

WILL PHILOSOPHY BURY ITS UNDERTAKERS?

In what is undoubtedly his most famous essay, the late F.C.S. Schiller posed the deceptively simple query: "Must philosophers disagree?"¹ To Schiller and, seemingly, the bulk of philosophers before and after him, the question should be answered in the negative. Yet, the dialogues among contemporaneous philosophers, past and present, as among the vast number of protagonists in the long, "unscripted" dialogue which constitutes the history of thought, reveal that the disagreements among philosophers justly may be said to define a central problem of philosophy, if not *the* root problem. Perhaps fearful lest the diversity of philosophical alternatives evidence the defeat of reason, many have striven to piece together a unified whole, to gloss over deep rifts in convictions among individuals, and even to institutionalize some contemporaneously acceptable explanation. But none of these moves has been successful to the present and none seem destined to gain the field in the future. Indeed, contrary to the end which the "heart" may desire, the "mind" drives us towards the conclusion that the ineluctable characteristic of

¹ Schiller, F.C.S., *Must Philosophers Disagree?* London, Macmillan, 1934.

Will Philosophy Bury its Undertakers?

reason is disagreement. Yet this in no way disparages reason or its usages, for no principle of logic has been violated when one chooses from among diverse basic convictions which form the foundation of alternative philosophic systems.

Every science operates either upon clearly enunciated or tacitly accepted principles which serve as the starting points or foci of its particular methods and operation. A practitioner in a science may or may not be actively concerned with the formulation and analysis of such fundamentals. This is possible because the explication of the underlying principles of a science and of their interrelationships, either within the same science or as they are related among various sciences, may be said to constitute the subject matter for a "higher" or "more basic" study, i.e., a "meta-science." Thus, the active natural scientist may relegate such concerns to students of the logic, the methodology, or the philosophy of science; while the creative artist may leave such matters to the aesthetician or to the critic. What are loosely termed "interest in the practice" and "interest in the theory" need not be coextensive. In brief, the scientist or artist, *qua* scientist or artist, may maintain, with justice, that considerations of basic principles and rules of operation fall outside the area of his immediate concern and form a separate and relatively distinct discipline, or, at least, a portion thereof.

Unfortunately, or perhaps most fortunately, the philosopher cannot assign the task of the analysis and interpretation of first principles to a higher discipline. There is no "meta-philosophy." This means that philosophers must not only present diverse sets of principles constituting alternative interpretations of experience, but must likewise investigate the ramifications and implications, the similarities and dissimilarities, and the interrelationships among various philosophic systems. In this respect, philosophy is reflexive: it is a part of its nature to turn upon itself as an object for consideration. In other words, the analysis of philosophic systems as proffered variant foundations for the arts and sciences or as "world views" is itself an inescapable function of philosophy.

It is customary for philosophers to begin, when they deign to mention them, by criticizing other philosophers. When such condescension is beyond the pale of grace of the new prophet,

it is proclaimed that the new mintage not only devaluates all other coinage but that it is the only legal tender. Thus, some philosophers are wont to assert that what others are doing is not worth wasting one's valuable time upon. For example, an ordinary language analyst would scoff that this very discussion was not "doing philosophy." Such a value statement on the activities of another is, in a contemporary idiom, an "emotive sentence." As such, it is neither verifiable nor falsifiable and only can be countered with a similar emotive statement. In the present case I might make an emotive statement of my own regarding that idle tea-table amusement of the Oxonians to the effect that "doing philosophy" in their sense of the term is much like chewing gum—not only does the flavour not last well but, worse yet, there is no nourishment in it.

My purpose in making the preceding remarks was not to record my disagreement with a particular group of thinkers. Rather, I intended merely to call attention to the nature of philosophic disagreements and to my conviction that philosophers *must* disagree. Yet, such critical disagreements need not be vicious: they become so only when they are based on intellectual provincialism, which has its roots either in unfamiliarity with the neighboring terrain or in a certain blindness which precludes appreciation of strange landscapes. Unhappily, both of these maladies are all too frequent in our day. One could, of course, seek to assign causes for the distempers of the philosophic body. But this is not my interest here.

