Ethical and Esthetic Consciousness
as Sources of Doubt about
the Interpreted World

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Dr. Ernst J. Meyer
Damascus, Virginia

Dear Dr. Meyer:

I regret that we are unable to provide space in our journal for your paper, "Ethical and Esthetic Consciousness as Sources of Doubt About the Interpreted World." There is an unusually large amount of material on hand, and it is against our policy to hold papers an excessively long time.

Very truly yours,

Marvin Farber

Marvin Farber, Editor

Doubt is a habit of mind. What doubt 'is' can no more be defined than what vision 'is' or what thought 'is'. If I am to explain what I mean by doubt, I will not succeed by inventing a definition. Instead I must demonstrate its function. On this premise communication becomes the teaching of skills rather than the transmission of propositions. Learning is not the committing to memory of propositional knowledge; it is the endeavor to follow the progression of thought. As thought is imitated it becomes familiar. The mind dwells on familiar thoughts and exercises itself in repeating them, varying them, testing, and applying them. Through such exercise the mind acquires facility, the foreign concept is naturalized, and knowledge is established.

It is my experience that the world most immediate to me is a world of ideas, to be exact: a world within a world, a private world within a public world, a world of ideas within a world of nature. Far be it from me to deny or even to disparage the consistency and power of what is popularly called the physical world. How well I am aware of its presence! All I contend is that the physical world is far less adequately comprehended by us than we think. When our thought naively intends the natural world, it all too often finds not what it seeks. Instead of the natural world, it encounters only the

conceptual world interposed. Doubt is the intellectual virtuosity that has learned to distinguish between the two.

Once the distinction between the natural and the conceptual worlds suggests itself, I am obliged to investigate the contrast between them, if only to preserve the rectitude of my knowledge. The more familiar the distinction becomes, the more I become convinced that however concrete the natural world may be in its own right, all that I can ever comprehend of it will be a certain constellation of images and a progression of judgments in my own mind. These images and these judgments I call interpretation. Both in their genesis and in their evolution they are immediately dependent upon the natural world that they reflect; at the same time they undeniably remain the unique exhibition of my own mental function. It appears possible to postulate without contradiction a natural world of utter reality peopled by sensitive and rational human beings like myself. By incessant interaction with that reality we may derive a conceptual image, unsubstantial yet eminently useful, of the natural world. Communication among us consists of the elaboration, dissemination, and interpretation of an intricate pattern of conceptual imagery. Such is the understanding of ourselves as rational beings, of our intellectual relationship to each other and to our common world in which my inquiry is grounded.

As I trace the origin of my scepticism concerning the conceptual world, I find that the most compelling occasions for doubt arise when consciousness is preoccupied with ethical or esthetic phenomena. Thus the distinction between the natural and the conceptual world sheds light not only on my own experience, but it facilitates a reexamination of the problems that have become classical in our intellectual tradition: What is soul? What is reality? What is knowledge? What is virtue? What is beauty? The trivial formulas in which these concepts have often been asserted or denied tend to make inquiry concerning them seem ridiculous and vain. These questions take on a new significance once they are understood as monuments to the discrepancy between the natural and the conceptual world. Ethical and esthetic consciousness are especially cognizant of this discrepancy. For this reason, ethical and esthetic consciousness are preeminent sources of doubt about the conceptual world. This proposition defines the intersection of ethical, esthetic, and psychological studies. It summarizes investigations into the pleasures of beauty, the imperatives of virtue, the implications of knowledge, and the structure of mind. As such a summary it represents the conclusion, not the premise of my argument. If this thesis sounds unlikely, my task is to make it plausible, perhaps inescapable, if only the reader will agree that the topic is deserving of thought.

The argument should begin not with the assertion of its conclusions but with the definition of its presuppositions:

Let it be granted that we live in an identical world of nature, that our minds are comparable, and likewise the conceptual worlds they fashion. Then let us use the term 'experience' to denote the unqualified relationship of the individual mind to the fragment of the natural world of which it is momentarily aware. Experience is the fundamental bond between mind and reality; my own encounter with the natural world must be comparable with that of other men. My thought will be meaningful to the reader only in so far as there is between us a community of experience; my argument will be comprehensible only to the extent to which my conception of that experience is both adequate and communicable.

Though reality be identical, though men and their conceptions be comparable, the common experience which I postulate as the basis of communication is elusive. Experience is universally accepted as a standard of reference; the description of experience by contrast is invariably distorted, superficially by the intellectual fashions of the day, basically by experience's incapacity of entering into objective formulas. Experience is the most authentic of all the functions of mind. It is prior both to conceptual thought and to language. Because of its primacy, experience is all the more difficult to demonstrate in its immediacy and purity. If we succeed in that demonstration, we may then use experience as a standard for measuring the many rationalizations that dominate our thought.

It may appear paradoxical that the definition of experience as the naive, primary disposition of mind in the natural world should be obscure. Everyone is ready to assume that his experience is self-explanatory, and almost no one is prepared to reflect seriously on it. The capacity to reflect upon experience divides men into two sorts, those who continue to insist that it is self-explanatory and unworthy of further thought, and those others in whom the reflection on experience kindles the flame of doubt. The history of thought is replete with examples of the opposition of these two intellectual attitudes. There are always men to whom the most difficult of problems, the nature of light, the constellation of the stars, the structure of matter, the power of deity, for example, are self-evident; and the confident ones have always outnumbered those who were puzzled and uncertain. Psychologically the acquiescence to what is given betrays the self-satisfaction of consciousness. Logically it implies acceptance of formulas which will prove to be vapid or tautologous. Our essay however must make its appeal to the mind that is puzzled.

When the validity of the problem is granted, disagreement will arise about the method by which it is to be investigated. The casual reader will suppose that the study and analysis of experience should be the task of some particular science such as anthropology or psychology. Or, if he recognizes the limitations of all hitherto developed disciplines, he may assume that this investigation should be the task of scientific method

in a specialty not yet defined. Scientific methods, he should like to believe, will be more accurate and trustworthy than such apparently random cogitations as ours. It is argued that just as science has defined the structure of the physical world, it will someday explain the nature of self and of experience. Once science shall have made sufficient progress, no question of import need remain closed to its investigations. This confidence in science is based on a specific historical interpretation of what science is and of what it has accomplished in the past. It is our choice not to accept this interpretation; we prefer not to share the faith in scientific method which it implies. The reasons for our choice will become apparent as we proceed.

Scientific principles may not be presupposed by us, scientific methods may not be employed in our analyses, because the structure and implications of science are themselves topics to be scrutinized in the context of our study. Various scientific disciplines, to be sure, have an interest in the problems we discuss, but we must deny their jurisdiction over our investigation and reject their eager offers of help. Closer inspection will show that what science can contribute to topics such as ours contains too many contradictions and inconsistencies. While these may properly be ignored in the pursuit of purely technical goals, they would introduce irreparable confusion into our present undertaking, were we to admit them. However invincible scientific logic may be within its own frame

of reference, from our point of view scientific method has irretrievable faults. These faults of scientific thought weaken its foundations, and the weakness of the foundations limits the dimension and the weight of the edifice they can support.

Contrary to the tacit assumptions of superficial erudition, knowledge is not self-explanatory and its limitations are not self-evident. All knowledge would be unintelligible, except in the context of inapparent presuppositions. It would be ineffective if it were not sustained by unconscious habits of thought. Those presuppositions make us receptive for knowledge; those habits enable us to use it. Their nurture and transmission is the chief function of education among us. They constitute the very core of our culture. These structural and functional presuppositions of knowledge must be made explicit if knowledge itself is to be understood and if its errors and inadequacies are to be explained.

The inadequacies of knowledge, its errors and gaps, are apparent most of all to the scientist himself, and he has learned to exploit them as occasions for emending his theory. It is a significant capacity of scientific method (in contrast for example to theology) that its errors should systematically be made sources of its revision. All the more remarkable is that this revision far from threatening, should confirm its theoretical basis. The self-correction implicit in scientific thought makes it invulnerable to criticism, largely because

the errors corrected are trivial and the emendations superficial. Corrections are motivated by a specific insufficiency and content themselves with repairing an apparently circumscribed defect. Scientific theory is incapable of initiating or sustaining an investigation such as ours, committed as we are to questioning both the foundation and the structure of scientific theory. Science is the logical refinement of 'common sense', and both are self-satisfied in their conceptual worlds. What is needful for us is a radical transition into a different realm of thought.

