ARTICLES

LIFE, DEATH, AND THE BODY IN THE THEORY OF BEING

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I

WHEN MAN FIRST BEGAN to interpret the nature of things—and this he did when he began to be man—life was to him everywhere, and being the same as being alive. Animism was the widespread expression of this stage, "hylozoism" one of its later conceptual forms. Soul flooded the whole of existence and encountered itself in all things. Bare matter, that is, truly inanimate, "dead" matter, was yet to be discovered—as indeed its concept, so familiar to us, is anything but obvious. That the world is alive is really the most natural view, and largely supported by prima facie evi dence. On the terrestrial scene, in which experience is reared and contained, life abounds and occupies the whole foreground exposed to man's immediate view. The proportion of manifestly lifeless matter encountered in this primordial field is small, since most of what we now know to be inanimate is so intimately intertwined with the dynamics of life that it seems to share its nature. Earth, wind, and water—begetting, teeming, nurturing, destroying—are anything but models of "mere matter." Thus primitive pan-psychism, in addition to answering powerful needs of the soul, was justified by rules of inference and verification within the available range of experience, continually confirmed as it was by the actual preponderance of life in the horizon of its earthly home. Indeed not before the Copernican revolution widened this horizon into the vastness of cosmic space was the proportional place of life in the scheme of things sufficiently dwarfed so that it became possible to disregard it for most of what henceforth was to be the content of the term "nature." But to early man, standing on his earth arched by the dome of its sky, it could never occur that life might be a side-issue in the universe, and not its pervading rule. His

panvitalism was a perspective truth which only a change of perspective could eventually displace. Unquestioned and convincing at the beginning stands the experience of the omnipresence of life.

In such a world-view, the riddle confronting man is *death*: it is the contradiction to the one intelligible, self-explaining, "natural" condition which is the general life. To the extent that life is accepted as the primary state of things, death looms as the disturbing mystery. Hence the *problem* of death is probably the first to deserve this name in the history of thought. Its emergence as an express problem signifies the awakening of the questioning mind long before a conceptual level of theory is attained. The natural recoil from death takes courage from the "logical" outrage which the fact of mortality inflicts on panvitalistic conviction. Primeval reflection thus grapples with the riddle of death, and in myth, cult, and religious belief endeavors to find a solution to it.

That death, not life, calls for an explanation in the first place, reflects a theoretical situation which lasted long in the history of the race. Before there was wonder at the miracle of life, there was wonder about death and what it might mean. If life is the natural and comprehensible thing, death—its apparent negation—is a thing unnatural and cannot be truly real. The explanation it called for had to be in terms of life as the only understandable thing: death had somehow to be assimilated to life. The question it inspires faces backward and forward: how and why did death come into the world, the essence of which it contradicts? And whereto is it the transition, since whatever it may lead to must still belong to the total context of life? Early metaphysics attempts to answer these questions; or, despairing of an answer, remonstrates with the incomprehensible law. It is the question of Gilgamesh—the answer of the funeral cult. As early man's practice is embodied in his tools, so his thought is embodied in his tombs which acknowledge and negate death at the same time. Out of the tombs arose pristine metaphysics in the shape of myth and religion. That all is life and that all life is mortal is the basic contradiction it strives to resolve. It meets the profound challenge; and to save the sum of things, death had somehow to be denied.

Any problem is essentially the collision between a comprehensive view (be it hypothesis or belief) and a particular fact

which will not fit into it. Primitive panvitalism was the comprehensive view; ever recurring death, the particular fact: since it seemed to deny the basic truth, it had to be denied itself. To seek for its meaning was to acknowledge its strangeness in the world; to understand it was—in this climate of a universal ontology of life—to negate it by making it a transmutation of life itself. Such a negation is the belief in a survival after death which primeval burial customs express. The cult of the dead and the belief in immortality of whatever shape, and the speculations into which they evolve, are the running argument of the life-creed with death—an argument which could also recoil on the embattled position and eventually lead to its breaking-up. At first, any settling of the contradiction, any solution of the riddle, could only be in favor of life; or the riddle remained, an outcry without answer; or the original position was abandoned and a new stage of thought ushered in. The first two alternatives attest to the original ontological dominance of life. This is the paradox: precisely the importance of the tombs in the beginnings of mankind, the power of the death motif in the beginnings of human thought, testify to the greater power of the universal life motif as their sustaining ground: being was intelligible only as living; and the divined constancy of being could be understood only as the constancy of life, even beyond death and in defiance of its apparent verdict.

