[AS YET UNIDENTIFIED BBC LECTURES]

This is a lightly edited transcript of a text in Isaiah Berlin's papers.[1] *No attempt has been made to bring it to a fully publishable form, but this version is posted here for the convenience of scholars. I should be grateful if anyone can shed light on its identity.* H.H.

[A: Eighteenth-century thought]

EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY beliefs in nature and reason. What is nature? Professor Grey[2] says that everyone interpreted her in his own way. Everyone was in her confidence and knew intimately what she wanted, particularly in France.

Among the persons who knew what nature wanted were three groups which may be distinguished.

(*a*) Man is naturally good and free, but corrupted and deceived by bad and deceitful men, by fools and knaves who take them in. Remove the bonds, let nature do her work unobstructed and all will be well. There is a natural harmony with which man is in tune provided the truth is revealed to him and he understands his place in nature. Education should be simple, unhistorical, factual, rational and scientifically up to date. Newton has explained inorganic matter, the same must be done for ethics and politics; the answers are got by observing the facts and reasoning from

[1] 'BBC Lectures 1954?' appears on these notes in IB's hand, but there were no BBC Lectures in 1954 known to me.

These fragments come in three sections, which may not be parts of the same whole. Section [A] – original TS folios 2–1 to 2–6 (here pp. 1–4) – a mixture of notes and prose, is a complete unit. Section [B] – original TS folios 2–10 to 2–12 (here pp. 4–6, 'world strife') and 13 to 52 (here pp. 6–37), 40–52 (here pp. 20, 'These four', to 37) being 1–13 renumbered by hand – is in prose, but starts and stops in mid-sentence. Section [C] – original TS folios [1] to 16 (here pp. 27–37) – is again a mixture of notes and prose, and again untruncated, though its composition seems to have been discontinued at the end, where some brief notes have been added by hand. The symbols { } indicate longer MS additions to the TS.

[2] [Professor Sir Alexander Gray? Ed.]

them. Man is endlessly perfectible. Condorcet, Helvétius, up to a point Rousseau. Goodness is a quality largely apprehended. There is no disagreement among rational men as to what it is. Similarly, freedom is freedom from obstruction to living by the light of nature, which all the best and wisest teachers of mankind have agreed about. The Church and bureaucracy, whether feudal or despotic and centralised, are selfish conspiracies engaged deliberately in darkening men's minds and leading them into slavery.

(*b*) Man is neither good nor bad, he is the product of environment, like everything in nature. He is not blameworthy for his acts any more than a tree or a stone. There is a natural harmony from which man has been kept by artificial means. Removal of this artificiality by restoring the natural harmony will make man happy because unobstructed. Moral concepts are neither here nor there; moral concepts, like right and wrong, imply that man is responsible for his acts, but if he is the product of his environment, he acts as he does because he cannot help it. His notions of right and wrong are as much conditioned by his environment as everything else; it is senseless to ask 'What should a man do?' The only correct question is 'Why does he act as he does and where and how long will he continue to do what?' History is neither here nor there. You do not appeal to historical conditions in chemistry or in forestry. Why then in human affairs? If the country is lucky enough to be governed by an enlightened prince, its inhabitants will be moulded in such a way as to fit with nature and to be happy. But this is pure luck. The prince, like everything else, will either occur or not occur; nothing can be done to produce him because the course of nature cannot be altered. (Weak form, Montesquieu; strong form, Holbach and La Mettrie.)

(*c*) Man is good but corrupted and is full of wistful desire to return to his early primitive condition. The sure guide is a deep sentiment and not logic-chopping or argument. If man had not been corrupted, government would not be necessary. Even rational government is necessary only because men are bad or it has been sent to punish and rule us for our sins (Tom Paine, and sometimes Rousseau). Inequality is the invention of the Haves against the Have Nots. Man has fallen from grace and is not advancing towards it. Knowledge and sophistication corrupt the natural goodness of the noble savage, who is poor and chaste and equal and truthful and generous. The best we can do is to restore

these virtues in the adverse condition of today, to remember the days of our youth, to live as our ancestors once did and as unspoilt races perhaps still do.

This contains at least four elements, none of which is compatible with the other. (*a*) Environment determinism. (*b*) Natural rights and desires. (*c*) Optimistic faith in guidance by non-rational sentiment. (*d*) Newtonian scientific engineering. All these are inconsistent. (Develop this.)

This amalgam all believed by the Jacobins. It may be confused, but it is broadly rationalist, naturalist, optimistic and individualistic. French Revolution made by people who believed in this and rejected faith and authority and appealed to tradition or prescription or supernatural sanction outright. They believed that their concepts had behind them the great prestige of natural science. They believed that language, if properly formulated, freed thought from misleading metaphysical concepts, essences, hidden forms, ultimate causes, special insights. The danger was to talk about things or institutions as if they were persons. Turgot and De Brosses talked with terrible contempt about 'fetishism', that is to say, the treatment of institutions or traditions as if they were persons in authority. Condorcet invited people to study society 'like beavers or bees'. These people believed in absolute rights, flowing from the nature of things, and believed in nature as a personified entity which cancels out individual wrinkles and vagaries, evens out chaotic individual passions – Mother Nature, Dame Nature etc. Not everyone equally optimistic, for example, Johnson, but he is a seventeenth-century throwback. Godwin is the most extreme example of this attitude. Legislation is putting into positive law what is already right according to nature. Either law ordains what is just or it is immoral. There is no obedience to the laws of the State as such. Either it is reasonable, in which case I obey my own reason, or it is not, in which case I obey brute force, which is irrational, therefore immoral. Man is everywhere always the same. Why do men consent to be governed as they are? Not because of force. That would be contrary to justice; nor because of divine behests, because that would be either contrary to reason or superfluous; nor on contract, because equally, the contract would follow rational ends or contradict reason. There is only one thing its consent rests on, namely, the rational deliberation of rational mankind.

The French Revolution destroyed the audience of these people because, based on their principles, it had failed either to cure the ills which it had been made to abolish, or to transform human nature. Misery, inequality and the chaos and violence of social life were, if anything, greater after Napoleon than before him. Disillusionment, cynicism, escapism and quest for authority. Frightful revulsion against the entire ideological bag of tricks with which the philosophers of nature promised to create the new moral and social order. Scepticism of natural rights stimulated by the despotic trampling of liberty by its Jacobin champions; the doctrine of the harmony of nature offset by the economic misery of industrial *laissez-faire*. The doctrine that man left to work out his own destiny without coercion will succeed, upset by the failure of democratic institutions in France and elsewhere. Just as the Russian Revolution killed liberalism in Europe, so the French Revolution killed nature-worship and the optimism and rationalism of the Encyclopaedists. Society obviously could not be arranged in neat patterns. Perhaps life happiness cannot be planned at all. Perhaps human material is too recalcitrant. Perhaps history is a better guide as to what can and cannot be done than rational doctrine. Perhaps the past, unencumbered by people trying to bend the historical process arbitrarily, was a better time. Hence the romantic medievalism, nationalism, historicism on one side and historicist socialism on the other. The opponents of rationalism divided into two camps: (*a*) pessimists and anti-rationalists – Maistre, Bonald, Burke, Herder; (*b*) optimistic planners, forwarders of the tactic of history – Saint Simon, Fourier. Thus the only survivors of the earlier period were the cautious, compromising Utilitarians, who believed in piecemeal, *ad hoc* planning adjusted to local needs and founded on no metaphysical premises.

[B: German romanticism]

[...] he was thought to sacrifice everything to a single goal because it was his goal, because he wanted that and nothing else, because he could not be diverted or corrupted or weaned away from offering all he had to the realisation of the ideal in which he believed absolutely. The artist was a teacher and a saint because he forgot himself in the pursuit of a single ideal, because he did not compromise, because he told the truth or created his art for its

own sake, reckless of consequences. This is something quite unknown to previous ages. Art for art's sake, a full life for its own sake. Military [], political power for their own sake as the goals of a disinterested activity which a man set before himself because he could no other, because they were that which alone made life worth living for him, because he chose them and willed them with his whole being. He bent the facts of the world to his will.

We need not go into the metaphysical extravagances which this led to (such as that the world is what I will it to be, that it is a self outside time and space which generates my experience in obedience to my will, etc.). But the admiration for Napoleon or Beethoven, for great virtuosi in various fields of life, the romantic ideal of the man who fulfils himself, despite all obstacles, the Byronic belief that it is better to fail in the attempt to do what you want to do because it is unattainable, however much pain this may cause to others, than to adjust your life to harmonious and peaceful compromise with circumstance.

