thoughts and energies, we could, within a generation, put an end to all serious poverty throughout the world.

I have spoken of liberty as a good, but it is not an absolute good. We all recognize the need to restrain murderers, and it is even more important to restrain murderous states. Liberty must be limited by law, and its most valuable forms can only exist within a framework of law. What the world most needs is effective laws to control international relations. The first and most difficult step in the creation of such law is the establishment of adequate sanctions, and this is only possible through the creation of a single armed force in control of the whole world. But such an armed force, like a municipal police force, is not an end in itself; it is a means to the growth of a social system governed by law, where force is not the prerogative of private individuals or nations, but is exercised only by a neutral authority in accordance with rules laid down in advance. There is hope that law, rather than private force, may come to govern the relations of nations within the present century. If this hope is not realized we face utter disaster; if it is realized, the world will be far better than at any previous period in the history of man.

Philosophy’s Ulterior Motives

Metaphysics, according to F. H. Bradley, “is the finding of bad reasons for what we believe upon instinct.” It is curious to find this pungent dictum at the beginning of a long book of earnest and even unctionous metaphysics, which, through much arduous argumentation, leads up to the final conclusion: “Outside of spirit there is not, and there cannot be, any reality, and, the more that anything is spiritual, so much the more is it veritably real.” A rare moment of self-knowledge must have inspired the initial aphorism, which was made bearable to its author by its semi-humorous form; but throughout the rest of his labors he allowed himself to be claimed by “the instinct to find bad reasons.” When he was serious he was sophistical, and a typical philosopher; when he jested, he had insight and uttered unphilosophical truth.

Philosophy has been defined as “an unusually obstinate attempt to think clearly”; I should define it rather as “an unusually ingenious attempt to think fallaciously.” The philosopher’s temperament is rare, because it has to combine two somewhat conflicting characteristics: on the one hand a strong desire to believe some general proposition about the universe or human life; on the other hand, inability to believe contentedly except
on what appear to be intellectual grounds. The more profound the philosopher, the more intricate and subtle must his fallacies be in order to produce in him the desired state of intellectual acquiescence. That is why philosophy is obscure.

To the completely unintellectual, general doctrines are unimportant; to the man of science, they are hypotheses to be tested by experiment; while to the philosopher they are mental habits which must be justified somehow if he is to find life endurable. The typical philosopher finds certain beliefs emotionally indispensable, but intellectually difficult; he therefore goes through long chains of reasoning, in the course of which, sooner or later, a momentary lack of vigilance allows a fallacy to pass undetected. After the one false step, his mental agility quickly takes him far into the quagmire of falsehood.

Descartes, the father of modern philosophy, illustrates perfectly this peculiar mental temper. He would never—so he assures us—have been led to construct his philosophy if he had had only one teacher, for then he would have believed what he had been told; but, finding that his professors disagreed with each other, he was forced to conclude that no existing doctrine was certain. Having a passionate desire for certainty, he set to work to think out a new method of achieving it. As a first step, he determined to reject everything that he could bring himself to doubt. Everyday objects—his acquaintance, the streets, the sun and moon, and so on—might be illusions, for he saw similar things in dreams, and could not be certain that he was not always dreaming. The demonstrations in mathematics might be wrong, since mathematicians sometimes made mistakes. But he could not bring himself to doubt his own existence, since if he did not exist he could not doubt. Here at last, therefore, he had an indubitable premise for reconstruction of the intellectual edifices which his former skepticism had overthrown.

So far, so good. But from this moment his work loses all its critical acumen, and he accepts a host of scholastic maxims for which there is nothing to be said except the tradition of the schools. He believes that he exists, he says, because he sees this very clearly and very distinctly; he concludes, therefore, “that I may take as a general rule that the things which we conceive very clearly and very distinctly are all true.” He then begins to conceive all sorts of things “very clearly and very distinctly,” such that an effect cannot have more perfection than its cause. Since he can form an idea of God—that is, of a being more perfect than himself—this idea must have had a cause other than himself, which can only be God; therefore God exists. Since God is good, He will not perpetually deceive Descartes; therefore the objects which Descartes sees when awake must really exist. And so on. All intellectual caution is thrown to the winds, and it might seem as if the initial skepticism had been merely rhetorical, though I do not believe that this would be psychologically true. Descartes’s initial doubt was, I believe, as genuine as that of a man who has lost his way, but was equally intended to be replaced by certainty at the earliest possible moment.