The value of thought is commonly measured by its applicability to practice. We note that the application of thought often seems remote, and the practice which it promotes is sometimes inapparent. By the same token let it be suggested that no theory, however telling its logical priority, ought ever be considered a practical prerequisite to any particular course of action. We are too much committed to the fallacy that what we do follows directly from what we think. It is not so! What we do follows from what we are, and what we think likewise follows from what we are. (Thought is a kind of action.) Agreed that what we are follows in part from what we do and think over a protracted period of time. Yet the causal relationship between thought and action, though it be real, is remote and circumstantial. Nations are governed, businesses promoted, wars are fought, fortunes are made and lost, even

the secrets of nature are discovered and demonstrated by men who have no time for problems such as ours; who deny them altogether, or who presume to do them justice with a single dogmatic assertion.

To the problems which we have raised belong traditional answers. On the surface our intellectual tradition encourages questions; actually it interdicts all but the trivial ones. The very formulation of our problem implies doubt of the answers that have been given, and disrespect to the tradition that presumes to answer them conclusively. It would be futile to attempt a summary of those answers. They are concealed not only in traditional formulas which are accessible, but even more potently in judgments which are inaccessible to inspection, except in the instant of thought which they govern. In my unqualified recourse to experience, I have had to ignore the precepts both of deism and of rationalism. They are the two popular metaphysical theories of our time which seem to support the social and the scientific orders respectively. Their defenders will criticise me although I intend them no harm. They will accuse me on the one hand of being irrational, because I fail to take the logical-scientific catechism at face value. On the other hand they will blame me for being ungodly, because I find it unnecessary to assign to deity his traditional place at the head of the hierarchy of concepts. Without disparaging the cardinal roles which deism and rationalism have in our

social and intellectual existence, we may reject their demands upon our loyalty. Their insistent claims upon our minds are more than inappropriate. To demand reason where reason cannot apply is self-contradictory. To worship reason is to assert reason irrationally, and to deny in practice what one affirms in proposition. The reality of God, let it be noted, would not need our assent. It is a mockery to propose a god so frail that his existence requires the constant endorsement of loquacious believers, or a god so fickle that he sulks whenever his name is not graced with the customary adjectives.

The misunderstandings discussed thus far arise for those who consider our questions superfluous, for those who are troubled that some of our answers might conflict with familiar beliefs. More disconcerting by far is the confusion created not by the unwillingness but by the inability to follow the argument. The foremost cause of confusion is probably uncertainty about the function of language. Unwittingly one assumes that language can provide a logical image of reality. The constitution and the processes of nature are thought to be exhaustively described by language. Conversely, it is assumed that for all the concepts that evolve from our pattern of speech, there ought somewhere in nature to exist a demonstrable prototype. Though rarely explicit, both of these assumptions are powerful determinants to our use and interpretation of language. For all their inconspicuousness, they are sources

of much confusion and obscurity. Therefore it is all the more important to emphasize our convictions to the contrary, that language ought never be considered a copy of reality nor employed in a programmatic description of it. Nor can we condone the inference that our concepts are reflections of a primary reality from which they derive their meaning. However precise or scientific it may become, language must never be accepted as an equivalent of any phase of nature, nor ought language ever be presumed to guide our minds to a definitive understanding of reality.

The interpretation of language which will avoid these pitfalls most effectively is a functional one. Such an understanding of language is readily illustrated by the common experience of conversation. The authentic application of language is speaking to someone; understanding language is being led by anothers thought. The author's intention is always to speak to an audience, and to speak convincingly, even though the audience be potential or anonymous. The original function of language is to seek and to posit an intersubjective agreement about the implications of the natural world. Whenever language appears normative or declarative, it has forsaken its original function as the meeting ground of two minds. The desire to understand and the effort to be understood exert a subtle influence both on the speaker and the hearer. Through their

communication they tend to become alike. The coincidence of mental function predisposes to the approximation of intellectual structure. The human mind, even more than the body, is determined by what it does in a way and to a degree that are not readily apparent. If language is to be understood, it must be judged by its effects on its audience, for it is incomprehensible as an object in itself. Language is meaningful only as the mutual interaction of two minds. These considerations are not to imply that language is unrelated to the natural world. What each author describes is a reflection of his own experience of reality; each reader understands him in the light of an experience that may approximate but does not coincide with the original experience and intention of the author. Nor is any description of experience meaningful except as the reader evaluates it. (It goes without saying, that when an author reads what he himself has written, he becomes his own audience. The implications of this fact, though of interest, need not be amplified here.) If the individual had no relationship of his own to reality, he could neither create nor interpret language.

It is easy, yet very misleading to make an issue of terminology. In order to convey his particular meaning each author must amend the logical schemata which he has been taught. It obscures the issue to attempt to define differences in interpretation as discrepancies in terminology. The reader ought

not be offended if my use of terms does not always coincide with what he had expected. I ask him to ignore that false conceptual reality to which terms are occasionally thought to belong as fixed and unalterable components. My task is not to invent another occult scheme of terminology, but to communicate methods of thought. The reader's task is to apprehend the meaning which the terms are designed to convey. If he is dissatisfied with what he understands, he ought to object to the meaning, not to quarrel with the terms. I do not expect him to accept my propositions as true. Agreement is not my goal. Agreement is a rare and precious phenomenon which must not be demanded prematurely. Our minds being such as they are, we communicate most effectively in propositions. These propositions cannot reflect the tentative exploratory quality of our judgments. The over-interpretation of propositions has become the bane of systematic thought. The very qualities of language precipitate this dilemma from which we can extricate ourselves only by deliberate effort.

The attempt to understand opens the gate to a multitude of historical considerations. One desires to find a precedent; one inquires after causes, influences, and historical significance. Our judgment and our imagination cherish an historical framework into which all new experience must fit. The present must always be reconciled to the past, to be modified and in turn to modify it. The same historical awareness makes it

customary for an author himself to attempt to evaluate his work as continuation, improvement, or correction of a tradition or of a predecessor. I myself shrink from such historical comparison, from humility and from the conviction that historical considerations are out of place in an essay which must include the structure and the implication of historical thought within the bounds of its criticism. Thinkers of note, Kant for example, have often remarked that philosophy must not be confused with its history. Yet Kant especially, hoping as he did to become the Copernicus of metaphysics, wanted to summarize the totality of past thought in order to be able to revise it and to define a pattern for all thought to come. With his historical pretensions, Kant violated his own maxim, I think much to his detriment. The task of an author is not primarily to append himself to a tradition, imaginary or real, but by taking account of all that learned and thoughtful men have said upon his subject, and meeting as it were their imagined objections, to accept the limitations imposed on his thought by his historical environment. Then he may attempt to transcend the hazards of history to write a book which will be meaningful regardless of the year in which it is read.

The most controversial proposition, the one most readily misunderstood and at the same time the most fundamental one, is the thesis which distinguishes between the real world and the world of our knowledge. The former may also be referred

to as the natural world, the latter as the conceptual or the interpreted world. The problem of distinguishing between them is complicated by theories, numerous and complex, which have been invented upon this topic in the past. Without disparaging, defending, or rehabilitating any of those theories of idealism, we shall attempt to take into account the objections that have been leveled against them.