That moral grandeur depends, not on the intrinsic rightness of your aims, whether they are provided by nature or by God, but upon the spirit with which you fulfil them, the independence and passion with which you ignore men and things and realise what is in you, unmoved by the allurements of an easier life, in short, the worship of the triumph of the will over the tendency to passive drifting under the influence of external factors – that is a nineteenth-century attitude, common both to left- and right-wing thinkers, both to religious and secular ones. If you look at a typical democratic hero of the nineteenth century, Garibaldi, Mazzini, the heroes of the Greek or South American or German wars of liberation, you will find that they are admired not merely because the liberties for which they fought are part of what will make people happier, what did, in fact, make people happier, or what the Bible or the Church instructed them to do, but because they asserted, in their action, certain human characteristics, the will to freedom, or the will to glory, triumphantly over rational calculation or obedience to dogma. Now this meant that a justification of a man's acts or his life was sought neither in the pronouncements of dogmatic authority nor in the rules of expediency calculated to satisfy the maximum number of the desires of average men and women, nor in the rules discovered by reason or sentiment for a specific doctrine, but in the pursuit of disinterested ends for their own sake, whatever those ends might be. The ideal was greatness,

and greatness was measured by the degree to which the great man transformed circumstances by imposing his will, in accordance with some disinterested principle, upon them.

Of course, people disagreed violently about the ends. Democrats fought against autocrats because their ends seemed to be incompatible with one another, but what they admired in one another was not specific beliefs, but the purity of the passion which inspired them. And this means that persons in that state of mind supposed that the answer to the question 'What ought I to do, and how ought I do it?' was given, not by reason or by scientific investigation, nor by working out the answer in books or immersing yourself in a tradition as a repository of wisdom, but in your own volitional activity, that which, upon examination, you found you did other things for the sake of, that which you found yourself willing for its own sake, not having it wished upon you or dictated to you, either by nature or by revelation.

This notion of human personality as volitional rather than intellectual, active rather than contemplative, is at the centre of Carlyle and Nietzsche. In Schelling it takes the form of an enormous metaphysic according to which the world, nature, is the activity of an active Spirit living and creating and making and changing and growing. Human beings are worthy, great, free etc. in proportion as they realise themselves as finite centres of this spirit, and will and create and live as part of this world impulse or world strife.

The German romantics made a great difference to political thought in Western and, indeed, Eastern Europe. It is rather difficult to get at what precisely the difference is. If you read the romantics themselves, Hegel, Schelling, Fichte, you will most probably be unable to make head or tail of what is being said. If you read the works of the interpreters, particularly the English interpreters, you will find something clearer and more coherent, but, in my view, a grave distortion of their views. I shall try to provide the reason for both these states of affairs.

(1) The central doctrine of the German romantics is based on the metaphysical premise that the world is not divided into the contemplative observer and the contemplated object, into man who enquires and nature who answers, but that in some sense man creates the events of the so-called world which he enquires about. Without going into the metaphysical subtleties of what this view implies, it amounts, so far as ethics and politics are concerned, to

the view that questions on these subjects cannot be answered by inspecting any body of facts. I ask myself 'What ought I to do?', 'What is my purpose in the world?', 'What is the ideal I should strive for?' The eighteenth century answered this by inviting me to do what I should do if I were to ask such questions as 'How much money have I?', 'What is the distance between my house and somebody else's?' or even 'What kind of food or drink will satisfy me most or cost me least?' To the early nineteenth century this was no kind of answer, and it was no kind of answer because it seemed to omit the element of moral pressure, the element of obligation, of ought. No amount of contemplation could propel me into action or get me into that state in which people sacrifice their happiness, or spill the blood of others and, finally, embark upon arduous and violent courses in the face of odds, which was thought to be the heart of the moral life.

Nor was Hume's answer satisfactory. Hume had performed a task of crucial, unforgettable importance in destroying the arguments and destroying the concept of metaphysical, necessary connections between objects or characteristics in nature. He had demonstrated in an irrefutable manner that even facts did not entail or necessitate other facts, that it is impossible from contemplation of one set of facts to deduce with logical necessity that some other body of facts must necessarily exist or have existed. This created new problems for the interpretation of physical and, indeed, common-sense beliefs, that is to say, those founded on the notion of causal laws as describing necessary links between facts which made the world a logical system, so that from any part of it the rest of it could be deduced by purely rational activity.

This doctrine has even more fatal consequences with regard to value judgements. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, starting from the unquestioned view that the world was a systematic whole linked by necessary links, you arrived at the notion that the world was the realisation of a great divine plan. The relation of historical events to one another was conceived as the relation of parts of a building to one another, which were as they were because of their relation to a kind of architect's ground plan. The architect conceived the plan as a coherent, intellectually interconnected whole, a system like the Euclidean system of geometry, every part of which was logically necessitated by the other. The march of history, the march of events, was simply the

progressive realisation of parts of this plan in time so that every event could be logically explained as made necessary by something in the logical schema in the head of the creator. Alternatively, if you believed, with Spinoza, that there was no progressive realisation, but that the whole thing was a static machine, then the creator and his plan were identical with the world, history was an illusion because time was an illusion, and a deeper insight ignored the time succession of events as a confused and shadowy reflection of a timeless metaphysical structure, the reality behind the shifting appearances. Value judgements, that is to say, questions like 'What should I do?', 'How should I like?', 'How should I be governed?', 'Why should I obey?' were questions of the form 'Where do I fit into this system?', or rather 'Where must I fit?', since everything that fits not merely does but must fit as it does, and 'How ought I to behave?' is identical with 'How would I behave if I understood my position in the system and accepted the behaviour which the system anyway imposes on me as the necessity it is?' just as 'What kind of food ought I to eat?' is equivalent to asking 'What food would I be eating if I were a perfectly healthy organism in a perfectly appropriate environment?'

Hume destroyed this notion of a necessary structure and taught people to believe that the world was simply a collection of *de facto* things or events which follow each other as they do, not because they must, not because of anything, simply as they do, in fairly regular patterns, which might have been less regular but fortunately were not. It therefore did not make sense any more to ask 'What, being what I am by necessity, is the behaviour which necessarily flows from my necessary nature?' To answer ethical questions, Hume produced a theory of approvals and disapprovals. That is to say, when I call a thing 'good', I mean that I experience a sentiment of approval for it which is a brute fact about me like all other facts about anything. 'Why should I obey the law?' equals 'Why should I approve of doing what I am ordered?', and to this Hume gives good, conservative answers, say, that if I did not, my life would become filled with insecurity. Without laws of some sort, people would not be sure of other people's behaviour; this would upset the social structure and lead to fear, distrust and, consequently, chaos and misery. Hence even bad laws which were stable were so much better than continual change or upsetting of laws, however good, and revolution or even radical reform, by undermining people's reliance on rules of conduct, did far more

harm than obedience to fixed laws, however disagreeable or revolting to the sense of moral approval. We approved of obedience because we liked stability. We rebelled against governments or laws when even instability seemed preferable to the misery or indignation which the government or the rules occasioned. Such indignation could not be regarded as justifiable or unjustifiable, because to justify is to bring under rule, and indignation might be against all prevailing rules. We just felt it, that is all, and if we felt it strongly enough, we acted, and if other people felt it strongly enough, they helped us and we succeeded in upsetting a regime. If they did not help us, we might fail, the old rules go on, and with the indignant minority out of the way, the rest of society might jog along quite happily under the old rules and forget about it. It was a natural, factual account of what went on: an attempt to explain why we behaved as we behaved in psychological or sociological terms, not involving such non-sensible metaphysical concepts as natural rights inherent in men, or irrevocable natural law by which men and States were bound to each other.

This is precisely the view against which the romantics so strongly rebelled. Already Rousseau and Kant have begun to feel very strongly that this was an inadequate description of what happened when people felt impelled to moral or political action. It was too cool, too objective, it did not explain what Kant called the categorical imperative, what the Protestants had spoken of as the private conscience, the sense of duty, inescapable obligation which made men martyrs, capable of facing without flinching the contempt and violence of entire societies directed against them. And quite plainly utilitarianism, which laid down that pain and pleasure – desire for pleasure and fear of pain – were the only springs of action which moved men, did not do justice to the facts either. It seemed absurd to maintain that a Galileo who underwent torture for his opinions, or some leader of rebellion who faced certain death in trying to liberate a class or a nation, were pursuing pleasure or escaping pain in the ordinary sense of those words. Escaping pain, perhaps. The pain of a guilty conscience or of appearing to oneself to be a compromiser or a coward, a compounder of forces of evil – but those who feared that would fear it only because they believed that it was a wicked or bad thing to give in or compromise. Thinking it bad was not equivalent to thinking it non-pleasure-giving or guilt-inducing – you felt guilt

yourself because you had done something wrong. You did not think it wrong because doing it would induce guilt. But thinking anything wrong was not enough. You might think so and do nothing. In moments of moral choice or political decision, you were, according to the romantics, conscious of something more than a set of facts, conscious of a command, an imperative, something ordering and driving you and pushing you in a particular unanswerable way towards a given goal.

