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For convenience in ordering use number at right of title

ADAMS, HENRY	The Education of Henry Adams 76
AESCHYLUS	The Complete Greek Tragedies, Vol. I 310
AIKEN, CONRAD (Editor)	A Comprehensive Anthology of American Poetry 101
AIKEN, CONRAD (Editor)	20th-Century American Poetry 127
ALEICHEM, SHOLOM	Selected Stories of 145
ANDERSON, SHERWOOD	Winesburg, Ohio 104
AQUINAS, ST. THOMAS	Introduction to St. Thomas Aquinas 259
ARISTOTLE	Introduction to Aristotle 248
ARISTOTLE	Politics 228
ARISTOTLE	Rhetoric and Poetics 246
AUDEN, W. H.	Selected Poetry of 160
AUGUSTINE, ST.	The Confessions of 263
AUSTEN, JANE	Pride and Prejudice and Sense and Sensibility 264
BACON, FRANCIS	Selected Writings of 256
BALZAC	Cousin Bette 299
BALZAC	Droll Stories 193
BALZAC	Père Goriot and Eugénie Grandet 245
BEERBOHM, MAX	Zuleika Dobson 116
BELLAMY, EDWARD	Looking Backward 22
BENNETT, ARNOLD	The Old Wives' Tale 184
BERGSON, HENRI	Creative Evolution 231
BLAKE, WILLIAM	Selected Poetry & Prose of 285
BOCCACCIO	The Decameron 71
BOSWELL, JAMES	The Life of Samuel Johnson 282
BRONTË, CHARLOTTE	Jane Eyre 64
BRONTË, EMILY	Wuthering Heights 106
BROWNING, ROBERT	Selected Poetry of 198
BUCK, PEARL	The Good Earth 15
BURCKHARDT, JACOB	The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy 32
BURK, JOHN N.	The Life and Works of Beethoven 241
BURKE, EDMUND	Selected Writings of 289
BUTLER, SAMUEL	Erewhon and Erewhon Revisited 136
BUTLER, SAMUEL	The Way of All Flesh 13
BYRON, LORD	The Selected Poetry of 195
BYRON, LORD	Don Juan 24
CAESAR, JULIUS	The Gallic War and Other Writings of 295
CALDWELL, ERSKINE	God's Little Acre 51
CALDWELL, ERSKINE	Tobacco Road 249
CAMUS, ALBERT	The Plague 109
CARROLL, LEWIS	Alice in Wonderland, etc. 79
CASANOVA, JACQUES	Memoirs of Casanova 165
CELLINI, BENVENUTO	Autobiography of Cellini 150
CERVANTES	Don Quixote 174
CHAUCER	The Canterbury Tales 161

CHEKHOV, ANTON
 CHEKHOV, ANTON
 CICERO
 COLERIDGE
 COLETTE
 COMMAGER, HENRY STEELE
 & NEVINS, ALLAN
 CONFUCIUS
 CONRAD, JOSEPH
 CONRAD, JOSEPH
 CONRAD, JOSEPH
 COOPER, JAMES FENIMORE
 CORNEILLE & RACINE
 CRANE, STEPHEN
 CUMMINGS, E. E.
 DANA, RICHARD HENRY
 DANTE
 DA VINCI, LEONARDO
 DEFOE, DANIEL
 DEFOE, DANIEL

DESCARTES, RENE
 DEWEY, JOHN
 DICKENS, CHARLES
 DICKENS, CHARLES
 DICKENS, CHARLES
 DICKENS, CHARLES
 DICKINSON, EMILY
 DINESEN, ISAK
 DINESEN, ISAK
 DONNE, JOHN

DOS PASSOS, JOHN
 DOSTOYEVSKY, FYODOR
 DOSTOYEVSKY, FYODOR
 DOSTOYEVSKY, FYODOR
 DOSTOYEVSKY, FYODOR
 DOUGLAS, NORMAN
 DOYLE, SIR ARTHUR CONAN

DREISER, THEODORE
 DUMAS, ALEXANDRE
 DUMAS, ALEXANDRE
 DU MAURIER, DAPHNE
 EMERSON, RALPH WALDO
 EMERSON, RALPH WALDO
 EURIPIDES

FAULKNER, WILLIAM
 FAULKNER, WILLIAM
 FAULKNER, WILLIAM
 FAULKNER, WILLIAM
 FAULKNER, WILLIAM

FAULKNER, WILLIAM
 FIELDING, HENRY
 FIELDING, HENRY
 FLAUBERT, GUSTAVE
 FORESTER, C. S.

