

## CORRESPONDENCE

TO THE EDITOR OF *Philosophy*

SIR,

I should like to comment upon Dr. Bourke's article, "Responsibility, Freedom, and Determinism," appearing in *Philosophy* for July 1938. His argument, which in its inception and early stages gave promise of shedding significant light on the problem of freedom, seemed to me to lose, at its climax, all claim to validity. Yet if this part of his argument were sound, it would set at naught, at the very outset, any attempt to defend the determinist's view. So apparently devastating an argument merits examination.

A crucial point, Dr. Bourke contends, in the defence of freedom and responsibility against the strictures of the determinist is made by attributing to the determinist an inconsistency in the very holding of the view that freedom and responsibility are not real. Merely to maintain the non-existence of responsibility, he observes, is already to admit its existence, for the reason that one cannot hold any position without thereby taking responsibility for the holding of it. One imagines that a determinist would very quickly reply to this argument that his "responsibility" for adopting this or any other view would not be a "genuine" responsibility in the sense of one resulting from a free choice among possible alternatives, but only the kind of responsibility that any member of a causally productive series of events would have in performing its causal function. So that the determinist in maintaining his determinism is himself determined by antecedent events in such a fashion that given these events, only the act of maintaining determinism could have eventuated. Such an explanation, it would be insisted, would be free from involvement in self-stultifying inconsistency.

But Dr. Bourke's case against the determinist, it appears, goes farther than this. The determinist's denial of all responsibility, Dr. Bourke says, involves the further denial that it is possible to distinguish between what is true and what is false. Conviction that a certain theory is true comes only when one is able actively to pronounce in favour of it as against other possible theories. If theories are "merely mechanical processions of events," then they are "all equally valuable and valueless," and the determinist is "not entitled to prefer and put forward his own theory as claiming truth any more than any other."

Are these really the implications of determinism? Does it make it impossible for any theory to be either more or less true than another? Does it destroy the foundations of knowledge? Does it prevent the determinist from even arguing his own case? It must be insisted at once that even if the determinist could not consistently claim to know that a theory is true, that fact would not militate against the theory's *being* true. It may be that Dr. Bourke does not mean to allege that it would, but his language at times comes close to suggesting something very like this. In any case it seems evident that the truth of a theory does not rest with the ability of a person to maintain that theory—except in the special case where the theory in question is precisely the theory that the person *can* (or cannot) maintain that theory. And it is no part of the determinist's thesis that he can maintain (in the sense of freely choosing from among alternatives) the theory he is proposing.

But what reply can be made to the contention that the determinist theory, if it be true, cannot be known to be true? Certainly conviction of truth comes in other fashions than by free and intelligent reflection. Compare William James's famous "anaesthetic revelation" produced by the dentist's nitrous oxide. A view of things obtained in this highly deterministic manner might well be held and asseverated with great vigour.

But conviction, it will rightly be held, is not knowledge. Knowledge involves discrimination, selective attention, sifting of evidence, reflection. Are these possible under determinism? In one sense in which these terms may be taken it is true

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that they are not. It is in this sense that the determinist denies that we have knowledge. But the terms have their deterministic interpretations in accordance with which the determinist holds that knowledge exists. Even in a deterministic universe we turn our attention to objects, we look at evidence, we find some evidence more relevant and compelling than other evidence, we draw conclusions: though all this takes place according to deterministically operative laws of cause and effect. Laws such as these that govern the thinking organism in its relation to its environment are, the determinist would maintain, fundamental for knowledge. Unless evidence—fact—does *compel* the mind's acceptance—as the Stoics would describe the relation between known object and knower—there is no real knowledge. Ultimately knowledge goes back to the direct deterministic relation of fact-compelling-mind. To see a fact is to be unable not to acknowledge it as fact. This may involve a kind of lack of freedom (though many would regard it as of the very essence of freedom), but it is what knowledge reduces to in the last analysis.