What was this imperative? Who ordered it? Who issued the commands? Who had the authority to do so? And what would it mean to say that such authority existed? What was authority? 'Stern daughter of the voice of God!.'[3] What did this image of Wordsworth's conjure up? Kant spoke of the categorical imperative as issuing from the rational will. Nobody then or now really knows what this is supposed to mean. Something volitional was certainly involved. It was not just a statement of fact. It was an act of will, but 'rational' seemed difficult to grasp. It was a term borrowed from logic and common sense, and had something to do with validity and consistency and the use of scientific method or ability to explain rather than blindly accept this or that. Kant's idealistic successors made more of this – there is a modern theory of ethics called the Emotive Theory to which they are nearer than is commonly supposed. The Emotive Theory declares that propositions of the form 'You ought to do this' or 'This is wrong' or 'Such and such is a noble or sordid act' are not really, despite the similarity to descriptive statements, descriptions of anything at all. What they really do is to indicate or show that the speaker has a certain attitude towards the world, is the kind of person who means or is prepared for certain kinds of acts or reactions and urges the same attitude upon the person spoken to, upon whomever he is speaking to. 'You should obey the government' does not say something which is true or false in the sense in which 'You are mild-tempered' states a fact. It simply orders you to do something, orders you to behave in a certain way, and evinces, without stating, that the person speaking is in favour of that kind of behaviour – is a symptom, in the way that a frown or a growl or a stamp of the foot would be, that if you do not, he will be angry and try to punish you.

[3] Wordsworth, 'Ode to Duty' (1807).

Whether this theory is adequate or not, its historical beginnings are in the writings of the German romantics. When Fichte or Schelling or even Hegel discussed ethics, still more Schlegel or Novalis, who are the really characteristic writers of this time and mood, you get the impression that ethical and political judgements are regarded as the breath, the [], the orders of an impersonal Spirit which blows through all creation inciting and forcing and driving finite spirits, that is to say, men, in a certain direction – to feel a strong sense of duty is not to contemplate something or judge something to be something but to be acted upon and be a vessel bursting with an inner spiritual energy or vital force which is responsible for everything that happens, history and nature – the ultimate vital force of which we hear so much later, which drives things and men in the direction in which they go and consciousness of which, in oneself, is moral and political experience.

The theory is one of which the root is to be found in Rousseau – namely, that I am not acting in a moral manner unless I am free, that is, unless I am not coerced by any outside force. Not to be coerced by an outside force is to do that which I will to do – of my own free will. It means that the ends which I pursue are ends which I have proposed to myself, not commandments from some outside source which I either cannot or must not disobey if I am to avoid disaster, but purposes which I say I freely pursue because I have generated them from within myself; I need not have done so, and have done so because I freely resolved to do so. What justifies these purposes or their pursuit? Simply that they are *my* purposes, that they are that for the sake of which I am prepared to do other things, that when these purposes are ultimate, that is to say, when I do not seek to justify them in terms of anything else, when they are that to the fulfilment of which everything else in my life is directed, then I am prepared to lay down my life for them, or destroy and kill others for frustrating them. I do not seek justification for them in sacred writings or in the behaviour of nature, for the sacred writings are not self-justifying – if I am a rational being, I do not accept dogmatic pronouncements without asking myself why I should obey this rather than that set of undemonstrated assertions. As for nature, how can contemplation of facts, however profound, teach me anything about what I ought to do? I learn what goes on in the world and perhaps how it goes on, what causes what, what has happened in the past, and what is

likely to happen in the future, and what would happen if this or that were done or not done – but however extensive and minute my knowledge of all this, how can I derive from it any answer to the question 'What should I or my society do?' unless I already possess some conception of the goal which I seek, to which these circumstances – the things and people in the world – must be adapted? And these goals, surely, I can discover only by looking within myself and discovering that there are certain ends which for me are ultimate and which are that in terms of which I justify everything else.

If the argument had stopped there, it would have led to direct subjectivism: everyone has his own ultimate ends, they are what they are and cannot themselves be justified in terms of anything else, for they are what justifies everything else. My ends may collide with yours, in which case there is nothing to be done and we must fight it out – and this is indeed the pessimistic view of individualistic philosophers like Schopenhauer who, in order to minimise the pain that arises from clashes of incompatible ends within a single individual or between different individuals or between organisations or Churches or States, recommends a Buddhist killing of desires, with elimination in oneself of all those impulses whose frustration causes one pain and destruction. Or there are the optimistic anarchists who hope, like the Utilitarians, that men's interests on the whole will coincide and harmonise and that, by suitable education, the area of conflict can be reduced or even eliminated altogether. But these are pious hopes, and the German Idealists looked for something more solid upon which to found their political and ethical doctrines.

What they arrived at was a view which tried to give objective justifications for subjective passion. If the world grows and develops as it does because some hidden force is responsible for its movement, perhaps it is the selfsame force which rotates the sun and the planets, causes the trees to grow and water to turn to ice or steam, and which occurs in the form of volitions and the artistic imagination in human consciousness. By following the direction in which he is urged by this inner force as it displays itself within him, man is automatically allowing himself to move in the same direction as that which nature is pursuing in its unconscious way; he will be frustrated only if he opposes this general movement. If he allows himself to follow the path dictated by a special kind of inner urge, which is the form the life force takes

within him, he will find himself at one with the general course of nature, simultaneously satisfying his deepest inclinations and justified in his life, for the direction of the world force is what we plead in justification of anything, is that in terms of which we praise and condemn, call things right or wrong, whether or not we realise this. We do not, like the eighteenth century, observe nature and then try to imitate her, or read Newtonian mechanics and try to work out a similar system for politics or morals; we do not artificially adjust our lives to this or that pattern; we follow a certain inner inclination without consciously enquiring about its connection with external nature. We shall thereby be ourselves realising her ends by obeying an impulse analogous to that which animates so-called inanimate nature; the difference between man and nature being that nature is unaware of the forces which play within her, whereas man, by becoming conscious of them, is acting freely – for freedom is simply to act from your own inner motives, knowing that they are yours, and not from without.

There is disagreement among the Idealists about how this inner impulse works – Schelling makes it consist in the irrational, artistic, semi-instinctive, pious, religious, emotion which poets and artists and religious natures experience and which reasoning and logic-chopping distorts and atrophies. The work of the frenzied artist, the inspired poet, when he is most removed from the cares of the earth, the sacred madness of the genius in a moment of creation, is the highest manifestation of the Spirit which moves everything towards his appointed goal.

Hegel prefers to call this activity self-conscious reason, which participates in the inner conflict of all things and causes man to range himself on the victorious side in the world conflict which is world progress. Since it is irrational to seek destruction, it is rational therefore only to discover on which side the hope of the future lies and to identify oneself therewith. But fundamentally there is a common doctrine there – which is that man ought to do that which he knows within himself is the overmastering purpose of his life. This purpose justifies everything; and in following it and imposing it upon the world lies at once freedom, for no one is coercing him, and [], for that is what obligation means, the having of a purpose which cannot be escaped by external considerations either of pleasure or of profit, but as the spirit animates – animates not individuals alone, but all nature. It is not individuals alone but individuals as parts of larger wholes who are concerned. To

understand what he is, an individual must understand his relations with everything else, but principally to other individuals. He is what he is in his acts: his acts are acts vis-à-vis others; their acts are acts in relation to him; together they form a pattern which is called society. No individual has purposes distinct from the existence of morality, the outlook, the habits, the view of life, the attitude of his time and his place and his social status. Individuals can be understood only seen together like bees in a beehive, since their functions are unintelligible save in relation to each other's. The unit therefore is not the individual but the community. The most articulated form of the community most aware of itself as the community is the State.

There are four distinguishable streams which feed the Idealist notion of the State.

