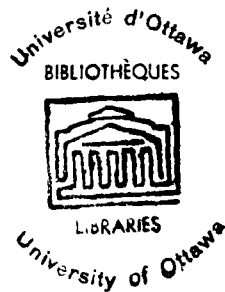


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THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL METHODS FOR THE SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM OF
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THOUGHT AND BEING IN THE PRE-TRILOGY
WRITINGS OF MAURICE BLONDEL

by Anne T. Perkins

Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Philosophy
of the University of Ottawa in partial ful-
fillment of the requirements for the degree
of Master of Philosophy.



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INTRODUCTION

Blondel's philosophy is a continuation of the evolution of modern thought, beginning with Spinozan realism, continuing through its antithesis in Kantian criticism, and culminating in the German Idealist rational synthesis.¹ However, the continuous revolutions and counter-revolutions among the thinkers of the tradition indicate that there is some central problem which each attempts to solve by counteracting certain defects in their predecessor's system. The problem is the seemingly perennial one of the relationship between thought and being. In his article on the three idealist illusions (realism, criticism, and absolute idealism) Blondel notes that,

La difficulté fondamentale reste donc d'expliquer comment la pensée et l'être, se pénétrant sans se confondre, partagent la souveraineté et ne la divisent pas. ...la solution du problème que le spinozisme laissait ouvert sous cette forme imparfaite... .²

1 Maurice BLONDEL, "L'Illusion idéaliste," in Les Premiers écrits de Maurice Blondel, Paris, Presses universitaires de France, 1956(1898), p. 99. The philosophy of action is not "une doctrine simplement juxtaposée ou substituée à d'autres, mais une extension et un emploi de la tradition philosophique;... ." For a good discussion of the various influences on the philosophy of Maurice Blondel refer to Father John J. MC NEILL, S.J., The Blondelian Synthesis, Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1966, 324 p.

2 Maurice BLONDEL, "L'Illusion idéaliste," p. 121-2. Undoubtedly the most important source on Blondel's ideas about Spinoza is Maurice BLONDEL, "Une des sources de la pensée moderne: l'évolution du Spinozisme," in Annales de philosophie chrétienne, tome 128, I, p. 260-275; II, p. 324-341.

The problem takes on many forms in the history of western thought, depending both on the specific ideology of the philosopher involved and on the particular aspect of the philosophical endeavor about which he is primarily concerned. The problem is itself a manifestation of the general philosophical problem of the "One and the Many". Two singularly important manifestations of the problem of the one and the many are what, for the purposes of this thesis, could be called the metaphysical type and the epistemological type. Under the classification of the metaphysical problem of the one and the many falls any problem of the relationship between being-as-such and the multiplicity of existing beings.³ Parmenides,

³ In his chapter on "Being and the One" in Being and Some Philosophers (Toronto, Canada, Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1952, p. 1-40), Etienne GILSON summarizes the various solutions to the problem in the metaphysical realm (the other chapters of the book are also of interest here, but the above-mentioned one is primarily concerned with Being in so far as it is one). In general, if we take metaphysics to be the study of being-as-such or being-as-being, the seeming contradiction between the unity of being and the multiplicity of existing, becoming beings must somehow be accounted for by the metaphysician. Metaphysics, after Aristotle is "a science which investigates being as being and the attributes which belong to this in virtue of its own nature;" it is this meaning that we are referring to here. ARISTOTLE, Metaphysics, I, I(1003)a, 21-25, in Aristotle Selections, edited by W.D. Ross, New York, Scribner, 1927, p. 53. In A Dictionary of Scholastic Philosophy (Bernard WUELLNER, S.J., Milwaukee, Bruce, 1965, p. 214) there is a generalized statement as to the nature of the problem of the one and the many. The many shades of the problem are exemplified. "This many-sided problem tries to reconcile unity and plurality as seemingly opposed features of reality, of knowledge, of human nature, of political society, etc." Ibid.

for example, chooses being as what is really real, instead of the individual becoming existents, which he calls illusionary.⁴

The second manifestation of the more universal problem is the epistemological mode of the dilemma. The term "epistemology" means the branch of philosophy which investigates the origin, structure, methods and validity of knowledge.⁵ The more general problem of the one and the many is here concerned with the relationship between what is or can be known, and what exists, or some other formulation of that combination. In the Kantian system, for instance, what is cannot, in fact, be known. The question, then, becomes what is knowable and how is it known? Even the German Idealists suffered under the same duality of what is known and what is, only, says Blondel, they move the problem itself

4 Parmenides not only chooses being as real, but equates being with thought, since, for him, thought without being or being without thought is impossible. Being carries the characteristic of indivisible unity, universality, and so on. It should be noted that the question for Parmenides here is whether being or becoming is real, not whether what is can be known or some comparable form of that question. If it is (being, in this case), then it is thought. PARMENIDES, "Philosophical Poem," in Selections from Early Greek Philosophy, translated and edited by M.C. Nahm, New York, Crofts, 1941 (second edition), p. 113-17.

5 Ledger WOOD, "Epistemology," in The Dictionary of Philosophy, edited by Dagobert Runes, New York, Philosophical Library, 1960, p. 94.

"...au coeur du sujet même,..."⁶

Again, however, there is a distinction within the epistemological problem of the one and the many. On the one hand, the philosopher may ask the question: "how does man know, that is, by what process does he take in his experiences and make them his own?" The questioner is intrigued by the difference and seeming contradiction between the concept and the individual

6 Maurice BLONDEL, "L'Illusion idéaliste", p. 106. It should be noted that the terms of the problem have changed from that of the concept and the things that are experienced and existing, to that of the subject who knows and the object that is known, as one moves from ancient and mediaeval philosophy into modern and contemporary philosophy. Concerning Blondel's labels of idealism, realism, and criticism, the Philosopher of Aix considers Spinoza the representative realist, Kant the representative criticist, and the Germans the representative idealists, although, he states that they all fall under the idealist illusion. "...qu'on s'attache à la réalité ou à la nature de l'être, à la conformité du sujet et de l'objet ou à l'incompatibilité de la pensée et de la chose, au problème de la transcendance ou au problème de l'immanence même, il n'est possible de rien affirmer qu'on ne le nie, de rien nier qu'on ne l'affirme, et il n'est pas possible de ne pas affirmer et nier en même temps. C'est pour cela qu'il a suffi dans le titre de cette étude, de nommer 'l'illusion idéaliste'." Ibid., p. 107. Moreover, Blondel confuses Thomism with Spinozism. His knowledge of the teachings of Thomas was very poor when he wrote "Lettre"(1896), in Les Premiers écrits de Maurice Blondel, Presses universitaires de France, 1956(1896), p. 5-95. In his interpretation of the history of philosophy, he even goes so far as to equate Scholastic realism with that of Spinozan realism, both having their sources in Aristotle. On this point, see John J. MC NEILL, The Blondelian Synthesis, footnote, p. 38-39. "Blondel's criticism of Scholasticism seems to be based more on what he had been taught at the Ecole Normale and what contacts he had with his Scholastic critics, than on direct contact with Scholastic sources. ...what is surprising is the fact that his Scholastic correspondents seem to accept Blondel's definition of their position without protesting."

existent and the experienced sensation and resulting image one has of that unique individual.⁷

On the other hand, the epistemological question has become more and more, "how do we know that we know?" in modern and contemporary thought. The emphasis, then, is not so much on the process of knowing, but, rather, on the validity of knowledge. By various methods which deal with mental entities alone, by divorcing himself from the original source of human knowledge in sense experience, and by either beginning with a doubt or presupposing it, the thinker of this general school actually begs the whole question of the very possibility of valid knowledge of existing things. In order to deal with the problem of validity, these philosophers take a variety of courses.

⁷ In reference to this particular point, Professor W.E. CARLO lists the differences between the more concrete image and the universal concept. According to Carlo, the image is individual, particular, concrete, changing, material, and contingent, as is the individual being which it represents. On the other hand, the concept is general, universal, abstract, immaterial, and necessary; it is a unity which covers all specifics which fall under it. For example, the man we see in our "mind's eye" is an image of a particular, material man, whereas, the definition of man as rational animal is the manifestation of the concept of man which holds for all men. It represents the form abstracted from all the individually experienced men, and is the means by which all men are known to be men. Plato is the first philosopher to note the discrepancy between the singularity of the image and the concept, or, as he calls it, the form or idea. See William E. CARLO, Introduction to Philosophy, "Course Through Correspondence," University of Ottawa, 1969, p. 5-7. And, William E. CARLO, Philosophy, Science, and Knowledge, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Bruce Publishing Co., 1967, p. 6-19.

However, they may be divided into one of three basic forms. The philosopher may conclude that reality cannot be known at all in itself as Kant does. Or, he may alter the nature of reality, emphasizing one or another of its characteristics, or forcing it to fall under a particular formulation as Descartes does.⁸ Finally, as the strict phenomenologist claims to do, he may decide to not deal with the question at all, saying that strict meaning is the only concern of the philosophical sciences.⁹

8 Descartes, for instance, moves everything into the mind including quality as a result of his mathematicism. For the Founder of Modern Philosophy, "true knowledge is necessary; mathematical knowledge alone is necessary; hence all knowledge has to be mathematical." Etienne GILSON; The Unity of Philosophical Experience, New York, Scribner, 1937, p. 140. With Spinoza everything is a mode of the divine substance (natura naturans); with Hegel, all is a manifestation of the Spirit. It should be noted that this alteration of reality need not be intentional.

9 Phenomenology as a philosophy in its most explicit sense has its founder and developer in the person of Edmund Husserl. Like any philosophical system Husserlian phenomenology attempts to uncover the first principle of all reality. Unlike what had been commonly called integral realism, phenomenology considers this primary principle under the aspect of essential meaning, not being. More exactly, phenomenology as a philosophy should be called either "Transcendental Phenomenology" or "Pure Phenomenology" in order to distinguish it from phenomenology as a contribution to philosophical method. Although, it should be noted that phenomenology as methodological and as philosophical cannot be separated if one is to remain faithful to the letter of Husserl. "Un grand nombre de philosophes contemporains adoptent, en la modifiant plus ou moins, la méthode husserlienne, pour la faire servir à la construction de leurs propres systèmes. Il est à peine nécessaire de souligner que pour Husserl une telle séparation est à tout (sic) fait illégitime." Gaston BERGER, "Phénoménologie," in Vocabulaire technique et critique de la philosophie, edited by André Lalande, Paris, Presses universitaires de France, 1968, p. 769. Referred to as Vocabulaire in the following discussion.

The unfortunate result of this mode of epistemological inquiry is that it may jeopardize philosophy's claim to attain reality. Blondel himself notices this problem when he deals with his own tradition of Spinoza, Kant, Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel, although he does not recognize it in these terms. The Philosopher of Aix believes that by using the methods of modern philosophy, he can resolve the **prevalent** problem of the relationship between thought and being where his predecessors had failed. Blondel **chooses** to decide the problem in its epistemological formulation by way of action, the vinculum substantiale, which unites the opposing poles of the dilemma. His solution to his particular version of the problem involves a unique synthesis of the epistemological methods of his predecessors. There is to be a critique, a doubt, and a notion of immanence, all with a specifically Blondelian flavor. It is the central purpose of this thesis to delineate the Blondelian solution to this classical problem.¹⁰

10 It should always be remembered that, although our main concern here is Blondel's solution to the problem of the relationship between thought and being, the Philosopher himself has the establishment of a philosophy of religion foremost in his mind. Thus, all other questions must be considered with this in the forefront. Refer to L'Action(1893), 495p. (Paris, Presses universitaires de France, 1950, re-edition). He states that he has "tenté de faire pour la forme catholique de la pensée religieuse ce que l'Allemagne a fait, depuis longtemps, et fait toujours, pour la forme protestante dont la philosophie il est vrai était plus aisée à dégager." Maurice BLONDEL, Lettres philosophiques, Paris, Aubier, 1961, lettre à Georges Perrot, 20 octobre, 1893, p. 34.

The thesis is divided into two parts. The first of these parts, entitled "The Blondelian Method of Solution", deals with those methods which Blondel uses in order to put himself in the position to scientifically solve the epistemological problem of the relationship between thought and being. There are three chapters in Part One. Chapter One is concerned with the general requirements of any science, and more especially with the science of action. In addition Chapter One takes the scientific requirement for an attitude of doubt and shows its application in the Blondelian philosophical endeavor. Chapter Two treats of Blondel's phenomenological approach to philosophy. The special Blondelian meanings of the term "phenomenology" are discussed, and the question of whether Blondel can have what is called a doctrinal or a philosophical phenomenology is investigated. Chapter Three, the second chapter concerned directly with the method itself, presents a study of the Blondelian method in so far as it is an immanent dialectic. Involved in the discussion is the definition of Blondel's method of immanence as it is opposed to a doctrine of immanence. Moreover, a brief synopsis of the dialectic itself is given and the nature of that dialectic analyzed.

Part Two of this thesis is called "The Solution To the Problem", and contains, again, three chapters. The first chapter is primarily concerned with Action, the object of the Blondelian philosophy. The second chapter begins the two-part process of integrating the many factors of the Blondelian solution to the problem of the

relationship between thought and being. This chapter deals with the particular object of the Philosophy of Action, that is, ideogenesis. We shall discover that Blondel is really studying the process of thinking or contemplation, the human action par excellence. As such, then, he studies thinking's syntheses both as they are living and as they are conceptualized. The Third Chapter, under the division of two parts, presents the Blondelian solution to the problem of the relationship between thought and being. This chapter shall presuppose what will have been given in all the preceding chapters. But, even more, it shall add clarification to all that has come before it both in our presentation and in Blondel's.

Before moving into the thesis itself, some qualifying

remarks are needed.¹¹ Any reference to those members of Blondel's tradition which he himself sees fit to use are interpreted only in light of the Philosopher's own criticism and understanding of them. Blondel does not seem to believe that he should be judged according to a norm of fidelity to historical tradition, since he uses his own sources without attempting to remain strictly faithful to their meaning, but, rather, to their spirit.¹² Finally, as can be seen from the title of this thesis, only those writings of Blondel's

11 The works of Blondel in translation are: Maurice BLONDEL, "The Theory and Practice of Action", a translation of the introduction to L'Action (1893) by James Somerville, in Cross Currents, vol. 4, 1954, p. 251-261. Maurice BLONDEL, "The Unity of the Christian Spirit", a translation of Exigences philosophiques du christianisme, ch. 4-5, by George Brantl, in Cross Currents, vol. 3, 1951, p. 1-12. Maurice BLONDEL, The Letter on Apologetics and History and Dogma, a translation of the "Lettre" (1896) and "Histoire et dogme" (1904) by Alexander Dru and I. Trethowan, London, Harvill Press, 1964, 301p. Maurice BLONDEL, "Latent Resources of Augustinianism", a translation of parts of "Les Ressources latentes de la doctrine augustinienne" (in Revue néoscholastique, août, 1930, p. 261-275), in St. Augustine: His Age, Life, and Thought, by Father Leonard, C.M., New York, World Publishing Co., 1957(1945), p. 319-353. In addition to these, in the translation of Jean Lacroix's book (Maurice Blondel: Sa vie, son oeuvre), translated by John C. Guinness, New York, Sheed and Ward, 1968(1963), 158p., there are some selections: Itinéraire philosophique (1927-8), p. 21-22, 34-36, 24; Lettres philosophiques (1961), p. 32-34; L'Action (1893), p. 110-115, 254-258, 467-470; "Principe élémentaire d'une logique de la vie morale" (1903), p. 128-132; L'Action (1937), p. 459-461; La Pensée (vol. 1, 1934), p. 202; L'Etre et les êtres (1935), p. 253-258; La Philosophie et l'esprit chrétien, (vol. 1, 1946), p. 8-12, 30-31.

12 The only exceptions to this is the use of Descartes (Part One, Chapter One, p. 14-30) where some Cartesian doctrine is given in order to show the conversion of the cogito to the Blondelian cogito of the will; and the use of phenomenology and reference to Husserl (Part One, Chapter Two, p. 33-36; 47-51 where the three meanings of "phenomenology" are presented in order to clarify the Blondelian usage of the term. For a brief discussion of Blondel's connection with his tradition, see Part One, Introduction, p. 2-7 of this thesis.

pre-Trilogy period are used.¹³ This later era is Blondel's matured

13 Blondel's published works may be divided into four groups based upon four basic periods of writing: those dealing specifically with the Philosophy of Action, those which are more apologetic in nature, those of the transition period, and, finally, those which fall under his more mature period, that of the Trilogy and L'Esprit chrétien. Along with these, there are also some posthumous publications which originate from the first period of the author's publication and continue until his death; these include both correspondence and autobiographical material. The division into four periods is merely a convenience, however. Since the prime purpose of Blondel's philosophy is to establish the groundwork for a philosophy of religion, the division is quite arbitrary. This specific goal hovers over all of his works, beginning with his doctoral thesis of 1893, L'Action: Essai d'une critique de la vie et d'une science de la pratique (Paris, Presses universitaires de France, re-edition, 1950). The title leads many of his commentators to bestow on his philosophy the appellation, "The Philosophy of Action", much to Blondel's dismay. The work does indeed deal with human action and shows, in general, the philosopher's method of approaching any philosophical problem, but the thesis is only intended to be an introduction to the whole philosophy. "L'Action n'est pas une philosophie entière,... . . . (Elle) ne m'apparaît que comme un chapitre d'une doctrine générale qui aurait à supposer d'abord une Unité congénitale, une immédiation primitive, un réalisme originel, mais unité implicite qui, par le progrès même de la vie et de la pensée, s'analyserait en une trinité réelle de la pensée de l'action et de l'être, avant d'aboutir à l'union finale et explicite..." Letter from Blondel to Paul Archambault, mars 4, 1915, noted by Paul ARCHAMBAULT, "Vers un réalisme intégral. L'Oeuvre philosophique de Maurice Blondel", in Cahiers de la Nouvelle Journée, vol. 12, Paris, Bloud and Gay, 1928, p. 5-218, quotation, foot-note 3, p. 5-6.

Considering, from the above statement, that Blondel thinks of his entire philosophical endeavor as a unity, it seems reasonable to work with the pre-Trilogy eras alone, as long as one remembers that the Trilogy is meant to be an extension and elucidation of the whole philosophy. Moreover, we are primarily concerned with the Blondelian method of approach to the problem of the one and the many, a part of the philosophy that finds a clear exposition in L'Action (1893) and the "Lettre" (1896). Henri BOUILLARD, Blondel et le christianisme, Paris, Editions du seuil, 1961, 288 p. divides Blondel's works into these periods and lists, in an appendix, those works which fall under the four basic eras of Blondel's writing. Ibid., p. 297-282.

thought and an extension of the earlier doctrines given in an attempt to clarify his thought against the massive criticism that pursued him. However, because of its unwieldiness and because the essence of his thought is already presented in the earlier works, the use of this last period of writings seems an unnecessary burden on the project.

PART ONE

THE BLONDELIAN METHOD OF SOLUTION

Maurice Blondel teaches that certain procedural requirements are necessary for a correctly scientific philosophy within the modern-Spinozan tradition. With these basic requirements the philosopher should be capable of offering some sort of methodological approach which would result in a reintegration of thought and being.

In "L'illusion idéaliste" Blondel criticizes the philosophical systems which came before him for being strict idealisms. Spinozan realism, Kantian criticism, and German absolute idealism are all of the same genus; each leading to a division of the real and thought in thought, making spontaneous thought the victim.

...qu'on s'attache à la réalité ou à la nature de l'être, à la conformité du sujet et de l'objet ou à l'incompatibilité de la pensée et de la chose, au problème de la transcendance ou au problème de l'immanence même, il n'est possible de rien affirmer qu'on ne le nie, de rien nier qu'on ne l'affirme, et il n'est pas possible de ne pas affirmer et nier en même temps. C'est pour cela qu'il a suffi dans le titre de cette étude, de nommer "l'illusion idéaliste"... .¹

Nevertheless, he still contends that the modern methods, those having their roots in Spinoza, Kant and the Germans, are the correct methods with, of course, modification and adjustment. Among these acceptable

¹ Maurice BLONDEL, "L'Illusion idéaliste", p. 107.

methods are the Spinozan and Kantian notion of immanence², the Kantian critical approach, and the German idealistic dialectic.

The modern concept of correct philosophical approach is that of the notion of immanence.³ Remember that Blondel has foremost in his mind the establishment of a philosophy of religion. But, this is to be only within the Christian context. And, within that context, the believer is always confronted with the fact that nothing may be Christian unless it is transcendent. This contradiction the Philosopher of Aix would hope to solve, along with the seeming contradiction between the real and thought in thought. He would try to do this by transforming the modern doctrine of immanence into a method of immanence. He finds that the very doctrine of transcendence implies the method of immanence and that the method of immanence, in turn, involves the doctrine of transcendence. For, "...notre idée des vérités ou des exigences transcendantes, réelles ou non,

2 Blondel attributes to Spinoza the major role in this instance; however, he does not deny the influence of Kantian thought on the notion of immanence. Nor does he ignore the German contribution in the area. But, the notion of immanence is Spinoza's most important contribution. "Dans la formation de cette méthode...la part du spinozisme est donc,...plus considérable que celle du kantisme même." Maurice BLONDEL, "Une des sources de la pensée moderne: l'évolution du Spinozisme", in Annales de philosophie chrétienne, tome 128, II, p. 332. Referred to as "Une des sources."

3 As Blondel himself demonstrates, the method of immanence and the doctrine of immanence actually have quite diverse origins and meanings. But until the time when the difference between them is delineated in this thesis, they will together be known as the "notion" of immanence. See Part One, Chapter Three, p. 58-66, this thesis.

reste immanente en tant qu'idée nôtre."⁴ In a more generally applicable sense, Blondel undertakes the philosophical method of immanence as,

sinon à mettre en équation, dans la conscience même, ce que nous paraissions penser et vouloir et faire, avec ce que nous faisons, nous voulons et nous pensons en réalité: de telle sorte que dans les négations factices ou les fins artificiellement voulues se retrouveront encore les affirmations profondes et les besoins incoercibles qu'elles impliquent.⁵

4 Maurice BLONDEL, "Lettre"(1896), p. 39.

5 Idem. Further discussion of immanence is part of this thesis, Part One, Chapter Three, p. 54-91.

From Immanuel Kant Blondel takes the method of criticism.⁶

Both agree that the critical approach is the ideal approach for philosophy. Blondel, however, criticizes Kant for being untrue to his own critical technique. Philosophy, first of all, could not alone be based on the reflexive, critical movement of the human mind because, if carried to the extreme, criticism becomes but another ideology by giving ontological value to one particular area of what we know.⁷ Kant's neglect of the noumenal sphere means

6 There are two points of interest concerning the Kantian-Blondelian relationship: first, there is a question as to whether Blondel even read Kant; secondly, during his intellectual career, Blondel was accused of Neo-Kantianism.

At times Blondel denies having ever read Kant, while at others, he states that he is deeply involved with the author of the three *Critiques*. See Maurice BLONDEL, *Carnets intimes* (1883-1894), Paris, Aubier, 1961-1966, p. 71; Maurice BLONDEL, *Correspondence: Blondel-Valesin* (1899-1912), vol. II, Paris, Aubier, 1957, p. 183; Maurice BLONDEL, *Lettres philosophiques*, p. 95-99. John J. MC NEILL, (*The Blondelian Synthesis*, p. 6-7) notes that whether Blondel actually read Kant and the German Idealists or not is not the key to his knowledge of their thought. More important is "the special relationships which bound him to his professor and director, Emile Boutroux and to his classmate, friend and collaborator, the historian of German philosophical thought, Victor Delbos." Consequently, if we are to be just to Blondel, we must not judge him according to his fidelity to history, but according to his own use of the spirit of that historical tradition that stems from Spinoza. Blondel has told his readers precisely this in "Une des sources", I, p. 261.

Concerning the charge of Neo-Kantianism, Blondel retorted that his critics did not realize his real purpose, that is, to use the system to go beyond it. See Maurice BLONDEL, *Lettres philosophiques*, p. 111. Again, in a letter to Albert Bazailles he writes: "Je ne reste pas en deçà de l'idéalisme criticiste; je l'accepte afin d'aller au-delà..." *Ibid.*, p. 40. See also Maurice BLONDEL, *Carnets intimes*, p. 223-4.

7 Kant irretrievably isolated practical and speculative knowledge from each other by putting artificial categories on the realm of being. See Maurice BLONDEL, "Une des sources," II, p. 357.

that he ignores his own method. And, this is Blondel's second objection to criticism; since the noumenal "...reste immanente en tant qu'idée nōtre...,"⁸ it is known, whether it is real or not. If Kantian criticism is a legitimate method, it must then be capable of somehow dealing with all areas of knowledge. According to the Philosopher of Aix, "...pour rester consēquente à son esprit critique elle devait simplement dēcrire tout le phēnomēne de la pensēe et de l'action dans la conscience... ."⁹

The relationship between Blondel and the German school of absolute idealism is a complex one. Their work most certainly influenced Blondel's philosophy both methodologically and doctrinally. Furthermore, because of the dubious distinction between method and doctrine in any philosophy, it is difficult to consider the two aspects separately. Consequently, it would not be completely accurate to say that the Idealistic dialectic has only a methodological influence on Blondelian thought. The Philosopher of Aix's logic of action is most certainly a doctrinal dialectical logic, as well as a methodological contribution to the history of philosophical thought. Therefore, both factors are understandably included in our discussion of the Blondelian method for a solution of the seeming contradiction between the real and thought in thought. On the other side of the coin, our consideration of the solution, which is more a look at the

8 Maurice BLONDEL, "Lettre"(1896), p. 39.

9 Ibid., p. 62.

doctrinal contributions of Blondel, will necessarily presuppose an understanding of the Blondelian dialectic as a method as well.¹⁰

Specifically, Fichte influenced Blondel's notion of the ego and his theory of the absolute; Schelling brought to Blondel his theories of evil, of the philosophy of religion, and of art; Hegel contributed his thoughts on the moral problem, the problem of the absolute, and on the philosophy of religion. Together, however, their greatest influence is in the area of the dialectic. Each has his own dialectic strongly tempered by his ideas in the other areas.¹¹

10 The same statement of relation between doctrine and method could be rightly made about both Spinozan immanence and Kantian criticism. Method always implies doctrine in some way; doctrine is always somehow a result of methodology. Descartes stands out as an example; close readers of the Father of Modern Philosophy attest to this fact again and again. However, in the instance of this particular thesis, there is good reason for the division set forth in Parts One and Two: "The Method of Solution" and "The Solution To the Problem". Blondel himself claims that his notion of immanence was not doctrinal, but methodological. (See Part One, Chapter Three, this thesis.) Moreover, his solution to the problem of the relationship between thought and the real in thought is worked out through an immanent, critical, retrospective dialectic. The entire procedure depends upon his notion (i.e., method) of immanence. Therefore, to remain faithful to Blondel one must take cognizance of his understanding of immanence. Furthermore, from the viewpoint of methodology in this thesis, a division had to be made somewhere for clarity of approach. Considering Blondel's own distinction between the method and the doctrine of immanence, the reasonable division in our present discussion is between method and solution, which presupposes doctrinal content.

11 Anyone interested in greater elaboration on these points should see: John J. MC NEILL, The Blondelian Synthesis, p. 106-202 (Fichte); p. 237-264 (Schelling); p. 237-264 (Hegel). For a thorough discussion of the relationship between Blondel and Hegel see, Peter HENRICI, Hegel und Blondel. Eine Untersuchung über Form.u. Sinnd. Dialektik in der "Phänomenologie des Geistes" und der ersten "Action", Pullachen philosophische Forschungen, III, Pullach bei München, Verlag Berchanskolleg, 1958, 206 p.

Blondel himself views transcendental idealism as an attempt toward a **reconciliation** between criticism and Spinozan realism. German idealism presents an extensive elaboration of becoming; and, this is its most important contribution, albeit, a doctrinal one. Blondel sees this solution to be insufficient, and his criticism of the German solution is, in fact, doctrinal.¹² With this doctrinal stand the German dialectical method is **integrally** related. The **method** finds its source in doctrine; and, in turn, the doctrine of absolute idealism can only be elaborated by way of dialectical method. The exact same thing may prove to be true in the Blondelian philosophy. But, it is the actual movement of that Blondelian dialectic which is of concern in Part One. The method of dialectic espoused by the Philosopher of Aix does move through a system of dualities synthesized again and again at higher levels. In this he most certainly respects the spirit of the dialectical method in German philosophy.

There are, then, two major points that must be kept in mind throughout the following study. First of all, despite the strong ties Blondel feels with his philosophical tradition, he fully intends

12 Artificial conditions placed on the situation by the Germans actually make the within (dedans) subordinated to the without (dehors). The duality is but transferred into the heart of the subject. See Maurice BLONDEL, "L'Illusion idéaliste", p. 106. According to Blondel, the two terms of thought and being have to be reintegrated by way of the spontaneity of living thought: "ce sera de les subordonner systématiquement ensemble à une doctrine hétérogène à l'un et à l'autre, à une doctrine qui les empêchera d'apparaître incompatibles, à une doctrine qui les montrera intelligiblement et nécessairement liés en droit comme ils le sont en fait." Ibid., p. 98.

to carry his own thought well beyond realism, criticism, and absolute idealism. Consequently, he cannot be judged according to his understanding of that tradition because, although his thought is admittedly in the spirit of Spinozism, his philosophy itself did surpass that inheritance. The most striking evidence for this statement is the school that follows from him, especially in the realm of the Philosophy of Religion.¹³ Secondly, Blondel's method does indeed have a direct connection with his doctrine. The method cannot be totally severed from the doctrine without doing violence to Blondelian thought. But, for the sake of the Philosopher's own statements on the key method of immanence and for the reason of clarity, the major emphasis in Part One will be on method with reference to doctrine only where absolutely necessary.

¹³ There are many examples. In the realm of a Catholic Philosophy of Religion, see any works by Henry DUMERY (who also has many other influences on his thought) and Henri BOUILLARD.