It is difficult to become fully aware how fragmentary our knowledge is. All that we know about an object may be expressed as the sum of the experience which we have of it in the present, our memory of past encounters with it, and the verbal propositions in which both present and past encounters are preserved. This sum of our 'knowledge' of the object is evidently but a fraction of its potential reality for us. We require time to become familiar with an object; our understanding of it is progressive. These facts themselves suggest a distinction between the object and our knowledge. By definition our understanding is sufficient to the requirements of our present relationship to the object, yet its inevitable emendation implies the discrepancy between what the object is and what we know of it. Our knowledge of objects is demonstrably fragmentary; nonetheless, we are accustomed to assume that what we are able to know about an object encompasses its reality, its 'being.' In theory this notion is untenable because it would lead to the absurdity of a relative reality. It should be untenable in practice

as well, except for our readiness to amend our knowledge whenever momentary experience confutes it. Knowledge is very much temporary and fragmentary; it indicates what we have learned and what we may reasonably expect of an object, but it can never predict what we will learn about this object in the future. Our knowledge of an object is logical information only about its present function with regard to us. Any unexpected phenomenon of the object startles us. We attribute any unanticipated quality that it may reveal to us literally to a new object. Then for a moment we recognize the discrepancy between our image of the object and what we muct call the object or thing itself. Then there occurs that vital moment of learning, the instant in which we encounter reality with our conceptual thought, the reflection that reveals to us that we know nothing. Soon the pattern of our thought recrudesces into its familiar complacent dogmatism. We confuse the knowledge that we possess with the object that is so utterly beyond our apprehension. Our continuing readiness to amend our image of it sustains the presumption that our knowledge concerns the reality of the object itself. The image conforms to our most recent experience; we anticipate as best we can the experience to come. The logical inadequacy of our knowledge is obscured by the very openness of mind; our willingness to learn is the implicit admission of our ignorance.

Although we systematically conceal from ourselves the absolute inadequacies of our interpretations of reality, the awareness of this insufficiency is not wholly suppressed. This awareness we may call doubt, and we must consider it a fundamental intellectual virtue. The sensitive mind is troubled by the perpetual failings of its knowledge, by the incongruence between its conceptual anticipations and the momentary encounter with reality. The conscientious mind is concerned by the ever unsolved riddles of ethics and esthetics. The consistent mind is disconcerted by the unjustified separation of ethical, esthetic, and cognitive theory. These inadequacies of our intellectual cosmos are the justifications of doubt.

To many the term doubt will conjure the spectre of a demonic negativism, of moral pessimism, and of cognitive nihilism. Doubt appears the opposite of that comforting and redeeming faith so hopefully preached by all the sects of Christendom. However, the doubt whose sources we shall try to trace is deeper than the naive denial of dogma that disturbs the theologians. The doubt with which we are concerned is the original reappraisal of our existence as persons, the reevaluation of our relation to the natural world. Perhaps, far from being irreligious, this doubt <u>is</u> in fact an authentic religious experience. Doubt does not presume to substitute a new set of assertions for the old ones, nor does it particularly desire to refute

the propositions that are traditional objects of belief. It does not distinguish the strikingly extravagant conceptualizations of religious experience from the more prosaic and much more convincing rationalizations of secular intelligence. Doubt seeks only to make apparent and vivid the limitations of all our conceptions. It appears therefore primarily as a negative tendency, as an attitude that shrinks from assertion without denying or disparaging the fruitfulness of reason. Doubt is the ability to discriminate between real and unreal. It is the intellectual skill that rids mind of its tyranny over itself. Doubt is the ability to think and act consonant with the limitations of knowledge and experience. It is the authentic quality of reason.

The essay is divided into the analysis of five familiar concepts: self, reality, knowledge, ethics, and esthetics. The analyses of these topics were carried out independently; they may be judged without reference one to another. It appears all the more remarkable that the various analyses should coincide on significant points. Like independent excavations which break through into each other in the depths of a mountain, like independent trails that intersect in the heart of an obscure forest, the ethical and esthetic conclusions have coincided with the epistemological ones. Their intersection serves to define the nature of self and of reality. This discovery and its implications, which illuminate much obscurity and resolve many difficulties, are described in these pages.

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The problems of knowledge, of ethics, and of esthetics have common roots in the nature of the human spirit; to it they may all be referred as to a common denominator. Our epistemological, ethical, and esthetic concerns are directed toward one and the same phenomenon. Always it is one and the same mind that knows, acts, and makes judgments of value. But custom prescribes that ethical and esthetic considerations be employed on a different plane from epistemological ones, as if the object of valuation were radically different from the object of cognition, as if the individual in need of knowledge were distinct from him who sought to act justly or from him who searched for beauty. It has always seemed impractical to measure knowledge with ethical or esthetic criteria; knowledge is presumed to be autonomous. The fact, as the fruit of knowing, is thought to be self-sufficient in its criterion of verity; the truth of facts is considered distinct from virtue and beauty. Conversely, all attempts to understand ethics or esthetics from a scientific point of view have faltered. The more intensively anthropology, psychology, the history of fine arts and the history of civilizations concern themselves with ethical or esthetic phenomena, the more inscrutable the basis of ethical or esthetic valuation becomes, the more questionable its justification. Every child who is well brought up knows that there are actions which are good, and that there are objects whose beauty makes them sources of

incomparable joy. These facts of a common experience constitute the preface to all ethics and to all esthetics, a preamble which no scientific investigation has even begun to explain.

Ethics penetrates into every phase of private and public life. Its source remains unknown but much has been written about the many problems that arise on its periphery. Morality is a favorite topic of dissertation. It raises a multitude of ethical and pseudoethical problems which tend to hide the radical question: Are men compelled to specific actions? If they are not, then why the apparent compunction? And if they are, then who compels them? And to what are they compelled? Is the content of ethical activity the accomplishment of a specific task, the performance of a given action, or the expression of a necessary intention? These questions are presupposed in all ethical discussion. The core of the ethical problem is that the individual strives to act virtuously and that the event in which he participates presents to him the appearance of value. Both the action and the event imply a quality of necessity, irrespective of the specific formulation of the imperative and of the particular context of the action. This quality of necessity is a source of much theoretical confusion in the analysis of ethics. On the one hand it is easy enough to supply words or phrases to designate it: absolute, innate, inspired, divine, transcendental, any of them will do.

None of these terms, however, is able to give a consistent explanation of empirical data; none of them can reconcile the discrepancies between the ideals of virtue of different individuals under different social circumstances. Conversely, it is simple enough to postulate morality to be accidental, a matter of convenience, of habit, of social adaptation perhaps. All such explanation, however, ignores the individual's conviction, latent or expressed, that he acts of necessity.

Attempts to define the problems of ethics invariably impinge upon an internal contradiction which may be called the ethical antinomy. The resolution of this antinomy, if it were possible, would not only unravel some of the traditional problems of ethics, it would likewise facilitate a reconciliation between ethics and other disciplines. The thesis of the antinomy insists upon the necessity for virtuous action; it implies that in any specific situation, ethical values are always unmistakably to be recognized. The antithesis of the ethical antinomy rejoins that ethical imperatives are products not of necessity but of chance, neither innate nor inspired, but results of training and adaptation. Ethics is an effective disguise for useful rules which fortuitously promote the welfare of society; in no sense, however, are they necessary, absolute, or immutable. In the antithesis of the antinomy the indeterminacy of virtue, so glaringly apparent in any conscientious study of actual problems, receives its most general formulation. This antinomy summarizes the enigma of

all ethical problems. It is incomprehensible that the directives of my conscience, inescapable as they seem to me, should not be meaningful and binding on all individuals under all circumstances. Yet I cannot deny or ignore the evidence indicating that even I myself, not to speak of my fellow men, might in a strange country and in a different age have cherished different and even contradictory ideals. However sincere my convictions, I cannot avoid the admission that my own valuations are haphazard and accidental. Nor is it conceivable that precepts so obviously subject to the vagaries of circumstance should be universally compulsive. One and the same value cannot be both absolute and relative. A contradiction stands at the beginning of all ethical discussion.

