The title of our final chapter is to be understood in the broad sense, in which one may learn from a thinker’s oversights as well as from his contributions. But nothing that remotely approaches a comprehensive evaluation of Whitehead’s philosophy will be attempted in this short space. And a real attempt to assess some part of it requires detailed studies which have not been made in this book. The most that I can do is to offer a few suggestions.

These are not suggested as answers to the question that is usually set for symposia on Whitehead, namely, What is valid in this philosophy? With Whitehead one must be especially careful to ask the right questions. Strictly speaking, only a philosopher’s arguments are valid or invalid. One of the many ways in which Whitehead was unusual is that so much of his work consists of analytical description and speculative construction, so little of argument. If we construe “argument” broadly enough to avoid this objection, it becomes necessary that we first make sure we agree on the criteria of validity. Then, alas, the discussion may never get around to Whitehead.
Rather than assume that I have the reader's agreement on criteria of validity, I drop that strong word altogether.

Similar prior questions could be asked if "true" or "valuable" were substituted for "valid." But "valuable" has the advantage of not advertising the possession of precise criteria which are in fact lacking, and so, of not inviting us to paint a picture in black and white alone. Let me, then, notice and briefly discuss a few of the distinctive general aspects of Whitehead's philosophy which seem to me most valuable. These are things which it is good, I think, for anyone who philosophizes to bear in mind. I shall also suggest a criticism of Whitehead. The discussion will be carried on in the light of a standard of value that is appropriate to his philosophy, not impossibly precise, and accepted by many philosophers as well as by Whitehead himself. His view was that philosophy is not argument but "the search for premises" (MT vi 1), and that the value of whatever premises may be offered lies in their power to elucidate human experience. (This statement tacitly includes his requirement that the set of premises be not merely self-consistent but coherent, since otherwise the connections between diverse aspects of experience will not receive elucidation.) The use of this general standard, too, at once runs into trouble; but the trouble is itself instructive. I shall be satisfied if the reader, when he lays down this book, has received an idea of what one requires for an evaluation of Whitehead.

II

In the reception of this philosophy, nothing is more striking than the uncompromising differences of opinion about its elucidatory power. Some thinkers (both theists and atheists) insist that his conceptions of God and the temporal world are irrelevant to the understanding of religious experience; other theists and atheists say that they get a profound understanding from those conceptions. So it goes with every topic in White-
head's philosophy. I do not see that these sharp disagreements will ever diminish unless one condition, so simple as to be almost utopian, is fulfilled more often: the condition that we come to his work with an open mind. It is all too obvious that no scheme of ideas will elucidate your experience unless you give it a chance. Unfortunately, one man may not consider his experience elucidated unless it heightens his sense of what has been called the "terrible chasm between us and all subhuman things." ¹ Another has embraced precisely the opposite position; perhaps he is, in addition, wedded to methodological naturalism, and so can approve only those methods of thought which have been so successful in the natural sciences. A third will admit enlightenment only by a dialectic of spirit, a fourth only by a materialist dialectic. And so on. It is not merely that we would-be evaluators of Whitehead cannot fairly assess him without contradicting our antecedent preferences; we are often under strong psychological compulsions, whenever a philosophical discussion begins, to fight for this cause or to defend that technique or instrument—say, ordinary language—against all comers. Until we have stilled our agitations and enlarged our minds, we are ill qualified to serve on this jury.

—On this jury, above all. I think that any experienced reader of philosophy who does not come to Whitehead as someone else's man, can perceive in his writings an unusual degree of philosophic candor. The always bland dispassionateness of George Santayana only makes us look more eagerly for concealed causes, and ask just what makes him tick. Not so with Whitehead. It would indeed be inaccurate to suggest that he was not a man, subject to some human weakness. But the watchful reader seldom feels that Whitehead has let himself be induced to favor a conclusion which is not suggested by some important evidence. In his remarkable candor, Whitehead excels among philosophers.

