabets (e.g. the Indian Devanagari) are not pictographic, and at least *prima facie* there seem to be strong logocentric elements in Eastern cultures as well (e.g. in Chinese Daoism and Confucianism).

Some dichotomies are emphasized by Derrida more than others.³ It has already been shown above that the dichotomy of presence and absence is connected to other dichotomies. In fact, the phenomenon of presencing (i.e. of preferring presence to absence) is taken by Derrida to be so important that he calls philosophy "the metaphysics of presencing".⁴

Another such dichotomy is that of speaking and writing.⁵ Speaking has been traditionally favored over writing, according to Derrida, because the latter has been seen as an imitation, or signifier, of the former. Moreover, speaking can take place at the time of thinking and thus has an element of immediacy and presencing in it, whereas writing does not. The preference of speaking over writing, then, matches with the preference of signified over signifier, original over imitation, the immediate over the mediate and presence over absence, and thus is part of the logocentric tradition.⁶ But in Derrida's opinion it is such an important part of logocentrism that it deserves a special name: phonocentrism.⁷

³ The status of the emphasized dichotomies in Derrida's writings is not completely clear. It is uncertain whether emphasized dichotomies are taken to be more logocentric than others, or whether they are taken to pervade others and actually influence them, or whether his practice of emphasizing a dichotomy is merely a heuristic device for Derrida.

⁴ E.g. in *Gramm.* 191.

⁵ *Gramm.* 42-5.

⁶ *Gramm.* 23.

⁷ *Gramm.* 23.

II. THE METHODS OF DECONSTRUCTION

But what are Derrida's methods of deconstruction and how does he justify their use? In his early writings Derrida's general strategy is to show that in fact the favored term is never self-sufficient and pure. In some way or other it is always related to the disfavoured term and hence, in some sense, dependent on it. Thus, for example, one of the arguments that Derrida uses in order to deconstruct the speaking-writing dichotomy is that writing can do the job that speech cannot: it can technically repeat speech where and when speech itself is not present. But this repeatability is a necessary condition for speaking to make sense at all.⁸ Derrida seems to argue, perhaps under the influence of Wittgenstein's private language argument, that only because speech has a fixed meaning which can be repeated in different contexts can it make sense to us at all. But if this essential characteristic of writing is a necessary condition for speaking, then writing is not secondary to speaking, as it has traditionally been viewed, but, on the contrary, speaking is secondary to writing.

Likewise, in what may be called the main-body/supplement dichotomy,⁹ it is the main-body which is traditionally favored. The supplement is taken to be an external, inessential addition to the main-body. Hence, whereas the main-body is understood to be independent of the supplement and self-sufficient, the supplement is not understood to be independent of the main-body. But Derrida tries to reverse the traditional relation between the two concepts. According to his analysis, the supplement can perform as such only because (1) there are some characteristics common to it and to the main-body and (2) because there is something missing

⁸ *Gramm.* 65.

⁹ Derrida himself does not use the term "main-body" but only the term "supplement".

in the main-body which can be supplemented. Thus, for example, in Rousseau's *Confessions* writing is needed to supplement speaking since there is something which both it and speaking can do (namely, emphasize Rousseau's worth as a thinker and human being), but writing does it better than speaking.¹⁰ Hence, in at least one sense the supplement is an essential part of the main-body and can even be seen as logically prior to it. And once the supplement is emphasized and taken to be prior to the main-body, many deconstructions which hitherto seemed absurd look more plausible.

A close but somewhat different strategy is to show that the distinction between the two terms does not hold and then simply to reduce both to one. Thus, Derrida claims that since signifieds and signifiers are never completely independent of each other, the distinction between them should not be accepted.¹¹ Hence, signifiers are not to be taken as referring to signifieds, as they traditionally have been, but only to other signifiers. But, again, once deconstruction stops referring signifiers to signifieds (e.g. physical objects, intentional states), but only to other signifiers, many of Derrida's deconstructions seem less absurd. Put differently, once the text is not understood as referring to anything outside it, it is easier to interpret it in any way whatsoever.

A third strategy for demonstrating that the favored term is never self-sufficient and pure is to show that it is part of an infinite series of terms, each of which is favored in comparison to some terms and disfavoured in comparison to others. In this way it is shown that there are no absolute, pure terms (which might have existed at the ends of the chains if the chains were

¹⁰ *Gramm.* 205.

¹¹ *Positions* 28-30.

finite). Moreover, it is shown that preferability is relative to a context and hence that, in some sense, the context is prior to it. Thus, for example, Derrida shows that for Rousseau writing is a supplement to speech, but speech is a supplement to non-verbal activity. Again, in Rousseau's *Confessions* the recollections of *Maman* are a substitute for *Maman* herself, but *Maman* herself is a substitute for the mother herself who, Derrida thinks, will also be a substitute for something.¹² On this basis Derrida concludes that there is an endless chain of such terms, all relative to each other.

A fourth strategy is to apply a distinction onto itself reflexively and thus show that it itself is imbued with the unfavored term. Thus, for example, Derrida shows that when Aristotle and other philosophers discuss the nature of metaphors (and thereby the distinction between metaphors and non-metaphors) they use metaphors in the discussions themselves. Hence, again, the effort to delineate a purely non-metaphorical communication fails. Non-metaphorical speech or writing is dependent, in some way, on the metaphorical.¹³ In a similar way, Derrida points out that philosophers who condemned writing still used it in the process of condemnation.¹⁴

Derrida takes all these cases to show, first, that whether or not recognized and wanted, the disfavoured term is all-pervasive and inescapable; second, that the distinction between the favored and the disfavoured terms is never clear-cut; the disfavoured term is part of the nature

¹² *Gramm.* 219-26.

¹³ "La Mythologie blanche" in *Marges* p. 301.