The thesis of the antinomy describes an ethical attitude popularly known as idealism. In deference to the more correct epistemological use of the term idealism, we prefer to call it ethical absolutism. Its precepts derive their authority from a progression of values that links each individual instance through maxims, rules, and laws with a single universal ideal of virtue. This ideal--it may have many names or remain nameless--is often called the good or the divine. Transgression of any specification of the ethical code becomes an infraction of divine law. This relationship of ethics to the divine provides the sanction of much written and unwritten moral legislation. A second noteworthy quality of ethical absolutism is

its universal applicability. This characteristic implies that all specific ethical laws should be culturally universal. They cannot be limited by the particular habits or education of the individual to whom they are presumed to apply. The suggestion is that these rules are either known by all men or can be learned by them; no situation is so obscure that the all-embracing ethical prescription should not apply to it. Ethical absolutism presupposes the homogeneity of men. As a matter of fact sensitivity to the moral law has often been proclaimed as the very criterion of humanness. Those beings unable to heed the voice of virtue have often been considered to be inhuman or subhuman, on account of this inability. The ideal of absolute virtue that I presume to follow and to which, I am convinced, my neighbor also owes allegiance, must be valid potentially for all men. Although among the pressures of day to day existence, I may temporarily lose sight of this ideal, yet it remains. Though the will to virtue may on occasion falter, it is never extinguished. Reflecting upon my peculiar situation, I become aware that I as anyone of human kind, from the least to the most worthy, need only diligently search myself to discover both an ideal of the good, and specific directions toward its implementation in the circumstances in which I find myself. Ethical absolutism has far-reaching implications. Through his participation in virtue, the individual becomes an integral element in a

conceptual framework that encompasses not only the totality of human society but that is ultimately extended to the very structure of nature itself. Not only is my goodness identical with the goodness motivating all men everywhere, but it is a complement to the excellence of nature and to all physical objects in their perfection. The bonds which bind the virtuous man to nature are usually expressed through the concept of divinity. My own virtue, the virtue of other men, and the virtue of nature are all reflections of the divine. The values represented by any one individual become part of universal valuation to which all men owe allegiance. This valuation is reflected not only in the many actions of individual virtue, but in the divinely guided course of history, and in the divinely sustained being of all substance in its perfection.

The subjective experiences of ethical valuation becomes the dominant cohesive and controlling influence in the individual's view of the world. Thinkers since Plato have pointed out that it is impossible to conceive of society not ruled by some formula of virtue. However inferior such an ethic might be to that virtue which we claim as our own, yet both would share absolutism as their most essential quality. Far from being an unnatural invention imposed upon the mind, ethical absolutism appears spontaneously wherever the mind is left to meditate upon its own intentions; it is expressive of a proclivity of man himself. Both state and church imbue the purely formal imperatives with specific interpretation. Ethical ab-

solutism must be recognized as the chief expression of the Christian ethic and as the most formidable bulwark of the society that this ethic has built. The compulsion which the state exercises in the enforcement of its laws becomes identified with and symbolic of our inward desire to be guided by necessity. Indeed it must be the task of those who make the laws, and especially of those who enforce them, to nourish this identification. The philosophical ideal of virtue is vague and idenfinite; it is supplemented by the awe-inspiring hypothesis of divine ordinance and the concrete injunctions of secular law.

Ethical absolutism presupposes both a unity of virtue and a unanimity of opinion among men. The fact in itself that such unity never exists and that such unamimity can nowhere be found is the refutation of all these theories. In practice one observes that ethical absolutism finds its most complete expression within a small and isolated group of men who share common prejudices about virtue and who make common cause in defending them. The logical inadequacy of ethical absolutism becomes apparent in practice both on a large scale and in miniature. It is pitiful and tragic to consider to what brutality and violence men will resort in order to promote their concepts of truth and right. None of the concrete theories of absolute virtue will tolerate logical analysis. When faced with specific decisions, the advocates of an absolute

ethic either resort superstitiously to the injunctions of dogma, or they begin disputing among themselves. The ideal of virtue is strongest where it is undefined; perhaps that is why the good is so often referred to as ineffable.

The antithesis to the ethical antinomy is summarized in theories which we call relativistic or empirical. These avoid the difficulties and contradictions of ethical absolutism. They derive their justification from the divergence between the ethical ideals of different ages and countries. No specific ethical ideal will satisfy any two individuals even though they belong to the same community; it will not even satisfy the same individual at different occasions in his life. Even under the most favorable of circumstances ethical theory is difficult to apply. Seldom will a course of action appear as inevitable or unconditional as the thesis of the antinomy would suggest. Though the imperative of any ethical experience derives subjectively from the individual, the content and quality of the ethical ideal which he applies are demonstrably reflections of his experiences and evidently rooted in the environment which nourished his ideas. Absolute ethics is sustained by the compulsion of the individual to virtuous action. When the determination of the individual is ignored, when instead the definition of ethics is based upon the observed actions of all mankind, then absolutism in ethics no longer requires refutation. The very facts of observation will disprove it.

The signal advantage of empirical ethics is its capacity to integrate into its theoretical framework the most diverse of ethical phenomena. Thus it is never embarrassed by being confronted with an ethical value which it had previously ignored. Yet precisely this unprejudiced tolerance makes relativistic ethics unable to account for the compulsive quality which is the core of ethics. The collapse of theories of ethical absolutism leaves a vacuum which any other theory that is to take its place is bound to fill. Explanation is required not only for the multiplicity of ethical convictions, but also for the orientation and intensity of ethical aspirations. Justification is needed for the sanctity with which individuals and society both invest not only the achievements of an entire life, but for the significance which they on occasion attribute to the decisions of each moment. Empirical ethics is unable to provide such explanation partly because it fails to recognize the phenomenon to be explained. The various biological, sociological, and anthropological theories with which relativism would explain ethical compulsion are as a rule but thinly veiled denials of the reality of that compulsion. This denial of the subjective necessity of ethical determination is the common characteristic of all relativistic ethics. With this denial, these theories refute themselves. The ethically conscious individual who is before us is no stranger, no third person, no suitable candidate for psychological or sociological study, no abstract person whose subjectivity might for scientific purposes

be ignored. But it is I, always and only I, who living in an ethical present am forced to significant action and to meaningful decision. The concern of ethics is not primarily about the objective world; it is the concern about the question what must I do. The actions of others concern me and I can interpret them only as if I myself had performed them, 'putting myself in their place', so to speak. This subjective concern is implicit in all my ethical judgments. It seems that although relativistic ethics looks favorably upon the ethical experiences of all men it is genuinely explanatory of none of them. In this light, relativism proves to be a travesty upon the ethical necessity of the subjective self. The universal applicability of its theories on which it prides itself becomes a transparent banality.

The proponents of relativistic ethics deny the validity of subjective valuation. In so doing they involve themselves in a paradox: what they deny is an experience of mind which they being human themselves cannot escape. The weakness of their argument was noted already by Plato. Their very humanness is the irrefutable refutation of their own superficial theorizing. Plato remarked that the representatives of relativism contradict themselves in their own actions. When they say, for example, that all things may be equally true or that all actions may be similarly good, they implicitly deny the value of what they themselves are attempting to assert. They disparage the

presumed excellence of their own thought; they deny the subjective necessity which is the impetus to all constructive and critical human activity. While absolute ethics gives adequate expression to subjective determination, it errs in its attempt to justify and corroborate its tenets in the objective history of individuals or societies. In so doing it tends to bestow the semblance of necessity on all variety of haphazard events. The transference of subjective necessity into the objective world leads to those contradictions by which it is inevitably refuted. Relativism on the contrary presumes to give explanation for all ethical phenomena. In order to do so it must deny the sole premise on which any ethics can rest. With this denial it compromises its ability to account for the direction and purpose of even a single human act.

The theoretical inadequacies of both absolute and empirical theories have become evident. Neither may be relied upon to give the needed and desired prescription for the direction of action in the specific circumstance. While absolute ethics may adequately comprehend the dependence of the acting subject upon the action to be performed, it has no valid reference to the objective world. It will often as not induce the individual to perform actions which he may recognize to be wrong and which he will subsequently regret. Conversely, empirical ethics, though it may be able to give technical advice concerning the most effective means for attaining a particular goal, is handi-

capped by its inability to comprehend the compulsive determination that is the quality of the true ethical action. Perhaps it is fortunate that our theoretical problems seldom have their practical equivalents. In practice, ethical absolutism or ethical relativism are seldom found in anything approaching a pure form. Most individuals who discover themselves acting according to absolute injunctions are inclined to view these injunctions as directives toward constructive personal and social conduct. Likewise, the purely empirical determination of human action is often impelled toward constructive goals by non-empirical considerations. It was Plato's discovery that even empirical determination must rely upon the consciousness of the individual for its impetus and execution. Reference to an intrinsic value of the goal always represents a compromise of the rigidly empirical position. In any case the practical consequences of the two ethical theories are indistinguishable.