One claim to which all might agree is that the most popular present-day conceptions of that activity called philosophy are not in accord with what traditionally was accepted as the nature of philosophy. However much they may differ, existentialism, phenomenology, pragmatism, linguistic analysis, and positivism share at least one common characteristic: they all are intended to be final reform movements that will set aside the fatal errors or meaningless babble of preceding philosophies and institute the vitally needed reconstruction of philosophy. A favorite stratagem of each succeeding wave of self-styled "revolutionaries" is to attack traditional distinctions, such, for example, as distinctions between the analytic and the synthetic, the mental and the corporeal, the logical and the factual, and even the distinction

between philosophy and science. Yet, elementary logic teaches us, or should teach us, that what constitute the complementary classes in one universe of discourse need not constitute complementary classes in another universe of discourse. Hence, it should be obvious that an untenable distinction within one philosophic framework may be, indeed, a tenable one in another context—nay, it may even be necessary. But there are, I fear, many who are not ready or who are unwilling to apply such simple lessons of logic to philosophic differences. Perhaps such behavior may be explained by the implicit rejection on the part of these reformers of the legitimacy of any other standpoint but their own. If such is the case, how can a genuine reformation occur? Would it not be more descriptive and more honest to announce a new revelation and to propagate a new faith based upon it? Perhaps, in this respect at any rate, the Oxford elucidators of usages are the most consistent of recent voices. For do they not proclaim that what traditionally passed for philosophy and most of what their own contemporaries have been doing is not philosophy? It is unfortunate that they are wrong. The latter, of course, also is an emotive statement and not subject to refutation, if you had a mind to try it.

Brief reflection on the history of modern philosophy will reveal that the revolt against traditional philosophical systems began little more than one hundred and thirty years ago. Prior to that time we had a succession of grand intellectual visions—*theorias*—from Plato's and Aristotle's through St. Thomas and on down to those of Kant, Fichte, and Hegel. It would be tiresome and it is unnecessary to detail here the characteristics of the long list of rational constructions from the height of Greek philosophic thought to that of the Germanic period of splendor. Suffice it to say that the seeds of revolt were already sown in the work of Schopenhauer and that the first serious volley was fired by Kierkegaard in 1846 with the publication of his *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*. Moved by what he considered the excesses of the system of Hegel, Kierkegaard initiated the counter-movement against all forms of traditional philosophic doctrines and methods that was continued, in a variety of forms, both on the European continent and in America. In this movement emphasis was directed upon individuality,

concreteness, temporality, spontaneity, novelty, and activity. In Germany, Nietzsche left his indelible mark on subsequent thought, and, somewhat later, Henri Bergson in France and William James in America played their parts in this anti-intellectualistic movement. Disenchantment with the ways of the past also led Dewey to call for a reconstruction in philosophy in order that philosophy might “cease to be a device for dealing with the problems of philosophers” to become “a method, cultivated by philosophers, for dealing with the problems of men.”²

In the meantime, a lonely scholar on the continent, dissatisfied with the results of philosophizing based upon presuppositions drawn either from science or from a pre-scientific mode of experience, was working long and diligently in an attempt to establish philosophy as the only rigorous science—the foundation for all sciences—with the hope that this would terminate the disagreements among and between thinkers in both philosophy and science. Edmund Husserl intended that the program he had initiated would be taken up by a community of investigators. But there were few to follow Husserl with careful phenomenological analyses and it was not long before his conception of philosophy as a rigorous science degenerated into the philosophy of the absolute of Scheler and the anti-rationalism of Heidegger and Jaspers. Whereas Husserl sought cognitive *Evidenz*, the existentialists sought authentic *Existenz*. From the Thirties to the present, efforts have been made to wed the phenomenological method of Husserl with the existential modes of thought of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche. But the marriage contract has not been, and it seems destined never to be, consummated.