¹⁴ *La Dissémination* (Paris: Seuil, 1972) pp. 182-3.

of the favored one and is assumed by it. Hence, the favored term is never pure. Third, Derrida concludes that the traditional way of seeing the hierarchical dichotomy is wrong, and hence it is also wrong to see the disfavoured term as a deprived version of the favored term and as dependent on it. On the contrary: the relation between the two terms should be reversed and the hitherto favored term should be seen as dependent on the hitherto disfavoured one.¹⁵

But the deconstructive inversion is not to be understood as merely reversing the order of the hierarchy in the dichotomy by switching the places of the favored and disfavoured terms. Since the characteristics of the deconstructed, newly-understood unfavored term are now seen as common to both terms, the distinction between them does not hold as it used to and the whole dichotomy collapses. Derrida says, for example, about the deconstructed, newly-understood writing:

The thesis...must forbid a radical distinction between the linguistic and the graphic sign....from the moment that one considers the totality of determined signs, spoken, and *a fortiori* written, as unmotivated institutions, one must exclude any relationship of natural subordination, and natural hierarchy among signifiers or orders of signifiers. If "writing" signifies inscription and especially the durable institution of a sign (and that is the only irreducible kernel of the concept of writing), writing in general covers the entire field of linguistic signs. In that field a certain sort of instituted signifiers may then appear "graphic" in the narrow and derivative sense of the word, ordered by a certain relationship

¹⁵ *Positions* 56-7.

with other instituted--hence "written", even if they are "phonic"--signifiers.¹⁶

Pre-deconstructed speaking and writing, then, can be seen as narrow and somewhat distorted derivations of the deconstructed speaking and writing, which Derrida, for this reason, sometimes calls arche-writing.¹⁷ The same is true for absence in the dichotomy of presence/absence or for supplement in the dichotomy of main-body/supplement. The hierarchical, dichotomic distinction between the pre-deconstructed favored and disfavoured terms collapses when the deconstructed disfavoured term comes out as basic to both.

Deconstruction functions, then, by bringing to the surface some tacit aspects of the two terms and thereby introducing a new understanding of their nature. According to this new understanding, some of the characteristics of the disfavoured terms, previously taken to constitute their inferiority in the dichotomic hierarchy, are in fact common and essential to both it and the favored term.

But in all the examples above Derrida makes his point with respect to only a few aspects of the terms discussed, and even then not always fully. Thus, it may be said that although Derrida showed something about some hitherto unnoticed aspects of the terms of the dichotomies, many other aspects of the dichotomies did not change. Derrida would fully agree with this conclusion, although he might emphasize the deconstructed aspects of the dichotomies more than his critics would. He would say that the hierarchical dichotomy is partly retained in the deconstruction,¹⁸ thus constituting an interplay between the pre-deconstructed and

¹⁶ *Gramm.* 65. Translated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976) p. 44.

¹⁷ E.g in *Gramm.* 202; *Marges* 14.

¹⁸ *Positions* 56-7.

deconstructed dichotomy. Rather than being a harmonious synthesis, the interplay consists of an aporetic alternation between the unsatisfying emphasis of these aspects and the un-satisfying emphasis of those. This interplay is called by Derrida *différance*, a word he created by adding the French noun suffix *ance* to the verb *différer*, which means both to differ and to defer. According to this understanding, then, deconstruction does not simply replace the pre-deconstructed dichotomy with the deconstructed one. The two facets of the dichotomy continue to relate to each other in disharmony.¹⁹

Derrida's early deconstruction, then, seems to have the following characteristics: first, although it is untraditional, it still can be said to "make sense" according to the regular use of this term. Even the interplay between the pre-deconstructed and deconstructed dichotomies can be said to make sense, notwithstanding the fact that it is hard to accept.

Second, the deconstruction operates (or is supposed to do so) mostly in the framework of dichotomies. Thus, in Derrida's earlier writings the deconstructed term has only one other term as its "other", rather than any other term whatsoever.

Third, the deconstruction frequently retains some of the features of the pre-deconstruction. The deconstructed disfavoured term differs from the pre-deconstructed one, but not radically and in all aspects.

Fourth, Derrida's strategies seem, by and large, to follow the same pattern as regular arguments. Observations and reasoning argue for stable conclusions concerning the new-dichotomies and their new-terms. It is true, some of these arguments seem very weak. For

¹⁹ "La Différance" *Bulletin de la société française de philosophie* 62 (1968):73-101, afterwards to be included in Derrida's *Marges*.

example, in Rousseau's *Emile* Derrida uncovers only a three-links-long chain of supplements and in the *Confessions* only a four-links-long chain of substitutes. Derrida chooses to conclude from his examples that there are long, perhaps endless chains of such terms, but his examples could as easily have justified the conclusion that all chains are finite, having at their ends pure, absolute terms. Likewise, although Aristotle and other philosophers do sometimes use metaphors when they discuss the nature of metaphors (and thereby try to demarcate between metaphors and non-metaphors), their language is neither only nor even mainly metaphorical. One can easily see how these philosophers could have expressed their views concerning metaphors equally well without using any. Again, the condemnation of writing is, of course, presented to us in written form, but could just as easily have been presented in spoken form (as initially it probably was). In all these cases, then, Derrida's claim that the disfavoured term is all-pervasive is not sufficiently substantiated. But although these arguments are weak, arguments they still are.

Even the way the writings are written is quite conventional. *Of Grammatology*, for example, reads by and large like a regular book. It argues in an organized fashion for a thesis (namely that the pervasive phonocentric bias should be gotten rid of). Further, it is easy to distinguish between the views Derrida outlines but does not agree with and his own views. Similarly it is easy to tell when the texts discussed are already deconstructed and when not. Even the physical layout of these writings looks conventional.