Best Plays by 171
 The Short Stories of 50
 The Basic Works of 272
 Selected Poetry and Prose of 279
 Six Novels by 251

A Short History of the United States 235
 The Wisdom of Confucius 306
 Lord Jim 186
 Nostromo 275
 Victory 34
 The Pathfinder 105
 Six Plays of Corneille and Racine 194
 The Red Badge of Courage 130
 The Enormous Room 214
 Two Years Before the Mast 236
 The Divine Comedy 208
 The Notebooks of 156
 Moll Flanders 122
 Robinson Crusoe and A Journal of the
 Plague Year 92
 Philosophical Writings 43
 Human Nature and Conduct 173
 David Copperfield 110
 Pickwick Papers 204
 Our Mutual Friend 308
 A Tale of Two Cities 189
 Selected Poems of 25
 Out of Africa 23
 Seven Gothic Tales 54
 Complete Poetry and Selected Prose of

12

Three Soldiers 205
 The Best Short Stories of 293
 The Brothers Karamazov 151
 Crime and Punishment 199
 The Possessed 55
 South Wind 5
 The Adventures and Memoirs of Sher-
 lock Holmes 206

Sister Carrie 8
 Camille 69
 The Three Musketeers 143
 Rebecca 227
 The Journals of 192
 Essays and Other Writings 91
 The Complete Greek Tragedies, Vol. V

314

Absalom, Absalom! 271
 Go Down, Moses 175
 Light in August 88
 Sanctuary 61
 The Sound and the Fury and As I Lay
 Dying 187
 Selected Stories of 324
 Joseph Andrews 117
 Tom Jones 185
 Madame Bovary 28
 The African Queen 102

- KEATS
 KIPLING, RUDYARD
 KOESTLER, ARTHUR
 LAOTSE
 LAWRENCE, D. H.
 LAWRENCE, D. H.
 LAWRENCE, D. H.
 LAWRENCE, D. H.
 LEWIS, SINCLAIR
 LEWIS, SINCLAIR
 LIVY
 LONGFELLOW, HENRY W.
 LOUYS, PIERRE
 LUDWIG, EMIL
 MACHIAVELLI
 MAILER, NORMAN
 MALRAUX, ANDRE
 MALTHUS, THOMAS ROBERT
 MANN, THOMAS
 MARQUAND, JOHN P.
 MARX, KARL
 MAUGHAM, W. SOMERSET
 MAUGHAM, W. SOMERSET
 MAUGHAM, W. SOMERSET
 MAUGHAM, W. SOMERSET
 MAUPASSANT, GUY DE
 MAUROIS, ANDRÉ
 MELVILLE, HERMAN
 MEREDITH, GEORGE
 MEREDITH, GEORGE
 MEREJKOWSKI, DMITRI
 MICHENER, JAMES A.
 MILL, JOHN STUART
 MILTON, JOHN
 MOLIÈRE
 MONTAIGNE
 NASH, OGDEN
 NEVINS, ALLAN &
 COMMAGER, HENRY STEELE
 NEWMAN, CARDINAL JOHN H.
 NIETZSCHE, FRIEDRICH
 NOSTRADAMUS
 ODETS, CLIFFORD
 O'HARA, JOHN
 O'HARA, JOHN
 O'HARA, JOHN
 O'NEILL, EUGENE
 O'NEILL, EUGENE
 PALGRAVE, FRANCIS (Editor)
 PARKER, DOROTHY
 PARKER, DOROTHY
 PARKMAN, FRANCIS
 PASCAL, BLAISE
 PATER, WALTER
 PEPYS, SAMUEL
 The Complete Poetry and Selected Prose
 of 273
 Kim 99
 Darkness at Noon 74
 The Wisdom of 262
 Lady Chatterley's Lover 148
 The Rainbow 128
 Sons and Lovers 109
 Women in Love 68
 Dodsworth 252
 Cass Timberlane 221
 A History of Rome 325
 Poems 56
 Aphrodite 77
 Napoleon 95
 The Prince and The Discourses 65
 The Naked and the Dead 321
 Man's Fate 33
 On Population 309
 Death in Venice (in Great German
 Short Novels and Stories 108)
 The Late George Apley 182
 Capital and Other Writings 202
 The Best Short Stories of 14
 Cakes and Ale 270
 The Moon and Sixpence 27
 Of Human Bondage 176
 Best Short Stories 98
 Disraeli 46
 Moby Dick 119
 The Egoist 253
 The Ordeal of Richard Feverel 134
 The Romance of Leonardo da Vinci 138
 Selected Writings of 296
 Selections from 322
 The Complete Poetry and Selected Prose
 of John Milton 132
 Eight Plays by 78
 Selected Essays of 218
 The Selected Verse of Ogden Nash 191
 A Short History of the United States
 235
 Apologia Pro Vita Sua 113
 Thus Spake Zarathustra 9
 Oracles of 81
 Six Plays of 67
 Appointment in Samarra 42
 Selected Short Stories of 211
 Butterfield 8 323
 The Emperor Jones, Anna Christie and
 The Hairy Ape 146
 The Long Voyage Home: Seven Plays
 of the Sea 111
 The Golden Treasury 232
 The Collected Short Stories of 123
 The Collected Poetry of 237
 The Oregon Trail 267
 Pensées and The Provincial Letters 164
 The Renaissance 86
 Passages from the Diary of 102