If in practice among noble and educated men there is no difference between the consequences of absolute and empirical theories of ethics that fact itself suggests the inadequacy of both theories. We shall attempt to describe a purely theoretical resolution to this contradiction. From all that has been said, it is apparent that in the strict sense none of our actions deserve the name of virtue, nor do laws guiding these acts deserve this appellation. One cannot be blind to the con-

tradicting values of different individuals at different times and one cannot ignore the fact that even those values which guide our actions from day to day have no consistency except that consistency which derives from the awareness that the values are values for some one, that they are his values, and that he is absolutely dependent upon them at the instant of his action. There is then no reason to deny the discrepancy between the achievements of each day and the apparently unattainable ideals which they presume to match. Nor ought one deny the difference between a particular act and ones own exaggerated expectations and pretensions. If one is to remain loyal to ones ideal of virtue, one must repudiate all of its specific realizations and embodiments. One may be satisfied neither with the value which is realized in ones own actions nor with that which is tangible in the objective world.

Probably it is inevitable that the conscientious individual abandon the attempt to examine the value of his own deeds. It is not to imply that he should henceforth be indifferent to the worth of his action; he cannot avoid this concern, although he recognizes the ethical goal of each action to be unattainable, to be objectively speaking, a deception. That he must attempt to win unattainable value is an ironic fact which engenders tolerance, humility, and resignation. Nor is he frightened to observe how often his actions precede the theory that is to guide them.

Consequently, the diligent search for virtue leads not to some formula practical or dogmatic but to a theoretical paradox and to the simple awareness of the limitation of ones knowledge and ones power. The attempt to press beyond this limiting point produces pretense in action and nonsense in language. Then the concepts with which we converse so freely contain not answers to the problem but merely serve to conceal the absence of a solution. Fortunately habits and customs are not inhibited by lack of logical foundation. We continue to act deliberately and decisively because such action is to us an unavoidable necessity. We need to aim toward specific goals. Simultaneously with our disillusionment about our own actions, we become aware that the deeds of other individuals, societies, churches, states, that as a matter of fact even the judgments of the justest of judges should not be called good in an unqualified sense. No circumstances of experience can satisfy the criteria of unqualified goodness.

The knowledge that virtue in an unqualified sense is unattainable, the knowledge that all judgments about virtue are relative and will not stand the test of time, does not diminish our desire for meaningful action. Of all things which he does deliberately man demands that they have significance, purpose and structure. As each action becomes conscious, it is seen to be motivated by a compulsion whose goal, spelled out or implicit, is an unattainable virtue. Yet if the emphasis has

hitherto rested solely on the potential attainability of the goal, our concern may shift to the act itself and to the instant of time which is determined by it. It is characteristic of the ethical attitude that the act and the moment of action coalesce, and that all time becomes nothing but a series of opportunities for virtuous action. As the objective significance of the act is reduced, its definition shrinks, until the only meaningful interpretation remaining is that the act is the subjective fulfillment of time itself. Quite in accordance with this definition the ethically conscious individual experiences the present as a continuing, indeed a well-nigh intolerable, challenge to action. The thought of the many moments of life that have been lost to idleness afflicts the conscientious mind with melancholy. The desire to fulfill the opportunity of each moment grows until it supplants all other ethical aspirations. It is a simple realization that yesterday's acts and yesterday's creations are no longer meaningful today. Our attention must be focused and refocused upon the present. In its ethical meaning all that was done yesterday is estranged and equivocal, remote from us as are the actions of others. The deeds of tomorrow remain even on the eve of their fulfillment vain and empty pretensions. It is only this moment, it is only now, only the thought that presently occupies the mind, only the object that presently weighs upon our hands that can matter. All reality is in the present and all ethical purpose must be exhausted in the fulfillment of momentary opportunity.

Under the acid of a critical analysis all that remains of the moral enthusiasm of youth is this awareness, this need, this overpowering consciousness of the present. We shall call it ethical consciousness.

The critical distinction between experience and its conceptual interpretations has demonstrated much cherished myth to be untenable. Reluctantly we have had to part with much of the treasure of traditional morality; no less reluctantly we have had to reject the ambitious moral schemata of a highly articulate psychology and sociology. Without belittling this loss we point to the discovery of a powerful, original awareness of our subjective integrity. If traditional morality is deprived of its dogmatic foundation, it receives a much broader and firmer basis in the individual consciousness of self.

A modern analytical approach tends to obscure the fundamental similarity of ethics and esthetics. The ancients were better aware of their relationship; they often named the good and the beautiful in a single phrase. It requires but little reflection to identify the experience which is common to them both. That experience is valuation. Depending upon the significance which one attaches to it one will consider ethics and esthetics to be related or disparate. Ethics concerns itself with the valuation of events or of actions. Esthetics is the valuation of objects or appearances. That we should value objects in the world about us and become attached to them will

appear as fundamental a trait of our natures as our valuation of our own actions and of events that concern us.

Certain differences between ethics and esthetics should be pointed out. Ethics has a far larger measure of applicability to our social and political institutions than does esthetics: the ethical behavior of individuals is one of the foundations upon which society is built. The practical functions of esthetics by contrast are far less salient. Esthetic problems have been obscured by the arbitrary limitation of that term to apply to art and to its history. As all meaningful actions and events belong to the realm of ethics, so esthetic considerations are applicable in all circumstances where an object in its appearance is capable of giving us pleasure or pain. We live in a complex realm of vulgar ethics. It is a pseudoethical relationship that compels us to obey for example the rules of traffic, the numerous ordinances with which our governments attempt to rule our lives, the petty regulations of the many institutions that flourish among us. Likewise, we live in a realm of vulgar esthetics. Questions for example of apparel, of decoration, the styling of vehicles, the design of appliances and tools, the structure of commercial buildings, all these may involve truly esthetic considerations which are compromised by vulgar considerations of financial profit or popular approval. In their elaboration and execution, genuine esthetic value is generally disparaged and neglected. The difficulty of fulfilling

true esthetic functions has made it inevitable that fine arts should be the sole representatives of esthetic experience. The exclusive limitation of esthetics to fine arts, however, makes valuation of objects appear esoteric. However, valuation of objects is as inescapable as the valuation of events or actions. Just as any event in which we are involved must appear to us good or bad, so any object in our environment that concerns us takes on the qualities of beauty or, by default, of ugliness.

The search for beauty has much in common with the desire for virtue. It is no less difficult for us to delineate the qualities of beauty in a particular object than to enumerate the elements of virtue in a particular event. In one case as in the other it is impossible to isolate that which is valued. It is not difficult to understand that the antinomy of ethics has its counterpart in an esthetic antinomy: The thesis of the esthetic antinomy insists that there is an absolute quality of beauty which is the common bond between all beautiful objects. It implies that an object which is beautiful to one beholder must be potentially or actually beautiful to all, and that the barriers to the recognition of beauty are mere limitations of human nature. Absolutism in esthetics implies that the beauty which seems haphazardly and evanescently distributed in the physical world, far from being accidental, is a necessary constituent of reality itself and of our experience of it. To say that beauty is absolute is to assert that as it appears in

each object it is the reflection of an ideal quality. This ideal quality belongs in some measure to all objects but in whole measure only to the ideal. Each man, so it is said, carries in him knowledge of this ideal of beauty, applying it like a template to all phenomena that he encounters and discovering its image in all objects that resemble the ideal. Physical limitations and sensual distortions may obscure the ideal but they can never extinguish it. Even the dullest and least sensitive of men possesses a knowledge of beauty and the ability to recognize it when it appears in a favorable light. The sensitive mind in search of a beauty discovers a paradox which is no less striking than the paradox of ethical consciousness. It is when I am faced with a particular experience of beauty, when I am confronted with the objects that are esthetically valuable to me, then I am puzzled to remind myself that values which I can only consider eternal and divine appear to alter from place to place and from time to time. Under different circumstances, were I but older or younger, had I been educated differently, my evaluations should have been radically different or even contradictory. The painting which only yesterday reflected eternal beauty today seems nothing but a partially successful representation; what strikes me as unremarkable today may be tomorrow's unexpected source of inspiration. That is why the realist disputes all contentions about the absolute quality of beauty. He believes that the ideal has no objective existence; he considers it a source of deception.