PART ONE

CHAPTER ONE

A PRELIMINARY TO THE METHOD

Blondel entitles his major philosophical work L'Action: Essai d'une critique de la vie et d'une science de la pratique.¹

He proposes, then, to present a scientifically philosophical solution to the problem of human action, not a spontaneous, a-rational one. Blondel demands of any science, and especially of philosophy, certain basic characteristics. Among those is an attitude of doubt. The first project of this thesis is, therefore, to delineate these essential characteristics that make a science a science, and to consider in depth the Philosopher's understanding and use of doubt. Keep in mind, though, that the proof of philosophy as a science must await realization in the course of our whole study.²

1 Maurice BLONDEL, L'Action: Essai d'une critique de la vie et d'une science de la pratique, Paris, Presses universitaires de France, 1950(1893), 495p. This is the doctoral thesis that made Blondel famous. It is distinguished from two later works of the Trilogy: L'Action: I. Le problème des causes secondes et le pur agir (1936), L'Action: II. L'Action humaine et les conditions de son aboutissement (1937), Paris, Presses universitaires de France, 1949; 1963, 346p.; 554p. It is by way of the problem of human action and destiny that Blondel approaches his project. See L'Action(1893), Introduction, p. vii-xxv.

2 The question of whether Blondel's philosophy is really a science according to his own criteria is settled during the course of our inquiry into the method itself. See L'Action(1893), p. 45-102 for a discussion of the question in depth: Is a science of the subject possible? Also see Part One, Chapter Three, p. 68-70, this thesis.

Ch. I, A. THE REQUIREMENTS FOR A SCIENCE

It is in André Lalande's Vocabulaire³ that Blondel first pointedly presents **those** three basic notes of a science, although they can be deciphered in his earlier works. These factors which make a science what it is are seen to be specification, systematic organization, and rigor of proof. Each science fulfills these notes in its own way. Their own unique way of following these characteristics is what makes the many sciences different.

The first characteristic is "Spécification (indépendamment de toute considération ontologique) par le seul élément formel, c'est-à-dire par un point de vue, par une méthode, de la matière, de telle

3 André LALANDE, editor, Vocabulaire technique et critique de la philosophie, Paris, Presses universitaires de France, 1968 (1932), tenth edition, 1323 p. Blondel's contributions are found under abnégation, absolu, acquis, acte, action, admiration, alogique, altruisme, âme, amour, analogue, anthropomorphisme, apparence, appétit, libre arbitre, art, ascétisme, assentiment, assimilation, béatitude, bien, bonheur, cartésianisme, casuistique, certitude, conation, concept, concrétion, connaissance, conscience, contraire, contradictoire, conviction, corps, criticisme, croyance, déduction, définition, Dieu, dogmatisme, durée, fidéisme, foi, grâce, idée, identique, immanence, immanent, individualité, induction, intellectualisme, intuition, liberté, logique, loi, matérialisme, matière, miracle, moi, mouvement, mystère, mysticisme, mystique, néant, phénomène, philosophie, pragmatisme, pragmatique, prospection, quantification du prédicat, raison, réflexion, relatif, religion, responsabilité, sacrifice, sagesse, science, sentiment, spiritualisme, subjectif, subjectivisme, sublime, sujet, superstition, surnaturel, théologie, tradition, traditionalisme, transnaturel, un, union, universel, valeur, verbal, vérifier, vertige mental, vie, vinculum substantiale, violence, vision, volonté, vrai.

ou telle science... ."4 Thus, a particular science differs from all the others because of the method it must use in order to study its proper aspect of the totality. Each looks at a group of things in a different manner. Secondly, Blondel states that science is a systematic body of "idées ou des faits dont l'être scientifique est constitué par leurs relations sériées."<5 Initial symbols are organized into language and adapted to the phenomena in order that the phenomena can be anticipated and controlled. The sciences differ in the manner in which they symbolize and control the object of their study. Thirdly, and this is most important to philosophy, scientific knowledge has to show rigorous proof because "'le Savant est un douteur' qui met en quarantaine tout ce qui n'est pas démontré vrai."<6 The various sciences all attempt tight proof within the realm of their own methodologies.

In the positive sciences, nature is studied by the empirical sciences and mathematical entities and objects of calculus are investigated by the exact sciences. Both proceed by way of analysis, synthesis, and hypothesis; however,

4 Ibid., p. 956. The remainder of the statement goes like this: "car les sciences diffèrent, non par la diversité des objets, mais par la façon d' envisager, sous un aspect déterminé, quelque chose du problème total: hétérogénéité et solidarité croissantes;... ." Idem.

5 Idem.

6 Idem.

L'une et l'autre usent de l'analyse et de la **synthèse**; pour la première, (exacte) l'analyse, pour la seconde (**empirique**), la synthèse est hypothétique. Pour la première, la synthèse si l'on peut dire est analytique a priori; pour la seconde, l'analyse est synthétique a posteriori; c'est-à-dire que l'une s'édifie avec les éléments d'une analyse idéale, et que l'autre n'atteint dans ses décompositions que des synthèses réelles.⁷

The exact sciences (calculus) have for their goal the reduction of everything to a homogeneity in a universal system, while the goal of the natural or empirical sciences is the ordering of discontinuous forms according to some rule which does not endanger knowledge of individual phenomena. The exact sciences attempt to analyze into simple elements and to then synthesize them a priori; and empirical science takes the initial chaos of brute experience, analyzes it into distinct unities, restricting its vision to the individual apart. Further, natural science, in ordering these discontinuous forms by some rule, gives artificial continuity. The exact sciences make use of symbolization of the ideal; the empirical sciences begin with facts of nature as they are real and individual. Observation, experimentation, and induction are used by natural scientists, while

7 Maurice BLONDEL, L'Action(1893), p. 53.

deduction is the forte of the exact scientist.⁸

Unlike the positive sciences Blondel believes that philosophy should be concerned with the totality. His own philosophy is presented as a total explanation of life and being in the context of meaning and values.

Dès son point de départ la recherche spécifiquement philosophique doit se distinguer de l'expérience commune et des sciences proprement dites qui s'attachent à des objets: car ce n'est pas à un objet particulier que la philosophie commence, mais à une façon totale de considérer le problème de la destinée et la question de l'être; et la difficulté permanente qu'elle doit surmonter, c'est précisément de dérouler ses investigations sans l'appui d'entités imaginées ontologiquement... .⁹

However, this did not mean that the discipline is capable of sufficing

8 On Blondel's understanding of the sciences see L'Action (1893), p. 45-78. There Blondel notes that the positive sciences seem to claim a total solution. He disputes this and attempts to show that both find the basis for their individual and cooperative success in action. "Pour la première, l'action est une intégration dont un calcul parfait donnerait la formule rigoureuse; pour la seconde, l'action est un fait sui generis, dont aucune approximation mathématique ne révèle l'originalité et qui, comme toute autre synthèse, ne peut être connu que par l'observation directe." Ibid., p. 53. Moreover, "Par leurs progrès parallèles et solidaires, les sciences exactes et les sciences expérimentales semblent en quelque sorte étendre la nature par les deux bouts à la fois; et en se rejoignant dans le bonheur commun de leurs mutuelles applications, elles paraissent clore le cercle où la vie de l'homme se déploie naturellement." Ibid., p. 49. So, even from a positivist viewpoint, there is a need for a science of action: "Vainement donc espérerait-on résoudre, à un point de vue positiviste, le problème de la vie:..., il y a la matière d'une science véritable, d'une science qui peut-être enfin se suffira." Ibid., p. 86.

9 Maurice BLONDEL, "Le Point de départ de la recherche philosophique", in Annales de philosophie chrétienne, I, janvier, 1906, p. 337-361; II, juin, 1906, p. 225-250. This article will be referred to as "Le Point de départ", I or II in the remainder of this thesis. The above reference is Ibid., II, p. 248.

for life and being.

La philosophie a pour fonction de déterminer le contenu de la pensée et les postulats de l'action, sans jamais fournir l'être dont elle étudie la notion, contenir la vie dont elle analyse les exigences, suffire à ce dont elle fixe les conditions suffisantes, réaliser cela même dont elle doit dire qu'elle le conçoit nécessairement comme réel.¹⁰

In the form of a retrospective analysis and a prospective synthesis (part two), with the immanent method, and by means of a phenomenological investigation, the Philosopher of Aix expects to produce that complete explanation. It would be premature at this time to say more than this about philosophy as a science fulfilling the first two characteristics.¹¹ After all, that is the purpose of the entirety of Part One. Something can, however, be said about demanding rigorous proof. The fact is, Blondel actually begins with a doubt, even to the point of questioning the very existence of the problem at stake in his bid for rigor.

Ch. I, B. THE ATTITUDE OF DOUBT

Almost propedeutic to his whole method of studying human action is the psychological attitude of doubt. This attitude demands that no ontological or doctrinal statements be either made or accepted as true until which point they naturally flow from the investigation.

¹⁰ Maurice BLONDEL, "Lettre"(1896), p. 66.

¹¹ It might be noted here, however, that Blondel partially models his philosophical science after natural sciences in that both put primary importance on experience and experimentation. See, Part Two, Introduction, p. 92-104 ; and Part Two, Chapter Three, p. 185-188, this thesis.

This is the only conceivable way Blondel thinks that he can proceed with some kind of certainty in his endeavor. This section of Chapter One has a two-fold purpose: the general rules for the doubt, and consequently, for the method itself, are considered; and, the nature of that doubt is discussed. A comparison is made between Blondel and Descartes in order to show the transformation of the Cartesian doubt by the Master of Aix into si non fallor, sum.

THE RULES FOR BLONDELIAN DOUBT

L'Action(1893) begins with a doubt so as to eliminate all unsatisfactory answers, leaving, in residue, the necessary solution. "...dès lors la vérité s'impose, elle est démontrée."¹² Blondel immediately severs his notion of doubt from that of Descartes: "Qu'on ne prétende point, comme Descartes par un artifice qui sent l'école tout sérieux qu'il est, extraire du doute et de l'illusion la réalité même de l'être."¹³ Clearly, Blondel does not intend his doubt to have any metaphysical implications; he is not giving real being. However, like Descartes, Blondel too has what could be called four rules for a philosophical method. But, it would undoubtedly be unfair to both thinkers to believe that their rules correspond to each other in any parallel way. Yet, one is able to say that the spirit of Modern Philosophy, that claims its founder as Descartes,

12 Maurice BLONDEL, L'Action(1893), Introduction, p. xviii.

13 Ibid., p. xxi.

penetrates Blondelianism as it does **tangibly penetrate** the majority of modern and contemporary thought.

The spirit of Modern Philosophy in Blondel is detected in his search for certainty, validity, and clarity by way of the doubt.

The Master of Aix states that his scientific method:

(Elles) excluent toutes les fausses explications d'un fait, toutes les coïncidences fortuites, toutes les circonstances accessoires pour mettre l'esprit en face des conditions nécessaires et suffisantes, et le contraindre à affirmer la loi.¹⁴

Moreover, in order for philosophy to be scientific it must **determine** "... pour tous une solution unique à l'exclusion de toute autre."¹⁵ Whether philosophy, in fact, is capable of supplying this unique solution is to be answered in the progress of L'Action(1893). Thus, with Blondel, one must ask in the following project whether,

si dans tous les égarements de l'esprit et du coeur il subsiste, malgré tout, le germe d'une science et le principe d'une intime révélation, telle que rien **n'apparaîtra** d'arbitraire ou d'inexpliqué dans la destinée de chacun, telle qu'il y aura consentement définitif de l'homme à son sort quel qu'il soit, telle enfin que cette **clarté** révélatrice des consciences ne changera pas dans leur fond ceux mêmes qu'elle accablera comme par surprise.¹⁶

Therefore, the science of action has to present a singularly unique solution and must reveal this solution with clarity and precision by means of a proper method.

14 Ibid., p. xviii.

15 Ibid., p. xvii.

16 Ibid., p. xx.

In order for the philosopher to consider all of the totality, he must proceed by way of analysis and synthesis: "L'expérimentation morale, comme toute autre, doit être une **méthode d'analyse et de synthèse.**"¹⁷ Blondel presents human action for philosophical analysis. In the process of that analysis he touches on all aspects of human action: the metaphysical, the moral, the aesthetic, the scientific, the religious, and the purely practical. The purpose of the analytic stage is to put "...en évidence une volonté supérieure qui n'est qu'en leur résistant."¹⁸ This will resists the tyranny of the appetites. The superior will or the primordial will is beyond mind and will, in the original dynamism of the being who acts. The synthesis of the Blondelian philosophy is action itself:

L'action doit constituer la synthèse de la spontanéité et de la réflexion, de la réalité et de la connaissance, de la personne morale et de l'ordre universel, de la vie intérieure de l'esprit et des sources supérieures où elle s'alimente.¹⁹

A fuller understanding of Blondelian analysis and synthesis must await further discussion in this thesis, especially the chapters on the dialectic of the two wills and on the meaning of action.²⁰ At this time, however, it would be well to note that Blondelian

17 Ibid., p. xiv.

18 Idem.

19 Maurice BLONDEL, "Action", in Vocabulaire, p. 21.

20 See Part One, Chapter Three, p. 54-91 and Part Two, Chapters One and Three, p. 105-117; 150-191, this thesis.

analysis and synthesis are of a much more complex nature than that, say, of Descartes. This is due primarily to the object of philosophical inquiry, that is, action. Blondel intends to discover and make understandable the relationship between the primordial will and the willed-will (the precise and determinate act of the will) by way of an intricate, critical dialectic. This investigation must entail completeness if it is to be of any value: "Mais qu'on prenne garde; rien de plus périlleux et de moins scientifique que de se gouverner, dans la pratique, par des idées incomplètes."²¹ Because action is qualitative more than quantitative, Blondel's methodological processes have to account for both quantity and quality in order to offer that completeness. Blondel notes this difference between his own notion of completeness and that of Descartes in a criticism of Descartes' Fourth Rule of the mind in Lalande's Vocabulaire:

Dans la quatrième règle de sa méthode, Descartes, comme il le fait encore plus explicitement dans les Regulae, nous prescrit les dénombrements et les exercices qui rendent la pensée de plus en plus agile, au point que ce qui était d'abord successif et discursif, peut finalement être embrassé tout d'une vue, simplici mentis intuitu. C'est au point de vue de la pensée savante et, si l'on peut dire, quantitative, qu'il parle ainsi. Mais dans l'ordre qualitatif, la compétence acquise du "connaisseur" n'est-elle pas une intuition laborieuse-ment et lentement obtenue?²²

Action cannot be reduced to the simplicity of a quantitative mental

21 Maurice BLONDEL, L'Action(1893), p. xvi.

22 Maurice BLONDEL, "Intuition", In Vocabulaire, p. 543.

intuition without doing violence to its qualitative nature.²³

THE EXISTENCE AND STATE OF THE PROBLEM OF HUMAN DESTINY

True to his demand, Blondel begins L'Action(1893) with questioning the very existence of a problem of action. In the first part of his thesis, the Philosopher of Aix shows that both the practical and the speculative dilettante have failed in their attempt to deny the problem of human action.²⁴ The more they deny the problem, the more it forces itself upon them: "Ils savent qu'il y a un problème, et ils ne veulent pas le savoir. Une ignorance délibérée n'est plus une ignorance."²⁵

Blondel's critique of dilettantism involves his theory of the "two wills".²⁶ The dilettante is unable to rid himself of the problem of human action because of an intellectual schizophrenia, that is, a division in the will. In willing to experience all, he refuses to experience sincerity and his will chooses, in reality, not to experience at all. Indeed, the dilettante takes a position; none can be neutral: he wills his own existence to the negation of all else.

23 See Part Two, Chapter One, p. 111-16 , this thesis.

24 See Maurice BLONDEL, L'Action(1893), p. 1-22.

25 Ibid., p. 13.

26 A thorough examination of the dialectic of the two wills has to await further development in this thesis. See especially Part One, Chapter Three, p. 67-78; and Part Two, Chapter Two, p. 123-138, this thesis.

Man's need for self-realization has its source, according to Blondel, in the primordial will. In following this need to its source, one discovers that the subjectivity of the primordial will would be for naught without some objective world. In effect the dilettante has constructed a counter-will, using the primordial will as source. Consequently, the counter-will perverts the first will, which in turn, rises up against the counter-will in an effort to retain its integrity. Thus, reprisal comes from the depth of man himself.

La condamnation et le châtement de cet état voulu, ce doit être ce même état, clairement connu; car dans la lumière de la pleine connaissance, les contradictions volontaires de l'action deviennent les contradictions nécessaires de la souffrance; et par une revanche inévitable du volontaire contre le voulu, c'est du fond même de la sincérité et du primitif amour de l'être pour l'être que devront surgir les représailles de la sanction.²⁷

The next step, once the existence of the problem has been established, is to question the nature of the solution. Pessimism presents a negative solution by willing the destruction of the object and the subject as object.²⁸ The idea of nothingness results from his notion of being as it is encountered and willed. From this idea the

27 Maurice BLONDEL, L'Action(1893), p. 20-21.

28 "La vie sera aussi bonne qu'elle peut l'être, quand affranchi de toute chimérique prétention sur elle, et persuadé qu'elle ne fait jamais banqueroute parce qu'elle ne nous prend ni ne donne rien, on l'envisagera paisiblement telle qu'elle est: c'est la brutale réalité, c'est aussi la vraie délivrance; il n'y a rien dans nos actes, il n'y rien au delà: néant." Ibid., p. 25.

pessimist constructs a symbolic representation of nothingness, negating his original notion of being. This process is not merely simple idea formation; it involves an artificial, voluntary conceptual duality. The natural spontaneity of the primordial will is curbed in an attempt to gain a will-not-to-be. This total death of the will, however, only is achievable in death.

Blondel's denial of pessimism rests on a psychological fault in the pessimists' reply to the problem of action.

Du phénomène il argue contre l'être, alors qu'il ne sent l'insuffisance du phénomène que s'il est pénétré d'abord de la grandeur de l'être: il l'affirme avant de le nier et pour le nier. C'est dans cette inconséquence que vont se découvrir les contradictions de sa volonté.²⁹

Thus, the pessimist equates his idea of nothingness with that of which he is ignorant. He demands something more from the phenomena than it can give as phenomena. The inherent contradiction of his position is that while the pessimist wills nothingness, he actually wills something more than the phenomena. He reasons from the relativity of appearance that nothingness is absolute, and then to the being of non-being. In fact, he presupposes that the will-to-be has produced appearance, an illusion which he is able to destroy by a will-not-to-be. But, even here, he is not able to completely rid himself of a will. There is always a will: "...il subsiste toujours ce terme commun, vouloir, qui domine de son inévitable présence toutes les

29 Ibid., p. 33.

formes de l'existence ou de l'anéantissement... ."30

Has this last will been eliminated? With the equation of the will and its object, if one uses the insufficiency of appearance as the measure, the will is deceived by the appearances, and becomes nothing: "Si fallor, non sum."³¹ The last will has been diminished. On the other hand, it is not eliminated if the measure of being of the will is that mystery which lies behind and beyond appearance. The will, then, transcends the entire order of appearance; the will is: "Si non fallor, sum."³²

Blondel notes that being and nothingness are used as ambiguous, equivocal terms in pessimism. "Being" refers to both the insufficient phenomena (nothingness) and the will which produces the illusion of being(nothingness), gaining its very being in the process. There still remains an object before a subject. If one is negated, then the other receives its being in the negation. It is a constant juggle between the subject and the object, the object and the subject. The pessimist is unable to eliminate both at the same time. Representation or real thought of nothingness is impossible:

30 Ibid., p. 37.

31 Idem.

32 Idem.

...en cherchant, ici comme partout, le secret des nécessités intellectuelles dans les mouvements les plus intimes et les plus inévitables de la volonté, si on ne conçoit pas le néant, c'est qu'on ne le veut pas et qu'on ne peut pas le vouloir.³³

The solution to the problem must be positive.

THE TRANSPOSITION OF THE CARTESIAN COGITO

What occurs in the progress of Part One of Blondel's doctoral thesis is a movement from the initial doubt to an undoubtable formula: Si non fallor, sum. There is a definite similarity between this movement and the Cartesian movement from doubt to Cogito ergo, sum. In order to see the place of the Blondelian cogito of the will, as one might call it, some slight comparison between Blondel and Descartes will be made.

The formula, I think, therefore I am, expresses the single existential judgment immune to the radical doubt in the Cartesian system.³⁴ Moreover, declares Descartes, that formula is not based upon a syllogistic inference, but is actually a simple intuition of

33 Maurice BLONDEL, "Néant", in Vocabulaire, p. 675.

34 "Since this truth, I think, therefore I am was so firm and assured that all the most extravagant suppositions of the skeptics were unable to shake it, I judged that I could safely accept it as the first principle of the philosophy I was seeking." René DESCARTES, Discourse on the Method of Rightly Conducting the Reason and Seeking Truth in the Field of Science, IV, translated by Laurence J. Lafleur, New York, Bobbs-Merrill Co. Inc., "The Library of Liberal Arts", 1964, p. 24.

the human mind.³⁵ By intuition, the Father of Modern Philosophy means "the conception of the pure and attentive mind which is so simple and distinct that we can have no further doubt as to what we understand...which arises from the light of reason alone."³⁶

The result of Blondel's analysis of the problem of human action is Si non fallor, sum. Behind the destructive effort of pessimism a common term is found, a "to-will" which holds out against doubt much as the Cartesian "to-think" did in the Founder's system. Because pessimism confuses being and nothingness, this does not mean, according to Blondel, that the pessimist does in fact negate the primordial will. The primordial will remains in tact.

The discovery of this root will is of great consequence; it indicates definitely that something is. Flowing from the affirmation of the existence of the will, there is a realization of the reality of its object. One must will, one, then, must will something. "Dans mes actes, dans le monde, en moi, hors de moi, je ne sais où ni quoi, il y a quelque chose."³⁷ With the question of the existence and state of the problem of human action set aside, the path is opened for the progressive analysis of action; the phenomenon of action

35 See René DESCARTES, The Philosophical Works of Descartes, Replies to Objections, II, IV, translated by Elizabeth S. Haldane and G.R.T.Ross, New York, Dover, 1955, p. 38-43; 114-115.

36 René DESCARTES, Rules for the Direction of the Mind, III, Lafleur translation, p. 154.

37 Maurice BLONDEL, L'Action(1893), p. 41.

must be investigated.

There are, however, two **discernible** differences of major proportion between cogito ergo, sum and si non fallor, sum. Although these differences are inextricably linked, it is expedient to investigate them separately. They are so important that Blondel can not simply carry over the Cartesian doubt into a doubt resulting in the existence of the will, but he actually has to transform it with an adapted Kantian transcendental analysis and idealist dialectic.

The first transformation has to do with Descartes' affirmation of the simplicity of the intuition, which has already been alluded to above. Both the analytic and synthetic stages of the Blondelian method are far more complex than Descartes contemplated them to be. The final intuition after which the Philosopher of Aix searches is the primordial will and all that flows from it. The relationship between the primordial will and the will-willed must be uncovered. The discovery and understanding of the relationship is not the disclosure of simple, autonomous factors, but, rather, of an intricate dialectic. There is not a single simple intuition because,

... dans l'ordre qualitatif, la compétence acquise du "connaisseur" n'est-elle pas une intuition laborieusement et lentement obtenue? L'intuition ne précède ou n'exclut donc pas toujours la réflexion discursive et la pensée analytique; elle peut aussi la suivre et la récompenser.³⁸

Obviously, then, si non fallor, sum is not conceived of as a simple

38 Maurice BLONDEL, "Intuition", in Vocabulaire, p. 543.

intuition, or, in fact, as the statement of the first principle of Blondel's philosophy. It is clear that si non fallor, sum could never claim that position, as presented here. The simple analysis Blondel uses to remove the two preliminary questions must be taken as both an entry into the phenomenology of action and the first step in the long and complicated dialectic of the will-willing and the will-willed. The reason for this difference with Descartes rests in Blondel's meaning of reason.

Descartes' notion of correct reasoning results from his own discoveries in the area of analytic geometry. He hoped to apply this successful method "just as usefully to the difficulties of the other sciences as I had already to those of geometry or algebra."³⁹ It is his basic assumption that this method of reasoning is the only one proper to the thinking man, even in the philosophical realm.⁴⁰ The very nature of his method demands a simple, distinct intuition arising from reason alone. In Lalande's Vocabulaire Blondel defines reason from two points of view.

39 René DESCARTES, Discourse on Method, II, p. 17, Lafleur translation.

40 René DESCARTES, Rules, VI, p. 164-8, Lafleur translation.

Raison, selon qu'on envisage surtout, soit le caractère analytique de ses opérations, soit la clarté certaine de ses assertions, s'applique tantôt à la faculté essentiellement discursive, qui, capable d'organiser des expériences ou des preuves, établit ses démonstrations; -tantôt à la faculté d'affirmer l'absolu, de connaître et pour ainsi dire de capter l'être tel qu'il est, et de fournir les principes, d'atteindre les vérités nécessaires et suffisantes à la pensée et à la vie. Dans le premier sens, la raison est un simple instrument, pour servir, aider ou mimer l'oeuvre d'une faculté plus haute d'intuition; dans le second sens, elle prend le premier rôle; elle prétend, plus ou moins délibérément, attribuer une valeur réaliste au travail discursif de l'esprit, et restituer le réel à l'aide des fragments artificiels de l'analyse.⁴¹

The first of these meanings is the one Blondel uses in his reflexive analysis of the phenomenon of action. The nature of the phenomenon is not intended to affirm the absolute or capture being, as his criticism of Descartes' philosophy shows. Blondel merely puts aside any ontological considerations and attempts to discover the inter-relations between the will-willing and the will-willed, thought and action, and so on.

The second difference between Descartes and Blondel bears this out. In his discussion on the latent resources of Augustinianism, Blondel notes that many historians claim Descartes as a follower of Augustinian doubt. Because of Descartes' association with the Augustinian Oratorians, it is a reasonable assumption that their knowledge of the Augustinian si enim fallor sum affected the Cartesian cogito. However, Blondel states a drastic difference:

41 Maurice BLONDEL, "Raison", in Vocabulaire, p. 878.

The Cartesian cogito, taken in its prematurely ontological sense, in its artificial isolation and false realism, soon turns turtle and plunges us into the sea of modern Idealist speculation. Nothing of the sort, fortunately, is to be found in St. Augustine, who admits a datum of experience but is exceedingly careful not to extract from it an entity on which the whole edifice of reality could not possibly be erected with impunity.⁴²

So Blondel does not even attempt to give the somethings which the phenomenon of action researches an ontological status. He merely accepts the order of appearances as hypothesis to discover how far his analysis can carry him in that order. It is not to be a doctrinal position, but a sort of experiment.

Comment on essai de définir par la science seule et de restreindre l'action dans l'ordre naturel.
 ...Peut-être l'édifice sera-t-il suffisant; peut-être que, sans sortir du phénomène et en le considérant comme tout ce qui est, j'aurai de mon action une idée complète et du problème de la vie une solution satisfaisante.⁴³

SUMMARY

The points discussed in this chapter have centered around philosophy as a science. Blondel presents three essential characteristics that all sciences must fulfill in order to be scientific: specification, systematic organization, and rigorous proof. These three notes not only distinguish the sciences from other disciplines, but

⁴² Maurice BLONDEL, "Latent Resources of Augustinianism", in St. Augustine: His Age, Life, and Thought, translated by Fr. Leonard, C.M., New York, World Publishing, 1957(1930), p. 332.

⁴³ Maurice BLONDEL, L'Action(1893), p. 43-44.

also, in their particular manifestations, differentiate the various sciences from each other. This is due primarily to the differences in their proper object. The positive sciences study either calculus or nature, while, according to Blondel, philosophy studies all of the totality, and thus, searches after a total explanation. As a result, the methods and modes of systematic organization must differ in accordance with the nature of their specific objects. Moreover, on the one hand, the third characteristic, the necessity of rigorous proof, is only satisfied within the realm of that science's methodology and systematization of facts and ideas. On the other hand, the attitude of doubt which supposedly assures certain, valid, clear, rigorous proof, in turn, effects certain demands on the method. In the Philosophy of Action, for example, a clear and valid solution giving certainty must move by way of an intricate analytic and synthetic process without any ontological considerations.

It has been shown that Blondel enters into his philosophical method by doubting both the existence and the state of the problem of human destiny. The immediate result of this preliminary doubt is a cogito of the will, si non fallor, sum. The Blondelian cogito, like the cogito of Descartes, is a formula immune to further doubt. However, its nature greatly differs from Descartes' Cogito ergo sum on two major points. First, the Blondelian cogito does not represent the single simple mental intuition of his thought, but merely the first step into the phenomenology of action. Because action is not quantitative, but, rather, qualitative, the first affirmation

of the will by way of the Blondelian cogito is not sufficient to settle the question. Blondel's final intuition has to be, as he says, "**laboriously** obtained," through an analysis of the relationship between the will-willing and the will-willed. Secondly. Blondel, by no means, intended to make an ontological statement, as his implicit criticism of Descartes in "Latent Resources of Augustinianism" has indicated. Even the "somethings" which are willed have no ontological status at this stage in L'Action(1893). And, in this a-ontological way, Blondel intends to proceed through his critical, retrospective, phenomenological analysis. Both of these differences between the originator of the modern cogito and Blondel rest on their individual meanings of reason.

So, it is with these requirements for a scientific philosophy that Blondel moves into his method proper. So long as these three notes are followed, philosophy will be the science it must be. And, so long as the attitude of doubt remains in the forefront, and one resists the temptation to give ontological value to any aspect, the Blondelian method should be able to proceed in the way that the Philosopher of Aix intends.

PART ONE

CHAPTER TWO

ON THE QUESTION OF METHOD (I): THE BLONDELIAN PHENOMENOLOGY

In Chapter One, the demands on philosophy as a science were given. In order to fulfill the requirement for rigor of proof, Blondel **chooses the way of doubt**. That very doubt results in the absolute affirmation of the existence of a will. And, because a will must will something, there follows from Blondel's cogito of the will the second affirmation that something is.

This second affirmation opens great vistas to Blondel. He must now investigate the relationship between these somethings and human action. To say anything ontological about these somethings would be to tread on dangerous ground, if Blondel is to be true to his ideal of philosophy as a science. Therefore, he must discover a way to proceed in his investigation of the relationship between the will and those things willed without crossing the threshold between what he calls "Le phénomène de l'action" and the ontological realm that he cannot prematurely accept. Blondel, then, undertakes an investigation in the order of phenomena, "Car dans l'ordre des phénomènes et dans les sciences...la distinction ontologique de l'être et du connaître n'a point de sens."¹ Although he **chooses to**

¹ Maurice BLONDEL, L'Action(1893), p. 42.

proceed at this stage by way of a "phenomenology", Blondel does not make a doctrinal statement in his own mind; he simply wishes to discover how far he can proceed within that realm in solving his dilemma. "Peut-être l'édifice sera-t-il suffisant; peut-être que, sans sortir du phénomène et en le considérant comme tout ce qui est, j'aurai de mon action une idée complète et du problème de la vie une solution satisfaisante."² Necessarily, at this point, then, our own investigation will be of the realm of the phenomena of action by way of the longest section in Blondel's doctoral thesis: "Le Phénomène de l'action."