FRANCE, ANATOLE	Penguin Island 210
FRANK, ANNE	Diary of a Young Girl 298
FRANKLIN, BENJAMIN	Autobiography, etc. 39
FREUD, SIGMUND	The Interpretation of Dreams 96
FROST, ROBERT	The Poems of 242
GALSWORTHY, JOHN	The Apple Tree
	(in Great Modern Short Stories 168)
GEORGE, HENRY	Progress and Poverty 36
GIDE, ANDRÉ	The Counterfeiters 327
GOETHE	Faust 177
GOGOL, NIKOLAI	Dead Souls 40
GOLDSMITH, OLIVER	The Vicar of Wakefield and other Writings 291
GRAVES, ROBERT	I, Claudius 20
GUNTHER, JOHN	Death Be Not Proud 286
HACKETT, FRANCIS	The Personal History of Henry the Eighth 265
HAGGARD, H. RIDER	She and King Solomon's Mines 163
HAMILTON, EDITH	The Greek Way 320
HARDY, THOMAS	Jude the Obscure 135
HARDY, THOMAS	The Mayor of Casterbridge 17
HARDY, THOMAS	The Return of the Native 121
HARDY, THOMAS	Tess of the D'Urbervilles 72
HART & KAUFMAN	Six Plays by 233
HARTE, BRET	The Best Stories of 250
HAWTHORNE, NATHANIEL	The Scarlet Letter 93
HEGEL	The Philosophy of 239
HELLMAN, LILLIAN	Six Plays by 223
HENRY, O.	Best Short Stories of 26
HERODOTUS	The Persian Wars 255
HERSEY, JOHN	Hiroshima 328
HOMER	The Iliad 166
HOMER	The Odyssey 167
HORACE	The Complete Works of 141
HOWARD, JOHN TASKER	World's Great Operas 302
HOWELLS, WILLIAM DEAN	The Rise of Silas Lapham 277
HUDSON, W. H.	Green Mansions 89
HUGO, VICTOR	The Hunchback of Notre Dame 35
HUXLEY, ALDOUS	Antic Hay 209
HUXLEY, ALDOUS	Brave New World 48
HUXLEY, ALDOUS	Point Counter Point 180
IBSEN, HENRIK	Six Plays by 305
IBSEN, HENRIK	The Wild Duck and Other Plays 307
IRVING, WASHINGTON	Selected Writings of 240
JAMES, HENRY	The Bostonians 16
JAMES, HENRY	The Portrait of a Lady 107
JAMES, HENRY	The Turn of the Screw 169
JAMES, HENRY	Washington Square 269
JAMES, HENRY	The Wings of the Dove 244
JAMES, WILLIAM	The Philosophy of William James 114
JAMES, WILLIAM	The Varieties of Religious Experience 70
JEFFERSON, THOMAS	The Life and Selected Writings of 234
JOYCE, JAMES	Dubliners 124
JUNG, C. G.	Basic Writings of 300
KAFKA, FRANZ	The Trial 318
KAFKA, FRANZ	Selected Stories of 283
KANT	Critique of Pure Reason 297
KANT	The Philosophy of 266
KAUFMAN & HART	Six Plays by 233

- PERELMAN, S. J.
 PLATO
 PLATO
 POE, EDGAR ALLAN
 POLO, MARCO
 POPE, ALEXANDER
 PORTER, KATHERINE ANNE
 PORTER, KATHERINE ANNE
 PROUST, MARCEL
 PROUST, MARCEL
 PROUST, MARCEL
 PROUST, MARCEL
 PROUST, MARCEL
 PROUST, MARCEL
 RACINE & CORNEILLE
 READE, CHARLES
 REED, JOHN
 RENAN, ERNEST
 RICHARDSON, SAMUEL
 RODGERS AND
 HAMMERSTEIN
 ROSTAND, EDMOND
 ROUSSEAU, JEAN JACQUES
 RUNYON, DAMON
 RUSSELL, BERTRAND
 SAKI
 SALINGER, J. D.
 SALINGER, J. D.
 SANTAYANA, GEORGE
 SCHOPENHAUER
 SCHULBERG, BUDD
 SHAKESPEARE, WILLIAM
 SHAKESPEARE, WILLIAM
 SHAKESPEARE, WILLIAM
 SHAW, BERNARD
 SHAW, BERNARD