II

Modern thought which began with the Renaissance is placed in exactly the opposite theoretic situation. Death is the natural thing, life the problem. From the physical sciences there spread over the conception of all existence an ontology whose model entity is pure matter, stripped of all features of life. What at the animistic stage was not even discovered has in the meantime conquered the vision of reality, entirely ousting its counterpart. The tremendously enlarged universe of modern cosmology is conceived as a field of inanimate masses and forces which operate according to the laws of inertia and of quantitative distribution in space. This denuded substratum of all reality could only be arrived at through a progressive expurgation of vital features from the phys-

ical record and through strict abstention from projecting into its image our own felt aliveness. In the process the ban on anthropomorphism was extended to zoomorphism in general. What remained is the residue of a reduction toward the properties of mere extension which submit to measurement and hence to mathematics. These properties alone satisfy the requirements of what is now called exact knowledge: and representing the only knowable aspect of nature they, by a tempting substitution, came to be regarded as its essential aspect too—and if this, then as the only real in reality. This means that the lifeless has become the knowable par excellence and is for that reason also considered the true and only foundation of reality. It is the "natural" as well as the original state of things. Not only in terms of relative quantity but also in terms of ontological genuineness, non-life is the rule, life the puzzling exception in physical existence.

Accordingly it is the existence of life within a mechanical universe which now calls for an explanation, and explanation has to be in terms of the lifeless. Left over as a borderline case in the homogeneous physical world-view, life has to be accounted for by the terms of that view. Quantitatively infinitesimal in the immensity of cosmic matter, qualitatively an exception from the rule of its properties, cognitively the unexplained in the general plainness of physical things, it has become the stumbling block of theory. That there is life at all, and how such a thing is possible in a world of mere matter, is now the problem posed to thought. The very fact that we have nowadays to deal with the theoretical problem of life, instead of the problem of death, testifies to the status of death as the natural and intelligible condition.

Here again, the problem consists in the collision between a comprehensive view and a particular fact: as formerly panvitalism, so now panmechanism is the comprehensive hypothesis; and the rare case of life, realized under the exceptional, perhaps unique conditions of our planet, is the improbable particular that seems to elude the basic law and therefore must be denied its autonomy—that is, must be integrated into the general law. To take life as a problem is here to acknowledge its strangeness in the mechanical world which is *the* world; to explain it is—in this climate of a universal ontology of death—to negate it by making it one of

the possible variants of the lifeless. Such a negation is the mechanistic theory of the organism, as the funeral rites of prehistory were a negation of death. "*L'homme machine*" signifies in the modern scheme what, conversely, "hylozoism" signified in the ancient scheme: the usurpation of one, dissembled realm by the other which enjoys an ontological monopoly. Vitalistic monism is replaced by mechanistic monism, in whose rules of evidence the standard of life is exchanged for that of death.

In the new monism, too, one face of the question is turned backward: no longer, how did death, but how did life come into the world, the lifeless one? Life's place in this world has shrunk to that of the organism, a problematical specialty in the configurations of extended substance. In it alone do "extended" and "thinking" being meet, after they had first been sundered into two ontological spheres of which only the first one is "world," and the second not even belonging to the world. Their meeting in the organism then becomes an insoluble riddle. Since the organism, as a corporeal thing, is a case of the extended, a piece of "world," however particular a configuration of its parts, it cannot be essentially different from the rest of the world, i.e., from the general being of the world. In itself this argument cuts both ways: if there is to be homogeneity, then either the general can be seen in the image of the particular (which is first and nearest in experience), or the particular can be seen in the image of the general—i.e., either world-nature in the image of the organism, or the organism in the image of world-nature. But what the general nature of the world is has been decided in advance: mere matter in space. Therefore, since organism represents "life" in the world, the question regarding life now poses itself thus: How does the organism stand in the total context already defined, how is this special order or function of it reducible to its general laws—how, in short, is life reducible to non-life? To reduce life to the lifeless is nothing else than to resolve the particular into the general, the complex into the simple, and the apparent exception into the accepted rule. Precisely this is the task set to modern biological science by the goal of "science" as such. The degree of approximation to this goal is the measure of its success; and the unresolved

remainder left at any time denotes its provisional limit to be advanced in the next move.