In all these ways the deconstruction in Derrida's earlier writings is not radically different from, for example, Robert Nozick's analysis of the relation between rich tax-payers and poor welfare recipients or Freud's analysis of the relation between the conscious and the unconscious. According to Nozick, rich tax-payers, who are forced by law to give part of their earnings to welfare recipients (in other words, forced to work part of their time for welfare recipients), are

on par with forced laborers or (as Nozick's views seem to imply) are close to being slaves of the welfare recipients. In modern welfare states, then, the rich are slaves of the poor.²⁰ Likewise, Freud understood the terms of the conscious/unconscious dichotomy in a new way which made the newly understood unconscious, rather than the conscious, the more fundamental term.²¹

It is true, Freud and Nozick do not use Derrida's methods of deconstruction. Moreover, they are committed to their views more than Derrida is committed to his; they aim to deconstruct only a limited number of dichotomies whereas he aims to deconstruct many; they treat their investigations seriously whereas he treats his somewhat playfully; and they do not think that there are any paradoxical relations between an old dichotomy and a new disfavoured term, as he does. But notwithstanding these differences, the similarities between Nozick and Freud's analyses and Derrida's deconstruction are significant enough to show that this early deconstruction is not as iconoclastic and anarchistic as at first it might seem.

III. THE METHODS OF DECONSTRUCTION: A SECOND ACCOUNT

But Derrida uses other, very different strategies of deconstruction as well. One such strategy is the use of word-play. Thus, for example, in *La Vérité en peinture* he connects the German word for "I" (*Ich*) with the Hebrew word for man (in English transliteration: *Ish*) since

²⁰ Robert Nozick *Anarchy, State, and Utopia* (New York: Basic Books, 1974) pp. 169-74.

²¹ Jonathan Culler *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1983) p. 159. Hereafter cited as *Culler* followed by page number.

they sound the same.²² Similarly, in *Glas* Derrida connects the initials of the French words *savoir absolu* (*sa*) with the beginning of the Roman name for the Greek God Kronos (*Saturn*) and with the French word for "it" (*ça*).²³ Note that Derrida does not claim, as Heidegger might have, that one of these words evolved from the other or that they have the same root. He merely relies on the fact that the words or parts of words he discusses sound almost the same.²⁴

Another strategy Derrida uses is based on associations. Thus, for example, in his *Glas* he associates a throne with a volcano, a toilet seat, and a truncated pyramid.²⁵ Likewise, in his essay "La différance" in *Marges* Derrida associates the silence of the "a" in the word *différance* (it is an unexpressed "a") with Hegel's *Encyclopedia*, a pyramid, the silence of tombs (the "a" is silent and the pyramid is a tomb), the "economy of death", and more.²⁶

A third strategy, which partly overlaps the previous ones, is to be humorous, ironical, or nonsensical. Derrida himself says in *Spurs/Eperons* that "the text will remain indefinitely

²² *La Vérité en peinture* (Paris: Flammarion, 1978) p. 189.

²³ *Glas* (Paris: Galilée, 1974) pp. 257-61.

²⁴ Of course, although the two terms *sound* the same, they are *written* differently. It is interesting that Derrida is ready here to favour sound over writing, since such a move would usually be condemned by him as phonocentric.

²⁵ P. 47.

²⁶ *Marges* 4.

open, cryptic, and parodying".²⁷ Indeed, the word-plays and associations Derrida uses impart the feeling that he is playfully parodying and ridiculing his readers. The same feeling arises when Derrida answers John Searle's objections by making puns on some of Searle's sentences and meticulously quoting others out of context.²⁸

Derrida even uses a new way of writing. The new writings do not read like regular books anymore. They no longer argue in an organized way for a thesis and it is frequently difficult, and sometimes impossible, to decide which part of them represents the views of the authors Derrida talks about and which Derrida's own views, which the pre-deconstructed text and which the deconstructed one. In some cases even the physical layout of the writings changes. Derrida's "Tympan" in *Marges* and his whole *Glas* are built in a new way. Each page of *Glas* consists of one column which discusses Hegel and another which discusses Genet. It is not certain whether the two columns relate to each other in some ways or are completely unrelated.²⁹

But these strategies are different in essence from the ones discussed in the previous section. They are not on a par with arguments in which reasons are used in order to arrive at stable conclusions. Nor does the deconstructed text retain anymore essential features of the pre-deconstructed one; they seem radically different, and without knowing the pun or association

²⁷ *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles/Eperons: Le Styles de Nietzsche* bilingual edition trans. B. Harlow (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979) p. 137. Hereafter cited as *Spurs/Eperons* followed by page number.

²⁸ "Limited Inc." *Glyph 2* (1977):162-254.

²⁹ See also *La Dissémination* 355-7.

which relates them it is sometimes difficult to see that they are related at all. Likewise, this new kind of deconstruction cannot be said to "make sense" in the way the earlier deconstruction did. Nor does it operate only in the framework of dichotomies. Hence, the "other" of the deconstructed term can be almost any term whatsoever.

Thus, whereas the deconstruction discussed earlier combines openness *and* stability, this deconstruction seems to offer *only* openness. Whereas the earlier deconstruction can still be understood in terms of a Wittgensteinian language game, the later deconstruction cannot; there are no rules in it, or if there are any, they change all the time. Hence Derrida can say in his later writings of Nietzsche's exclamation "I have forgotten my umbrella" that "a thousand possibilities [to understand it] will remain open".³⁰ Rather than resembling Nozick or Freud's analyses, the new kind of deconstruction seems close to Dadaism or to the writings of Raymond Queneau and Alfred Jarry. Unlike the deconstruction discussed earlier, this kind of deconstruction is essentially iconoclastic and anarchistic.³¹

IV. THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN EARLY AND LATER DECONSTRUCTION

But how can the differences in the accounts of the nature of deconstruction be explained? The portrayal of deconstruction in sections I and II comes predominantly from Derrida's three 1967 books (*La Voix et le phénomène*, *De la grammatologie* and *L'Écriture et la différence*). The portrayal of deconstruction in section III fits mostly the way it appears in the works Derrida published from 1974 onwards: *Glas* (1974), *L'Âge de Hegel* and "Limited Inc." (1977), *La*

³⁰ "Limited Inc." *Graph 2* (1977):201.

