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Philosophy in World Perspective

A Comparative Hermeneutic
of the Major Theories

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I have profited enormously from my twenty years' participation in the Columbia faculty seminars on Oriental thought and religion and on Neo-Confucian studies. In my judgment, the intellectual and moral leadership of William Theodore de Bary in these circles has been very significant. Over as many years, the diverse intellectual styles in the philosophy and religious studies departments at the State University of New York at Stony Brook have provided a continuous context of collegial exchange. I was twice visiting professor in the philosophy department at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, Honolulu. My book is an attempt to rethink these experiences, too.

Limiting myself to those Stony Brook colleagues who have directly stimulated the systematic reflections of this book, I must cite Justus Buchler, Harold Zyskind, Robert Sternfeld, Robert Neville, Thomas Altizer, and Edward Marcotte. In immediate retrospect, I owe the largest debt of gratitude to Walter Watson, whose pioneering work in the architecnics of meaning provided the springboard for my comparative hermeneutic of the world's philosophical and religious classics. I have sought to extend his thoughts in my own way, but my conclusions have grown out of a constant dialogue with Walter Watson on the principles of the major philosophers, artists, writers, and musical composers. In all the phases of envisioning and completing this work I have had the special resources of his sagacious judgment and generous encouragement.

In the wider orbit of my professional career I owe thanks to a number of colleagues in the field of modern Japanese philosophy. Prominent among these are the distinguished Kyoto School philosophers Nishitani Keiji, Takeuchi Yoshinori, and Abe Masao, and such scholarly comrades as Robert Wargo, V. H. Viglielmo, Jan Van Bragt, and Stuart Kiang. I have sought to continue our conversations in the pages that follow.

My associations with other circles of colleagues are also directly represented in the hermeneutical judgments of this book. These include, among others, long-standing informational and critical exchanges with Julia Ching, John Bertrong, and Mary Evelyn Tucker in Chinese and Japanese intellectual history; with Edith Wyschograd, Robert Magliola, and Dorothea Olkowski in Continental philosophy; with George Pepper in Jaspers studies; and with Angus Kerr-Lawson in Santayana studies. I have attempted to preserve many of these influences intact in the pages that follow.

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I

Introduction: Resources for an Intellectual Renaissance Today

Multiple Heritages of World Philosophy

Consummate, perfect perceptions of the world and of human life have been realized in history. Great works of civilization—Aristotle's *Ethics*, Newton's *Principia*, Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, for example—embody these insights. A distinctive feature of such works is their recombinant powers. They are still alive today, providing inspiration for contemporary thought, action, and expression.

The great works of civilization are clearly the products of greater minds, and require greater proficiency in interpretation. Acquiring this proficiency, we can continue to learn from Homer or Sophocles; Plato or Aristotle; Confucius, Lao Tzu, or the Buddha; Murasaki Shikibu or Sei Shônagon; Dante or Michelangelo; Shakespeare or Goethe; Bach, Mozart, or Beethoven; and other creative geniuses. Nourished by them, we may also be inspired to produce comparable works of achievement that will serve as new resources for our own times and for all times. I would venture to add that it is such universally esteemed works that really count. These immortal works transcend the vicissitudes of time and circumstance. In the continuity of their influence they form the real bonds of our common humanity.

Mozart, for example, has been called the musical genius of a millennium. Such a statement goes well beyond personal preference; it purports to define human accomplishment according to several historical criteria. The author of this judgment, Wolfgang Hildesheimer, has this to say about genius itself:

The concept originated in the eighteenth century and has become a questionable one. Indeed, we cannot call any of our contemporaries by this term. Not only do we lack the necessary distance from the

individual, but we also cannot adequately define the concept in terms of works that are created as we look on. We are dependent on models. . . . But let us retain the concept. The reader knows who is meant: the rare executor of enduring high achievement, independent of social conditions, uncomprehended by sociology and anthropology, recognized but apparently insufficiently comprehended by psychology; the executor of works that have contributed to our own formation and without which we cannot conceive our own existence. I speak of the creative genius of the past.¹

It is well worth pondering the pedagogical implications of this passage. A list of such geniuses of higher civilization would include, among others, Homer, Confucius, Plato, Aristotle, Shakespeare, Newton, Mozart, and Van Gogh. Any set of such judgments will confirm the proposition that it is the great works of recognized geniuses that form our vital resources.

I will enlarge on this theme in various ways. A distinctive feature of our own times is that we command unprecedented access to various cultural heritages, as these are becoming available to us through solid advances in learning, translations of foreign texts, the technologies of travel, and other innovations. We are as much at home today with the aesthetic sensibilities of Chinese landscape paintings or Zen gardens as with the musical masterpieces of Bach or Mozart. We meet Asians everyday who are Christians or Marxists, and Westerners who live their lives according to the codes of Confucius or the Buddha. Indeed, we know more today about the Taoist paintings or Zen gardens, and the compositions of Bach and Mozart, than the people who lived at the time these works were created. Similarly, we have a more sophisticated understanding of the works of Homer, Plato, Aristotle, Confucius, Lao Tzu, Chu Hsi, Dōgen, and many others than all previous ages combined.

Extrapolating from this evidence, we can forecast that future ages of mankind will achieve even greater insight into our many cultural traditions. Here I am making two points. First, the generations to come will undoubtedly develop even more sophisticated approaches to past works of human genius. Second, they will produce other geniuses, whose own works will stand the test of time in company with the great accomplishments of the past. The work of contemporary hermeneutics should therefore gather our present resources and stimulate new possibilities of thought, action, and expression.

The program of this book flows from this consideration of the enduring worth of the immortal works, their interrelationships, and the possibilities of the future. I limit myself in the main to the observation of

philosophical forms. I hold, on the one hand, that there is nothing sacred in any of the past philosophical (or religious) systems in themselves—nothing that renders them impervious to reinterpretation. On the other hand, I maintain that it is foolish to think one can refute or even deconstruct any of the great philosophical texts. That would undermine the ground on which we now stand. Rather, the task must be to repossess—to remember and to re-appreciate—past philosophical accomplishments as they relate to present and future developments in philosophy.

Academic philosophy, I trust, will make a contribution to such an instauration in our own times. The emergence of a sense of world history and world philosophy among professional scholars is already a trend of considerable importance. The number of international conferences under such a rubric in recent decades and the increasing number of scholarly publications in such fields as comparative politics and religion give us some indication of the growing interest in this phenomenon. At the grass roots level, innumerable smaller conferences and colloquia have been focusing on similar themes.

Such scholarly currents reflect the convergence of modern and pre-modern, Eastern and Western civilizations in our times. Philosophy has become global, just as human life has been transformed by worldwide political, economic, and cultural forces. Philosophers have already begun reflecting upon the intercultural transformations that are shaping their lives. Conversely, philosophical definitions elucidate and sometimes determine the transformation of civilization that is taking place.

The history of ideas is replete with precedents of cultural cross-fertilization and attendant reconstruction of philosophical traditions. We need only think of the reclamation of the pre-Socratic schools of thought in the Athenian, Hellenistic, and Roman worldviews; or of the restoration of the latter by the Neoplatonists of the third and fourth centuries A.D.; or again of the confluence of Aristotelian, Arabic, and Neoplatonic traditions in the thirteenth century. The translation of Indian Buddhist sutras into Chinese in the fourth century A.D. presents a case of West-East philosophical interaction, with far-reaching effects for Korea and Japan as well. Japanese culture is itself a showcase of global philosophical interchanges, first in its assimilation of Indian and Chinese traditions and later in its broadly based syncretism of Western ideas and institutions.

Although harder to estimate at close quarters, the reemerging character of philosophical activity is evident in this century as well. Santayana, for example, was a remarkably cosmopolitan, supranational, and supracultural thinker. Freud was another. What is valuable about Santayana's or Freud's writings is that they convey a sense of civiliza-

pre-Socratic philosophers and yet range even more widely among the forms of ancient and modern life.

Before Freud, Nietzsche and Schopenhauer also produced texts that bring Hinduism, Buddhism, and other Eastern religions into a common purview of discussion with classical Greek, Christian, and other Western philosophies and religions. Hegel traces the movement of philosophy from East to West, for reasons connected with the dialectical movement of his thought. Controversial though this may be in the perspective of other systems, his writings also reflect the kind of reconstructive classicism to which I am alluding here.

Precedents for Hegel's enlarged vision derive from the sense of "world" that emerged with the eighteenth-century philosophers, if not from the Renaissance, which introduced a generic sense of "new worlds" in geographical explorations, scientific discoveries, and artistic and philosophical pursuits. But in broader perspective, the Renaissance and Enlightenment mapped new worlds while repossessing the old worlds of classical antiquity and the Far East.

