ON CONSTRUCTING A PHILOSOPHICAL SYSTEM

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1. How can a philosophical system be constructed, is a recurrent question in the history of speculative thought. In the Republic, as well as in his later Dialogues, Plato treats this question in terms of the Idea of the Good as the principle of ideas or else in terms of the interrelations of the ideas themselves. Aristotle approaches the problem in terms of certain ultimate, immediately known, principles which constitute the starting-points of logical inference. As is well known, Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Kant and Hegel all give this problem careful consideration.

The purpose of the present discussion is to demonstrate the impossibility of erecting a philosophical system by means of the constructive methods employed in the sphere of the exact sciences (1).

2. *Concept Assumption*

No concept may be assumed as self-evident. Before assuming any concept, the grounds of its assumption must be established by a definition of its place in a particular conceptual structure. Such a definition must characterise the structure under consideration and the relation of the concept to be assumed to that structure. The procedure of relating a concept to a structure is teleological because it establishes the function to be fulfilled by a particular concept in a particular structure and for its sake. In addition to assigning the concept at hand its function, a well-founded concept-assumption must demonstrate that this function can be fulfilled by no other concept. A concept's uniqueness in relation to its function constitutes the justification and ground of its assumption.

The premise of his assumption-procedure is the primacy of func-

(1) In his various writings, Professor Ch. Perelman sets out to demonstrate the same thesis. However, his line of reasoning differs from that of the present study because of the fact that he puts forward a general theory of argumentation. The approach expanded here takes naturally advantage of the findings of this theory.

tion and its capacity to serve as a criterion of concept-evaluation, in terms of their justification.

The obvious difficulty which arises at this juncture is this: what warrants the assertion that a concept's assumption is justified by its function ? Or, to formulate the problem in traditional terms — that is, in terms of the famous question facing any teleological approach — assuming that the end (the concept's function is to serve) justifies the means (the concept) what is it that justifies the end ? Is the end self-evident ? If the answer is yes, i.e. if the end is unconditioned, then it may be converted into the starting-point of concept-assumption. In other words, a final end — by virtue of its very nature as a *final* end — can serve as a criterion and starting-point of the assumption of instrumental concepts. In the epistemological sphere, the procedure of assuming the concept of, e.g. causality consists in establishing the necessity of this concept's epistemological function. The assumption of e.g. a law which determines the relations of events and situations in time is conceived as a necessary means to the end of knowing the given world. The epistemological end entails the assumption of the epistemological law subservient to its achievement.

It may, however, be asked whether knowledge or at least empirical knowledge is an end in itself, or whether it is in turn subservient to another end which alone can serve as the starting point of concept-assumption. It may be maintained that the ultimate final end is unity and that knowledge constitutes a special way, or means, of defining the unity of the given world. There is a tendency to suppose that in the speculative sphere, unity is the ultimate end and knowledge the means of achieving it. The instrumental relation of knowledge to the end it is supposed to serve would not be altered were we to substitute 'conformity to law' for 'unity'. Unity and conformity to law are assumed as the end of cognition; and knowledge is assumed as the means of achieving both. The process whereby knowledge facilitates the assumption of unity and conformity to law involves the employment of diverse concepts subservient to unity and conformity to law. The assumption of such concepts is justified in terms of their function in the process of achieving unity-oriented knowledge.

3. *The Teleological Approach and Construction*

That the teleological approach to knowledge is *ipso facto* a con-

structivistic approach is implied by the nature of unity and conformity to law as final ends. Being by definition *ends* and not starting-points, unity and conformity to law are not given. It is true that both constitute the starting points of concept assumption. However, in relation to his process they represent *methodological,* not *ontological,* starting points. If they are not real starting points, i.e. if they are not given, then the ends of unity and conformity to law must be constructed, constructed by means of knowledge and its concepts. Thus the corollary of the teleological proof of concept assumption, is the constructive proof which maintains that construction of unity and conformity to law constitutes the criterion of knowledge. To assume concepts for the sake of the end of cognition, is to assume them as constructive concepts, i.e. as the constructors of unity.