In order to decide better precisely what Blondel means by his term "phenomenology" it might be useful to take a brief look at what the term has come to mean in the time since Edmund Husserl, the accepted founder of the present-day Phenomenological School of Philosophy.

In his essay "What is Phenomenology?" Pierre Thévenaz notes that phenomenology offers its proponents a great refuge for ideas on many things, like, the logic of essences and meanings, the theory of abstraction, psychological analysis, and speculation on the transcendental ego.³ Thus, there seems to be great confusion as to what constitutes a phenomenology. Many current thinkers claim phenomenology

2 Ibid., p. 43-44.

3 Pierre THEVENAZ, "What is Phenomenology?" and Other Essays, translated by J.M. Edie, C. Courtney, and P. Brockelman, Chicago, Quadrangle Books, 1962(1952), p. 37.

for their tradition; and even some pre-Husserlians and contemporaries of Husserl are, in retrospect, labeled as phenomenological in their approach. It is important, then, to uncover just what Maurice Blondel means by phenomenology and what role it has in his philosophical endeavor. Two questions will be considered in this chapter: first, what does the term "phenomenology" indicate?; and, secondly, in what way is Blondel phenomenological in his endeavor?

Ch. II, A. THE MEANING OF PHENOMENOLOGY

The first query may be settled if "phenomenology" is defined on three different levels: non-technical, methodological, and philosophical. The first of these meanings is used by other disciplines as well as by philosophy. The second and third are more restricted to philosophical systems.

In its non-technical sense, phenomenology signifies a kind of descriptive approach to a subject. In this sense, there are many philosophical schools which are so-called phenomenological, although they in no other way proceed phenomenologically.⁴ Secondly, the term refers to a method which is practiced by many philosophers who do not share with Husserl his philosophical groundings. Methodologically.

⁴ See Quentin LAURER, Phenomenology: Its Genesis and Prospect, New York, Harper and Row, 1965 (1958), p. 1. "There is a sense, of course, in which this vague use is justified, since every attempt to get away from speculative constructionism and to limit oneself to the data which are presented in consciousness - describing rather than explaining them - is to that extent phenomenological."

phenomenology demands two things: faithfulness to what is given, necessitating a purification of postulates, and the practice of reduction of that which is given into its essential constituent parts so one has access to the ideal meanings and their inter-relations.⁵ Without doubt, one could digress and describe in detail the four basic types of reduction: philosophical, eidetic, psychological,

⁵ See Gaston BERGER, "Phénoménologie", in Vocabulaire, p. 769. "Comme méthode, elle est un effort pour appréhender, à travers des événements et des faits empiriques, des "essences," c'est-à-dire des significations idéales. Celles-ci sont saisies directement par intuition à l'occasion d'exemples singuliers, étudiés en détail et d'une manière très concrète."

and phenomenological. However, for the purposes of this thesis, setting them out below should suffice.⁶ The third meaning of phenomenology is specifically descriptive of the philosophy of Edmund Husserl. Like any other philosophical system Husserlian

6 (a) Philosophical reduction demands that one abstain from all solutions presented previously in philosophy and base all insights and intuitions on what is seen. "We must try to maintain this standpoint during the whole of our phenomenological investigations and abstain from making any judgment concerning the theoretical content of any previous philosophy. Thus our whole further discussion must remain within the limits imposed by this 'philosophical epoche'." Joseph J. KOCKELMANS, A First Introduction to Husserl's Phenomenology, Pittsburgh, Duquesne University Press, 1967, p. 108.

(b) The eidetic reduction demands that one abandon all particulars in order to attain essences of which philosophy is properly called the study. This type of reduction is not so much an abstraction from the many as it is a reduction to essential notes. "The eidetic reduction drops all references to the particular and individual in the immediately given phenomena because, unlike the natural sciences philosophy necessarily is a science of essences." Ibid., p. 134.

(c) Along with the eidetic reduction comes a psychological reduction which strives to eliminate the individual, contingent experiences, in order to retain typical experiences. "A necessary presupposition of such a study (of essences) is, first, the eidetic reduction from facts to essences, and then a reduction from 'objective things' to 'things of meaning' given in my own subjectivity as a real psychological entity in the world." Idem.

(d) Finally, the phenomenological reduction is the most radical of all reductions. "The transcendental (or phenomenological) reduction is responsible for putting the general thesis of the natural attitude out of action; what ever is included in this general thesis is placed in brackets with due respect for its nature as 'being real'. In so doing the real world is not denied; neither is it doubted; the transcendental reduction is used only in the sense of completely barring oneself from using any judgment that concerns the real spatio-temporal existence of the world out there." Ibid., p. 303.

Quentin LAURER has claimed that there are really at least six levels of reduction in his book Phénoménologie de Husserl. Essai sur la genèse de l'intentionnalité, Paris, Presses universitaires de France, 1955, foot-note 4, p. 340; foot-note 1, p. 361.

phenomenology eventually attempts to uncover its first principle of reality under the aspect of essential meaning. This third depth of meaning is the more properly philosophical definition of phenomenology. In order to distinguish it from the two above meanings it will be called transcendental or pure phenomenology. However, it should be noted that phenomenology as methodological and phenomenology as philosophical cannot be separated if one is to remain faithful to the letter of Husserl.⁷

Ch. II, B. THE BLONDELIAN PHENOMENOLOGY

Although Blondel (1861-1949) was a contemporary of Husserl's (1859-1938), there is no evidence that he is in any way a disciple of the Founder of Modern Phenomenology, even though the spirit of that philosophical approach must have been in the air, so to speak. Yet, the Philosophy of Action uses a kind of phenomenology. The question is, in what way is Blondel phenomenological in his approach? This question can be answered in three stages. First of all, it can be shown that Blondel is descriptive in approaching the phenomena. Secondly, whether the Philosopher of Aix is methodologically phenomenological or not must be established. Finally, the possibility of a doctrinal or philosophical phenomenology must be

⁷ "Un grand nombre de philosophes contemporains adoptent, en la modifiant plus ou moins, la méthode husserlienne, pour la faire servir à la construction de leurs propres systèmes. Il est à peine nécessaire de souligner que pour Husserl une telle séparation est à tout (sic) fait illégitime." Gaston BERGER, "Phénoménologie", in Vocabulaire, p. 769.

considered. Accordingly, Part B of this chapter is divided into three sub-sections, one dealing with each meaning of phenomenology in reference to the Philosophy of Action.

BLONDEL'S DESCRIPTIVE PHENOMENOLOGY

If one looks at his section on the phenomenon of action, one can see that he can be labeled phenomenological in the weakest sense of the term, at the very least. At the ground roots, Blondel develops his longest section of L'Action(1893) using a descriptive analysis of sorts. He limits himself to the data presented to consciousness and minutely describes every phase. All the data in consciousness must be covered, not just what Kant called phenomena. This, in fact, is Blondel's very criticism of the Kantian critique; he had not described "...tout le phénomène de la pensée et de l'action dans la conscience."⁸ Their disagreement on this point centers around the understanding of the term "phenomena". Unlike Kant, Blondel's term includes all that is present to consciousness in any way. The phenomenal for Kant is all that could not be classified as noumenal, or the unknowable sphere. For Maurice Blondel all is immanent to consciousness, be it noumenal in the Kantian sense, or phenomenal, and so is subjected to description and eventual criticism. Thus, by neglecting the noumenal sphere, the Father of Criticism is unfaithful to his own system, according to Blondel. Thus, Blondel

8 Maurice BLONDEL, "Lettre"(1896), p. 62.

will say of the noumenal that it "reste immanente en tant qu'idée nôtres... ."9

BLONDEL'S METHODOLOGICAL PHENOMENOLOGY

The basic phenomenological method of "bracketing" also serves well Blondel's purposes. The need for bracketing of the ontological question can be seen by first considering what Blondel means by reason in contradistinction to the Spinozan definition as the Philosopher of Aix sees that definition.

According to Blondel, Spinoza's anthropomorphism divinizes reason. This former conception of reason is geometric¹⁰; and, after a geometric model, the relationship between the object and the understanding is taken as totally immanent to the human intellect, and truth will not, then, be conformity of the mind to the thing known. According to Blondel's understanding of Spinoza, his ontology becomes epistemology because "...le monisme de Spinoza...avait restreint de plus en plus précisément le problème métaphysique aux conditions de la connaissance et de la connaissance humaine... ."11

With God immanent cause of all, "the order and connection of ideas

9 Ibid., p. 39. See Introduction to Part One, p. 4-5, this thesis.

10 Maurice BLONDEL, "Une des sources", I, p. 268. "...Spinoza considère précisément l'intelligibilité sous la forme d'une synthèse géométrique, laquelle est exclusive de toute finalité."

11 Ibid., II, p. 331.

is the same as the order and connection of things."¹² This is the Spinozan solution to the problem of the relationship between thought and being. It is quite understandable, then, that Spinoza means to affirm the absolute and capture being by way of reason. One of the two heterogeneous meanings noted by Blondel in the Vocabulaire describes Spinozan reason; reason, in its second meaning,

-tantôt à la faculté d'affirmer l'absolu, de connaître et pour ainsi dire de capter l'être tel qu'il est, et de fournir les principes, d'atteindre les vérités nécessaires et suffisantes à la pensée et à la vie. ...dans le second sens, elle prend le premier rôle; elle prétend, plus ou moins délibérément, attribuer une valeur réaliste au travail discursif de l'esprit, et restituer le réel à l'aide des fragments artificiels de l'analyse.¹³

These ontological pretensions are unacceptable in the Blondelian system.¹⁴

12 SPINOZA, His Life, Correspondence, and Ethics, translated and edited by R. Willis, M.D., London, Trubner and Company, 1870, 458 p. This reference is Ethics, part II, propositio vii, p. 458.

13 Maurice BLONDEL, "Raison", in Vocabulaire, p. 878.

14 Spinoza had given reason the power to bestow reality on that which it studied by means of the artificial fragments of analysis. These ontological pretensions Blondel accuses Spinoza of promoting in one of his articles on Spinozism; See Maurice BLONDEL, "Une des sources", II, p. 332. In other words, Spinoza takes what he learns in thought and forces it onto being in the way that mathematical laws construct geometrical entities without realizing that the human mind could not reconstruct being from that geometric-like analysis.

In distinction to Spinoza, Blondel presents another definition of reason, which he makes use of in L'Action(1893).

Raison, selon qu'on envisage surtout, soit le caractère analytique de ses opérations, ...s'applique tantôt à la faculté essentiellement discursive, qui, capable d'organiser des expériences ou des preuves, établit ses démonstrations;...Dans le premier sens, la raison est un simple instrument ..., pour servir, aider ou mimer l'oeuvre d'une faculté plus haute d'intuition... .¹⁵

Blondel, then, proceeds by an analysis of the contents of consciousness with the intent to discover the interconnections in human consciousness between the will-willing and the will-willed. The success of that endeavor within consciousness demands that he abstain from any ontological declaration throughout his analysis. In fact, the ontological question is quite absurd in a scientific study such as he is undertaking, "Car dans l'ordre des phénomènes et dans les sciences...la distinction ontologique de l'être et du connaître n'a point de sens."¹⁶ The sole purpose of Blondel's project is to "...montrer comment de l'objet résulte le sujet et comment le sujet retourne agir et vivre dans l'objet, sans préjuger pour cela aucune question ontologique."¹⁷ As a scientific endeavor, the phenomenology of L'Action(1893) could not immediately concern itself with beings, but only with the contents of consciousness and the laws of the science of action. We recall that a science, no matter of what,

15 Maurice BLONDEL, "Raison", in Vocabulaire, p. 878.

16 Maurice BLONDEL, L'Action(1893), p. 42.

17 Idem.

consists in a systematic set of "...idées ou des faits dont l'être scientifique est constitué par leurs relations sériées... ."18

Because Blondel is structuring a science of action, he takes the appropriate method of approach for that science; he chooses what could be called an existential epoche. Further, since reflection is seen as the second act of the intellect, those truths which are separated out can not have any ontological status. Reflection only disengages "...aussi intégralement que possible la chaîne continue de la pensée, sans préjugé réaliste ou idéaliste d'aucune sorte."19

Methodologically, then, philosophy can properly only go over

la série intégrale de nos idées inévitables et de nos conceptions solidaires, indépendamment des apparentes mutilations ou des restrictions partiales qu'y semble introduire l'intervention superficielle des décisions réfléchies, telle qu'elle se produit sous la préoccupation des problèmes ontologiques et moraux.20

The function of philosophy becomes limited to determining the what that is in thought and discovering the laws of action,

...sans jamais fournir l'être dont elle étudie la notion, contenir la vie dont elle analyse les exigences, suffire à ce dont elle fixe les conditions suffisantes, réaliser cela même dont elle doit dire qu'elle le conçoit nécessairement comme réel.21

18 Maurice BLONDEL, "Science", in Vocabulaire, p. 956.

19 Maurice BLONDEL, "L'Illusion idéaliste", p. 109.

20 Maurice BLONDEL, "Lettre"(1896), p. 39.

21 Ibid., p. 66.

Not unlike Husserlian phenomenology, the bracketing of the ontological question in the Blondelian epoche does not call for the rejection of the natural knowledge of objects on which one makes spontaneous judgments. "Il y a une connaissance naturelle des objets, une affirmation inévitable de leur réalité, qui, en fait, reste indépendante de la justification explicite et totale qu'on en peut fournir."²² Blondel, however, is looking for the necessary laws a priori of human action in a scientific way, making use of an indirect method of approach and must search for justification apart from natural considerations.²³ On the scientific level,

Se demander de ce papier, telle qu'une réflexion sommaire me le montre, s'il existe, c'est là, quand on pose d'emblée cette question sous une forme aussi abstraite, une curiosité artificielle qui ne comporte guère qu'une réponse verbale.²⁴

A philosopher cannot begin his philosophy by questioning the existence of anything. He must first establish the necessary conditions and laws in consciousness by investigating the inter-connections and their development. "La première tâche du philosophe, c'est de déterminer ce que nous pensons exactement, pour aboutir à définir les conditions auxquelles sont suspendues les réalités que la pensée affirme inévitablement."²⁵ The entire analysis remains in the realm of an epoche where

22 Maurice BLONDEL, Lettres philosophiques, p. 166.

23 See Part Two, Introduction, p. 92-104 for a discussion of the direct and indirect methods of solving the problem of destiny.

24 Maurice BLONDEL, "Le Point de départ", II, p. 231.

25 Maurice BLONDEL, Lettres philosophiques, p. 134.

there is no idealistic or realistic prejudice. Up until the point where a total inventory of all these conditions and their inter-connections has been taken, the ontological question and the existential judgment is not broached in order to remain absolutely true to the critical spirit of philosophy.²⁶

Not at any point in the following dialectic of the phenomenon of action does Blondel trespass into the forbidden realm of ontology. Instances can be taken from many sections of L'Action(1893). For example, in the second step of the dialectic, Blondel notes that the reality or other wise of freedom is not in question:

26 Duméry has remarked that the phenomenological reserve is necessary, not only because reflection is but a second act of the intellect, but also because Blondel has to maintain the natural independence between the orders of immanence and transcendence. Only in this way is the final reintegration possible on any level. "Que telle soit la méthode d'immanence, on n'en peut douter, puisque Blondel la définit ainsi. Le passage de la Lettre que nous avons soumis à exégèse est immédiatement suivi par un rappel du 'phénoménisme' méthodologique, par une évocation de ce qu'est "l'Oeuvre propre" de la philosophie: étudier la liaison des phénomènes, leur déterminisme, voir les principes requis par la pensée et l'action, définir les conditions de toute réalisation. Blondel observe, comme en 1894, que l'affirmation immanente du transcendant ne préjuge pas la réalité de son objet. Et il affirme que seule cette distinction radicale permet 'de construire scientifiquement...le phénoménisme intégral de la pensée et de l'action'. La réserve phénoménologique est si importante que, sans elle, on ne pourrait 'assurer la mutuelle indépendance des deux ordres' ni constituer 'la seule philosophie religieuse - vraiment religieuse et vraiment philosophique - qui soit possible'. Si cela ne signifie pas que l'époque est essentielle à la méthode d'immanence, je ne sais comment Blondel pourrait être plus explicite." Henry DUMERY, Raison et religion dans la philosophie de l'action, Paris, éditions de seuil, 1963, 640 p. This reference is Ibid., p. 330-331.

Comme auparavant j'ai parlé de phénomènes objectifs ou de vie subjective sans donner à ces mots aucune portée idéaliste, réaliste ou phénoméniste, je traiterai de la liberté, sans me préoccuper de savoir si je parle d'une réalité, d'une idée ou d'une illusion. Ce n'est pas ici encore que se tranche la question, c'est bien plus loin que les déterministes ou leurs adversaires ne l'ont vu d'habitude.²⁷

Even the question of the reality of interpersonal relations is bracketed.²⁸ And, "Même quand...il a fallu rencontrer l'idée de Dieu ...il ne s'est nullement agi d'en conclure l'être de Dieu; il s'est agi de constater que cette idée nécessaire du Dieu réel nous mène à la suprême alternative."²⁹

In his investigation of the phenomena Blondel is considering meaning without any reference to existence. Therefore, the first task of philosophy is "de déterminer ce que nous pensons exactement, pour aboutir à définir les conditions auxquelles sont suspendues les réalités que la pensée affirme inévitablement."³⁰ The search for what a thing is is the only way of being faithful to both the realist instinct and the critical spirit.

27 Maurice BLONDEL, L'Action(1893), p. 114.

28 Ibid., p. 201-297.

29 Ibid., p. 426.

30 Maurice BLONDEL, Lettres philosophiques, p. 134. My emphasis.

Se demander ce qu'il est, parvenir peu à peu à remplir cette notion objective d'une connaissance de plus en plus concrète, rendre explicites les conditions implicites de cette perception qui, pour paraître simple n'en est pas moins une synthèse immensément complexe, voilà la méthode normale qui, sans méconnaître l'instinct réaliste de la pensée, ne compromet pas davantage le besoin critique de l'esprit... .³¹

Only through the natural movement of this phenomenological analysis is the truth revealed.³²

However, Blondel's search for definition and meaning does not make him strictly essentialistic. The immediate concern of his effort is the construction of a science of the singular, acting man, the science of action. Even in the phenomenology he is interested only in man in so far as he is acting, free, not as he is an essence, a nature, or an idea alone. The object of his entire philosophy is action and the relationship of the will-willing to the will-willed, a relationship existing men, not some abstract natures, are subjected

31 Maurice BLONDEL, "Le Point de départ", II, p. 231.

32 "Sans préoccupation ontologique ou déontologique, sans effort de persuasion, avec la tranquille assurance d'une charité plus contenue pour être plus pressante, on n'a qu'à laisser cette vérité nécessaire se déployer malgré toutes les résistances." Maurice BLONDEL, L'Action(1893), p. 469.

to.³³ In the process of this study, if the ontological question arises in the natural order of things as the next possible path to follow, then Blondel will take it, if there is no other choice. Therefore, although the existential question is bracketed by the Blondelian epoche, that epoche only holds so long as the ontological question and the existential judgment do not necessarily arise in the thrust of the investigation.³⁴ The necessary thrust of that questioning, as shall be seen later, cannot help but to be felt eventually somewhere in the Blondelian doctoral thesis. Because of the nearly a priori acceptance of the existence of the acting man with all his options, the Philosophy of Action can almost better be coupled with

33 James M. SOMERVILLE notes this in his Total Commitment: Blondel's "L'Action", Washington, Corpus Books, 1968, p. 281-282.

"Blondel's objection to this as a Christian was that the state of 'pure nature' is an abstraction. It may never have existed, and it is certainly not the condition of man today. Therefore, it cannot be the thesis, as far as the phenomenology of man is concerned, because we are not dealing with a hypothetical humanity but with the humanity that actually exists. To state the problem, then, as though philosophy's task were to analyse the exigencies of a state that may never have existed and does not now exist, is to reduce philosophy to a formalistic, essentialistic, and logico-deductive science which prefers to dispense with the data of experience in order to contemplate an order of possibles.

The task of philosophy, as Blondel understood it, was to study the phenomenon of man in the concrete, existential order, without initially determining what remote factors may enter into its constitution. Action then, appears as a more comprehensive term than nature or essence since it may include both the human and the divine action."

34 See Part Two, Chapter Three, p. 150-188; this thesis, for a discussion of the question, how it arises, and how it is solved within the Philosophy of Action.

modern Existentialism, than with strict phenomenology, as Cartier has pointed out.³⁵ The science of action is "la vie même prenant conscience et direction d'elle-même."³⁶ What, in fact, distinguishes philosophy from all other sciences for Blondel is that it is specified by the totality of both life and being in their context of meaning and value. And, therefore, one must say that it indeed does make a difference whether man exists in this investigation of the phenomenon of action in the man of the concrete, existential order.

THE POSSIBILITY OF A BLONDELIAN PHILOSOPHICAL PHENOMENOLOGY

At least in so far as Blondel has an existential epoche, he can also be classified as a phenomenologist. The question now arises as to the philosophical content of his phenomenology. According to our previous delineation of the meanings of phenomenology, there were three distinct senses in which the term could be used: non-technical, methodological, and philosophical. The first two of these definitions are found to fit loosely the Blondelian phenomenology. The third can be assessed as to its applicability in two ways: first of all, through his criticism of Kant, Blondel indicates that strict use of a phenomenology throughout his philosophy would lead to drastic error, and,

35 For Blondel, "the only truly ultimate a priori is existence itself." John J. MC NEILL, The Blondelian Synthesis, p. 181. See Albert CARTIER, Existence et vérité: Philosophie blondélienne de l'action et problématique existentielle, Paris, Presses universitaires de France, 1955, 259p. Also, John J. MC NEILL, "Necessary Structures of Freedom" a paper presented to the Jesuit Philosophical Association, 1968.

36 Maurice BLONDEL, "Le Point de départ", II, p. 227.

secondly, a strictly philosophical usage of phenomenology would seem to contradict the very spirit and goal of the entire Blondelian endeavor.

Blondel's very criticism of Kant indicates to his alert critics that he fully intends to use the phenomenology only as a method in the above sense to study the contents of thought and action. First of all, he refuses to base philosophy on the reflexive, critical movement of the mind alone.

Il suffira d'ailleurs de remarquer à quel point cette vive intuition y est ramenée aux formes abstraites de l'analyse idéologique, et comme elle s'achève en un rationalisme qui a modifié la matière de l'ancien sans en changer l'esprit, pour qu'apparaisse le caractère encore factice d'une telle initiative de la pensée, le caractère encore arbitraire d'un tel fidéisme.³⁷

There is too much danger in remaining within the critical movement of the mind alone; critical philosophy falls into the trap of giving an ontological value to one part of knowledge. Kantian moral critique becomes a new form of rationalism, which confers ontological status to artificial divisions and abstractions introduced by thought into being. Blondel's view of Kant is that he presents theory that is its own end. Yet, it is obvious to anyone reading Blondel that he uses a critique in a phenomenology to both illuminate and criticize the whole of reason. The status of this investigation, however, is methodological, and this is its saving grace. He accepts the Kantian conception of criticism as hypothesis, and attempts to discover how far it can take

37 Ibid., II, p. 351.

him in his investigation. The success of this method will be judged in light of the following chapters. Perhaps we will find with Blondel that the phenomenal is sufficient. And, if that is found to be the case, the ontological question will not ever arise. It should be remembered here that the entire reason for the existential epoche is to preserve philosophy from prematurely confronting the **ontological question** and the existential judgment so that the criticism and the search for the laws of action can proceed unhampered; phenomenological bracketing is essential to this search. To say this is to also say that when the critical stage of the Blondelian Philosophy of Action is surpassed, if ever, then the need for an existential epoche also is surpassed.

This brings up the second point: could Blondel be philosophical in his meaning of phenomenology and still work within the very spirit of his philosophical task? A further discussion of this particular point will have to await the development of the following chapters of the thesis.³⁸ Because Blondel is searching for a final re-integration of all factors, real and ideal somewhere in the process of the inventory, he cannot close the ontological question off from his mind in any permanent way. For, if that question arises by way of the elimination of the phenomena by insufficiency, then that question and the existential judgment must be faced in order for

38 See particularly Part Two, Chapter Three, p. 169-171, this thesis for an evaluation of this point in light of Metaphysics to the Second Power.

Blondel to remain faithful to his own particular spirit of criticism. That is why he presents his phenomenology as an experiment which will, hopefully, push his investigation ahead toward a solution of the division between the real and thought in thought: "Peut-être l'édifice sera-t-il suffisant; peut-être que, sans sortir du phénomène et en le considérant comme tout ce qui est, j'aurai de mon action une idée complète et du problème de la vie une solution satisfaisante."³⁹

In fact, to make a philosophical phenomenology out of his methodological phenomenology would be to distort the meaning of the existential epoché. For, to deny the birth of the ontological question and existential judgment when it necessarily arises, if ever, is to make a kind of negative existential judgment about the existence of that question. Methodologically, Blondel cannot do that if he is to be faithful to his own exigencies. So he shall proceed by way of an immanent phenomenological dialectic of elimination by insufficiency.

One cannot legitimately say, then, that Blondelian philosophy is phenomenological in the sense that it is the attempt to uncover the first principle of all reality under the aspect of essential meaning alone without ignoring Blondel's meaning and purpose. One can say that Blondel's brand of phenomenology is description and existential epoché which are distinguishing characteristics of phenomenology in general. There is support for this understanding of the term with Paul Ricoeur:

39 Maurice BLONDEL, L'Action (1893), p. 43-44.

Au fond, la phénoménologie est née dès que, mettant entre parenthèses - provisoirement ou définitivement - la question de l' être, on traite comme un problème autonome la manière d'apparaître des choses.⁴⁰

Blondel brackets the question of existence, the ontological question par excellence, temporarily.

SUMMARY

The point of inquiry in Chapter Two has been the so-called Blondelian phenomenology. The determination of the meaning of a phenomenology within the Blondelian context has taken two stages. The first of these defined the term phenomenology in three different senses: non-technical, methodological, and strictly philosophical, in light of modern phenomenology. Using these thumb-nail sketches, stage two attempted to define phenomenology as it applies to Maurice Blondel's philosophy.

It has been shown that Blondel is phenomenological in the non-technical meaning of the term because he proceeds by description of all that is present in consciousness. Secondly, the Blondelian endeavor is found to be methodologically phenomenological; the Master of Aix has an existential epoche. With due reverence for the scientific approach to philosophy, he brackets the ontological question and existential judgment throughout his Third Part of L'Action(1893). On the one hand, by abstaining from a premature ontology Blondel hopes

40 Paul RICOEUR, "Sur la phénoménologie", in Esprit, 21(décembre) 1953, p. 821.

to solve the question of the relationship between thought and the real in thought, which Spinoza failed to settle. On the other hand, he tries to hold his phenomenology to methodology alone, so as not to confer any ontological value on one area of human knowledge by default, as he believed Immanuel Kant did. Therefore, in the first case, the scientific philosopher cannot have ontological pretensions at this point in his endeavor because analytic reason is incapable of attaining being; and, in the second case, the philosopher should not even want to work ontologically if he correctly comprehends the true impact of criticism. By method, philosophy describes all ideas and their implications in consciousness without any ontological or de-ontological consideration. And, in determining these ideas and laws, Blondelian philosophy cannot give their being.

True, Blondel is looking for meaning, laws and definitions, but not in the sense of Husserlian phenomenology. Existence has to be presupposed in some way or the whole question with which L'Action (1893) is dealing is quite absurd. Blondel is concerned with the existing, acting man, and is, by no means, essentialistic. But, until the point where the ontological question and the existential judgment must arise by necessity, all paths are to be taken in an attempt to exhaust the question of human destiny within the phenomenal realm. Therefore, Blondel is a phenomenologist both by description and by method, but not by doctrine: the first principle searched for is not pure essential meaning. Blondel's whole approach has negated the purely philosophical sense of phenomenology. His final goal is, in

truth, a re-integration of the real and thought in thought; so, he must not be trapped by his phenomenological method. If caught with the doctrinal statement that he must never consider the being of action, he chances aborting his whole goal, that is the reunion of these terms through action.

Yet, to see the Blondelian method as a phenomenology alone is short-sighted; that which the Philosopher considers in a descriptive manner is all that is immanent in us, all our knowing, willing, and acting. Consequently, the question of the meaning of the Blondelian method of immanence must arise. This is the topic of our next chapter.

PART ONE

CHAPTER THREE

ON THE QUESTION OF METHOD (II): THE BLONDELIAN IMMANENT DIALECTIC

Before the ontological question can be broached, the whole content of spontaneous consciousness has to be revealed and the workings of the immanent dialectic of the will-willing and the will-willed disclosed.

Il ne s'agit point d'une connaissance partielle ou d'une réflexion morale, propre sans doute à éclairer la bonne volonté, mais sans caractère démonstratif; il s'agit d'une science totale, capable d'embrasser le déterminisme universel de l'action et d'en suivre le déploiement continu qui porte à l'infini ses conséquences nécessaires: de la pensée à la pratique et de la pratique à la pensée, le cercle doit être fermé dans la science parce qu'il l'est dans la vie.¹

Blondelian immanence consists not in a doctrine of immanence, as it did in his predecessors, but rather, in a strict method. In the present discussion, the nature of the method of immanence and the movement of the dialectic are explored. This inquiry is divided into three sections. The first is to question the nature of the method itself. The object of the second and third is the movement of the dialectic of the will-willing and the will-willed. Of course, these two sections cannot be separated as such, since the Blondelian method of immanence is both the key to the dialectic itself, and, the direct

¹ Maurice BLONDEL, L'Action (1893), p. 469.

bridge between Blondel's search for a philosophy of religion and his solution to the problem of the relationship between thought and reality in thought.