Meanwhile, another movement which we cannot neglect had its birth when, in 1928, a group of brilliant young men began to gather together in Vienna in order to exchange philosophical ideas. With strong interests in science and following the tradition of Hume, Comte, Mill, Mach, and Russell, the philosophers of the Viennese Circle sought to found a single method of science free from metaphysical assumptions and to purge the corpus of scientific knowledge of the pseudo-concepts they seemed to

² Dewey, John, *et al.*, *Creative Intelligence*. New York, H. Holt and Company, p. 65.

see in it. The positivism which developed from their efforts to clarify the concepts and statements of science by means of logical and semantic analyses had the result of reducing philosophy to the position of a handmaid of science.

Finally, and somewhat belatedly, our friends in the British Isles were aroused from their siege of torpor by the realization that the “new way of ideas” of their forefathers was not a glory road to eternal Truth. However, unlike their Viennese counterparts, the Oxford dons did not see genuine philosophy as a servant of science with whatever failed to perform this function as “nonsensical.” Instead, they affirmed the independence of philosophy from science and, for that matter, from any art or history. For, in their view, “doing philosophy” apparently means doing something which, in order to “do” properly, one must not do anything else. To these “method philosophers,” the purity of method demands the absence of subject-matter. Being purists, they can only consider adherents of other movements as either “confused” or “philosophically naive.” And thus they have become the fundamentalists of philosophy with the Oxford Dictionary for their scriptures. In the beginning was the word and the word is all.

I am not, as I trust it has been seen, blowing the bugle for any of these reformists. Yet, I would be the last to contend that there has been nothing of value in their activities. Still, as is typically the case with revolutionists, many of their grievances were merely imagined and others overly exaggerated. And, still conforming to type, they have tended to be extremists advocating various proposals for the reconstitution of our domain that would effectually deny us our very sovereignty. Despite these persistent attacks I believe that the integrity of philosophy has not been violated. Perhaps it is high time for its would-be reformers to reconsider its actual powers, duties, and territorial claims. Such a review may lead them to acknowledge their misjudgements of its alleged pretensions and may aid in reestablishing the legitimacy of philosophy.

To help us to appreciate some of the causes for various misunderstandings that have engendered reform movements, brief retrospection of the conceptions of the relations between philosophy and science will be useful. It is, of course, common

knowledge that for the early pre-Socratic thinkers no distinction was drawn between philosophy and science. In the beginning of Western thought, as in the world of experience of Homeric man, "all things were together." The Greek tradition begins with the study of nature as a whole and only by degrees are distinct parts of the field marked off for particular attention. At first only medicine and mathematics were separated from that total contemplation of nature which later came to be called philosophy. However, one cannot conclude from the subsequent progressive separation of the sciences from philosophy that they are one and the same in content or in method. Is this, perhaps, the fundamental error of both positivism and scientism? Such a *non-sequitur* also might enlighten the apt characterization of logical positivists as "neo-Pre-Socratics."³ To be sure, it may be said that even for Plato and Aristotle philosophy and science form a unity. But this unity is not to be construed as identity. There is still a distinction within that unity analogous to the relation between soul and body in that composite unity known as man. And in considering this analogy it may be well to remember that for the Greeks the soul was the cause of the growth and development of the body and, in a sense, the body was the product of the soul. Moreover, we should recall that Plato and Aristotle agree both that wonder is the origin of philosophy and that it is a search for knowledge merely in order to know. The philosopher contemplates for the sake of contemplation, not in order to do or to act. To the master and pupil alike, the philosopher exemplified to the highest degree the "theoretical" mind, and philosophy sought a coherent and unitary view of the universe reconciling all facets of experience.