The sense of beauty, he avers, is acquired not innate. It is no manifestation of the divine but a form of cultural expression of society. The realist denies the subjective feeling of necessity in the valuation of beauty not because he has never experienced it but because, being faithful to scientific disciplines, he is determined to deny subjective feeling in favor of objective demonstrability. Time and again the variety of exthetic ideals repudiates all assertions that the sense of beauty should be universal. Among different races, among different nations, and even for one and the same individual at different times there are many ideals of beauty. Who is competent to judge between the ideals, each one of which demands that it be absolute? Since all of them claim perfection, no order, no hierarchy, is possible among them. By their very insistence upon the absolute, they contradict themselves. Should they be more than dream or deception?

A solution to this problem becomes apparent that as soon as one divests oneself of the prejudice that esthetically valuable objects must have an historical individuality. The illusion that esthetic valuation depends upon historical uniqueness is the chief barrier to the correct interpretation of esthetic value. As soon as one recognizes that there is no fundamental distinction between esthetic pleasures derived from objects of art and from the simple objects of everyday experience, the difficulties of esthetics begin to resolve themselves. The inapparent objects with which we are in daily contact can pro-

vide the mature mind with pleasures which, though they may be less intense, are nonetheless in their kind indistinguishable from the great esthetic delights. A vase of roses on my desk, the clean copy of a manuscript, the neat binding of a valued book, these and their kind, trivial though they be, are familiar, dependable, and essential objects of esthetic experience. Hardly an object may be imagined which by virtue of its purity, wholeness, or durability does not already have or might not readily acquire esthetic value. Each object that surrounds us contributes to our consciousness at the present moment. We value the esthetic object to the extent that it certifies to us our reality in space. If the totality of the objects that surround him determines the consciousness of man, then in a sense his being in space depends upon them. Only in his relationship with esthetically valuable objects does the self become spatially real.

The consequences of our considerations may now be summarized. The esthetic relationship is the bond between self and the object in space. The ethical relationship is the attitude of the self to the events of the present, of real time, - i.e. the present as opposed to the past or future as imagined time, - and to the action by which this present time is determined. Esthetic valuation is evidence of the realization of the self in space. Ethical valuation is the realization of the self in time. These propositions we call the axioms of consciousness. They represent the significant results of our investigation of

ethics and esthetics. They will obtain corroboration and amplification from an inquiry into the pattern of consciousness itself. The derivation of the axioms of consciousness did not require psychological considerations. Simple scrutiny of ethical and esthetic experience shows the dependence of the self on its valuation of objects and upon its valuation of events. The greater the heroism of the action, the more intense the experience of beauty, the more readily demonstrable this dependence will be. If the axioms of consciousness are correct, then their truth should be corroborated by an examination of the structure of the self, whose sufficiency they so seriously impune.

With what justification do we speak of self as an object, demonstrable as an entity and physically discrete? Does each man's awareness of himself assure him at all moments the integrity of this nucleus of his person? Does he properly attribute to himself an existence independent of the world? Does he reasonably assume that this self should be the independent author of all his thoughts? The axioms of consciousness disparage the integrity of self; they give occasion for an analysis of its substance.

The extraordinary esteem in which scientific methods are held in our day leads us to turn first of all to science in our inquiry about nature of self. Biology, anthropology, psychology, sociology, each of these disciplines has some know-

ledge about the human being. All of them are concerned with the human being as object either as an individual or as a member of a group. Their scientific function demands that in so far as possible they ignore all subjective characteristics, and that they attempt to explain that subjective experience which they cannot ignore in terms of objective phenomena. They must translate the question, who am I? into the altogether different question, who is he? or what is man? This unwarranted transference of the question from a subjective into an objective sphere conceals the reason for the all too apparent insufficiency of these sciences. Even psychology which comes closest to the discipline we require fails on this score. All objective knowledge of the human being leaves the enigma of the self untouched. If I were face to face with my twin brother, if all his characteristics were described to me and if they also happened to be mine, still my own self would in no way be comprehended in that description. It would be comprehended in that description no more than in the description of a person altogether foreign to me. Therefore my quest for the specific nature of my self turns to the circumstances of my own physical and intellectual existence. Initially and not unnaturally I attempt to discover in my body as the physical prerequisite of my life the essential qualities of self.

Naturalistic thinkers would like to presume the identity of self and body as an indisputable fact. However, in spite of the coincidence of the limits of sensation and the bound-

aries of action with the physical perimeter of the body, this identity is problematic. Only slight reflection will suggest that the body is but one of the objects with which the self identifies itself and even this identification must be learned. It is not innate; it may be observed to be absent in certain types of mental illness. Furthermore, the identification is qualified; it is neither exclusive nor final. One may identify with the self numerous inanimate objects of which we may say that they belong to us, for example, articles of clothing, possessions of greater or lesser value, whose loss demonstrably injures the self. Aside from physical goods, there are the much more valuable human beings: friends, parents, wives, and children. Often in them we possess and with them we may lose a valuable portion of the self. One may easily elaborate a hierarchy of experiences in which the self may be realized. There should then be no object, however obscure, which might not by some circumstance become essential. Nor would there be any object however dominant that could not become negligible to the consciousness of self. At best the relationship between self and the physical objects of its experience is ambiguous and variable.

This ambiguity and variability is nowhere more clearly demonstrable than in the critical relationshp of self and body. Consciousness is utterly and immediately dependent on the physiologic integrity of the body. We have every reason to assume that with the death of the body, this consciousness rep-

resenting all that we know shall also be extinguished, no less than in a deep sleep. These facts summarize the unrefuted arguments for the identity of self and body. Whatever merits this argument may or may not have, it is summarily vetoed by consciousness. Consciousness derives its identity with the body, and to this denial must be adjudged no mean logical validity. The mind will not be identified with the body, and so long as mind exists it remains true to this determination in all its judgments. I conceive of myself as irrevocably independent of the physical functions of the body. The nerves which tell of warmth or cold, of pain or of the delight of touch, may be temporarily or permanently paralyzed. The eye may grow blind and the ear may grow deaf, yet I conceive of my 'self' as remaining unimpaired, my losses notwithstanding. And what is true from a functional point of view is even more evident from a topological one. Nothing which constitutes itself as an object as a part of my body, not limbs, bones, muscles, sinews, vessels or nerves; nor organs, neither liver nor spleen, kidneys, stomach or lungs, not even heart or brain is accepted by mind as logical prerequisite for its existence or function. For this reason the comtemplation of the human body in its parts, as is required for

example in the study of anatomy, is a frightening task to the unadapted mind. So long as there is consciousness, so long as there is knowledge, judgment, invention, speech and sensation, so long mind exists, all its losses notwithstanding. Its not being, its annihilation by the destruction of physiologic function is so utterly incomprehensible to it that mind will promise itself immortality as an indefinite, unending extension of its mortal experience. Consciousness knows but itself. It knows the world only as a function of itself, and it postulates, consciously or unconsciously, its own existence as a prerequisite to all of its ideas and all of its knowledge. That is why, although mind understands and anticipates its physical demise, it cannot accept the corollary of its own limitations. When death inevitably occurs, when the weakness of the body wanes to the point where life can no longer be sustained, and consciousness is lost, then there occurs no gradual dissolution of the self, but mind experiences in faithful anticipation of a celestial immortality a sudden metamorphosis into the unknown and unknowable.

