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Edited by

ALVIN PLANTINGA
ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF PHILOSOPHY
WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY

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Traditional Reason and Modern Reason

FRANCIS H. PARKER, Professor of Philosophy, Haverford College. A.B., Evansville College; A.M., Indiana University; Ph.D., Harvard University. Author of (with Henry Veatch) *Logic as a Human Instrument;* essays in *The Return to Reason* (ed. John Wild), *The Philosophy of Knowledge* (ed. R. Houde and J. Mullally), *Twentieth Century Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge* (ed. L. Loetscher), *Collier's Encyclopedia;* articles in *Review of Metaphysics, International Philosophical Quarterly.*

Traditional Reason and Modern Reason

BY FRANCIS H. PARKER

IN MUCH OF CONTEMPORARY PHILOSOPHY THERE IS A BELIEF, AMOUNTING almost to a dogma, that no proposition can be both necessarily true and also about real existence. I want to try to defeat this belief by arguing the four following points: (1) The belief that no proposition can be both necessary and also existential or factual is necessarily connected with a peculiarly modern conception of reason (and, correlatively, a peculiarly modern conception of experience). (2) Fundamentally opposed to this is a conception of reason (and correspondingly of experience) which is central to the tradition of classical and medieval philosophy and which implies that there *can* be propositions which are both necessary and existential, both necessarily and factually true. (3) While the issue between these two conceptions of reason is so basic that neither can be strictly, logically demonstrated, it can be demonstrated that *belief* in or *assertion* of the traditional conception of reason is inescapable, even for the modern philosopher. Consequently, (4), there is compelling reason to believe that there can be, and actually are, propositions which are both necessarily and existentially true.[1]

A proposition can be necessarily true only if its terms signify

[1] An appreciation of the nature and importance of the traditional conception of reason is chief among my many philosophical debts to Professor William Harry Jellema — my teacher, friend, and one-time colleague — whom we strive to honor with this volume.

repeatable, complex structures — forms, universals, sets, or the like.[2] And a necessary proposition can be factual or existential only if these universals or complex formal structures are primary data of awareness, immediate intuitions. If, on the contrary, experience includes only particulars, then the universals requisite for necessary propositions, and consequently the necessary propositions involving these universals, must be *a priori*, uninformative, vacuous, non-factual, or non-existential. Thus any philosophy which excludes universals, forms, or essences — intelligible structures — from what it finds given in experience, must also exclude the possibility of propositions being both necessarily and factually true.

The most obvious and most influential historical examples of this double exclusion are Hume and Kant. Of these two Kant seems especially interesting and instructive in view of the ironical fate of his own contention that there are propositions about facts which are necessarily true. When his followers remembered the dictum of Leibniz and Hume that only "analytic" propositions, only "truths of reason" or "relations of ideas," can be necessarily true, Kant's view that all necessary factual truths are "synthetic," that "analytic" propositions are always *a priori*, led to the conclusion that there are no necessary truths of fact at all, that necessary propositions are always *a priori* and without experiential reference. But why should Kant

2 This is certainly true of so-called analytic propositions, since there can be no analysis of simple terms. While bare tautologies of the form "A is A" *need* not have terms which signify complex structures (e.g., "That's that"), they *may* have (e.g., "A rose is a rose"); and, moreover, many philosophers would hesitate to denominate such unanalyzable tautologies *propositions*. I myself am in the habit of following the predominant current custom of regarding the class of necessary propositions as co-extensive with the class of analytic propositions (while believing, as this essay indicates, and contrary to the predominant current attitude, that some analytic propositions are existential or factual). Professor Henry Veatch has advised me to rid myself of this habit, however, both on the ground that "analytic" now *means* "non-factual" or "uninformative" and also on the ground that the analytic-synthetic distinction is philosophically untenable, or at least badly misplaced. Concerning the first of these two points, I myself would hope that the notion of "analytic" could be divorced from the notion of "non-factual," since I believe that these two notions are quite independent of each other. Concerning the second point, I have not yet straightened out in my own mind the philosophical problems involved in the analytic-synthetic distinction, although I have been greatly helped in this regard by personal correspondence with Professor Veatch and by his excellent unpublished essay entitled "On Trying to Say and to Know What's What." Because of these considerations I have decided to avoid describing necessary propositions as analytic in this essay while hopefully awaiting later clarity concerning the appropriateness or inappropriateness of the term "analytic." This decision does not, I believe, affect the argument of this essay, since necessary propositions are currently held to be non-factual or uninformative whether or not they are said to be analytic.