The modern period, beginning in the 16th century, is distinguished from preceding ages in its different conception of the nature and uses of knowledge. Whereas the classical concept of philosophy attributed the search after knowledge to intellectual curiosity, some men of the 16th and 17th centuries reacted vigorously to this imputed motivation and proclaimed that the genuine motive for knowledge is domination over nature. Francis

³ Jenkins, Iredell, "Logical Positivism, Critical Idealism, and the Concept of Man," *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 47, N. 24, pp. 677-695.

Will Philosophy Bury its Undertakers?

Bacon declared that knowledge is power and that we are able to do only as much as we know. His younger contemporary, Descartes, rather unwittingly contributed to the new idea of knowledge through failure to make a distinction between philosophy and science and by advocating a single method of inquiry. Later contributors to this position include Comte, Marx, and Dewey. This modern conception of knowledge begins with the rejection of the claim that men seek understanding for its own sake and proceeds on the counterclaim that the concept of knowledge is vacuous if it does not involve prediction and power over nature. This position develops to the point of asserting that knowledge not only has practical consequences, but that it ought to be directed to that end, so that the sole motive of any inquiry is practice, although not necessarily in the moral sense of that term.

I submit that both science and philosophy have their origin in that disinterested desire to know which Aristotle attributed to all men as a natural characteristic. The objective of science, as of philosophy, is to understand, in some sense of that word, this world in which we find ourselves through no doing of our own. This does not mean that the distinction between science and philosophy is a false one. Science and philosophy are distinct modes of explanation differentiated by their different starting-points, methods, and goals. Philosophic explanation and scientific explanation do not conflict because they seek to satisfy diverse needs and, in so doing, employ dissimilar perspectives, concepts, and criteria of tenability.

Yet, if both pure science and philosophy are engaged in the quest for understanding for its own sake, how do they differ? It is unnecessary to go into a minute comparison or to cite commonplaces. But it may be profitable to sketch three major points of difference between philosophy and science.

First, we may note that for good and sufficient methodological reasons science finds it necessary to dissect the totality of given phenomena into various classes and to treat each class of phenomena separately. Thus the individual special sciences attempt to find sequential orders among the phenomena that are formulable in mathematical expressions. The languages of mathematics are employed in order to escape the vaguenesses and

ambiguities of natural languages and to secure maximum precision and clarity of statement.

But, whereas science is a partitive consideration of the totality of phenomena, philosophy, not bound by the limitations of the scientific method, refuses to consider reality in any fractured form. Philosophy strives to be all-encompassing; its concern is with the whole of reality, not merely some segment. Still, one might question, does not science seek ultimate unification? True, but scientific unification and the comprehensive coherency of philosophic systems differ. The unification sought by science is that of the subordination of partial theories to one general theory and the integration of all empirical laws through a small number of definite constants. The systematic coherency sought by philosophy is that of necessary connections among general ideas, different in kind from scientific concepts, through which all facets of our experience can receive some degree of interpretation.

This leads to the second point of difference between philosophy and science, namely, the nature of their fundamental concepts. However far removed from the data of sensory experience they may be, it is universally accepted that the concepts of science must have empirical meaning. Despite the abstractness of fundamental scientific concepts, we must not lose sight of the fact that the two termini of scientific activity, the starting-point and the stopping-point, are particular sense data. Concepts of science are thus distilled from the manifold of sensory phenomena and, in turn, must be symptomatic of other sensory data. In the whole complex that is science we may distinguish different kinds of concepts, but regardless of whether we are considering generic, functional, or integrative concepts, they must all be reducible to, or at least be related to, sensorily observable phenomena. In brief, scientific explanations are always controlled by the criterion of observation.