(1) Firstly, there is a stream which issues from Rousseau. Because the notion of good was defined by him in terms of volition, that is to say that things are not good or bad in themselves or because of some relation which they have to one another, but because they are desired, what you meant by calling something good was not some characteristic of the thing itself, but simply that you desired or wanted it in a certain way. Then if you asked 'What does the good of the community as a whole consist in?' the answer plainly could not be the sum of the desires of the various members in it, for these might conflict and yield no consistent answer to the question: my good is what I want, your good is what you want, but our good cannot be what we want, because we do not both of us want the same thing. If you have a criterion for good which does not depend on desire, then the question 'What is our good?' can be answered, because it means 'What is the good for us?', settled independently of what we want; but if you think that good must be defined in terms of desire and that it makes sense to talk about the good of the community, then by a purely logical process you have to define the good of the community as what the community desires, not the community as a collection of individuals, but the community as a desiring entity; but only persons can desire, trees and stones do not, and animals only in a rather dubious sense. Moreover, the desire which renders its objects good for Rousseau is something called 'rational desire', and that, certainly, only fully conscious personalities can have. Hence the community must be a person in some sense, and we get the whole mythology of the State as an organism and men as its

limbs, of individuals as incomplete save in so far as they function as part of an organic whole, of the good of the individual as an element in the system and nothing without it, and so on. If a community is a person there is something called the will of the community, and the wisdom of the community, and acts of the community, which are not the wisdom or will or acts of its members; the will of the community is no more a collection of individual wills than the will of an individual is a collection of the wills of his limbs; and the well-being of the community is no more the sum of the well-being of its members than a musical melody is the sum of the tones of its constituent sounds. This is one stream of thought.

(2) Another is the Hegelian view of historical development: and this goes back to Vico. Vico made one profound observation which has affected the history of human thought: he observed that, so far from understanding nature and being puzzled about the workings of our minds and souls, the opposite was the case. When we studied nature, while we could record what occurred, when it occurred, in company with what else it occurred, and so establish generalisations of what happened when and before and after what, which was physics and chemistry, we did not know and could not expect to know why what happened happened. If it was an inner nexus – a purpose to which physical purposes were directed, or thought and feelings in things as well as men, bonds of other than a purely before-and-after, together-and-apart type, if there were such, we did not know about the material world, and all hypotheses about this were so much metaphysical or theological speculation for which we have no [evidence?], which could never be made scientific.

On the other hand, we knew ourselves as we did not know material objects: we knew why we behaved as we did, because we were conscious of purposes, our own, and by analogy or sympathetic insight, those of others. We knew far more about the spirit than we knew about matter because we were spirits and could be autobiographical from within, as it were. We knew what it felt like to be persons. We did not know what it felt like to be tables and chairs, or trees and stones. We knew only what they looked like and how they moved in space. There is, therefore, according to Vico, an inherent absurdity in trying to apply the methods of natural science to human affairs. The eighteenth century is dominated by the notion that the only true method of

obtaining the truth is that of science, science being physics and chemistry, that is to say, observation and generalisation made on the basis of it. But this is to treat human beings as if they were sticks and stones, when we know they are not, to treat them as if they had no motives, no purposes, no thought, no attitudes toward life, as if they are mere three-dimensional bodies moving in space. Nobody in his senses, when actually writing about human history, would in fact do this: nobody ever really tried to apply purely physical or mathematical methods to the history of human institutions, nor yet to the biographies of individuals. Behaviourism, such as that of La Mettrie or Condillac, was an unnecessary absurdity; if animism, if the pathetic fallacy by which we treated nature as if it was full of feelings and desires, as if weeping willows literally wept, and tables literally groaned under their weight, as if winds uttered melancholy sounds and fields smiled after rain – if all this was unforgivable anthropomorphism, the endowing of nature with human qualities when what we meant by nature was precisely what did not possess human qualities – if that was an obvious fallacy, surely the opposite was just as fatal: to endow men with the properties of stones or trees, to look on human history as merely the play of mechanical or even biological cause and effect, omitting precisely those characteristics which distinguish conscious spirits from brute nature. The categories we use, and rightfully, in describing human events and social institutions, employ such concepts as purpose, effort, success and failure, freedom and compulsion, satisfaction and frustration, progress and reaction, all of which cannot be applied to nature. Human society is not a collection of mere human bodies in reciprocal interaction. Human society is a network of relations between purposive individuals and the history of societies is the history of their purposes; trees and stones have no history precisely because they have no purposes, they pursue no ends, they have no careers, they do not act or suffer; geology is not history, it studies repetitive patterns. It asks only what happens, when and where, and before and after what else. Whenever A occurs in circumstances C, B occurs; but history does not study repetitive patterns. It tries to explain what occurred in terms of the ambitions and actions of specific individuals whose ambitions and acts differed from those of other individuals uniquely, because we can understand what it is like to be an individual endowed with this or that character, by analogy with ourselves, in a way in which

it is meaningless to suggest that we can understand what it is to be this or that piece of quartz, this or that oak, externally similar to other rocks or trees but moved by a different inner urge. Hence true history is a history of human experience, of desires and acts and purposes, and intellectual and moral beliefs and insights, and what is called the inner life in men, as opposed to the sense-given behaviour of nature.

All this is interesting and partly true, and Vico is a forerunner of the romantic revolt against universal application of the methods of exact science. But the romantics carried this insight too far. If history is a history of human endeavour and not of statistically analysable events, if history can never be sociology, a science of society composed of beavers and bees, then, they felt, since history is not the history of isolated individuals but of communities of them, it studies not the individual purposes of individual persons, what Alcibiades did and suffered, but the experience, the behaviour, the plans and acts and fates of whole cultures. But now we are back with Rousseau again. What can plan and succeed, or fail and grow and decay, cannot be either inanimate, like an object in nature, nor a collection of separate entities casually come together. It must have the unity of a person, or at least of a biological organism. Societies are individuals; otherwise they can have no history. Every organisation, like the organisation of an individual man or woman, or of the lowest plant, has a structure of a specific kind, in terms of the growth of which its history can be described. Men grow from simple embryos to elaborately articulated organisms, from confused sense-perception to sophisticated intellectual processes, then gradually decay into senility and simplicity once more. So do societies, and what biological organisation and emotional and intellectual characteristics are for the individual, that institutions are for the community. Catholics and Calvinists saw it in their Churches, and followers of Fichte and of Hegel in the modern State.

Once more we arrive at the personified State, the State as something which has a history of its own, which is not a collection of the biographies of its citizens. Institutional history appears for the first time. The history of legislation, the history of art, the history of religion, the history of fashions or clothes or gastronomic tastes; what we are describing is no longer a physical or chemical repetitive pattern, A followed by B followed by C followed by Z followed by A in eternal circles, but the history of

various aspects of one pervasive Spirit with many facets, taking the form now of intellectual progress, now of the creation of works of art, now of mechanical invention, now of distant exploration, to be explained as one would explain the many activities of an individual, not as effects following causes but as activities fulfilling temperamental forces or purposes; only this time the subject is not the individual but human society as a whole, or else articulated portions of it, units called States or cultures, each with literally a life of its own, a character of its own, purposes of its own, intelligible only to those who see these purposes. I understand another person if I understand why he thinks what he thinks and what moves him to act as he does; if I were a biologist or physicist, I would not understand him, only his body; similarly, if I am an historian, I understand a given society only if I understand what it is at, where it is going and why, why it makes war at one time and produces works of genius at another; merely to give an account of what happens to it and when is not to understand it, only its outer shell. This talk of outer and inner is at the heart of romantic thought. The outer manifestations you perceive by the senses and catalogue under scientific hypotheses to be verified by [experiment?]. The inner core you understand by an act of introspective insight. You understand the purposes of the society in which you live because your own personal purposes are in some sense an element in this greater purpose.

(3) There is a third stream of a similar sort which feeds this notion. When I say that someone is loyal to his society or State, what is he loyal to? If the State is a utilitarian State, a mere traffic policeman, a night-watchman, then what am I loyal to? Surely not to a merely useful dodge to prevent collisions and safeguard property? I am loyal to individuals. Loyalty is a sentiment of devotion to members of my family, or my friends, or my master, or my servants, and surely if I mean anything by saying that I am loyal to my country, it too must be a kind of person towards which emotions can be directed. Team spirit, institutional loyalty, patriotism, public spirit, all these words seem to point to an attitude which individuals have towards an entity, their school, their army, their ministry, their country, treated as entities which have their own history and survive the lives of individual members.