The earlier goal, we have seen, was to interpret the apparently lifeless in the image of life and to extend life into apparent death. Then, it was the corpse, this primal exhibition of "dead" matter, which was the limit of all understanding and therefore the first thing not to be accepted at its face-value. Today the living, feeling, striving organism has taken over this role and is being unmasked as a *ludibrium materiae*, a subtle hoax of matter. Only when it is a corpse is the body plainly intelligible: then it returns from its puzzling and unorthodox behavior of aliveness to the unambiguous, "familiar" state of a body within the world of bodies, whose general laws provide the canon of all comprehensibility. To approximate the laws of the organic body to this canon, i.e., to efface in *this* sense the boundaries between life and death, is the direction of modern thought on life as a physical fact. Our thinking today is under the ontological dominance of death.

One may object here that we speak of "death" when we mean the mere indifference of matter, which is a neutral character whereas "dead" has an antithetical meaning applying only to what is (or could be, or once was) alive. But in fact, though this is forgotten, the cosmos once *was* alive as perceived by man, and its more recent lifeless image was built up, or left over, in a continuous process of critical subtraction from its fuller original content: at least in this historical sense the mechanistic conception of the universe does contain an antithetic element and is not simply neutral. Moreover, that "subtraction" was set in motion and for long sustained, not by the critical understanding but by dualistic metaphysics which has demonstrable roots in the experience of mortality. *Dualism* is the link that historically mediated between the two extremes which so far we have opposed to one another unhistorically: it is indeed the vehicle of the movement which carried the mind of man from the vitalistic monism of early times to the materialistic monism of our own as to its unpremeditated, even paradoxical result; and it is difficult to imagine how the one could have been reached from the other without this gigantic "detour."

III

In more ways than one, the rise and long ascendancy of dualism are among the most decisive events in the mental history of the race. What matters for our context is the fact that all through its varied career dualism continued to drain the spiritual elements off the physical realm—until, when its tide at last receded, it left in its wake a world strangely denuded of such arresting attributes. One clearly recognizable strand (there are others) in its origin and motivational history is the death theme. The "unto dust shalt thou return" which every corpse calls out to the living, the finality of the state which its decay opposes to the transience of life, must have first and ever again forced "matter" as bare and lifeless into the reluctant human view, and it never ceased to renew the challenge which panvitalistic creeds could, in the funeral cult, appease but not silence. Whether and when this contradiction came to a crisis depended on historical circumstances with which the "death motif" had to ally itself so that at some time it could overwhelm the "life motif." But when this happened, the naïve monism broke up into a dualism with whose growth the traits of the bewildering sight from which it had started—the sight of the corpse—could progressively spread over the face of the physical all. Death in fact conquered external reality.

Soma-sema, the body-a tomb: this Orphic formula expressed the first dualistic answer to the problem of death—now conceived (as that of life, which only now became a problem too) in terms of the interrelation of two different entities, body and soul. The body as such is the grave of the soul, and bodily death is the latter's resurrection. Life dwells like a stranger in the flesh which by its own nature—the nature of the corporeal—is nothing but corpse, seemingly alive by favor of the soul's passing presence in it. Only in death, relinquished by its foreign visitor, does the body return to its original truth, and soul to hers.

This discovery of the "self," made first in earnest (for the West) in the Orphic religion and culminating in the Christian and gnostic conception of an entirely non-mundane inwardness in man, had a curiously polarizing effect on the general picture of reality:

the very possibility of the notion of an "inanimate universe" emerged as the counterpart to the increasingly exclusive stress laid on the *human* soul, on its inner life and its incommensurability with anything in nature.[1] The fateful divorce, stretched to the point of an extreme foreignness which left nothing in common between the parted members, henceforth qualified them both by this mutual exclusion. As the retreating soul drew about itself all spiritual significance and metaphysical dignity, contracting them and itself alike within its innermost being, it left the world divested of all such claims and, though at first decidedly demonic, in the end indifferent to the very question of value either way.

At the peak of the dualistic development, in Gnosticism, the *Soma-sema* simile, in its origin purely human, had come to extend to the physical universe. The whole world is tomb (prison-house, place of exile, etc.) to the soul or spirit, that foreign injection in what is otherwise unrelated to life. There, one might be tempted to say, the matter rests to this day—with the difference that the tomb has meanwhile become empty. With the critical evaporation of the hypostatized spiritual entity, of the "something" which could be thought of as enclosed in that grave or prison, only the walls remained, but these were exceedingly solid. This is, metaphorically speaking, the position of modern materialism, which inherited the estate of a defunct dualism, or what was left of it. Thus the splitting of reality into self and world, inner and outer existence,