³¹ See also *Spurs/Eperons* 134-7.

Vérité en peinture (1978), *La Carte postale* (1980), etc. The books of 1972-3 (*La Dissémination*, *Marges* and *Positions* in 1972, *L'Archéologie du frivole* in 1973) seem to be in between. *Positions* is a series of interviews done with Derrida from 1967 to 1972 and reads like an ordinary book. *La Dissémination* and *Marges*, collections of lectures and essays written during this period, vary. The essays "La Différance" and "Les Fins de l'homme" in *Marges*, for example, seem closer to the 1967 works, whereas "Tympan" is clearly closer to those written in and after 1974. *L'Archéologie du frivole* seems to be more on the "1974-and after" side.

If this indeed is the case, then the two different natures do not belong to the same deconstruction but to two different ones. A distinction should be made between an "early deconstruction" and a "later deconstruction", and between an "early Derrida" and a "later Derrida". It is true, these distinctions are not clear-cut. Word-plays already appear in *Of Grammatology*, and Derrida already recommends the use of humour and playfulness in *L'Écriture et la différence*.³² Moreover, some instances of "early" strategies (even some of those shown in section II above) are found in "later" writings. Nevertheless, early strategies are much more predominant in the 1967 books, as later strategies are in the books that appeared from 1972 onwards. The distinction between early and later deconstruction, then, is based on the different emphasis they put on certain qualities. Although the difference between them is not clear-cut, it still exists.

Acknowledging the distinction between the early and later deconstructions can solve a disagreement in Derrida scholarship. Some scholars, such as Geoffrey Hartman and Wayne

³² *L'Écriture et la différence* (Paris: Seuil, 1967) pp. 427-8.

Booth,³³ take deconstruction to be an "everything goes", iconoclastic and anarchistic activity. Others, such as Jonathan Culler and Christopher Norris,³⁴ see deconstruction along more conservative lines. Both parties bring strong evidence for their views. Hence, trying to solve the disagreement by claiming that the other view is completely wrong will not do. Solving the confusion or disagreement by claiming--as I do--that contrary characteristics belong not to one deconstruction but to two will probably seem to many Derrida scholars logocentric and dichotomic. Nevertheless, it seems that only such a distinction can do justice to the contradictory characteristics of deconstruction we saw above and to the evidence both parties bring. The distinction enables opposing characteristics not to contradict each other in one deconstruction, but to coexist beside each other in two. For the price of having to accept two deconstructions one buys consistency and freedom from contradictions in each of them. Hence, I think that the supposition that in different periods Derrida understood and used deconstruction in different ways has to be accepted.

But why did Derrida change his understanding of deconstruction? And what is the relation between the two deconstructions?

In his early writings Derrida deconstructs many dichotomies, but not all of them. Whereas he does deconstruct, for example, the dichotomies of presence/absence and

³³ Geoffrey Hartman *Saving the Text: Literature/Derrida/ Philosophy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981) p. 33; Wayne Booth *Critical Understanding: The Powers and Limits of Pluralism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979) pp. 216, 262.

³⁴ Culler 132; Christopher Norris *Derrida* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987) pp. 179-83.

speaking/writing, he does not deconstruct those of essence/accident, central/marginal, and typical/atypical, although they are no less central to logocentrism than the former ones. The latter dichotomies remain un-deconstructed both in Derrida's discussion of other authors (e.g. Rousseau, de Saussure) and in his own deconstruction itself. Only because the latter dichotomies are not deconstructed in his own early deconstruction is it a deconstruction in which arguments are used; conclusions are reached; terms are deconstructed into only one "other"; some characteristics of the deconstructed terms are retained; and the deconstruction in general "makes sense". Thus, in Derrida's early deconstruction, both the deconstructed texts and the deconstructive process itself remain somewhat logocentric. Both the deconstructed texts and the deconstruction itself can still be characterized by some essential, central and typical features rather than by some accidental, marginal and atypical ones.

In Derrida's later writings, on the other hand, the dichotomies of essence/accident, central/marginal, and typical/atypical are deconstructed as well. Again, this is true not only of the texts Derrida deconstructs, but even of his own deconstruction itself. Thus, his later deconstruction uses no arguments; has no fixed conclusions; retains nothing or very little of the pre-deconstructed term or dichotomy; does not necessarily "make sense"; does not operate in the framework of dichotomies; and does not deconstruct a term into one expected "other", but into many possible ones.

To achieve these ends, puns, associations, humour and irony are very efficient means. Humour and irony enable one to say things without committing oneself to them. Thus, by using humour and irony Derrida can criticize logocentrism without at the same time committing himself to a certain view or thesis, without admitting that he means what he says—in short, without being logocentric himself. Moreover, Derrida does not seem to use puns and associations differently here than he would in non-deconstructive contexts, and thus makes it

difficult to distinguish deconstruction from non-deconstruction. Furthermore, Derrida uses the puns and associations in a sporadic and disordered way that makes it difficult to see them as part of a method.

The later deconstruction, then, is a more complete and total deconstruction than the early one. And the early deconstruction can be seen as a partial and undeveloped form of the later.

It is interesting to note that some of the things Derrida says of deconstruction in his early writings, fit his actual deconstructions only in the later ones. For example, in *Of Grammatology* he says that deconstruction "menaces at once the breath, the spirit, and history as the spirit's relationship with itself. It is their end, their finitude, their paralysis. Cutting breath short, sterilizing or immobilizing spiritual creation in the repetition of the letter...it is the principle of death and of difference in the becoming of being."³⁵ But this seems more true of Derrida's later deconstruction than of that in *Of Grammatology*. Likewise, Derrida is already conscious of the need to present a non-logocentric deconstruction, or to deconstruct deconstruction itself, already in his 1968 essay "Les fins de l'homme". He wonders what would be good means toward such a deconstruction and suggests, for example, that "it is a new style that we need"³⁶ and, more specifically, that perhaps "several languages must be spoken and several texts produced at the same time".³⁷ But these suggestions are fulfilled only in his later

³⁵ *Gramm.* 40-1 (English translation p. 25).