Leibniz's search for a "universal characteristic," for example, was a feature of his comprehensive cast of mind. He pursued this theme in his quest for what he called "the principle of all principles," which would reconcile the paradigms of the ancient, medieval, and modern philosophers, scientists, alchemists, and cabalists. His text covers a multidimensional world, including that of the Chinese, interpreted by claims of universally valid principles of philosophy.

This sense of the recurrence and connectedness of foundational ideas is again conspicuous in the "principles of nature" celebrated during the Enlightenment. Its background can be traced to the physics of Newton and the political theory of Locke, both of whom looked to the Bible and the ancient Greek philosophers (notably the Epicureans) for first principles. In the eighteenth century Hume also turned to the ancients for the precedents of modern life.²

Kant's work provides us with other dimensions of the concepts of worlds and worldviews I am exploring here. In response to the developments of post-Renaissance science and philosophy, Kant's first *Critique* purported to map universal forms of sensibility, of intellectual judgment, and of the ideas of pure reason. His second *Critique* extended the concept of universality to a realm of ends as a moral universe shared by all rational beings. His third *Critique* took as its theme the transcendental subjective validity of our aesthetic and teleological judgments.

Thus Kant contributed another, explicitly theoretical focus to the subject of this work. This was his conception of philosophy itself—a definition that echoed the formulations of Aristotle and other classical Greek

cepts," as distinguished from the merely "technical concepts" of the logicians, mathematicians, and students of nature, for philosophers concern themselves with foundational questions of human knowing, acting, and making.³ Therefore philosophical, or "cosmical," concepts are to Kant the only concepts having universal human significance and validity.

On the basis of Kant's definition we can assert that each philosopher produces a universal Weltanschauung—literally intuiting the world—in his or her legislative act. A philosophy is a world-perceptual—that is, world-theoretical or world-formative—act that frames the possibilities of every subordinate species of perception of the world.

Kant's definition overshadows all the merely relativistic, culture-bound strains of Weltanschauung generated by subsequent thinkers. It confirms the perennial vocation of philosophy, which is to provide the theoretical framework for the sciences and the humanities. It resists the subversion of its essential function by every kind of "sociology of knowledge."

At the end of his *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant even muses about a "history of pure reason"—a work that would coordinate the formal and material aspects of the history of the "cosmical concepts" of mankind. Kant's writings in fact reflect the influence of his philosophical and religious predecessors: the British empiricists, the Continental rationalists, the Epicureans and Stoics, the philosophers of ancient Athens, and biblical exegetes. But he finally sees them as "merely scholastic" and, with the mordant passage of time, "in ruins only."⁴ Kant never followed up on his own suggestion, though, he left it to us to write the history of pure reason.

Such considerations as these have the salutary effect of "relativizing" the concepts of East and West, ancient and modern, while placing claims of historical novelty in a broad perspective. They also return us to one of the themes of this work, which is the fundamental question of what philosophy is or can be. If philosophy is the unique act of world-formation, what are its essential forms and possibilities? How does the abundance of worldviews in our emerging world-culture contribute to this inquiry?

The increasingly global interconnections of twentieth-century political, economic, and cultural life generate the same kinds of questions. Institutions of higher learning, no less than the seats of political power and the marketplace, reflect a new, more abundant pluralism, as East meets West and old meets new. On all these fronts, we require systematic concepts adequate to the forces and materials at hand.

This reconsideration of a universalistic perspective—global both in its

transcultural reference and in conceptual form—may fly in the face of some current trends that are narrow in focus and technocratic in character, or again merely relativistic and culture-bound. Many specialists seem to feel more secure in merely exhibiting some regional style, usually to fellow stylists, even taking a kind of perverse pride in being ignorant of other styles, not to mention the grand traditions of East and West. Every large tradition, however, subsumes such localized forms within itself. The narrow-gauge styles of contemporary philosophy seem particularly in need of a framework that can relate them to the many currents of world philosophy in which they have their sources. They have not themselves provided such a picture.⁵

I suggest, then, that the time is ripe for constructing a theoretical framework that repossesses our premodern and modern, Eastern and Western philosophical heritages. If authentically theoretical, such a framework may serve to stimulate discussions within a variety of disciplines, each of which can contribute further to unified cultural configurations—the pedagogical configuration of the current university, for example, and in particular the structure and function of philosophy departments within the university.⁶

We need a new and essentially comparative hermeneutical expertise to be able to understand and appreciate the major texts of world philosophy, and to coordinate their lessons into a single intertextual picture. Such a philosophy would not merely reorient us in the world history of thought, but would also nurture a philosophical culture that permits us to combine the texts into a single purview.

Probably the best ancient or modern precedent for this intertextual hermeneutic can be found in writings of Aristotle, who investigated the teachings of his predecessors and contemporaries in pursuit of the first principles of all of the sciences and arts. Kant's text, we shall see, is a variant of Aristotle's. However, we need to update Aristotle's works and all the other philosophical projects alluded to above, in the light of our vastly more complex picture of world philosophy today.

Such a project will amount to a transcultural hermeneutic. It will be transcultural not only because it will map the various historically formed worldviews, but also because it will compare the several contemporary styles of philosophy—each style consisting of “cultures” of texts too. Questions concerning the character and significance of various regional styles of philosophy—American, Anglo-American, Continental, Asian, and so on—will fall into place when set into this perspective. We can of course imagine any number of new philosophical systems in the future of humanity. But even the best of these must finally take their places among the great systems of the past and the present. In short, since this transcultural approach calls for a study of all the possible forms and functions of philosophical texts, it requires a comparative hermeneutic.

An Architectonic, or Governing, Theory

The point of departure for this work is an inquiry into the resources of our higher philosophical cultures. At the same time, this project requires a definition of the kind of method our global hermeneutic of the first principles of philosophy must have.

I have advanced the claim that the great books of world philosophy provide the indispensable materials for this endeavor. But the peculiarity of the world classics is that they flourish only when repossessed in some contemporary hermeneutical act. Therefore, our pedagogical method must be both interpretive and encompassing. Such a reading of the philosophical classics must resolve each one into its essential form and reach its own internal completion in the form of a ruling, or architectonic, theory.

It will be proper, therefore, to speak of the conceptual form with which we measure the theoretical potentialities of other such works. Once again, the great texts recall us to the perennial vocation of philosophy itself, which is to enunciate foundational truths about the world and our relations to it. Individual philosophical methods, however specialized they become, still form part of a set of historical claims as to true philosophical method. Even the sophisticated, skeptical, and deconstructive methods reenacted in the academy today are philosophically legislative.

Our preliminary consideration of the proper methodology of a comparative hermeneutic must accordingly define its own rule of conceptual organization. For reasons elaborated below, a method that compares the material and formal parameters of world philosophy will be called synoptic.

In this work I will sketch the outline of the architecture of theories, East and West, by examining the implications of a series of comparative judgments. In essence, I will show that all the major theory-formations fall under four generic types, themselves systematically related—Sophistic, Democritean, Platonic, and Aristotelian.⁷ (This nomenclature refers to and is drawn from historical paradigms, for the principles of philosophy come to light in exemplary texts and can be known in their essential variety from no other source. But I will demonstrate that, while they are associated with classical Athenian philosophers, the four pure types transcend their historical models.)

All the other possible theory-formations are contractions of these four types. In a current economic idiom, the mixed types of philosophical texts are subsidiaries. While they seem to function independently, they still presuppose and ultimately rely on their parent companies. In this sense each of the four pure modalities of theory-formation has its own synoptic character.

I will show that Aristotle's instantiation of the "Aristotelian" type determines the relation of his own theory to that of the other pure types, as distinguished from the subsidiary types. (One of the four pure types, the Sophistic, embodies principles of historical relativism that the proposed architectonic theory will overcome.) I will show, in brief, that the Aristotelian type, whether fully realized or not by Aristotle himself, is the ruling theory.

The Aristotelian theory will be shown to function by virtue of its normative principle of moderation. In its architectonic, or ruling, capacity it moderates the truth claims of the other theories. In adjudicating the varied truth claims it also displays the required reflexivity in philosophical method. In its discursive practice this book must inevitably enact, or reenact, one of the possible forms of philosophical thought. Searching through great works of world philosophy, I find that the synoptic form of discourse required for this book has its own precedents in the works of such philosophers as Aristotle, Kant, and Peirce.