 SHAW, IRWIN
 SHAW, IRWIN
 SHELLEY
 SMOLLETT, TOBIAS
 SOPHOCLES
 SOPHOCLES II
 SPINOZA
 STEINBECK, JOHN
 STEINBECK, JOHN
 STEINBECK, JOHN
 STENDHAL
 STERNE, LAURENCE
 STEWART, GEORGE R.
 STOKER, BRAM
 STONE, IRVING
 STOWE, HARRIET BEECHER
 STRACHEY, LYTTON
 SUETONIUS
 SWIFT, JONATHAN

 The Best of 247
 The Republic 153
 The Works of Plato 181
 Selected Poetry and Prose 82
 The Travels of Marco Polo 196
 Selected Works of 257
 Flowering Judas 284
 Pale Horse, Pale Rider 45
 The Captive 120
 Cities of the Plain 220
 The Guermantes Way 213
 The Past Recaptured 278
 Swann's Way 59
 The Sweet Cheat Gone 260
 Within a Budding Grove 172
 Six Plays by 194
 The Cloister and the Hearth 62
 Ten Days that Shook the World 215
 The Life of Jesus 140
 Clarissa 10

 Six Plays by 200
 Cyrano de Bergerac 154
 The Confessions of 243
 Famous Stories 53
 Selected Papers of Bertrand Russell 137
 The Short Stories of 280
 Nine Stories 301
 The Catcher in the Rye 90
 The Sense of Beauty 292
 The Philosophy of Schopenhauer 52
 What Makes Sammy Run? 281
 Tragedies, 2, 3—complete, 2 vols.
 Comedies, 4, 5—complete, 2 vols.
 Histories, 6 }
 Histories, Poems, 7 } complete, 2 vols.
 Four Plays by 19
 Saint Joan, Major Barbara, and
 Androcles and the Lion 294
 The Young Lions 112
 Selected Short Stories of 319
 The Selected Poetry & Prose of 274
 Humphry Clinker 159
 Complete Greek Tragedies, Vol. III 312
 Complete Greek Tragedies, Vol. IV 313
 The Philosophy of Spinoza 60
 In Dubious Battle 115
 Of Mice and Men 29
 Tortilla Flat 216
 The Red and the Black 157
 Tristram Shandy 147
 Storm 254
 Dracula 31
 Lust for Life 11
 Uncle Tom's Cabin 261
 Eminent Victorians 212
 Lives of the Twelve Caesars 188
 Gulliver's Travels and Other Writings

SYMONDS, JOHN A.
 TACITUS
 TENNYSON
 THACKERAY, WILLIAM
 THACKERAY, WILLIAM
 THOMPSON, FRANCIS
 THOREAU, HENRY DAVID
 THUCYDIDES
 THURBER, JAMES
 TOLSTOY, LEO
 TROLLOPE, ANTHONY
 TURGENEV, IVAN
 TWAIN, MARK

VASARI, GIORGIO

VEBLÉN, THORSTEIN
 VIRGIL
 VOLTAIRE
 WALPOLE, HUGH
 WARREN, ROBERT PENN
 WEBB, MARY
 WEIDMAN, JEROME
 WELLS, H. G.
 WELTY, EUDORA
 WHARTON, EDITH
 WHITMAN, WALT
 WILDE, OSCAR
 WILDE, OSCAR
 WILDE, OSCAR
 WODEHOUSE, P. J.
 WORDSWORTH
 YEATS, W. B. (Editor)
 YOUNG, G. F.
 ZIMMERN, ALFRED
 ZOLA, EMILE

The Life of Michelangelo 49
 The Complete Works of 222
 Selected Poetry of 230
 Henry Esmond 80
 Vanity Fair 131
 Complete Poems 38
 Walden and Other Writings 155
 The Complete Writings of 58
 The Thurber Carnival 85
 Anna Karenina 37
 Barchester Towers and The Warden 41
 Fathers and Sons 21
 A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's
 Court 162
 Lives of the Most Eminent Painters,
 Sculptors and Architects 190
 The Theory of the Leisure Class 63
 The Aeneid, Eclogues & Georgics 75
 Candide and Other Writings 47
 Fortitude 178
 All The King's Men 170
 Precious Bane 219
 I Can Get It For You Wholesale 225
 Tono Bungay 197
 Selected Stories of 290
 The Age of Innocence 229
 Leaves of Grass 97
 Dorian Gray, De Profundis 125
 The Plays of Oscar Wilde 83
 Poems and Fairy Tales 84
 Selected Stories 126
 Selected Poetry of 268
 Irish Fairy and Folk Tales 44
 The Medici 179
 The Greek Commonwealth 207
 Nana 142