say that no necessary truth is *a posteriori*, derivable from experience and possessing experiential, existential reference? Because, he tells us, "necessity . . . cannot be obtained from experience."[3] But why should Kant say that necessity cannot be obtained from experience? Because he equates experience with *sense* experience, and Kant rightly sees that sensed items are, as sensed, always particular and contingent. "The sum of the matter is this," the Prussian Hume pronounces,[4] "All our intuition takes place by means of the senses only; the understanding intuits nothing but only reflects." Given a stock of intuited sensory particulars as materials, the understanding can set about its proper business of constructing orderly phenomenal objects according to its purely *a priori* blueprints. But the understanding has no peculiar intuitions, no proper objects of its own; universals, the proper concern of the understanding, are *a priori*, non-empirical. Since all empirical data or intuitions are sensory and therefore particular and contingent, and since necessary propositions essentially involve universals, no necessary proposition can be empirical, *a posteriori*, or factual. The conception of understanding, intelligence, or reason underlying this belief, the conception of reason as non-intuitive and purely reflective, I shall call "constructive reason."

The alternative conception of reason which I want to consider is essentially foreign to modern thought. It is peculiarly classical and medieval, and it originates most clearly in Aristotle. So fundamental to his thought as to be both ubiquitous in his philosophy and yet rarely self-consciously expressed is the conception of reason as an intuitive agency, a mode of cognition distinct both from sensation on the one hand and from reflective, discursive reason on the other. "The thinking part of the soul must . . . be capable of receiving the form of an object," the philosopher tells us;[5] and this "thinking part of the soul" whose apprehension of the forms of things gives rise to "universal and necessary judgments" and "the first principles of scientific knowledge" he calls "intuitive reason" (*νοῦς*).[6] Intuitive reason has peculiar data of its own, its own proper objects; and these proper objects of intuitive reason are forms, essences, characteristics, or universals rather than particulars. Thus their apprehension and formulation can give rise to essential or necessary propositions. Furthermore, these forms intuited by reason are given empirically, embedded in the particular, contingent data of sensation. "The ob-

3 *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysic*, Section 2, c, 2.
4 *Ibid.*, Sections 22 & 13, Remark II.
5 *De Anima*, 429a, 14-16.
6 *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1139b, 31-1140a, 8.

jects of thought are in the sensible forms," Aristotle says,[7] "viz., both the abstract objects and the states and affections of sensible things." Thus propositions definitive of these forms are also *a posteriori*, factual, or existential. Consequently the assumption of rational intuition of formal structures coeval with and immersed in sensory data implies the possibility of propositions which are both essential and *a posteriori*, both necessarily and factually true.

Such necessary, existential propositions are, to be sure, completely certified prior to all *subsequent* experience; since they are true by virtue of their meanings alone, no *further* experience is required. But these meanings by virtue of which alone they are completely certified are still themselves factually real since they are, as the proper objects of intuitive reason, embedded in empirical reality. One may of course object, as Kant does, that "all analytic judgments are *a priori* even when the concepts are empirical," on the ground that *qua* "analytic" they "depend wholly on the law of contradiction,"[8] which cannot itself, Kant believes, be derived from experience. But such an objection only begs the question, for it is possible, assuming intuitive reason, for the law of non-contradiction itself to be factual or existential as well as necessary. All that is required for the actualization of this possibility is that the universals which are the proper objects of intuitive reason include among them at least one that is completely universal, such as *being* or *thing*. We shall return to this point later.