Can the assumption of the concepts of a philosophical system be justified by the teleological-constructive proof upon which the assumption of epistemological concepts is based ? At first glance, the assumption of the system-concept might seem to be entailed by the concept of unity qua end. That is, if unity is construed not only as the end of the epistemological sphere in particular, but also as the end of the intellectual realm as a whole — i.e. as encompassing the spheres of, eg., ethics, aesthetics, theology etc., as well — then the system-concept might be conceived as a necessary means to the end of unity. Conceived as the end of all intellectual spheres, just at it is the end of the epistemological sphere, unity is evaluated as the ultimate ideal. But is the analogy valid ? Does it not rest on an equivocal use of the term «unity» ? Unity means one thing in a strictly epistemological frame of reference and another thing in the broad frame of reference of speculation in general. In the former, unity is defined in contradistinction to conceptual chaos, whereas in the latter it is defined in contradistinction to a multiplicity of intellectual spheres.

The question which cannot be evaded is whether the relation of unity to *multiplicity* is the same as the relation of unity to *chaos.* To give this question careful consideration is to expose the fallacy of misplaced methodology, i.e. of illegitimate transference to the comprehensive sphere of system, of methods employed in the limited sphere of empirical knowledge. The concept of the system is neither assumed in the sphere of empirical knowledge nor is it a conceptual means of establishing the unity and conformity to law of the given world. The frame of reference in which this concept's function is determined transcends the limits of the espistemological sphere. For

the end to which the concept of system is subservient is the determination of the manifold of spiritual spheres, and of each sphere within that manifold. Thus the concept of system is meaningful not within, but *beyond* the limits of any particular sphere. Its assumption is impossible in the epistemological sphere within whose limits specific concepts are determined by reference to their specific, nay unique, functional relation to the epistemological end. Its assumption is equally impossible in all other intellectual spheres; the determination of concepts in each being controlled by the specific character of the sphere. In contrast with all concepts determined within the limits of particular spheres, i.e. with particular, determinate concepts, the concept of system — provided it is meaningful — is not particular-determinate but comprehensive or inclusive. The comprehensiveness of the concept of a system is meaningful only on the condition that it defines the interrelations of diverse spheres. For this concept, to be meaningful is to transcend all particular spheres.

4. *The twofold end*

The problem presented by the necessary comprehensiveness of the concept of system is whether a comprehensive concept is subject to determination in relation to an end to which it is subservient, or whether it must be conceived as an end in itself. Determinate particular concepts, as we have seen, are determinated for the sake of the particular end governing the particular sphere (epistemological, ethical, aesthetic, etc.) in which they are assumed. If, by definition, the concept of system cannot be determined within the limits of any sphere, is it subject to teleological determination as a means to some end, or is it rather to be identified with the final end itself? To conceive of the system as the final end is to imply that all particular, determinate concepts are determined by their subservience and orientation to the concept of system. If the system is an end, and if the essence of the end is unity, then the system is the unity of diverse spheres, and the unity of the manifold is raised, as it were, to the rank of the final end. As regards the sphere of knowledge, for example, the teleological duality this involves is patent. The end of knowledge is unity produced by the ordering of the chaos of sense-impressions. But the final end of all the spheres is unity produced by subordination of the manifold of spheres to a common end. Which implies that knowledge or empirical knowledge for that is also subservient to an end which transcends its own.

What does unity mean once it is transfered from the limited sphere of knowledge to the comprehensive sphere of a system ? In an epistemological frame of reference, unity means guaranteeing certain conformity to law in the realm of experience and establishing universally valid statements. Here unity an conformity to law are meaningful because the datum which is ordered by means of diverse methodological procedures is not ordered from the outset. This is not the case as regards the diverse spheres. A system must be a unity of ordered spheres whose proper methodological procedures have been determined. As such, a system is a unity to the second degree and the question is whether there is any justification for transferring the concept of unity which has been determined in a *particular*-determinate sphere to the totality. It is impossible to define the system as a unity of spheres without first providing a precise definition of what 'unity' means in this frame of reference, and without characterising the relation of such unity to the manifold procedures whereby it is produced. To put it another way, systematic unity is defined in relation to a double manifold: 1. a multiplicity of particular spheres and 2. a multiplicity of methodological procedures within each sphere. Hence, a definition of the system qua unity presupposes an answer to the question, what is the relation between unity to-the-second-degree and the spheres it is supposed to orders.