MISCELLANEOUS

- An Anthology of Irish Literature 288
 The Apocrypha 326
 The Arabian Nights' Entertain-
 ments 201
 Best Amer. Humorous Short Stories 87
 Best Russian Short Stories 18
 Best Spanish Stories 129
 Complete Greek Tragedies, Vol. I 310
 Complete Greek Tragedies, Vol. III 312
 A Comprehensive Anthology of Ameri-
 can Poetry 101
 The Consolation of Philosophy 226
 Eight Famous Elizabethan Plays 94
 Eighteenth-Century Plays 224
 Famous Ghost Stories 73
 The Federalist 139
 Five Great Modern Irish Plays 30
 Fourteen Great Detective Stories 144
 Great German Short Novels and Stories
 108
 Great Modern Short Stories 168
 Great Tales of the American West 238
 The Greek Poets 203
 Stories of Modern Italy 118
 A Kierkegaard Anthology 303
 The Latin Poets 217
 The Making of Man: An Outline of
 Anthology 149
 Making of Society 183
 Medieval Romances 133
 The Modern Library Dictionary 1
 New Voices in the American Theatre
 258
 Outline of Abnormal Psychology 152
 Outline of Psychoanalysis 66
 Restoration Plays 287
 Seven Famous Greek Plays 158
 The Short Bible 57
 Six Modern American Plays 276
 Six American Plays For Today 38
 Twentieth-Century Amer. Poetry 127

PREFACE

THE ANTHOLOGY of British philosophers here published includes the most important works of all the thinkers of recognized eminence in the field from the time of Francis Bacon to that of John Stuart Mill. These works are reprinted without omissions save in the case of Hobbes' *Leviathan*, Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, and Bentham's *Principles of Morals and Legislation*; even with these, more material is contained than has usually been provided in the previously available volumes of selections from these men. The first part of this statement needs a slight modification in regard to Bacon's *Novum Organum*, where a portion of the concluding list of "prerogative instances" is omitted. The standard editions have been used; in Locke's case additions made by the author after the first edition of the *Essay* have been indicated by square brackets. The punctuation adopted by the authors has been retained, while the spelling and capitalization have been modernized.

I wish to acknowledge a special indebtedness to Professor Gail Kennedy of Amherst College for helpful suggestions as to the selections to be included.

Ithaca, N. Y.
June, 1939

E. A. BURTT

INTRODUCTION

by EDWIN A. BURTT

PHILOSOPHY has something in common with the naïve reflections in which unsophisticated people engage, and with the abstract and exact inquiries of science; there are also important differences between philosophy and each of these modes of thinking. But the similarities and dissimilarities naturally vary greatly according as we pursue one or the other of these two lines of comparison. An excellent way of apprehending what essentially distinguishes philosophy is to embark briefly on such a comparative study.

Persons untrained in habits of logical discrimination frequently ask questions expressing curiosity not about this or that particular object but about some very comprehensive or speculative problem. Such wonderment is especially evident in the questions naturally asked by children when they reach the age at which a generalized interest is possible. Few parents, I suppose, have avoided the challenge to satisfy a youthful desire to know who made the world, what our habitat was before we were born, or why it is wrong not to submit to the restrictions which established custom places upon childish impulse. And although even unsophisticated maturity comes to smile upon some such queries, it continues to ask the others, and adds to them equally general puzzles which only a very precocious child would entertain. Whether our waking experience may not after all be nothing but a dream is one of these additions; how a good God can permit evil in his world is another.

Now the fundamental feature in common between philosophy and the uncritical reflections of common life lies just in the fact that both raise such comprehensive and ultimate questions. Philosophers, as philosophers, are not concerned with the detailed adjustments of means to ends which nine-tenths of the time constitute the matter of everyday thinking, nor with the satisfactions of curiosity about specific puzzling occurrences which almost fill the remaining tenth. It is their business to deal with the themes of vast and general scope, on which common sense also occasionally theorizes, or problems involving peculiar difficulties that no established technique is quite able to meet. But when philosophers ask these questions they ask them in a different way—a way which betrays the acceptance of a kind of intellectual responsibility which the

man in the street has not assumed. He has not assumed this responsibility because he is unconscious of its absence, and has not learned that wise discrimination in attacking these questions is necessary if the quest is to escape futility, a discrimination only achieved through severe logical training.