Accordingly, the first question I would discuss concerning the value of his philosophy is this: What, specifically, can we

learn from him about the working attitude of an unprejudiced philosophic mind? I begin with something which we might learn about the use of reason in philosophy.

As we know, Whitehead was a Platonist—but with that circumspection which, though it is not, ought to be a matter of course by this time, twenty-three centuries after Aristotle. Whitehead the metaphysician held that "there is an essence to the universe which forbids relationships beyond itself, as a violation of its rationality" (PR I i i), and he sought that essence with unexampled boldness and care, by offering original formulations—the best his powerful mind could devise—of those forms and interconnections of forms which may be found in observable facts of existence. He stated well and frequently the moral for philosophical discussion which fits the example of his work. For instance, at the end of Adventures of Ideas he wrote that fundamental notions are not to be justified by argument; their discussion "is merely for the purpose of disclosing their coherence, their compatibility, and the specializations which can be derived from their conjunction" (xx x). Logical arguments "are merely subsidiary helps for the conscious realization of metaphysical intuitions." He added that St. Ambrose’s saying, Non in dialectica complacuit Deo salvum facere populum sum, "should be the motto of every metaphysician" (AI xx xi). Some others have agreed: Cardinal Newman put it on the title page of his Grammar of Assent. But Whitehead's next sentence is strictly Whiteheadian: "He [the metaphysician] is seeking, amid the dim recesses of his ape-like consciousness and beyond the reach of dictionary language, for the premises implicit in all reasoning." ²

I am taking space to praise Whitehead on this issue because, much as we admire him and wish we had his constructive

² Cf. his definition of mathematics in the Britannica article of 1910: "the science concerned with the logical deduction of consequences from the general premises of all reasoning." (The article was described in Chapter 6, Section IX, above, and Whitehead's final view of the relation between mathematics and metaphysics in Chapter 10, pp. 280 f.)
abilities, almost no one is really willing to let the dialectic go. Professional philosophers feel that a request to do so is almost a blow in the face. Of course Whitehead himself prepared a hearing for his new ideas by arguing against older positions and for his own approach to metaphysics; and he did this very effectively. What is almost absent from his work but customary in philosophy is the use of dialectic to validate positive conclusions. An obvious example of it is Royce’s claim to have conducted his reader ineluctably, by mere “dry logic,” to the reality of the Larger Self. More recently, we remember Russell’s argument that though the anti-Platonist should eliminate all other universals, one, similarity, must remain. It is hard to imagine Whitehead’s offering such a defense of Platonism. It would have been more like him to say that Platonism rests on a slender basis indeed if this is its final defense. Whitehead in fact called “proof,” in the strict sense of that term, “a feeble second-rate procedure” (MT III 3). This goes contrary to all our usual evaluations. I wonder whose mind, besides his own (and perhaps William James’s), Whitehead was thinking of in his next sentence: “When the word ‘proof’ has been uttered, the next notion to enter the mind is ‘half-heartedness.’” It should indeed be obvious that when a metaphysician seeks the general forms, or categories, by conceptual analysis and reasoning, all he can be sure of demonstrating is the impingement of one conceptual pattern upon another. He may thus spell out the terms in which he and his friends habitually interpret experience, and triumph over adversaries who have set foot on the same road without thinking much about where it leads. For intellectual self-clarification—a good thing, surely—proof is a crucial, not a second-rate, procedure. But Whitehead was never content to think of such clarification as a sufficient purpose for any philosophy. Even analysis, as he used the word, is not of

*I make no objection to the careful use of what has been called “empirical dialectic”—argument which furthers the search for more adequate premises than we possess by giving a defective premise all the rope it needs to hang itself. Socrates was adept at this.*
concepts but of processes and things, and their entry into experience. It is from this explorer's standpoint that he called logical proof a second-rate procedure: in what an argument can say about the nature of things, its force is borrowed from that persistent experience upon which its own premises depend for evidence of truth. This must be granted. Yet among Whitehead's teachings, "Let the dialectic go" (as I have somewhat dramatically put it) is the one that is almost universally passed over. This seems to me a pity; for although many philosophers have downgraded logical argument, his positive ideal of speculative philosophy makes him unique among them. The desirability of serving this ideal as well as we can is not destroyed by the rarity of Whitehead's breadth of observation and powers of conceptual formulation. Our service of it is hindered by fondness for argument.

