

Meditations on the Holistic

The word "Holistic" is derived from the Greek root holo () having the meanings, entire, complete in all its parts, whole, safe and sound. The root meaning is thus close to that of the Latin integer, with its English derivatives such as "integral" and "integration". Until recently "holo" has appeared in English usage only as a combining form in words in which wholeness in a restricted sense or in a restricted domain is a characteristic of some entity or function. But in the present instance the words "Holistic" and "Holology" have a very much wider meaning, in fact, one which is not completely definable by a finite number of specifications. Nevertheless, a degree of definition is possible, and, indeed, necessary if the mind is to achieve an effective orientation. Accordingly, we shall proceed to develop a preliminary definition as the first task of these meditations.

As a first approximation, we may think of the Holistic as a Religious, a Philosophical and a Scientific orientation in which wholeness is the central value in an explicit as well as in an implicit sense and ^{a value which is} to occupy this central place in conscious practice as well as in theory. The special emphasis here rests upon the words "explicit" and "conscious practice", since as a matter of theory the notion of wholeness is not strange in the history of metaphysical philosophy both in the form of speculative philosophy and philosophy grounded upon Realization, as in the cases of Shankara, Parmenades and Hegel, to mention three outstanding examples. In each of these instances, as well as in the present Holistic philosophy, the notion of Wholeness is not to be understood as a mere collection or aggregate of all entities, elements or relations, ^{in the domains of the} physical, biological, psychological, logical,

etc., which might be conceived as having pluralistic origin, but rather insistently affirms that essentially the Whole is One, however multiple it may appear to the empiric consciousness. Indeed, there are few, if any, problems which have arisen in the course of philosophic thought which have occupied a more important place and afforded greater difficulties than precisely the problem of the Many and the One. For how is it possible to reconcile the insistent experience of manyness, that imposes itself upon us from all sides, with either the dictate of the pure reason or the insight of Realization that somehow the Ultimate Reality is One or Monistic? Heretofore, the classical resolutions of this problem have tended either to a denial of the One and an assertion of ultimate Pluralism, or to a denial of the reality of the many, with the assertion that real reality belongs only to the One. But neither resolution satisfies all the demands of human consciousness, since in either case something important is amputated from that consciousness. So, we might say that the central problem which presents itself to the present Holistic Philosophy and Movement is an effectuation of the resolution of the One and the Many in such terms and by such means as shall avoid the crippling amputation. Further, this resolution must adequately satisfy the demands of the philosophic consciousness, while no less it is also essential that it shall be such as will be effective in actual life, and by this is not meant merely an other-worldly life, though this is included, but also life as it is lived here in this world. Thus the Wholeness envisaged by the Holistic must be a practical or empiric Wholeness, as well as one achieved in the theoretical sense. Clearly, the task is one of supreme difficulty.

From contemplation and observation of the development of the significance of the Holistic it early becomes evident that this symbolic notion has a three-fold meaning. These three significations may be called the Ontological, the Static and the Dynamic. It is characteristic of Holistic thinking, as it begins to develop beyond the earliest stage, that all concepts, taken in the context of the Whole, lose the character of fixed determination, but, like living entities, they have a life of their own and so tend to develop beyond the limits which formal logic is able to pre-determine. Thought becomes guided, more and more, by something like a dynamic logic, so that there is an added enrichment of meaning transcending the limits possible for analytic derivation. The Holistic ever escapes from entrapment by any definition however comprehensive. In the fleeting moment of a nascent consciousness ~~and yet~~ it may appear to be just This and, yet, just beyond that transitory perception It is seen as also embracing the not-This, thus ever transcending Itself and receding beyond the most lofty comprehension. Yet for a first step toward some initial ^{understanding} ~~comprehension~~ we may consider the Holistic under the three aspects which may well be the first to emerge in the consciousness of the pursuing mind.

1. The Ontological Holistic. From the ontological standpoint the primary thesis of the Holistic Philosophy is that nothing has self-existence except the Whole. Thus, everything which can be isolated as a part, a facet, a phase, etc., possesses at most a derivative or dependent existence. This applies to concepts as well as to all other formations. Therefore no definitive or segregated concept can possess more than a partial truth. Similiar statements apply equally to all other particularized

formations such as living entities and material bodies. But from the standpoint of philosophy and science the implications of the Holistic Philosophy with respect to concepts is of a premier importance, for concepts are the very warp and woof of these disciplines. No conception can embrace the Whole or any true part of the Whole, since the Whole is resident in every true part, and also since every definitive conception is a part which is not a true part. Since the distinction between "part" and "true part" is fundamental in the Holistic Philosophy some discussion of this is necessary at this time.