Thus constructive reason is revelatory only of our attitudes toward things, while intuitive reason is revelatory of factual reality. At this point an analogy may possibly be helpful in clarifying these contrasting conceptions of reason. Let us imagine that in the midst of a raging battle each contending army sends a messenger back to its own headquarters. Each message has been codified, and each code has been withheld from the messenger lest he be captured and reveal it under torture. But one of the messages has been garbled by a snafu coder. Thus while neither messenger can read the inscription that he carries, only one of the inscriptions contains any message to be read. When the two messengers arrive at their respective headquarters, the inscriptions they delivered are run through decoders. In the case of the message-bearing inscription the intelligence officer reads the original message, thus discovering the true facts of the matter at the front. The other intelligence officer, however, finds only gibberish. But gibberish cannot determine strategy, so the inscription

[7] *De Anima*, 432a, 4-6.
[8] *Op. cit.*, Section 2, b.

must be made to make sense. And so it is; the intelligence officer constructs meaning where he cannot find it.

The inscription, in this analogy, stands in both cases for the data of sensation. The first intelligence officer is intuitive reason, and the message he discovers in the inscription is the statements of the formal structure embodied in the data of sensation but given only to intuitive reason. The second intelligence officer is constructive reason, and the meaning he constructs is an *a priori* statement, a truth of reason, a relation of ideas, imposed upon the data of sensation.

Thus we have two alternative conceptions of reason: the conception of reason as intuitive, and the conception of reason as constructive.[9] The replacement of intuitive reason by constructive reason might well be regarded as a fundamental theme of the rise and development of modern philosophy. If medieval man is created lower than the angels but higher than the brutes, his definitive in-betweenness lies most of all in his possession of intuitive reason. The angelic factor above medieval man is divine revelation, a participation in God's vision rather than in man's own peculiarly human vision. The brute factor below medieval man is sense experience, that power of observing particulars and storing those observations which man shares in common with the brute animals. And man's in-betweenness, that which differentiates him from the angels above and the brutes below, that in him which is peculiarly human, is his reason: man's natural faculty of discerning universals in and through particular sense experiences. The brutes discern universals not at all, and the angels discern them without abstracting them from sensation. As a result man possesses the power of acquiring a specifically human wisdom, a knowledge and appreciation of universal, abiding truths gained in and through common sense experience.

The classical and medieval tradition in philosophy is, I believe, most basically characterizable by its recognition of this essential in-betweenness of man, by the presence of reason defined as the power of discerning universals in sensations. In ancient philosophy the struggle was primarily for the distinctness of reason from sensation, for the distinctness of the specifically human from the brute; and in the great ancient philosophers, especially Plato and Aristotle, this struggle was successful. In medieval philosophy the struggle was primarily for the distinctness of reason from revelation, for the distinctness of the specifically human from the angelic and divine; and, once more, this struggle was successful in the great medieval philoso-

[9] The first is central to what Professor Jellema calls the tradition, and the second is central to what he refers to as modernity.

phers, especially Augustine and Thomas. From this point of view the basic character of the late medieval and early modern period was a revolt against reason as it had been conceived in the tradition, a revolt against man's essential in-betweenness. Such a revolt could take only two different forms: a reduction of reason to sensation and a reduction of reason to revelation. The reduction of reason to sensation meant the substitution of empirical science for rational philosophy, the confusion of philosophy with science. The reduction of reason to revelation meant the substitution of religious faith for rational philosophy, the confusion of philosophy with religion. These two forms of the revolt against traditional reason developed concurrently, and, indeed, were often combined in the same persons: science and religion without philosophy as a distinct discipline, sensation and revelation without reason as a distinct faculty. This double-phased revolt continued down into and through modern times, and it led to the development of the conception of reason as constructive.