Does unity constitute the end to which the spheres are subservient ? If it does, then the relation of the spheres to systematic unity must be conceived as analagous to the relation between the conceptual means of knowledge and its end of constructing a unified realm of experience, i.e. as a relation of constructor to constructed. The unavoidable conclusion of the conception of the spheres as constructive methodical means to the end of unity is that unity is the end for whose sake the diverse spheres are determined. The trouble is that the spheres (knowledge, ethics, etc.) have already been determined, each according to the content of its proper end and conceptual means. This implies that it may be impossible to preserve the intrinsic explications of the spheres, that it may be necessary to alter their concepts and assertions, in order to convert them into means of achieving their common final end. Does not the assumption that e.g. the epistemological sphere serves two purposes, one intrinsic and for whose sake this sphere has been determined, the other extrinsic and determining the relations of this sphere to all others, does not this assumption point to a possible reconstruction of the epistemological sphere controlled by the extrinsic end ? Or, to put it another way, doesn't the assumption of a

double unity, an immanent unity of order and a transcendent unity of multiplicity point to a possible reconstruction of the epistemological sphere from the viewpoint of the interrelations of the diverse spheres? Transfer the teleological-constructive conception from the epistemological sphere to the sphere of system, and you are forced to accept the consequences of that transference.

Assumption of duality in each sphere is one consequence entailed by the transference of the constructive view to the sphere of system. For while one assumes assertions, principles and explications which belong within the limits circumscribed by the particular determinate nature of each sphere, at the same time one must assume the necessity of determining other assertions, principles and explications because all the spheres serve the purpose of unity. The intrinsic end of each sphere being distinct from the extrinsic end of all, it cannot be taken for granted that those concepts which have been determined for the sake of diverse ends, will be identical. Furthermore, if the subservience of each sphere to a double end entails the determination in each sphere of two sets of assertions, principles and assertions, what grounds are there for positing a multiplicity of spheres? The multiplicity of spheres owes its existence to, or is a function of, the diversity of ends to which the spheres are oriented and the diversity of means by which those ends are achieved. The assertions and principles called for by the end of e.g. the epistemological sphere differ from those called for by the end of the ethical or the aesthetic sphere. Whereas knowledge employs theoretical methods, ethics employs practical imperatives regulating the will. Were the intrinsic end of each sphere to be replaced by a transcendent end of all, it would — perhaps — be unjustifiable to assume a multiplicity of spheres. If, in other words, a single end is served by all spheres, then there may be only one, solitary sphere whose concepts, assertions and explications are valid.

Be this as it may, the point is that a double mode of determination is entailed by the definition of unity not only as the end of knowledge — i.e. not only in contradistinction to an amorphous datum and conceptual chaos — but also as the end of a multiplicity of ordered spheres. In themselves, the spheres and their explications are determined. However, in relation to their final end, their intrinsic determinations may turn out to be unsubstantial, being subject to possible replacement by other determinations controlled by the end of unity of the spheres. While the intrinsic determinations of each sphere are sustained, at the same time, it is necessary to sustain determinations which transcend the bounds of each sphere and are

subservient to systematic unity as the end of all the spheres. Because it is a constructed unity, the system differs from the diverse spheres and is likely to reorganize their internal structure. Given such double determination, the question is this: does the unity of the spheres demand that the particular spheres be adjusted to it, or is this unity identifiable with the very multiplicity of the spheres? If unity entails adjustment then the unavoidable conclusion is that the origi nal character of the spheres is provisional and destined to be replaced by unity. If unity is indiscernible from multiplicity, then the unavoidable conclusion is that there is no justification for assuming unity because it is not an entity which transcends the manifold. What is more, to maintain such unity as demands the readjustment of the intrinsic essence of its component spheres, is to eliminate multiplicity. But to eliminate multiplicity is to destroy the grounds of system-assumption because by its very definition, the system is a unity of a manifold.

