

TOWARD A NEW AXIOLOGY

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All the history of the human thought, or, if you prefer, all the history of philosophy, since this denomination was invented by Pythagoras, is the history of the two greatest categories: spirit and matter, which gave origin to two philosophical tendencies in a constant struggle for realizing the meaning of the concepts of knowledge, reality and values.

Materialism came first, when the Milesian School looked for a universal substance, where all the transformations would be dissolved and which would explain, at the same time, the origin and development of the *kosmos*. But, in this early school of our Western civilization, some hints of spiritualism are present in Anaximenes' *ánemos*, the only element scientifically explaining the real universal essence. However, the definite principles of the materialistic tendency in philosophy were organized by Democritus, the first thinker who put forward the assumption of an eternal matter: the world has not been created either by gods or by men, but it is the product of the two combined aspects of reality, i.e., the atoms and the void in which atoms move and form the composed bodies.

Spiritualism appears later in our philosophy when Pythagoras identified this activity with the best means for saving our souls. We know that Pythagoreanism derived from the Orphic rites, so its founder tried to provide religion with a scientific basis. This condition is always found at the basis of every spiritualistic theory.

These two opposite philosophical positions have lasted throughout centuries and we have to consider the present conditions in which the discussion is still held. In our present days, we have the tendency to believe that the material nature of existence is a postulation of consequence and the spiritual nature of existence is a postulation of hypothesis, when such consequence seems to have no explanation. Spiritualism, therefore, often derives from ignorance or from weak resources which man considers in order to explain the consequence of his phenomenological observations. In the present situation of science, philosophy is in an acute crisis. This so-called principle of consequence looked very clear in the past century, but not so clear today. On the other side, the materialistic philosophy has a lot of difficulties in explaining the amount of phenomena, which look like they are unsolvable in comparison with the sciences referring to the phenomenological reality and concerning problems partially solved as the atomic and molecular nature, the biological evolution and the structure of the human mind. Besides, there is another kind of problems, which is difficult to situate in the traditional scientific knowledge and in

regard of which both philosophy and science cannot give a satisfactory explanation. These problems are called *parapsychological* and are as ancient as the human race, but science has never been interested in them, precisely for their characteristics of incredibility. Somebody called them *fantastic* or *beyond human knowledge*, but they need a deep investigation to discover their truth or falsity. Some phenomena of telepathic nature seem to be accepted by famous scientists, but as their principle of consequence has not been discovered, no materialistic appreciation has been given.

No materialistic conception of the world has found a satisfactory principle of consequence because of the source of incommensurable energy of the electron, of the short waves of radiation, or of the pure energy of the electron; in the second place, because of the extraordinary complexity and organizations of the genetic nucleic macromolecules; third, because of the universal expansion and its organization, distribution and evolution; besides, because of the antagonistic relations between the entropic processes and the conformation and origin of life; and finally, because of the mechanism of the development itself, process and evolution of the biological species.

On the other hand, we cannot forget that spiritualism often takes its force from the incompleteness of the data furnished by the science or from the lack of the instrumental possibility for verifying natural phenomena in spite of the tremendous technological development of our time. But it is an incontrovertible fact that world nature is presented every day to the scientific investigation more and more as a miracle of structure and organization. Philosophy cannot be dogmatic and if spiritualism appeared as the correct solution to the problem, we should naturally accept it. Spiritualism, however, has another kind of difficulties: it is often involved in religion and politics and, sometimes, it tries to anticipate scientific discoveries.

We have, then, to make a first conclusion: any philosophical system has to respect science from which it derives, and it has to take care that its principles raise mankind to a higher level of moral and material life. This is the greatest purpose of the philosophical activity and noblest one; if it were not, it would be better for men to close forever the door to their thinking capacity.

This first conclusion reminds us of the tenet at the beginning of this paper: any monism is philosophically dangerous, because it centers the solution to universal problems in contradictory positions: only matter or only spirit is harmful to man's way of thinking. The conflict is more and more serious when it originates fights in favor of or against religions or when it refers to the meaning of man or to his destiny in the world.