I turn now to what we can learn from Whitehead about philosophy's appeal to experience. His main point was that the chief appeal should not be to those factors in experience of which we enjoy clear consciousness, for these are the variable, and hence the metaphysically superficial, ones; we are to look instead for factors which are always present, and so not usually in the focus of attention; for example, the derivation of our experience from its antecedent environment, and our exercise of purpose. Whitehead contrasted this orientation with that of Hume and his philosophical descendants; today its chief contrast is probably with Oxford philosophy. Concern with showing the specific use and point of making typical statements in ordinary language has its value in the analysis of meaning; in metaphysics and in moral philosophy (broadly understood) Whitehead's advice is to look for that which ordinary speech sees no point in saying, because it so pervades our experience that it is taken for granted. This Whiteheadian thesis is now familiar. One fact about his expression of it, however, has not been sufficiently noticed. It is especially important for those whose inspiration is not ordinary language but the writings of the existentialists. When Whitehead directs us toward "the rush of immediate transition" or to other
pervasive features of experience, he does it in a straightforward way which uses the words "pervasive," "immediate," "concrete" and "abstract" in senses which are either obvious or explained by him. It is not by weaving into his statements such advertiser's adjectives as "genuine" and "authentic" that he seeks to persuade us; nor does he ever supercharge the words "being" and "existence." I am referring to a temptation which besets our excitable age, even as the temptation to turn discussion into edification sometimes beset idealists in the late nineteenth century. I am saying that we can learn from Whitehead to make our appeals to experience dispassionate, and let the epithets go. This does not mean that the ideal philosopher will be a passionless creature; certainly Whitehead was not. What I mean is that if we become zealots in our appeal to experience, the appeal is spoiled.

Any philosopher who follows Whitehead in the use of reason and in the appeal to experience will always be on guard against what, in his last course of lectures at Harvard (February to May, 1937), he called the trap of the clear-headed man—the assumption that questions for which there is no room in a precise "logical syntax of language" are meaningless. Mankind, he said, is always hunting for a formula that will enable it to avoid questions. The opposite danger, the trap of the mystic and the muddle-headed man, is the notion that whatever can be articulated must be unimportant. One does not became a philosopher, however, simply by avoiding these extremes; he must be ready to learn from everybody—from these men, and from the plain man, the emotional man, the religious man, the near-lunatic man (Whitehead in a Harvard lecture mentioned William Blake), and so on. His mind will not seek to find repose solely in any one of these attitudes. Every attitude, said Whitehead, reveals something to consciousness, and conceals something from consciousness. These are

---

*I am not criticizing the introduction of "authentic" by a systematic thinker to express a strictly defined meaning. In the speech of existentialism's American admirers, unfortunately, the word is almost inevitably a selling word.*
not the words of a phenomenologist _qua_ phenomenologist; they are simply the words of a wise metaphysician who desired a broad basis for understanding the universe. The ability to work from such a basis without falling into eclecticism is the final test of greatness in philosophy.

If we wonder how this is possible for any man, part of the answer is given by a positive rule which doubtless came naturally to the author of _A Treatise On Universal Algebra_, and which he considered “more important even than Occam’s doctrine of parsimony—if it be not another aspect of the same”: “In framing a philosophic scheme, each metaphysical notion should be given the widest extension of which it seems capable. It is only in this way that the true adjustment of ideas can be explored” (AI xv xvii). Would that there were more interest today in this kind of exploration!