I propose to employ a synoptic method of architectonic analysis to coordinate the essential principles of thought that inform the great books of world philosophy. Such a method must proceed on two levels of textual operation. First, it requires a holistic orientation to the reading of individual classics. Second, it requires a resolution of the points of convergence and divergence of these works.

As to the first methodological obligation, a great book will be seen to have its own semantic integrity. It is the function of genius to produce paradigmatic representations of the world, as the great authors themselves insist. Whatever the aims of contemporary criticism, therefore, let it be clear that it is no longer its proper function to tell Mozart that his work has too many notes—or to deconstruct the text of Confucius, Plato, or Aristotle. (The ethics of intertextuality suggests that such deconstructive criticism be limited to debates among living authors.)⁸

To cite only one illustration of this point here, Descartes in his *Second Replies to Objections* writes as follows: "But I know how difficult it will be, even for those who pay attention and seriously seek the truth, to perceive in one intuition the whole body of my *Meditations*, and at the same time to have distinct knowledge of each of its parts. Yet I think that both of these things should be done at once, if the whole fruit of the work is to be captured."⁹ Doctrinally, Descartes advances a logistic method in formal epistemic procedure in his *Meditations* and other writings. But he asks us to read his own work synoptically. Generalizing from this interesting case, I submit that we must treat every great book as a semantic whole, having its own beginning, middle, and end. The reason for this is that texts are noetic products, unities of mind. They are like James's beads of water falling from the edge of the table: they drop all at once or

not at all. Moreover, the great works have achieved a special status because they have stood, and continue to stand, the test of time.

The second level of methodological obligation derives from the juxtapositions of such great books in our philosophical heritage and in contemporary texts. Their synoptic resolution into one theory generates precisely the legislative, and therefore architectonic, project I envisage here.

The employment of a synoptic method in architectonic theory is both a general possibility of method and a historically validated technique of inquiry. This axiom proves to be of immediate value, for it allows us to capitalize on the fact that different versions of the synoptic method were used in the past, and continue to function in the present.

Methodological Precedent in Kant

In its strategic position in the history of modern Western philosophy, Kant's career-text looks back upon the methodological revolution initiated by Bacon and Descartes and comments explicitly on the empiricist and rationalist forms of inquiry promoted by his seventeenth- and eighteenth-century predecessors. Kant's self-styled Copernican revolution in critical philosophy, however, actually completes the turn of a methodological circle that goes back to Aristotle.

A differential analysis of these two exemplary exponents of synoptic method provides a significant lesson in the continuity of philosophical strains, while keying our comparative hermeneutic to major examples. In archaeological fashion, I will here trace this intertextual relationship from Kant to Aristotle, that is, from a modern to a classical version.

Kant's core doctrine of synthetic a priori forms—forms of sensibility, of the discursive concepts of the understanding, and of moral, aesthetic, and teleological judgments—amounts to a repudiation of the methodological form advocated by logicians from Descartes to Hume. Kant, moreover, was a keen student of the scientific revolution, which was successfully employing the logistic method along a broad front.

As Kant saw it, his method was different in kind. He characterized the forms of our cognitive faculties as combining the apparently diverse elements of experience in holistically constitutive ways. Thus, while the logistic method adopts the formal epistemic rule of parts outside of parts, which is a mechanical rule, Kant's synoptic method discriminates among parts according to an organic model of organization. The mechanical model is epitomized in Newton's physics, or in Hume's dictum that whatever is distinguishable is separable. In the Kantian model, on the other hand, epistemic parts have no status outside of the holistic

functionings of the mind of which they are parts. Mental life proceeds from germs of organization of the materials of life to construct sophisticated edifices of scientific knowledge. In analogous fashion, moral life proceeds from germs of moral sensibility and training to legislate the rational grounds of our actions.

For Kant, this constructive activity of the cognitive sciences and moral life ultimately requires a critique of the faculties of reason. Reason must establish its inventory of possible forms by distinguishing in the first instance between its own legitimately employed antecedent and consequent concepts, and in the second instance between the essential and accidental concepts in the subjects of its investigations. Thus reason discovers that its processes of organization are divisible. But what is epistemically distinguishable is not necessarily separable. Noetic distinction is, rather, a function of the mind's own discursive activity.¹⁰

Kant employs this discursive presupposition in the organization of his own critical project, namely, the architectonic distribution of transcendental philosophy into three synoptically organized *Critiques*, corresponding to the three faculties of knowing, willing, and aesthetic judgment. Each of the *Critiques* asserts and exhibits a doctrine of methodological procedure in the same form.

The fundamental assumption underlying Kant's critical writings is that procedural validity resides in the reciprocity of the parts and the whole. A theoretic concept (*Begriff*) grasps a set of facts, while the facts simultaneously inform the theory. In Kant's often quoted dictum: Intuitions without concepts are blind, while conversely concepts without intuitions are empty. The mind's discursive operation, then, consists of analyzing a subject into its component parts so as to reconstitute them in their essential order.

A scientific problem is addressed; one works methodically toward its solution. What is at first indeterminate and problematic is resolved through analytical inquiry. Kant argues that this procedure applies primarily to the problem of pure reason. It is pure reason that must take up this problem and bring it to its essential resolution by reconstituting its own essential faculties in a complete set.¹¹ It is instructive to note that Kant did not write a fourth critique; the distribution of the three *Critiques* comprises the complete synopsis of Kant's architectonic project.

Kant proceeds to specify all the problems and solutions of his critique of pure reason with respect to this kind of holistically differential model. He therefore regards each of the sciences, transcendental or empirical, as proceeding from its own principle. His writings also emphasize the architectonic character of philosophical science, which views the speculative and practical parts of its own activity as a complete set. He envisions his critical project as laying the groundwork for all the sci-

ences within the master-text of his own transcendental "metaphysics as science."¹²

For our comparative hermeneutic, Kant is an exemplary model of the synoptic philosopher at work. His text recapitulates the prevailing concern among his philosophical predecessors for fundamental concepts and particularly for laying the groundwork of the sciences, both cognitive and moral.

In regard to a critical grounding of the cognitive sciences one can see that the crux of Kant's analysis of the speculative use of reason must be his doctrine of a transcendental unity of apperception.¹³ Kant explicitly intended that form or function as "unifying act," both in definition and in textual organization, transcends the logicist form of rationality that combines putative atoms of sense-perception or of intellectual intuition.¹⁴ The very meaning of Kant's own doctrine is configured in the synoptic form of conceptual organization. In his second *Critique*, he applies the same methodological obligation to the definition of the moral person, who legislates his or her own moral maxims by a universal rule of rational conduct.

Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, which is designed to interrelate the first two *Critiques*, is also noteworthy in the context of this work. Kant's doctrine of the a priori teleological judgment becomes a paradigm of the form of judgment I will employ to establish certain principles of discourse as the infrastructural variables of all philosophical texts.

My comparative hermeneutic seeks to organize the variety of texts in the history of philosophy and contemporary interpretive practices into networks of internally consistent theoretical formations. In order to do so, what I am calling the career-text of an author—although it may amount to many separate volumes and many thousands of pages—must be assumed to constitute a single, internally coherent train of thought. Every great book, representing its author's mental life, presents itself as a semantic whole, with its own exemplary sensibility and configuration of the world. That philosophical authors construct and elaborate such meaning-formations across the mature phases of their careers is, in Kantian language, an indispensable supposition of a reading of such texts. The same presupposition underlies one's active participation—one's various acts of reenactment—in the transmission of such texts.

Of course, some alleged philosophical texts or traditions may fall short of internal coherence. One is always free to find internal contradictions in another's text or its tradition, so long as one's own text remains internally coherent.

My comparative hermeneutic therefore sees fundamental philosophical concepts as being expressed in a variety of major texts. But at the

same time, because of the recombinant forces that form the larger history of ideas, I strive to analyze the relationships of those texts. Of relevance to this present hermeneutical project, therefore, is Kant's argument for the concept of "natural purpose" in his third *Critique*.¹⁵ He argues that for a thing to have a natural purpose, its parts must be conceivable only through their reference to a whole.¹⁶ An analogous concept of natural purpose informs the hermeneutical function of this book. Each of the great philosophical books forms its own natural (that is, theoretical) synopsis of the world and of itself. Quite naturally, the historically related philosophical works tend to refer to one another, forming various strains of agreement and disagreement. My comparative hermeneutic studies the semantic (sense-legislating) configurations of the major philosophical texts and does so precisely in regard to their interrelationships. It can only do so by progressively unfolding its own theory of theories.