In contrast to the origin and nature of scientific concepts, philosophic concepts are explanatory devices which do not inherit the limitations of such an ancestry. Genuinely philosophic concepts are not necessarily constructed out of sensory data or, at least, they will not be derived entirely out of such data. The reason for this is that philosophy is seeking a unitary, coherent view of the totality of phenomena which does not neglect the

Will Philosophy Bury its Undertakers?

perceiving and valuing subject and, hence, its concepts must be of such a nature that they are applicable in one of their various meanings to diverse aspects of experience. This is why philosophic concepts are not merely equivocal but also have no clear, fixed connotations, although they may frequently have a clear use in some specified context.

Although I have said that philosophic concepts are not directly constructed out of sensory phenomena, they are not to be construed as having no basis in experience. The sources and natures of such concepts and the consequences of this for philosophy have been expressed so well by the late Alfred Stern of the California Institute of Technology that I will take the liberty of quoting Professor Stern at some length, with general agreement and some envy at not having said it first.

...The reality of the abstract entities and processes described by philosophy is only a theoretical, conceptual one, a realm of symbols. But the material of these symbols can be borrowed either from concrete pictorial imagination, as in the case of Leibniz' "monads", from the realm of emotions, as in the case of Schopenhauer's universal "will" and Bergson's "vital impulse", or from the realm of general concepts, as in the case of Plato's or Hegel's "ideas". The truth of philosophical statements cannot consist in the fact that the elements described in these statements are *copies* of a reality existing outside theoretical thought. The truth of philosophical statements can only consist in the fact that they are *valid for* a reality outside theoretical thought—our empirical reality. To be valid means to be applicable to the reality outside theoretical thought in such a way that the factual relations among the parts of reality appear as logically necessary relations. For philosophy this reality is that of man and his world.

When the philosopher says, "That is so," it means, in my opinion nothing but: "It can be thought this way without contradiction and is valid, i.e., applicable to the empirical relations between subject and object, between man and his world."

But if that is so, then there remains the possibility that the same relationship between man and the world may be conceived by means of different conceptual or symbolic systems. In view of the great variety of choice of different symbolic material, it is possible that several philosophical systems establish symbolic constructions equally free from logical contradictions and equally well applicable to the

relations between man and his world. Hence the great variety of philosophical systems created in the course of our long history of ideas. In realizing that these different philosophical systems are only different possibilities of conceiving theoretically the same basic relationships between man and the universe by means of different symbols, we must become more tolerant toward diverging systems and not think that the one has necessarily been refuted by the other because the other appeared later in time. If we would dogmatically affirm that the truth of a philosophical system consists in the fact that it is a copy of reality, then among the hundreds of systems the history of philosophy has produced there would be only *one true* system. Such an affirmation would be nonsense. But while only *one* system could be the right *copy* of reality, there may be many systems *applicable to* reality with the same degree of evidence. If, therefore, I define the truth of a philosophical system not by its character of being a copy of reality but by the criterion of its applicability to or validity for reality, then we may understand that different philosophical systems may be equally true and not only the one we prefer for extra-theoretical, emotional reasons, or simply because it better fits our interests. False philosophical systems would then be only those which are either self-contradictory or not applicable to empirical reality; that is, those from which the facts of our experience cannot be derived logically—in short, those which do not explain them. After all, philosophical systems represent only different possibilities of conceiving theoretically, and understanding logically, the basic relationships between man and his world.⁴

The principal point of difference between Professor Stern and myself turns on the number of philosophical systems that have, or can be, constructed. He refers to “hundreds of systems,” whereas I would set the figure *much* lower. But this is of no moment here.

In referring to the efforts of philosophy to present a tenable depiction of the relationships between man and the world, Professor Stern has led us to the third fundamental and very illuminating contrast between science and philosophy. Science is interested in the mutual relations among the determined objects which constitute the world without regard to the thinking subject. Thus, it views the world from the standpoint of the

⁴ Stern, Alfred, “Science and the Philosopher,” *American Scientist*, Vol. 44, N. 3, pp. 281-295.

Will Philosophy Bury its Undertakers?