III

The term “elucidate,” used as a name for what philosophers systematically attempt for human experience, covers a wide variety of pursuits. At one extreme, the logical positivist offers a precise spelling out of current scientific concepts, procedures, and theories which, applied to phenomena, enable the prediction of definite observations. At the opposite extreme, systematic elucidation to Whitehead means a speculative formulation of the way in which process and form, final and efficient causation, becoming and perishing, individuality and continuity, and all other generic contrasting features of our experience are inseparably together in the process by which finite immediacies of experience arise from the infinite universe. This is a truly titanic mode of elucidation. Many large questions are involved in understanding and evaluating it. One, for example, is whether Whitehead was right in believing that all ultimate reasons are in terms of aim at value.

Linked with that question is another, posed by Whitehead’s
concept of organism. It is surprising how small a portion of the published discussion of the philosophy of organism has been directed upon the idea from which Whitehead drew the name. In *Process and Reality* he left his readers in no doubt about its meaning. Probably many of them were taken aback by his complete temporalization of the notion of holistic pattern. His unit process of becoming, an “actual entity,” is a self-guided integration of given data: “the actual entity, in a state of process during which it is not fully definite, determines its own ultimate definiteness” (*PR* III iii). This notion is difficult, if not unintelligible, for common sense. When we think of anything as half formed (like the drop of water at the faucet) or half grown, we customarily think of its state as perfectly definite. Probably this merely manifests our uncritical pictorial habit of supposing that there is a definite distribution of matter at every state—even every instant—of a process. In Whitehead’s philosophy of organism a different kind of definiteness obtains: definite alternative potentialities (eternal objects and not yet realized propositions) are there. Explanation is also given for the initiation of the actual occasion’s progressive resolution of indeterminations, by reference to the primordial nature of God. Now I think we should agree with Whitehead that every metaphysics in some form or other attributes self-causation to whatever it takes to be ultimate actuality. What in this respect is good in Whitehead’s metaphysics is his explicitness. “Self-realization is the ultimate fact of facts. An actuality is self-realizing, and whatever is self-realizing is an actuality” (*PR* III iv). What is radical is his fidelity to this requirement, in assigning self-causation to the becoming of every puff of existence. We have seen his reasons for doing that. To recall one reason: he thereby avoids a dualism of self-determining men and wholly unfree lower forms of existence. Finally, what is interesting is the question whether a comparably broad and rationally articulated conception of self-determining organisms which does not rely upon an eternal divine reservoir of potentiality can be constructed. This seems to me extremely difficult to do without
compromising the principle of temporalism—the principle that “if process be fundamental to actuality, then each ultimate individual fact must be describable as process” (MT v 3).  

It should be noted that although an answer to the question of the soundness of the concept of a self-creating organic process is likely to be presupposed when philosophers assess Whitehead’s metaphysics, his work is at the same time an important piece of evidence bearing on the determination of the right answer to that particular question. A similar situation obtains for most—possibly for all—of the larger questions involved in understanding and evaluating Whitehead.

IV

Whitehead’s system, almost alone among cosmologies, has a richness which is not many orders of magnitude removed from that of the world. If we ask what the substance of his universe is, there are many answers to be given, and we must bring them all in. That is one of the great difficulties preliminary to evaluating this metaphysics. For example, after mentioning the three most obvious answers—creativity, structured immediacies of process (his “actual entities”), and feeling—it is absolutely essential to remember that Whitehead also understands the universe, so far at it is not a chaos, to be composed of societies of actual entities, and societies within societies. Although “society,” for excellent reasons, is introduced as a “derivative notion” in Process and Reality, it alone enables the reader to compare Whitehead’s world with that of everyday things. The addition of other brief descriptive statements would bring us closer to a just answer to our question. I wish particularly to show that there is a respect in which Whitehead’s world is made up of what in Process

5 The proposal made at the end of Sect. IV of Chap. 11, above, may be useful as a first step toward an alternative construction which does not compromise the principle of temporalism.
and Reality he describes as sensa, for I doubt that their role in the philosophy of organism is often enough appreciated. The probable reasons are that Whitehead put more emphasis on our direct experience of the causal efficacy of our sense organs and of other actualities than on experience of sensa; and that he sometimes used "sensa" itself as a name for the variable tactile, visual, etc., data of the conscious sense perceptions which occur only because the human animal, on the planet Earth, has just those sense organs.