³⁶ "Les Fins de l'homme" in *Marges* 163, translated with the collaboration of Edouard Morot-Sir, Wesley C. Piersol, Hubert L. Dreyfus and Barbara Reid as "The Ends of Man" in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 30 (1969):56.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

writings, such as *Glas*.

But if Derrida already has an outline of a completely non-logocentric deconstruction already in his early writings, why is his deconstruction from that period still partly logocentric? Why does the realization of this model have to wait a number of years? It may be that in the very beginning of his writings Derrida did not think that he had to deconstruct everything. But even when he did start to think that, he was hesitant to apply it and to deconstruct his own deconstruction. In the early writings, he was not yet sure of his whole project and wanted to develop and reflect on it gradually. Further, at that time he still needed to present, both to others and to himself, a more or less stable picture of what deconstruction is, and deconstructing his own deconstruction would not have enabled such a presentation to take place. Similarly, at that stage of experimentation he wanted his deconstruction to be convincing and make sense both to others and himself, whereas a deconstructed deconstruction would not have let that happen. Thus, in his early period Derrida presented a total deconstruction only as an ideal, without yet trying to fulfill it.

But the more Derrida deconstructed, the more he came to feel the gap between the actual deconstruction he used and the model of deconstruction he had in mind. Thus, he slowly changed the nature of his deconstruction. Some strategies which existed only in a limited way in his early writings (e.g. association, punning, joking) were emphasized more, and his texts were written differently. This enabled the deconstruction to change and to stop being logocentric.

Derrida's basic model, according to which everything should be deconstructed, including the deconstruction itself, is common, then, both to his early and his later writings. From virtually the beginning of his writings this basic model did not change. But consciously or unconsciously, he came to see that although his early deconstruction had been necessary in order

to introduce it, the early deconstruction did not fit his concept of what deconstruction should be. Thus, to fit his model Derrida shifted from his early non-totalistic deconstruction to his later, totalistic one.

V. LEGITIMACY AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LATER DECONSTRUCTION

Is the reflexive deconstruction contradictory or affirmatory? The answer is not completely clear. Since this deconstruction both deconstructs essential and typical characteristics and relates to itself, it seems to deconstruct its own essential characteristics and thus to be a contradictory reflexivity.

However, if this indeed is the case, Derrida's later deconstruction does not hold. On the one hand, if deconstruction deconstructs itself it cannot be a deconstruction anymore; it cannot continue to emphasize *différance*, text, marginality, accidents and change, over logocentrism, speech, centrality, essence and stability. But without these central, essential, typical--and thus logocentric--characteristics, the deconstruction stops being one. On the other hand, if deconstruction does not deconstruct itself, it admits into itself logocentric elements and thus defeats itself again. Thus, deconstruction can neither deconstruct nor not deconstruct itself, since in both ways it contradicts the essence of the theory. The denials in the theory deny even themselves.

It may be answered that the contradictory reflexivity would indeed be fatal to the theory if the theory were logocentric; a logocentric theory cannot tolerate such contradictions. But since Derrida's theory is not logocentric, the contradictory reflexivity cannot be brought as a tenable criticism against it. Moreover, it may even be claimed that, since Derrida's theory is not logocentric and thrives on contradictions, the contradictory reflexivity enhances rather than

defeats it.

But Derrida's theory cannot be *completely* non-logocentric. Nor can any theory be, since if it were it would stop being a theory at all. If anything at all is said, it must include a logocentric element. Otherwise it cannot be said at all. Thus, if there were no logocentrism whatsoever in Derrida's deconstruction it would not be deconstruction at all but mere nonsense-talking. Even the claim that the contradictory reflexivity enhances rather than undermines his views is logocentric.

Derrida cannot claim, then, that since his teachings are completely non-logocentric the contradictory reflexivity does not defeat them in any way. Since his teachings are necessarily logocentric to an extent--otherwise they would not be teachings at all and he would not be saying anything--the contradictory reflexivity does apply to them.

Of course, Derridians may choose to continue and deconstruct what has just been said here, claiming (or not claiming) that there are no logocentric elements in the deconstruction. But if this is the case, then there is really no reason for any Derridian to object to what has been written here.

But it is not completely clear that the reflexive deconstruction is indeed contradictory. It may be claimed that the later deconstruction--like the early one--should be seen as constituting an alternating, unappeased *différance*-interplay between the pre-deconstructed and the deconstructed text. When deconstruction jokes, makes puns, or associates it does so--dis-harmonically--in the context of the regular, traditional understanding of what it deconstructs. Thus, through this interplay, even the later deconstruction should be seen as retaining some aspects of what it deconstructs, even if in a different way and to a lesser extent than the early deconstruction.

Hence, when deconstruction relates to itself in this un-appeased interplay, it constitutes an affirmatory reflexivity in some of its aspects, and contradictory reflexivity in others. The contradictory reflexivity exists in those aspects of the interplay in which the deconstruction negates the essence of what it deconstructs--namely itself. The affirmatory reflexivity exists in those aspects of the interplay in which the deconstruction retains what it deconstructs. Moreover, if this is indeed the nature of the deconstruction, then it is also affirmatorily meta-reflexive in its being both affirmatory and contradictory. Its being contradictory in some of its aspects and affirmatory in others constitutes an interplay between affirmatory and contradictory reflexivity which fits the interplay in the deconstruction before it related to itself.

But deciding about the exact nature of the self-relating deconstruction in Derrida's writings is difficult, since the nature of the deconstruction itself in his writings, both early and late, is so unclear.