In a man whose reasoning powers are good, fallacious arguments are evidence of bias. While Descartes is being skeptical, all that he says is acute and cogent, and even his first constructive step, the proof of his own existence, has much to be said in its favor. But everything that follows is loose and slip-shod and hasty, thereby displaying the distorting influence of desire. Something may be attributed to the need of appearing orthodox in order to escape persecution, but a more intimate cause must also have been at work. I do not suppose that he cared passionately about the reality of sensible objects, or even of God, but he did care about the truth of mathematics. And this, in his system, could only be established by first proving
the existence and attributes of the Deity. His system, psychologically, was as follows: No God, no geometry; but geometry is delicious; therefore God exists.

Leibniz, who invented the phrase that "this is the best of all possible worlds," was a very different kind of man from Descartes. He was comfortable, not passionate; a professional, not an amateur. He made his living by writing the annals of the House of Hanover, and his reputation by bad philosophy. He also wrote good philosophy, but this he took care not to publish, as it would have cost him the pensions he received from various princes. One of his most important popular works, the Théodicée, was written for Queen Sophie Charlotte of Prussia (daughter of the Electress Sophia), as an antidote to the skepticism of Bayle's Dictionary. In this work he sets forth, in the authentic style of Voltaire's Dr. Pangloss, the grounds of optimism. He holds that there are many logically possible worlds, any one of which God could have created; that some of them contain no sin and no pain; and that in this actual world the number of the damned is incomparably greater than the number of the saved. But he thinks that worlds without evil contain so much less good than this world which God has chosen to create that they have a smaller excess of good over evil than it has. Leibniz and Queen Sophie Charlotte, who did not consider themselves likely to be among the damned, apparently found this type of optimism satisfying.

Beneath these superficialities there is a deeper problem, with which Leibniz struggled all his life. He wished to escape from the rigid necessity that characterized the determinist's world, without diminishing the empire of logic. The actual world, he thought, contains free will; moreover, God freely chose it in preference to any of the other possible worlds. But since they are less good than the actual world, the choice of one of them would have been incompatible with God's goodness; are we, then, to conclude that God is not necessarily good? Leibniz can hardly say this, for, like other philosophers, he believes it possible to find out important things, such as the nature of God, by merely sitting still and thinking; he shrinks, however, from the determinism which this view implies. He therefore takes refuge in obscurity and ambiguity. By great dexterity he avoids a sharp contradiction, but at the expense of the diffused muddle which pervades his whole system.

A new method of apologetics was invented by the amiable Bishop Berkeley, who attacked the materialists of his day with the arguments which, in our time, have been revived by Sir James Jeans. His purpose was twofold: first, to prove that there can be no such thing as matter; secondly, to deduce from this negative proposition the necessary existence of God. On the first point, his contentions have never been answered; but I doubt whether he would have cared to advance them if he had not believed that they afforded support for theological orthodoxy.

When you think you see a tree, Berkeley points out that what you really know is not an external object, but a modification of yourself, a sensation, or, as he calls it, an "idea." This, which is all that you directly know, ceases if you shut your eyes. Whatever you can perceive is in your mind, not an external material object. Matter, therefore, is an unnecessary hypothesis. What is real about the tree is the perceptions of those who are supposed to "see" it; the rest is a piece of unnecessary metaphysics.

Up to this point, Berkeley's argumentation is able and largely valid. But now he suddenly changes his tone, and, after advancing a bold paradox, falls back upon the prejudices of the unphilosophical as the basis of his next thesis. He feels it preposterous to suppose that trees and houses, mountains and riv-
ers, the sun and the moon and stars, only exist while we are looking at them, which is what his previous contentions suggest. There must, he thinks, be some permanence about physical objects, and some independence of human beings. This he secures by supposing that the tree is really an idea in the mind of God, and therefore continues to exist when no human being is looking at it. The consequences of his own paradox, if he had frankly accepted them, would have seemed to him dreadful; but by a sudden twist he rescues orthodoxy and some parts of common sense.

The same timidity in admitting the skeptical consequences of his argument has been shown by all his followers, except Hume; his most modern disciples have, in this respect, made no advance whatever upon him. None can bear to admit that if I know only “ideas” it is only my ideas that I know, and therefore I can have no reason to believe in the existence of anything except my own mental states. Those who have admitted the validity of this very simple argument have not been disciples of Berkeley, since they have found such a conclusion intolerable; they have therefore argued that it is not only “ideas” that we know.¹

¹ The two sides of Berkeley's philosophy are illustrated by the following two limericks:

There once was a man who said, “God
Must think it exceedingly odd
If he finds that this tree
Continues to be
When there’s no one about in the Quad.”

—RonalD Knox

Dear Sir,
Your astonishment’s odd;
I am always about in the Quad.
And that’s why the tree
Will continue to be,
Since observed by
Yours faithfully,
God.