But we remember Whitehead's famous protest in Science and the Modern World against stripping nature of qualities. "The poets are entirely mistaken. They should address their lyrics to themselves, and should turn them into odes of self-congratulation on the excellency of the human mind" (p. 77). In the same book our mathematician-philosopher, giving his first systematic account of eternal objects (Chapter x), marked a grade the members of which are of "zero complexity," each being in itself (in its "individual essence") "simple," not analyzable into a relationship of others. Such an eternal object must be a wholly qualitative entity. It is what he terms a sensum in Process and Reality. Apart from some emotional qualities which may have the requisite character but which educated observers seldom consider directly perceivable (AI xvi v), sensa can be exhibited to our minds only as simple qualities of sensation, e.g., green of a definite shade. But Whitehead put to use the notion, suggested by reflection on unsophisticated experience, that the primitive core of every such quality is an indefinable definiteness of emotion. Until continuing research on sensory processes should give conclusive evidence against it—something which may not be easy to determine—we may not dismiss his thesis that the eye receives the green light as an emotional quality which then is intensified, supplemented, raised to consciousness, and projected upon the green leaf seen. Unless something like this is the case, I do not see how the poets' attitude toward nature can be other than mistaken (so long as they take the leaf and the light as natural things rather than divine symbols).
I very much doubt that any philosopher *knows* whether Whitehead's bold alternative to the bifurcation of nature is true. But I would call attention to the unrestricted scope which he gave to his idea that sensa are simple emotional forms transmitted from occasion to occasion. "The simplest grade of actual occasions," he wrote, "must be conceived as experiencing a few sensa, with the minimum of patterned contrast" (PR II iv iii). These are "the actual occasions in so-called 'empty space'" (PR II vii iv). Whitehead also suggested that sensa (and the vibrations associated with them) which are characteristic of our "cosmic epoch" may—like the fundamental particles of our physics and the three dimensions of our geometry—not be characteristic of other epochs. However, a striking remark in *Modes of Thought* implies that in his universe some sensa are by no means provincial. "We know about the colour 'green' in some of its perspectives. But what green is capable of in other epochs of the universe, when other laws of nature are reigning, is beyond our present imagination."

He added that "there is nothing intrinsically impossible" in the notion that men may eventually gain some understanding of these other possibilities of green; that is (to put it in a way which accords more strictly with the roles of eternal objects and actual occasions in his metaphysics), we may become able to imagine something of the contexts in which green can be realized by actual occasions in other cosmic epochs, and something of the new syntheses of value which may thus arise. Whether such imaginative understanding be possible or not, it is plain that any type of entity about which the remark I have quoted may be made is, in the world view of the man who makes it, part of the very alphabet of being.

So far I have not used the term "value" in connection with sensa as Whitehead conceived them. Without doubt, it must be used. Eternal objects are possibilities, and their essential role is to define possibilities of value. But the mathematical...
Platonic forms do not do this directly; rather, they define conditions of value. The eternal objects which can be realized by actual occasions as subjective forms of feeling, or elements of their subjective forms, directly comprise all the values for existence. Sena constitute the simplest category of these elements. The others are constrasts, contrasts of contrasts, and yet higher contrasts of sensa.

William James once suggested (and only suggested) a naïve metaphysics of “pure experience,” according to which the primordial reality consists of “sensible natures” which get synthesized in various ways. As we know from Chapter 13, he also entertained an idea (of doubtful compatibility with this one) that the drop or moment of experience is the unit of existence. Whatever may be wrong with Whitehead’s theory of actual entities and his theory of sensa, at least they work out systematically a way of conceiving process as at once qualitative, structured, and individualized. Far removed from all phenomenalisms, Whitehead’s metaphysics does more than any of them for the reality of qualities.