VI. DERRIDA AND THE HISTORY OF THE USE OF REFLEXIVITY

In this chapter I have tried to show the centrality of reflexivity in Derrida's writings. All his later writings seem to be pervasively reflexive, and the need for this is in part responsible for the change from early to later deconstruction. Moreover, at least under some understanding of the nature of the deconstruction in Derrida's writings, the reflexivity has the interesting characteristic of being both contradictory and affirmatory, and then affirmatory at the meta-level as well.

Apart from this central reflexivity in Derrida's writings there are not many others. One other, already mentioned above, may exist in Derrida's applying a distinction onto itself and

thus showing that it itself is imbued with the disfavoured term. But this reflexivity is neither especially interesting nor innovative in its structure, nor very central in the writings.

Another reflexivity seems already to exist in Derrida's early writings, where many passages seem both examples of deconstruction, explanations of what it is, and justifications for it. Since the very justifications of deconstruction are already examples of it, they can be taken to assume their conclusions or, put differently, to justify themselves. Nevertheless, this self-justification can be seen as part of a hermeneutical circle of the sort that Heidegger already uses and, moreover, claims all other thinkers do. This reflexivity too, then, does not seem especially innovative or outstanding.

Other claimed reflexivities may not be reflexivities at all. For example, in *L'Écriture et la différence* Derrida discusses prefaces and repeated readings of the same texts, which are similar to each other only in their difference from the readings of other texts. But he takes the repetition in prefaces, or in multiple readings, to be circular as well. He says:

Once the circle turns, once the volume rolls itself up, once the book is repeated, its identification with itself gathers an imperceptible difference which permits us efficaciously, rigorously, that is, discreetly, to exist from closure.³⁸

But if such a repetition indeed constitutes circularity at all (which is doubtful), it is quite clear that it is not of the reflexive type. Likewise, it may be claimed that deconstruction is reflexive since Derrida does not see it as a foreign procedure which is imposed on the texts from above, but takes the forces of deconstruction to be already hidden in the texts and, once revealed, to do their work. Thus, texts are taken to deconstruct themselves by what may be seen as a

³⁸ *L'Écriture et différence* p. 430. Translated by Alan Bass as *Writing and Difference* (London: Routledge Kegan Paul, 1978) p. 295.

contradictory reflexivity. But, as was shown in the Introduction to this work, in order for there to be a reflexivity the relator and the related must be the same. However, it is not clear that in deconstruction they are. Of course, in a very general way they are both part of the text. Even more specifically, they may both be in the dichotomy. Nevertheless, if the process of deconstruction consists in emphasizing some aspects of the dichotomy and de-emphasizing others, it is not clear that what deconstructs and what is deconstructed are the same (nor is it clear what exactly they are).

Thus, the other reflexivities Derrida uses are either not especially significant nor of a dubious status. But in the context of the history of the use of reflexivity, even Derrida's central reflexivity is not especially outstanding or noteworthy. As shown above, reflexivity is necessitated in Derrida's writings for the most common reason: the urge for totalism. In this sense, then, Derrida's use of reflexivity is non-innovative. Moreover, Derrida's use of reflexivity is not very clear. Furthermore, its centrality in the teachings is partly due to their poverty in other respects; if Derrida's theory were as detailed as Frege's or Aristotle's, the reflexivity in it would seem as inconspicuous.

However, there seems to be one aspect in which Derrida's use of reflexivity is outstanding. Derrida not only accepts reflexivity, but also desires it. Thus, in Derrida's writings the use of reflexivity is not only acknowledged, but also applauded. There is no other thinker I can think of who emphasizes the use of reflexivity in his writings as does Derrida. Derrida celebrates reflexivity and sees himself as a champion of its use.

Thus, Derrida's use of reflexivity may seem noteworthy as the final stage in a gradual process that this work has followed: the normalization of the use of reflexivity during the history of Western philosophy. It has been shown in this work how, during the course of the history of philosophy, reflexivity came to be ascribed more and more to human beings; to human beings

with no connection to God; and to human beings in non-holy and non-religious contexts and in different ways. All these were expressions of the growing tendency to see reflexivity as a perfectly legitimate and normal philosophical tool. It may seem that in Derrida's writings this process has come to its apex; not only is reflexivity legitimized and accepted as a normal philosophical tool, but it is also sought after and celebrated.

Nevertheless, this is a false impression. Reflexivity is legitimized and desired in Derrida's theory not because it itself is seen in a new way, but because legitimacy and theory are. Reflexivity is taken to be fit to be part of a philosophical theory not because reflexivity is now taken to be free of chaos, but because philosophical theories are taken to be imbued with it. Thus, Derrida returns to the old view according to which reflexivity is an anarchistic, chaotic concept which forgoes and contradicts logic and sense. Because of this image, many philosophers avoided reflexivity as much as possible. Derrida, precisely *because* of this image, craves it. Put differently, Derrida uses reflexivity for the very same--and wrong--reasons that traditional philosophers did not use it. He disagrees with tradition, then, only concerning the question of the *value* of what have been taken to be the essential characteristics of reflexivity, not concerning the question of what these essential characteristics *are*. Thus, Derrida cannot be seen as part of the tendency in the history of philosophy to see reflexivity as a coherent, "normal" philosophical tool.

In different chapters of this work it has been shown that various uses of reflexivity are more significant in the history of the use of reflexivity than they appear. The conclusion of this chapter, however, is that Derrida's use of reflexivity is less significant for the history of the use of reflexivity than it appears. In spite, or rather because, of Derrida's un-traditional views, his use of reflexivity is a traditional one, and, moreover, in the context of the changes in the use of reflexivity through the generations, conservative and reactionary. Notwithstanding popular

opinion, and notwithstanding Derrida's sympathy towards what he understands as reflexivity, it is difficult to see him as one of its champions.

chapter ten
CONCLUSION

In this thesis I have discussed the theories of seven philosophers and one mystic in order to demonstrate the following points about reflexivity: that although traditionally unrecognized, it is useful and fertile in philosophy and other fields; that it is a basic structure common to different phenomena; that a structural analysis of the different types of reflexivity and the relations between them can be presented; that reflexivity can be used legitimately or illegitimately like any other philosophical tool, and thus that there is nothing wrong or illogical about it *per se*; that acknowledging the existence of reflexivity and understanding its structure can deepen our understanding of philosophical systems and, more generally, help us see philosophical, social, and natural phenomena in a new way; and that the history of the use of reflexivity is marked by a tendency towards the "normalization" of its use.