It might be argued that there is a third alternative, namely — a conception of the system as a unity of manifold spheres which does not necessarily entail an alteration either of their intrinsec determinations or of the very grounds upon which their assumption is based. A system — so the argument might run — is indeed an end. However, the methods employed to achieve it are not distinct from the intrinsic determinations of the spheres. Systematic unity of the epistemological, ethical, etc., spheres is achieved precisely by sustaining the principles of knowledge and ethics and the assertions established on the basis of those principles. At first glance, this line of reasoning might seem to eliminate the necessity of constructing the system. But only by luck, or by 'happy chance' can a system which meets these requirements be found. In other words, it is to a happy chance that we owe such a unification of the determinations of the spheres as demands neither alteration nor construction. The reason why such a system lacks a solid foundation is that its determination is achieved by examining the reciprocal adjustments of the spheres and their specified determinations. Moreover, in order to determine a system of this kind, it is necessary to assume certain tests of adjustment supporting the interrelation of the spheres. Which implies that the system depends upon certain assumptions which do not depend upon it. Since it presupposes validity tests which are independent from it, a system of this kind does not constitute a real final end. To put it another way, being a product of an examination of assertions dependent upon certain validity tests, unity anchored in a happy chance is an aposteriori unity. What follows from all

these considerations is, a) that the constructive-teleological conception must not be transferred from the epistemological sphere to the sphere of system; and, consequently, b) that it is impossible to define the system as a constructed unity of spheres. The system is not a construction.

5. *The system as principle*

An apparent alternative to the constructive-teleological view is the view which conceives of the system as a principle. The reason why the difference between the two views is superficial is that both emphasise the priority of the system in relation to the spheres, the former by investing the system with the logical priority of a final end, the latter by investing it with the logical priority of a principle. True, one does endow the concept of system with a new shade of meaning by defining it as a principle, a shade of meaning borrowed from the epistemological sphere. In the latter sphere, the principle of conformity to law is logically prior to all assumptions of particular laws. Or, to put it another way, the trancendental unity of apperception (in Kant's sense) is the condition of all particular transcendental assumptions. Similarly, the system is presented as if it were a principle prior to the spheres, that is, as if it were the condition of their assumption as particular wholes and possibly of the sphere assumption within the spheres. This conception is open to question on several counts. In the first place, the meaning of the system-as-principle is by no means clear. Is the system, thus defined identical with the transcendental unity of apperception, i.e. with the condition of the assumption of particular laws ? If it is, then the concept of transcendental apperception has been transferred from the epistemological sphere of the construction of law-abiding experience, to the realm of the interrelations of the spheres. Yet the transference of the concept of apperception from one sphere to the other affects its meaning. In the epistemological sphere, where the fundamental duality between law or conceptual assumption and datum is perserved, apperception constitutes the principle of the law or of the assumption. But in the sphere of system, which — as we have seen —, is an ordered structure of ordered structures, what we have in fact is not the duality of principle and amorphous datum but the duality of principle and ordered structures of valid assertions. And the question is what function can the system as principle fulfill in relation to the spheres and their assertions ? Does its functions presuppose

the preservation, within its sphere, of the duality between the assumptions and the datum ? If the answer is yes, then the validity of the intrinsic principles of the spheres is not injured, even though these principles are now conceived as conditioned by a higher principle. It is conditioned by a supreme principle so that they constitute a unity. It follows: a) that the duality underlying the system is one of *principles* on the one hand and *assertions* on the other; and that b) the system is a unity of manifold principles conditioned by a supreme principle.

This conception clearly involves all the difficulties disclosed by our examination of the teleological-constructive conception of the system as a unity which assumes assertions whose determination is for the sake of the common end of all spheres, instead of the intrinsic assertions of each particular sphere. True, the conception of the system as principle does not deny that each sphere constitutes an end in itself. That is, it denies the legitimacy of assuming a single end common to all spheres, i.e. an end which lies above and beyond the intrinsic end of each. However, the conception of system as principle cannot surmount the well-known difficulty involved in the transition from unity to multiplicity. Although this problem is originally an ontological one, it nevertheless confronts us in the domain of principles as well, its scope being more comprehensive than the sphere in which it first emerges. The problem of the transition from unity to multiplicity is less acute in the epistemological sphere where the transcendental unity of apperception constitutes the principle of epistemological principles. Here, in other words, the supreme principle is the condition of particular principles and the transition from unity to multiplicity proceeds from the *supreme* epistemological principle to the *particular* epistemological principles. Thus, within the limits of the epistemological sphere, the transition is effected between homogenous elements, no qualitative multiplicity being entailed by the multiplicity of the particular epistemological principles. By contrast, in the sphere of the system, the transition proceeds from the unity of the supreme principle to the qualitative multiplicity of the principles of the diverse spheres. The question is whether a transition of this kind is possible or, to put it another way, whether it is possible to assume a principle capable of serving as the condition of a multiplicity of diverse spheres.