V

One reaction to the philosophy of organism, sometimes expressed (and, I suspect, more often felt), is that the world can’t be as complicated as all that. This strikes me as quite unphilosophical. Metaphysics, at least, is alive only when metaphysicians systematically dream of more things than are known to exist in heaven and earth. It is rather when we come to certain topics in the philosophy of man, such as the theory of human knowledge, that we may say with some truth that Whitehead went too far, and as a result did not adequately elucidate these matters. I confine myself first to the theory of empirical knowledge.

In the first three decades of this century epistemological realists insisted (among other things) that empirical knowl-
edge is basically "knowledge by acquaintance," whereas the pragmatists (except for William James) insisted that there is no such thing. The dispute was bound to be futile, for the real concerns of the two parties were far from identical. The pragmatist, looking out his window, wished to know whether the green expanse which he perceived was a meadow or a lake, and whether he would find it where it appeared to be. The general principles of correct (warranted) classification and of the confirmation of implicit expectations then make up the theory of empirical knowledge. C. I. Lewis concentrated on it, and was content simply to acknowledge that diverse perceptions occurring under the same conditions were due to diverse dispositional properties of external objects. But the realist was a metaphysician from the start—a man who was wondering whether what he saw as green grass was in itself really green, or at least greenish. Both questions are meaningful; but attack on the second, if it is not to be naive, must begin by admitting the skepticism implied by our knowledge of the transformations which our own sensory processes effect upon their initial data, and it can overcome this skepticism only by going beyond the principles definitive of verifiable identification of such things as meadows. Whitehead appealed finally to the immanence of God in the world (AI xvi, xi; xx ix).

But first he made an essential contribution to the debate by exhibiting the basis of our acknowledgment that the perceived greenness has a source: we experience this derivation of the sense-datum, by "perception in the mode of causal efficacy." Unfortunately there is one point, crucial for epistemology, to which he did not, I think, give due weight. Let it be granted not only that we experience the general fact of derivation, but also that at the subconscious levels of experience there are causal "feelings" of all actual occasions on the route of transmission from the external object to the percipient occasion in the brain. This is important for the general theory of the causal constitution of temporal existents. It is irrelevant to epistemology. Only what is indubitably given to conscious experience can be particular evidence of perceptual truth or
error. Hence Whitehead’s explanation of error as a mistaken symbolic transference from perception of presented sense-data to perception in the mode of causal efficacy is epistemologically useless. As he himself wrote,

In the case of perceived organisms external to the human body, the spatial discrimination involved in the human perception of their pure causal efficacy is so feeble, that practically there is no check on this symbolic transference, apart from the indirect check of pragmatic consequences,—in other words, either survival-value, or self-satisfaction, logical and aesthetic.—S p. 80.

Long before we come to survival-value, the correctness of a sense-perception is testable in a way on which the pragmatists dwelt—testable by those further sense perceptions which occur when we act upon the perceptual judgment. Causal experience merely assures us that, whether our perceptions are right or wrong, they come from existent sources. What the effective distinction of perceptual truth from perceptual error requires is expectation which moves from one perception in the mode of presentational immediacy to others. (The empirical character of the object perceived is filled out—as the pragmatists seldom noticed—by the imaginable content of nonfutural hypothetical sense perceptions: by what the perceiver, or someone like him, supposes he would observe from other places or would have observed at other times.)

I think that Whitehead also handled the conceptual element in perceptual knowledge on the wrong plane—metaphysical rather than epistemological. It is curious that a thinker who enriched philosophy with so many new concepts should have said so little about the nature of concepts: they are “merely the analytic functioning of universals” (PR II i vi). Doubtless they are merely that—from Whitehead’s metaphysical point of view. In human knowledge, however, they play a role which he did not fully appreciate. Notice of it would have fitted easily onto his profound observations about the role of theories, had he not assumed, with the neorealists, that human minds cannot apply a common conceptual pattern to their environ-
ment unless they enjoy sense-data in common (SMW p. 126). Grant, with Whitehead, that these data are not confined to the moment of perception but are recurrable eternal objects, and also that they are continuous with rather than separated from qualities which are enjoyed by the perceiver’s sense organs and which may be ingredient in events beyond his body. It is still possible that, when an object is placed before several observers, the exact quality which each perceives is confined to him and his body. That this does not make knowledge of the object impossible, can only be due to the way in which men frame, use, and express their concepts. I think that the true, and epistemologically sufficient, account of the matter was well stated by Lewis in 1929:

As between different minds, the assumption that a concept which is common is correlated with sensory contents which are qualitatively identical, is to an extent verifiably false, is implausible to a further extent, and in the nature of the case can never be verified as holding even when it may reasonably be presumed. Nevertheless, community of meaning is secured if each discover, within his own experience, that complex of content which this common concept will fit.7

One moral which I draw here is that, though the conception of distinct individuals which Whitehead provided in his theory of actual occasions and societies of occasions may be sufficient and admirable for metaphysics (as I rather think it is), when we come to epistemology (and many other topics in the philosophy of man) it is essential to take the individual person as the primary unit in terms of which problems should be discussed.

A system of metaphysics should try to describe the universe in a way which permits all human activities to be exhibited as various highly specialized instances of the operation of generic metaphysical factors. It is the responsibility not of metaphysics but of a general theory of man to show the distinc-

tive features of diverse groups of such instances—e. g., of moral
conduct, historical inquiry, political organization, and civilized
life. In *Adventures of Ideas, Modes of Thought*, and the
undeservedly neglected last chapter of *Symbolism*, Whitehead
illuminated many of these topics as no one else could. In doing
so he was consciously applying his metaphysics—not bestowing
ontological titles (as many philosophers now do) upon those
special features of human existence which are important to
us. If the preceding discussion of his view of perceptual
knowledge is correct, however, it shows that he did not always
take certain specifically human factors into account. I also
suggest that although eternal objects, or universals, may be
metaphysical factors, concepts are human factors, whose special
nature the theory of human thought must determine. And
although Whitehead’s introduction into metaphysics of pro­
positions as a category of existence, consisting of “impure po­
tentials” functioning as lures for feeling (generally uncon­
scious) in the processes of the world, was an original con­
tribution of great importance, the proposition as a union of
concepts—a union which must be consciously entertainable—
is another and much more special thing, and must still be
treated as a topic in the theory of human thought. That theory
must assume responsibility for clarifying the criteria by which
the propositions thought by men may be accounted true or
false, probable or improbable, accurate or inaccurate, etc.
These propositions are human proposals; they are not appear­
ances which have or lack a certain relation to reality. White­
head’s profound discussion of the “truth-relation” of appear­
ance to reality (AI xvi) has only an indirect relevance to them.

In view of the magnitude of Whitehead’s work it would be
out of place to dwell on his tendency to ontologize these
concerns of the human mind. He wanted his philosophy to
be used. My critical suggestion is that in its future use a nice
discrimination between the theory of being and the theory
of man will sometimes need to be supplied.
VI

If the reader will turn back to Section VII of Chapter I, he will see some of the things which we can learn from Whitehead in framing our social and political philosophies. There is nothing on earth that is more urgently needed than wisdom in that task. Whitehead had it in the highest degree that I have seen. This statement is not to be justified here; Part I, "Sociological," and Chapter xix, "Adventure," in Adventures of Ideas must be studied. You will not find there analyses of the theory of natural law, utilitarianism, historicism, or the organic theory of the state. The stock alternatives have often been examined and revised. In Whitehead we have a broader view of society, and a way of thinking about ideals which makes them absolutely fundamental and is yet perfectly sane.

He wrote: "Life can only be understood as an aim at that perfection which the conditions of its environment allow. But the aim is always beyond the attained fact." (AI v v). In this sense the civilization of the Roman Empire in the West was not alive. The Empire itself "was a purely defensive institution, in its sociological functionings and in its external behaviour." That is one pattern which must not be repeated in our time.