Ch. III, A. THE METHOD OF IMMANENCE

In order to make this relationship clearer, a brief outline of the Blondelian method of immanence will be helpful before tackling it in detail. The all-encompassing purpose of Blondel's philosophy is to establish a philosophy of religion: "J'ai tenté de faire pour la forme catholique de la pensée religieuse ce que l'Allemagne a fait, depuis longtemps, et fait toujours, pour la forme protestante dont la philosophie il est vrai était plus aisée à dégager."² Thus, the exigencies of his doctoral dissertation are to be seen only as they contribute to his grounding of a philosophy of religion. He rejects the scholastic approach because he finds it insufficient. "Lettre" (1896) begins with the statement that "...jamais l'erreur de la méthode ne peut sainement et durablement profiter au fond des doctrines."³ The divinization of reason in scholastic thought forces the use of a false method. On the other hand, modern philosophy insists that the correct philosophical approach to any problem must be the notion of immanence. However, within the context of the Christian believer, anything that is strictly Christian is to be seen as

2 Maurice BLONDEL, Lettres philosophiques, p. 34.

3 Maurice BLONDEL, "Lettre"(1896), p. 8.

completely transcendent. It is this contradiction that Blondel attempts to solve by transforming the modern doctrine of immanence into a method of immanence. He discovers that the very doctrine of transcendence implies the method of immanence and that the method of immanence, in turn, involves the doctrine of transcendence.

"...notre idée des vérités ou des exigences transcendantes, réelles ou non, reste immanente en tant qu'idée nôtre."⁴ For Blondel, this method of immanence is nothing other than putting,

...en équation, dans la conscience même, ce que nous paraissions penser et vouloir et faire, avec ce que nous faisons, nous voulons et nous pensons en réalité: de telle sorte que dans les négations factives ou les fins artificiellement voulues se retrouveront encore les affirmations profondes et les besoins incoercibles qu'elles impliquent.⁵

Blondel has perceived that the supernatural appears as both necessary and inaccessible to the philosopher. Yet, neither the freedom of man, nor the supernatural can be compromised,

Ce qui est nécessaire, c'est que, sous une forme dont il est impossible de fixer la définition singulière et concrète pour chacun, les pensées et les actes de chacun composent dans leur ensemble comme un drame dont le dénouement ne se produit pas sans que la décisive question ait tôt ou tard surgi en la conscience.⁶

The new form of apologetics is to be entirely foreign to past systems. Philosophy, through a progressive realization of the method of

4 Ibid., p. 39.

5 Idem.

6 Ibid., p. 44.

immanence and the critical technique, begins to recognize the limits within which it is adequate. The philosopher must realize that philosophy cannot suffice for life: "...il faut qu'elle trouve en elle ce qui la dépasse, un immanent transcendant."⁷

This realization forces a new understanding of the function of philosophy, which is "...de déterminer le contenu de la pensée et les postulats de l'action, sans...réaliser cela même dont elle doit dire qu'elle le conçoit nécessairement comme réel."⁸ Its function, as seen in this way, allows for the integration of thought, of philosophical reflection, and of Christian awareness. Secondly, Blondel attributes to the domain of philosophy the study of all the phenomena of religious life, since it is now within the limits of the method along with the other phenomena. Thirdly, philosophy can still retain the capacity of judgment according to its own immanent criterion because "Dans le transcendant de la pensée et de l'action immanentes elle trouve un principe interne de jugement absolu... ."⁹ This thumb-nail sketch has now to be more closely inspected.

7 Ibid., p. 65.

8 Ibid., p. 66.

9 Ibid., p. 67.

A DENIAL OF THE DOCTRINE OF IMMANENCE

From the above introduction one can note several things. First and foremost, the method of immanence is not understood as a doctrine of immanence. Since neither a false method nor a wrong conclusion can provide for Christian doctrine, Blondel has to show the doctrine of immanence wrong in "Lettre"(1896). A doctrine of immanence is recognized as such by its systematic acceptance of the principle of immanence as the total explanation and source of everything. The method of immanence, on the other hand, a matter of attempting to equate "dans la conscience même, ce que nous paraissions penser et vouloir et faire, avec ce que nous faisons, nous voulons et nous pensons en réalité... ."10 Spinoza's philosophy is, for example, pan-anthropomorphic precisely because of his doctrine of immanent reason as divinized.¹¹ The only conclusion left to the immanentist was that,

En sorte que du jour où la raison, laissée seule maîtresse du connaissable, prétend trouver, immanentes en elle, toutes les vérités nécessaires à la vie, elle exclut radicalement ce monde de la foi; il n'y a plus juxtaposition, mais opposition, mais incompatibilité.¹²

Now, Blondel accepts immanent criticism as the only way, in present day, to philosophize. The question arises as to how he is able to

10 Ibid., p. 39.

11 See Part One, Introduction, p. 1-8, this thesis.

12 Maurice BLONDEL, "Lettre"(1896), p. 30.

do this and still stay clear of the doctrine of immanence.

His inheritance is clear, as is the natural conflict between an immanentism and the transcendental realm of the real and the Divine. Blondel summarizes the difficulty quite well in a long passage in the "Letter on Apologetics".

En deux mots qu'il faudra expliquer, mais qui marquent d'emblée la gravité du conflit, la pensée moderne avec une susceptibilité jalouse considère la notion d'immanence comme la condition même de la philosophie; c'est-à-dire que, si parmi les idées régnantes il y a un résultat auquel elle s'attache comme à un progrès certain, c'est à l'idée, très juste en son fond, que rien ne peut entrer en l'homme qui ne sorte de lui et ne corresponde en quelque façon à un besoin d'expansion, et que ni comme fait historique, ni comme enseignement traditionnel, ni comme obligation serajoutée du dehors, il n'y a pour lui vérité qui compte et précepte admissible sans être, de quelque manière, autonome et autochtone.¹³

Although "...notre idée des vérités ou des exigences transcendantes, réelles ou non, reste immanente en tant qu'idée nôtre"¹⁴, nevertheless, the source of these transcendent truths is not ultimately us:

13 Ibid., p. 34.

14 Ibid., p. 39.

Car tout ce que nous tirons de nous n'est rien de ce que nous avons à recevoir; et jamais, par cette voie, nous ne rencontrerons la difficulté véritable, nous y tournerions le dos, puisque ce n'est pas l'objet ou le don, mais la forme et le fait du don qui est l'obstacle. Alors même que par un effort révélateur de génie nous recouvrerions presque toute la lettre et le contenu de l'enseignement révélé, nous n'aurions rien encore, absolument rien de l'esprit chrétien, parce qu'il n'est pas de nous. Ne point l'avoir comme reçu et donné, mais comme trouvé et issu de nous, c'est ne point l'avoir du tout... .15

Therefore, Blondel rejects the doctrine of immanence for the method of immanence, which he finds to be so true and necessary in his endeavor to both solve the problem of the relationship between thought and reality and the dichotomy of reason and revelation, the specific problem with which "Lettre"(1896) is concerned.

Blondel does not simply reject the doctrine of immanence, but he also shows that if one accepts the method of immanence, he must automatically reject the doctrine of immanence. Philosophy,

arrive à comprendre que 'la méthode d'immanence' est exclusive d'une 'doctrine de l'immanence'; c'est-à-dire qu'on ne peut faire de la négation du transcendant ou du surnaturel une vérité transcendante, et qu'on ne peut exclure l'ontologie que d'un point de vue ontologique... .16

Consequently, in order to remain faithful to the method of immanence, all phenomenal data, including the idea of the transcendent, has to fall under the scrutiny of immanent criticism. The connection between the method and the doctrine never did exist, according to Blondel:

15 Ibid., p. 35. My emphasis.

16 Ibid., p. 62.

"...la méthode d'immanence s'appuie si peu sur ce principe ainsi compris qu'elle en est précisément la négation et l'antidote."¹⁷

17 Maurice BLONDEL, "Immanence", in Vocabulaire, p. 469.

"Sur la 'méthode d'immanence' et le 'principe d'immanence': Ce serait restreindre et absolument dénaturer ce que nous entendons par le principe d'immanence que de l'assujettir ou à une métaphysique intellectualiste ou à une thèse pragmatiste. Il est faux notamment de le réduire à signifier que, 'la pensée s'impliquant tout entière elle-même à chacun de ses moments ou degrés, nous n'aurions, pour atteindre la vérité et constituer la philosophie, qu'à dévider en nous un écheveau préalablement formé, qu'à réaliser un inventaire sans invention véritable, sans apport étranger, sans dilatation nouvelle, sans progrès effectif. La méthode d'immanence s'appuie si peu sur ce principe ainsi compris qu'elle en est précisément la négation et l'antidote. Ni historiquement ni doctrinalement elle n'en procède et ne s'y rapporte... Elle marque seulement le point de départ de la réflexion, qui ne peut pas s'établir d'emblée dans une transcendance ruineuse pour la philosophie, et qui doit au contraire partir de la réalité donnée. Et cette démarche d'une pensée qui veut simplement user de tout ce qu'elle porte en elle est si loin d'aboutir à un 'immanentisme' qu'elle engendre inéluctablement une attitude toute contraire.

Dès l'instant en effet où nous tentons de rattacher la pensée consciente à ses origines réelles et de l'acheminer délibérément vers les fins où elle tend d'elle-même, dès l'instant en un mot où nous cherchons à égaler en nous la volonté voulue à la volonté voulante, nous sommes amenés à reconnaître de plus en plus précisément que, pour aller ainsi de nous à nous-mêmes, nous avons à sortir de nous avant d'y rentrer, à subir de multiples intrusions et comme une dépossession provisoire qui, en tout ordre, scientifique ou moral, social ou religieux, fait d'une hétéronomie laborieusement définie et onéreusement pratiquée, le chemin nécessaire de l'autonomie véritable. Il ne s'agit donc pas du tout d'un pur processus dialectique ou d'un simple passage de l'implicite à l'explicite; il s'agit d'un progrès réel, d'une conquête, d'une création continuée, qui, loin de nous enfermer dans notre immanence initiale, nous ouvre, nous entraîne à nous dépasser sans cesse, et ne nous permet point de nous arrêter en nous-même avant une réintégration totale.

Le terme d'immanentisme (qu'on a d'ailleurs raison de condamner comme un néologisme vague et même ambigu) ne saurait en tout cas désigner qu'une théorie systématisée (et non une méthode), qu'une doctrine exclusive, directement contredite par toute notre attitude morale et tout notre dessein spéculatif... ." Maurice BLONDEL, "Immanence", in Vocabulaire, p. 469-470.

Along with the all-encompassing purpose of the Blondelian philosophy, the reader must consider, as a sub-point, this curative aspect of the method of immanence.

IMMANENT JUDGMENT-ADEQUATION

A second point worthy of note from the above introductory sketch of Blondelian immanence is that philosophy retains its capacity for judging according to its own immanent criterion. In conjunction with Spinozan immanence Mc Neill has already discussed this point at some length in The Blondelian Synthesis;¹⁸ this comparison is not of interest here. It can be said, however, that the immanent norm of truth and judgment does not rest in a divinization of reason as far as Blondel is concerned. In order to disclose the nature of the immanent norm of truth and judgment, the problem of adequation, which is integrally connected to Blondel's logic of action, is to be discussed.¹⁹

As has already been noted, the method of immanence is nothing but,

18 See John J. MC NEILL, The Blondelian Synthesis, p. 26-41.

19 See Part Two, Chapters Two and Three, p. 143-7; 173-6.

Blondel's major works in logic are: Maurice BLONDEL, "Principe élémentaire d'une logique de la vie morale", in Les Premiers écrits de Maurice Blondel, 1956(1903), p. 123-147; and Maurice BLONDEL, "Ebauche de logique générale: Essai de canonique générale", in Revue de métaphysique et morale, janvier-mars, tome 65, n° 1, p. 7-18, 1960 (1894). Anyone interested in the logic might refer to J.J. MC NEILL, The Blondelian Synthesis, p. 200-33 ; and Albert PONCELET, "The Christian Philosophy of Maurice Blondel", in I.P.Q., (5), December, 1965, p. 564-593.

...sinon à mettre en équation, dans la conscience même, ce que nous paraissions penser et vouloir et faire, avec ce que nous faisons, nous voulons et nous pensons en réalité: de telle sorte que dans les négations factices ou les fins artificiellement voulues se retrouveront encore les affirmations profondes et les besoins incoercibles qu'elles impliquent.²⁰

The problem of thought and being has been removed and the "problème équivalent et tout différent de l'adéquation immanente de nous-même avec nous-même..."²¹, replaces it. This is the only way, according to Blondel, to avoid the "idealist illusion" of which he so often speaks. The illusion can be overcome in this way because the "revelation" of the dialectic of the will-willing and the will-willed is a Pandora's box of "La solution ... toujours en nous, déjà provisoirement fixée à chacun de nos moments qui pourrait être le dernier: elle se produit et s'enrichit par l'effort même que nous faisons pour la dégager."²² The measure of this degree of self-adequation falls under what Blondel calls the "Law of the Determination of a Logico-Ethico Criterium". The core of this law says that some of the choices presented to man regarding his destiny are positive, while others are privative, negative because they disregard the obligatory order.²³ In general, the fundamental function of Blondel's logic, one

20 Maurice BLONDEL, "Lettre"(1896), p. 39.

21 Maurice BLONDEL, "L'Illusion idéaliste", p. 110.

22 Ibid., p. 111.

23 See Maurice BLONDEL, "Principe élémentaire d'une logique de la vie morale", p. 144 for this law.

more basic than all others, is "...à discuter pour ainsi dire algébriquement les diverses possibilités de solution négative ou positive, et à décrire le cadre rigide sur lequel s'appuie, dans lequel se déploie le libre jeu de l'action humaine... ."24 What the logical construct is intending to do is to maintain and to uncover at the same time the natural synthesis of thought and being by way of the vital, all-encompassing logic of action. The type of truth value here is an immanent truth of adequation of the will in all its activity with another term, be it idea with idea, mathematical elements in a universal homogeneous ideal system, things with reason, our ideas with their connections and productions, self with self, or "... intellectum in actu et intellectus in actu idem sunt,"25 - metaphysical truth.

What makes the difference, and all the difference, is that Blondel is dealing with action, the synthetic a priori. The primary task of the Philosophy of Action is "...déterminer ce que nous pensons exactement, pour aboutir à définir les conditions auxquelles sont suspendues les réalités que la pensée affirme inévitablement."26 But this problem of determination is enmeshed in the problem of conformity which rests in action, not in thought. Hence, Blondel's thought is essentially a counter-revolution to the Kantian

24 Idem.

25 Maurice BLONDEL, "Vrai", in Vocabulaire, p. 1224.

26 Maurice BLONDEL, Lettres philosophiques, p. 134.

Copernican Revolution. "Il s'agit du tout de l'homme; ce n'est donc pas dans la pensée seule qu'on doit le chercher. C'est dans l'action qu'il va falloir transporter le centre de la philosophie, parce que là se trouve aussi le centre de la vie."²⁷ The third part of Blondel's doctoral thesis deals with the phenomena of action, not the phenomena of thought as it is separated off from action:

Le fait de pensée y est pris en lui-même, séparé de l'acte même de penser, considéré non comme résidu ou comme retentissement de la vie à la fois physiologique et morale, générique et individuelle, mais comme réalité en l'air, déraciné de ses origines vitales, mutilé dans ses ramifications naturelles... .²⁸

This is Kant's fault. As a result, speculative knowledge and practical knowledge hold irreconcilable positions. The single way around this difficulty while still retaining a critical method, is the phenomenological study of action because action touches on all aspects of the problem: thought, willing, being, and life in so far as they are part of the synthesis that action is. The problem of truth, then, is no longer centered on the question of thought, but, rather, on the question of self-adequation or, in its root, the moral truth. Moral truth is the originative source of the immanent norm of truth and value judgment in the Blondelian synthesis: it is " ...adaequatio mentis et vitae, pour réaliser par nos intentions et nos actes l'accord

²⁷ Maurice BLONDEL, L'Action(1893), Introduction, p. xxiii.

²⁸ Maurice BLONDEL, "L'Illusion idéaliste", p. 120.

de notre personnalité acquise avec les exigences de notre nature... ."29

Now, Blondel intends to provide a total philosophy, as we have already seen. In fact, only if the method of immanence could provide a total philosophy, would it be retained as the sole method of approach. The essence of immanent criticism is that it should provide that total explanation, because every work of man and nature has its value as well as its reality determined by the whole of which it is part.³⁰ The question must always remain until the end of the Blondelian phenomenological endeavor as to whether or not immanent criticism can indeed provide that necessary total explanation.

29 Maurice BLONDEL, "Vrai", in Vocabulaire, p. 1224.

30 Blondel often says that everything can only be looked at in any thorough way as it is a part of a vast whole. This would lend support to a coherence theory of truth in the Philosopher of Aix's work. As Leslie J. WALKER (Theories of Knowledge: Absolutism, Pragmatism, Realism, London, Longmans, Green and Co., 1919) states, for an adherent of the coherent theory of truth, "Truth consists in a totality of synthesis; it is the complete harmony and unification of every part of knowledge. What we strive to know is Reality itself, and Reality is a system in which each part is related to all the rest and cannot be understood in isolation from the rest. It is a coherent, organized whole, an individual whole, a whole which is essentially intelligible; and as such it is at once the object which we seek to know, the Ideal towards which our knowledge tends, and the criterion by which it must be judged." Ibid., p. 506.

Dès son point de départ la recherche spécifiquement philosophique doit se distinguer de l'expérience commune et des sciences proprement dites qui s'attachent à des objets: car ce n'est pas à un objet particulier que la philosophie commence, mais à une façon totale de considérer le problème de la destinée et la question de l'être; et la difficulté permanente qu'elle doit surmonter, c'est précisément de dérouler ses investigations sans l'appui d'entités imaginées ontologiquement.³¹

Perhaps the phenomenological immanently-critical method will be found to be insufficient at the terminus of this inquiry. On the other hand, perhaps one will discover that, although not sufficient as a restricted method, the very method itself will present a ground by which it can be transcended, since "Nos assertions intellectuelles ni ne sont étrangères ou indifférentes à la réalité qu'elles expriment et dont nous vivons, ni ne portent sur l'absolue et intégrale réalité de l'être même qui est l'objet de la connaissance."³² But, this, then, is a hint of an answer.

Ch. III, B. THE WORKINGS OF THE DIALECTIC

The dialectic of the will-willing and the will-willed of L'Action(1893) is an integral thing. There are three phases of the movement of the will in search of ending the "...disproportion entre la volonté voulante,...et la volonté voulue... ." ³³ The entire goal

31 Maurice BLONDEL, "Le Point de départ", II, p. 248.

32 Maurice BLONDEL, Lettres philosophiques, p. 161.

33 Maurice BLONDEL, L'Action(1893), p. 132.

of the life effort as lived is the final integration of the heteronomy of the willed or objective will with the autonomy of the subjective will. In light of this, the goal of the entire reflexive phenomenological analysis of the life effort is to be that final integration, in so far as it arises in consciousness. Although philosophy is taken to mean "...la vie même prenant conscience et direction d'elle-même..."³⁴, it does so, according to Blondel,

...sans jamais fournir l'être dont elle étudie la notion, contenir la vie dont elle analyse les exigences, suffire à ce dont elle fixe les conditions suffisantes, réaliser cela même dont elle doit dire qu'elle le conçoit nécessairement comme réel.³⁵

James Somerville, in his Total Commitment: Blondel's "L'Action",³⁶ has already given a tracing of the arguments of the dialectic; here, then, a simple outline of these three totally related phases is sufficient. Following the outline, the actual movement of the dialectic as a retrospective analysis of lived action is discussed.

A SYNOPSIS OF THE RETROSPECTIVE DIALECTIC³⁷

The first phase of the dialectic is found in Chapter Three of L'Action(1893) and is entitled "Le Phénomène de l'action." In this long section, after establishing the necessity for a science of

34 Maurice BLONDEL, "Le Point de départ", II, p. 227.

35 Maurice BLONDEL, "Lettre"(1896), p. 66.

36 James SOMERVILLE, Total Commitment: Blondel's "L'Action", p. 73-284.

37 See Part Two, Chapter Two, p. 123-38, this thesis.

action, Blondel analyzes the expansion of the will through the successive steps and progressively higher series of means in relation to ends. This phase of the dialectic is an analysis, then, of the will's expansion in relation to the phenomena. The expansion is divided into two general sections: the first deals with the development of consciousness and the upsurge of freedom.³⁸ The second is concerned with the multiple series of conditions and syntheses moving from consciousness and voluntary operation (intentional) to the external extension of actions: individual action, social action, and superstitious action. There is a change, then, in perspective from the first aspect of this phase to the second, that is, from the subject to the will as it probes the without or external action. The movement is necessitated because the aspirations of the subject are found to be too great to find fulfillment only in intention, which "...a besoin de se réaliser par l'action, et l'action l'enrichit... ."39 Blondel has moved to the phenomena of external action in hopes of finding that they are capable of satisfying the problem of

38 In the process of developing the content of consciousness in the subject Blondel uncovers two inseparable facts: (1) the subject, in the process of acting, has disclosed the source of both voluntary action and the ascending movement of determinism and freedom; and (2) freedom has become an objectified, stratified end, making manifest the disproportion between the objective will and the primordial will. See L'Action(1893),p. 114; 127; 132.

39 Ibid., p. 148.

life.⁴⁰ Each step in the expansion, however, is found to be unsatisfactory; the phenomena are not able to fulfill the quest of the will. And, the subject cannot return to itself either.

...il est impossible de ne pas reconnaître l'insuffisance de tout l'ordre naturel et de ne point éprouver un besoin ultérieur; il est impossible de trouver en soi de quoi contenter ce besoin religieux. C'est nécessaire; et c'est impraticable. Voilà...les conclusions du déterminisme de l'action humaine.⁴¹

With this realization of the conflict, the phase of the dialectic dealing strictly with the realm of phenomena ends.

The second phase is a direct result of the failure of both the self and the phenomena to be sufficient for human self-adequation. The question of "something more" arises naturally in consciousness; "Impossible de ne point poser le problème. Impossible de trouver un refuge dans le néant; il n'est pas pour nous. Impossible de se contenter du 'quelque chose' où l'on cherche à s'enclorre."⁴² Therefore,

40 "Comment on essaye de définir par la science seule et de restreindre l'action dans l'ordre naturel. ...Peut-être l'édifice sera-t-il suffisant; peut-être que, sans sortir du phénomène et en le considérant comme tout ce qui est, j'aurai de mon action une idée complète et du problème de la vie une solution satisfaisante." Ibid., foot-note, p. 43-44.

41 Ibid., p. 319.

42 Ibid., p. 321-322. This something more which has been found within action is not simply a fact but a necessity: "...résultant du déterminisme total de la pensée et de la vie." Ibid., foot-note, p. 322.

...de ce conflit qui s'élève en toute conscience humaine, jaillit forcément l'aveu de "l'unique nécessaire". Qu'on sache ou non le nommer, c'est la voie où il est impossible de ne pas passer. Aussi n'est-ce pas d'en chercher une définition métaphysique qu'il s'agit ici; il faut l'étudier, non dans la mesure où la connaissance présume de pénétrer en lui, mais dans la mesure où son action pénètre et promeut la nôtre. Il entre, lui aussi, dans le dynamisme de la conscience: par la présence de cette pensée qui travaille sourdement les âmes, la vie volontaire revêt forcément un caractère de transcendance. Le conflit se résout donc en une alternative qui, en face des termes contradictoires du dilemme, exige une option suprême et permet seule à la volonté de se vouloir librement elle-même telle qu'elle souhaite d'être à jamais.⁴³

This phase is distinguished from the previous one because it deals with the option for or against the Uniquely Necessary, not the relative phenomena; as such, this phase is discussed in the Fifth Chapter of L'Action(1893).⁴⁴ The chapter itself is divided into two distinct sections: the conflict, where the Blondelian arguments for the existence of the Uniquely Necessary are presented; and the alternative, where the two opposing options are given.

The three arguments that present the proof of the necessary existence of the Uniquely Necessary are cosmological, teleological, and ontological. They are, nevertheless, really quite inseparable from one another, the first affirming the Uniquely Necessary as a necessary reality, the second affirming It as the ideal power which allows for

43 Ibid., foot-note, p. 338.

44 Entitled, "L'Etre nécessaire de l'action", p. 323-388.

self-adequation in the subject, and the third as the affirmation of the Uniquely Necessary as the perfection of both thought and being which makes it the synthesis of the two previous arguments. In the cosmological argument "...la nécessité relative du contingent nous révèle la nécessité absolue du nécessaire."⁴⁵ Beginning with the incapacity of the self to suffice for itself, the teleological argument discloses that "...Pour donner l'équation de notre action volontaire, il faut regarder en nous jusqu'où cesse ce qui est de nous."⁴⁶ The subject is found to be able to equal itself only through "...la médiation permanente d'une pensée et d'une action parfaites."⁴⁷ Lastly, Blondel presents his ontological argument. The order of these arguments is not a matter of indifference;⁴⁸ in order for this last of the arguments to carry any weight, it has to presuppose that the Uniquely Necessary has been shown to be discoverable in the reality of a contingent action in man (the first proof) and in the ideality of a final re-integration (the second proof). "...nous ne le saisissons pas lui-même en lui-même où nous ne sommes pas; mais nous partons de lui en nous où il est, afin de mieux voir qu'il est en comprenant un peu ce qu'il est."⁴⁹ From the real

45 Ibid., p. 344.

46 Ibid., p. 347.

47 Ibid., p. 346.

48 See, Ibid., p. 348-350.

49 Ibid., p. 348.

experience of insufficiency in human action, the Uniquely Necessary as free of these limitations is seen to be total perfection,

"...l'absolue équation de l'Être, du connaître, et de l'agir."⁵⁰

Because Blondel begins with the cosmological argument, he believes that he can legitimately say:

C'est donc dans la pratique même que la certitude de "l'unique nécessaire" a son fondement. En ce qui touche à la complexité totale de la vie, seule l'action est nécessairement complète et totale... Elle porte sur le tout; et c'est pourquoi d'elle et d'elle seule ressort l'indiscutable présence et la preuve contraignante de l'Être.⁵¹

From this moment the self is faced with an option to either accept or reject the intervening activity of the Uniquely Necessary.

...Être dieu sans Dieu et contre Dieu, Être dieu par Dieu et avec Dieu, c'est le dilemme. En face de l'Être, et de l'Être seulement, s'applique la loi de contradiction dans toute sa rigueur, et s'exerce la liberté dans toute sa force.⁵²

Thus the option is one either for the death of action in choosing against God, or one for the life of action choosing for God and the ability He presents to man to transcend himself.

At this point the reader enters into the third phase of the dialectic, that of the critique of religious action.⁵³ After the many controversies arising from L'Action(1893), Blondel wrote the

50 Ibid., p. 349.

51 Ibid., p. 350.

52 Ibid., p. 356.

53 "L'Achèvement de l'action", Chapters One and Two, p. 389-423.

letter of 1896 and, in 1903 (published in La Quinzaine, 1904), he offered his readers "Histoire et dogme."⁵⁴ In "Lettre"(1896) Blondel deals with this particular phase and the last one, with however, the experience of his critics' misunderstandings and disagreements partially behind him. In this article, he undertakes to show that "...qu'il faudrait supposer le surnaturel absent de la vie pour montrer qu'il est postulé par la pensée et l'action."⁵⁵ The implications of L'Action(1893) are stated briefly and clearly in the later work:

Puisque la philosophie, même en faisant la science intégrale de la pratique, ne peut empiéter sur ce que la pratique seule apporte d'incommunicable enseignement; puisque, même en étudiant le surnaturel, elle ne peut se prononcer sur sa présence de fait, sur sa forme historique et sur son opération actuelle, il devient loisible de discuter librement les questions qui intéressent la religion la plus positive sans qu'on la mette en cause ni pour se prononcer sur ce qu'elle offre ni pour usurper ce qu'elle se réserve.⁵⁶

The fact is that "...la science ne nous doit rien de plus et rien de moins que le nécessaire: elle n'a pas à dire si les conditions

54 See the following sources for a discussion and history of the controversies between history and dogma: the Modernist Controversy (1902-1907) and the Veterist Controversy (1907-1926): A. DRU and I. TRETHOWAN, "Introduction", in Maurice BLONDEL, History and Dogma, and the Letter, translated by A. Dru and I. Trethowan, Harvill Press, London, 1964, p. 19-33; and Jean LACROIX, Maurice Blondel: An Introduction to the Man and His Philosophy, translated by John C. Guinness, Sheed and Ward, New York, 1968, p. 43-49. (This last source tells something of Blondel's problems with his critics.)

55 Maurice BLONDEL, "Lettre"(1896), p. 21.

56 Ibid., p. 47.

qu'elle requiert sont réellement posées; mais, étant donné qu'elles le soient, ses exigences deviennent absolues."⁵⁷

PHENOMENOLOGY OR ONTOLOGY?

One may well question what happens to the phenomenological reserve in the last two of the above phases of the retrospective dialectic. However, just because Blondel has entered into proofs for the Uniquely Necessary and the question of an option for or against that Uniquely Necessary, does not mean that he has entered into the forbidden realm of ontology.

At the end of Phase One of the phenomenological dialectic Blondel departs from the insufficient realm of the phenomena because, by necessity, there has to be something more than the relative nothingness which is uncovered. The insufficiency of the willing self to fulfill itself is merely phenomenal, relative, in value.

Au nom même du déterminisme, il n'y a qu'une conclusion inévitable;...par son action volontaire l'homme dépasse les phénomènes; il ne peut égaler ses propres exigences; il a, en lui, plus qu'il ne peut employer seul; il ne réussit point, par ses seules forces, à mettre dans son action voulue tout ce qui est au principe de son activité volontaire.⁵⁸

Now, the last two phases of the phenomenological dialectic are but phenomenal in value, however necessary their conclusions might be. The proofs for the necessary existence of the Uniquely Necessary

57 Maurice BLONDEL, L'Action(1893), p. 406.

58 Ibid., p. 321.

actually constitute a farther phenomenological analysis of the will-willed in search for perfect identity with the primordial will. Thus, "Pour donner l'équation de notre action volontaire, il faut regarder en nous jusqu'où cesse ce qui est de nous."⁵⁹ The Uniquely Necessary, the absolute also finds its place "...dans le dynamisme de l'action. La science humaine n'a pas rechercher si c'est réel ni même si c'est possible: elle doit montrer, au nom du déterminisme, que c'est nécessaire."⁶⁰ Therefore, although Blondel affirms the necessary reality of the absolute (argument One), the ideal necessity of the absolute (argument Two), and the synthetic necessity or perfection of the absolute (argument Three), he must consider that supernatural as a notion because philosophy:

...même en faisant la science intégrale de la pratique, ne peut empiéter sur ce que la pratique seule apporte d'incommunicable enseignement; puisque, même en étudiant le surnaturel, elle ne peut se prononcer sur sa présence de fait, sur sa forme historique et sur son opération actuelle... .⁶¹

59 Ibid., p. 347. In his "Action et dialectique: les preuves de Dieu dans L'Action de 1893" (in Archives de philosophie, xxvi, 1963, p. 12), D HOTEL notes that the proofs are actually the means of discovering the source of the division in the will and the necessary direction man must take in order to reunite the fractionated primordial will. Already the need for a search beyond phenomena has been shown as an internal necessity; in the case of the Uniquely Necessary, it is not possible to begin where we are not, but only from ourselves, where we find the idea immanent in us. See Maurice BLONDEL, L'Action(1893), p. 344.

