

*Main Trends In Recent Philosophy**

SPECULATIVE PHILOSOPHY

THE first half of the century has seen two opposing movements in philosophic thought. On the one hand there has been a renaissance of speculative thought, and on the other hand a radical attack from several quarters on metaphysics as a fruitful or legitimate enterprise. But while these movements are opposed, they are, I think it can be shown, closely interrelated, if they do not, indeed, have a common source. And while they both have an historical continuity with the past, they reflect, in characteristic ways, a fundamental if not a revolutionary break with the older tradition.

The traditional claim of metaphysics to be a knowledge of the nature of reality, distinct from science both in its universality and its finality, has been frankly contested on differing grounds. On the one hand, there has been the growing conviction that philosophic systems are not only conditioned by, but represent and express, the aspirations and needs of the age and culture to which they belong. The pretensions of past thinkers to offer systems of ultimate and universal truth have been so discredited by the course of history that few venture to make the same claim today. Furthermore social scientists from Marx to some recent anthropologists have advanced theories widely interpreted as justifying historical or cultural relativism. On the other hand, there has been an undermining of metaphysics from psychological sources. From Freud and his school has come the recognition of the part played by unconscious motivations in shaping accepted beliefs and theories. And psychologists of other schools have also tended to discredit the older conception of reason as a function of man capable of acting in independence of his needs as an organic being. Man may be a rational being, but his rationality equips him only to attain ends set

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