“anonymous observer,” i.e., as “objective.” This “objective” reality of science is not something that is directly, immediately, given to any one of us. Rather, it is constructed out of the manifold of phenomena given in absolute form to a multiplicity of subjects. Only the subjective is *thus* absolute. (Hence Kierkegaard’s dictum: “Truth is inwardness.”) But science’s quest for objectivity means that it must abandon the absolute for the relative. Thus, while recognizing the function of personal experience in valid knowledge, science must go “beyond” it if its knowledge claims are to be publicly, inter-subjectively, testable. In this demand for objectivity, for that which is common to all, science must overlook the knower and his distinctive relationship to the content of his experience. Scientific theories do not deal with what “appears” or is “given” to any *one* observer but with what must appear to *anyone* who makes precise physical observations under the “same” conditions. Science is not concerned with the divergences among perceptions but with that which is invariant among them. Since scientific knowledge is independent of any particular observer, the laws of science are laws for the “anonymous observer,” that is, for any given observer under specified conditions.

Now, whereas science must overlook the relationships between man as subject and the objects of nature, philosophy refuses to do so. Philosophy would rather give up what is public so as not to ignore the standpoint of the subject. Hence, while the conception of an “anonymous observer” is legitimate and, indeed, a necessary one for science, it has no place in philosophy. Philosophy demands an account of the relation of the observer to the objective world. But, since the observer is also a feeling and valuing being—one who loves and hates, prizes and despises—philosophy must also examine emotions and values. Hence, unlike science, philosophy cannot escape the problems of either epistemology or axiology.

Characterizing the nature of philosophy through contrast to that of science serves to nail down one crucial point: science is not philosophy and philosophy is not a science. Neither science nor philosophy is dependent for its existence upon the other and neither one is reducible to the other. Philosophy is neither embryonic science nor a mere handmaid of science. The

expression “scientific philosophy” is self-inconsistent. All efforts of those who seek either to apply the methods and criteria of scientific inquiry to philosophic inquiry or who hope to develop a rigorous philosophy as foundational to all sciences are foredoomed to failure. Philosophic systems are intellectual visions based upon an urgent need that some men feel for a rational construction of our total human experience. Now, clearly, some men may have no need for such activity and may find adequate satisfaction in the scientific mode of explanation. But can they then assert that what satisfies themselves must be adequate to the needs of all men and that philosophic speculations are the idle products of perverse minds? If philosophic visions are nonsensical to the scientific mind, are not the ways and ends of science insensible to the demands of the philosophic temper? The philosopher pursues his speculations because he is driven by intellectual curiosity, not by the desire for control over nature. Indeed, philosophy would destroy itself if its goal became pragmatic.

Many of our contemporaries have been maintaining that philosophy abuses ordinary language usages and that clarity of discourse requires adherence to the literalness of the language of the common sense level of experience. But to insist that traditional philosophic terminology is empty of meaning and that philosophic discourse is confused is to misunderstand the necessity of philosophers to resort to an *extra*-ordinary language. I already have referred to the nature of philosophic concepts and the functions that they are meant to serve. The literal meanings of words, bound up as they are to the empirical and to the gross distinctions of common sense, simply are not adapted to express the meanings of philosophic concepts. Philosophical clarity is not the same as literalness. Philosophers *are* constrained to use words with “stretched” or new meanings or to employ equivocal terms with diverse significations in different contexts. To be sure, this makes communication extremely difficult and we may never be quite sure that the meanings that were ideally intended are in fact those understood by the interpreter. But is this not a common failing of all modes of discourse? And do we not need to realize that the philosopher is seeking to convey something about a personal, extraordinary vision to one who may

Will Philosophy Bury its Undertakers?

or may not have had a similar insight through the only means available to him? You may contend that the modes of discourse always intercede and preclude precise coincidence of knowledge between the communicants. Perhaps this is so. But does this mean that we ought not to try to communicate and that we should not make any special effort to penetrate through to the meanings intended when philosophers use language in extraordinary ways? If one has extraordinary insights or visions one must use extraordinary language in trying to convey them. One may, of course, maintain that extraordinary insights do not occur. This contention may tell us something of the private life of the reporter, but it cannot be claimed to be a universal matter of fact.