Certain philosophical texts address the subject of intertextuality more directly than others. Aristotle's text, with its orientation to the historical realization of principles of thought, exemplifies this methodological orientation.

Methodological Precedent in Aristotle

Although a precedent can be traced to the teachings of the school of Hippocrates, Aristotle's text displays the most developed model of a synoptic method among the classical Greek philosophers. In the subsequent traditions of Western intellectual history, the contour of Aristotelian thought functioned as the methodological precedent for such pivotal figures as Aquinas and Kant. But in the final analysis, Aristotle's career-text has the advantage for the present project of exhibiting a reflexive orientation to historical examples of the first principles of thought.

In certain postmodern styles of philosophy practiced today one encounters a self-serving strategy of declaring the end of metaphysics—that is, its closure and demise. The phrase and the strategy can be traced to Heidegger, although it now enjoys a wider currency. Heidegger's claim is in fact an old one—at least as old as the text of some of Aristotle's Athenian contemporaries, with parallels in ancient Hebrew and Asian texts. The reverse side of this coin is that Aristotle's text is also perfectly contemporary. One of the theses of this book will be that the passage of time in no way diminishes the relevance of the major works of philosophy. Indeed, Croce's dictum that all history is contemporary history has its full application with regard to the major worldviews.

In studying the history of philosophy, it is hard to avoid the conclu-

sion that Aristotle did in fact correctly view the purpose of metaphysics as an architectonic inquiry into the first principles of thought. He correctly saw an opening for a metaphysics of philosophical texts, so to speak—a metaphysics of the historical manifestations of worldviews organized into their various interconnections. In this sense his text demonstrates its own cardinal doctrine of thought thinking itself.

Aristotle brought this perennially contemporary project to one completion in his own career-text (which, of course, includes his *Metaphysics* in a wider set). Every philosopher who debates Aristotle over the first principles of philosophy reopens, rather than closes, the same discussion. Indeed, the very pedagogy of philosophy keeps reestablishing certain points of contact among major philosophical texts.

Aristotle's own analyses of the problems of philosophical inquiry always proceed by factoring out a covariable set of material and formal causes. He sometimes works with the matter-form variable as a generic hermeneutical set; his fuller doctrine is to devise a set of material, structural, efficient, and final factors, as constituting the essential features of natural processes and activities. The intellectual activity of metaphysical definition falls under the same rubrics of analysis in Aristotle's text, which is markedly self-reflective in character.

Aristotle reasons from a rationally legislative principle, which he defines as guiding the discursive operations of the scientific mind in general, thereby establishing the precedent for Kant, among others. Characteristically, he writes:

Once the mind has become each set of its possible objects, as a man of science has, when this phrase is used of one who is actually a man of science (this happens when he is now able to exercise the power on his own initiative), its condition is still one of potentiality, but in a different sense from the potentiality which preceded the acquisition of knowledge by learning or discovery; the mind too is then able to think *itself*.¹⁷

This description applies preeminently to the hologrammatic series of writings that comprise Aristotle's career-text. But it applies as well to the career-text of any philosopher, each of whom claims final jurisdiction over the domain of scientific discourse.

It is not irrelevant here to recall that intellectual historians of all epochs have considered Aristotle the philosopher's philosopher. One of the arguments of this book is that nothing has happened within Western intellectual history to diminish that status. However, this perception of Aristotle can now be brought up to date through a new survey of the major traditions of philosophy, East and West.

For present purposes, what is instructive in Aristotle's depiction of "the man of science" is his possession of the holistic form of a subject,

which then allows him to think at once of all its essential parts. The scientist, as well as the artist, sees and forms the parts and the whole together in some significant perception of the real world.

Thus a scientific view of a topic does not spring up ex nihilo. Framed in a historical and social matrix of inquiry, action, and expression, a topic is at first indeterminate, obscure, recalcitrant. The hard facts only reluctantly yield their true forms. But once realized, this scientific view can produce a complex network of essential configurations.

Aristotle's sense of intellectual penetration entails precisely this kind of active inquiry and accomplishment. He formulates this general theory of scientific ordering in his *Posterior Analytics*, then reformulates and exemplifies it in each of the speculative, practical, and productive sciences.¹⁸

In the case of a living body, for example, the psychologist must define its animating form, which is the first principle of a body having the potential for life.¹⁹ In the case of a human life, various goods are pursued, but some are subordinate and some are final.²⁰ *Ethics* inquires into the consummatory and enduring good of a human life, which is happiness; *Politics* inquires into the good of a community of citizens. *Ethics* is a subdivision of *Politics*, even though it also retains its status as a legitimate science in its own right.²¹

Surveying its own possible forms, the human mind distinguishes between its essentially cognitive and essentially practical functions. This philosophical distinction is itself synoptically exhaustive, converting the genus of science, which sees the universal, into two specific forms. The cognitive sciences then naturally subdivide into the three distinguishable forms of physical, mathematical, and metaphysical sciences, with possible further subdivisions. The practical function is divisible into sciences of human acting, as in politics and ethics, and of human making, as in the greater variety of productive or technical sciences. In all these discriminations, Aristotle remains true to the doctrinal assertions of his method.

The gist of Aristotle's doctrine is that we must continue to work, however laboriously, from the interpretations of our sense experiences and the perceptions of reasonable men to a knowledge of principles and causes, thereby achieving a rational analysis of the world. But things that are first in the order of experience are distinguished from those which are first in the order of nature and of knowing. The intuition of what is first in the order of nature (or being) finally transforms experience into art and science—the domains of the truly universal in the practical and theoretical spheres, respectively. In both art and science, the particular is reconstituted in the light of the universal. Indeed, the particular achieves its epistemic and ontological status only through this reconstitutive process.²²

The significant variable one encounters here in the text of Aristotle is the methodological one—namely, that of the reciprocity of form and matter in the mind's act of thinking. As both Aristotle and Kant aver, this is the methodological sense in which the mind forms universals.

Aristotle's universalizing method can be found in every segment of his works. It culminates in his discussion of the "man of wisdom" in the first book of the *Metaphysics*. Wisdom is knowledge of principles and causes at the most fundamental level. That is why, Aristotle says, we suppose that the wise man knows all things, as far as possible, although he does not have knowledge of each of them in detail. Knowing the universal, he knows in a sense all the instances that fall under the universal. Moreover, the most exact sciences are those that deal most directly with first principles.²³

On this basis Aristotle proceeds inductively through a consideration of the theories of his philosophical predecessors, from Thales to Plato, only to reconstitute their views in the light of his intuition of the most universal and irreducible first premises, or principles. In Aristotle's final analysis, the "four causes" are the "first," primordial meanings—the basis of all philosophical thinking as exhibited in the views of his predecessors.

It is crucial to observe, then, that Aristotle's *Metaphysics* takes its point of departure from a conjugation of a material (historically formed) variety of philosophical views into their paradigmatic forms. It proceeds synoptically to reconstitute these views into a theory of the essential number and character of such first principles. By contrast, the contenting speculations of his pre-Socratic predecessors as to the number and character of first principles and causes reminded him of the way untrained men behave in fights. "For they go round their opponents and often strike fine blows, but they do not fight on scientific principles, and so too these thinkers do not seem to know what they say."²⁴

For both Aristotle and Kant, a true grounding of the sciences cannot take the form of either a merely dialectical gathering of opinions—in a postmodernistic "conversation among the humanities," for example—or any other relativistic, politicized discourse. A nonsophistical grounding of human wisdom must establish the primary principles of cognitive, practical, and productive human activity in functionally complete sets. The philosopher engaged in this enterprise must therefore reflect on the very possibilities of thinking, doing, and making as he can gain access to these through their best exemplifications. Doing so, the philosopher must also reflect on his own essential forms of conceptual analysis, while establishing their historical relationships and relevance.

To complete the circle of this Aristotelian paradigm, any aspiring architectonic project of this sort must situate itself in relation to already established views on the first principles of thought. In the present ep-

och, the same project suggests itself anew. It does so in view of the multiple heritages of world philosophies, whose abundance in contemporary life calls for a modernized theory of their relationships. To deal responsibly with these great works in their variety and to focus responsibly on their inexhaustible potential as texts for all ages, such a theory of their intertextuality must itself be synoptic.

I insist that such theoretical work can be done, and this book represents my own attempt at it. Such a system of recursive interpretation will require future fine-tuning, but even at this juncture certain prolegomena to any future hermeneutic can be established.

2

Prolegomena to Any Future Hermeneutic

The great works of philosophy generate a common realm of discourse. We enter this realm each time we describe these texts or connect them in any new interpretive act. The many different interpretations of the great works already indicate the formal nature of their interrelationships.