When dealing with finite aggregates as ordinarily apprehended the notion of "part" seems simple enough. It is a portion of the aggregate which contains some of the elements of the aggregate but not all, and thus is something less than the whole aggregate what, in general, can be subtracted from the aggregate, leaving the latter in some sense smaller than it was. In common practice we usually deal with such parts as though they were isolatable entities which lend themselves to full definition, as in the case of the mathematics of the finite. But it is easy to see that we never have and never can achieve such full isolation of a part, for in both the case of the aggregate and of the part we have neglected a vitally important component, in that both exist only in relation to a cognizer, and this generally is not an explicit portion of the isolating definition. If, now, it is supposed that this error can be corrected by appropriate recognition of the cognizer in the definition, and the effort to do this is made, it is easily seen that the error has simply receded, but not vanished. For the cognizer has ^{Merely} ~~simply~~ moved behind the ~~new~~ conception which was intended to embrace both the cognizer and the cognized aggregate and part,

and from this there develops an infinite regression which thus, at once, invalidates the attempt to achieve segregation of a part by a finite number of specifications. The result is that the supposed part not only lacks self-existence but even has no true existence at all.

In contradistinction to the notion of "part" in the ordinary sense, a "true part" possesses the fundamental characteristic of embracing, in some sense, the Whole as well as being comprehended by the Whole. The result is that the distinction of part and whole tends to become shadowy and is replaced by a sort of fusion of a surface determinateness with a profound indeterminateness. Every true part embraces all other true parts and, in turn, is embraced by them. Thus the notion of definitive boundaries separating parts, such that, each part is distinctly other than and outside every other part, ceases to be valid, since every true part interfuses all other true parts. The result is that each true part not only possesses its individual resources, if we may so speak, but, at the same time, possesses the potential of the resources of all other true parts, such as Power, Knowledge, Aesthesis, Delight, etc. Clearly, a true part must share in the deathlessness of the Whole and thus is immortal, since it is not restricted to a limited resource of energy.

While the notion of true part as here delineated may seem strange and, perhaps, incomprehensible to minds familiar exclusively with the part-whole relationships of finite manifolds, yet human thought has evolved conceptions which are at least logically analagous. It is interesting and significant that these conceptions, instead of being the production of loose thinking, have arisen in precisely the field of constructive application of highly rigorous logic, i.e., pure mathematics. In the part-whole relationships of transfinite manifolds

it was proven in the last century that any transfinite or infinite manifold possesses an infinite number of parts which have the same cardinality as the whole, or, in other words, these parts possess the same order of infinity as the whole. Further, it was shown that these parts ~~were~~ are completely representative of the whole and, while each part is derivative from the whole by an appropriate relation, it is also true that the whole, in turn, can be derived from the part by a relation which is the inverse of the first, and, further, by the appropriate relational steps, each part can be transformed into any of the other parts. Later we may have occasion to develop this analogy with more completeness, but this brief reference is made at this time to show that the conception of "true part" is not wholly strange and divorced from all logic.

An important immediate implication from the notion of true part is that the true part must be, not only immortal but, of necessity, ~~is~~ also infinite.

The ontological Holistic appears to be One to the pure Reason and to many Realizations, but from the perspective of that supreme Realization wherein there is attained immediate I identity with the Whole, It is known as not one and not many. In other words, It transcends even the highest classifications of the relative consciousness. But though as a whole unidentifiable with either oneness or ~~many~~ manyness, It reveals Itself in the dual and co-existent aspects of the One and the Many. To a consciousness, which is exclusively acquainted with the relationships which are found to be pragmatically valid in the finite field, the idea of an existence which is neither One nor Many or both One and Many may prove difficult to understand and accept. However, there is an important conception employed in mathematics which may be of help here, i.e., the conception of the

continuum. The continuum manifests the principle of unity in its continuity or non-discreteness; it is an inter-connected whole. But it also manifests manyness or multiplicity in the infinity of terms of which it is composed. A fundamental characteristic of the continuum consists in the fact that it is impossible to pick out any two terms which stand next to each other; for between any two terms there exists an infinity of intermediate terms, as numerous, indeed, as the totality of all the terms of the continuum. It is true that a particular term may be isolated for special discussion, but such a term acquires its meaning from its relationship in the continuum, and thus is not a self-existent entity by itself. Here, then, we do have a synthesis of unity and multiplicity, but neither the unity nor the multiplicity are of the types characteristic of finite manifolds.

An important general truth of the ontological Holistic is that of its transcendence of all dualities. Thus It abides outside all possible predication, though It is That without which all predication would be impossible and, indeed, It is the hidden support of all possible manifestation and activity. It is unconditioned by space and time. It is neither becoming nor being. It is not merely the as yet unknown but the eternal Unknowable, but It may be Realized through Identity.

2. The Static Holistic. The Holistic in the ontological sense is neither static nor dynamic, since It transcends this with all other dualities, but It may appear to the ascending, ^{though} ~~but~~ not yet fully ascended, consciousness through the more or less thin veiling of one or another of Its lofty facets. Perhaps most commonly It appears as the Immobile and Featureless and in this case it is here called the static Holistic. The static Holistic is a true part of the ontological Holistic and thus is Eternal and Infinite and is

Realized as embracing and supporting the dynamic facet. From the standpoint of the static Holistic, Being or Existence appears to be the supremem fact on the basis of which Becoming is but a dance upon the surface that leaves the Root Existence unaffected. It is Realized as an illimitable, unbroken and unbreakable Calm and Peace into which the play of pleasure and pain, which so strongly characterizes life, never breaks. It is the beginning, the end and all between. It is the domain of absolute equality, since there is nothing more and nothing less. The distinction of the evolved and the unevolved has no meaning here.