Of all the modern movements, existentialism has understood the philosophic predicament better than the rest, only it has not drawn the sole or even a necessary consequence from this situation. From Kierkegaard on down, existentialist thinkers have contended that philosophic systems no longer can be constructed. I believe that this is true, not because such systems are self-defeating or impossible in principle, as existentialists may claim, but because they already have *been* constructed. A defense of this contention must be left for another essay. Here we need merely note that recognition of the limits of rational thought has led to psychic nausea, dread, and anguish, and has produced a considerable number of philosophical hypochondriacs left to their fear and trembling. Perhaps, however, this result is not inescapable and it even may be that a re-examination of our human situation may provide the vivifying antidote for their sickness unto death.

Appreciation of the methods, structures, and limitations of philosophic systems calls for much more than the tinsel of learning so much in vogue today. It calls for arduous comparative studies of systems through the adoption of a neutral perspective and by means of various analytical devices. Only then can we reach a deep but humble understanding of the common limits of all rational thought constructions. In so doing we are enabled to "see through" the maze of systems and beyond philosophy itself. By "seeing through" I refer to an understanding that surpasses all understanding, akin to the enlightenment we experience

when we have attained a psychoanalytic insight into the workings of our own personality. Such realization of the frailty of human reason need not cause despair and put us in search of therapy, nor need we withdraw from active participation in the world to meditate upon death and nothingness. Spinoza justly observed that “wisdom is a meditation not of death but of life.”⁵ And from such meditation there results a transfiguration. The wise man is a phoenix—after being consumed by his own flames he rises reborn from his own ashes.

The “consolations of philosophy” that once were unabashedly voiced can only be reached when we have patiently and ploddingly gone in, around, and through the highways and byways of philosophic systems. When we emerge we do so with a sense of fulfillment, of presentness, of the nature of the inescapable human situation to which we are confined. Such “seeing through” philosophy has a profound salutary effect. It is the only kind of personal salvation of which we ourselves are capable. There is then neither renunciation of thought nor of feeling, neither of fact nor of value, neither of the self nor of the world. There is sheer acceptance—of things as they are and for what they are. And yet this does not stifle all protest against social injustices and the idiocy of man’s inhumanity to man. Instead, he who has gone through philosophy has a heightened sensitivity to both the folly and the dignity of man, the ironies and the victories of life. He who perceives the human situation in its manifold dimensions and in its intricate complexity has a just appreciation of the tragic in life, but he does not see life itself as tragic. What is most tragic is man’s unwillingness to make full use of his various resources and to love the beauty and mystery of *being*. For, as the poet Hölderlin wisely wrote: “who most deeply has thought, loves the most living.”⁶ Thus it is that the philosopher is at the same time the saddest and happiest of men. For, in spite of the bleaker aspects of existence, he values its comic and joyous sides. Within himself, the philosopher finds a note of defiance mingled with one of resignation and a rejection

⁵ Spinoza, Baruch, *Ethics*, Part Four, Prop. LXVII (various editions).

⁶ Hölderlin, Friedrich, *Some Poems of Friedrich Hölderlin* (trans. by Frederic Prokosch). Norfolk, Connecticut, New Directions, n.d. (Poem V).

Will Philosophy Bury its Undertakers?

of the thesis that life is a poor play “full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.”

Once again, then, it appears that the cries of the doomsayers are premature. Fortunately, since philosophical method is neither pre-determined by human experience nor is it an innate characteristic of reason, the query posed by Schiller, *Must philosophers disagree?*, must be answered affirmatively. Disagreement is the condition of philosophical reason and, even at present, close examination of the condition of philosophy points to the fact that there is ample life in this old but continually rejuvenated mistress.