Whitehead declared totalitarianism "hateful": "If the man be wholly subordinated to the common life, he is dwarfed. His complete nature lies idle, and withers." (ESP p. 65; AESP p. 125). But he never supposed that courage and love of freedom, backed by technical progress, are enough. "In the region of large political affairs, the test of success is twofold—namely, survival power and compromise. . . . Some English statesmen of vigorous decisiveness . . . try to decide and impose. They are the failures in modern English history, much beloved by vivid intellectuals." (ESP p. 72; AESP pp. 132 f.). This does not apply to Englishmen only! Whitehead added, "Political solutions devoid of compromise are failures from the ideal of statesmanship." Surveying our postwar
world, he did not hesitate to recommend "sympathetic compromise" (ESP p. 53 n.). Choice among ideals (bad ones are as numerous as good ones), coordination and compromise, provision of more opportunity for individuals, courage, reverence for the human soul, care that the foundations of civilized society be not destroyed: all are essential. A Bertrand Russell and a Sidney Hook, alive at 100 A.D., might have agreed on the necessity of abolishing slavery in the Empire; not so Whitehead (see AI II vi). His imaginativeness was as many-sided as it was keen, and it was perfectly united with a firm common sense.

Dewey liked to quote Whitehead's statement, "Mankind is that factor in Nature which exhibits in its most intense form the plasticity of nature." In general, the relation of Whitehead's social philosophy to his metaphysics conforms well to the ideal stated in the preceding section. Mankind's social experience, familiar to him from his lifelong historical reading, receives a signal, though of course partial, elucidation from the metaphysics, mediated by his fine sense of historical importance and of what constitutes civilization. The world-process is not merely the motion, consolidation, and dispersal of matter and energy, sometimes accompanied by pain and pleasure; nor is it the enactment of the opera called Dialectical Materialism. What then is it? Whitehead's Platonic-organismic cosmology is a grand alternative to these. To be sure, not all social philosophers assume that some kind of materialism is the only possible view of nature and of man. An experienced planner of American foreign policy has just worked out a political philosophy in terms of a dualistic metaphysics of existential things and the perfection of Platonic

---

8 AI v v; italics in text.
9 "Elucidation" does not mean that the course of history can be deduced from the metaphysics. Another common imputation is that any use of a metaphysical idea or a judgment of importance is a claim to possess some "privileged information" or "special knowledge." Opponents of philosophy substitute this tic for a quiet look at their own general assumptions.
forms.\textsuperscript{10} But Professor Halle's Platonism is naïve and tame in comparison with Whitehead's.

We Whitehead readers cannot hope to acquire everything—beginning with his creative mathematician's feeling for general patterns—that is in his philosophy. But we can be encouraged to widen our sensitivity to human values and the values of nature,\textsuperscript{11} whether or not we share his religious sense of "the coordination and eternity of realized value." We can become wiser in our understanding of the history of the race and our attitudes toward its problems. And we can recover "the old doctrine that breadth of thought reacting with intensity of sensitive experience stands out as an ultimate claim of existence" (PR I i vi).

Philosophy is intellectual, and practical: "an endeavor to obtain a self-consistent understanding of things observed" (MT p. 208), and "an attempt to clarify those fundamental beliefs which finally determine the emphasis of attention that lies at the base of character."\textsuperscript{12} In philosophy, the feeling of clarity that comes from mental subtraction is a cheat. By his example even more than by his teaching, Whitehead continually impels his reader toward wider and subtler observation, and toward greater imaginativeness in thought. This impulsion is the best of all the good things which his philosophy gives to the world.


\textsuperscript{11} Anyone who with Lewis Mumford is appalled by the morals of extermination and is attracted by that writer's good campaign for "the renewal of life" but desires a more dispassionate wisdom and a more articulated metaphysics will find them in Whitehead.

\textsuperscript{12} AI vi vi. The context is a consideration of the ways in which populations may react to the crises they encounter.