Its proud assertions of transcendental being notwithstanding, mind is dependent on the very objects with which it refuses ultimate identification. All references to mind as pure subjectivity are elliptical. There is no 'pure' consciousness. Consciousness is always consciousness of some situation in space or of some action in time. The degree of our dependence upon the natural world become most apparent when we consider our-

selves deprived of it. Without sound, without light, without verbal stimuli, without the ability to feel and without the ability to act, the mind disintegrates. Under such circumstances, the mind perishes like a flame deprived of air, although the body may live on. The precise relationship between consciousness and the body is illuminated by the analysis of a single function of sense, for example, of vision. My knowledge that the eye is the organ of sight is not concomitant with the process of vision. As I see, I am not conscious of my eye; neither am I conscious of the other anatomic structures involved in vision. Only when I have learned from repeated experience that occlusion of the eye will blind me, that injury to the eye will distort or destroy vision, only then will my idea of the eye and my experience of vision become identified. In a manner quite comparable, I observe the brain to be the organ of thought. From observation of my own or of others experience, I learn that brain injury is accompanied by intellectual deficit. My own thinking is never accompanied by a consciousness of the cerebral cortex. The awareness of my eye no more accompanies vision than for example the awareness of the retina, of the optic nerve or chiasm, of the optic tract, or of the cerebral cortex. Indeed, in contemplation of the physical structures that subserve vision, vision itself becomes incomprehensible as a process of experience. Likewise, speech becomes inexplicable purely in terms of nerve and muscle function. Our motions and our sensations are self-apparent as

life itself. Whatever the study of physiology accomplishes, it does not make them more comprehensible. At its logical extreme physiology deprives our motions and our sensations of all imaginative and intuitive elements, leaving them ultimately meaningless and impossible to understand.

Although the identification of self with the body is a logical pattern of great practical value, it is by no means an intrinsic characteristic of consciousness. The ancients' belief in transmigration of souls, irrational and unsupported by empirical evidence that it is, suggests how indefinite and ambiguous the bond between mind and body may under circumstances appear. When we identify the eye with vision, the ear with hearing, the brain with thought, we are no longer asserting a physiological concomitant of the action itself, we are already expressing a judgment, the synthetic quality of which is inapparent because of its familiarity. Our whole image of ourselves is a result of a series of such judgments which we have unobtrusively learned to make since infancy and which we are no longer able to question save at the expense of sanity itself. We develop a mental image of ourselves that is comparable to the mental image which we have of other human beings and similar to that which they have of us. This mental image is an integral part of our developing personality. It is centered about the immediate present but it also extends far into the past and projects into the future. Memories grow about it and anticipations are nourished by it. These memories and an-

ticipations open a new field of investigation about the self and its relation to the person, an area which logically belongs to the province of history, but which we must discuss in this context because it is historical considerations that make the impressions of the present plausible and convincing.

Memory preserves the feelings and thoughts of times past and weaves them into the complex image which I have of myself as a person. Whoever reflects upon himself,- and the more educated an individual is, the more he does so,- creates half-consciously with more or less care and cunning the history of his life. Whether this history is expressed and explicit, whether it is phrased in speech or even committed to writing, or whether it silently occupies the mind, perhaps even only on the threshold of consciousness, it nonetheless influences thought and action, however unobtrusively it may do so. It is noteworthy that this historical image remains fragmentary. It must remain logically insufficient because logical sufficiency would presuppose a degree of completeness that is unattainable. At every moment the history of the past is revised from the viewpoint of the present, not only because the present is continuously contributing new facts, but because even events long since past obtain new structure and substance from the changing present. The image which I had of myself only last week, no longer satisfies today's requirements. Diligently yet unaware, I consume my hours and my days with the construction of the history not only of the world but also of myself.

The notion of self as an historical concept centers around my name and is identified with my body as with a symbol. The more purposeful my life is, the more specific will the biography which my mind cherishes become. I am ready at a moments notice not only to summarise the events of my life, but also to justify them. If such a history lacked nothing in authenticity and completeness, it might be assumed to render an exhaustive explanation of the self and might be thought to represent its logical equivalent.

That such is not the case, that in spite of its intricacy the image of myself which I construct must remain a deceptive pretence of thought, will become dramatically apparent if I should happen to find an old letter or a forgotten entry into a diary. Then I would realize how little the self of my imagination coincides with that historical self lost in past time which was responsible for the letter or the notation. Assume that I possessed a continuous documentation of my life from the moment of birth to the present. Such documentation is conceivable with the aid of cinemaphotography and electrical tape recording. Assume that all that had ever impressed my senses, that every word that I had uttered and heard, that every motion of my body and every vision my eyes had ever seen, were immediately available to me as a record for comparison. If in this way I were fettered to the actuality of my past life, how helplessly should I not face that strange deceased yet documented self that technology was able to conjure into my presence! Not only does each day's new point of view contribute to my image

of my self, but each day's measure of oblivion also subtracts from it.

The distinction between the individual and society is complex. Not only is he molded by his relationships with other human beings, with his parents in particular, but from childhood to maturity he identifies himself with his associates. Society, which forms him to be what he is, continues to participate in the subjective experiences to an extent which is difficult to define and impossible to overestimate. To a large measure a man is himself only a member of the group of which he has grown to be a part. He desires to belong, to merge his own individuality with that of others. He derives security from being led, and on occasion, power from leading. The consciousness of ones identity may be transferred from the self to the group, from the citizen to the state, from the believer to the congregation, from the soldier to the army. Beyond the community of mortals is the hypothetical association of immortals. He whose intellectual poverty and physical weakness is not sufficiently compensated by his society on earth, finds a heavenly society to receive him and to complement his infirmities. Little that a man is or does comes of himself; in his contact with other men he learns to think, to feel and to speak. His intellect can be comprehended only as the reflection and expansion of a common intellectual wealth.

Its objective interrelationship with society notwithstanding, the mind by virtue of its subjectivity ultimately disengages itself from the community which nourished it. Ultimately the communal consciousness does not satisfy. Perhaps it is the reflection of man's concern with his own body, and expression of biological necessity that in the end turns his thought toward his inward self. Patriotism, the loyalties to neighbors, even the love of family, prove to be a form of self-assertion. In the final analysis, I discover myself caring only for my own soul. Much honest and dishonest altruism all too often ignores this point. A magnificent egotism arises: the concern about individual salvation. It shatters the fragile conventions of community, and diverts all inventiveness, all power of knowledge, all craft and skill of mind from the multifarious preoccupations of worldly business. They all are enlisted in the urgent exchatological concern of individual salvation.

With relentless compulsion, man's consciousness dominates him. While he boasts of his power, he surmises the frailty of his own self. Whatever he has been at any time in the past, he is now no more, and what is at any present time, he would desire always to remain. The essence of this being is compressed in a single work, full of anticipation and hope, yet heavy with despair: soul. That this soul should be real, as real as the stars, the sun, the mountains and the sea, is the purpose of his prayer. That the soul should be real is the surreptitious intention of his invention of deity. Yet nowhere in the world

of objective reality can he find the soul, and only in the evanescence of his consciousness does he find its vestige.

Sooner even than we fear the proud prowess of our actions falters and the favorite images of of ourselves fade away. We become aware of the limitations of self as an object that stays or as a power that acts. We may then dispose of the childish conception of soul as an object in nature. No longer deceiving ourselves with the fantasies of the soul's concealed integrity or infinite duration, we consider the frailty of consciousness! How dim our vision, how short our memory, how vacillating our judgement, how near at all times we are to sleep, death and oblivion. Consciousness, when it attempts only a slight progression beyond itself, becomes fragmentary, indistinct, awkward and faltering. Where among physical objects, where in the endless chain of events can we find the self preserved? Is not man's very determination to assert himself the undeniable symptom of his weakness? Become what you are, he admonishes himself, know yourself, improve, perfect yourself, become real, repent, turn back to make a new beginning. Then, when his own energy fails him, he implores heaven for purification and redemption. Would all that be necessary, if man were in sure possession of his vaunted self? Except in the throes of religious ecstasy, except in the pangs of emotional depression, it is difficult for him to realize what he is and what he is not, how evanescent, how shadowlike his being. Except for the presence of familiar things, except for the habit which

absorbs him, would man be anything at all? Our question is reasonable and necessary. It grows not from the mystical meditation on intuitions; it springs from a rigid and rational analysis of universally demonstrable experience. Our answer: the compulsion of ethical and esthetic experience is the necessary complement to the failure of the self.