When the Greeks, a people endowed with extraordinary intuitions, created the myth of the Titans, who faced the Olympic Gods, trying to win them, never imagined that they left the most perfect portrait of philosophy as structured in the past century: on one side, the sons of the earth, the materialists defended by their scientificism, climbing the mount Olympus which symbolizes the power over the human thought; and, on the other side, the sons of the heaven, each one representing the gods of the different religions in a cruel fight. It is ironic that in this myth, god Pan's awful cry decided the fight in favor of the gods making the Titans flee. Probably god Pan is the symbol of the whole nature having two aspects, that is, spirit and matter. And I said that it is ironic because in many occasions, especially during the liberal century, the polemic was solved by the fear to the unknown, to the death, to the probable punishment, in favor of a certain religiosity, but not with its own weapons.

This myth of the Titans indicates to us that the advance of atheism instead of religious ideas is due to the ambiguous solution offered by the conflict between materialism and spiritualism in respect of the world nature. Descartes, sharply separating material and spiritual substances, was the major cause of the definite divorce between science and philosophy, giving the occasion to the materialists to take advantage of the science as the Titans took advantage of the earth, which gave them life, when they dropped dead by the strength of god's weapons.

To solve the problems of the universal essence or essences, we can presume that, in spite of the multiple efforts which many famous thinkers tried to realize, the best way to follow is to face the importance of time, i.e., of the historical development, only possible by the most complex conscience obtained in our days.

I said that the first thinker who organized materialism as a system was Democritus, whose concept of matter was still valid in 1808, when Dalton conceived his atomic theory, the elements of which were precisely the ones that Democritus imagined twenty-three centuries before. On this basis, both philosophy and science were dangerously ambiguous; the world is material (in an atomic sense). The two above mentioned philosophical positions arose by means of this affirmation: materialistic monism and a certain dualism in which Democritus' theory of soul, as a more refined composite of atoms, were rejected precisely because they appeared to be antilogical as atoms are material. Spirit (and soul has to be considered as a spirit if separated from the body) has no mass, no weight, no bodily form, nor is subject to the laws of impenetrability and is spaceless. It was logical, then, and almost natural that a new system opposite to the materialistic atomism which would overcome the contradictions in Democritus' conception of soul. The new system was a dualism where spirit is taken as

the antithesis of matter. Such dualism grew up proportionally to the materialist philosophers' re-affirmation of the atomicity of the world.

It is very important to point out that dualists as well as Democritus' followers, accepted the atomic theory, but only in relation to the matter. Even the most intolerant modern materialists have to admit that they were right, taking into account the unserious concept that Democritus maintained in regard of the atom-spirit.

It is equally important to emphasize the concept of the relative truth, achieved in our time by Einstein's theory. In effect, the evolutionistic philosophy affirms that we can reach only relative truths, or, better than this, highly probable hypotheses, which are such only in a limited scale of action in determined space and time. This concept of truth allows us to maintain that truths recognized as such in a certain time or field, according to the scientific-religious-philosophical progress, can be very important factors for advancing, but when their time of application is over, when we make them absolute beyond their reasonability, they become very serious obstacles for the renewal of the human thought. This was precisely the drama of Democritus' atomism, the consequences of which we still experience in all their violence.

Let me take an example. If we suppose that somebody maintains that the structural unity of reality is the cell and he does not know that cell is a complex composite, a similar phenomenon which happened in Democritus' atomism would appear: he would try to explain both organic and inorganic substances by taking the characteristics of the cell. We could observe real intellectual juggles in this case (a kind of cellular monism would arise) or common sense would rebel until a dualism would be formed in opposite fields: the cellular and the uncellular are so different that they might be accepted as representations of spirit and matter (then we might speak of a cellular-uncellular dualism); this situation would be perfectly real if we did not know that both cells and inanimate objects have another common constituent which eliminates the strict opposition: the atom.

This could be our case. Knowing that atom is a general unity and possibly close to the spiritual field as thought, for instance, we could not deny that atoms, in some way, have a deep intervention in the so-called soul and its product: thought. The advance of modern neurophysiology permits us to hold such opinion. But, then, we have to answer an ancient and modern question: how can we explain on an atomistic and corpuscular basis a reality which is as uncorpuscular and spaceless as thought itself? A more important objection has to be answered: this belief of monism in the unity of the universe and this security of the dualism, conscious of a double manifestation, would not either result in the same mistake as that

of our hypothetical cellular thinker? What would happen if the atom, guilty, as we saw, of traditional monism and dualism, were not the last unity, but further divisible and at the same time composed of simpler unities? Modern physics knows that this is the truth: there are subatomic particles and today we have reached the quanta. But we have to consider that it is difficult to admit that a truth, which was absolutely accepted, is no longer a truth because of its relativity. And this was the way employed by monists and dualists for applying their concept of materiality to the preatomic elements, thus violating the principles of the scientific investigation.