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[1] Illuminating in this connection are some of the charges which in the sixth century A. D. Simplicius, one of the last of the Platonists, levelled against his Christian contemporary Johannes Philoponus. He accuses him of blasphemy for likening the light of the heavens to ordinary fire and to glow-worms, its color to that of fish-scales (*in Arist. de caelo*, p. 88, 28 ff.); he also takes him to task for denying, against Aristotle, the eternity of the world (*ibid.*, p. 66, 10). It was a gallant protest of the doomed cosmos-piety against the indignity done to nature under the dispensation of transcendental religion: the submersion of its hierarchy in the common status of mere created things. Almost one thousand years earlier Anaxagoras had been charged by the Athenians with blasphemy for declaring the sun to be a mass of heated metal or stone. Between the two events lie the rise and fall of cosmological religion. The dualistic challenge was more radical than the naturalistic one of the Ionians who were potentially "pantheists." A naturalism, coming after dualism had done its work, was accordingly bound to be more thoroughgoing.

mind and nature, long sanctioned by religious doctrine, prepared the ground for the postdualistic successors.

If dualism was the first, great correction of the animistic-monistic onesidedness, materialist monism which remained as its residue is then the no less onesided, total triumph of the death experience over the life experience. In this sense, the theoretical shock that once issued from the corpse has turned into a constitutive principle, and in a universe formed after the image of the corpse the single, actual corpse has lost its mystery. All the more the one unresolved remainder clashes with the universal norm: the living organism, which seems to resist the dualistic alternative as much as the alternative dualism-monism itself. The quest for its analysis on the terms of general physical law is the running argument with the refractory from the position of the ontology of death—an argument which may yet turn back on the position itself and cause its exclusive claim to be re-appraised. In its heyday, when the new ontology ruled unchallenged, any settling of the contradiction, any solution of the riddle, could only be in favor of death; or the riddle remained, an annoying dualistic rest: either case testifies to the ontological dominance of death. This dominance is the inverted monism with which mankind emerged at the far shore from the waters of dualism which long ago it had entered with the archaic monism of the soul.

But precisely the nakedness of the new monism, from which the general life had been banished and which no transcendent pole complemented anymore, exposed to view the particular, finite life in its metaphysically expatriated identity—and left it to be appraised in its "own" terms after it had so long been measured by other ones. Its solely remaining here-and-now, suspended between beginning and end, acquires a prominence which both preceding views had denied to it. The attention to its peculiar nature, belonging to nothing else, has increased in proportion as, in retreat both from the diffusion of animism and the width of dualistic tension, it has become narrower—in proportion, that is, as the locus of life within being has shrunk to the special case of the organism in its conditioning earthly environment. The conditioning, life-enabling character of that environment is in turn an improbable accident of a universe alien to life and indifferent

in its material laws. All modern theories of life are to be understood against this backdrop of an ontology of death from which each single life must coax or bully its lease, only to be swallowed up by it in the end.

The road through dualism here briefly indicated marks the irreversible time-order of the two positions, and dualism itself represents so far the most momentous phase in the history of thought, whose achievement, however overtaken, can never be undone. The discovery of the separate spheres of spirit and matter which split primeval monism asunder, created forever a new theoretical situation. From the hard-won observation that there can be matter without spirit, dualism inferred the unobserved reverse that spirit can also be without matter. Irrespective of the tenability of the ontological thesis, the essential difference of the two had now come into view, and their dualistic separation inspired the resolute spelling-out of both their natures in their stark otherness, which was never to be confounded again. Every conception of being that can come thereafter is in essence, not merely in time, post-dualistic, as the preceding one was essentially pre-dualistic. As in the latter, the specificness and difference of the two fundamental dimensions was not yet discovered (so that its monism was naïvely unproblematic, disturbed only by the experience of death and gradually eroded by technology—until theoretically selfconscious dualism spelled the end of this and all naïveté), so has any post-dualistic theory of being inescapably to deal with the two pieces which dualism left behind, and concerning which it can be monistic only at the price of choosing between them, i.e., of opting for one of them—at least so long as the dualistic heritage still enforces the recognition of its alternative. With this alternative at its point of departure, any post-dualistic monism includes a decision which it has made for one or the other side; that is to say, it is itself of an alternative and thus partial nature, having its opposite as the excluded possibility with it.