Thus, instead of inquiring "Who made the world?" the philosopher will be more likely to ask: "How did the present order of events come to be what it is?" Why the difference? Well, the reason for his dissatisfaction with the former of these two questions is twofold. In the first place, he detects a serious ambiguity in the word "world," which an untrained mind may fail to note but which renders the question entirely hopeless until it is removed. We often mean by "world" the entire complex of entities and events, including those which have occurred in the past or will occur in the future as well as those spread out before us in the present. Now, if this is what the question means, it is obviously inconsistent with itself and cannot possibly be answered. For the world as thus defined contains within itself all beings who have ever made anything as well as everything that has ever been made; it cannot therefore permissibly be treated as an object of the verb "made." We cannot logically inquire into the origin of the world at all in this sense of the term. On the other hand if we mean some partial selection from the comprehensive totality just mentioned, what selection do we intend? No particular part is clearly indicated by the word, and the question remains quite indeterminate until it has been decided what part is meant. Many people would doubtless mean that portion of the universe which we call "physical," but it cannot be assumed that all must do so.

In the second place, the philosopher observes the presence, in the question "Who made the world?" of certain assumptions which he knows are so debatable that others who have seriously reflected about the matter will have no patience with him if he takes them for granted without systematic justification. Even though he replace, then, the word "world" by "the world of matter" or "the present order of events," he will be conscious of the possibility that it may not have been "made" at all, but came to be what it is through some essentially different process. This is the case even if he be a theist in his philosophy and therefore, as far as his own thinking is concerned, regards the word "made" as appropriately used in this connection. For since he is aware that some of his readers will presumably not be theists, he realizes that it is incumbent on him to formulate the question in such a way as not to imply in advance any disputed answer to it; the considerations that support his theism may appropriately be introduced only after the question has been stated, and not by the form of the question itself. Otherwise many

persons will toss his book aside without even considering what he has to say.

This instance will serve as an illustration of what is meant by the intellectual responsibility accepted by a philosopher that is usually not consciously assumed by the man without logical training. They share in common an interest in certain big and appealing problems; but the philosopher has learned to discriminate between questions that may not pertinently be asked and the more or less similar ones that may properly be raised, as well as between ways of formulating queries that prejudge the answer in an unfortunate manner and ways that are essentially impartial. Since the aims of intellectual discourse forbid the posing of meaningless problems, and confusing a question with its subsequently awaited answer, philosophy's contribution here is in large part to clarify unsophisticated discussion by showing how its perplexities should be expressed; it need hardly be added, perhaps, that similar discriminative acumen in its prosecution of their solutions is also displayed.

In the assumption of such intellectual responsibility lies the main common feature which unites philosophy with science. The details of approved scientific method vary greatly between different branches of science, and even some of the more general aspects of exact inquiry depend sufficiently on the distinctive nature of science so that we are not surprised at their absence in philosophical investigations. But every serious intellectual endeavor must needs respect certain general rules of procedure which the undisciplined mind is apt to violate on occasion; the whole history of reflective toil has been required to teach their necessity in the guidance of man's mind whenever he embarks upon any pursuit of dependable truth. These rules are precisely those which the phrase "intellectual responsibility" is intended to embrace and imply; they are exhibited in science as fully as in philosophy. Insistence on clarity in the meaning of our terms, on consistency in the affirmations made by the use of these terms, and on humble respect for all discoverable facts that are relevant to the problems we are attempting to solve—these are three of the most fundamental rules which must be applied wherever genuine intellectual responsibility is accepted. Both the scientist and the philosopher are aware of this necessity while the man in the street is usually not.

The major difference between science and philosophy lies in the circumstance that the former disavows the task of dealing with the kind of question that is of common concern to philosophy and unsophisticated speculation. The scientist, as such, refuses to take the entire universe as his province. He confines his researches to limited fields where the applicability of accepted methods of analysis, measurement, and explanation

appears to be assured. At times he proffers rather general theories, purporting to account for large masses of fact, but these theories never claim to embrace everything without exception, and they are normally such as established procedures of verification are essentially competent to test. When a theory transcends such limited generality, or when it must devise its own method of verification, we have left the realm of science for that of philosophy. It is a consequence of this latter restriction that the scientist, as such, disclaims responsibility even for quite specific problems whose form of statement implies entities or conditions with which his techniques are powerless to deal. The question mentioned above regarding the principles which rightfully govern our moral conduct will illustrate this limitation. The anthropologist is prepared to tell us, so far as available facts justify any conclusions, what restrictions on human conduct have in fact obtained in this, that, or the other community at such and such a time, but if he is asked what restrictions *ought* to obtain he will plead, in his capacity as scientist, at least, that the word "ought" implies something that his scientific procedures are powerless to handle—a normative standard quite irreducible to any observed facts. Yet the question seems to be not only pertinently raised but very important, deserving the most careful and logically responsible discussion attainable. Lest the breach thus left open be abandoned entirely to the uncritical judgments of common sense and the often dogmatic, piously prejudiced pronouncements of theologians, philosophers jump into it with the quest for such wise and disciplined evaluations as a cautious, relatively impartial survey of the dependable goods of human experience can at any time muster.