60 Ibid., foot-note, p. 388.

61 Maurice BLONDEL, "Lettre"(1896), p. 47.

It is only in action itself "...que la certitude de 'l'unique nécessaire' a son fondement. (...) Elle porte sur le tout; et c'est pourquoi d'elle et d'elle seule ressort l'indiscutable présence et la preuve contraignante de l'Etre."⁶² The thrust of the three proofs for the Uniquely Necessary in the retrospective-phenomenological dialectic merely brings the subject to the point of option for or against the supernatural without ontological preoccupations: "Il n'est besoin d'avoir résolu aucune question métaphysique pour vivre, si l'on peut dire, métaphysiquement."⁶³

The notion of the supernatural becomes the necessary destiny of the will, but not as a necessity of ends, rather, as a necessity of means arising from the analyzed thrust of that will itself and the disproportion found within it. The correct notion of the supernatural discoverable in this reflective analysis is what is "Absolument impossible et absolument nécessaire à l'homme..."⁶⁴ The supernatural as a real hypothesis and as an ideal necessity has its place in the realm of philosophy because it is founded in a thrust immanent to human consciousness, but its metaphysical or ontological necessity cannot be demonstrated by philosophy in this dialectical movement now.

62 Maurice BLONDEL, L'Action(1893), p. 350.

63 Ibid., p. 353.

64 Ibid., p. 388. "Etablir qu'il est impossible de porter, en ce sujet, une négation valide, c'est en effet maintenir, non point que 'c'est' (la foi étant, par hypothèse, un don gratuit), mais que 'c'est possible', puisqu'il n'est pas possible de prouver que c'est impossible." Ibid., p. 390.

What is left is for man to make his choice in action for or against that supernatural.

Ch. III, C. THE NATURE OF THE RETROSPECTIVE-
PHENOMENOLOGICAL DIALECTIC

The final task of this chapter is a discussion of the nature of the dialectic. First of all, the nature of this dialectic must be explained in terms of the difference between the direct and indirect methods of approach to the problem of human destiny. In conjunction with this, the meaning of retrospection will be given, as it is opposed to Blondelian prospection. Secondly, the retrospective dialectic will be found to have two distinct movements within its progress: the progressive and the regressive movements.

RETROSPECTION vs PROSPECTION AND THE DIRECT METHOD

Blondel often notes that there are two methods for approaching the problem of human destiny. The first is the most basic because it is the one that all men follow, the direct method.⁶⁵ The second, the indirect method, is that of the science of action, and more properly, the philosophical method needed for one to discover the necessity in action and the laws and conditions for its fulfillment. As a philosopher, Blondel's purpose is to propose a philosophical solution, using this indirect method; he could not present the spontaneous,

65 See Ibid., Introduction, p. vii-ix.

a-rational solution of each man's living experience. Yet, there is a point of meeting for these two methods, since both deal with human action and destiny.

...il y a en apparence deux méthodes, indirecte et directe, scientifique et pratique; mais ces deux méthodes doivent se rejoindre. Voilà pourquoi le mot destinée a lui-même deux sens; mais ces deux sens sont également légitimes. Ce mot équivoque désigne le développement nécessaire de la vie, indépendamment de toute intervention de l'homme dans la trame des événements qui se déroulent en lui et hors de lui; et il désigne, en même temps, la façon personnelle dont nous parvenons à nos fins dernières selon l'usage même de la vie et l'emploi de notre volonté.⁶⁶

At the start of his endeavor Blondel is not able to presuppose this meeting point lest he endanger the success of his project as a science. He instates an ethical epoche, abstaining from the ontological question for the duration of the phenomenological, reflectively analytical dialectic; there are no predetermined ethical standards.⁶⁷ This means

66 Ibid., p. 469-470.

67 Early in L'Action(1893) Blondel shows that he has to abstain from any predetermined ethical standards within the indirect method. Thus, in a manner somewhat like Descartes, Blondel brackets accepted moral imperatives in the practical realm, that is in the realm of the direct way, until which point the reflexive analysis can critically justify them. However, on the direct level, the strictly practical - living level, no one is able to be exempt from those moral imperatives. Blondel reiterates that no amount of speculation can possibly be sufficient for the direct method of approach. Therefore, no one is exempt from following the direct method of practice, even the philosopher, who is occupied with the indirect method. See Maurice BLONDEL, L'Action(1893), Introduction, p. vii-xxv. Thus, the abstention of the moral imperative is a matter of methodology most strictly. Yet, to abstain from the practical level of moral necessity would be absurd; it is the only real verification one has for the speculative throughout the coming analysis.

that the direct method is bracketed as is the inevitable existential affirmation of the natural knowledge of objects.

In science we have the indirect method. It has the three characteristics of specification of method, systematic organization of ideas or facts, and rigor of proof.⁶⁸ Since "La connaissance philosophique est spécifiquement distincte de toute autre"⁶⁹, it should be pointed out again how it differs from the other sciences, and direct knowledge. Philosophy differs, first and foremost, because its object is not particular, but total.⁷⁰ The problem is a question "...du tout de l'homme; ce n'est donc pas dans la pensée seule qu'on doit le chercher. C'est dans l'action qu'il va falloir transporter le centre de la philosophie, parce que là se trouve aussi le centre de la vie."⁷¹ So Blondel undertakes a reflexive analysis of action:

...il faut dérouler la série intégrale de nos idées inévitables et de nos conceptions solidaires, indépendamment des apparentes mutilations ou des restrictions partiales qu'y semble introduire l'intervention superficielle des décisions réfléchies, telle qu'elle se produit sous la préoccupation des problèmes ontologiques et moraux.⁷²

The reflective knowledge involved is as natural as the direct one,

68 See Part One, Chapter One, p. 10-19, this thesis.

69 Maurice BLONDEL, "Le Point de départ", I, p. 339.

70 See Ibid., II, p. 248.

71 Maurice BLONDEL, L'Action(1893), Introduction, p. xxiii.

72 Maurice BLONDEL, "Lettre"(1896), p. 39.

although, "...elle ne le reproduit, elle ne le supplée pas."⁷³

...par un retour qui ne semble pas moins naturel, pas moins humain que l'élan directe de la vie, nous agissons pour connaître; nous prenons notre action même et ses moyens et ses résultats et ses matériaux comme objet de notre attention.⁷⁴

In the Blondelian terminology reflective analysis is equated with retrospective analysis in opposition to what the Philosopher calls prospective synthesis as well as to the direct approach to the problem of human destiny. Retrospective analysis is reflection which "...vise les conditions antécédentes et efficaces du fait de conscience ou de la réalité donnée qui est l'objet de son étude et qu'elle rattache à des idées générales ou à des lois... ." ⁷⁵
Prospection, on the other hand, is "...la pensée orientée vers

73 Maurice BLONDEL, "Le Point de départ," I, p. 344.

74 Ibid., p. 342.

75 Maurice BLONDEL, "Réflexion," in Vocabulaire, p. 905.

l'action... ."76 Therefore, retrospective analysis is opposed, first of all, to the direct method which is spontaneous and singular in its object. Secondly, retrospective analysis is opposed to prospection which is directed towards action and is synthetic and finalistic. Prospection does not refer to "...les conditions antécédentes et efficientes du fait de conscience ou de la réalité donnée... ."77 The term "retrospective analysis", then, corresponds to the method of the phenomenological dialectic above.

76 Ibid., "Prospection", p. 846. It should be noted here that prospection is equated with the direct, spontaneous thought of the direct method in "Le Point de départ de la recherche philosophique" and defined as a type of reflection in Lalande's Vocabulaire. There is some inconsistency in these definitions. For now, we will present the differing definitions; later, the problem will be discussed in more detail: See Part Two, Chapter Three, p. 185-88 this thesis. In "Le Point de départ" Blondel defines prospection as "une première connaissance qui, parfaite en son genre, est directe, au service de nos desseins réels et actuels, liée à notre vie totale, tournée vers le futur qu'elle anticipe comme pour s'y appuyer déjà en le prévoyant et en l'évoquant, capable de croître en clarté et en précision sans rien perdre de son caractère synthétique et pratique." (I, p. 341). In Lalande's Vocabulaire he defines it as the word which "...désigne la pensée orientée vers l'action, la pensée concrète, synthétique, pratique, finaliste, envisageant le complexe total de la solution toujours singulière où se portent le désir ou la volonté, par opposition à la "rétrospection" ou "réflexion analytique" ...la prospection...comporte une attention...et ne doit pas être confondue avec la spontanéité ou l'élan des actes directs." ("Prospection", p. 846.)

77 Maurice BLONDEL, "Réflexion", in Vocabulaire, p. 905.

REGRESSIVE AND PROGRESSIVE MOVEMENTS OF THE DIALECTIC

However, within this retrospective analytic dialectic two different movements can be found. One is a function of the retrospective analysis itself, while the other movement is a function of what is analyzed: action. Action is a real, synthetic fact: "...le confluent en nous de la pensée et de la vie, de l'originalité individuelle et de l'ordre social et même total, de la science et de la foi... ."78 A proper analysis must take into account the very nature of action as a real synthesis by transposing "...le centre de la philosophie" into action "parce que là se trouve aussi le centre de la vie."79 Action is the synthesis of all a priori and a posteriori factors, since it

...doit constituer la synthèse de la spontanéité et de la réflexion, de la réalité et de la connaissance, de la personne morale et de l'ordre universel, de la vie intérieure de l'esprit et des sources supérieures où elle s'alimente.80

Thus, the retrospective analysis of action must disclose the source of action, which is found to be the primordial will, while still holding on to action as a synthesis. This task is achieved through two movements within the retrospective analysis: regressive and progressive.

78 Maurice BLONDEL, Itinéraire philosophique, Paris, Aubier, 1966(1927-28), propos recueillis par Frédéric Lefèvre, p. 36. "L'action est le double mouvement qui porte l'être au terme où il tend comme à une perfection nouvelle, et qui réintègre la cause finale dans la cause efficiente." Maurice BLONDEL, L'Action(1893), p. 467.

79 Maurice BLONDEL, L'Action(1893), Introduction, p. xxiii.

80 Maurice BLONDEL, "Action", in Vocabulaire, p. 21.

The regressive movement searches for necessity. In order to construct

...la science de la pratique et trouver l'équation de l'action, ce n'est donc pas seulement développer, devant la pensée réfléchie, tout le contenu de la conscience spontanée; mieux encore, c'est indiquer le moyen de réintégrer dans l'opération voulue tout ce qui est au principe de l'opération volontaire.⁸¹

After retrospective or reflective analysis moves from the empirical fact of the insufficiency of the positive sciences to the necessity of a science of action, it regressively unfolds subjectivity until it comes upon the primordial will, the root of all subjectivity, voluntary action, determinism, and freedom. Not satisfied with a mere unfolding of conscious activity, retrospection has to regressively show "...l'apparente nécessité de chaque étape résulte d'un vouloir implicite."⁸² The root of the necessary chains of determinism, and laws and conditions of human action and of the reintegration of the "wills" is found to be the primordial will a priori. In other words, a priori regressive analysis shows by what laws an expansion of action is possible and under what conditions a synthesis of the autonomous willing-will and the heteronomous willed-will is achievable.

81 Maurice BLONDEL, L'Action(1893), p. 469.

82 Ibid., p. 41. See Marc RENAULT, Déterminisme et liberté dans "L'Action" de Maurice Blondel, Lyon, Editions Emmanuel Vitte, 1965, 263 p., for a discussion of determinism and necessity in the Philosophy of Action.

As Duméry notes, under this form, the critical movement of L'Action (1893) is essentially a kind of "recapture" of action, not as it is contingent or living, but as it is necessary or lived.⁸³

Cartier speaks of what is here called the progressive movement of the retrospective dialectic.⁸⁴ Cartier calls this aspect an empirical analysis a posteriori, which he equates to the expansion of action. The necessity of this progressive expansion is called the necessity of the subjective fact. True, an analysis of the progressive or expansive movement of that primordial will through the successive stages and higher series of means in relation to ends was given in the dialectic. But, from the summary of the dialectic above, it should be clear that the necessity of the subjective fact is but a result of the a priori movement of the source will discovered under analysis. Therefore, the necessity of fact is reduced to the necessity of the conditions and laws for action and final integration. "Cette nécessité a posteriori résulte du mouvement a priori de la volonté."⁸⁵ It must be said, then, that the entire retrospective analysis of the dialectic is a regressive a priori analysis.

83 See Henry DUMERY, Raison et religion, p. 436.

84 See Albert CARTIER, Existence et vérité: philosophie blondélienne de l'action et problématique existentielle, Paris, Presses universitaires de France, 1955, p. 65-106.

85 Maurice BLONDEL, L'Action(1893), p. 281. "C'est l'initiative a priori de cette libre activité qui, en se déployant, doit reconstituer la nécessité à laquelle elle est soumise pour ainsi dire a posteriori." Ibid., p. 127.

Nevertheless, from the point of view of description, which the dialectic is also, an empirical a posteriori critique is present; action is always a factual synthesis of both a priori factors and a posteriori ones. Action as a synthesis of a priori's and a posteriori's is the very object of reflection. Still, though, the results of the retrospection, in the realm of the phenomenon of interior action and externalized action, in relation to the Uniquely Necessary, and, finally, in the realm of the phenomena of religious action, have only the weight of necessity revealed through the retrospective analysis in a phenomenological dialectic. That is why Blondel limits the function of philosophy to determining what is in thought and discovering the laws of action, "...sans jamais fournir l'être dont elle étudie la notion... ."86

What is left to be said, however, is that it must be remembered that the method of immanence - in the retrospective dialectic - has shown that "...dans chaque état de la nature et de l'esprit l'infini est présent, c'est-à-dire que sans sortir du fait nous devons déterminer en lui les relations internes qui en

86 Maurice BLONDEL, "Lettre"(1896), p. 66.

constituent la vérité et qui en sont la loi."⁸⁷ Therefore, philosophy provides a method of transcending the limitations of

87 Maurice BLONDEL, "Une des sources", II, p. 334.

Take note that Blondel is not equating "immanent" with "subjective" and "transcendent" with "objective" in the Kantian sense. Rather, he considers the idea as containing both the subjective and objective poles in the act of thinking. Immanence means that all ideas, whether of the completely transcendent or not, are immanent because they are our ideas. See Maurice BLONDEL, "Lettre"(1896), p. 39. This Kant would have seen if he had described all of what was in consciousness, of both thought and action. See, Ibid., p. 62. On this topic John J. MC NEILL notes that Blondel accepted the Kantian terms of noumenon and phenomenon. Further, he also agreed with the meaning of phenomenon: the phenomenal order was that knowable order which excluded the actually existing real, the noumenal, or the objective order of existentially existing beings. It was to imply only the subjective order of appearance by Kant. With Blondel also, the noumenal meant, positively, the intelligible acquired in an intellectual intuition, and, negatively, the thing-in-itself which could not be presented in a sense intuition. However, for Kant, no intellectual intuition was possible. As a result, all knowledge was of the phenomenal order received in sense intuition under the proper a priori schemata. Metaphysical objects, objective morality, and so on, were unknowables. Real intellectual intuition was considered to be possible by the Philosopher of Aix (actually, his intellectual intuition was moral; see, Part Two, Chapter One, p. 111-16, this thesis), and so, both noumenal and phenomenal objects fall under the category of the knowable. John J. MC NEILL, The Blondelian Synthesis, p. 61-62.

In one of his contributions to André Lalande's Vocabulaire Blondel made quite clear his feelings about the division between the phenomenon and the noumenon. "C'est sans doute à Parménide que, philosophiquement, il convient de rapporter l'opposition radicale - trop radicale et artificielle - de ce qui paraît et de ce qui est. Cette distinction de l'être et du phénomène ne supporte d'ailleurs pas un examen critique approfondi: car, pour l'affirmer verbalement et pour la réaliser mentalement, on est forcé de concevoir en même temps le phénomène comme être, et l'être comme représentation subjective et phénoménale; en sorte que cette opposition se ramène partiellement à celle du subjectif et de l'objectif, comme cette opposition elle-même serait réductible à d'autres, jusqu'au moment où l'on verrait qu'il faut poser le problème en termes moins purement analytiques et abstraits." Maurice BLONDEL, "Phénomène", in Vocabulaire, p. 767. That problem was to be posed and solved by studying action.

SUMMARY

The raison d'être of Chapter Three is a discussion of the Blondelian immanent dialectic, with special emphasis on the method of immanence and the retrospective analysis. The first section of this chapter deals with the method of immanence in so far as it is a denial of the doctrine of immanence and is the foundation of the immanent judgment of adequation. The second section presents the workings of the immanent dialectic in synopsis form and poses the question whether or not there is any ontology involved in the last two segments of the dialectic. Section Three presents a consideration of the nature of the retrospective-phenomenological immanent dialectic, opposing it to both prospection and the direct method of approach to the problem of human destiny. Two movements, progressive and regressive, have been disclosed in the immanent dialectic.

It has been shown that Blondel is confronted with two views that he feels he must join in order to both fulfill his purpose and to follow the main path of modern philosophy. On the one hand, if he is to construct the basis for a Catholic philosophy of religion, he must retain the transcendence of the objects of faith. On the other hand, he believes that modern philosophy was correct in maintaining a notion of immanence for its approach to philosophical problems. Blondel's specific solution to these two seemingly contradictory polls is to retain the notion by way of a method, that is, in fact, the very antidote to the doctrine of immanence. The method of immanence means,

for the Philosopher of Aix, that everything is immanent to the human intellect in so far as it is an idea present to consciousness. The method is an attempt to equate in consciousness what man appears to think, will, and do with that which he does think, will, and do. In this way, the laws of action, and the basic affirmations and needs of the primordial will would be revealed in a dialectic of necessity and freedom. What differentiates the method from the doctrine is that the method, unlike the doctrine, does not claim to found the givens of consciousness as coming from the human intellect, but as they are received. This means that a method of immanence cannot produce a transcendent or exclude it. Immanent judgment becomes, then, a problem of adequation, a problem of adequation on all levels of human existence.

The synopsis of the dialectic shows the progression from the phenomena as an object of the will to the Uniquely Necessary, and finally to the critique of religious action and how it fulfills the will's search for adequation. The dialectic moves through a thesis and antithesis of necessity and freedom, moving constantly higher and higher, leaving behind many a set of insufficiencies. The question, however, can be legitimately asked whether Blondel is still doing a phenomenology and not an ontology in the second and third phases of his retrospective dialectic. According to the Master of Aix, he is still within the realm of phenomenology because he is not making a statement of the necessity of the reality of the Uniquely Necessary. Only action itself proves, so to speak, the real reality of the

Uniquely Necessary.

The Third Section of this chapter compares the retrospective movement of the dialectic with prospection and the direct method of solving the problem of human destiny. Philosophy is a science, and therefore, proceeds by way of the indirect method of reflexive analysis of action. It does, however, meet with the direct method which is the approach of all men to the problem of human destiny by way of action itself. Moreover, philosophy's reflexive analysis is distinguished from prospective synthesis, which is directed towards producing action and is finalistic. Reflexive analysis is retrospective analysis which takes the antecedent and efficient conditions of the facts found in consciousness, either as given or originating there, and attempts to uncover the laws and general ideas of action. Farther, the retrospective dialectic can be divided into two movements, one regressive and the other progressive. Both are truly movements within the retrospective analysis; however, one is reducible to a function of the analysis itself, while the other is a product of what is analyzed, action. The search is for the necessary laws of action in the regression; the movement of the progression shows the expansion of action in the retrospective dialectic. Both movements, says Blondel, originate in the movement of the primordial will. These together give the description of the retrospective dialectic. Moreover, this section shows that the limit on philosophy, restricting it to a-ontological realms, still opens the way to the transcendent by the method of immanence. By way of the retrospective analysis

of the will-willing in relation to the will-willed, the internal relations which constitute the truth and laws of the transcendent, in so far as it is present within the aspirations of the will, can be determined.

What is left to consider in this thesis is whether Blondel has, by using the method of immanence and a phenomenological retrospective dialectic, provided an integration of being and thought in thought in some way. Therefore, Part Two of this project is concerned with, first, the meaning and place of action in the philosophy of Maurice Blondel, and secondly, the way in which he presents an integration of the factors involved. This second section is composed of three chapters: one on the object of the philosophy, action; the second on Blondel's central study of ideogenesis, and the third, on the elements of the solution to the problem of the relationship between thought and reality.

PART TWO

THE SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM

The Philosopher's central purpose is to supply the foundation for a philosophy of religion that would show the relationship between the Transcendent reality of Christianity and our immanent knowledge thereof. In order to succeed in this endeavor, Blondel cannot help but consider the more general problem of the relationship between all human thought and all the reality to which we are exposed. The problem touches on both the supernatural and the natural realms of "reality". Our primary concern here is the more general problem because it incorporates both the natural epistemological problem and the problem of a philosophy of religion, as defined in the above terms.

Like the large majority of modern and contemporary philosophers, Blondel insists that philosophy be a science. But, philosophy must also be distinguished from the positive sciences; it is responsible for studying the totality. Therefore, the first question Blondel must answer in his philosophical effort has to be this: by means of what methodology can we hope to solve the dilemma of the correspondence between thought and reality in the totality without prematurely answering that question and thus usurping the proper dignity of philosophy as a scientific discipline? Within the confines of the first part of this thesis we find that Blondel proposes a method composed of a psychological attitude of doubt, a

phenomenological description and epoche, and an analytic retrospective immanent dialectic. Although we found it expedient to present this method in three chapters, it is really one method with one single purpose: to solve the philosophical problem of the relationship between thought and reality in thought when it can be properly solved, and not before.

Therefore, the method is as much preventative as it is progressive. The attitude of doubt makes the philosopher wary of all premature solutions and insufficient paths towards the answer to the problem. The cautious attitude must be retained from start to finish. But, the doubt must be implemented in such a way that philosophy is not put completely at a standstill. Blondel finds that an immanent phenomenological dialectic fits his needs. He can investigate the totality by means of studying the contents of man's consciousness in a complete and exhaustive manner while, at the same time, bracketing the ontological question of the real existence of the phenomena of things and of human action. Only when the ontological question necessarily arises as a function of the science can that question be considered and an answer proposed. The entire purpose of our last part has been to present these methods and their necessary use; the goal of this present division is to show how they are implemented by Blondel and what solution he proposes to the problem of the relationship between thought and reality in thought.

The methods are not the only factors which make for Blondel's solution to this problem. It is essential to realize at the very beginning of this segment that action is the central figure in the Blondelian solution to the problem of the relationship between thought and reality in thought. The perpetual presence of action is already implicit in the methodology: Blondel's phenomenological analysis is of action. But, Blondel was by no means the first modern or contemporary thinker to attempt a dialectico-critical analysis - an obvious fact.¹ However, he was the first in his tradition to realize that if philosophy is to present a total explanation, it must study living action because it is there that one finds "le centre de la vie."² The true character of that action, both in so far as it is living, and in so far as it is the object of his philosophy has yet to be made clear.

Living action is essentially unstratified, moving. Action is the human as he is an ego-acting and it is the a priori synthesis of all that comes before its power.

L'action doit constituer la synthèse de la spontanéité et de la réflexion, de la réalité et de la connaissance, de la personne morale et de l'ordre universel, de la vie intérieure de l'esprit et des sources supérieures où elle s'alimente.³

But, there is not one action in time which constitutes this a priori

1 See Part One, Chapter Three, p. 54-91, this thesis.

2 Maurice BLONDEL, L'Action(1893), Introduction, p. xxiii.

3 Maurice BLONDEL, "Action", in Vocabulaire, p. 21.

synthesis; action is a constantly higher and higher synthesis, progressively moving toward adequation of the points of the triangle of knowing with willing with being. "Agir, c'est chercher cet accord du connaître, du vouloir, et de l'être, et contribuer à le produire ou à le compromettre."⁴ Action always strives for what we oftentimes, offhandedly, call the well-integrated life, a goal never completely attained, but eternally sought after by the ego.

Ma réalité ce n'est pas ce que je suis à cette seconde, ce que j'étais il y a dix ans ou ce que je serai dans dix jours: c'est la série même de toutes les positions de ce mobile que je suis, ramenée à l'unité d'une intuition, sous la loi qui s'impose à mon progrès et qui juge ma vie.⁵

Now, Blondel defines philosophy as "...la vie même prenant conscience et direction d'elle même... ." ⁶ What more proper object can it consider but action?

La philosophie commence donc lorsqu'elle se propose, de façon expresse, l'étude de dénivellement intérieur, pour tendre à une coïncidence progressive de l'implicite et de l'explicite; son objet propre, c'est l'action.⁷

However, designating action as the object of the Blondelian endeavor does not mean objectification; it is for this reason that Mc Neill is perfectly right in declaring that action is more correctly specified

4 Maurice BLONDEL, L'Action(1893), p. 467.

5 Maurice BLONDEL, "Le Point de départ", II, p. 233.

6 Ibid., II, p. 227.

7 Ibid., II, p. 235.

as the center of perspective or the instrument of the Philosophy of Action.⁸

But, philosophy is still properly a science, and as the specific science that it is, it is reflective, critical, and it works with phenomena that it orders according to its own special methods. It focusses its analytic eye on our action, "ses moyens et ses résultats et ses matériaux."⁹ Simply as a reflective analysis, it can, then, only hope to reveal each synthesis and each of the representations that these syntheses leave behind. So, although the Philosophy of Action is to be clarifying of life, it never has the clarity and sufficiency of life itself. "Il est indispensable de montrer que l'expérimentation pratique comporte une suffisante clarté; qu'elle supplée à la science, sans que la science y supplée... ." ¹⁰ In the process of clarifying, philosophy introduces a certain degree of artificiality that is not found in life as it is living. For example, in the phenomenological analysis of the genesis of our idea of freedom (and the concomitant genesis of our idea of necessity), the artificial character is noted by Blondel as a result of the science:

8 See John J. MC NEILL, The Blondelian Synthesis, p. 70-72; 94-98. "N'est donc pas un objet hypothétique, une fiction idéale; c'est la réalité immanente qui enveloppe l'origine et le terme dont notre pensée actuelle est l'effet et le moyen. ...le mot action semble bien choisi; car il comprend à la fois la puissance latente, la réalisation connue, le pressentiment confus de tout ce qui, en nous, produit, éclaire et aime le mouvement de la vie." Maurice BLONDEL, "Le Point de départ", II, p. 234-235.

9 Maurice BLONDEL, "Le Point de départ", I, p. 342.

10 Maurice BLONDEL, L'Action(1893), p. 470.

Et de même que le déterminisme antécédent a paru indispensable à la manifestation de la libre volonté, de même le déterminisme conséquent est une condition intégrante de la liberté. Ce double aspect n'est même qu'une vérité unique; car la façon de diviser et d'ordonner les choses dans le temps n'est souvent qu'un artifice d'analyse.¹¹

There seems to be a contradiction between the demand on philosophy that it give a total explanation by studying living action and the limitation on the science's competence because it is analytical and reflective. If philosophy is truly only abstract in its results, it "ne fait donc que s'attacher à l'ombre projetée et éparpillée, non au corps même de l'être, dans sa solidité et son intégrité. Elle ne saurait aboutir qu'à des généralités et à des idéalités."¹² In the study of living action, that will just not do.¹³ In order to overcome this impasse in his endeavor, Blondel inserts a factor so necessary that, without it, his work would be no different from those philosophical systems under which he was educated. This factor is again, action - but not only as the object of his philosophy. Living action actually controls philosophy for the Master of Aix. What Blondel really means when he insists that philosophy study living action is that it must always refer to practice.

11 Ibid., p. 143.

12 Maurice BLONDEL, "Le Point de départ", I, p. 348.

13 See, Etienne GILSON, "Maurice Blondel", in Recent Philosophy: Hegel to the Present, New York, Random House, 1962, p. 360-361. "His initial 'no' was directed against the notion of a philosophy of the 'abstract'. Only the concrete is real. His own position always remained in the concrete, beyond both singularity and universality."

Philosophy cannot even begin "lorsque, non contente de se référer à l'idée de l'action comme à son objet propre, elle se subordonne à l'action effective et devient 'pratiquante'."¹⁴ Thus, although there is nothing as sufficient as the living system, philosophy does possess some degree of adequacy because it does (and must) proceed under the auspices of life by constant reference to living action, albeit, in a reflective and analytical way. Philosophy is properly reflective (retrospective) only when it proposes to itself "...initialement comme tâche d'élucider la synthèse intégrale de la prospection."¹⁵ To see the full impact of what has just been said, we must consider how philosophy, with its limited competence and its object as living action, supplies a solution to the philosophical problem of the relationship between thought and reality in thought. That is, after all, the key issue in this thesis.

The Philosophy of Action is presented with an edict: "...de la pensée à la pratique et de la pratique à la pensée, le cercle doit être fermé dans la science parce qu'il l'est dans la vie."¹⁶ The results of analysis alone (revealing each synthesis and each representation arising from it), coupled with the control and constant input of prospection allows for Blondel's investigation to complete

14 Maurice BLONDEL, "Le Point de départ", II, p. 239.

15 Ibid., p. 226. My emphasis.

16 Maurice BLONDEL, L'Action(1893), p. 469.

the circle of life in a reflective, although still relatively insufficient, way. We are told that the striving for self-integration is a quite real and necessary problem; it is the problem of human destiny.¹⁷ That problem translated into a question of philosophy becomes one of the problem of interior adequation of the will-willing with the will-willed. When Blondel finds the solution to this problem within the Philosophy of Action, he will have solved the dilemma of human destiny (and action) in the realm of philosophical thought.

En posant le problème de l'équation intérieure, la philosophie pose du même coup le problème de l'universelle réalité, sous la seule forme où il peut être résolu. Du moi apparent au moi intégral, il y a en effet un infini à franchir, à remplir. Pour m'égaliser et me posséder, j'ai l'univers et Dieu à mettre dans ce besoin d'être, d'éternité, de bonheur qui me constitue.¹⁸

Before the solution can be achieved, Blondel must analyse the élan and the exigencies of all human action - thinking, willing and acting. By meticulously analyzing each and every manifestation of human action, the Master of Aix reveals, not only the syntheses of action and their results, but also, a logic of action; this is what he has been striving

17 "Aussi, quelque apparente disproportion qu'il y ait entre ce que je sais, ce que je veux et ce que je fais; quelque redoutables que puissent être les conséquences de mes actes; même si, capable de me perdre, mais non de m'échapper à moi-même, je suis, jusqu'au point où il serait meilleur pour moi de n'être pas, il faut que toujours, pour être, je veuille être, dussé-je porter en moi la douloureuse contradiction de ce que je veux et de ce que je suis." Ibid., introduction, p. xxiii.

