

C. S. Peirce divided the empirical sciences into two branches, physics and psychics, using both terms in very broad senses inclusive of several special sciences. Appealing to Peirce, Charles Hartshorne argued for the ultimacy of a psychical account of nature, calling for a philosophical unification of all our experience and understanding on the basis of psychics rather than physics. But psychics as much as physics is empirical science, not transcendental metaphysics. So to attempt to unify all experience and understanding on the basis of psychics is not to do anything different in principle from attempting their unification on the basis of physics. In either case, the attempted unification is merely empirical, and so not properly philosophical after all.

However, in the depths of all my empirical experience of myself and the world, psychical as well as physical, there is an existential experience of myself, others, and the whole. Presupposed by all my sense experience and the claims to truth arising from it is the certainty of existence—the certainty that I exist as the subject of my experience and that I exist together with others, fellow creatures like myself, to whom I am related and on whose actions I am dependent, even as they are thus related and dependent with respect to me. And just as fundamental is the certainty that both I and my fellow creatures all exist within, and therefore as parts of, the all-inclusive whole, the one circumambient reality on which we all depend and which, in its way, also depends on all of us—our primal source and our final end, whence we come and whither we go.

This complex certainty of existence—of myself, others, and the whole—is the experience out of which all religious language arises and by reference to which it is always to be understood. In this sense, all religious language is "existential" language, in which, on the primary level of self-understanding and life-praxis, we explicitly express and refer to our own existence as selves related to others and the whole as also related to us.

This becomes all the more intelligible if we keep in mind that our fundamental existential certainty has a richness or thickness that the word "existence" may not always convey. My experience of myself, others, and the whole is not simply an experience *that* we are, in some neutral or

nonevaluative sense—as mere facts, if you will—but is always, precisely as the experience of existence, an experience of worth, of value, of meaning, of significance. Indeed, in experiencing my own existence in relation to others and the whole, the essence of my experience is *the sense of worth*—of my own worth for myself and others, of their worth for themselves and me, and of our common worth for the whole and its worth for all of us.

Thus the fundamental certainty underlying all of my experience is not only that I am together with others in the whole, but that what I am and what they are is significant, makes a difference, is worthwhile. This certainty that one is and that one is significant or worthwhile grounds a basic confidence in the meaning of life. And this confidence is the original faith that, being constitutive of our very lives as human beings, is, in the proper sense, the "common faith" of humankind. To exist humanly at all is to exist as one who shares in this common faith, because every attempt to question or to controvert it necessarily presupposes it. One cannot question the worth of life without presupposing the worth of questioning and therefore the worth of the life by which alone such questioning can be done. In the same way, to look for evidence against the claim that life is worthwhile presupposes not only that there is or can be such evidence, but that it is worth spending one's time and energy trying to find it. As a matter of fact, even suicide, as the intentional act of taking one's life, entails not so much a denial of life's worth as an affirmation of it. One can hardly choose to end one's life unless one assumes that doing so is not merely pointless but is somehow significant or makes a difference.

This explains, in turn, why it is this same existential experience that is also the fundamental datum of philosophy, understood as critical reflection on the most basic presuppositions of all our experience and understanding, oriented by the existential question about the ultimate meaning of our life. Whether as analysis of all such presuppositions, or as critical validation of all answers to the existential question, implicit as well as explicit, philosophy, in both phases, also arises, in its way, out of the depths of our existential experience of ourselves, others, and the whole, and is always to be understood by reference to it, as distinct from ~~from~~ our empirical experience.

But this means that there is the distinct possibility of a very different and more fundamental unification, not only of all the sciences, but also of all the other domains of experiencing, understanding, and changing the world, nondiscursive as well as discursive. In a word, there is the possibility of a properly philosophical unification, not on the basis of any empirical science, psychical or physical, but on the basis of the transcendental metaphysics and ethics in which the work of philosophy itself, in its first phase as analysis of presuppositions, naturally culminates. In this case, any claim for the ultimacy of either branch of empirical science to the exclusion of the other is undercut by a very different and completely nonexclusive claim. This is the claim for what really and truly is ultimate, and, as such, utterly noncompetitive and unifying—namely, our existential experience of ourselves, others, and the whole, and the transcendental metaphysics and ethics in which the depths of this experience, theoretical and practical, are made fully explicit.

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