In order to answer this question it is necessary, first, to establish the property common to the particular, determinate principles of the diverse spheres; and, second to assume — on the basis of this common property — a principle of principles which must constitute

the condition of the particular principles of the diverse spheres. The common property cannot be an aspect of content for a distinction has already been drawn — in each sphere — between its material assertions and its principles. The common property can only be an aspect of form. It is not unjustifiable to assert that the principles of the spheres, *qua principles* feature an aspect which warrants the assumption of a supreme principle as their common condition e.g. consistency in the sphere of knowledge as well as in the sphere of ethics. However, it seems more is lost than gained by this procedure. To focus upon a formal property common to all principles, is to abstract each principle from its specific sphere and from its relatedness to the material assertions of that sphere. Such abstraction deprives the particular principles of their meaning as principles of *diverse spheres*. Yet a unity of principles whose necessary relation to their spheres has been annulled, is not a real unity; since what it unifies is the *shadows* of the diverse spheres rather than the spheres themselves. If a systematic unity of this kind is no longer a unity of a real manifold, then the means of achieving it — namely abstraction and detachment of particular principles for the sake of assuming a supreme principle as their common condition — such means do not represent a legitimate procedure of assuming the concept of system. A system erected by this procedure is a unity of manifold principles which have been abstracted and uprooted in order to render their unification possible. Which implies that this system is a constructed one: for construction of a sort is involved in the removal of particular principles from their original spheres and in the process of preparing them for subservience to a principle which is prior to them. Directly or indirectly, every assumption of either an end or a principle which transcends the intrinsic and independent principles of the diverse spheres necessarily entails construction.

But this is not the only difficulty involved in the conception of the system as principle. It will be recalled that the reason for identifying the system with a supreme principle lies in a desire to uphold the apriori status of the system as the precondition of the particular spheres. The question is whether the a priori status of the system is actually sustained by the procedure of abstracting particular principles from their spheres of independent validity in order to prepare them for being conditioned by a supreme principle. Doesn't the adoption of such a procedure render the assumption of the system-principle and the establishment of its validity dependent on specific epistemological operations ? And doesn't the dependence

of the supreme principle undermine the legitimacy of its allegedly prior status ? Upon closer examination, in other words, the status of the system turns out to be only apparently a priori. In reality, it is contingent upon certain procedures whose intrinsic determination is not entirely subservient to the principle of system and whose origin is not in the sphere of system but in the epistemological sphere. Abstraction is a procedure whose essence and validity do not depend upon the principle of system. It is another method of which has been borrowed from the sphere of cognition and transferred to the sphere of system. Thus the system as principle or precondition of specific principles is itself conditioned by methods over whose determination it has no control. This line of reasoning is illustrated by the conception of a unity of cultural consciousness proposed e.g. by the Marburg school. According to this conception, explication of the contents of the diverse spheres ultimately produces a unity of cultural consciousness. The attainment of this unity entails neither abstraction away from particular laws and contents nor the substitution of another law and another content. Diversity is preserved intact side by side with the unification of these laws into a substantial unity (²).

6. *Theory of Knowledge and Theory of System.*

By now it should be clear that there can be no simple transference of methods and procedures determined in the epistemological sphere to the sphere of system. The methods of empirical knowledge are determined as means to the end of knowing the datum or constructing its conformity to laws. It is vain to tackle the problem of the system with epistemological tools; it is vain to pose this problem in constructivistic terms and it makes no sense to model either the formulation or the solution of the problem on an epistemological pattern. The theory of knowledge is concerned with problems pertaining to the determination of the assumptions of the sciences or of Science — if one assumes the unity of diverse scientific fields. In other words, epistemology is the science of the sciences. Being concerned with the determinate assumptions of determinate, particular scientific spheres, and not being concerned with the interrelations of diverse spheres, epistemology does not deal with the problem of system which, as we have seen, pertains precisely to the

(²) H. Cohen, *Logik der reinen Erkenntnis* ², Berlin 1914, p. 609

interrelations of diverse, (ethical, aesthetic, religious, etc.) spheres. If the problem of system transcends the limits of the theory of knowledge, then the methods determined within these limits can be of no use in solving the problem of system. Which implies that it is necessary to raise a meaningful speculative problem which is the concern neither of the exact sciences nor of epistemology as the science of sciences. If the theory of knowledge is a science to the second degree then, perhaps, the theory of system may be conceived as a science to the third degree. The question is whether the latter science has categories, or a category, of its own. It has already been shown that this science can accomodate neither the constructive procedure nor the categories whose sphere of applicability is circumscribed by the constructivistic approach. It remains to be seen whether a non-constructive category, as distinguished from the categories of the sciences, can be found in the sphere of the system.