18 Maurice BLONDEL, "Le Point de départ", II, p. 236-237.

for. The results, in turn, can be reintegrated into practice, for "La prospection ne devient strictement philosophique qu'en se proposant initialement comme tâche de réintégrer en elle toutes les conquêtes fragmentaires de la réflexion."¹⁹

Still, however, Blondel's meaning of action needs clarification. The philosopher offers many definitions of action throughout his works. The most concise of these are found in the foot-notes of Lalande's Vocabulaire. There the Philosopher of Aix makes clear that the proper object of his philosophy (and, most perfect and inclusive) is the human action of thinking or contemplation. There is a distinction among various understandings of the term made: to do or make, to act, and to think. Action generally expresses "...ce qui est à la fois principe, moyen, et terme d'une opération."²⁰

In its first sense, action means the ability to model "...une matière extérieure à l'agent, à incarner une idée, à faire coopérer, pour une création artificielle, diverses puissances physiques ou idéales."²¹ This action, upon which all knowledges of the phenomena directly depend, is the incarnation of concepts and ideas in reason in order that the will can make itself adequate by knowing things. Secondly, the term action refers to the fashioning of the agent's own members so that he may live a moral life by way of his free and

19 Ibid., II, p. 226-227.

20 Maurice BLONDEL, "Action", in Vocabulaire, p. 20.

21 Idem.

reasoned exercise of action in its individual, social, superstitious, and religious manifestations. "L'action peut consister à façonner l'agent même, à sculpter ses membres et ses habitudes, à faire vivre l'intention morale dans l'organisme, à spiritualiser ainsi la vie animale elle-même, et, par elle, la vie sociale."²²

The final and most crucial definition for Blondel's purpose is action as contemplation. "L'action à réaliser la pensée en ce qu'elle a de plus universel, d'éternel; la contemplation, au sens fort et technique, est l'action par excellence."²³ In this most perfect sense Blondel finds the expression of the perfect unity of knowledge and being, "...que préparent les conflits provisoires et subalternes de toutes les puissances extérieures, intérieures, supérieures enfin réconciliées, hiérarchisées, actualisées."²⁴ This third meaning of action expresses the unity of the two previous ones with contemplation, the highest synthetic a priori action.²⁵

Because man possesses an intellect and reason, he is unique in his approach to the totality; he concentrates, understands, utilizes the entire universe as his own. By action he "...produit, éclaire, et

22 Idem.

23 Ibid., p. 20-21.

24 Ibid., p. 21.

25 "Dans le troisième cas l'action contemplative semble s'opposer aux démarches et à l'agitation discursive de la médiation ou de la pratique; mais en réalité elle exprime l'unité parfaite de l'être et de la connaissance." Idem.

aimante le mouvement de la vie."²⁶ Action -

...il s'agit de la réalité déjà contenue en nous, de l'aspiration positive qui stimule le développement de la pensée distincte et de la vie morale en chaque homme. ...il y a, dans l'action...un principe interne qui oriente, exige, juge pensées et actes fragmentaires.²⁷

Contemplation is the general action under which all other individual human actions have their kingdoms. Whether we consider reason as action or society as action, they all are contemplation - the real infinite in man, the synthetic a priori. And, lest there still be any doubt, consider the Master of Aix's statement in the Letter of 1896:

...et par ce mot (action), il faut entendre l'acte concret de la pensée vivante qui nous exprime à nous-même avec tout le reste, sans que nous égalions jamais la moindre de nos idées, aussi bien que l'initiative par laquelle nos instincts, nos désirs et nos intentions s'expriment dans tout le reste, sans que notre effort perpétuellement renouvelé pour nous atteindre nous égale à nous-même.²⁸

What has become of our solution to the aspect of the problem of the one and the many, that problem of the relationship between thought and reality in thought? We have seen that philosophy itself is not reality, nor can it furnish reality. Only living moves in and out of thought and reality because it is essentially acting - on all levels. Philosophy, however, must study living action in consciousness;

26 Maurice BLONDEL, "Le Point de départ", II, p. 234-5.

27 Ibid., II, p. 235.

28 Maurice BLONDEL, "Lettre"(1896), p. 65.

this means that the science really studies the relationship between thought and the real in the act of thinking (contemplation). It is these two terms - thought and the real in thought - that are to be reunited so that the circle can be completed within the realm of science as well as in the realm of life. Analysis of thinking, not just the products of that essential human action, should supply the solution to our problem because it shows the reintegration of the will-willing with the will-willed within thinking.

The singular result of Blondel's analysis is the disclosure of the necessary conditions for the attainment of the real adequation of the will-willing with the will-willed both in thinking and in living action. These inescapable guidelines are the laws of human action, which are incorporated into a general logic of action under which all other logics fall. This logic of action shows the scientific necessity by which all actions are propagated, representing the ultimate means of attaining the real integration of being and human thought in life.

Eh, bien, en nous montrant qu'en nous même l'action... en montrant, dis-je, que notre action immanente reste transcendante à tout équilibre provisoirement obtenu par elle et à toute connaissance extraite d'elle, on rend à la philosophie le service de lui fournir la seule matière et la seule forme qui, s'adaptant l'une à l'autre, la constituent selon son essence même. D'un côté, en effet, son objet précis et son idéal toujours présent c'est de déterminer le contenu, les relations internes et les requêtes de l'action, sans prétendre jamais y pourvoir, même quand elle les définit rigoureusement selon une loi de nécessité.²⁹

29 Idem.

We shall show the Blondelian solution in three chapters. The first of these chapters shall deal with the key intuition of the philosophy. We will find that the intuition of the ego, who is essentially acting, is the living intuition of philosophy, according to Blondel. Through its natural activity, the ego is synthetic a priori action and the explanation for all our powers of thinking and acting in the exterior world. Ultimately, it allows man to possess reality by means of all of his acts.

In our second chapter we shall find that Blondel's study is of the process of thinking, the human action par excellence. It is by this process that we know and make ourselves adequate to ourselves and the universe around us within the capacity we have as finite beings. It is our action of transcendence by which we free ourselves from the contingencies with which we are confined as material beings. The basic characteristics of our genesis of ideas will also be distilled.

Chapter Three will present the actual solution to the problem of the relationship between thought and reality in thought. This means that the ontological question has finally presented itself within the Blondelian effort and it is the role of metaphysics to the second power to explain how the question arises and by what means it must be answered. Secondly, we will see the complete role of action in this solution in Part B of the chapter. We should not need to repeat this, but, without action, in its most committed sense, the Blondelian philosophy could not supply the solution to this problem at any level whatsoever.

PART TWO

CHAPTER ONE

THE KEY INTUITION OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF ACTION

While living action is the object of the philosophy, the central resident living in Blondel's thought is the intuition of the ego as action. This ground source of all human action is not disclosed in L'Action(1893) until after the analysis of both sensation and the positive sciences give rise to the need for a science of the subject, a science of action. However, the source is really constantly present in the entire dialectic from start to finish. In fact, it is subjectivity which is uncovered as such only at the end of Step One, that makes sensate and scientific experience viable paths to the knowledge of phenomena. Because of the dynamism of the within within of the subject, there is a necessary drive in the subject to conquer all through knowledge, willing, and beyond into the realm of being. Subjectivity explains the entire thrust of Blondel's (in-)famous doctoral dissertation. Thus, this chapter, especially, strives to show the why and where-for of the movement of the dialectic of the will-willing and the will-willed in its progression toward completion.

Ch. I, A. THE FOUNDATION OF ACTION

In L'Action(1893) we discover that the analysis of sensation and positive science brings out the need for a study of human action apart from the limitations of both positive science and sensation. In the beginning of this part we noted that action is an a priori synthesis - and the source of all synthesis.¹ Action has its source in man in subjectivity, the original a priori synthetic action. Subjectivity is "...une opération immanente à la diversité des parties, une idée organique, une action originale qui échappe à la connaissance positive au moment où elle la rend possible."² But from this standpoint alone, subjectivity is seen only in its surface view; we merely touch the exteriority (without) or dehors of subjectivity. The within disclosed in the analysis of perception and scientific action itself possesses an interiority or a dedans.³ But, there are some things

1 See Part Two, Chapter Two, p. 119-47, this thesis, for a discussion of action as a synthetic a priori in thinking.

2 Maurice BLONDEL, L'Action(1893), p. 87.

3 The notion of interiority is not restricted completely to human subjectivity. In Lalande's Vocabulaire Blondel seems to indicate that all the layers of 'reality' possess something of a within which gives them unity. In line with L'Action(1893) we will call this interiority, which shows itself in the act of that layer. See Maurice BLONDEL, "Acte", in Vocabulaire, p. 16. Also, J.M. SOMERVILLE, Total Commitment: Blondel's "L'Action", p. 95. Anyone really interested in the possible similarity between Blondel and Fr. P. Teilhard de Chardin on this point and others might consult William Whitman's translation of Henri de LUBAC'S presentation of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Maurice Blondel: Correspondence, New York, Herder and Herder, 1967(1965), 174 p.

that can be said about the exteriority of subjectivity.

First of all, empirically - if one can really make use of this term within the science of action - it is the exteriority of subjectivity that shows itself through action, giving a ground-root unity called the subject. In other words, there is a subjective fact that posits actions, although it is only discoverable insofar as it acts. Again, in Lalande's Vocabulaire Blondel defines act as the way in which we show ourselves as existing substances.

C'est l'aspect intérieur et unification de ce que nous nous représentons comme cause ou comme fait, le principe à la fois réel et formel de ce que nous concevons comme subsistant et comme connaissable. Le fait même n'est perçu qu'en fonction d'une acte, qui dans le connaissant comme dans le connu exprime ou suppose une unité organisatrice.⁴

As the quotation indicates, there is an exteriority to subjectivity simply because there is a real interiority of subjectivity as well. Thus, all subjectivity is a dedans or an interiority within an interiority. Human subjectivity is unique in that, although it is a member of the universal determinism, it surpasses that determinism with a higher synthesis which in no way is reducible to its parts.

Ce n'est pas un produit, c'est comme une synthèse originale qui donne plus qu'elle n'emprunte à ses conditions: triple relation qu'il importe de préciser, en esquissant l'embryogénie mentale.⁵

The nature of irreducibility and syntheticity means that subjectivity

4 Maurice BLONDEL, "Acte", in Vocabulaire. p. 16.

5 Maurice BLONDEL, L'Action(1893), p. 90.

must be, ultimately, a within within. Subjective interiority is like an infinitesimal point, a spontaneous and dynamic force, into which all flows and becomes super-charged with energy.⁶ Energy charging generates spontaneous multi-centers (active centers of perspective) which mediate the total system in a stimulus-plus-response way. These centers of partial equilibrium evolve into more complex systems within the total. When organization becomes sufficiently complex, life appears. Life, in turn, interiorizes the system and becomes a center of perception (a function of subjective conscious life). In André Lalande's Vocabulaire Blondel has something to say about his meaning of "life" which we make note of here. In referring to Leibniz' statement in a letter to Wagner ("Dans un sens dérivé, la vie est principe de perception d'assimilation, et de participation au tout. 'Vita est principium perceptivum.' Lettre de Leibniz à Wagner, Erdmann, 466 A"), Blondel says this of life:

Et cette "perception" qui "exprime" et digère l'univers en un centre original de perspective et d'action spécifiée, constitue l'être en son unité interne tout en le rattachant à la Vie, au sens le plus fort du mot: en sorte qu'on ne peut dire qu'il y ait "opposition" entre les sens biologique et spirituel du mot.⁷

6 As with freedom and the other discoverable contents within consciousness, this explanation of the origin of subjectivity and human life is only on the phenomenal level. Blondel is not saying that this is the being of the subject or the creation of subjectivity on the real, ontological level. We are concerned with the phenomena of action and the knowledge of phenomena, be it external or internal in source. This explanation is a product of the phenomenological retrospective analysis, and, therefore, cannot properly be called ontological.

7 Maurice BLONDEL, "Vie", in Vocabulaire, p. 1206-1207.

By life Blondel means, at least in the present selection, perceptive human life, and not any other type of cosmic life. Although, insofar as human consciousness is a center to which all of the totality is referred, conscious human subjective life does include all cosmic life. This is why Blondel can call philosophy "La vie prenant conscience et direction d'elle-même..."⁸; it studies that center of perspective and perception, human subjectivity.

With the appearance of human conscious life there arises a very new and very original complex unity that is infinitely more than all the influences on it, although these antecedent centers remain immanent to it. "Le supérieur porte en soi et représente à lui seul tous ses antécédents, sans qui l'inférieur, à côté, au-dessous, ou au dedans, cesse de garder sa nature et sa place."⁹

Giving support to consciousness deep within, we should never forget, is interior subjectivity, a priori synthetic action. Thus, the subjective fact that we saw in act as an exterior subjectivity not only presents itself as a unified object, but, because it is essentially active, also makes itself in infinitum.

8 Maurice BLONDEL, "Le Point de départ", II, p. 227.

9 Maurice BLONDEL, L'Action(1893), p. 97. This principle of synthesis holds for all stages of the dialectic, as we should expect in light of the nature of action.

Il convient peut-être de marquer davantage, selon la terminologie de Maine de Biran, le caractère concret, intérieur, singulier de cet être qui existe non seulement en soi, mais pour soi, et qui, ne se bornant pas à être un objet, visible du dehors ou délimité par des contours logiques, n'a sa véritable réalité qu'en contribuant à se faire lui-même, à partir sans doute d'une nature donnée et selon des exigences intimement subies, mais par un devenir volontaire et une conquête personnelle. Le sujet n'est pas, comme du fini; il croît in infinitum.¹⁰

Interior subjectivity is both en soi and pour soi because it is the ultimate source of all human action. It is because of the root synthetic a priori action that human consciousness and the many other higher **complexification of forces** (reason, freedom, and so on) is capable of dealing with the multiplicity of phenomena in a more universal way and even add to the totality by human action, be it moral, physical, or intellectual. Man is a "Microcosme...le sommaire de toutes les expériences, de toutes les inventions et de toutes les ingéniosités de la nature, extrait et produit original de tout l'ensemble."¹¹

Consequently, the science of action has something quite different to deal with than any of the positive sciences. It must eliminate all the excess which hides this interiority of subjectivity in order to, first, dig down to subjectivity in all its purity, and, secondly, to uncover all the contents of subjectivity as they necessarily arise in consciousness within the movement of the dialectic. "Il est nécessaire de prendre le phénomène de conscience en lui-même,

10 Maurice BLONDEL, "Sujet", in Vocabulaire, p. 1067.

11 Maurice BLONDEL, L'Action(1893), p. 95.

de l'abstraire des représentations objectives où il se mêle...et de le saisir dans toute sa pureté."¹²

Ch. I, B. THE INTUITION OF THE EGO-ACTING

The disclosure of the interiority of the subjective fact as the ultimate action-source implies, at the same time, the central intuition of the ego as action in the Blondelian philosophy. In the earlier parts of this thesis, we briefly noted a difference between Blondel and Descartes concerning the nature of their intuitions central to their respective philosophies.¹³ It is this problem that we return to now.

Quite early in L'Action(1893) Blondel arrives at the first statement of his central philosophical intuition: Si non fallor, sum. It is a Cartesian-like statement which ultimately resists all doubt. The question answered when si non fallor, sum appears is whether the last will to act can be eliminated by pessimism. In answer, Blondel

¹² Ibid., p. 98. The true science of the subject "...est celle qui, considérant dès le point de départ l'acte de conscience comme un acte, en découvre par un progrès continu l'inévitable expansion. Elle cherche l'équation de l'action, c'est-à-dire que se proposant d'en développer tout le contenu, son dessein est de déterminer quel en est le terme nécessaire d'après la force même du mouvement initial d'où procède l'acte et qui se marque à chaque effort de son développement. C'est donc dans l'oeuvre même de la volonté... comme un objet plus ou moins fictif, mais ce qui est en elle, ce qu'elle est déjà par cela seul qu'elle veut et non par ce qu'elle veut." Ibid., p. 100-101.

¹³ See Part One, Chapter One, p. 19-28, this thesis for our previous discussion of this topic.

shows that the will "...subsiste toujours...qui domine de son inévitable présence toutes les formes de l'existence ou de l'anéantissement."¹⁴ To will is the common term. That is the basic thrust of the Blondelian intuition in its first form: If I am not deceived, I am.

Again, however, we have another, different manifestation of that same intuition in the analysis of the segment of the phenomenology that we have just reviewed. It is not in classical hypothetical propositional form like si non fallor, sum. Rather, the intuition of the ego as action is what Blondel is really taking notice of when he uncovers the exteriority and the interiority of the subject.¹⁵ The human ego is naturally both an en soi and a pour soi, both objectified in showing itself by positing actions, and by becoming itself in personal conquest of itself (willing-will and willed-will) and of the cosmos (knowledge and control of the phenomena). In all actuality, neither of these manifestations really completely engenders the fullness of the Blondelian intuition of the ego as action.¹⁶ This, in

14 Maurice BLONDEL, L'Action(1893), p. 37.

15 See Maurice BLONDEL, "Sujet", in Vocabulaire, p. 1067.

16 Despite the difference between the two instances of the intuition that have been mentioned (minimally, the first is a short, concise form; the second more fully illustrates the intuition) our discussion will be primarily concerned with si non fallor, sum: (1) because of its similarity in format to the Cartesian cogito; (2) because of its placement so early in L'Action(1893); (3) because both forms illustrate the same basic moral intuition; (4) because the same points hold for a qualitatively complex intuition in both of the cases.

essence, is what differentiates the Blondelian intuition from the Cartesian Cogito ergo sum.

In the first place, the Blondelian intuition of the ego is a moral intuition, not an intellectual one as with the Cartesian Cogito ergo sum. We do not proceed in our conquests for the sake of knowledge of objects, but, rather, so as to become more adequate with ourselves within the unity that is the ego as action:

Au lieu donc de viser d'abord à connaître et à connaître des objets, la philosophie procède du besoin où nous sommes invinciblement de nous équilibrer sans cesse en nous mouvant: elle a pour point de départ formel et spécifique l'affirmation systématique de notre inadéquation actuelle et de la solidarité de tous les problèmes qui intéressent aux autres êtres qu'en passant par notre être, et nous ne nous réalisons nous-même qu'en les réalisant davantage en nous.¹⁷

The proper way of philosophizing is, then, integrally tied to the nature of its primary intuition of the ego as a moral (-intellectual) intuition, not as an intellectual intuition in the Cartesian manner.

Since Blondel's cornerstone is a moral intuition, his critique also takes on a different character than those of his predecessors. The question must be asked if "...le criticisme, à son tour, a-t-il échappé à la tentation de conférer une sorte de valeur ontologique à une part privilégiée de la connaissance?"¹⁸ If philosophy (which must be critical for Blondel as well) grounds itself "...sur l'action

17 Maurice BLONDEL, "Le Point de départ", II, p. 236.

18 Ibid., I, p. 351.

réfléchissante du jugement comme sur une intuition morale"¹⁹, the ontological question is not pre-empted, and therefore is possibly solvable in the totality of the dialectic.

A second major difference between Descartes and Blondel arises because of the nature of their respective cornerstones. Descartes considered his Cogito ergo sum to be a single unity that is recognized in one complete instantaneous view. Blondel does agree with the Founder of Modern Philosophy in saying that there is quantitatively one single intuition upon which philosophy is based. Blondel's choice is moral, the ego-as-acting; Descartes' is intellectual, which we might call, the ego-as-thought after the geometrical model. However, qualitatively "...la compétence acquise de connaisseur...une intuition laborieusement et lentement obtenue."²⁰ In short form, si non fallor, sum suffices to represent the pulse of the Blondelian intuition. It is a single, all-encompassing statement of the one intuition upon which the whole edifice of the Blondelian effort is structured. But, there is no way that it can be considered the statement of a simple intuition. Although the pre-phenomenology section of L'Action(1893) presents a statement in a singular way, these preliminary sections of the work only open up the way for the dialectic of the will-willing and the will-willed to be investigated by showing that there really is a problem of human action and destiny, and that

19 Idem.

20 Maurice BLONDEL, "Intuition", in Vocabulaire, p. 543.

the solution is strikingly positive. Yet, it is not qualitatively complete. Nor, in fact, is the intuition of the ego-acting qualitatively sufficient in the early segments of "Le Phénomène de l'action." And, this is really the point.

The problem here is one of the difference between a quantitatively singular intuition and a qualitative one seen in one, all-encompassing view. "L'intuition ne précède ou n'exclut donc pas toujours la réflexion discursive et la pensée analytique; elle peut aussi la suivre et la récompenser."²¹ The first statement of the Blondelian intuition of the ego-action is presented for two inter-related reasons: first, it is definitely indicative of the root intuition of the ego as action; and, secondly, it is the result of a simple analysis used to remove those two preliminary challenges to the raison d'être of L'Action(1893). From here, the phenomenology can begin. So, one can go so far as to admit that si non fallor, sum (and the analyses in the development of "Le Phénomène de l'action") is a singular statement of the central intuition in a quantitative sense. There is, after all, only one central intuition in the Blondelian philosophy. In the qualitative sense, it is only in the development of the dialectic through and beyond the phenomenology that the intuition of the ego-action becomes as complete as is possible within the confines of the philosophical endeavor. The intuition of

21 Idem.

the ego is by no means a simple one.²²

SUMMARY

In the first chapter of Part Two we have considered the intuition of the science of action as it is subjectivity or the ego-acting. Admittedly, it is rather misleading to work with the intuition as an object because, as we said in the Introduction to Part Two, action is never a static object. Rather, the ego-acting is essentially a dynamic synthesis. Through its natural activity, it is synthetic a priori; although, it does present itself, at the same time, as objective (dehors) and as subjective (a within or the dedans). It is the dedans with which the science of action is really concerned because it is this subjectivity which distinguishes man from the rest of nature and allows him to encircle, so to speak, the entire universe within him, through knowing, acting, and be-ing. Further, as the microcosm that he is because of his subjectivity, man carries in him all the antecedent conditions of nature while transcending them, making himself in infinitum.

The ego as acting is the key intuition of the Philosophy of Action. However, because of the nature of that intuition, it cannot be singular and complete at any one point in the way that the Cartesian cogito ergo sum is. Whereas Descartes' cornerstone was an intellectual intuition after the geometrical model of simplicity,

22 Maurice BLONDEL, "Le Point de départ", II, p. 237.

Blondel's is a moral intuition without premature ontological import. Only in the fullness of the Blondelian dialectic does the quality of the intuition of the ego show itself. Si non fallor, sum is specifically quantitatively singular, but it does not present the qualitative creativity of this intuition. Only in the continuous realization of the conquering ego-willing(action) searching for adequation do we find the fullness of the Blondelian intuition. Not only is the intuition of the ego-acting the cornerstone of the philosophy, but, as intuition, it is the constant driving force of the entire endeavor.

So, as we are told early in the introduction of L'Action(1893), we must act, since that is of the very nature of the ego and its thrust towards adequation. In an attempt to complete himself, man strives to possess everything through knowing, acting, and willing.

PART TWO

CHAPTER TWO

PHILOSOPHY: THE STUDY OF IDEOGENESIS

We must always remember that in Blondel's phenomenological analysis of consciousness and its contents, he is not, oddly enough, analyzing what we know. That is to say, he is not really asking the question, what do we know - or, even, how do we know that we know? He wants to disclose the how of our states of consciousness and the phenomena of action. It is the fieri of the sciences, not their esse that is primarily under scrutiny.

Et au lieu de dialectique sur nos concepts et nos percepts...il s'agit d'abord d'étudier l'idéogénie, de rechercher les tenants et aboutissants de ces états de conscience, de dérouler aussi intégralement que possible la chaîne des ces états, avant, pendant et après la conscience directe et lumineuse que nous en avons, bref, de chercher ce que nous pensons et ce que nous voulons et ce que nous faisons réellement.¹

Blondel studies the workings of human action, most especially contemplation in so far as it is man's essential means of becoming adequate, to reintegrate the will-willing and the will-willed. Therefore, any chapter centered around the aspect of this solution must, too, be concerned with the "...processus de l'esprit qui spontanément produit

1 Maurice BLONDEL, Lettres philosophiques, p. 83.

les idées scientifiques."² Even at that, we cannot ignore that "...la connaissance même intégrale de la pensée et de la vie ne supplée ni ne suffit à l'action de penser et de vivre."³ Since Blondel is studying human action in a properly analytic manner, he must set his philosophical gaze on these various images, concepts, and ideas - objectifying them - but realizing, at the same time, that they are themselves active syntheses continuously thrusting the will onto farther levels of action. But, as these images, concepts, and ideas are properly synthetic moving a priori actions, he studies primarily their genesis. As they are products, so are they processes; as they are moving, so are they arrested.

Toute pensée est à la fois acte et connaissance; et si la connaissance est l'extrait ou le résidu de toute une vie qui s'y projette en s'y concentrant, l'acte même qui opère cette synthèse déborde la représentation abstraite qui en reste.⁴

But, while Blondel does deal with the usual commodities in reason, he also appears to extend his analysis beyond the confines of that human power. He believes that he has shown that "...la connaissance, dans toute l'étendue de la série, est une dérivé de l'action où elle trouve sa justification et sa réalité."⁵ It seems that there should be little quarrel with that claim. It is the second part of

2 Ibid., p. 185.

3 Maurice BLONDEL, "Lettre"(1896), p. 64.

4 Maurice BLONDEL, "L'illusion idéaliste", p. 115.

5 Maurice BLONDEL, Lettres philosophiques, p. 36.

his statement that has caused, and still causes, many to stop short: "D'autre part, je montre que notre action humaine implique tous ces besoins religieux qu'on nous présentait comme extérieurs à nous ou comme chimériques."⁶ His justification for this claim rests in the progressive movement of the phenomenological dialectic which moves by means of the relationship between freedom and determinism, efficient causality and finality.⁷ There are many other needs revealed in the analysis than the usually accepted need for knowledge of science, of sense, and of self.

6 Idem.

7 "L'action est l'entre-deux et comme le passage par où la cause efficiente qui n'a encore que l'idée de la cause finale, intellectu et appetitu, rejoint la cause finale qui s'incorpore peu à peu à la cause efficiente pour lui communiquer la perfection à laquelle elle aspirait, re. Elle paraît nous épuiser; elle nous emplit. Elle semble sortir de nous; mais ce qui émane ainsi de notre fond le plus intime nous ramène ce qui est au dehors comme une fin à atteindre, et nous rend immanente la série totale des moyens par où nous tendons de notre principe à notre terme. Donner de soi, c'est donc gagner plus qu'on ne donne; et la vie la plus sacrifiée ou la plus extensive est aussi la plus intense." Maurice BLONDEL, L'Action(1893), p. 468.

...voilà pourquoi j'étudie ce qui semble dépasser le rôle propre de l'homme, sans sortir du rôle de la philosophie, parce que je ne sors pas de notre action humaine. Si je parle du surnaturel, c'est encore un cri de la nature, un appel de la conscience morale et une exigence de la raison que je fais entendre. Voilà pourquoi j'étudie ce qui semble dépasser son rôle propre sans sortir du domaine de la raison, simplement en suivant l'évolution continue des idées scientifiques, morales et religieuses; j'arrive ainsi à faire jaillir de la conscience, au-dedans, ce qui semblait, à l'origine de ce mouvement, imposé du dehors. Nos actes enferment dans leur constitution naturelle tout ce que le surnaturel peut y être. Aussi, lorsque je parle de ce qui est supérieure à la science ou à la raison, est-ce encore ou non de la raison et par un besoin de la nature.⁸

Nevertheless, philosophy still studies the human action of ideogenesis: "...je reste dans le domaine des idées, toujours dans l'ordre de la raison."⁹ And, reason itself is the essential ingenuity of human action. Blondel defines philosophy in terms of,

...la vie même prenant conscience et direction d'elle-même, donnant à la pensée tout son rôle et rien que son rôle légitime, tendant à l'équation de la connaissance et de l'existence, et développant simultanément la réalité de notre être au milieu des êtres et la vérité des êtres en nous.¹⁰

Philosophy investigates all the layers of human living by means of a phenomenological approach in a conscious, reflective way, placing reason in its proper perspective by making clear both its (reason's) restrictions and its potential accomplishments. In this way, the

8 Maurice BLONDEL, Lettres philosophiques, p. 36.

9 Ibid., p. 37.

10 Maurice BLONDEL, "Le Point de départ", II, p. 227.

science intends to disclose our reality as egos acting, as human selves taking possession of ourselves and of our world. But, we take note that its restrictions cannot be what they were for his predecessors - reason has further needs than knowledge of what is traditionally included under the term phenomena.

Blondel begins, nevertheless, at a lower level. In the will's search for adequation, nothing can be denied it in its dynamism. It must will something: "Il y a quelque chose."¹¹ Although we know this not to be the case, but with Blondel, we must begin with the minimum assumption and hope that the investigation can be cut short by discovering that the order of phenomena provides the will with an end to its aspirations where it will be at peace.¹² After all, in the realm of acceptable phenomena, there is much that can capture the will for a while: sensation, positive science, the powers of reason, reflection, freedom, and the phenomena of action externalized.

On a opté pour ce quelque chose qui est immédiatement senti, connu, désiré de tous, qui offre à l'activité humaine un champ immense, que le progrès même des sciences positives ne permet plus guère, semble-t-il, de nier ni craindre.¹³

11 Maurice BLONDEL, L'Action(1893), p. 41.

12 See Ibid., p. 44.

13 Ibid., p. 43. "Il s'agit d'analyser le contenu de l'action voulue, afin d'y voir enveloppée toute la diversité des objets qui paraissent être des fins étrangères, mais qui ne sont en réalité que des moyens pour combler l'intervalle de ce que nous sommes à ce que nous voulons être." Idem., foot-note.

After this perhaps-too-long introduction to the study of ideogenesis, we should end our discussion. However, considering the great laborious effort of the twists and turns in the dialectic, it would be clarifying to present two examples, such as they are, of this analysis of the process of ideogenesis.¹⁴ Secondly, the following part of this chapter will distil four points which concern the entire dialectic so as to make the importance of the phenomenology clearer to the reader.