Philosophies share in common with all texts the property of conceiving of, or interpreting, the world. Their special function is to interpret the world fundamentally. Philosophies conceive of the world comprehensively. But while each worldview does this individually, on its own terms, they still belong to a common realm of discourse.

Our fundamental concepts are those dealing with the world itself, which is not a text or any possible sum total of texts, and with philosophies as ultimate theories of the world. The world is always both pre-textual and posttextual in the sense that it gives rise to and yet transcends all actual or possible theories. The two concepts combine in what I call the world-texts of philosophies to account for the final ontological, or worldly, reference that such theories always achieve. Religious texts are not different from philosophical texts; both address the nature of being.

The interrelationships of philosophical and religious texts suggest other categories of expression and of their semantic transferences in the transmission (reinterpretations) of their doctrines. For the sake of a nomenclature, I will identify these transcendental forms of philosophical expression as *assertive*, *active*, and *exhibitive* and will further characterize their semantic transference as *homomorphic* or *heteromorphic*. The question of transferences introduces the more complex topic of the actual contact points and differential vectors of philosophical texts. I address this topic under the heading of the *archic variables* of philosophical texts and go on from there to chart the *archic profiles* of several taken from the great traditions of philosophy and religion.

Transcendental Forms of Expression or Judgment

A musical composition, painting, sculpture, scripture, novel, poem, play, mathematical system, and scientific or technological treatise are all texts. Individually and jointly they present themselves to us as intellectual products and processes. We learn to understand, to live by, and to make more and more complicated texts in the course of our lives.

We become involved in increasingly complex interpretive acts, entailing various kinds of readings—that is, of intertextual transferences. We judge our youthful readings and utterances by adult standards. We judge adult utterances according to established standards of competence and excellence. In all these cases, we measure intellectual capacities.

Every reading entails an interpretation, or a way of conceiving of the world. Although not entirely in Derrida's sense, our readings are often writings, especially in those categories of texts I call active and exhibitive. Thus we continually reinterpret our own or others' concepts of the world.

All texts convey meaning in assertive (propositional), active (morally and politically agential), and exhibitive (aesthetic, performative) modes of expression or judgment.¹ We translate feelings into actions and thoughts, thoughts into actions and feelings, and actions into thoughts and feelings, at various levels of mental activity. These modes are the human vectors of expression, so to speak. They often function simultaneously in complex combinations.²

So true is this of philosophical texts that we cannot imagine them otherwise. Hegel's writings propose a doctrine of dialectical method and exemplify it in literary style. Leibniz's and Hume's texts illustrate their own logistic doctrines, just as Kierkegaard and Nietzsche give rhetorical expression to their own agonistic methods. And all such philosophical texts have practical consequences—that is, they can be applied to problems of human life.³

A good text is always internally consistent, revealing some unified grasp of life in its various forms of expression. For example, the Zen master shouts "Ho!" in a simultaneous assertion, enactment, and aesthetic exhibition of the ego-shattering truth of the Buddhist teaching. In the case of the sages, saints, and soldiers of all ages and cultures, we honor their lived commitments to their own principles. By contrast, we regard as a bad text one whose semantic forms are not conceptually consistent or sincerely lived; we consider characters who change their identities in midscript to be bad.

But in the realm of philosophy we are well beyond all that. We expect and find a high degree of internal consistency in the semantic forms of the great texts. Indeed, these texts have achieved such consummate

unions of form and content that it is impossible to imagine them otherwise.

The burden of disproof clearly falls upon those who practice a hermeneutic of ambiguation. Granted, for instance, that it is possible to play the deconstructionist game—to put play back into play, in Derrida's phrase.⁴ The danger is that this kind of disingenuous interpretive practice may distort more important philosophical goals. In particular, it may impair the greater interpretive sensibilities that civilization requires of us.

Archaeologists, psychoanalysts, and many other kinds of interpreters produce texts whose express purpose is to restore fragments of other texts to their pristine forms. Performing artists—musicians, for example—devote their lives to authentic renditions of immortal works, which do not truly lend themselves to indefinite supplementations. By the same token, the great clarity of such works positively resists erasure.

My point here is that the immortal texts command attention in a special way. They shape our attitudes toward them and become ingrained as standards of excellence for our own contemporary interpretations. It is the great texts themselves that inspire our habits of faithful translation or representation.

But at the same time, interpretation may involve inconsistency in semantic transference in another, quite different sense. Some texts, in any of the three modes, adapt the content of other texts in a way that departs from their original meaning. The reinterpreting text usually manages to make good sense in its own fashion, even though this may require a radical break with the interpreted text's original intentions. Philosophical texts furnish abundant evidence of what I have called heteroarchic semantic transference.

Texts that faithfully represent, reproduce, and restore the essential meaning of another text are homoarchic in semantic transference, a definition philosophers need not find problematical. As every good text translates its own phases of significant expression, it inevitably demonstrates the property of homoarchic semantic transference. As a matter of course (as well as of scholarly practice), we excerpt passages within an individual text, to which we also assign a place within the unfolding career-text of an author, agent, and performer.

It thus takes a disingenuously heteroarchic text—and still one with an internally consistent form—to reduce a good text to a discontinuous series of semantic displacements. Intuitively, there is good reason to extend the homoarchic property to semantic transference between or among certain texts, as well. We settle this question every time we deal with traditions and cultures. Certain traditions and cultures of texts engender heterogeneous elements, but others do not. These are adjudicable factual questions and cannot be prejudged by an epistemologi-

cal theory. Christian, Pure Land Buddhist, Jewish, and Muslim parents, for example, surely pass down the faiths of their parents and ancestors to their children. Thomists faithfully reproduce the text of Saint Thomas; Wittgensteinians, the text of Wittgenstein; Derrideans, of Derrida.

The hermeneutical insight we gain from these observations is that even such a radical deconstructionist as Derrida must presuppose some concepts of consistency and identity. While Derrida may deconstruct other texts, he cannot deconstruct his own.⁵ Derrideans then faithfully repeat his exact meaning in various ways. In so doing they run afoul of the homogeneity of their own school or professional affiliation, which collides with their official doctrines.

At any rate, let us call those reinterpreting texts that are genuinely sense-altering heteroarchic in their semantic transferences. Many philosophical texts are deliberately heteroarchic: they change the rules of the game, subordinating the interpretive principles of other philosophical texts to their own. This is a characteristic feature of nomothetic texts, which establish the validity of certain assumptions at the expense of others.

Heteroarchic transference, therefore, is another transcendental property of texts in general. But neither modality, the homoarchic or the heteroarchic, can take precedence within a comparative hermeneutic. Philosophical texts function in one or the other of these modes because of their substance or method of discourse. However, we can still distinguish between homoarchic and heteroarchic semantic transferences.

We turn now to another concept of our comparative hermeneutic—that of the career-text of a philosophical author. This is something that applies preeminently to the texts of the major figures of the world traditions. The great philosophical texts can be described as well-wrought mental products. Set within the career-text of an author, his or her text expresses fundamental feelings and perceptions of the world. The pleasures and sorrows of an individual historical life are only gradually transformed into discursively unified thoughts and thereby communicated to other individuals with comparable mental habits.

Thus philosophical texts are achieved unities of mind. They enter into the intertextual domain as certain grades of active interpretation of the world. As a rule, we tend to identify one or several works as the representative—in the sense of consummate—expressions of a person's career. But again, we locate and critically evaluate such individual and career-texts within a wider set of civilizational products.

Teaching philosophy requires indeed a whole series of interpretive acts. I assert that if philosophies are world-interpretive in purpose, then the way they are taught must be essentially comparative as well. Despite this fundamental consideration, the contemporary schools promote narrow, technical expertise in the field of philosophy. We will be true to

the grand traditions of philosophy if we take these threads of pedagogy in hand and weave them into a unified pattern of their actual and potential achievements.

What, then, are the conditions under which a philosophical text functions comparatively, that is, participates in the wider intertextual realm of philosophical discourse? This question raises another: What are the essential points of contact among philosophical texts in general?

The Arctic Variables of Philosophical Meaning

World-texts are nomothetic because each such philosophical work orders a real world in the assertive, active, and exhibitive modes of expression. Therefore such world-texts function differently from the ordinary pragmatical texts of daily life. Such ordinary texts presuppose one another indefinitely; many dissolve (in the cinematic sense) into one another. But they are not world-texts; they tend, however, to presuppose world-texts of certain kinds. The world-texts provide the justification for the ordinary texts.