The early stages of the reduction of reason to sensation are found most notably in William of Ockham and Nicholas of Autrecourt, and the early stages of the correlative reduction of reason to revelation are to be found especially in Meister Eckhart and Nicholas of Cusa. What is not sensorily observable is a matter of faith, so all things formerly grasped by reason and formulated in rational philosophy – e.g., the existence and nature of God, the soul, and moral principles – become the concern solely of revelation. Thus is the world partitioned into science and religion, sensation and revelation. From this point of view the Renaissance may be regarded as the social manifestation of the reduction of reason to sensation, of the merging of man with the brute animal; and the Protestant Reformation may be regarded as the social manifestation of the reduction of reason to revelation, of the merging of man – in so far as he is more than a brute – with the angelic and divine. Just as no institution shall stand between the individual man and his God, so shall no rational system – the core of institutions – intervene between the individual human and God. The next stage in this story of the loss of traditional reason and the development of constructive reason is the rise of a new, intermediate conception of reason in Descartes and his followers, the continental "rationalists," the conception of reason as a faculty of deducing universal truths *a priori* from innate ideas which are wholly independent of sense experience. When this conception of reason was discarded by the British "empiricists," it required the revolution of Kant to develop the conception of reason as constructive, modernity's fully developed conception of reason which we are here contrasting with

the tradition's conception of reason as intuitive. For the tradition the intelligence officer – in our previous analogy – finds meaning in experience; for continental "rationalism" meaning is deduced from innate ideas independently of experience; for British "empiricism" meaning is imparted only by the subrational faculties of passion and habit; and for Kant and his voluntarist and pragmatist followers, utilizing the conception of reason as constructive, meaning is created out of the mind itself.

Here, in summary form, are what I believe to be the two major competing conceptions of reason: the conception of Aristotle and the tradition of reason as intuitive, which conception makes possible truths which are both factual and necessary, and the conception of Kant and modernity of reason as constructive, which conception excludes the possibility of such existential yet necessary truths. How now are we to decide between these two conceptions of reason – or can we decide between them at all? Well, why did Kant make the choice he made? Because he identified experience with sense experience. But why did he do this? Because it was the modern thing to do? Because it was done both by the characters inhabiting his dogmatic slumber and also by the rude fellow who awoke him? Distinctively rational factors were innate for the "rationalists" and psychological (if present at all) for the "empiricists." Neither school found them in experience. So Kant didn't find them there either, and given this fact it took the genius of Kant to connect them plausibly with experience. But these *causes* of Kant's acceptance of the conception of constructive reason cannot be regarded as *reasons*.

Why, then, did Aristotle accept the conception of intuitive reason? Because it seemed obvious to him, because he thought he saw a non-sensuous type of intuition. But why did he think this? Because he studied twenty years with Plato? Again we may have historical causes, but no reasons. Indeed, the issue is so basic as to raise serious question whether any reason could be given for either position. If we examine what is involved in each of these conceptions, however, we may yet find grounds for accepting one or the other of them. We have already seen that one consequence of the conception of intuitive reason is the possibility of necessary factual truths, and that this is precluded by the conception of constructive reason. Put more strictly, the possibility of necessary factual propositions and the conception of intuitive reason would seem to be mutually implicative. But is there anything else of consequence involved in, even though not a co-implicant of, the conception of intuitive reason which

would therefore be a ground for accepting or rejecting that conception?