Ch. II, A. ANALYSIS OF TWO KEY IDEOGENESES

The two instances of ideogenesis that are to be examined are central to two of the transitions in the dialectic. The first is the ideogenesis of freedom and the concomitant idea of obligation; the second is the genesis of the idea of metaphysical morality (Blondel's metaphysics to the first degree). The ideas of freedom and obligation carry the subject from the internal phenomena of subjective action to the necessary externalization of intention in individual, social, and superstitious action. Blondel's genesis of the metaphysical idea ultimately forces the subject from the insufficiency of mere phenomena into the option for or against the Uniquely Necessary. Together these two above considerations serve as the sub-sections of Part A.

¹⁴ J.M. SOMERVILLE (Total Commitment: Blondel's "L'Action") has also done an admirable job of summarizing the step by step movement of all stages. There is little sense in repeating this work.

THE IDEAS OF FREEDOM AND OBLIGATION

It seems quite natural to choose the genesis of the idea of freedom and its simultaneously realized idea of necessity as an example of ideogenesis because, as we know, the genesis of all the states of consciousness is based upon the interplay of these two notions.¹⁵ In this case, however, freedom and determinism have become conscious and obviously controlling ideas. Freedom is related to determinism in two ways. First, freedom and determinism are mental opposites that force the dialectic onto a higher level of synthesis, externalized action: I must externalize intention to maintain my freedom. Secondly, freedom and determinism as obligation are related as the free will to an exterior objective will: I must act in accord with heteronomous moral law. In fact, it is here in the dialectic that we see the transition from the determinism of a hierarchy of efficient causes in relation to ends, to the determinism of ends themselves. However, the movement towards this goal begins much earlier when reflection arises to take control of the many antagonistic or complementary motives of imagination. Therefore, it is with reflection that we must take hold of the ideogenesis of freedom and obligation.

15 See Marc RENAULT, Déterminisme et liberté dans "L'Action" de Maurice Blondel, 263 p.

Reflection and its power of reason appear, from below, to necessarily arise out of the many motives underneath. But reason transcends this multiplicity of motives, giving them, at the same time, their very existence.¹⁶ Reason frees human subjectivity from the complete determinism of these motives by paralyzing them in drawing all spontaneous energies from them. Yet, all motives remain immanent to the transcendent power of reason. That is all fine and good, but, even though the determinism of spontaneity and nature are overcome, reason seems to put a stop to further action in holding all motives at bay.

Du déterminisme des mobiles et des motifs surgit donc une puissance qui le tient en échec. Grâce à elle, nulle suggestion de la nature ne conserve le charme magique qui la rendait souveraine; devant elle, rien n'a une influence décisive, une valeur absolue; rien pour ainsi dire ne mérite plus d'être fait: il y a arrêt, il y a indifférence.¹⁷

The negative arresting power of reason, though, is only half of the manifestation of reason. By its very nature, the idea of reason is of an infinite power; it holds all within while being totally distinct from its contents. "L'infini, c'est-à-dire ici ce qui dépasse toute représentation distincte et tout motif déterminé; ce qui est sans commune mesure avec l'objet de la connaissance et les

16 See Maurice BLONDEL, L'Action(1893), p. 112. The multiplicity of images and desires "...suppose d'abord une unité capable de les comprendre et de les produire tous." Idem.

17 Ibid., p. 115.

stimulants de spontanéité."¹⁸ As an infinite power, reason is strikingly positive. Man can perform a single reasoned act; he thus distinguishes himself from what he knows while it is still an integral part of him.¹⁹ He is free from spontaneity - free to act in a reasonable way. Thus, in this sense the ideas of freedom and reason are co-habiteurs in the realm of the phenomena of internal action.

To more fully comprehend the implications of the relationship among reason, the idea of the infinite, and freedom, we must understand the interplay between efficient and final causality. We know already that reason is an efficient cause in relation to the existence of motives. But there is much more to the relationship of causality

18 Ibid., p. 118.

19 We might note here the difference between man with his reason and the brute. Man is capable of dealing with the multiplicity of phenomena in a more universal way than any other organism. This fact empirically separates human life from all other forms of life. Take for instance brute life and its means of responding to the environment: instinct. "L'instinct est, comme l'organisation dont il est le principe interne; une réponse très condensée et très élaborée à la multitude des excitations extérieures, un cas particulier et une solution partielle du problème cosmique; son caractère étroit n'empêche pas qu'il tienne aux formes de vie les différentes de celles où il se meut; on le voit bien aux difficultés de l'acclimatation. Ce que l'animal a d'activité psychologique est une projection réduite et une concentration déterminée du reste; et ses actes sont des conclusions particulières dont les prémisses générales restent en dehors de lui dans l'ordonnance totale." Ibid., p. 94. But, reason, one of the products of subjectivity! "La raison enfin se développe à mesure qu'elle devient plus adéquate à l'univers et qu'elle sait concentrer, comprendre, utiliser une plus grande variété de phénomènes; c'est ainsi que la civilisation tend à élargir, à enrichir, et à dépasser la nature dont elle émerge." Idem.

than that. The negative stopping power of reason is overcome because of the infinite mediation and the necessary synthesis of freedom.

Bref, pour agir il faut participer à une puissance infinie; pour avoir conscience d'agir il faut qu'on ait l'idée de cet infini pouvoir. Or c'est dans l'acte raisonnable qu'il y a synthèse de la puissance et de l'idée d'infini; et cette synthèse c'est ce que l'on nomme la liberté.²⁰

We have yet another transcendent synthesis in the dialectic; this time the power reason and the necessary idea of infinity are synthesized into freedom - a product of scientific necessity. Reason, as infinite power, is free to choose one act over another present to it, and to place it into the universe of other acts. Synthesized with the idea of infinite power it becomes both an efficient cause (it can produce a free-reasoned act over and above its power of arresting all motives held within it) and a final cause (it sees an idealized end which can be achieved by free-reasoned action).

We have, no doubt, come to a conclusion too quickly here in light of the convolutions of the effort of the Philosopher of Aix. We cannot ignore that the movement of the phenomenological analysis has made freedom a scientific necessity. Freedom does arise in consciousness by determinism, although that does not make it any the less freedom within the set of oppositions. Both terms of freedom and necessity survive side by side in the phenomenal order -although

²⁰ Ibid., p. 121.

not in the real order.

La liberté est postulée par la science. Elle apparaît à la conscience par le jeu même du déterminisme. Il n'y a conscience du déterminisme que par la liberté. La liberté adopte toutes ses conditions antécédentes. Mais elle n'y trouve pas sa raison d'être. C'est dans une fin transcendante à la nature ou à la science qu'il devient nécessaire de voir la raison véritable de l'action.²¹

Blondel's scientific necessity of freedom is manifested in both an irrational and a rational way.

D'une part, nous avons conscience d'un pouvoir intérieur qui seul donne à nos décisions, quelles qu'elles soient, leur véritable raison. D'autre part, ce pouvoir n'est pas défini, et semble n'être qu'une indifférence absolue, une force aveugle et arbitraire, et pour ainsi dire une déraison.²²

As should be expected in light of the transcendent synthesis of reason and the idea of the power of the infinite, it is not unreasonable or a-rational freedom that carries ascendancy. Irrational freedom is freedom just for the sake of freedom without positing the true reason for a particular action because it is really only a spontaneous motive itself. On the other hand, rational freedom is a conscious, limitless power which does give the reason for an act.

21 Maurice BLONDEL, L'Action(1893), p. 124.

22 Ibid., p. 129-130.

La liberté libre c'est donc celle qui veut vouloir, celle qui, supprimant d'abord l'efficacité naturelle des tendances spontanées, ne consent à subir l'attrait de l'une d'elles que dans la mesure où elle y place la raison de sa résolution.²³

In the first and more proper sense of the term, freedom possesses the role of efficient cause, giving efficacy to a single motive. Not unlike the dual relationship in images,²⁴ freedom also takes on the role of final cause; it becomes objectified by presenting itself as the ideal end to be achieved. "Elle se pose devant elle comme objet, comme but, comme fin particulière, au-dessus des autres motifs en droit,...una ex multis; elle est mienne, elle n'est plus moi-même."²⁵ As a finality, freedom is stratified, solidified. There is a "...disproportion entre la volonté voulante,...et la volonté voulue."²⁶ Now the primordial will must not only strive to

23 Ibid., p. 131. "C'est ainsi que, nécessairement immanente d'abord à un motif quelconque parmi d'autres motifs également déterminés, la liberté se distingue de tous et confère à l'objet de ses préférences un caractère de transcendance. Se soumettant à une hétéronomie pour maintenir sa propre souveraineté, elle apporte au service d'une tendance élue les forces mêmes des tendances rivales; elle fait ce qu'elle fait avec la puissance qu'elle est employée à faire tout ce qu'elle ne fait pas. Voilà comment elle se propose pour fin une raison, quoiqu'elle doive être elle-même la raison de sa décision. A ce qui est insuffisant pour la déterminer, elle ajoute sa propre suffisance pour se déterminer; et l'acte résolument volontaire devient ainsi forcément expressif d'une initiative autre que l'impulsion du motif triomphant." Ibid., p. 130-1.

24 See Ibid., p. 105-110.

25 Ibid., p. 131-132.

26 Ibid., p. 132.

conquer all that is not of it, but also must try to re-attain or reintegrate itself with itself. To succeed at all in this necessary endeavor freedom must be exercised, intention must be externalized, or liberty is lost.²⁷

It is from this point that the dialectic proceeds from a necessary chain of determinisms centered around the necessary conditions or causes as they are efficient in relation to ends, to a determinism of ends in succession. The necessity imposed in the later case is one of heteronomous objective law on the autonomous subjective will. The very transformation of freedom and subjective determinism into the objective freedom of finality gives the imperative: you must put your intention into action in the external realm and you must do so following the objective moral law. The very dynamism of the will itself is the ultimate source of its own transcendence and control under moral heteronomy.²⁸

THE IDEA OF METAPHYSICAL MORALITY

Metaphysics to the first power, what Blondel calls metaphysical morality, is found in the fifth step of the phenomenology entitled "De l'action sociale à l'action superstitieuse."²⁹ It should be noted at the beginning that this metaphysics to the first power is

27 See Ibid., p. 133.

28 See Ibid., p. 136-143.

29 See Ibid., p. 245-322, especially p. 279-304.

not the only metaphysics found in L'Action(1893). The first metaphysics properly falls into the phenomenology, and, as such, is really a-ontological, as peculiarly contradictory as that may seem. In answer to some queries of the Abby Bricout, Blondel defines the scope of these two distinctly different metaphysics in reference to his doctoral thesis:

Au sens où l'entend la vieille ontologie, il faut faire rentrer la métaphysique dans le rang(L'Action, pp. 291-297); c'est-à-dire la considérer comme un moment compris dans le développement général de notre vie et simplement comme un principe réfléchi d'action. Mais il y a ce que j'ai appelé "la métaphysique à la seconde puissance", et c'est cette partie terminale de la philosophie qui recherche à quelles conditions peuvent être effectivement réalisées toutes les vérités - les choses que nous avons conçues nécessairement comme réelles: L'Action, pp. 424 à 465.³⁰

Metaphysics to the first power serves as the source for a unifying idea by which we organize our action.³¹ It is another step in the phenomenology and promotes the analysis into superstitious action - and finally to the option for or against the Uniquely Necessary.

30 Maurice BLONDEL, Lettres philosophiques, p. 124-125.

31 According to MC NEILL, Blondel seems to be alluding to Kant's notion that metaphysics is a necessary and natural disposition. In Blondel's case, action must have these metaphysical ideals (duty, God) before it in order to have total ideals towards which to strive. Like Kant, he does not affirm their objective validity; nor, on the other hand, does he deny them that validity. Judgment is suspended. Nevertheless, for Blondel, these ideas are felt as ideals towards which action must strive. (The Blondelian Synthesis, p. 99-100.)

Second metaphysics, with which we will be dealing later, is of an entirely different nature than metaphysical morality and the phenomenology thereof.³²

We are using metaphysical morality as the second (and last) example of the analysis of ideogenesis. The genesis of the metaphysical idea gives all the previous syntheses a phenomenological unity of purpose while, at the same time, thrusting the analysis ahead towards its last stand in the Uniquely Necessary.

As always, one is presented with the dilemma of deciding where to begin the description of a particular segment of the analysis of the ideogeneses. In the case of the genesis of the idea of metaphysical morality we shall begin with the dissatisfaction with natural morality which is brought to light in the study of that more primitive morality.

We discover that, in answer to the need for an obligatory morality in a social structure, there is a natural moral system built up. This naturalistic morality presents itself under two aspects: on the one hand, it is objective, that is, it gains objective data from experience and structures this data under a science of morality. On the other hand, naturalistic morality carries some very definite subjective force - the necessity of it is experienced as an impelling force within. In actuality, the experienced necessity fulfills an already present subjective outline for it - one through

32 See Maurice BLONDEL, Lettres philosophiques, p. 61-64.

which the will expects to project itself still farther towards infinity.³³ However, man, who is looking for some really solid rules by which to guide his actions, becomes unsatisfied with both simple natural morality and the universe around him. Neither suffice for his needs. Blondel summarizes the movement from trust in a natural morality to complete dissatisfaction with the entire realm:

Ainsi se dévoile peu à peu l'aspiration profonde de l'homme; ainsi se déroule la série des moyens par lesquels il recherche sa fin. L'ordre entier de la nature rentre dans le champ de son expérience. Tout ce qu'il en reçoit a posteriori, il le sollicitait déjà a priori. Ce qu'il cherche, c'est la définition même de son propre intérêt; oui, que doit-il entendre par son intérêt? il traverse l'univers sans le rencontrer. Il se désintéresse donc de l'univers. Le monde a un caractère ambigu; la conscience ne s'y trouve pas chez elle: il faut quelque chose, au-dessus, pour l'expliquer et pour y ajouter un sens. La morale naturaliste, utile pour marquer la continuité du progrès de la vie et l'éveil de la conscience, est donc suspendue à une forme nouvelle de la pensée et de l'action, à une morale métaphysique. Par une initiative originale, l'esprit humain, au delà du monde actuel, en suppose tout naturellement un autre, un monde idéal.³⁴

Metaphysical morality draws its substance from three sources: real ideas, ideal ideas, and practical ideas. By real ideals Blondel means that their source is experiential, as is the source of imagery.

33 See L'Action(1893), p. 279-290.

34 Ibid., p. 289-290.

Dans la vie spontanée de la conscience, le mécanisme même des causes efficientes suscite, on l'a vu, une cause finale, une cause qui, par son caractère synthétique, est en progrès sur les puissances encore aveugles dont elle s'empare à son profit. Dans le développement réfléchi de l'action volontaire, il se produit, d'une façon plus distincte, un semblable travail: du jeu même de la vie surgit une conception qui semble supérieure à la vie, comme un idéal objectif.³⁵

Implicit metaphysical ideas are behind the quite real experience of man trying to pursue and to conform to an ideal - implying that

"Au regard de la conscience, par le sentiment et par l'effet immédiat de l'action, il y a donc quelque chose de plus réel que le réel."³⁶

Complete dissatisfaction with earthly things forces, from within, ideal ideas, structured by a kind of abstraction and reification, into systems which present themselves as above the real order in the form of objective regulative truths to which we must acquiesce.³⁷ It is from this viewpoint that Blondel claims that metaphysical morality has an ideal source: "...la connaissance semble d'un degré en avance sur la réalité; et c'est la raison pour laquelle, au-dessus des faits

35 Ibid., p. 291-292.

36 Ibid., p. 293-294.

37 "Quelle que soit l'origine, quelle que soit la forme particulière des pensées maîtresses que l'homme superpose à sa vie, chacun de nous a nécessairement sa métaphysique; et cette métaphysique, si fruste qu'on l'imagine, a une influence nécessaire, une efficacité propre." Ibid., p. 294. Hence, we see that metaphysical morality is a necessity, one which unifies all past finalities under metaphysical ideals. Moreover, the ultimate source for these ideals is the will itself.

donnés et connus, nous sommes amenés à construire cet ordre idéal qui les explique et qui est comme la vérité a priori de toutes choses."³⁸

However, ideal metaphysical abstractions are not abstractions for their own sake, but for the sake of farther action;

En un sens,...sans doute, va de la pensée à la pensée; mais, en même temps, la connaissance spéculative n'est qu'une forme de transition dans le progrès de la vie volontaire; car la pensée part de l'action pour aller à action.³⁹

Metaphysical ideals are, then, ultimately practical as well. And, metaphysical morality is at the junction of the two causal movements; it is unifying of all that has come before it as a member of the determinism of finality; and it is promoting, a forward thrusting science - efficacious.

En établissant que la réalité donnée ne s'explique et ne se soutient pas d'elle-même;...qu'elle n'arrête pas le mouvement de la pensée parce qu'elle n'égale pas le contenu de l'action humaine, la métaphysique est amenée à devenir, elle aussi, une science promouvante; elle exige une forme nouvelle de l'action.⁴⁰

The ideal of metaphysical morality does not really fulfill action any more than natural morality does on its level; this surplus, which neither of the previous finalities contained, comes under a

38 Ibid., p. 294.

39 Ibid., p. 295.

40 Ibid., p. 297-298.

third moral finality: effective moral action.⁴¹ Effective moral action is the synthesis of natural duty and the metaphysical ideal.

L'action a été le lien toujours présent aux synthèses successives qui ont constitué cet ample système des phénomènes dont nous venons de montrer les degrés; et ce qui, dans cette marche ascendante, est apparu comme un développement nécessaire du déterminisme, apparaît, au regard descendant de la réflexion, comme une hiérarchie de relations obligatoires et de devoirs à consacrer par une pratique acceptée. La liberté morale est donc le but et la forme réalisante de l'ordre naturel.⁴²

But, the will is still unsatisfied - one final effort for fulfillment is to be made in the phenomena of superstitious action - only to again find disappointment.⁴³

Among those ideas that we normally call metaphysical is the regulative idea of God, or, as Blondel calls it, the idea of the Uniquely Necessary - and, upon which follows our important option for or against. The status of these proofs for the existence of the metaphysical idea of a Uniquely Necessary is still phenomenological.⁴⁴ Lest, however, there be any doubts about this, consider the following statements found in Blondel's published correspondence. When Bricout asked him if he was really proving rationally the reality of God in the

41 "Le phénomène universel ne semble exister que pour devenir le théâtre de la moralité, ou mieux encore pour être le corps même de la volonté." Ibid., p. 303.

42 Ibid., p. 302.

43 See Ibid., p. 305-322.

44 See Part One, Chapter Three, p. 73-78, this thesis.

segment of L'Action(1893) on the Uniquely Necessary, he replied:

...je dirai que nous concevons nécessairement Dieu; que, par l'effort de la réflexion, nous justifions cette conception spontanée et nécessaire, en démontrant rationnellement que Dieu est affirmé comme réel et comme efficace en nous; et qu'enfin si la pensée est un ressort indispensable pour nous guider à sa recherche, elle n'est pas plus suffisante ici qu'ailleurs pour nous procurer la réalité vivante, réalité qu'elle affirme d'autant mieux que la volonté se conforme davantage à ce que nous savons d'elle.⁴⁵

His study of the ideogenesis of the metaphysical ideas - and of their synthetic a priori action which forces the farther syntheses of action in the attempt of man to make himself integral - is a study of thinking and the necessary laws and progress of that action of contemplation. Blondel is working in the realm of ideas; philosophy still does not supply for life, and cannot, within its own competence, deliver or even fill that living reality on any level. But, metaphysics to the first power does involve the necessary ideogenesis of the world and objective reality while still not attaining it. "...il est scientifiquement démontré que nous ne pouvons pas ne pas inclure dans notre notion du monde le concept d'une réalité objective."⁴⁶ This is another ideogenesis. The quotation above does appear somewhat misleading, so there is a necessity to give what short clarification that can be supplied at this time. Blondel is still not attaining objective reality, nor is he asking the ontological question, the question of existence. We remember that Blondel's

45 Maurice BLONDEL, Lettres philosophique, p. 124.

46 Ibid., p. 166-167.

phenomenology is a method of bracketing existence and the ontological question; he can neither affirm existence nor deny it. If the idea of the objective real arises in thought necessarily in the examination of the processes of thinking, it cannot be ignored without actually transgressing the phenomenological method itself. The method is a-ontological, not anti-ontological. Consequently, the possibility of the question still remains open to Blondel.⁴⁷ In the phenomenology and in the realm of metaphysical ideas that are scientifically proven to be necessary, this idea of the world and its corresponding idea of the objectively real are regulative ideas from the metaphysics in thinking.

Ch. II, B. THE GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF IDEOGENESIS

There are certain general notes that can be seen in the entirety of the phenomenology concerning both the process and the products (if one can rightly call them that) of the ideogenesis. They are presented below in list form so that the reader can refer to them in light of the past section on the genesis of freedom and metaphysical ideas with relative ease.

(1) The Source of Ideas.

In each and every case, the source of ideas and actions in the process of ideogenesis is both a posteriori and a priori. The a posteriori source is always experience, whether we speak of the images

47 See Part One, Chapter Three, p. 75-78, this thesis.

of exterior phenomena, the ideas of internal phenomena, or the ideas of the phenomenon of action externalizing intention. The ultimate a priori source is inevitably the ego-acting-willing.

Il me semble qu'une distinction, plus importante et plus réelle que celle de l'a priori et de l'a posteriori, c'est celle des concepts dus à l'expérience subjective, à l'initiative de notre activité exercée spontanément ou délibérément (unité, identité, liberté, force, etc.). Au regard de cette distinction, les mots a priori et a posteriori ont le tort d'arrêter la recherche à l'idéologie abstraite, qui analyse les produits de l'entendement, sans montrer le problème idéogénique, qui découvre le processus de l'action productrice des concepts. Au fond tout concept est à la fois a priori et a posteriori, parce que dans tout concept l'élément représentatif n'est que le champ de rencontre d'une action et d'une réaction.⁴⁸

Somerville puts it very well when he notes that the regressive analysis is not of bare consciousness, not of the idea of action, but, rather, of action itself which is the synthesis a priori of both subjective

48 Maurice BLONDEL, "Concept", in Vocabulaire, p. 160.

a priori conditions and a posteriori elements of experience.⁴⁹

(2) The Nature of the Ideogenesis.

The action of thinking, of consciousness itself, moves constantly by contrast-synthesis, giving farther ideogeneses. Each new synthesis holds all that has come before it within it even while it transcends it. Reason serves as a good example; but, in all actuality, it makes little difference which ideogenesis we consider from L'Action(1893).

All ideogeneses arise from an internal opposition in consciousness. "Toute idée, tout état de conscience distincte implique un contraste et une opposition interne."⁵⁰ Although, it (consciousness) itself seems to arise out of the discrimination necessary in

49 See J.M. SOMERVILLE, Total Commitment: Blondel's "L'Action", p. 39-41. "Blondel's necessary conditions for the achievement of human action are a priori conditions, But they are not a priori in the Kantian sense. They reflect not only the inner structure of the subject but also of the objective world. Action is a synthesis of a priori and a posteriori factors, standing in a position of mediation between the universe of objective fact and the inner content of the will. In the regressive analysis the object of our scientific reflection is not a bare 'consciousness-as-such', nor simply the idea of action. It is the concrete phenomenon of action, a synthesis filled with experiences. Therefore, if the subjective a priori conditions make their appearance in the course of analysis and if, for the moment one brackets the existential question of their objective reality, Blondel insists from the start that action of the subject is a synthesis of elements that are drawn from the ambient universe... . The object of Blondel's reflection is always a synthesis of a posteriori and a priori elements.

If the analysis were purely a posteriori, we could only discover the world of contingency; if it were purely a priori only a logical necessity would result. In this case as in so many others, what seems to be entirely subjective and a priori is grounded in our experience of a posteriori synthesis."

50 Maurice BLONDEL, L'Action(1893), p. 110.

light of the many motives in play. These motives are in constant contrast with each other, one always attempting to supplant the other without ever destroying the other. Consciousness exists in the spirit of contradiction. This contradiction is not one of disunity, but necessarily one of unity. "Toute conception est donc comme une fraction qui n'a de sens que rapportée à l'unité totale et qui appelle le complément d'une autre fraction."⁵¹ The so-called law of simultaneous or alternative contrast is what actually separates animal instinctive life of man from that of the brute. Hence, Blondel will say:

...s'il est vrai, comme on l'a vu en étudiant la spontanéité subjective, que tout acte de conscience soit une synthèse de forces et un principe nouveau de force, il est également vrai que toute conscience d'une acte (idée ou sentiment) résulte d'un conflit, d'un trouble et d'un arrêt dans le dynamisme mental, d'une "inhibition" au moins partielle. Il est nécessaire d'en étudier les causes et les effets.⁵²

These images become ends to be realized, ideals to be achieved under a force of determinism, and an unknown necessity. Each carries a power of realization. These contrasting motives are formed into systems which retain their heterogeneity while still remaining together in the complex unity of the one single organizer, the human ego. The question is, by what means is human consciousness able to retain these contrasting systems in some kind of unified

51 Ibid., p. 111.

52 Idem.

whole? Blondel's answer is as follows: in order for these contrasting systems to exist side by side, there must be some superior power to which they are integrally related for their existence. They are never isolated fragments, they are always part of a whole, but their very existence presupposes some unity able to understand and produce every one of them. This unity that allows man to have a choice among motives, making each one of them only possible motives, what is it?

...Ce rapport, dans la conscience, des parties contrastantes entre elles et avec le tout, c'est à proprement parler la réflexion. Elle résulte du caractère partiel des états antagonistes; mais cette pluralité des états solidaires et opposés n'est possible que par l'action immanente d'une puissance capable d'embrasser toute la multiplicité des contraires dans une unité supérieure, et qu'il faut bien appeler la raison.⁵³

Under the influence of these internal contrasts, consciousness has discovered its power of reason and become reflection. And, although man holds all within him in the form of motives at some level, none of them controls what he chooses because he chooses by reason, understanding the end which these motives present to be fulfilled. Therefore, it can be said that : "La connaissance réfléchie est donc comme une synthèse à deux degrés; c'est une représentation de représentations. Ce qu'elle est résume ce qui est en nous, et ce qui est en nous résume tout le reste."⁵⁴ Moreover, reason completely transcends

53 Ibid., p. 112.

54 Ibid., p. 113.

these motives, not only from the point of view of reason controlling them instead of their spontaneity controlling reason, but also from the point of view of these motives' existence. For without reason, these motives could not exist in contrast in reason in consciousness. The energies of human reason are far more than the sum of its parts. The relationship between transcendence and immanence within the states of consciousness and the ideogeneses that we have seen above is true on all the various levels of the Blondelian dialectic.

(3) Truth In the Ideogenesis.⁵⁵

The study of ideogenesis is most certainly a search for psychological truth - "...explication du contenu de la conscience, pour élever davantage nos idées à leurs conditions et à leurs productions."⁵⁶ Among the contents of consciousness are logical ideas, mathematical syntheses, and physical ideas originally taken from brute experience and the observation of it. Therefore, formal logical truth, mathematical truth, and physical truth fall under the scrutiny of the study of ideogenesis. The results of the investigations there are as follows.

There should be little problem with strictly formal logic. The truth of formal logic is the "...cohérence de la pensée abstraite avec elle-même, dans l'ordre logique."⁵⁷ Logical truth represents the

55 See Part One, Chapter Three, p. 55-67, this thesis.

56 Maurice BLONDEL, "Vrai", in Vocabulaire, p. 1223-1224.

57 Ibid., p. 1223.

adequation of the will with itself on the purely abstract level of ideas with abstract ideas, both structures of reason.

After attaining simple elements by analysis, calculus synthesizes them a priori in hopes of reducing heterogeneity to homogeneity within a universal system. The ultimate source for the synthetic a priori is human subjective action. "Pour la première (calcul), l'action est une intégration dont un calcul parfait donnerait la formule rigoureuse."⁵⁸ The real foundation of the exact sciences is in the development of the will itself.

...que ces sciences surgissent du fond même de notre activité et s'organisent spontanément sous l'empire de la même loi intérieure qui préside à toute notre vie. Ainsi les mathématiques mêmes apparaîtront comme une forme du développement du vouloir.⁵⁹

Therefore, mathematical truth is found to be "...d'un caractère déjà synthétique."⁶⁰

Natural science depends upon sensation because it is rooted in observation. It takes the initial chaos of brute experience and puts it into distinct unities in order to restrict its vision - the observations of the individual serve as matter of natural science's inductions. "Pour la seconde (empirical), l'action est un fait sui generis, dont aucune approximation mathématique ne révèle l'originalité et qui, comme toute autre synthèse, ne peut être connu que par

58 Maurice BLONDEL, L'Action(1893), p. 53.

59 Ibid., foot-note, p. 55-56.

60 Maurice BLONDEL, "Vrai", in Vocabulaire, p. 1223.

l'observation directe."⁶¹ In order to gain the matter of observation, natural science makes re-presentations of brute experience, searching for physical truth, the "...adéquation approximative et perfectible de la pensée semi-concrète à ses objets, de manière: adaequatio rerum et rationis."⁶² Obviously, the same holds true of the truth value of sensation itself.

The ultimate task of L'Action(1893) is to solve the problem "...de l'adéquation immanente de nous-même avec nous-même"⁶³, a task impossible to succeed in if he separates the fact of thought from the act of thinking.⁶⁴ The only way to proceed in this endeavor is by studying the phenomenon of action because action touches all aspects of the problem of thought, willing, being, and life in so far as action is naturally synthetic. The problem of truth is no longer centered around the problem of knowledge as thought, but around the problem of self-adéquation by action of ourselves with ourselves. This is moral truth: "...adaequatio mentis et vitae, pour réaliser par nos intentions et nos actes l'accord de notre personnalité acquise avec les exigences de notre nature, dans le sens plein qu'a l'expression: 'C'est une âme vraie!'"⁶⁵ Moral truth is the source of the

61 Maurice BLONDEL, L'Action(1893), p. 53.

62 Maurice BLONDEL, "Vrai", in Vocabulaire, p. 1223.

63 Maurice BLONDEL, "L'Illusion idéaliste", p. 110.

64 See Ibid., p. 120.

65 Maurice BLONDEL, "Vrai", in Vocabulaire, p. 1224.

immanent norm of truth and value judgment in the entire Blondelian synthesis of other truths. Formal logic, mathematical science, natural science, and sensation are all rooted in the will's search for adequation, by means of either organizing ideas so that they cohere with each other or by means of conquering the external phenomena by means of knowledge. Philosophy itself is an action rooted in the thrust of the will to explain ideogenesis - the constant process of trying to make adequate ideas with their conditions and products, in an analytical, reflexive way.