But I also see this work as an introduction to further studies of reflexivity. Such studies should analyze the place and functions of reflexivity in the writings of other philosophers, as well. The first figures in whose systems the place of reflexivity should be studied are Plotinus, Augustine, Aquinas, Maimonides, Fichte, Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty and Foucault. But this is only a partial list; the use of reflexivity awaiting research in the history of philosophy is much more prevalent.

Many reflexivities in non-philosophical contexts also await analysis. For example, the reflexive structure's ability to combine the natures of two entities into one, which was utilized in Hegel's philosophy to merge a philosophical system with reality, can help explain the merging of fantasy with reality in the reflexivity used in works of fiction. A good example of such a use of reflexivity appears in the last chapter of Gabriel Garcia Marquez' *A Hundred Years of*

Solitude.¹ Towards the close of the chapter Aureliano Buendia--a major character in the book--understands that the writings of Melquiades, given to the family many years earlier, are actually the story of the family. When he sits to read Melquiades' book he find in it everything that happened to his family, including--towards the end of the book--the fact that this very understanding dawned on him--Aureliano Buendia--while he was sitting and reading the book. Buendia thus feels that the story of his family is part of itself. Buendia is used to the distinction between a description of reality and reality itself. But when he sees that the description of reality is about the situation in which it is read by Buendia, i.e. about itself, it becomes a member of both worlds: the one in front of his eyes and the one described in the book. Hence, the other things described in the book also achieve a more real status. Thus, what is written in the book he is reading has neither the status of a description of reality alone nor the status of reality alone, but the bizarre status of both.

The reflexivity shows itself in the temporal sense, too. Fictional (or described) time is different from real time. For example, the real time it takes Buendia to read the book (a few hours) is different from the time it took the events described in the book to actually happen (dozens of years). But when the book describes, at its end, Buendia's reflexive reading of the book, the difference between real and fictional, described time disappears for him.² In other words, when the book describes itself in a complete reflexivity, the difference in time between what describes and what is being described disappears just as, in Eckhart's reflexive mystical experience, the difference between consciousness and what it is conscious of disappears.

¹ Gabriel Garcia Marquez *A Hundred Years of Solitude* trans. Gregory Rabassa (New York: Avon, Harper and Row, 1970).

² For us, of course, Buendia's real time is fictional too.

But this is not the only reflexivity at the end of *A Hundred Years of Solitude*. Another one, somewhat similar to that which Buendia experiences, is experienced by the reader. The reader feels that the book Buendia has found is the very same book the reader is now reading. It is true, the book the reader is reading was written not by Melquiades but by Marquez, and not in Sanskrit but in Spanish. But since what is written in *A Hundred Years of Solitude* is similar to what is written in the book Buendia finds and reads, the reader has a feeling that it might be the same book. In other words, the reader has a feeling that the book he is reading is the same as the book about which he is reading. He feels that the book is describing itself, and thus is at the same time both part of the world of fiction and part of the world of reality. The distinctions between reality and fantasy are obliterated to a large extent, and the book and what is described in it have, by the end of the book, the nature of both.³

But this is only an example of how reflexivity can be analyzed not only in philosophy but also outside it.⁴ Thorough analyses of the function and nature of many uses of reflexivity

³ It is interesting to note the similarity between Hegel's system and *A Hundred Years of Solitude* in other respects too. In *A Hundred Years of Solitude* there is a reflexivity and a meta-reflexivity (Buendia's reading the book is reflexive, but this reflexivity is also part of the larger, even if weaker, reflexivity that the reader feels). Likewise, the self-relating event at the end of *A Hundred Years of Solitude* includes all previous ones, just as the self-relating absolute spirit and the summit of Hegel's system includes all previous stages. Likewise, the self-relating event at the end of *A Hundred Years of Solitude* gives previous events a sense of reality, just as the last stage in Hegel's system, in which the absolute spirit relates to itself, gives all previous stages more reality and necessity. Furthermore, the last event in *A Hundred Years of Solitude* gives a synoptical view of what happened before it, and returns to the beginning of the book in a richer way, just as the self-relating absolute spirit does at the end of Hegel's system.

⁴ I have hardly mentioned the reflexivities in modern art in this work, notwithstanding the central place they have in it. Many modern art pieces (e.g. the ready-made bicycle-wheel which

outside philosophy still have to be performed.

The history of reflexivity also awaits more minutely detailed research. I have shown how the use of reflexivity has become more "normalized" through the generations in the writings of seven philosophers and one mystic. Reflexivity began as an exclusively divine activity (Aristotle); was subsequently also ascribed to human beings, provided they performed it when united with God (Eckhart); it was then ascribed to human beings independently of God, as a preparatory stage for the proof of the existence of God (Descartes); next ascribed to human beings in a way as to make them special, perhaps even exalted when they perform the reflexive activity, but with no relation to God (Kant); then attributed to human beings in connection with God but very frequently and in all areas of life (Hegel); and finally ascribed to human beings without connection to God, in all areas of life, frequently and as a normal and everyday activity (Heidegger). In the final chapter of this work it was shown how a frequent, everyday use of reflexivity can emerge not only from seeing reflexivity as a normal philosophical tool, but also from seeing it as a non-normal one (Derrida). But further studies of the history of reflexivity,

Marcel Duchamp exhibited as a work of art) should be understood as no more than reflexive exclamations that they, the exclamations, are works of art. The thing these works of art are about is them themselves, and their evaluation as works of art, which again is traditionally distinguished from them, is again them themselves. Unlike traditional works of art, then, these modern ones reflexively constitute themselves as works of art. This reflexive exclamation is the essence of many other modern art works, especially in Dada and Pop-Art. This tendency has been crystallized even more by Rauschenberg who, when commissioned to draw a portrait of a Ms. Iris Clert did so (or took himself to) by sending a telegram which said: "This is a portrait of Iris Clert if I say so" (Michael Compton *Pop Art* [London and New York: Hamlyn, 1970] p. 20).

which would take into account the reflexivities in other major philosophical systems, as well as minor ones, are still needed.