Let us, then, see whether there is any primary mode or form of interrelationship which can be established as the intrinsic category of system understood as pattern of the interrelations of diverse spheres. By defining the system as pattern of the interrelation of diverse spheres, we confine our search for the categorical form of the system within the sphere whose limits are circumscribed by that interrelation. At first glance, it might seem possible to assume reciprocity as the relational form or category which characterises the interrelations of the spheres. But the category of reciprocity has been borrowed from the sphere of epistemology too where it means mutual dependence of assertions and principles. Accordingly, in the sphere of system the category of reciprocity should mean the mutual dependence of the diverse spheres. Hence, if the category of reciprocity is applicable within the sphere of the system, then the assumption of one sphere must of necessity entail the assumption of the others. In other words, presuming that reciprocity is the presiding form of the interrelations of the spheres, the assumption of the epistemological sphere will of necessity entail the assumption of the ethical sphere and vice versa.

But may we presume that reciprocity is the presiding form of the interrelations of the spheres ? If we may, what precisely is meant by reciprocity once it is transferred from the sphere of epistemology to the sphere of the system ? Does it signify a relation which obtains between more than two determinate spheres ? In other words, does the statement that the interrelaions of the spheres are reciprocal imply that the assumption of the epistemological sphere entails the assumption not only of the ethical sphere but also of the aesthetic,

religious etc., spheres ? To put it another way, does reciprocity — in the sphere of system — entail the mutual dependence of all spheres ? To answer in the affirmative would be to posit the conversion into one and of all the spheres assumed as correlative to the sphere at hand. The question is what kind of relation is capable of converting a multiplicity into a unit. If there is a special kind of relation in virtue of which manifold spheres can be converted into a unit, then the system must be conceived as the product of two modes of relationship; one being the interdependence of a particular sphere and all other spheres within the relational structure, and the other being a special relation in virtue of which the spheres assumed as correlative to the particular sphere are converted into a unit or single correlative. Supposing we assume the ethical, instead of the epistemological, sphere as one term of the reciprocal relation, and the totality of the remaining spheres (minus the ethical one) as the other term. This would involve the production of a unit other than the one correlative to the epistemological sphere. The question is whether it is possible to establish the existence of a unit of spheres without first coping with the problem of its constituent spheres, or whether it is necessary to posit a limited number of possible units. To put the latter alternative another way, are we to assume the impossibility of taking any random sphere as one term of the reciprocal relation and any random unit of spheres as the other term ? If the nature of the terms is not subject to arbitrary determination, then it is necessary to assume a certain logical order in conformity to which the reciprocal relations between the spheres are established. Which implies that in itself, reciprocity is not a sufficient category of system-determination and that it is therefore necessary to employ certain ordering principles which do not depend upon that category.

What, then, does «reciprocal assumption» mean in the context of the interrelations of the spheres ? Does it mean that every judgment assumed in one sphere entails the assumption of a correlative judgement in all the remaining spheres ? Or does it mean that the assumption of a principle in one sphere necessarily entails the assumption of a principle in another sphere and that, conversely, were no principle to be assumed in one sphere, principle assumption in another sphere would be meaningless ? And is it necessary to maintain that the assumption of a *particular* statement or a *particular* principle in one sphere necessarily implies the assumption of a *particular* statement or principle in another sphere ? Or does the category of reciprocal assumption apply to *all* statements and to *all*

principles without specifying or entailing any determinate correlation ?