It follows that in the post-dualistic situation there are, on principle, not one, but two possibilities of monism, represented by modern materialism and modern idealism respectively: they both presuppose the ontological polarization which dualism had generated, and either takes its stand in one of the two poles, to

comprehend from this vantage point the whole of reality. They are thus in their origin, though certainly not in their intention, partial monisms, unlike the integral monism of prehistory in which the two sides were still fused undifferentiatedly. There is no returning to this: dualism has not been an arbitrary invention, for the two-ness which it asserts is grounded in reality itself. A new, integral, i.e., philosophical monism cannot undo the polarity: it must absorb it into a higher unity of existence from which the opposites issue as faces of its being or phases of its becoming. It must take up the problem which originally gave rise to dualism.

IV

The problem is still the same: the existence of feeling life in an unfeeling world of matter which in death triumphs over it. If its dualistic solution is theoretically unsatisfactory, the two partial monisms—materialism and idealism— at bottom evade it, each in its own manner of onesidedness. Their means of unification, i.e., of reduction to the chosen denominator, is the distinction of primary and secondary reality: of substance and function (or "epiphenomenon") in the case of materialism, of consciousness and appearance in the case of idealism. As an ontological position, i.e., as serious monism, either standpoint claims totality for itself and thus excludes the other. But since the point of departure in either case is partial with respect to integral reality, they severally embody the internal contradiction of a partial monism—a contradiction which betrays itself in the failure of their reduction of one to the other element. In the case of materialism, this failure happens in relation to consciousness, in that of idealism, in relation to the thing-in-itself.

Both standpoints, it is true, can dissemble their monistic, i.e., ontological character and, rather than trying to pass for total views of being, try to pass for a division of labor in the cultivation of two separate fields of reality —their own separateness thus resting first on the difference of their subjects, which naturally demands different methods. We then would have a phenomenology of consciousness and a physics of extension, and the method of one discipline would

be as necessarily idealistic as that of the other materialistic. Their separation would then be not ontological, according to alternative concepts of being, but "ontic," according to subject matter. Here the mutual relation of the two seems to be that, not of alternative, but of complementation: "sciences of nature—sciences of mind." But this peaceful coexistence presupposes that the two "fields" are in fact separate, and can be isolated from each other. Precisely this is not the case. The fact of life, as the psychophysical unity which the organism exhibits, renders the separation illusory. The actual coincidence of inwardness and outwardness in the *body* compels the two ways of knowledge to define their relation otherwise than by separate subjects, otherwise, also, than as complementary descriptions of the same subject from different "sides" which can eschew the question of how those abstract aspects concretely cohere in being. For such a descriptive abstention, which is to insure metaphysical neutrality, could be maintained only on condition that the two fields of phenomena are closed in themselves at least qua phenomena and do not transcend themselves by their own contents: that either one can be described entirely without drawing in the other. Yet precisely our living body constitutes that very self-transcendence in either direction and thereby makes the methodological *epoché* founder on its rock. It must be described as extended and inert, but equally as feeling and willing—and neither of the two descriptions can be carried to its end without trespass into the sphere of the other and without prejudging it. The physical-outward description cannot be carried to its end without compromising the freedom and thus the genuine reality of the mind; the vitalistic-inward description not without compromising the total determination and autarky of the "extended" realm. Dualism, when its work was done, had left behind the "extended" as the lifeless and unfeeling, and the body undeniably is a part of this extended: either, then, it is essentially the same as the extended in general—then its being alive is not understood; or it is *sui generis*—then the exception claimed for it is not to be understood and calls into question the whole rule, i.e., the materialist interpretation of substance as such, along with the pure properties of indifferent extension. The same goes, *mutatis mutandis*, for the other side, that of idealist consciousness. Dual-

ism had left it behind as the uncorporeal absolutely, the unextended and purely inward per se, and the "body" as the sensible field of feeling and volition belongs to this inwardness itself: either, then, as a part of the total phenomenal extension it is but one among the "external ideas" ("cogitations") of consciousness—then its being the body *of* this consciousness, its being *my* body, my extended "I" and my share of the world of extension, is not understood; or life and inwardness are really extended through it ("to the tips of my fingers"), it really is "I"—then it is, even though phenomenally extended, not an idea of consciousness but the actual outward extent of its own inner spatiality which itself occupies space in the world: and therewith it calls into question the whole idealist interpretation of consciousness as opposed to the entire world of extension.