(4) Finally, there are certain other words which incline us in much the same direction. If we say that a society is politically stable, we do not mean that the individuals who compose it are

politically stable, though they may be; if you say such and such a society is variegated or old or powerful or sinister, you do not mean that the individuals who compose it are variegated or old etc., nor even that the majority of them are such, but that they stand to each other in such a relation that the society which they compose displays this pattern. But what has a pattern must be a something or other. Mere heaps do not have patterns. Mere sounds do not yield melodies. A symphony in the composer's head is no less an entity with its own inner structure than a piece of sculpture which has been executed and occupies space. It has a pattern; it is a patterned something: so is a society or a State. It cannot be analysed into constituent parts, into loose aggregates. You may hear the sounds and not hear the melody. You may see a patch of the colour and not discriminate the picture. Nevertheless, the melody and the pictorial pattern are there, though undiscovered by you. So you may know in detail about the characteristics and histories of all the citizens of the State and of all the buildings in it and of everything else which composes it, but not have discerned the connection or the history of the State itself which alone provides the answer to the question 'Why should the citizens do this or that?', just as the pattern of the music provides the answer to 'Why should the flute play this note and the bassoon that?' The pattern is, so to speak, the explanation of its constituent parts, the thing to produce which they are intended by the maker or assembler of them.

There are these four strands: (*a*) society as having a 'good' of its own, and therefore desiring, willing something; (*b*) society as something which has purposes and experiences and is not inanimate and unintelligible and opaque like nature; (*c*) the State as the object of emotional attitudes, as a lawgiver, a rewarder and punisher, the object of loyalty and fear, the sovereign etc., the England of 'England expects that every man will do his duty'; (*d*) the pattern of the carpet, the whole in terms of which the parts are explained, the unity which is logically prior to the diversity in it, the inner structure of which everything is a specific manifestation, which alone enables us to explain one thing in terms of its relation to another.

All this together produced one of the most monstrous ideas of modern times, the organic State, the State to which it was the duty of individuals to sacrifice themselves because it was greater than they, because its power and glory was the individual's sole

justification, that to serve which, and be used up in the process, was his function and duty and pride, as it is for the note in music which dies away once its function in the work is over. Above all, the State was credited with a will of its own which [has?] the aims and purposes which were presented as categorical duties to its citizens. If to call a thing a duty was to say the State willed it, no States had duties towards one another, for that would mean that there was a super-State which had to will the inter-State duties. But Hegel thought he could show by biological reasoning that life development depended upon conflict, that is to say, the existence of separate States which were their own masters, responsible to themselves alone, the political counterpart of the Byronic individual, who owned no master but himself, whose ideals, whose justification of his acts, lay in his own uncontrolled and uncontrollable will and imagination, the ends which he set before himself as final.

These four basic ideas, powerful as their combined influence undoubtedly was, nevertheless embody fatal fallacies. Let us review them in order.[4]

(1) Rousseau's notion that because the good must be defined in terms of volition, and because to talk about the good of a community is neither on the one hand to talk about the sum of what is desired by its members, nor on the other hand something meaningless, does not entail that society is an individual. It would do so if the word 'good' were unambiguous, but it is not. For although the fact that X is good for an individual may entail that X desires it, or should desire it, it does not follow that 'X is good for a community' entails 'The community desires or should desire it', any more than it follows from the fact that a community is said to be old or powerful that it probably wears a beard, or could fight in a boxing-ring. And to say that a community is a personality with fears and hopes and desires, if taken literally, is no less absurd than to say that a community is bald or bearded or is about to marry a wife. Obviously, when we say that a community is old, we do not mean to imply anything about the condition of its physical cells, because communities are not physical bodies, and to say of them that they are old is to say something rather complicated about a similarity of pattern over many years between persons related in certain social ways. You can, if you like, say that it is a metaphor,

[4] [Actually the last two are inverted.]

and that is only to say that the epithet 'old' does not carry the implications which it would carry if applied to a living organism, or even an inorganic material object.

The word 'good' functions in at least as many senses. Therefore, to infer, from the fact that something is good for the community, that the community desires something in the way in which an individual does, is to use a violently misleading analogy. To say that something is good for a community or that there is a social good is a simple way of saying something fairly complicated – namely, that if certain states of affairs are realised, whether by acts of individuals or otherwise, the kind of relationships which people in a society require to have toward one another if they are to be called a society are promoted, are likely to last long, or that as a result of such acts the individuals will stand in the kind of relation to one another which somebody, the speaker or individuals in a society, do in fact desire or will, or would desire or will if they were as clear about the situation as the speaker thinks they ought to be, or claims to be himself. 'The extermination of disease is good for society' merely means that the average member of the society, if he knows as much as I know, prefers healthy rather than diseased bodies or minds to be the rule in the society in which he lives. You ask why he prefers it or should prefer it. That depends on the ethical views you hold. The point is that all you mean to do is to make a statement about how certain persons feel or desire or behave or would do about this or that actual or possible state of affairs; nothing follows about something which had public desires, about real public entities, which is ultimately a meaningless concept, any more than saying that a medicine is good for my insomnia entails that my insomnia is an entity with an individual history of its own, which sleeps when I sleep and functions vigorously together with me when I am awake. So much for the first leg of this four-legged stool.

(2) As for Vico, the proposition that self-knowledge or knowledge of human beings and their activities is a different sort of knowledge from knowledge of material objects and material laws is a fruitful and important insight. But again, it has no tendency to show that anything exists apart from persons and things. It is perfectly true that if I am trying to describe the life of a man or the development of social or political or other human institutions, I am doing something different from a natural scientist; and if I insist on confining myself to that alone which I

can observe with the senses and deductions drawn therefrom, as if I were watching the behaviour of automata, as if men were mechanical objects and social institutions, natural phenomena like the tides of the sea or the formation of geological layers – if I do this, I am perversely treating the facts as if they were different from what they are, applying concepts drawn from alien fields, saying less than I know, pretending that men do not think and will and feel, when in fact I know that they do, and pretending that social institutions are unrelated to moral, intellectual and aesthetic dispositions, when in fact they are. But again, it does not follow from this that if history is not like physics, it is like biography; that if it is not physics, does not describe the behaviour of matter, there is only one other thing it can describe, the behaviour of an entity called the Spirit, whether of an age, or a nation, or a religion, or whatever. While it is helpful and illuminating to explain this or that phenomenon by attributing it to the intellectual climate, to the spirit of the age, to the character of a particular nation, to the outlook of a particular government, it does not follow that governments literally have outlooks in the sense in which individuals have, that ages literally have spirits in the sense in which individual artists have, that peoples literally have characters in the sense in which particular persons may be said to have, and so on. To say that a nation has this or that character is, once more, to say a rather complicated thing simply – namely, that if individuals are born in certain places and at certain times, which entitles them to be called members of a certain nation, then it is a fair guess, a reliable generalisation, that they will behave in a certain way in certain circumstances, whereas if they had been born at different times, in different places and environments, they would probably have behaved differently. And it lays stress on the fact that perhaps men's relations to one another are crucially important in determining their experiences and actions, that to ignore the past, not merely of an individual, but of other individuals who surround him, to ignore the results upon him of being descended from those persons whose relations to other people were such and such, would be a grave oversight and lead to mistakes in understanding and estimating a man's character and activities. No doubt, before the romantic movement, there was too much emphasis on individuals as self-contained entities whose character and behaviour, and whose ideals and motives, could be discovered by inspecting them in relative isolation. No doubt

Montesquieu performed a valuable service in pointing out that climate and environment were powerful factors in affecting human life, and no doubt Herder and Hegel performed a service in pointing out that institutions, the language a man uses, the clothes he wears, the habits of life to which he is brought up, the memories and traditions of the past of his nation or race, are equally powerful factors in leading him to behave as he does and, therefore, in explaining what he is and why he holds the beliefs he does. But it is an immense jump from this to the view that when we say 'The German race is fond of music', or 'of fighting' we are using 'is fond of' in the same way as when we apply it to individuals. And yet no less than this is claimed by Hegel and his followers. 'Ludwig loves music because he is a German' is not equivalent to 'The stone fell because Ludwig dropped it' – the cases are not parallel. The man Ludwig and the stone both occupy space, exist independently of each other and sometimes come into contact; but a man and the German race do not both exist in space, do not exist independently of one another, and do not come into contact. If all the Germans were dead, the German race would not continue to exist in a funny attenuated way.

(3) The Theory of Patterns, starting from interesting and true propositions, leads to the same sort of dangerous fallacies. It is perfectly true that a system or a pattern possesses characteristics which are not simply the sum of the characteristics of their constituent elements. A tune is not identical with the sounds which compose it, in the sense that we hear the sounds and do not hear the tune, or hear the sounds and hear now one tune, now another, now one rhythm, now another. And there is a sense in which the question of why a given sound is called for in a musical work, why a particular patch of colour occurs in a given painting, can be answered only by explaining the purpose of the entire composition, which is not the sum of the purposes of its parts. Moreover, it is possible to maintain that we apprehend things largely in patterns, and that the analysis of these into their constituent elements, while it teaches us a good deal about such elements, sometimes makes us forget the original pattern, the existence of which was responsible for our original interest in the whole thing.