One important, already adumbrated, factor involved in the conception of intuitive reason is the possibility of an empirical ontology. Put more strictly, intuitive reason is a necessary condition of an empirical ontology. As already mentioned, if among the structured forms given to rational intuition there are any which are completely universal, as wide as being itself, then the propositions formulating these structures will be, on the one hand, ontological and, on the other hand, both necessarily and factually or existentially true. This possibility is excluded by the conception of reason as constructive. The "very concept" of "metaphysical knowledge," Kant tells us,[10] "implies that they [its sources] cannot be empirical. Its principles (including not only its maxims but its basic notions) must never be derived from experience. It must not be physical but metaphysical knowledge, namely, knowledge lying beyond experience. It can therefore have for its basis neither external experience, which is the source of physics proper, nor internal, which is the source of empirical psychology." One is tempted to say that Kant is here punning on the word "metaphysics," but in any event his statement is doubtless true of *meta-physics* thus conceived. But it is not true of an empirical, existential ontology. Whether we do in fact possess this other condition necessary for an empirical, existential ontology, whether, that is, there are in fact given to intuitive reason data which are completely universal, is another question, which I now leave open. Likewise, the exact statements constituting any such empirical ontology is quite another matter. That the conception of reason as intuitive is a necessary condition of an empirical ontology, and that the conception of reason as purely constructive excludes the possibility of an empirical ontology, would seem, however, to be sufficiently clear. But does this mean that the conception of reason as intuitive is therefore the correct one, that we ought to accept it? Not necessarily, of course. It means only that *if* an empirical ontology is possible, or *if* we believe, or want to believe, that it is possible, then we must accept the conception of intuitive reason — that if we reject this conception we reject all possibility of an empirical ontology. Seeing this connection may persuade some to accept one conception of reason, but it will probably also persuade just as many to accept the other. In any event, therefore, the argument is inconclusive.

10 *Op. cit.*, Section I.

Perhaps a connection between the conception of intuitive reason and the possibility of empirically necessary axiological truths may be persuasive, however. It seems clear that a conception of reason as intuitive is also a necessary condition of necessary, existential truths about values. If there are among the proper objects of intuitive reason value structures not completely reducible to facts, then the propositions definitive of these structures will be, on the one hand, axiological and, on the other hand, both necessarily and existentially true. This possibility is excluded by the conception of reason as constructive. On the basis of that conception value truths are either *a priori*, as with Kant, or contingent, as with Moore, or non-existent, as with the non-cognitivists. Whether we do in fact possess this other condition requisite for existentially necessary axiological propositions, the condition, that is, that intuitive reason find among its data non-reducible value structures, it is not my purpose to discuss. Likewise whether any such value data would include distinctively moral, or aesthetic, or religious ones is another matter. That the conception of reason as intuitive is a necessary condition for any existential yet necessarily true value propositions, and that a conception of reason as entirely constructive precludes the possibility of any such propositions, would seem, however, to be sufficiently clear. Now is *this* connection a compelling reason for the acceptance of one or the other of these alternative conceptions of reason? Again, not necessarily. We can only say — but we can say this — that *if* necessary *a posteriori* truths of value are possible, or believed or hoped to be possible, the conception of intuitive reason must be accepted.

A third consideration is the connection between intuitive reason and natural or rational theology. In so far as there are or may be necessarily true propositions about God as a real existent, the conception of intuitive reason is presupposed as a necessary condition. If there are among the peculiar objects of intuitive reason either aspects of God Himself or situations entailing aspects of God, then the propositions definitive of these aspects will be necessarily true (as definitive) and existential (as concerning a real being) as well as theological. Such propositions are impossible on the basis of the constructivist conception of reason. On the basis of that conception propositions of natural theology are either *a priori and* non-existential, as with Kant, or merely probable, as with Mill and James, or entirely non-existent, as with the positivists. Whether or not we do in fact possess this other condition requisite for necessary existential theological propositions, the condition, that is, that intuitive reason find among its data aspects of God as a real being or situations en-

tailing aspects of God, it is not my purpose here to discuss. That the conception of reason as intuitive is a necessary condition of any existential yet necessarily true theological propositions, and that the conception of reason as entirely constructive precludes the possibility of any such propositions, would seem, however, to be sufficiently evident. But is this connection any more of a compelling reason for the acceptance of one or the other of these conceptions of reason than were the other two connections? Once more, not necessarily. We can only say — but we must say this — that *if* necessary existential theological propositions are possible, or believed or hoped to be possible, the intuitivist conception of reason must be accepted.