Hume, the enfant terrible of philosophy, was peculiar in having no metaphysical ulterior motives. He was a historian and essayist as well as a philosopher, he had a comfortable temperament, and he perhaps derived as much pleasure from annoying the perpetrators of fallacies as he could have derived from inventing fallacies of his own. However, the main outcome of his activities was to stimulate two new sets of fallacies, one in England and the other in Germany. The German set are the more interesting.

The first German to take notice of Hume was Immanuel Kant, who had been content, up to the age of about forty-five, with the dogmatic tradition derived from Leibniz. Then, as he says himself, Hume “awakened him from his dogmatic slumbers.” After meditating for twelve years, he produced his great work, the Critique of Pure Reason; seven years later, at the age of sixty-four, he produced the Critique of Practical Reason, in which he resumed his dogmatic slumbers after nearly twenty years of uncomfortable wakefulness. His fundamental desires were two: he wanted to be sure of an invariable routine, and he wanted to believe the moral maxims that he had learned in infancy. Hume was upsetting in both respects, for he maintained that we could not trust the law of causality, and he threw doubt on the future life, so that the good could not be sure of a reward in heaven. The first twelve years of Kant’s meditations on Hume were devoted to the law of causality, and at the end he produced a remarkable solution. True, he said, we cannot know that there are causes in the real world, but then we cannot know anything about the real world. The world of appearances, which is the only one that we can experience, has all sorts of properties contributed by ourselves, just as a man who has a pair of green spectacles that he cannot take off is sure to see things green. The phenomena that we experience have causes, which are other phenomena; we need not worry as to whether there is causation in the reality be-
hind the phenomena, since we cannot experience it. Kant went
for a walk at exactly the same time every day, and his servant
followed carrying the umbrella. The twelve years spent in
producing the Critique of Pure Reason persuaded the old man
that, if it came to rain, the umbrella would prevent him
from feeling wet, whatever Hume might say about the real
raindrops.

This was comforting, but the comfort had been purchased
at a great price. Space and time, in which phenomena take
place, are unreal: Kant’s psychical mechanism manufactured
them. He did not know much about space, having never been
more than ten miles from Königsberg; perhaps if he had
taveled he would have doubted whether his subjective crea-
tiveness was equal to inventing the geography of all he saw. It
was pleasant, however, to be sure of the truth of geometry,
for, having manufactured space himself, he was quite sure that
he had made it Euclidean, and he was sure of this without
looking outside himself. In this way mathematics was got safely
under the umbrella.

But although mathematics was safe, morality was still in
danger. In the Critique of Pure Reason Kant taught that pure
reason cannot prove the future life or the existence of God; it
cannot therefore assure us that there is justice in the world.
Moreover, there was a difficulty about free will. My actions,
in so far as I can observe them, are phenomena, and therefore
have causes. As to what my actions are in themselves, pure
reason can tell me nothing, so that I do not know whether they
are free or not. However, “pure” reason is not the only kind;
there is another—not “impure,” as might have been expected,
but “practical.” This starts from the premise that all the moral
rules Kant was taught in childhood are true. (Such a premise,
of course, needs a disguise; it is introduced to philosophical
society under the name of the “categorical imperative.”) It
follows that the will is free, for it would be absurd to say “you
ought to do so-and-so” unless you can do it. It follows also that
there is a future life, since otherwise the good might not be
adequately rewarded, nor the wicked adequately punished. It
follows also that there must be a God to arrange these things.
Hume may have routed “pure” reason, but the moral law has,
in the end, restored the victory to the metaphysicians. So
Kant died happy, and has been honored ever since; his doctrine
has even been proclaimed the official philosophy of the Nazi
state.

iii

Philosophers, for the most part, are constitutionally timid,
and dislike the unexpected. Few of them would be genuinely
happy as pirates or burglars. Accordingly they invent systems
which make the future calculable, at least in its main outlines.
The supreme practitioner in this art was Hegel. For him the
course of logic and the course of history were broadly identi-
cal. Logic, for him, consisted of a series of self-correcting at-
ttempts to describe the world. If your first attempt is too
simple, as it is sure to be, you will find that it contradicts itself;
you will then try the opposite, or “antithesis,” but this will
also contradict itself. This leads you to a “synthesis,” contain-
ing something of the original idea and something of its op-
posite, but more complex and less self-contradictory than
either. This new idea, however, will also prove inadequate, and
you will be driven, through its opposite, to a new synthesis.
This process goes on until you reach the “Absolute Idea,” in
which there is no contradiction, and which, therefore, de-
scribes the real world.