If the relation of each sphere to all the remainder is one of reciprocity or interdependence, why must the separation of the spheres be assumed altogether ? The interpenetration of spheres produced by the necessary interconnection of their respective statements and principles may — perhaps — preclude the logical possibility of preserving the diversity of spheres and create a logical possibility of assuming a solitary, homogenous sphere whose principles and statements are determined within its own limits. Because the reciprocity of the spheres entails their interpenetration and consequent crossing of their proper limits, it affords grounds for eliminating those limits. But reciprocity based upon elimination of the proper limits of the spheres involves construction; and a system erected in conformity to the category of reciprocity will substitute a new, rearranged or reconstructed, set of interrelations for those which had obtained between the spheres from the outset. A system of this kind will be structured in such a way as to correlate the meaningful statements of one sphere with the meaningful statements of other spheres, or in such a way as to establish the mutual dependence of the spheres.

But the logical ground of this interdependence is not self-evident. In other words, it is by no means clear whether this ground is material or formal. If material — then something in the content of e.g. cognitive statements ought to entail their necessary correlation with ethical statements. In which case there might very well be no logical ground for distinguishing between the diverse spheres of epistemology and ethics. For what difference can there be between spheres whose interdependence is anchored in a common content ? If, on the other hand, the ground of reciprocity is not material but formal, then the assumption of a multiplicity of interdependent realms lacks logical foundation. For a formal property common to manifold assertions does not afford sufficient grounds for assuming their interdependence. The point is that an approach which conceives of the system in terms of the category of reciprocity, cannot help vacillating between the aim of establishing a reciprocal relation between the spheres and the need to preserve the specific character of the diverse spheres. From this it follows that a definition of the system in terms of the interdependence of diverse spheres always harbours a possibility of constructivism. If stress is laid upon reciprocity or systematic unity, then maintenance of this relation may call for alternation of the intrinsic determinations of the diverse

spheres. If the system is structured in conformity to the category of reciprocity, then the spheres might have to be reconstructed in order to prepare them for their function as terms of a reciprocal relation. Thus, in the last analysis, not even an approach which defines the system in terms of the interrelation of the spheres (and not in terms of an end or principle which lies beyond them) can avoid the pitfall of subordinating the spheres to an end which transcends their limits. Some factor not implicit in the spheres and their principles, must be assumed if their interdependence is to be established. Of course, understood as a pattern of the reciprocity or interdependance of the spheres, a system accepts the spheres and arranges them in a certain order without subordinating them to any material design. But an element of transcendence still remains; and transcendence is constantly threatened by the danger of construction which aims at an extrinsic end. If elimination of the diverse spheres is not to be the price of erecting the system, we must seek the grounds upon which to erect it within, and not beyond, the proper limits of the spheres.

But this is easier said than done. In order to preserve both the reciprocity and the intrinsic limits of the diverse spheres, it is necessary to re-examine the meaning of reciprocity. Does it mean equality of status and function ? That is, are we to understand reciprocity as the form of a relational structure of spheres whose component terms imply one another in such a way as to preclude their arrangement in a serial order of priority ? Does it imply (as, e.g., Hegel maintains) the replacement of linear relations by circular ones ? Even if a system does represent an order of spheres in which there is no priority of one sphere to another sphere, it still does not afford grounds for assuming the concept of reciprocity. Spheres can be equal from the point of view of placement or priority without being interdependent. From the premise that a is not prior to b, and b is not prior to a, the conclusion that the assumption of a entails the assumption of b and vice versa, by no means follows. Nor can the mutual dependence of diverse spheres be deduced from the equality of their status.

Another shortcoming of the conception of a system as controlled by the category of reciprocity is its attempt to build up the structured interrelation of diverse spheres by means of a single concept whose sphere of applicability lies beyond their limits. Such a conception neither takes into account the diversity and independent contents of the manifold spheres, nor seeks the grounds of their systematic

interrelation *within* their proper limits. To base a system upon a special category — be it even that of reciprocity — is to base it upon *extrinsic* grounds, i.e. upon grounds which lie not within but beyond the limits of the spheres. This would seem to imply that the pitfalls of constructivism and assumption of extrinsic concepts can be avoided only by assuming that the system depends upon the spheres, and not the other way around.

Conclusion

The conclusion indicated by the foregoing considerations is clearly negative: *construction* of a philosophical system is impossible. One positive corollary implied by this negative conclusion is that the proper limits of the diverse spheres of intellectual activity are inviolable. But whether one construes this critical analysis as a total undermining of system-building or as a step toward the evolvement of a more positive and detailed exploration of the nature of philosophical speculation is a question which lies beyond the compass of this study.

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