What, then, is philosophy? It is essentially the persistent effort to transcend the limitations of science while respecting the fundamental standards of intellectual attainment upon which science has come to insist. It is a queer hybrid in the realm of reflective inquiry, produced through the fertilization of the spontaneous speculations of common sense about ultimate things by the responsible discipline of scientific logic. The philosopher is a child in his open-eyed wonderment at the world; a man of mature research in the critical and rigorous fashion in which that wonderment is satisfied.

But the history of philosophy, in the West, at any rate, indicates that this quest can be pursued under the influence of either of two major alternative convictions. These convictions concern the relation between knowledge and life. Philosophy purports to attain a generalized knowledge; but what are the scope and significance of the wisdom it achieves? Is philosophic understanding coextensive with the whole of man's life and experience, and is it the supreme accomplishment of which life at its

best and fullest is capable? Or does life essentially transcend knowledge, being a larger and more significant whole in relation to whose ends our philosophic apprehensions should be viewed as subordinate though still very valuable means?

Throughout the development of philosophy in ancient times a national difference may be detected in this regard between the Greeks and the Romans. The most influential Greek thinkers took for granted the first of these viewpoints. For them there was nothing in life that essentially transcends the competence of reason; for them, moreover, rational contemplation of the ultimate truth of things was the highest attainment in human experience, the self-justifying good toward which all the varied practical activities of life must be regarded merely as contributory values. Life exists for the sake of the comprehensive insight that philosophy can achieve; not insight for the sake of life. The Romans, on the other hand, with their remarkable genius for administration and their consuming interest in practical affairs, took, in general, the alternative viewpoint. They cared little for metaphysics; the kind of speculation which seemed to them most pertinent was moral and social philosophy, seeking clarification of the significant goods and commanding duties of life and providing the practical knowledge necessary to their fuller realization. For them the supreme faculty in man was not reason, but a dutiful will—a will disciplined by reason into respect for order, but still ultimately focused upon the themes of practical endeavor rather than the absorptions of metaphysical contemplation. The high-water mark of Greek speculation was Platonic and Aristotelian ontology; of Roman thought, the moral, political, and legal theories of Stoicism.

Now the same difference prominently reappears in modern philosophy, although not, of course, in precisely the same form. French philosophy, to be sure, is too variegated to be classified in these terms; it exhibits a persistent metaphysical interest while practical concerns also are never forgotten; a tendency to approach philosophy through sociological considerations has been its most distinctive feature, especially during the last century. But German and English philosophy continue, though in a novel way, the speculative feud of the Greeks and Romans. German thinkers have tended to adopt the same fundamental viewpoint regarding the relation between knowledge and life as the Greeks; the merely practical and utilitarian is for them a disparaged realm. One who allows himself to be captivated by its appeal is thereby forfeiting something of the rational dignity that rightfully pertains to man. The supreme task of mind is to apprehend absolute and ultimate truth, which transcends the limitations of phenomenal experience and the inevitable disappointments of practical endeavor. Man exists to know, not merely to do. There are many exceptions, of course, but this has been the dominant

quality of German philosophy from the time of Leibniz to the present. And even the exceptions are often not unqualifiedly such. Kant, for example, made moral practice supreme over metaphysical cognition, but he also made an absolute and rational principle or law of practice supreme over practice; reason for him is never instrumental to anything other than itself.

In this exaltation of rational insight into ultimates the German philosophers exhibit few of the detailed characteristics of the Greek mind; once we descend from this basic common feature, differences are far more prominent than similarities. The fresh pioneering curiosity, forthright simplicity, and eager artistry of the Greek classics is replaced by a ponderous, professorial passion for system. We move in an atmosphere of patient, conscientious manipulation of scholarly distinctions and unifications, often lapsing into dull and lifeless pedantry. That these differences should coexist with a common view of the nature and task of philosophy is a rather surprising circumstance, yet it remains true that for German as well as Greek, man lives to think and to realize the fullness of reason; he does not just think to live.

English philosophy shares the practical temper of the Romans. Again there are many exceptions, and again the manner in which this practical temper displays itself is very different; in particular, it must be said that while Rome produced few really first-rate philosophers in comparison with Greece, Great Britain has shown itself quite equal in philosophic competence to the nations across the Channel. The most important differences, of course, arise from the different distinctive genius of the English people, together with the changed historical and cultural situation which their developing philosophy has been called upon to face. Britishers express more generally and uncompromisingly than other peoples the modern European emphasis on individualism and personal freedom. Forswearing as rather unsportsmanlike the privilege of exploiting each other beyond what the rules of fair play would permit, they find compensation in a more conscious and aggressive effort at the control of physical nature than other races have displayed, at least until the latter learned the trick from them.