It is also appropriate at this point to note that there is good reason to believe that the conception of intuitive reason receives support, if not its origin, from a belief in God as the source of the possibility of intelligible traffic between man and nature. The conception of intuitive reason involves the idea of a bond of intelligibility between the mind of man and the structure of nature, a rational pattern in which both nature and the human mind participate. If intelligible forms come into being in and pass away from nature or the human mind or both, then they are independent of and prior to both nature and the human mind. If we attend to this transcendent priority and independence rather than to the immanence of those forms in nature and mind, then we have the Forms of Plato; and if we attend to the unity of these forms as intelligible rather than to their multiplicity, then we have — to cite only a few examples — the Good or the One of Plato, the Pure Actuality of Aristotle, the λογος of the Stoics and of the fourth Gospel, the *voûs* and the One of Plotinus, or the Divine exemplars of Augustine and Thomas. The late medieval and early modern loss of intuitive reason as man's definitive in-betweenness also meant, I believe, the loss of God as rational mediator between man and nature — though not necessarily the loss of God as completely transcendent and rationally unknowable. Without a source and home for those intelligible forms which mediated between the mind of man and the structure of nature, man's bond with nature was broken. Thus arose the subjectivism, *a priorism*, and constructivism definitive of modernity — though whether the loss of God as λογος caused the loss of reason as intuitive, or vice versa, I do not know.

Our results so far are disappointingly inconclusive, however. Can we not find a strictly compelling reason for a selection from these two alternative conceptions of reason? Well, what would be

a strictly compelling reason? Why, a logical one, of course. And, indeed, it does seem possible to produce a logical reason for a selection, for careful analysis seems to indicate that the conception of reason as purely constructive involves a contradiction.[11]

According to the purely constructivist conception of reason, reason constructs its objects out of certain materials; it makes phenomena out of the "manifold of intuition" or constructs out of sense data. Now this means that rationally to know anything is to transform it into something else, to construct some other thing out of it. But this is to assert that the rational knowing of a thing is *not* a rational knowing of *that* thing *itself* at all, but rather of something *new* and *different*. And this position is, I believe, self-contradictory. At this point, however, the advocate of constructive reason will object that the antecedent thing is not an object of reason at all before its transformation, that it is only the material for such an object. It is rather the transformed thing, the construct, the phenomenon, which is the object of rational knowing; and as soon as we see this, we see that there is no contradiction at all. Be it so. But exactly how, then, is the construct, the phenomenon, rationally known on the basis of a purely constructivist conception of reason? Since the phenomenon or construct is by hypothesis an object of rational knowledge, and since rational knowledge is regarded as a purely constructive activity, then we must say of the construct that it too is transformed or constructed, or better, *re*-constructed, by the act of rationally knowing it, into a still different something. But then once more, to know something is not to know that something, but rather something else — and so on. In each case there is a contradiction, and the contradiction is continued in an infinite regress.

At this point, however, the advocate of constructive reason may again object that for any given object the constructing process occurs only once, and that after it has occurred so as to produce an object, phenomenon, or construct, then that constructed object is just simply known. By saying this we stop the regress and avoid the contradiction. This is, indeed, just what Kant seems to say. But the point to be noted is that to say this is to invoke the conception of intuitive reason; to say that the rational construction is followed by a rational intuition of the construct is to abandon the conception of reason as purely constructive. This does avoid the contradiction,

[11] The two following paragraphs are an abbreviated form of an argument I have used elsewhere for a different, though related, purpose — most recently in "A Demonstration of Epistemological Realism," *International Philosophical Quarterly*, II, 3 (Sept. 1962), 382-384.

but only at the cost of conceding the point. Indeed, Kant's theory is plausible only because it tacitly assumes that phenomena, once constructed, are simply intuited exactly as they are.

Thus it would seem that we have finally arrived at a compelling reason for accepting the conception of intuitive reason and rejecting the conception of reason as purely constructive – namely, that the latter either involves a contradiction or else abandons its position. And of course any conception which is self-contradictory is thereby false.