The most obvious cases of pattern are tunes and pictorial designs, but of course any collection of entities may display such unifying relationships. There are simple and there are complex

unities; a collection of persons very different from each other collected on the platform of the railway station form one kind of pattern, in so far as they are all waiting for the same train, and can be treated as potential passengers, another in so far as they form material for an impressionist painter or illustrator of scenes of social life. The mere fact that they can be surveyed as a whole makes them elements in a design or Gestalt. Similarly, when we study institutions, we get the impression of certain social or political patterns running through them, so that we can speak of this or that act being characteristic of the French Foreign Office or the feudal system in Hungary, which thus get treated as a kind of entity with distinguishable attributes which are supposed to be accountable for this or that event or object. In surveying history, people detect such explanatory patterns, which help them in making attributions: that is, if a book or a work of art is discovered of unknown authorship, if a political institution is found to exist but its date is difficult to establish, and so forth, historians find that they attribute such authorship or such dates because of a general sense, based on some sort of knowledge, that the work of art or the institution most probably forms part of some familiar pattern and is most likely to have occurred as it does in such and such context, to the fuller reconstitution of which research is then directed. It is a precarious process because its results are uncertain, but it is one which we instinctively perform every day and in every field. Just as, when we come into a room, we have a general sense of those parts of it which we cannot see or do not attend to, the backs of chairs, the insides of books, the underneath parts of the floor on which we stand, which we take for granted because we mechanically expect what we were familiar with in the past to reproduce itself under similar circumstances, so, by a greater stretch, we fill, from knowledge and imagination, lacunae in history, the periods in Cretan history we know little about, the obscure periods in the lives of historical characters, and so forth, drawing on our general sense of how such patterns run. Of course we can justify this only by the most scrupulous scientific induction, but even in performing these inductions we take for granted the repetitive patterns in experience which have set up systematic expectations and beliefs in the researcher.

There is nothing mysterious or a priori about such patterns: the sounds of 'God Save the King' do not yield that tune because they must, or because 'God Save the King' is some occult structural

principle which by itself generates the sounds. The sounds produce the tune *de facto*, they just do, and for all we know may suggest all kinds of other tunes to differently attuned ears and minds. Similarly, there is no reason for supposing that history yields the same patterns to all scholars. The same facts can be seen in a thousand different lights and shuffled in hundreds of different ways, and all the insights so obtained may be equally exciting and true – true, that is, if subsequent research confirms that the pattern discovered really did occur, that the sounds in the unheard part of the work are such as to justify the expectation of a listener who has heard only half the tune but had unconsciously inferred the rest.

This is a method somewhat different from that practised by the natural sciences, where hypotheses are tested by a single experiment. But supposing you are interpreting a corrupt classical text and have made emendations, as Porson did in the text of Aristophanes, which were afterwards corroborated triumphantly by manuscripts discovered later, it does follow that you have somehow divined the linguistic patterns in which Aristophanes' mind worked, and done so not by explicitly inductive or scientific method, that is to say, the accumulation of statistics about the use of words and explicit noting of similarities and differences of usage.

But the romantics went further than this. They thought that there was one single pattern laid in history which, by the use of special faculties – Schelling spoke of intuition and imagination, Hegel of reason – you could find out. Once you had found it out, empirical research became unnecessary, for you know what must have happened and what did happen, because you had found the master key, the answer to the riddle of history, the pattern in the carpet. And if the facts did not conform, they were illusions. Your certainty of the principles of history was deeper and more sure than the methods by which you discovered the so-called facts in time and space. Applying this to politics, you could know what institutions were for, what their historical role was, and therefore how to fit yourself into them, with a certainty not open to empirical methods. You knew that what the State ordered was right because you knew that the State was the form of organisation pre-ordained by the pattern of history. What you meant by saying it was right to obey it was that anyone who understood this pattern would, unless he were mad and wished to destroy himself, desire to survive and realise his faculties by adjusting himself to this

historical necessity. Freedom is freedom to do what you want; a rational being does not wish to do the impossible; it is impossible to upset the pattern of history; hence a rational being wishes only to fulfil his role in the historical drama; this role is inevitable and it is therefore irrational to struggle against it; to call a thing good or right is to say that it belongs to this necessary role. Reality is rational, that is to say, it follows an intelligible pattern; what is, must be, and to say that it must be is to say that it is good and that it should be, for good equals the object of desire of a rational nature, that is to say, a nature which plays a proper part in the harmony of the world. Thus, from the correct and interesting perception that there exist patterns, contexts, from the notion of historical explanation, we pass to the metaphysical doctrine where it is a necessary pattern discoverable in history, and moral and political ideas, as well as facts, can be stated only in terms of this necessary structure, discovered by non-empirical means. Moreover, the pattern as exemplified in institutions is more real than events in time or things in space, because they pass away, but it remains. Moreover, again, the pattern is more real because it generates the events of which it is the skeleton and acts as a kind of transcendent bringer-into-being of everything which happens, like the immanent God of Spinoza or the Stoics.

(4) Finally, there is a stream which is fed by the explanation given of such concepts as patriotism, loyalty, obedience. Once personal government is discredited and loyalty to a king or a general is impossible, because the king or general no longer play a dominant part, there is an attempt to find an entity towards which these emotions are, or can be, directed. 'England expects that every man will do his duty.' Who is the England which does the expecting? Not a given group of Englishmen in the Admiralty or in the Cabinet, because nobody would be inspired by that alone. There is conjured up a vague but emotionally moving complex of notions of a pattern of social life and history, memories, specifically English sights, sounds, smells, social, political, religious belief, and so forth, for the sake of which men might be expected to fight: but a detailed statement, and a vague one at that, an analysis of what in this sense the word 'England' visually evokes, is not equivalent in emotional power to the simple and historically charged word 'England' itself, and when men are asked what it is they are loyal to, because that is difficult to define, we prefer to say, simply 'my country' or 'my Church', because these words are

brief nouns, and because it seems foolish to profess loyalty to vague complexes of feelings, propositions, opinions, memories, expectations, false hopes, likes and dislikes. There is a tendency to personify and to say that England is something over and above any given group of Englishmen or their attributes, that it is a transcendent entity realising itself through given men and women, through institutions and language and behaviour, but more real than, greater than, all these earthly manifestations of itself.

But sober reflection would tend to show that when we ask ourselves what the world is composed of, it is composed of nothing but things and persons, and England is neither, neither an object in time or space – or rather in so far as it is an island inhabited by persons, it is not the object of loyalty in itself, not as a geological or geographical entity – nor is it a person, that is to say, a thinking, willing, feeling being. And when we speak of loyalty to it, this expression, though legitimate in itself, must not mislead us into creating non-existent entities said to act or to judge and justify the acts of others. I can be said to feel loyalty to the traditions of my family or school, but tradition is not a thing, nor a person, nor does it exist or act or suffer. Such verbal traps are frequent and have led to dangerous political mythologies. The desire behind them is the desire to simplify [...]

[C: Nineteenth-century thought]

1. Nineteenth-century political philosophers preoccupied by two questions. (1) Traditional problem, 'Why should I obey any person or persons?' (2) 'Why did the French Revolution fail?' In theory these are very distinct questions, the first moral, the second historical, the first of value, the second of fact. Actually, the first half of the nineteenth century was occupied in trying to interrelate these questions or prove them to be one and not two.

2. Background. Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century philosophy full of identified value and factual judgements: moral and political questions of the type 'What should we do?', 'How should we do it?', 'Why should we obey?', 'What justifies the acts of individuals or governments?' etc. These are all ultimately factual questions, that is, true answers to them can be discovered by the proper techniques. What the answers were and what the techniques caused deep splits.

(*a*) Belief in revelation, sacred tradition or supernatural sanction – divine rights, dogmatic authority or platonic forms, or Aristotelian intuitions.

(*b*) Atheistic teleology – Aristotle, Butler, the Renaissance.

(*c*) Scientific rationalism – Spinoza, Hobbes, Social Contract, Grotius – natural ethics, natural politics, natural theology and the German idealists, the Marxists, the Positivists.

(*a*) Belief that moral and political propositions could be represented as a system of axioms and logical demonstrations. Axioms are revealed in the Bible or other sacred books, God endows men with rational powers to deduce consequences, faith ultimately guarantees the validity. Ultimate axioms are divinely revealed commandments interpreted by specially endowed interpreters. Men might differ about which was the right dogma – Catholics, Calvinists, Royalists etc. – but nobody doubts that some one and only one of these conflicting answers must be correct and can be discovered by the use of special faculties. Belief in such special faculties invariably cops up whenever alternative methods are temporarily discredited.