If the non-determinist objects finally that those who hold theories based on such knowledge are not really responsible for them, that the theories are not really *theirs* to maintain, the determinist replies that if this means that such people have had the theories thrust upon them by forces beyond themselves, then, in all instances of genuine knowing, these forces can only be facts. But to free the mind from the pressure of facts is equivalent to dooming it to utter ignorance, and hence utter irresponsibility. So that responsibility is not inconsistent with, but rather dependent upon, the compulsion of facts. And this view of responsibility the determinist believes he may maintain without refuting himself in so doing.

Yours faithfully,

LUCIUS GARVIN.

OBERLIN COLLEGE,  
OBERLIN, OHIO, U.S.A.

November 22, 1938.

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### TO THE EDITOR OF *Philosophy*

SIR,

In the very interesting article, "The Relations of Philosophy," by Professor Jared S. Moore, in the last July number of this Journal (Vol. XIII, No. 51), he says: "Religion is unlike both Philosophy and Science in that it is a *way of living*, whereas Philosophy and Science are *theories* about life. In other words, the aim of Philosophy and Science is knowledge, the aim of religion is personal fellowship with God and the inspiration of daily life." May I here point out that in India, which has devoted thousands of years to the pursuit of religion and philosophy, the *opposite view* is held. In India, philosophy is *pre-eminently* "a way of living." It is knowledge based upon life and life based upon knowledge. Philosophy is *nothing* if not *lived*. It is theology, dogma, scholasticism and the like, so often mistaken for Philosophy, that are mere "theories" or "opinions," and they contradict each other. Religious beliefs being based upon faith, and mystic life are likewise held to be of the nature of opinions (*matam*) in so far as their experiences contradict each other and are not ordinarily verified or verifiable. Philosophy is what is based upon Truth (*Taitvam*) actually verified or verifiable, by ordinary facts of Life, as being something beyond contradictions, like two plus two are equal to four.

Philosophy being an interpretation of the facts of life, it is of value in India *solely* as that which *enables* one to make attempts to *live* a life as perfect as possible, it being based on a knowledge of the Truth of All Existence. This Truth is tested only in practical life, taken as a whole. Every kind of activity, social, political, religious, intellectual, and emotional, is comprehended in life, as interpreted and lived by the Philosopher. This Truth is illustrated in Indian Philosophy from the lives of rulers, politicians, warriors, tradesmen, hunters, butchers, menials, priests, ascetics, housewives—nay, men, women, and even children, in all walks of life. In fact, the greatest and the most widely known philosopher of India was a king and a warrior who taught Philosophy on the *battle-field*. Philosophy in India is *most emphatically* no theory, no speculation.

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Religious beliefs, on the other hand, are opinions formed by men according to "tastes," "temperaments," and "capacities." Such opinions have undoubtedly their influence on men's lives, which makes men feel religion to be a necessity. This influence is, however, limited to individuals or groups only. It often becomes an endless source of hostilities among men, when they become conscious of the differences in their beliefs. In spite of the contacts that men are said to make with Gods, in their religious life, it is the religious differences that have been the causes of a larger number of wars, a greater amount of bloodshed, cruelty and homicide in the world, than mere economic distress or other circumstances. The unimpeachable facts of history point to the fact that it is not Religion that helps most to promote the social good of humanity *in general or as a whole*, but Philosophy, whose objective is Truth, verified in *actual* life, as known to all, here, in this world, not in the next or a different world. One's *life* is the best exposition of one's philosophy, as understood in India. Philosophy is not the spinning of yarns out of one's own mind from within.

In the same issue of this Journal is published another thoughtful article on "The Concepts of Politics," by Mr. J. D. Mabbott. It deals specially with the implications of the terms "Society" and "Common Good." Though modern Indian Philosophy has not much to contribute to discussions relating to such topics, yet her ancient wisdom appears to contain something that may be found useful.