Or is it? Can we really be sure that any conception which involves a contradiction is thereby false? To say that a claim made upon reality is false *because* it involves a contradiction is to assume that the law of non-contradiction is true of *reality*, of *fact*. But this is to assume that at least one necessarily true proposition is also existentially or factually true, and this in turn entails the conception of intuitive reason which we are trying to establish. So the argument that the conception of constructive reason is false because it involves a contradiction is itself based upon the assumption of intuitive reason, and specifically upon the assumption that the law of non-contradiction is necessarily true of real, factual existence. But of course this is just what the advocate of constructive reason does not admit. No necessary propositions "provide any information about matters of fact," Ayer reminds us.[12] "Analytic propositions are necessary and certain" because "they simply record our determination to use words in a certain fashion. . . . As Wittgenstein puts it, our justification for holding that the world could not conceivably disobey the laws of logic is simply that we could not say of an unlogical world how it would look."[13] Since the necessity of even the laws of logic is contingent upon our linguistic or conceptual conventions, even the law of non-contradiction could be abandoned. True enough, as C. I. Lewis points out, "The higher up a concept stands in our pyramid, the more reluctant we are to disturb it. . . . The decision that there are no such creatures as have been defined as 'swans,' would be unimportant. The conclusion that there are no such things as Euclidean triangles, would be immensely disturbing. And if we should be forced to realize that nothing in our experience possesses any stability – that our principle, 'Nothing can both be and not be,' was merely a verbalism, applying to nothing more than momentarily – that denouement would rock our world to its foundations."[14] And

12 *Language, Truth, and Logic* (London, 1946), p. 79.
13 *Ibid.*, p. 84.
14 *Mind and the World Order*, p. 306.

yet such a world-shaking event is still quite possible – in some ineffable use of the word "possible" – simply because, on this view, not even the law of non-contradiction is necessarily true of the real world.

And so our final effort seems also to have failed, simply because it begs the question. The conception of intuitive reason cannot be demonstrated to be factually, existentially true even by showing that its denial involves a contradiction, because to say that contradictoriness implies falsity concerning the real, factual world is to assume at least one necessarily true existential proposition and hence also the conception of intuitive reason.

Yet perhaps we should not give up quite so easily. While it does seem that the issue between these two conceptions of reason is too basic to be resolved by logical demonstration, may there not be some other way of justifying one conception over the other? Here one is reminded of Aristotle's argument that the skeptic refutes himself by reducing himself to the vegetative state. Is it possible for us as humans, as thinking beings, to avoid believing that the law of non-contradiction is necessarily true of the real world? To say that "the law of non-contradiction does not hold true of objective reality" is to allow that the contradictory of this very proposition itself may also be true, that it may also be true that the law of non-contradiction *does* hold true of objective reality. As we have seen, however, this latter proposition is precisely the fundamental position of the advocate of the conception of reason as intuitive. Hence the advocate of the conception of reason as constructive is, at bottom, in the self-defeating position of denying his thesis in the same breath with which he affirms it, of granting the conception of reason as intuitive at the same time that he denies it. And this is exactly not to maintain any position at all. This being the case, the intuitivist need pay no more attention to the constructivist than Aristotle did to his vegetable. Thus while the conception of reason as intuitive might possibly *be* false, by some unspeakable use of the word "might," it cannot be *asserted* or *believed* to be false. Put differently, while the *proposition* that reason is intuitive can only be rationally intuited and cannot be rationally demonstrated to be true, the *assertion* of or *belief* in that proposition can be demonstrated to be inescapable by any being who makes any assertion or holds any belief at all.

Contemporary philosophers are therefore obliged to admit that at least one proposition, the law of non-contradiction, is both necessarily true and also true of real, factual existence just in order to maintain their position – or any position at all. And they must there-

fore also accept the conception of reason as intuitive, at least in addition to if not in place of the conception of reason as constructive. Here the reason of modernity must, just in order to assert itself, become the reason of the tradition.

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