Thus the organic body signifies the latent crisis of every known ontology and the criterion of "any future one which will be able to come forward as a science." As it was first the body on which, in the fact of death, that antithesis of life and non-life became manifest, whose relentless pressure on thought destroyed primitive panvitalism and caused the image of being to split, so it is conversely the concrete unity manifest in its *life* on which, in turn, the dualism of the two substances founders, and again this bi-unity which also brings to grief both alternatives branching off from dualism, whenever they—as they cannot help doing—enlarge themselves into total ontologies. Indeed, it is this very bi-unity which compels them thus to enlarge themselves, i.e., to transgress their boundaries, and prevents them from taking shelter in the seeming neutrality of mere part areas or part aspects. The living body that can die, that has world and itself belongs to the world, that feels and itself can be felt, whose outward form is organism and causality, and whose inward form is selfhood and finality: this body is the memento of the still unsolved question of ontology "what is being?" and must be the canon of coming attempts at its solution. These attempts must move beyond the partial abstractions ("body and soul," "extension and thought," and the like) toward the hidden ground of their unity and thus strive for an integral monism on a plane above the solidified alternatives.

V

The problem of life, centered in the problem of the body, is thus a cardinal theme for ontology and the constant disturbance of its latter-day antithetical positions in materialism and idealism alike. It is characteristic of the post-dualistic situation that the problem poses itself today as that of life and not of death: this inversion is the end-result of that contraction of life from the whole of nature into its distinct singularity which began with the first dawn of dualistic lightening of the indistinctness. Against the enormous boundary transgression of primordial monism which made life coextensive with being, discrimination could only mean, first, discovery of lifeless matter as such, and then, ever increasing expansion of the extent of the lifeless—until this in turn became coextensive with being. Now obviously, as expression of this post-dualistic theoretical situation, materialism is the more interesting and more serious variant of modern ontology than idealism. For among the totality of its objects—bodies in general—materialism lets itself in earnest also encounter the living body; and since it is bound to subject it, too, to its principles it exposes itself to the real ontological test and with it to the risk of failure: it gives itself the opportunity of knocking against its limit—and there against the ontological problem. Idealism is able to evade it: it can always from the secure standpoint of pure consciousness, artificial as it is, interpret "the body," like all other bodies, as external "idea" or "phenomenon" in its intentional horizon and can thus disown the corporeality of the self: by this means it saves itself the problem of life as well as of death. This was the reason why at the outset we chose materialism as the representative of post-dualistic ontology (the "ontology of death") and as the true counterpart to the pre-dualistic ontology of panvitalism. Materialism is the real ontology of our world since the Renaissance, the real heir to dualism, i.e., to its residual estate, and with it must be our discourse. Only with a "realist" standpoint can there be fruitful discourse anyway, whereas an idealistic one can slip through one's fingers.

Moreover, it can be shown that the idealism of the philosophy of consciousness is itself but a complement, an epiphenomenon as

it were, of materialism and thus in the strict sense also one face of the ontology of death. This shall be indicated here in just one respect. Only a world objectified to pure extensive outwardness, as materialism conceives it, leaves opposite itself a pure consciousness which has no share in it, in its dimension and its function—which no longer acts but merely beholds. And vice versa, it is this bodyless, merely beholding consciousness for which reality must turn into series of points juxtaposed in space and succeeding in time: points of extension necessarily as external to one another as they all together are to consciousness and therefore offering no other rules of order than those of extraneous collocation and sequence. Indeed, without the body by which we are ourselves an actual part of the world and experience the nature of force and action in self-performance, our knowledge—a merely "perceptive," beholding knowledge—of the world (in that case truly "external world" with no real transition from myself to it) would really be reduced to Hume's model, viz., to sequences of contents external and indifferent to one another, regarding which there could not even arise the suspicion of an inner connection, of any relation other than the spatio-temporal ones, nor the least justification for postulating it. Causality here becomes a fiction—on a psychological basis left groundless itself.

At this agnostic resignation modern physics has arrived from its own end, i.e., from its materialist premisses which by the road of absolute externalization must lead to the same skeptical framing of the concept of causality as the theory of consciousness must by its road of absolute internalization. Neither can do otherwise, and both from the same cause: pure consciousness is as little alive as the pure matter confronting it. Accordingly, the one can as little generate the aliveness of active connection in its understanding as the other can present it to perception. Both are fission products of the ontology of death to which the dualistic anatomy of being had led. Note that this renders them helpless, not just in dealing with life, but already on the subject of general causality. In the latter field, that of mechanical law, transcendental and materialist theory alike had claimed their principal triumph, for which to forego the knowledge of organic teleology seemed not too high a price to pay. However, it seems that in the long run no part

of a whole can profit from what that whole loses in another part, and in the end even general causality loses in intelligibility what the elimination of life was meant to secure for it in terms of scientific knowledge. The fate of the causality problem in idealist epistemology on the one hand and in materialist physics on the other bespeaks the fact that both positions, considered ontologically, are fragmentary, residual products of dualism, and both are merely consistent when they, each by its own kind of skepsis, acknowledge the inevitable outcome of their isolation, viz., the inexplicability of that which through the sundering has become inexplicable. The artificial sundering of *res cogitans* and *res extensa* in the heritage of dualism, with the extrusion between them of "life": this double-faced ontology of death creates problems which it has rendered unsolvable from the start.