The ancient Indian goal in political life is summed up in such formulae as "*Sarve janah sukhino Bhavantu*," "*Sarve Satwa sukho hitah*," "*Sarva bhuta hite ratah*," and so forth. They indicate that individuals *cannot* attain any *real* or lasting good unless the community, society, or State attains it, and that the community, society, or State cannot attain it unless all humanity (*Sarve Janah*) attain it. In other words, no individuals or groups can attain *real* or lasting good unless they realize that all human beings form a single "body." It may be remembered by some of your readers that this was the message sent to the last International Congress of Philosophy, held in Paris, by His Highness the Maharaja of Mysore (India), as the message of *Indian Philosophy*.

This shows that the concept "society" acquires wider and wider significance as man progresses till it comprehends the whole of humanity. We are now somewhere on the way. So are the Totalitarians at the stage of the "State," and they have yet to reach that of "*all humanity*."

Next, the term "common good" takes us further. Since "good" and "common" are topics dealt with in pure Indian Philosophy, I shall not go into that subject here. It will be enough to refer to the Indian view that *ultimately* the "individual" implies the "all." As such, unity is always implied in multiplicity. It is only what is "good" for all that is good for the individual. Otherwise the "good" is not "real." "Common" implies "unity." Hence Indian Philosophy holds that "common good" is not what is good only for a body of individuals as a body, but to each and every one. It is good to each *in the same degree*. Here also there are different stages through which man passes before he realizes this Truth. The *real* "common good" is attained only when every individual realizes his identity *with all* humanity. This looks like mere theory, and that of a most impracticable kind. But that it can be most practicable will be evident only when we go deep into *Philosophy*—not religion, which is beyond the scope of this note.

V. SUBRAHMANYA IYER.

MYSORE, INDIA.

September 29, 1938.

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TO THE EDITOR OF *Philosophy*

DEAR SIR,

Professor Turner, in his review of my *Beyond Humanism*, has somewhat misunderstood the view there suggested of the relation of God to nature. I did not mean to deny, but to assert, what he describes as the "traditional theistic view" that God is to all nature (including past "cosmic epochs") as a man is to the few cubic feet and years of nature occupied by his body. This view, which is too complex in its implications to be easily understood (think of the various mind-body theories),

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has been bitterly combated in most Protestant and all Roman Catholic theologies. True, some of the older theologians accepted it, such as Spinoza and Schleiermacher, but to my mind they ruined it by such assumptions as determinism, which Professor Turner also accepts. It is essential to the "new theology" that the parts of the body, its cells in the widest sense, can react upon the mind of the whole, and that the latter is not "pure actuality," but *passive* as well as active. The primary question is whether or not God is completed perfection in every sense, therefore incapable of change or of being acted upon, or of having genuinely individual active parts. Many of the most distinguished Protestant theologians of our time hold, at least implicitly, the doctrine that God is perfect only in righteousness, wisdom, and power; while his aesthetic value, his happiness or bliss, is capable of endless increase, to which we may contribute, how *much* depending upon our free action. This view, many now admit, is in accord with the Bible, but it certainly is not traditional in technical theology, though I hope and believe that it is fast becoming so.

Against Professor Turner's pronouncement in favour of determinism, I am moved to be equally dogmatic. If by "reaches of philosophy" is meant schools of philosophy, then no doubt some of them will be ruined by determinism, but if it is branches of the subject, such as ethics, metaphysics, or logic, then, on the contrary, since philosophers have largely abandoned determinism (Boutroux, James, Peirce, Whitehead, Ward, Bergson, even Santayana), these subjects have been doing rather well. Professor Turner is an able representative of a tenet which in two hundred years very nearly did destroy philosophy (in Comte, Nietzsche, Mill, and their immediate successors). Has not the subject been enjoying one of its greatest renaissances precisely since determinism ceased to be the generally accepted philosophic view?

That a doctrine acceptable to men like Whitehead, Bohr, Jordan, and many others of high competence in the philosophy of science spells the ruin of science, requires stronger support than I find even in Professor Turner's vigorous discussions of this matter.

Yours very truly,

CHARLES HARTSHORNE.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO,  
October 16th, 1938.