(*b*) Teleology. Belief that everything in the world exhibits a purpose and that that alone is right which can be shown to be conducive to its fulfilment. 'How should I lead my life?', 'Why should I obey the law?', 'Why should I not steal, murder?' etc. are reduced to asking 'Why am I made?', 'How do I function?', 'To what end am I created?', 'What is my relation to other entities in the universe?', 'How do I contribute to the working out of the great plan according to which the universe is constructed?' The answer can be discovered by observation only provided the question is legitimate – as we know that everything has a purpose, or as we discover the purpose by watching things behave. If one knows that there is a god and that he has a purpose, one can have an opinion about the degrees of scrutability or inscrutability of that purpose, optimism and pessimism are possible. The purpose may be regarded as analogous with one's own moral impulses, in which case one will try to prove that the apparent cruelty and carelessness and chaos of nature really spring from the benevolent purpose, or one could believe that the purpose of the world and of the universe is other than one's own limited ends, and what will be cruel in the individual's behaviour is compatible with the principles of the universe. The first view was taken by Butler, the second by Hegel. Teleological ethics and teleological politics thus justify the

moral and political rules and supply the conditions of such concepts as liberty, authority, justice and so forth, in terms of an overriding world purpose; Plato's *Republic* is the most impressive exposition of this, and so are a good many religious Utopias. In the nineteenth century this view is principally to be found among the Saint-Simonians and German Idealists as well as the Marxists.

(c) Scientific atheism. Due to the fascination of the scientific advance of Galileo, Descartes, Newton, particularly the latter, seventeenth-century science revolutionised any enquiry into nature by substituting for dogmatic beliefs and special intuitions such notions as self-evident axioms and methods of deduction plus careful observation of entities obeying the axioms. If axioms are possible in physics and astronomy, why not in morals and politics? If Galileo can prove something about the velocity of falling bodies or Newton about gravitation, why cannot similar laws be formulated for the conduct of individuals and societies? This tendency led to two movements of thought:

(1) Positivist analysis, for example Spinoza, Hobbes. The first thing to do is to discover what human systems are composed of, exactly as you discover what material circumstances are composed of, that is to say, by observation. You then discover how they function. You then analyse political concepts as you would the old, discarded metaphysical concepts, as an obscure formulation of the observable facts which the new science clarifies according to empirical principles. Thus Hobbes and Spinoza both provide psychological analysis of the springs of human behaviour plus an attempt at a history of how contemporary society came into being, just as in the case of medicine the question of what is good or bad for a given body reduces itself to the question 'What retards or promotes its normal processes?' – not purposes but *de facto* processes – just as the laws of health are deducible from anatomical or pathological analysis, so political maxims should be deducible from a correct analysis of social facts. Political philosophy is a branch of scientific sociology or social psychology. Hobbes was cruder and Spinoza more delicate in his analysis of the social facts, but they reached similar conclusions; both identified rights, justice and liberty with certain actual and possible relations of political and material power between individuals. Legislators and statesmen were like physicians and surgeons, technical experts adept at preserving or promoting social combinations; to ask for things to be other than they were was not

politics or ethics, that is to say, to ask for changes in the material order was as inept as crying for the moon. The world is what it is and political philosophy is the analysis of certain aspects of it with a view to action dictated by the available motives.

(2) But this also took the form of supposing that 'nature' held the answers not merely to what actually occurred and had to occur but to what ought to or should occur. Inspection of nature discovered not merely a heap of facts related by causal relations which were what they were but might have been different, but revealed certain rules which, whether they know it or not, were the proper mode of life sought for by men and would alone make them happy. It alone justified men's acts – for example, sacredness of contracts, international morality founded on the law of nations rooted in natural law, etc. This is the line followed by Grotius and the social contract theorists as well as the Encyclopaedists and scientists of the eighteenth century.

The 'cash value' of these views can best be demonstrated by taking the result in the treatment of a typical political concept, say justice:

(1) Under the theocratic view, justice is that characteristic of laws and rules which makes them most nearly fulfil the commands laid down in the sacred books or the tradition of the Church. How far specific principles are to be discovered by reason and how far by faith is a moot point and depends upon your view of the nature of God. But justice is neither more nor less than the translation of revealed principles laid down for the conduct of man. Human laws can be unjust if they transgress these commandments. The criterion lies either in the authoritative statements of the appropriate authority (for example, the Church or prophet or leader) or in the dictates of the divinely inspired private conscience of Lutherans.

(2) According to the second view, justice consists in adhesion to principles deduced from the purpose of the universe. There cannot be any conflict between duty and interest because unless you adjust yourself to the direction in which the universe is bound to proceed in any case, you will suffer disaster, be mowed down by the wheels of history. The argument used by Plato in the *Republic* to refute the sceptics who say that justice is simply the advantage of the stronger is that it is not, but that 'the stronger' is the universe as he interprets it – the force of reason, etc., and not a

given group of despots or exploiters.[5] You will suffer for your sins, not because they are sins, but rather because a sin is running counter to the purpose of the universe, which will inevitably be avenged. Injustice is obstructing the world purpose. Justice is the system of human relations which best fits into the general plan of the world. You discover the general plan by trial and error: by intuition and observation.

(3) From this it is not far to the eighteenth-century view that the universe has a purpose but that it is discovered not by special intuitions, but by scientific method, as in biology – the function of the eyes is to see, the function of the grass to grow, the function of government is to do that for the body politic which doctors or engineers do for physical welfare of human beings. The degree of useful control can be settled by empirical tests, that is to say, how far they promote that harmony, the notion of which derives from observation of material processes in nature and to some extent in art, and of which we have empirical experience.

(4) Power = what the powerful ordain. Spinoza and Hobbes wish to reduce everything to positive facts. Justice, like every other real concept, must simply classify the real or possible state of affairs. How do you discover what the word 'green' means? By asking people how they use it, by finding out what is commonly referred to by 'green'. So with justice. The universe has no purpose.[6] It is a metaphysical delusion and meaningless to suppose that it has. Justice is a *de facto* relationship. A man is considered just when he does certain things, keeps promises, pays his debts, enforces laws. Why should he keep promises, enforce laws etc.? Because there are rules which tell him to do so. Who is responsible for these rules? Human beings. What makes those particular human beings obeyed whereas others may lay down rules to which no one would pay attention? Because they are in power. What does that mean? That they have the material force at their command enabling them to exact obedience. Can they use this force unjustly? No, because unjustly means breaking rules presumably laid down by someone else and the rules that they made are the rules that

[5] {Thrasymachus = Nation State: Plato's answer is the stock argument of moralists and theologians against 'cynical' power views: that is, not that God or nature or morality are *right*: but that they are the stronger. Yes you do seek happiness: but only God or nature can give it you.}

[6] {Ex. on e everything has purpose Purpose given by X.}

matter, that is to say, the rules laid down by the people whose rules matter, that is to say, those in power. Hence, might, provided it is accepted by the community, is right, for in the name of what could you dispute it? Only in the name of some other rules for moral or political principles. But what are moral rules or political principles? Enactments, not impersonal enactments, for how can there be such things? There are laws that govern behaviour, not physical laws or chemical laws, but laws plainly capable, unlike physical laws, of being broken, save that their infringement will be punished, punished by those endowed with the power to do so. Otherwise they would not be laws. Hence, justice is identical with the laws laid down by people capable of enforcing obedience, and it would be meaningless to ask why such laws of themselves are just, for justice is behaviour according to such laws and a quest for justice outside them presupposes standards beyond them, that is to say, rules for the enactment of rules, which leads to infinite regress and is meaningless.