The question, who, when, what am I? becomes the source of great anxiety. It engenders a fear assuaged by no scientific description of man, relieved by no considerations of individual or community history, however vivid or detailed they might be. Nor is this fear removed by reference to the incomprehensible dependence of consciousness on the body. The poignancy of the question may be concealed; but the emptiness, the fear, which it brings is not dispelled. Time and again the suspicion of their insignifance leads men to assert themselves heroically as in war, or with skill and craft as in art, to prove themselves and to confirm their reality.

The enigma remains. The time and place of pure consciousness are mysterious. No interval in time belongs to it except the transient moment of awareness, no place in space except perhaps the limited dimensions of the animal body, that all too fragile and temporary accomodation to which it clings. How then shall consciousness become real, how shall it assert itself? The answer which I propose is as follows: the valuation which consciousness requires for itself, it bestows upon

things in space and events in time. This valuation is esthetic and ethical, and the faculty of the self which is capable of asserting this value is ethical and esthetic consciousness. Let this argument be referred to as the psychological derivation of esthetic and ethical value.

This psychological derivation suggests a dual characteristic of ethical and esthetic values. As an echo of traditional distinction we call them a priori and a posteriori. The form of ethical and esthetic experience, that quality of absoluteness, which appears to cling to all our judgments with irrational tenacity, must be distinguished from the characteristics of the particular thing or episode that is valued. This conclusion was already strongly suggested by the two antinomies. The a priori quality of beauty and virtue is the projection by ethical and esthetic consciousness of absolute value into experience. Tha a posteriori characteristic on the other hand, is that quality of the object which, distinguishing it from other comparable objects of its group predisposes to its becoming the extraordinary vehicle of ethical and esthetic value.

To explain the a priori characteristics of ethical and esthetic experience is the task of psychology, if we use this term to denote our understanding of the subjectivity of man. By this definition psychology should describe the self as the agent that evaluates. Ethical action and esthetic contemplation would appear in their purity unencumbered by the accidental circumstances under which they become apparent. It must

be shown how the exigencies of ethical and esthetic experience serve both to fructify and to paralyze our intellectual efforts, how, for example, ethical and esthetic consciousness may be the sources of doubt about an interpreted world.

The study of values a posteriori leads in very different directions. It will determine under what circumstances and to what extent any particular act deserves valuation. Here belong questions concerning personal conduct, obedience, custom, law, as well as retrospective judgments about historical justice or injustice. As values a posteriori must also be considered the ideals of beauty which are exemplified for instance by the human body, by landscapes and by objects of beauty as we encounter them in nature and in the fine arts. In every case such investigation must begin with examples. It must everywhere be concerned with the elaboration of specific instances. The study of values a posteriori is the proper concern of numerous individual disciplines.

It is usually ignored that there is an obvious relationship between things as objects of valuation and things as objects of knowledge. From a naive point of view, the two objects might be assumed to be identical. Valuation and interpretation might be considered only two different intellectual approaches to the same object. This judgment would suffice, but for the fact that it presupposes much more than we may safely assume or assert. The thing itself is distinct from

the object interpreted: it is distinct also from the object valued. Accordingly there is no reason to assume that the object interpreted and the object valued are necessarily identical: In this context it must be noted that valuation causes a transformation in the interpretation of the object. The process of valuation is in itself a method of selection of objects suitable for interpretation. Apart from prior and concomitant valuation, interpretation itself should become meaningless. A synergism between valuation and interpretation is not difficult to demonstrate; upon further consideration an antagonism between the two also becomes apparent. What is valued is prized for its own sake and is magnified in its substance through valuation. What is interpreted is understood in relation to other objects, in relation to its past and to its future. In many instances interpretation appears to detract from the value of the object interpreted.

The object of esthetic valuation is self-sufficient. We assume that beyond its appearances which we see, it leads an unobtrusive, perfect existence; it reposes in a reality of its own. Independent and superior to us who admire it, the esthetically valuable object reflects upon us the dignity of its being.. Our desire is that the esthetic object should <u>be</u>, should exist in fullness, and that it should remain without end. We with that it should reign as a touchstone of value and reality over the haphazardness and changeableness of our existence. As soon

as we exert our power over it, as soon as we desire to analyse, to create or to control it, as soon as we deny its hegemony over our spirit, the esthetic value is extinguished, beauty becomes grotesque, our delight is replaced by chagrin, and anticipation makes way for disappointment.

Interpretation of the object is the reflection of its reality to our minds. It is inevitable that this reflection should color and distort, and it is the paradox of our knowledge that this distortion of actuality is our only access to it. In the process of our knowing a significant quality of reality is lost. The object that enters into the scheme of reason leads an existence that is real only so far as it is comprehended by our knowledge. It exists not for itself, but for an example. It is a means whose value is derived from the conceptual entirety in which it takes its place. Our attitude toward the rationalized object is an imperative one, in contrast to our attitude toward the esthetic object which we face with astonishment and reverence. To determine the quality of the interpreted object is the prerogative of mind. It gives the pleasure of possession and the satisfaction of power. The object of interpretation exists dependent and possessed. It is determined by a logical definition and its lifespan is the moment of our attention.

Ethical valuation and interpretation are in conflict. Valuation is always intent on the present; inevitably it contradicts our sense of history and it disrupts our rationalization of time. Ethical awareness directs all of man's attention to

the moment immediately before him: ethical consciousness demands the devaluation of memories of the past and of dreams of the future. All that memory and the written word make vivid to the imagination is condemned by ethical awareness as jejune phantasy, valuable only in so far as it might facilitate action or enhance its effectiveness. For our ethical consciousness a deed is measured not by its causes nor by its consequences. Even the insignificant and trivial action may obtain dignity; the symbolic action--ineffective of itself--is the expression of ethical consciousness par excellence. What is trivial may become significant, and what is significant derives meaning not from its causes or consequences but from its immediate, exclusive accessibility to the self. The ethically valuable act is incomparable with the future and unrelated to the past. It is only attainable fulfillment of the immediate present. That is why ethical consciousness elevates the present moment to highest dignity and condenses the meaning of time past and future into this one noble precious instant.

'Historical rationalization knows nothing of the spontaneity and freedom of the immediacy of the present. All historical moments, however significant they be, are washed over by the streams of time. 'Now' is only the summary of past events or the preface to future ones. The reality of things in the present is disparaged to the advantage of past and future. Conversely, history is impotent to grasp this present moment and

its overwhelming reality. It is lost in the span of time which is measured and calculated. But the measurement of that time is a travesty when its beginning and its end are equally inaccessible to our intellect. The notion of present floats between past and future, a vacuous boundary devoid of context, substance, and consistency. All value, all purpose is extinguished by the boundless extent of past and future time. That is why, consistently considered, history admits no ultimate values. The moment which appears to endure has deceived you. Before your very eyes while you observe it, it crumbles to obscurity.

The conflict between interpretation and value is everywhere encountered. Unconsciously we accept its paradox. Not every mind is capable of comprehending the dialectic of the two opposites, accepting and uniting them. Wherever an object appears beautiful, wherever an action strikes us as good, a schism appears in the schematic uniformity of the rational world. Day after day beauty and virtue kindle the sparks of doubt in the minds of uncounted men. It does not impede the effectiveness of doubt that they should not recognize it in its origin and that they should not trace out all its consequences. Wherever doubt flourishes, it instigates unrest and dissatisfaction with well-known images, it nourishes criticism of the well-worn, familiar catechism of concepts. Wherever doubt thrives, it searches for new vistas and it finds new reality. Doubt is

the instrument of the perpetual rejuvenation of the mind. Consciously or unconsciously doubt, or by whatever name it may be called, is the most fruitful spring of true knowledge and of real intellectual attainments.