The result was the following: the spiritualist monists, who remained at the border of the atomic reality, have defended subatomic physics at the moment when scientists began their fascinating discoveries: wave and corpuscle are found at the basis of reality at the same time; time does not follow the same directions that it does in our macroscopic world, masses and weights do not exist and impenetrability is a simple concept. Without any doubt, this fundamental reality has been compared with a form of gigantic thought, a violation of the principle of contradiction. This and more.

But, what kind of conclusions could we infer from this revolution of science? Does success belong to any of the monisms or, on the contrary, to dualism? We believe that it is possible to answer with the following remarks, which are the most important ones for the future of philosophy.

In the first place, we must reject as a philosophical solution for the problem of the universal essence or essences the materialistic monism built on an atomistic basis, because it can no longer designate matter as the corpuscular reality, due to the fact that this reality has some manifestations which were previously referred to the spirit.

Secondly, we must reject the spiritualistic monism, because we have to take into consideration the fact that the corpuscular reality itself is closer to the ancient concept of matter and it has been the object of scientific research.

Besides, it is necessary to overcome the traditional dualism, which started in a justification (unnecessary today) that it was impossible to find the link between spirit and matter, according to their different and traditional manifestations. Our present reality belongs to both spheres: to call it in some way it is *spiritualoid* or *materialoid*. This reality, therefore, cannot be explained by monist or dualist conceptions, which were sufficient for an atomistic world conception.

The French thinker Pierre Teilhard de Chardin gave an answer which is perfectly adjustable to our investigation. There is only one substance by which the created universe is structured: the Spirit-Matter, the inner and

outer aspects, which contain the elements provided by contemporary science: wave and corpuscle, two faces which manifest themselves according to the state that the evolutionary process produces: matter will be, then, the form through which this spirit-matter is manifested to us: in other words, the outer face of the reality. When such reality increases through evolution until it reaches the reflective form in man, it would be the inner face. This explanation permits us to understand the relationship between spirit and matter and states that traditionally so-called matter and spirit develop together. We can speak, then, of a manifestation of the inner or spiritual aspect of reality according to the evolutionary process, when the most synthetic unities are produced, when the organized pluralities are shown as a unique being. This conception would explain that life has unmaterial characteristics and would confirm to all the religious thinkers that man, due to his perfectly unitary organization, is the greatest manifestation of spirituality. The reason is that human spirituality is characterized by critical reflection.

This new conception of *bimonist* reality touches axiology, where distinction between matter and spirit is strictly maintained and contrast consists in defining values as objective or subjective. There is a serious difficulty in obtaining a satisfactory definition of value. Hartmann says very vaguely that value is what is worthwhile, but such definition says nothing.

Let us see now the viewpoint of those who maintain that values are objective. They point out that values exist for all men and that training tends more and more to lead value judgments toward a common standard. This, they believe, is more easily explained in the theory that values belong to the world of nature or, in other words, that they exist in themselves previously to any knowledge or realization by men.

On the other hand, those who maintain that values are subjective point out that value judgments vary from person to person and from age to age: the loss of value depends on the cessation of interest or satisfaction, whereas in the opposite theory, values exist forever, in the field of the ideal, of course, not in the field of the so-called derived values.

A third position is maintained by those who think that values are both objective and subjective. In this case, value would be a relationship between a person and an environmental situation which evokes an appreciative response in the individual. In other words: society gives objectivity to the values and subjectivity is given by the individual judgment, that is, by the mental reaction to a real situation.

Such theories have difficulties very similar to those we found in monism and dualism which we discussed before. The reasons are the following: if we accept objectivism, we remain in a more or less pure abstraction, therefore, let them discuss if values are or are not beings.

Subjectivism would lead us to skepticism about value and relativism would convert values in something constantly changing.

If we remember that in our thesis man is considered the summit of spirituality, that is, the most complex manifestation of the inner aspect of reality, we could say that values are the most considerable expressions of the natural laws, which only man, among the beings known by us, can appreciate because of his reflecting capacity as a natural searcher for truth.

We conclude, then, that, according to our thesis, values do not exist before man and are not created by man: they are discovered by man in himself. From this point of view, man will probably attain a more realistic conception of his natural essence.

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