But is there not contradiction here? Has not the discrimination of the lifeless and the living first made possible the distinct articulation of what is peculiar to life? And has this not benefited the "spirit," which as it were drew to itself what there was of life in the universe and concentrated it within itself as "consciousness?" If matter was left dead on one side, then surely consciousness, brought into relief against it on the other side and becoming heir to all animistic vitality, should be the repository, even the distillate of life? But life does not bear distillation: it is somewhere between the purified aspects—in their concretion. The abstractions themselves do not live. In truth, we repeat, the pure consciousness is as little alive as the pure matter standing over against it—and, by the same token, as little mortal. It lives as departed spirits live and cannot understand the world anymore. To it the world is dead as it is dead to the world. The dualistic antithesis leads not to a heightening of the features of life through their concentration on one side, but to a deadening of both sides through their separation from the living middle. This deadening exacts its revenge in the fact that—not to speak of the riddle of life—even for the interpretation of the external regularity in the movements of matter, the image of a causality by active force no longer finds legitimation in any admitted first-hand givenness.

VI

Here we recall Kant's answer to Hume's skeptical challenge which claimed to supply just that legitimation, not indeed in a "given," but in an a priori structure of the mind. However, the transcendental solution of the problem which heroically undertakes to ground causality and its objective meaning in the pure consciousness alone, does not escape the truth that you cannot derive the concreteness from one of its abstractions. The success of Kant's attempted solution depends, *inter alia*, essentially on the proof that "causation" is indeed a concept of the pure understanding (after that, on showing why it should be valid objectively). But an unprejudiced examination will find that not the pure understanding but only the concrete bodily life, in the actual interplay of its self-feeling powers with the world, can be the source of the "idea" of force and thus of cause. The understanding as such knows merely of reason and consequence, not of cause and effect: these are a connection of reality by means of force, not of ideality by means of form. The experience of living force, one's own, namely, in the acting of the body, is the experiential basis for the abstractions of the general concepts of action and causation; and the "schematism" of *directed* bodily *movement*, not of neutrally receptive intuition, mediates between the formality of the understanding and the dynamics of the real. Causality is thus not an a priori basis of experience, but itself a basic experience. That experience has its seat in the *effort* I must make to overcome the resistance of worldly matter in my acting and to resist the impact of worldly matter upon myself. This happens through and with my body, with its extensive outwardness and its intensive inwardness at once, both of which are genuine aspects of myself. And advancing from my body, nay, myself advancing bodily, I build up in the image of its basic experience the dynamic image of the world—a world of force and resistance, action and inertia, cause and effect. Thus causality is not the a priori of experience in the understanding but the universal extrapolation from proprio-bodily prime experience into the whole of reality. It is rooted in just the point of actual, live transcendence of the self, the point where inwardness actively transcends itself into the outward and con-

tinues itself into it with its actions. This point is the intensive-extensive body in which the self exists, at once with itself (intensive) and in the midst of the world (extensive). Causality is primarily a finding of the practical, not of the theoretical self, of its activity, not of its perception—an experience of the one, not a law of the other.