The world-texts, too, generally presuppose one another, but they do not dissolve into one another. World-texts tend to exclude and to displace one another instead. Each makes an essential judgment on the world.

The political philosophies of Locke and Marx, for example, are mutually exclusive. So too are the epistemologies of Hume and Kant, or the grammatologies of Wittgenstein and Derrida. Taoists have ridiculed Confucians, Confucians have denounced Taoists and Buddhists, and Buddhists have been intent on refuting all false views for centuries. This is easier to see at a distance, but it remains true at close range, in the ways schools of theory and practice divide in our contemporary philosophical culture.

Present philosophical culture may be described in terms of a vigorous heterogeneity. The situation reminds us of Darwin's concept of the "polity of nature," in which all available spaces tend to get filled up by the profusion of different species, which still interact symbiotically in a common ecosystem. The rule here is that the denser the occupancy of the same area (the profession of philosophy, in this case), the greater the divergence in structure, habits, and constitution. The historical evidence suggests that we can extrapolate from our own experience of such heterogeneous philosophical activity to any previous culture of civilized thought and verify the same phenomenon of an interacting ecosystem of worldviews.

Pace Dewey and others who describe the progressive career of philosophy, however, the concomitant Darwinian rule that there must be

philosophical differences. Darwin's and Dewey's concepts already presuppose certain kinds of philosophical assumptions as to natural or human progress.⁶ But in our comparative hermeneutic, the analogy between philosophical texts and evolutionary phenomena must eventually break down. For in their capacity as world-texts, philosophies define evolutionary phenomena.

In other words, philosophies are intellectual products and processes of their own kind. The principle here seems to be that there are certain fundamental world views, occupying specific niches in the broader realm of discourse, that are reenacted in various philosophical configurations. This realm of discourse may develop historically along certain lines, but it is not necessarily historically generated. The forms of thought, rather, appear to represent eternal intellectual possibilities of the world.

The point to bear in mind is that each of the worldviews realizes some final form of this realm of intellectual discourse. Unlike ordinary texts with their indefinite intertextuality, world-texts concern themselves with the nature and relations of being and seek to discover universal principles.⁷ The history of philosophy, no less than of religion, is a book of orthodoxies and heterodoxies. This also accounts for the tendency of contemporary philosophers to divide into clear-cut schools.

Let us now analyze the reasons why a philosophical text, in any of its modes, functions as a nomothetic judgment on the real world and thus on real human life, including its own intellectual life. First, as I have just indicated, a philosophical text entails an ontological, or world, orientation. Conversely, texts that do not form some sense of the reality of the world are not philosophical. This is true even of certain ostensibly dis-ontological philosophical texts.

The texts of the Greek Sophists and the Mahayana Buddhists, for example, are actually world-referring (or ontological). Like the texts of Berkeley, Hume, James, Nishida, or Wittgenstein, they affirm an existential sense of the reality of appearances. These, of course, are the human appearances—the acts of human perception, volition, or concrete linguistic transactions and their contingent contents—which for existential philosophers form the real basis of the abstractions of the sciences, whether natural, philosophical, or theological.

The texts of such philosophers as Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu, or of Democritus, Locke, Marx, or Nietzsche, deny that such existential forms of life are truly real. To these philosophers, the surface life of human consciousness is only an epiphenomenal play of illusory appearances—what Santayana calls "the trooping essences" on parade.

like Freud, devise methods to decipher the surface text of consciousness in terms of its substrative causes.

My point here is that these philosophers of the hidden substrate make ontological commitments, too, however much they differ from the existential philosophers. Other philosophers reject both the existential and the material senses of reality and advance some special views of their own.

Thus, the world itself, which is not a text, appears in a philosophical text only in a particular ontological focus. Moreover, the world's world-hood is always caught in the meshes of a philosophical text's discursive, or methodological, form of expression. This is as true of the disc-ontological texts that purport to negatively grasp the real properties of language (about the world) as it is of pro-ontological texts that claim to address directly what is or what can be known.

Philosophers have fought fiercely over both these questions—namely, (1) what is real, really real, or ultimately real, and (2) what are concepts and how are they legitimately associated or disassociated in true concept-formations.

Philosophers also ask (3) what are the grounding principles of the-oretical assertion, political and moral practice, and aesthetic enjoyment. In doing so, they give precedence to their own views, for they automatically put into play their own goals and motives.

Moreover, they always approach these questions from (4) some valid perspective, or standpoint. Presuppositionally, they challenge the authority of other standpoints as they advance their own.

Even when philosophers do not consciously make use of these four archaic variables, they invoke them at an infrastructural and presuppositional level. A sense of reality and its formal order, together with an authorizing perspective and grounding principle, function as the transcendental conditions of every worldview.

Therefore, there is always a point of contact among the foundational world-texts.

Plato's text, for example, represents the perspective of a higher wisdom, an illumination of the soul from on high, so to speak, which simultaneously repudiates the personal perspective advocated by Protagoras and the other Sophists. From this authorizing perspective, Plato's text refers simultaneously to a truly real realm of immortal soul or souls and one of immutable forms or essences, in which the apparent world of our senses participates in varying degrees. Contrary to the teachings of the Sophists, Plato's concept of the form of true reality encompasses ever higher orders of being, culminating in a supersen-

suous, or noumenal, realm, which is experienced only through dialectical assimilation of the lower forms into the higher. The final form of true reality—the goal of the dialectical method—is the governing principle of all encompassment, the form of the good, which is the form of the whole and its hierarchical distribution in an ideal set.⁸

We can say that Plato's text postulates a noumenal sense of true reality; a dialectical sense of order; a higher, illuminative perspective; and a hierarchically comprehensive principle.⁹ In all these respects Plato consciously repudiates the positions of his contemporary adversaries, the Sophists. Conversely, Plato's text makes contact with the Sophists' texts along the same four dimensions of philosophical expression.

Democritus, in contrast to his near-contemporary Plato, postulates a material sense of reality, reduced to two ultimate ontological concepts, atoms and the void. The authorial attitude of his text is that of an objective observer; its grounding principle presupposes the eternal necessity of the material particles that underlie the cosmic and human processes. Although they may dovetail in certain conclusions, the texts of Plato and Democritus differ radically in their first premises.

Aristotle, among many others, noted that the texts of Plato and Democritus were incompatible in various fundamental respects, although he sided with neither but tended to steer a middle course between them. Other philosophers, of East and West, steer courses between and around them, as well.

Many philosophical positions share some semantic assumptions while diverging in others. They partially overlap in fundamental presuppositions. Newton consciously reinterpreted the physical atomism of Democritus, even though he replaced the latter's principle of conservation of momentum with a creative principle. Leibniz consciously returned to Platonic assumptions but retained the logistic method of Democritus and Descartes. Hume agreed with Democritus, while adopting Berkeley's existential sense of reality. Thus, in whatever direction they went, these thinkers remained within the realm of philosophical intertextuality.

The mutually reinterpreting texts of the Sophists, Democritus, Plato, and Aristotle present the problem of our comparative hermeneutic in miniature. They involve one another even as they displace one another. We seek to map their relationships in a set of transcendental textual principles and to employ the same comparative instrument in a synoptic reading of a wider range of texts, East and West, including contemporary hermeneutical models.

To this end I have identified and characterized four transcendental principles of philosophical texts: authorial perspective, ontological focus, method of articulation, and grounding principle. They are transcendental because they function as semantic factors, or causes of philo-

sophical meaning. But they are drawn synoptically from the history of philosophy.

I will show that while these archic variables may be drawn from any number of major philosophical texts, they can be found all at once, so to speak, in the text of Aristotle. For these presuppositional factors of world-text composition correspond to, and hermeneutically transform, Aristotle's doctrine of the four causes.

First, a philosophical text's material cause is precisely its ultimate ontological reference, as this appears in its definition of its subject matter, however specialized that might be.

Second, its formal cause is its methodological form, which logically orders that subject matter in some definite way. Thus, semantically considered, matter and form are always reciprocal but still distinguishable functions of philosophical worldviews.

Third, a world-text's final cause is its sufficient, grounding principle, which motivates and controls its own interpenetration of material and methodological factors. This kind of telic function is what philosophers usually refer to as the principles of their respective texts. For example, it is what Leibniz identifies as the principle of perfection (which is God's sufficient reason for creating the best of possible worlds); what Hume or Santayana mean when they postulate animal sentiment as the principle of morals; or what Kant refers to when he grounds our cognitive and moral faculties in a principle of pure reason. Or again, without employing the term *principle*, it is what Lao Tzu refers to when he calls the Tao the universal mother; or what Freud postulates as the essentially conservative character of the instincts.