In a sense all these views could not be further apart. What could be further apart than the view that the king is entitled to obedience because he is the anointed of the Lord and the Lord's word may not be questioned; the view that the world is a vast system moving towards a far-off divine purpose and that obedience to rules or any other authority is part of that purpose; the view that nature embodies the ideal of harmonious relationships and that political life should approximate such harmony like a work of art modelled upon nature; and the view that the world is a vast mechanism and political life is the human part, the social part, of that mechanism, obeying specific and discoverable laws, like the material world, and that all misery and unhappiness arises from ignorance of such laws, which, once known, enable men to conduct themselves rationally in political life as much as in the physical world? Yet there is one element in common which differentiates all views of this kind from a cluster of opposite views, namely that all presuppose that value judgements, judgements of what is just, right, proper etc., are deducible from factual ones, that questions of politics and ethics are not in principle different from any other questions of fact, that when I ask myself 'What should I do?' the answer must be sought where the answers to all questions are, in the general constitution of the world. Whatever the differences between the four views enumerated, they agree in this, that the question 'Why should I

obey any other person or persons?' is part of the larger question 'What is political obligation?', and this is a question like the questions 'What is a tree?', 'What is a man?' or 'What is a happy society?' Obligation is some sort of entity, a feeling or a relation between persons, or the fact that someone has commanded someone else to behave in a certain way, or that the world is moving in a certain direction and we with it. Obligation is something we look for and discover in the natural or supernatural world in the same way as any other relation, say that of being made to suffer for our evils, or being made rich as the result of our skill or good fortune. 'Why should I obey?' equals 'What is the nature of the thing called obligation when it occurs?' And then the four answers are answers to this question.

The assumption is that men do in fact want to be free or to be happy or to realise their potentialities. That they do so want is taken as a basic psychological fact. The only question is how best they can do so. The theological view says that the world is such that men can be happy only if they obey God, who fashioned it and them for certain purposes. The teleological view says that the world is such and such – moves in a purposive manner towards certain ends – and if we are to be happy, content etc. we must understand what those ends are and adjust ourselves. We make ourselves unhappy or criminal because we resist the paths laid down for us by the general constitution of the universe. The materialists like Hobbes and the naturalists like Helvétius take a different view of the nature of the universe. The first thinks it is a machine, that it is a mechanical system with human sentiments and ideas in place of atoms, the second accepts a modified view of that; but both think that the answer to the question 'Why should we obey?' still depends on the question 'What position do we occupy on the map of the universe, and what steps must be taken to fit into some sort of general scheme, the existence of which does not depend on us?' Opinions may vary as to whether the way to achieve our goals is this or that, but there is no dispute about what the goals are, nor is the problem whether they are the right goals, but since they are, how to achieve them. The goals are often called happiness, pleasure, a natural life, wisdom, doing one's duty, being a good citizen, being enlightened, being free, being virtuous, etc. But there is no suspicion as yet that any of these goals are incompatible, that it may not be possible logically and materially both to be free and to be happy, to be virtuous and happy, or wise

and do one's duty. It is taken for granted that all these good things coincide, because behind the whole story there is the assumption of a general ideal of which all these things are facets. There is the life that is best for man, whatever the analysis of that life shows it to be. Aristotelians who believe that the human soul is a developing, growing thing directed towards the right, and Hobbesian mechanists who believe there is no soul but that man is a bundle of emotions and lusts and hates and fears, believe equally that there is some ideal equilibrium, some special condition which is what is best for men, and by 'best' they mean most satisfying to him because in some way best adjusted to the structure of the world, to the nature of things, the *rerum natura*.

Questions of value are thus questions of fact. There is a rational answer to all genuine problems and it cannot be the case that a man could be only happy or contented,[7] or that it is right for him to do something which it is impossible to attain, or which conflicts with something else which he equally strongly desires or which others desire. To say that one's desire is doomed to frustration is to say that it has been improperly thought out, just as it is to say that one's question is doomed to remain falsely answered. If you are clever enough, you can, by the use of reason, discover the answer to answer all questions, or if you cannot, someone else – God – can. This must apply in politics and morals no less than in physics and mathematics, and once you have discovered the answer, it must be in principle attainable, though it may be difficult. To say that it is in principle impossible to do so is to say that the universe is irrational in character, that frustration is a necessary characteristic of it, which to the rationalists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is as meaningless as to say that physics and mathematics are in principle incapable of being made consistent or valid. In short, it rests on the metaphysical belief – metaphysical because it cannot be rendered probable by observation – that there is a state of affairs which all men are in search of – the highest good, the ideal life – that it can be discovered by the use of reason, and that the rest is then purely a problem of technical achievement.

The problem of politics, 'Why should I obey?', 'When is it right for me to revolt?', 'What does it mean for me to say it is right?', is like a problem in hygiene, 'Why should I eat and drink?', 'When is

[7] [?]

it right for me to reject a given food?' The ideal of health – what good or perfect health actually is – is undisputed, and so therefore is that of political health, a satisfactory communal life. St Thomas said, echoing Aristotle, that man was by nature a social being; that it is unnatural for a man to live a solitary life; and this is like saying that it is natural for the lungs to breathe or the heart to beat or the blood to circulate. Locke, Althusius, Rousseau all talked about a social contract, and without going into the question as to what exactly this is, it comes to saying that in order to satisfy their desire to live a certain sort of life – namely, a social one – which they wish to do either out of calculation or by instinct, men have come together, or act as if they have come together, to make an agreement. Then various philosophers differ as to what these agreements were and what was agreed. But all assume that it is wrong to break agreements, because this would offend against the rule laid down either by God or by man, but anyhow part of the natural order. For a man to perjure himself is to frustrate that part of his own nature which consists in faithfully observing certain so-called natural rules or laws. Liars or promise-breakers are like warped plants, entities which have not come off, which have failed in their part in the general plan.

Leibniz speaks of men and things as an orchestra in which each instrument has its score. Rousseau speaks of the natural endowments and natural ideals – love, justice, equality, fraternity – of man perverted and corrupted by civilisation, an artificial self-maiming. The assumption of all this is that there is something called nature, a harmonious whole in which everything contributes its part, that we are part of it and that our reason is that faculty which enables us to know what our part is and to play it with the least friction and most efficiently. And this frictionless efficiency is happiness and wisdom and liberty and virtue. The Middle Ages believes the world to be hierarchical, the seventeenth century that it is based on unequal power relations and contracts, the eighteenth century that it is egalitarian, and so on. These are questions of fact. Given that these questions could be settled, the rest flowed logically from the premisses. The great eighteenth-century radicals, when they said that man was by nature good, but was ruined by wicked kings or unscrupulous priests, or by particular institutions and habits, or by poverty and disease, meant that man was by nature a part of a system of nature, and was

unhappy or wicked only in so far as he misunderstood it through stupidity or ignorance or the perversion of his nature.

This view of man led to a paradox. If man is wholly the creature of environment like a tree or a stone, then it is useless to call upon him to improve himself, for he is determined and cannot help himself; if he can, by the employment of reason and education, arrange his life better, he cannot be wholly determined, like trees or stones, by the environment. The vague idea of human nature covers up a fearful ambiguity. In one sense, nature is contrasted with imaginary causes, the theological or metaphysical view of the world according to which man is naturally sinful and can be saved only by a particular discipline or resistance to his natural impulses. Against this, the naturalist view is that man, like everything else, is a natural object, neither good nor bad except as made so by outside influences. The opposite view is that of nature contrasted not with supernatural causes but with convention, artificial behaviour, mistaken views of what leads to happiness, liberty, wisdom etc., so that being natural is to be rational, for nature is embodied reason, whatever that may mean. To be rational is to have the power to give correct answers to all theoretical and practical problems, in this case knowledge of how to behave, obscured and denied by the machinations of wicked persons or by accident and misfortune. But one cannot have it both ways. Man is determined either by his environment or by his rational faculties. Either nature is the general world system which makes me be what I am, so that I cannot help acting as I do, or it is the faculty of rational choice between alternatives which sufficient education and knowledge provide. Eighteenth-century thinkers rode both these horses at the same time and appeared not to realise the divergent directions in which they were bound to lead. Each of these views had its career in the nineteenth century and ultimately came to inevitable conflict. The first view supported Marxism, the second the liberalism of natural rights; modern socialism combined them both in an uncomfortable alliance.

But my main point is this. The great rebellion which occurred at the end of the eighteenth century was the sharp division between value and fact, between nature and ideals, between history and purpose.

The philosophers mainly responsible for this were Hume and Kant and Fichte. Hume destroyed the knots of necessary connections in nature and of reason as the faculty which

discovered them. He showed in a manner not to be readily refuted that the proposition that the world not merely was what it was, but had to be as it was, or strove in an inevitable manner towards a certain goal, was not so much false as meaningless. Kant put forward the view that values – ends which men sought for their own sake, absolute truth, justice, doing one's duty – were logically independent of any state of affairs – of what was, or is, or will be the case. {Fichte developed Kant's view that ends – ideals, purposes – in terms of which political 'oughts' were defined were created by the will, by somebody's free fiat, and were not 'natural facts' – data – Kant and the personal categorical imperative – the notion of moral grandeur and of political purity – freedom for its own sake – noble patriots, noble humanitarians etc. – ideals for their own sakes and not a world pattern or outside reason, supernatural or natural.}

Posted 11 August 2005, corrected 29 September 2006