Likewise, there is a place for further studies of the structure of the types of reflexivity and the relations between them. Such studies would further not only the general theory of reflexivity, but also the general theory of relations.

More importantly, I hope that the analyses in this work would lead to further uses of reflexivity. There is no reason why reflexivity should not be used in contemporary philosophy (and other fields as well). If one accepts a Heideggerian point of view, then reflexivity is not only a legitimate part of our philosophical context but also a necessary part of it. But even if such a view is not accepted, reflexivity seems extremely relevant, for example, to discussions of causation and determinism, theory of action and epistemology. Moreover, the theory of relations presented in the Introduction, of which the theory of reflexivity is a part, is also a general metaphysical theory which should be further studied and developed.

But such studies and uses of reflexivity cannot appear as long as the importance of reflexivity in philosophical and non-philosophical contexts is not acknowledged and as long as the unjustified bias against it continues. It has been one of my aims in this study to show that reflexivity has a more important place in philosophy than the extended disregard of it might suggest. Note that in the theories analyzed in this work reflexivity is an essential or almost essential element. Further, it enriches them and adds important dimensions to them.

It should also be noted that reflexivity is frequently identified with the aspects deemed most important in era it is used. Eras in which God is ascribed great importance attribute

reflexivity to God, those which put humans at the centre see reflexivity as a human activity, those which emphasize *praxis* see it as practical, etc. In other words, from one era to another reflexivity takes on those aspects which are taken to be the important ones in the cultural setting of that era. The changes reflexivity has undergone through the generations reflect changes in Western culture. All in all, then, reflexivity has had an important place in Western philosophy, and this importance should be acknowledged.

Similarly, another aim of this study has been to increase awareness of the fact that the aversion towards reflexivity is an unjustified prejudice. This has been done by showing, in chapter after chapter, that there is nothing wrong with reflexivity in itself and that, like any other philosophical tool, it can be used both legitimately and illegitimately.

However, the prejudice against reflexivity is a very strong one. This can be seen not only from the sparse research on reflexivities (even in heavily researched systems in which it plays an important part), but also from the fact that a logician of the ingenuity, originality and thoroughness of Frege could have worked for almost twenty years on his system without having the paradox of "the set of all sets which do not contain themselves" come to his mind at all. Likewise, only thus can it be explained that a philosopher like Ayer could have presented a criterion of meaningfulness in his *Language, Truth and Logic* without realizing that the criterion is meaningless by its own standards. Ayer's neglect to realize of the contradictory reflexivity in his theory is all the more striking when it is remembered that he was influenced by and acquainted with Wittgenstein's philosophy, in which the somewhat similar "problem of the ladder" did come up.

One can learn much about the aversion to reflexivity and the unease philosophers feel towards it even from Russell's feeling towards his theory of types, where Russell does not permit functions to refer to all functions of their own type, and thus to themselves. In this way,

Russell does not allow any reflexivity and, *a fortiori*, any contradictory reflexivity to be created, thereby saving the system from the logical contradictions which would otherwise have appeared in it. Russell had a philosophical justification for his theory of types, but he was not content with it. He thought, correctly, that this justification is *ad hoc*, meant to solve the problem of contradictory reflexivities in the system. Not having a better solution to the problem of contradictory reflexivities, however, he held on to the theory of types and its philosophical justification, in spite of his dissatisfaction with it.

The nature of Russell's justification for the theory of types as well as an assessment of its strengths and weaknesses is not relevant for the present discussion. The important point here is that Russell's very need to provide a philosophical justification for his device for excluding contradictory reflexivities from the theory, as well as his uneasiness with the fact that both device and justification were *ad hoc*, is just another token of the mistaken attitude philosophers have had towards reflexivity. Although Russell wanted to keep the number of axioms and laws of derivation that form the basis of the system to a minimum, he would have not hesitated to add one or two if he thought it would eliminate contradictions. Moreover, he would not have felt any need to justify this addition philosophically, and he certainly would have not felt uneasy that this addition was *ad hoc*. But things were different when the contradiction evolved from a reflexivity. Such a contradiction did not seem to him "natural" enough to justify a simple addition to the system, and he felt he had to defend it with a philosophical justification. Here again Russell exhibits the traditional unease philosophers have had with reflexivity. He does not treat it as another normal philosophical and logical phenomenon, but as one which should be given special treatment.

But I have tried in this thesis not to call for, and supply a basis to, any future studies

and uses of reflexivity whatsoever, but to future studies and uses of a certain kind. There is a danger that reflexivities might be studied and used more frequently, but in a way too close to Derrida's use of it. Such uses would not contribute to the constructive employment of reflexivity in the world we live in, nor to learning more about its uses and abuses, potentials and shortcomings. On the contrary, they would encourage the conception of reflexivity as an abnormal structure which is useful only for enhancing an "everything goes" understanding of the world. The discussions presented in this work concerning the unfounded prejudice against reflexivity and the legitimacy of the uses are meant to show that reflexivity can be used constructively. We have followed in this work the historical process of the "normalization" of reflexivity. I hope this work will enhance this tendency and minimize the chaotic uses of reflexivity, which I take to be not stages in the progress of its normalization but the beginnings of its regress.

All in all, then, I see this work as only an introduction and invitation to future studies and uses of reflexivity, preferably of a particular type. I hope that what I have written here has enough substance to justify and propagate them.

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