Fourth, a world-text's efficient cause is its authorial perspective. In such a text an author, as theoretical agent, speaks from a certain viewpoint on what is real and its formal constitution. Final and efficient causes are thus also interdependent: the philosopher (theoretical agent) forms a concept of the world according to some principle of interpretation, which simultaneously accounts for his or her text's semantic character.

In the final analysis, however, we do not have two pairs. As Aristotle's various deployments of the four causes already suggest, because of the holistic character of a text each of the semantic factors must coordinate with all the others. Instead of two pairs, we have a set of four reciprocal but distinguishable functions of a philosophical text.

The concept of the text itself, as the subject of this inquiry, corresponds to Aristotle's concept of substance in the primary sense. All along, the text, with its essential modes and properties, has been the substance of these hermeneutical reflections. Thus, while these analytical concepts have generic meanings of their own and can be isolated in specific instances, they function not as meanings in themselves, but

rather as the *causes of meanings* in texts. It is the individual world-texts, functioning holistically, that are meaningful in the primary sense and that reveal to us their archic, semantic assumptions.

For the purposes of our comparative hermeneutic, therefore, these archic factors constitute a hermeneutical set drawn from and applicable to the history of philosophy. Conversely, they function only as heuristic factors formally employed in relation to the worldviews. Only in this synoptic sense may they be called archic, or presuppositional, factors, embedded in what I have called the nomothetic utterances of philosophical texts. While they can be learned from Aristotle's text, they transcend it, both in generality and in point of material origin.

I will adduce ample evidence that such hermeneutical principles can be drawn from various texts or groups of texts in the history of ideas. Indeed, the strength of Aristotle's discussion of principles and causes is that it can be cross-referenced in the broader set of philosophical texts.

The Evidence for an Archic Matrix

The body of world-texts provides us with the great books through which we can discover the archic variables of philosophical discourse in general. But we can establish these transcendental points of contact only by a hermeneutical theory general enough to account for the comparability of such texts.

Aristotle's metaphysical causes, I submit, can be reinterpreted as such generic hermeneutical controls. This is not a conclusion that can be deduced from any *a priori* starting point, however—or even from Aristotle's own text. If our method is synoptic, the painstaking examination of a full range of historical materials and their formal factors will yield this result.

Our comparative hermeneutic, therefore, needs to confirm this interpretation through a series of analyses. In its most local focus, Aristotle's primary heuristic concepts will be seen to pertain to a formal understanding of the principles of his immediate philosophical predecessors and contemporaries. But given the universal character of philosophical discourses, one may then apply Aristotle's primary categories to the broader history of thought.

The ensuing chapters will show how the great texts of philosophy may be illuminated by Aristotle's first principles, reconstituted as hermeneutical causes, and conversely how this broadened field of philosophical discourse substantiates Aristotle's set.

There are no shortcuts to understanding the principles of philosophical thought. The only way to grasp the full range of the formal possibilities of thought—the field of philosophical mind itself—is by study-

ing the entire history of philosophy in a series of synoptic sightings. Contrary to some contemporary hermeneutical models, therefore, I am interested here not in making some narrow stylistic claim, but rather in calling attention to the abundance of world philosophies. The primary fact and point of departure for any truly comparative hermeneutic must be the interrelatedness of the major worldviews. The abundance of world classics outweighs any merely individual claim or omission. Their greatness provides standards for judging contemporary achievements.

In the light of these considerations, let us now assert and exhibit the rich possibilities of comparative analysis opened up by the four archic variables. Allowing for the requisite references to primary sources, I submit that a broadly synoptic reading of the history of philosophy reveals the following divisions among the four archic variables:

P E R S P E C T I V E

The authorizing voice of a world-text can take one of four possible forms:

Personal. This is the self-referent, idiocentric presence of an author or authors—in the first person singular or plural—that shapes his worldview. The personal perspective is generally preferred by philosophers who promote concepts of irreducible human subjectivity, such as Xenophanes, as well as Protagoras and the other Greek Sophists; Mo Tzu; Erasmus, Descartes, and Hobbes; Voltaire and Rousseau; Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Scheler, James, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty.

Objective. This authorial perspective dispassionately observes the world's objects and their practical effects. This is generally the perspective of philosophers who deny that human subjectivity is authoritative in theory-formations—who view such requirements of subjectivity as mere wish-fulfillments or anthropocentric delusions to be replaced by a more realistic cognitive attitude. This perspective is embodied in the texts of such philosophers as Anaximenes, Anaxagoras, and Democritus; Hsün Tzu, the Chinese Legalists, and the skeptic Wang Ch'ung; the Epicureans, Skeptics, and Stoics; Spinoza, Newton, Locke, and Hume; J. S. Mill, Darwin, and Marx; Peirce, Freud, Einstein, and Weber; Wittgenstein, Russell, and Santayana.

Diaphanic. This is the standard voice of religious texts. It bears witness to a higher wisdom or the revelation of an absolute knowledge, of which the text constitutes a transparent, self-transcending medium. This is the authorizing perspective of all sacred scriptures and their theological traditions, and also of various philosophers who speak of and for God or the absolute, such as Heraclitus, Empedocles, and Parmenides; Pythagoras, Plato, and Plotinus; Leibniz, Schelling, Hegel, and Schopenhauer; Bergson, Nishida, and the Kyoto School writers; Heidegger and

Jaspers; as well as most of the classical and modern Taoist, Confucian, Buddhist, and Neo-Confucian writers.

Disciplinary. The disciplinary perspective presupposes an ideal community of like-minded readers; it typically takes the form of the first person plural. In differing versions, the texts of Hippocrates, Aristotle, Aquinas, Machiavelli, Copernicus, Vico, Kant, Fichte, Husserl, Dewey, F. H. Bradley, and Whitehead exemplify this perspective.

In short, a given philosophical text always presupposes its own authorial voice and subordinates the other forms of perspective to itself. Philosophers may agree and disagree about perspectives, but they establish contact with each other on this point of intertextuality.

ONTOLOGICAL FOCUS

Philosophers variously refer to what is real in the subject matters of their texts in the following terms:

Existential. Some philosophers place an ontological priority on historical data—on the acts and affairs of human experience, each of which is “vivid and intense,” in Hume’s phrase, as it makes its appearance in the stream of an individual or epochal (societal) consciousness. The texts of the Zen Buddhists and Greek Sophists and Skeptics; Erasmus, Berkeley, Voltaire, and Hume; J. S. Mill; William James and F. H. Bradley; Nishida and the Kyoto School; Weber, Sartre, Wittgenstein, Russell, Jaspers, Merleau-Ponty, and Foucault grant precedence to this ontological focus.

Substrative. To other philosophers, the deceptive surface life of existential consciousness has to be traced down to a more fundamental but invisible level of real causality and motivation—of material particles or vitalistic forces; of chemical, biological, and instinctual forces; of forces of production or libidinal economies, and so on. This sense of reality pervades the texts of several of the pre-Socratic *physis* philosophers, as well as those of Hippocrates and Democritus; the Stoics and Epicureans; Mo Tzu, the Legalists, the Taoists, Neo-Taoists, and Wang Ch’ung; Machiavelli, Hobbes, Newton, and Locke; Vico, Rousseau, Adam Smith, Darwin, and Marx; and of Nietzsche, Bergson, Freud, Santayana, and Derrida.

Nounmenal. The nounmenal sense of reality transcends appearances; it refers to a transphenomenal, supersensible, and eternally perfect realm or activity. One finds this ontological commitment in the New Testament, the Koran, the Hindu scriptures, Parmenides, Plato, Plotinus and the Christian Neoplatonists, Aquinas, Spinoza, Leibniz, Kant, Fichte, Schelling, and Kierkegaard.

Essential. As opposed to the existentialist, the essentialist philosopher sees ideal forms and general, continuous, or enduring traits of nature

and experience in the form of gradated patterns, functions, and values. The essentialist describes these as realized or realizable “in” nature and experience (and not “apart,” as in the nounmenal sense). This ontological focus is found in the Old Testament, in both the Confucian and Neo-Confucian texts, and in Xenophanes, Socrates, Aristotle, Descartes, Hegel, Peirce, Dewey, Husserl, Scheler, Whitehead, and Heidegger, among others.

A worldview always puts forward a dominant sense of what is real, displacing or subordinating other forms of ontological reference to its own.