But a practical interest, directed into appropriate channels by these circumstances, has been pervasive and fundamental in English philosophy. Life, for the typical English thinker, essentially outreaches knowledge and is far more inclusive. The assumption that the human mind can comprehend the whole of things and rest secure in the contemplation of ultimate truth strikes him as not only preposterous in the nature of the case, but grievously lacking in the humility appropriate to man's finite station and limited capacities. Mind—*our* mind, the only mind we can exercise—is simply not equal to the totality of the universe. Its knowl-

edge is always partial and tentative, condemned to an indefinite process of irregular growth in its exploration of the mysteries that surround it. Moreover, there is something intrinsically opaque to reason about the very existence of individual objects and the occurrence of particular events—all that understanding can really do is to describe the regular connections that experimentally obtain between these irrational and arbitrary entities. Reason cannot swallow its objects wholesale and digest their very substance; it can only trace their practically significant relations. Finally, and most important of all, life, for the influential and representative British philosophers, is more valuable than knowledge. Its supreme and self-justifying end is not metaphysical insight, nor even a balanced and well-rounded wisdom concerning man and his world, but happiness. And what is happiness? In the eyes of these thinkers, it is a state in which all the varied delights of which human nature is capable, including the distinctive pleasures of the intellect along with others, constitute a harmonious whole of enduring contentment, pain being reduced to a minimum and the intenser but more fickle joys subordinated to those which promise constancy and display expansive power. The pleasures of knowledge belong among these more dependable joys but do not exhaust them, and they are not, therefore, of themselves, the final human good to which everything else may be properly treated as means. The rest of life does not exist for the sake of knowledge; rather, knowledge exists for the sake of a happy life. Its relation to life as a whole is both that of a significant part and a major instrument. Its role is to clarify the supreme good by critical analysis, to point out the methods suitable to its richer and wider attainment, and to contribute its own distinctive satisfactions to that integrated complex of contentments which the word "happiness" denotes.

Thus oriented, English philosophy has naturally been somewhat chary of metaphysical speculations in the traditional sense of a science or theory of reality as a whole. Its metaphysics typically reduces to epistemology, and an epistemology written from an obviously practical standpoint. British philosophers found it necessary to attack the problem of knowledge, not primarily as a theoretical matter involved in a systematic investigation of reality, but as a means of justifying their concentration upon practical concerns by showing the futility of any endeavor to apprehend ultimate truth. Man's knowledge, suited to his place and station, is severely limited in its scope and legitimate pretensions; it is sufficient to guide us toward the fulfillment of duty and the attainment of happiness, but not toward a final comprehension of the vast environment in which our quest for happiness is set. On the positive side, the English thinkers found an outlet for their philosophic interests in two main directions. On the one hand, they were profoundly concerned to provide an

adequate methodology for the natural sciences which were developing so rapidly during the period in which these philosophers lived. And the methodology they offered, taking for granted a fundamentally practical interpretation of scientific method, was for this reason empirical in its foundation as contrasted with the rationalism of prevailing continental philosophies of science. For them, explanation of an event, whatever else it might be, must render possible successful prediction and control of similar events in the future; now the difference between successful and unsuccessful prediction cannot be tested by rational deduction but only by experience of the predicted occurrence when it takes place. Hence the final criteria of true explanation from this standpoint are empirical. It is not enough that our ideas about an event be clear and deductively consistent with whatever premises seem most reasonable. Only when our direct perceptual commerce with it, in the most cautious and searching exercise of eye, ear, and touch, fully approves, may we pronounce an idea true. On the other hand, British philosophers were eager to establish on secure foundations a sound moral and social philosophy, and to indicate its main implications for a theory of politics, of economic processes, of education, and of law. They wished to illumine the legitimate ends of human conduct in the light of analyses of appropriate means for their realization, and they participated actively in reform movements which aimed to establish these ends in quite concrete ways. This aspect of English philosophy culminated in the moral theory known as utilitarianism, which, partially anticipated by many earlier thinkers, came to clear, systematic expression in the work of Bentham and the Mills.

It should be noted again that in these summary characterizations we are speaking of a dominant trend to which there are naturally many exceptions. In fact, toward the end of the nineteenth century, under the powerful influence of the German philosopher Hegel, the exceptions seemed to have become the rule, and since then there has been no decisive indication of a return to the earlier pattern of English thought. But in this volume our concern is with English philosophy in the three centuries that are now past; it is happily not our duty to attempt the more difficult task of assessing its trends in the present or its promise for the future.

At the beginning of the period which the present anthology covers, this distinctive genius of English thought gained most vigorous expression in the context provided by the struggle of what we now call modern science to gain an appropriate method. Francis Bacon's main contribution to philosophy is an attempt to meet this need. He offered a comprehensive program for the complete renovation and redirection of