Admittedly, whether the universal extrapolation which in fact, and irresistibly, we make from proprio-bodily experience is also rationally justified, is a question for a philosophical critique which we must here leave open. It is in the first place, however, an ontological and not an epistemological question. In ontology belongs also the general problem of anthropomorphism which also raises its head at this point. The anathema on any kind of anthropomorphism, even of zoomorphism, in connection with nature—this in its absoluteness a specifically dualistic and post-dualistic prohibition—may well turn out to be, in this extreme form, a prejudice. Perhaps, rightly understood, man *is* after all the measure of all things—not indeed through the legislation of his reason but through the exemplar of his psycho-physical totality which represents the maximum of concrete ontological completeness known to us: a completeness *from which*, reductively, the species of being may have to be determined by way of progressive ontological subtraction down to the minimum of bare elementary matter (instead of the complete being constructed from this basis by cummulative addition). The question is still open whether life is a quantitative complication in the arrangement of matter, and its freedom and purposiveness nothing but an apparent blurring of its simple, unambiguous determinacy through the massed complexity as such (a fact of our bafflement rather than of its own nature), or whether, contrariwise, "dead" matter, as one extreme of a spectrum, represents a limiting mode of the properties revealed by feeling life, their reduction to the near-zero minimum of inchoateness: in which case its bare, inertial determination would be dormant, as yet unawakened freedom. The ontological justification for this question lies in the fact that the living body is the archetype of the concrete, and being *my* body it is, in its immediacy of inwardness and outwardness in one, the *only* fully given concrete of experience in general. Its actual, concrete fullness teaches

us that matter in space, otherwise experienced only from without, *may* have an inner horizon too and that, therefore, its extended being need not be its whole being. Seen from the only true concreteness furnished to us, both pure "extension" and pure "thought" may well appear as mere abstractions.

Independently, however, of this metaphysical question of a unity of being and the propositions derivable from it if granted, independently also, therefore, of the question concerning the *right* of the de facto extrapolation from our corporeality, there is the plain fact that *without* the body and its elementary self-experience, without this "whence" of our most general, all-encompassing extrapolation into the whole of reality, there could be no idea whatever of force and action in the world and thus of a dynamic connection of all things: no idea, in short, of any "nature" at all. Idealism—in that respect the faithful mirror image of materialism—by ranging the body entirely among the external objects, thus understanding it as an object of experience and not its source, as datum for the subject and not as active-passive reality of the subject, has deprived itself of the possibility to go beyond a rule of external orders of sequences and grasp a real connection of things rooted in their own nature—be it in the form of efficient or final causation. (On this, the transcendental standpoint has no say anyway, whatever its historical preference.) But whichever causality it be, on this point Hume's critique was right, that it is not met with in any perception, and that the nexus between the data is not a datum itself—not a perceived content. Force indeed is not a datum, but an "actum" humanly present in effort. And effort is surely not a percept, even less a form of the synthesis of percepts. But objectifying thought is wedded to perception ("intuition" = "presentational immediacy") and thus cannot encounter what is not contained therein.

VII

Thus it appears that waiving the intelligibility of life—the price which modern knowledge was willing to pay for its title to the greater part of reality—renders the world unintelligible as well. And the reduction of teleological to mechanical causality, great as

its advantages are for analytical description, has gained nothing in the matter of comprehending the nexus itself: the one is no less mysterious than the other.

Our reflections were intended to show in what sense the problem of life, and with it that of the body, ought to stand in the center of ontology and, to some extent, also the center of epistemology. Life means material life, i.e., living body, i.e., organic being. In the body, the knot of being is tied which dualism does not unravel but cut. Materialism and idealism, each from its end, try to smooth it out but get caught in it. The central position of the problem of life means not only that it must be accorded a decisive voice in judging any given ontology but also that any treatment of itself must summon the whole of ontology. To this whole belong the hitherto unrealized possibilities of ontology, even if they happen to teach more on posing than on solving the problem. Our considerations have shown that not even "animism," i.e., the panvitalism of the dawn, is to be excluded from the ontological evidence that has to be weighed: the principle of the interpretation of being which it, however preconceptually, represents is not really done away with even from the perspective of modern knowledge.[2] Yet the decisive phase in the unfolding of the problem, so we found, was dualism, which also in other respects represents the most pregnant chapter in the history of man's interpretation of being and himself. At its hands, the paradox of life received its most pointed antithetical articulation and, on its expiration, was left behind in its most irreconcilable form. Lastly, we found that, of the post-dualistic positions which divided the dualistic legacy between them, materialism has an advantage over idealism as a meeting ground with the problem of life, since this problem can be less easily evaded there. One sign of this is that materialism, herein more faithful to the dualistic bequest, knows of death whereas idealism has forgotten it. Also the thinker himself is here less easily bribed. In materialism, he looks his own negation in the eye; but since

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[2] One is reminded of the panpsychism of a Teilhard de Chardin, or (on a considerably higher philosophical plane) of Whitehead's theory of all actuality as "feeling."

he at the same time, in what he does by thinking, exemplifies the very case to which his thought denies a place, he is here in less danger of forgetting one side of the question than is the follower of idealism, which with the primacy of thought, so flattering to the thinker, has taken his side in advance.

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