METHODS

Philosophers assert and exhibit different kinds of concept-formation: *Agonistic or paradoxical.* This method obeys the logic of contending forces, or of contrasting concepts, which cannot be reconciled through some higher agreement. It is adversative in formal presupposition. This is the logical method in the texts of the classical Confucians and Legalists; the Taoist Chuang Tzu; the skeptic Wang Ch’ung; Nagarjuna and all other Buddhists; Homer, several pre-Socratics (Anaxagoras, Heraclitus, and Empedocles), the Athenian Sophists, and Hellenistic Skeptics; the Koran; Machiavelli, Erasmus, and Galileo; Berkeley and Voltaire; Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Freud; Nishida and the Kyoto School; Scheler and Jaspers; Wittgenstein and the later-phase Wittgensteinians; and Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze, and other postmodern Continental hermeneuticists.

Logistic or computational. The logistic method consists of relating discrete, or simple, units (integers, atoms, ideas, characters, essences, or elementary propositions); it reduces complexes to simples, and then adds or subtracts such homogeneous units by the rule of $+1$ or -1 (or of $1, 0$), while postulating the logical chain of their exact order of antecedents and consequents. As in computer logic, it is a mechanical model. This is the method in the texts of Mo Tzu, Thales, Anaximenes, Anaxagoras, Democritus, and Epicurus; Descartes, Hobbes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Newton, Locke, Hume, Vico, and Adam Smith; J. S. Mill, Malthus, and Darwin; and Husserl, Frege, Carnap, Russell, and Santayana.

Dialectical or sublational. In the dialectical method one observes a logic of higher agreement, which presupposes and accomplishes a synthetic unity of opposites, contrasts, or multiplicities. Partial, abstract views are subsumed and reconciled—whether aesthetically, actively, or propositionally—in an emerging whole. The Old and New Testaments; Upanishads and Bhagavad Gita; Tao Te Ching, I Ching, Yin Yang theorists, and the Neo-Confucian philosophers; Pythagoras, Plato, the Stoics, Plotinus, and the Christian Neoplatonists; Rousseau; Fichte, Schelling,

Hegel, and Marx; and Royce, Bergson, Bradley, Whitehead, Heidegger, Sartre, and Merleau-Ponty display this method.

Synoptic or problematic. This method converts a problem or subject matter into an analysis of generic and specific, relevant and irrelevant features. The whole and the parts are seen together (hence synoptically) and treated as form and matter of the same holistic function. In differing versions, the texts of Hippocrates, Aristotle, Aquinas, Kant, Schopenhauer, Peirce, James, and Dewey share this approach.

In sum, a philosophical text grants precedence to its method of articulation, subordinating other possible logical forms to its own, and in this way enters into the wider realm of philosophical discourse.

PRINCIPLES

Creative. The creative principle emphasizes making a difference (the opposite of sameness), in which the new replaces the old. It generally functions as an assumption of volitional efficacy or agency in the making of fact—of willpower, work, and effort, whether human or divine; however, it can take the form of some generative cosmic process, as in Thales, Epicurus, or Whitehead. In differing versions, the texts of the Old and New Testaments; Thales, the Greek Sophists, and Epicurus; Hsün Tzu and the Chinese Legalists; Saint Augustine and many other medieval theologians; Luther and Calvin; Hobbes, Newton, Locke, and Berkeley; Adam Smith, Darwin, Marx, and Kierkegaard; William James, Dewey, Bergson, and Whitehead; Weber, Jaspers, Heidegger, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Foucault, and Derrida function according to this principle.

Elemental or simple. This is the principle of sameness, identity, indifference, homogeneity, or parity; hence of the conservation of momentum, repetition, and recycling of the same basic element, nature, or essence. The texts of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Taoism; of Mencius, Wang Ch'ung, and Wang Yang-ming; Anaximenes, Parmenides, Empedocles, and Democritus; the Hellenistic Skeptics and Plotinus; Dionysius the Areopagite, Erigena, Meister Eckhart, and Cusanus; Erasmus, Machiavelli, Hume, Voltaire, and Rousseau; Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Scheler, and Freud; Wittgenstein, Russell, and Santayana exhibit this semantic principle.

Comprehensive. As observed in Plato's idea of the good, Chu Hsi's heavenly principle, Leibniz's preestablished harmony, and Einstein's sense of universal causation, the controlling assumption here involves an ideal set, variety, and multiplicity of forms, with emphasis on the perfect form of the whole, which assigns its members their just and proper places. The texts of the Confucian classics, Mo Tzu, the I Ching, Tung Chung-shu, and the Sung Neo-Confucians culminating in Chu

Hsi; Anaximander, Heraclitus, Aeschylus, Pythagoras, and Plato; Copernicus, Kepler, and Galileo; and Leibniz, Einstein, and F. H. Bradley are examples of this principle.

Reflexive. The reflexive principle may be described as Aristotle's principle of the essential variety of goods and functions, or as the principle of self-sufficiency, autonomy, and self-completion of a specific nature or of a thing's intrinsic form or function. The self-completion of the intellect—of thought thinking itself and generating its own forms—reurs in different versions as the controlling principle of the texts of Descartes, Kant, and Hegel, among others. Xenophanes, Anaxagoras, Aristotle, the Stoics, Aquinas, Spinoza, Vico, Montesquieu, J. S. Mill, Peirce, and Husserl also employ this principle.

In sum, a philosophical text requires a grounding principle to govern the development of its subject matter. In this respect it establishes an affinity with certain philosophical texts and displaces others.

Philosophers are generally well aware of the archaic assumptions they bring to their writings. They consciously inquire into the nature of reality, its formal constitution, grounding principles, and valid perspectives. They do not necessarily engage all four semantic factors in one place or at one time, however. They may not envision all four of these variables in their own texts.

Philosophers with alternative hermeneutical projects may even reject, in principle, the possibility of generating such a set of semantic factors. But philosophical disagreement will itself take the form of "text" and will therefore become open to a comparative semantic analysis.

The merit of these variables is that they form a complete set of control concepts, thus allowing for a systematic approach to the various world-view texts. At the same time, the set satisfies the categorial obligation of its own synoptic method. For although it is a formally constituted set, it is drawn from the history of philosophical texts.

As sketched above, the perspectives, ontological references, methods, and principles of philosophical texts can be seen to function as the points of contact, as well as the differential vectors, of all intertextual semantic transferences. The archaic matrix drawn from the great world-texts provides a cross-cultural heuristic tool that avoids the disadvantages of the more insular models in use today, and places current deconstructive models in broader perspective as well. It reflects and provides the hermeneutical basis for an architecture of theories, East and West.

Summarily presented here, this synoptic mapping of the specific differences among major philosophical writers generates a complex system of comparative interpretations. It is the result of innumerable hours

of teaching and research, and it is subject of course to further insights and correction.¹⁰

These readings nevertheless offer us the possibility of constructing a comparative hermeneutic of first principles in a cross-cultural approach to the history of philosophy. Together with the transcendental textual modes of human expression, this set of archic variables provides us with a clear guide to any future hermeneutics.

At this point, my readings of the great texts constitute a set of abductive inferences, or predictions, in Peirce's sense. Let us confirm these findings by a closer analysis of the major world-texts.

The Principles of Athenian and Hellenistic Philosophy

Democritus, Plato, and Aristotle

There is no ultimate justification for beginning an analysis of the great texts of philosophy with the major Athenian philosophers. One could just as well begin with a period of Indian, Chinese, or Japanese intellectual history—or with another period of Western thought. Any such endeavor simply leads to a larger inquiry, which alone can give shape to the interpretive system.

The story of Athenian philosophy is generally well known and therefore convenient for the present purpose. In addition, our comparative hermeneutic can take advantage of a basic rule of interpretation, that is, to see earlier forms of historical and intellectual experience in the light of later ones. The texts of the Sophists, Democritus, Plato, and Aristotle are the most developed worldviews in Greek philosophy, incorporating the principles of earlier thinkers in many ways.

Aristotle's text represents the culmination of Athenian philosophy, as well as focusing more explicitly on first principles of thought. (One sees this, for example, in Aristotle's survey of the psychological opinions of the many and the wise in *De Anima*, or of the many kinds of constitutions in his *Politics*.)

One should also note that Aristotle tended to see his own text as occupying a middle ground between those of Democritus and Plato. This is an important point for this inquiry. Given the centrality and apriority of the four causes in Aristotle's text, it suggests the possibility of our reconstructing the archic relationships among the texts of Democritus, Plato, and Aristotle himself.

Aristotle must have perceived the differences between the texts of Democritus and Plato. Taking the archic profile of his own text as a