But the real world, in Hegel as in Kant, is not the apparent
world. The apparent world goes through developments which
are the same as those that the logician goes through if he starts
from Pure Being and travels on to the Absolute Idea. Pure
Being exemplified by ancient China, of which Hegel knew only that it had existed; the Absolute Idea is exemplified by the Prussian state, which had given Hegel a professorship at Berlin. Why the world should go through this logical evolution is not clear; one is tempted to suppose that the Absolute Idea did not quite understand itself at first, and made mistakes when it tried to embody itself in events. But this, of course, was not what Hegel would have said.

Hegel's system satisfied the instincts of philosophers more fully than any of its predecessors. It was so obscure that no amateurs could hope to understand it. It was optimistic, since history is a progress in the unfolding of the Absolute Idea. It showed that the philosopher, sitting in his study considering abstract ideas, can know more about the real world than the statesman or the historian or the man of science. As to this, it must be admitted, there was an unfortunate incident. Hegel published his proof that there must be exactly seven planets just a week before the discovery of the eighth. The matter was hushed up, and a new, revised edition was hastily prepared; nevertheless, there were some who scoffed. But, in spite of this contretemps, Hegel's system was for a time triumphant in Germany. When it had been almost forgotten in its native country, it began to control the universities of Great Britain and America. Now, however, its adherents are a small and rapidly diminishing band. No subsequent great system has taken its place in the academic mind, and few now dare to say that the philosopher, by mere thinking without observation, can detect the errors of the man of science.

Outside the universities, however, one last great system has arisen from Hegel's ashes, and has kept alive in wide circles the happy faith in the power of thought which our professors have lost. This last survivor of an almost extinct species is the doctrine of Karl Marx. Marx took over from Hegel the belief in dialectic—that is to say, in logical development by thesis, antithesis, and synthesis, shown in the course of human history and not only in abstract thought. To Hegel, at the head of his profession and revered by his compatriots, it was possible to regard the Prussian state as the goal towards which all previous efforts had been tending; but to Marx, poor, ill, and in exile, it was obvious that the world is not yet perfect. One more turn of the dialectical wheel—that is to say, one more revolution—is necessary before the attainment of the millennium. There can be no doubt that this revolution will take place, for Marx, like Hegel, regards history as a logical process, so that its stages are as indubitable as arithmetic. Faith and hope thus find a place in Marxian doctrine.

Most of Marx's theory is independent of Hegel, but the Hegelian element is important, since it contributes the certainty of victory and the feeling of being on the side of irresistible cosmic forces. Emotionally, belief in Hegelian dialectic, when it exists in those whose present circumstances are unfortunate, is analogous to the Christian belief in the Second Coming; but its supposed logical basis gives it a hold on the head as well as the heart. Its hold on the head is endangered not so much by bourgeois prejudice as by the empirical scientific temper, which refuses to suppose that we can know as much about the universe as the metaphysicians supposed. Perhaps empirical sobriety is so difficult that men will never preserve it except when they are happy. If so, the various irrational faiths of our time are a natural outcome of our self-imposed misfortunes, and a new era of metaphysics may be inspired by new disasters.

iv

Philosophy is a stage in intellectual development, and is not compatible with mental maturity. In order that it may flourish, traditional doctrines must still be believed, but not so unques-
tionally that arguments in support of them are never sought; there must also be a belief that important truths can be discovered by merely thinking, without the aid of observation. This belief is true in pure mathematics, which has inspired many of the great philosophers. It is true in mathematics because that study is essentially verbal; it is not true elsewhere, because thought alone cannot establish any non-verbal fact. Savages and barbarians believe in a magical connection between persons and their names, which makes it dangerous to let an enemy know what they are called. The distinction between words and what they designate is one which it is difficult always to remember; metaphysicians, like savages, are apt to imagine a magical connection between words and things, or at any rate between syntax and world structure. Sentences have subjects and predicates, therefore the world consists of substances with attributes. Until very recently this argument was accepted as valid by almost all philosophers; or rather, it controlled their opinions almost without their own knowledge.

In addition to confusion between language and what it means, there is another source of the belief that the philosopher can find out facts by mere thinking; this is the conviction that the world must be ethically satisfying. Dr. Pangloss in his study can ascertain what sort of universe would, to his way of thinking, be the best possible; he can also convince himself, so long as he stays in his study, that the universe means to satisfy his ethical demands. Bernard Bosanquet, until his death one of the recognized leaders of British philosophy, maintained in his *Logic*, ostensibly on logical grounds, that "it would be hard to believe, for example, in the likelihood of a catastrophe which should overwhelm a progressive civilization like that of modern Europe and its colonies." Capacity to believe that the "laws of thought" have comforting political consequences is a mark of the philosophic bias. Philosophy, as opposed to