The totality of all these movements sourced in the will is a part of the basic need for the will to become adequate to itself and all its productions, a search for moral truth. Even metaphysical truth depends upon the search for moral truth (metaphysical truth is "...intellectum in actu et intellectus in actu idem sunt.").⁶⁶

What philosophy, by its method of immanence is trying to do is

...à mettre en équation, dans la conscience même, ce que nous paraissions penser et vouloir et faire, avec ce que nous faisons, nous voulons et nous pensons en réalité: de telle sorte que dans les négations factices ou les fins artificiellement voulues se retrouveront encore les affirmations profondes et les besoins incoercibles qu'elles impliquent.⁶⁷

Thus, philosophy is not merely concerned with psychological truth for its own sake, but with our processes of adequation on all levels.

⁶⁶ Idem., we shall come again to the relationship between moral truth and metaphysical truth. See Part Two, Chapter Three, p. 173-176, this thesis.

⁶⁷ Maurice BLONDEL, "Lettre"(1896), p. 39.

The end product of its researches will be a logic of action which are laws by which we measure self-adequation in answer to the needs of the will.

SUMMARY

In this chapter we have shown that Blondel's effort is a study of thinking, the principle action by which man attempts to make himself what he ultimately wills to be. He is not considering the contents of consciousness as they are stratified ideas, but as they are both results of the processes of thinking and as they serve as synthetic a priori forces for farther thinking and idea formation. His epistemological question is: By what processes do we know and make ourselves adequate to ourselves and the universe which we attempt to contain in us? His answer is centrally ethical: we know and make ourselves adequate by action and action alone as follows our ultimate nature as egos. But action is not meant to be a praxis without thinking. In fact, human acting and living is essentially thinking and living in light of living reason.

In order to illustrate his question and answer, we considered two central ideogeneses that were analyzed in the phenomenology: the genesis of freedom and obligation, and the genesis of metaphysical ideas. In our first study of Blondel's analyses we saw that the ideas of freedom and obligation arise necessarily in consciousness and hold a controlling role in the determinism of human action. Human action is necessarily free and obligatory in that it must, at least

minimally, follow the objective moral law as it freely projects itself into the external phenomena. At the same time, both necessities come ultimately from the dynamism of the will itself. In our second study, that of the genesis of metaphysical ideas and metaphysical morality in particular, we showed the necessary genesis of duty, the idea of the Uniquely Necessary, and the idea of the world (and its sub-idea of the objectively real). Further, the controlling aspect of these ideas, especially those of metaphysical morality, was made clear as they are members of the determinism of ends. These ideas, too, are sourced in the will's thrust toward adequation. Moreover, as a word of caution, we pointed out that Blondel has still not asked the question of existence, the ontological question par excellence, but he has neither rejected the possibility of posing that question at a later time in his study. This is the essence of the phenomenology as a method, not a doctrine.

For our second section we have distilled three basic characteristics of the genesis of ideas. First of all, we find that all ideas are a priori syntheses of a posteriori experiences and a priori ego action. Secondly, we noted that the processes of consciousness are essentially based upon a contrast-synthesis dialectic in progressive movement. Thirdly, we saw that truth is essentially an immanent measure, of the adequation of the self with the self and all that it contains in the way of the knowledge of external phenomena, the powers of subjectivity, the externalization of intention, and the transcendent ideals which immanently affect it.

Only in light of the final chapter of this thesis will the previous five chapters, and especially this one, find their place in the Blondelian effort to solve the perpetual problem of the relationship between thought and reality in thought. In our next chapter we shall consider the two-pronged solution to this perpetual problem in terms of Blondel's metaphysics to the second power and his disclosure of the reality of action. The relationship between metaphysical truth and moral truth will be again noted under the clarifying vision of the converging solution.

PART TWO

CHAPTER THREE

THE ELEMENTS OF SOLUTION

The intention of this last chapter is to present the Blondelian solution to the problem of the relationship between thought and reality in thought. The essential characteristic of this solution is action, whether we consider the second metaphysics, or the logic of action. In fact, neither the logic of action, nor the Blondelian metaphysics to the second power has any meaning whatsoever without the action of action.

Action has begun our study; the whole retrospective phenomenological analysis studies human action, and in particular, contemplation or the processes of thinking. Action is also at the conclusion of the study. Action, and by this Blondel means all effective action, whether it makes use of retrospection and reflection or not, makes for the real solution to the problem of the relationship between thought and reality. However, within philosophy itself, and even within the philosophical situation of the second degree metaphysics, we only attain reality in potentiality, in theory. It takes personal commitment for the final and real possession of objective reality. In other words, one must act. But, philosophy can study what happens when the commitment is made and what this possession of real objectivity will mean...if we only act. Moreover, philosophy can provide

the laws by which we act as a product of its effort. In turn, these laws disclosed under the auspices of philosophy may (and perhaps should) be made use of in our everyday actions, be they of great importance or of not so great importance.

The first part of this long chapter must look at the second of Blondel's metaphysics in order to determine the nature and status of it in relation to our problem. We shall see the development of the metaphysical option from the pre-option, subjective, neutral state through to the option itself, which may either be consummative or privative in result. We shall note the position of objectivity.

Our second part to Chapter Three is really quite the most important of the chapter and, in fact, of the thesis. There we shall attempt to take grip of the resolution of the problem of the relationship between thought and reality in the Blondelian endeavor. In order to do this, we must first show the differences between Blondel's two metaphysics, question their respective statuses as phenomenological, and decide the relationship between Blondel's understanding of metaphysical truth in relation to moral truth. Secondly, we must realize that the real solution to our particular aspect of the general problem of the one and the many is action, living, moving action. We shall see that being is relation because of action; we shall see that action is the principle unity of the self, and of the reintegration of that self and all that it contains within it with the totality around it in the real re-joining of the results of philosophical retrospection with the direct method of acting and solving

the problem of our destiny.

Ch. III, A. THE OPTION AND METAPHYSICS TO THE SECOND POWER

In our consideration of the workings of the dialectic, we have seen that even Blondel's disclosure of the Uniquely Necessary and the options for or against Him are but on the level of phenomenology.¹ Philosophy,

...même en faisant la science intégrale de la pratique, ne peut empiéter sur ce que la pratique seule apporte d'incommunicable enseignement; puisque, même en étudiant le surnaturel, elle ne peut se prononcer sur sa présence de fait, sur sa forme historique et sur son opération actuelle... .²

In the last chapter we looked at the three metaphysical ideas of duty and the world, along with that of the Uniquely Necessary, and found the same thing. They are all elements in the necessary development of the will's search for adequation, and distilled as necessary in the science of action. Still we remain in the phenomenology.

But, we have been constantly warned that a Blondelian phenomenology is not anti-ontological, but a-ontological. Blondel's purpose for making use of a phenomenological method is to prevent any premature introduction of the ontological-existential question. We must scientifically catalogue all action in an attempt to disclose

1 See Part One, Chapter Three, p. 70-78, this thesis.

2 Maurice BLONDEL, "Lettre"(1896), p. 47. Consider what Blondel himself has to say in the summary of the previous movement of his investigation in L'Action(1893), p. 425-426.

the laws of living action. If, in the process, the ontological question necessarily arises in the forward moving investigation, then it must be asked, for to refuse to ask would be anti-phenomenological as well. Phenomenological method can neither opt for the ontological question nor ignore it, if it confronts us; that would be a kind of negative existential judgment about the existence of that question.

C'est-à-dire qu'on ne peut faire de la négation du transcendant ou du surnaturel une vérité transcendante, et qu'on ne peut exclure l'ontologie que d'un point de vue ontologique... .³

After the great lengthy inventory of the phenomena of action, the question of the objectively real finally arises in consciousness. It makes its appearance as have all the other stages in the investigation: "La nécessité pratique de poser le problème ontologique nous amène nécessairement à la solution ontologique du problème pratique."⁴ In his letter to Bricout in 1893, he reminds us that there is a second metaphysics (different from metaphysical morality) which is the metaphysics of which we now speak:

3 Ibid., p. 62.

4 Maurice BLONDEL, L'Action(1893), p. 425. "Croire, ...que la conduite humaine est indépendante de toute vue métaphysique, que la pratique se suffit à elle-même, et qu'il est possible de vivre en se désintéressant de l'être, c'est là une égale erreur." Ibid., p. 428.

C'est cette partie terminale de la philosophie qui recherche à quelles conditions peuvent être effectivement réalisées toutes les vérités - les choses qui nous avons conçues nécessairement comme réelles: L'Action, pp. 424 à 465.⁵

But, carefully note that it is only after the entire phenomenology of action that the ontological question arises.⁶ In a letter to Delbos, Blondel points out,

...que le problème de la réalité objective ne peut être utilement abordé qu'après qu'on a déployé le déterminisme intégral de l'action, jusqu'à et y compris les conditions définies de la vie proprement religieuse.⁷

A PREVIEW OF THE MOVEMENT OF THE CHAPTER

The problem of objectivity is only solved, according to Blondel, by an inevitable step of thought which moves from a regressive analytical outlook in the study of the phenomena of action (giving a series of necessary conditions and means) to a synthetic view of ends, ends made of real truths and beings.⁸

5 Maurice BLONDEL, Lettres philosophiques, p. 125.

6 "Croire qu'on peut aboutir à l'être et légitimement affirmer quelque réalité que ce soit sans avoir atteint le terme même de la série qui va de la première intuition sensible à la nécessité de Dieu et de la pratique religieuse, c'est demeurer dans l'illusion: on ne saurait s'arrêter à un objet moyen pour en faire une vérité absolue, sans tomber dans l'idolâtrie de l'entendement; toute assertion prématurée est illégitime, et, aux yeux de la science, fausse, même quand il y faudra revenir plus tard, mais par une autre voie, et en un sens différent." Maurice BLONDEL, L'Action(1893), p. 428.

7 Maurice BLONDEL, Lettres philosophiques, p. 66.

8 See Maurice BLONDEL, L'Action(1893), p. 425.

But this change in perspective is by no means the result of a leap of any kind. The generation of the notion of real objective existence is definitely necessary, and, so, is the change in direction which flows from both the nature of the question and the answer which Blondel insists upon. In fact, the change in perspective is a natural outcome of the whole chain of determinisms, as are all the various steps in the disclosure of the notion of objectivity.⁹

Already we noted above that the whole chain of determinisms must be disentangled before the problem of the relationship between being and knowledge is considered; only then does one have "...le droit de se retourner et de voir, dans la fuyante succession des phénomènes, la solidité même de l'être."¹⁰ Once we exercise this right, thought is placed in a position to embrace,

9 "Expliquer la génération nécessaire de la notion d'existence réelle; montrer que nous sommes forcément amenés à affirmer (quelle que soit d'ailleurs la valeur de cette assertion) la réalité des objets de la connaissance et des fins de l'action; faire voir comment, par la médiation de cette inévitable idée de l'existence objective, les besoins de l'action se transforment en vérités régulatrices pour elle; indiquer à quelle conception précise de l'être objectif nous sommes forcément conduits, et déterminer les conditions qui nous apparaissent indispensables pour que cette existence, ainsi définie, soit réalisée telle que nous ne pouvons nous empêcher de la concevoir, ce n'est point, malgré le renouvellement de la perspective, sortir du déterminisme des phénomènes, c'est manifester comment, par cela seul que nous pensons et que nous agissons, il nous est nécessaire de faire comme si cet ordre universel était réel, et ces obligations, fondées." Ibid., p. 426-7.

10 Ibid., p. 427.

...l'ensemble des opérations transitives qui peu à peu rendent la cause finale immanente à la cause efficiente, c'est une nécessité pour elle (la pensée) de faire participer toute la série de ses objets à la réalité du terme qui était déjà présent dès le point de départ.¹¹

Two different results arise in light of the right and the consequent necessity. First of all, the embracing of all the necessary means forces us to hold,

...une connaissance certaine de l'être, à laquelle nous ne pouvons nous dérober; et même cette connaissance, qu'elle soit explicite ou non, est coextensive à son objet; d'où l'on peut dire qu'il y a entre l'être et le connaître une absolue correspondance et une parfaite réciprocité.¹²

Secondly, "...il faut, pour atteindre au terme, passer par l'alternative et trancher le problème pratique qui s'offre à nous comme une question de vie et de mort."¹³ But, considering the right and the necessity in this way ends in a radical heterogeneity and infinite distance between knowledge and being, between the vision and the possession of being.

Thus, the problem of the relationship between knowledge and reality is presented under a radically different aspect. Blondel must dismiss the usual solutions: both a premature solution to the problem at any previous point in the investigation and a complete disregard of the question are quite wrong. Neither is it a

11 Idem.

12 Ibid., p. 427-428.

13 Ibid., p. 428.

question of the idolatry of the understanding or of belief. It is a question of an option for living or dead knowledge "...selon que l'être, dont elle porte en elle la présence nécessaire, n'y est qu'un poids mort ou y règne par l'effet d'une libre adhésion."¹⁴

Most certainly, many clarifications have to be made by Blondel as to the nature of his affirmation of objectivity and his metaphysics to the second power. He will attempt to fully answer the three questions he notes at the end of his introduction to this most difficult, and probably most controversial chapter. First of all, he must show how the idea of objective reality is necessarily conceived by thought with careful precision. Secondly, with the Master of Aix, we must consider the result of rejecting the metaphysical option to recognize this inevitable conception of being: what is left in what Blondel calls privative knowledge? And, thirdly, we must seek the answer to the question of what happens in the case of the free admission and practical adhesion to this inevitable affirmation of our conception of objectivity. "Bref, comment l'action parfaite consomme-t-elle tout ce qui avait servi à la constituer?"¹⁵

14 Ibid., p. 429.

15 Idem.

THE PROBLEM OF OBJECTIVITY AND THE METAPHYSICAL OPTION

a. Before the Option: Subjective and Neutral.

Looking back on the necessary conditions and means uncovered in the regressive analysis, we see two things: on the one hand, the entirety of these means appear to us as what we must will so as to attain destiny; on the other hand, we must know the origin of what seems to be a series of real things that appear as means for our destiny. Put another way, real things appear as necessary means, while at the same time, these mere means seem to be quite real in themselves. "Pour que le rôle médiateur de l'action soit pleinement expliqué, il faut que ce double aspect soit pleinement justifié."¹⁶ Moreover, whatever results from our ultimate conclusions in this respect, automatically affects the entire chain of means in a single affirmation (or denial) of the truth of any of them. Blondel is convinced that, if he can show how all of the heterogeneous terms disclosed in the analysis imply the integrity of the series, he will succeed in showing not only,

...ce qui, dans la connaissance, est indépendant des déterminations de la volonté, mais aussi ce qui subordonne la possession de la vérité et le sens de l'être à la solution du problème pratique que ce minimum de connaissance nécessaire impose à toute conscience d'homme.¹⁷

16 Ibid., p. 430.

17 Ibid., p. 430-431.

We discover that a mutual relationship of generation exists between the idea of objectivity and the subjective element which shows itself in the options for or against singular steps which ultimately secure our loose destiny. We act and think according to a universal determining order, albeit, one which is first spontaneously implied by each and every step of the human will. But, even as we imply it, when and if we absolutely deny its push (and pull) at any point in the chain of determinisms, we feel its full force: "Vainement essaye-t-on de le nier ou de le briser; par l'effort qu'on fait pour le ruiner ou s'y soustraire, on le pose et on le ratifie."¹⁸ We see, even by our negation, an objective force to this universal, a force over which we have no control because it appears to be independent from us. "...cette vérité réelle des objets de la pensée est prélevée sur la substance même de la volonté."¹⁹ Notice two things (1) "Bien qu'il soit lié aux plus intimes productions du sujet (sans cela nous ne le connaîtrions pas), il n'en est pas moins à nos yeux l'objet (sans cela nous ne saurions y voir un système de moyens et de fins pour la volonté)."²⁰ (2) The determinism, although something undoubtedly possessed by us by way of its spontaneous production in thought, is also an end to be attained by willed operation. Therefore, both segments of the problem are

18 Ibid., p. 431.

19 Ibid., p. 432.

20 Ibid., p. 431. My emphasis.

necessary for any idea of real existence, because "Pour arriver à la simple idée d'une subsistance objective, il faut que cette notion soit assurée par un double acte d'entendement et de volonté."²¹

Because saying something about one idea in thought necessarily implies the same about the whole continuity of heterogeneous ideas, at the same time, "...il faut proposer à la volonté, au moins confusément, l'alternative qui l'implique tout entier."²² The question is one of all or nothing at all which involves both speculation and the practical. We must freely will what is realized as independent in order to attain our destiny, "...sans l'assimilation de ces objets et la possession de ces fins nous ne sommes pas ce que nous voulons être."²³ The problem of objectivity and that of the problem of our destiny are inseparable dilemmas which can be only completely solved together.

However, simply from the viewpoint of necessary laws, that is, from the side of the laws of convergence, harmony, and finality, this aspect of the solution seen from above is only in the realm of abstraction. In order for objectivity to be really present to consciousness, "...il faut que cette abstraite conception se réalise dans des objets concrets."²⁴ By means of this quite factual

21 Idem.

22 Ibid., p. 432.

23 Ibid., p. 432-433.

24 Ibid., p. 433.

affirmation, "La notion d'une connaissance objective et celle d'une existence réelle, quoique très distinctes, sont connexes."²⁵ We must ground objective value in the singular nature and quality of each of the objects in intuition. The wholistic view and the unique synthesis of each singular idea is part and parcel of our objective experience of the whole and of each of the particular ideas in the chain. More than individual qualitative syntheses, though, all the terms are comprehensible only through the entire series which actually holds all terms in each- and each term in all terms.

Voilà comment, dans la solidarité totale et la continuité universelle, toute synthèse particulière apparaît avec un caractère d'absolue hétérogénéité et d'entière originalité. Voilà comment aussi tout objet particulier peut devenir, pour la volonté, la matière d'une option et nous amener à résoudre l'alternative qui décide de la vie.²⁶

The relationship which makes it possible for each term to hold all the terms and visa-versa is the causal bond. "L'unité qu'il établit entre tous ses termes hétérogènes...c'est celle du plus complexe des liens, du lien causal."²⁷

The nature of this causal bond is grounded neither purely in an a priori deductive law of thought, nor only in an a posteriori experience of what seems to occur in a regular sequence in empirical

25 Idem.

26 Ibid., p. 433-434.

27 Ibid., p. 434.

"reality". In order to understand what is a priori and what is a posteriori in the causal bond, and what makes it different from either of these in pure state, Blondel must disclose "...la loi nécessaire qui exprime idéalement à la pensée l'enchaînement réel des nécessités pratiques dont la volonté ratifie elle-même les exigences."²⁸ Both the abstract a priori ideas in thought and the notion of singularity are necessary for a proper understanding of the causal connection, and for the distinct knowledge of any single object. It is a matter of making finality immanent to the order of efficiency by action; "...le propre rôle de l'action humaine c'est toujours de se déterminer par la vue d'un objet ou d'une fin."²⁹ It is the act of making an option in thinking for both the particular which shares in the universal and necessary, and the totality which is grounded in the various heterogeneous particulars. Thus, it is by free option that there is a unity of the orders of speculation and practice. The solution to the problem of the relationship between thought and reality in thought is never purely intellectual; and, on the other hand, a purely singular solution in practice without thought supplies but a contingency with no necessity, a shadow with no link to anything.

28 Idem. "D'où le caractère ambigu de lien causal: pour en étudier la nature logique, il faudrait remonter jusqu'au point où se révélerait l'unité de l'emploi analytique et de l'emploi synthétique de notre pensée." Idem.

29 Idem.

Nous avons l'idée d'une réalité objective, nous affirmons la réalité des objets; mais, pour le faire, il est nécessaire que nous posions implicitement le problème de notre destinée, et que nous subordonnions tout ce que nous sommes et tout ce qui est pour nous à une option. Nous n'arrivons à l'être et aux êtres qu'en passant par cette alternative: selon la façon même dont on la tranche, il est inévitable que le sens de l'être soit changé. La connaissance de l'être implique la nécessité de l'option; l'être dans la connaissance n'est pas avant, mais après la liberté du choix.³⁰

b. With the Option: Either Privative (Negative) or Consummative (Positive).

The introduction of the metaphysical option brings us to a decisive point in this last chapter. Depending upon which way we resolve the option, we may either only have a speculative knowledge of objectivity, or, by choosing the affirmative option, truly possess the being and the real truth of being.

La vérité réelle des objets, leur être ne réside donc pas dans l'inévitable représentation que nous en avons, il consiste dans ce qu'il dépend de nous de vouloir ou de ne pas vouloir en eux. Pour être en nous, il faut que nous voulions qu'ils soient pour nous ce qu'ils sont en soi.³¹

If we choose negatively in light of the metaphysical option by ignoring the Uniquely Necessary and refusing to bow to the heteronomous law of objective determinism, we cannot possess objective reality. Under a negative option only speculative objectivity is

30 Ibid., p. 435-436.

31 Ibid., p. 436-437.

attained; there is objective knowledge. But, knowledge of the objectively real is privative; the access to its possession as it is in being is cut off.

Ainsi, en se fermant aux obligations qui sont apparues comme les conditions vivifiantes de l'action volontaire, l'on se ferme du même coup l'accès, l'on se prive de la possession de la réalité connue, mais sans supprimer pour cela la connaissance de la réalité... .³²

Nevertheless, the will continues to desire possession of the real, being unsatisfied with the mere privative knowledge of real objectivity. Further, because the pre-option "proofs" for objectivity were only subjective in nature, the man who chooses the negative solution to the option does attain complete subjective knowledge of truth; but objectively, he does not possess being in its positive entirety.³³

The affirmation of the real truth of being (by choosing positively) consists in subordinating our will to both the order of necessities present to the intellect and, even more essentially, to the Uniquely Necessary. Only by allowing our will to depend upon reality do real truths and being gain access and become possessed

32 Ibid., p. 437.

33 "A cette question 'quel est le minimum d'être qui subsiste dans l'homme qui en a retranché tout ce qui peut n'être pas voulu', on doit donc répondre: en lui, la connaissance subjective de la vérité demeure entière et positive; la connaissance objective de la réalité est entière, elle aussi, mais négative. La sanction est à la fois dans ce qu'il connaît de l'être réel et dans ce qu'il n'en connaît pas. Car, en sachant ce qui est à savoir, il sait également que la possession réelle de ce dont il s'est privé lui eût apporté un surcroît infini de clarté et de joie." Ibid., p. 439.

by us. Even more, the Uniquely Necessary is the principle member of beings to which we must subordinate ourselves. It is always a question of the totality of the system, and that system depends upon our affirmation of Being because all other beings are contingent upon Him.

Et comme, malgré la multiplicité des objets, la chaîne est unique, c'est du système entier qu'il s'agit, pour nous, d'inclure ou d'exclure la présence réelle. Tout dépend donc de l'attitude prise en face de l'unique nécessaire, puisque c'est le principe de la série entière, et puisque la suite du déterminisme total a pour effet de nous y ramener sûrement. Sans l'être, point d'autres êtres en nous; avec lui, tous seront présents.³⁴

c. The Placement of Objectivity

From what has been said above, there are certain things that we can note about the position of objectivity in willing, in knowledge, and in the action of God. These three aspects Blondel discusses in Part Four of this chapter of L'Action (1893); however, it seems expedient for us to look at them presently while the above considerations are still fresh in our mind.³⁵

First of all, we must realize that the idea of objectivity is subjective on two distinct planes, depending upon whether we refer to the necessity of the idea before the metaphysical option or the free choice for or against this metaphysical option. In the

³⁴ Ibid., p. 437.

³⁵ See Ibid., p. 450-461.

first case, we know the entire order of phenomena revealed by the expansion of the will. This expansion is necessary (it moves in the dynamism between causalities constantly producing farther and farther actions), and it is subjective (the subject himself generates the phenomena of actions according to his vital nature as ego). By means of a change of perspective, now synthetic, all the necessary conditions and means disclosed in the regressive analysis are seen in terms of the totality of ends which are real truths and ordered beings. Again, the action of the subject is the major key. But, in the second case, the subject freely chooses objectivity in the real sense of possession if he affirms the metaphysical option. Even in the case of the negative choice, the subject freely opts for objectivity, although not as possession, but as really speculatively known. Consequently, in both the case of privation and of possession, it is the subject who voluntarily receives or refuses. "Or c'est entre ces éléments subjectifs que se place ce qui est proprement et réellement objectif."³⁶ This objectivity we cannot successfully reduce to subjectivity.

The second point of note we need hardly be reminded of in light of the section on sensation early in L'Action(1893).³⁷ Ideas are always a synthesis of immanent subjective a priori action (connaissance produite, initiative subjective) and re-presentations of

36 Ibid., p. 450.

37 See Ibid., p. 45-47.

objects (connaissance subie, passivité externe).³⁸ Both are always necessary for knowledge within the confines of man's powers. As with all other relations Blondel considers, there is constant reciprocity here;

...ces deux aspects ne sont l'un et l'autre réels que dans la mesure où, irréductibles l'un à l'autre, ils sont reliés dans l'unité d'un même acte de volonté, dans la perception d'une même sensibilité et d'une même raison.

C'est donc parce que la raison est immanente au sensible et le sensible immanent à la raison, que ces phénomènes ont une subsistance propre.³⁹

Thirdly, there is the question of the action of God and its relation to objectivity. The entire chain of phenomena (beings) ultimately arise from the free act of creation of God. And, it is to Him that they return. The objective real finds its place between the action of free creation and the action of returning to this creator as He is Final Cause. "La réalité du phénomène et, avec elle, le système total et la cité même des esprits s'évanouirait sans cette double attache du relatif à l'absolu et de l'absolu au relatif."⁴⁰

Ch. III, B. RESOLUTION

Now seems the time to recall that the goal of this thesis is to show Blondel's solution to the problem of the relationship between thought and the real in thought. Because Blondel expects philosophy

38 Ibid., p. 451.

39 Ibid., p. 455.

40 Ibid., p. 460; see the entire section, p. 456-461.

to be a science, and because it is insufficient to living action, an insufficiency that proves to be quite real at the end of L'Action(1893), this solution is of a different nature. Ultimately, we see that the solution is present from the start of Blondel's investigation. That solution is action, the vinculum substantiale.

However, the solution to the problem of the relationship between thought and reality in the philosophy as a strict philosophy is only in potency. Blondel merely shows how the very real problem of this relationship is solved. That way is centered around the necessary laws of action and, as we noted above, the quite real need for living action.

Because Blondel is analyzing the exigencies of living human action; and because living human action is essentially contemplation in the fullest sense of that term, the real problem of the real relationship between real living thought and real living being is solved by association and in theory. For that in-theory status to be made actual calls for, necessarily, the reintegration of the disclosed laws of the logic of action into effective action. This real solution is, of course, beyond the competence of philosophy alone.

Much of what has been said above we would expect in light of the preceding chapters. But in order to make the nature of this solution clearer, we shall consider two major points. First of all, we must disclose the real status of the second metaphysics. We must first ask whether we still remain in a phenomenology. Does metaphysics to the second degree really attain reality?, and if not, what

does it supply for the solution to the problem of the relationship between thought and reality? We must also consider the differences between the two metaphysics, and their relation to truth in the Blondelian system. Our second major section will show action as the solution on all levels, the strictly philosophical-phenomenological, the level of internal thinking, and the co-extensive level of philosophy integrated into living action.

THE STATUS OF METAPHYSICS TO THE SECOND POWER

In order to evaluate the status of this second metaphysics, we must consider a few basic questions. First of all, is his metaphysics to the second degree still phenomenological? Secondly, does Blondelian philosophy ever really attain or suffice for reality? In the case of a negative answer to the above question, what does philosophy give to the solution?

a. The Question of a Phenomenology

In order to answer our first question, we should quickly review the meanings of phenomenology as they are most assuredly attributable to Blondel's study.⁴¹ We need not, at this time, defend the statement that the Philosopher of Aix uses description and hence falls under the non-technical meaning of the term. We do not think, either, that we need defend the fact that Blondel makes use of the existential

41 See Part One, Chapter Two, p. 33-36, this thesis.

epoche in his phenomenology of action. In fact, he continues to use it right up until the point where the ontological question arises by necessity. True enough, the question itself is forced by determinism, and at this stage, it is the necessary chain of phenomenal means and ends disclosed in the retrospective analysis which brings out the first view of the last ontology. But the question of the real existence of the objectively real does arise and can no longer be avoided. Hence, the second meaning of phenomenology, in so far as it is an existential epoche, is no longer strictly followed. We must remember, though, that the method demands something else along with the bracketing of the existential question: the phenomenologist must remain faithful to what is given. Most certainly, the raising of the ontological question, and, in fact, its solution are part of the progressive data of consciousness on which Blondel is working. This is why he would be just as unfaithful to the phenomenological method if he continued to bracket the question than if he had broached it at the very beginning of the inquiry. To ignore the necessary question would be to misunderstand Blondel's understanding of his own phenomenological method as well. The Philosopher's method is phenomenological, but it has its own intrinsic limitations as far as holding onto the epoche.

Again we must also consider whether or not Blondel's phenomenological method is doctrinal. It is difficult to assess this without presupposing some knowledge of Husserl. That is, of course, not part of our purpose. But, if we are willing to accept two points as true,

we should see how Blondel's phenomenological approach could not be doctrinal. First of all, Husserlian phenomenology attempts to uncover the first principle of all reality under the aspect of meaning. Secondly, if one is to remain true to the thought of the modern founder of phenomenology, one must retain the complete method and the doctrine together. Certainly, this last point does not hold for Blondel, since he has had to eventually abandon the existential epoche so as to remain faithful to it. And, along with giving up that bracketing of the ontological question, Blondel also changes the direction of his view from analytically retrospective to synthetically prospective. We do not think Blondel can be accused of essentialism because he does not restrict his findings to the realm of pure abstract meaning. We recall that he demands of philosophy a constant subservience to real action and to the direct mode of solving the problem of human destiny. And, in that sense, what Blondel studies is always itself a synthesis of a priori elements from the subject and a posteriori elements from real, singular, concrete, individual experience. Consequently, he cannot reduce his analysis (and synthesis of this last segment) to one of pure meaning. This is precisely what he strives to avoid - this pure and utter abstraction - by studying ideogenesis, the process of thinking, which, admittedly, does give rise to meanings in the intellect. We remember that he would not limit himself to a study of what came from these geneses as stratified objects of meaning.

b. The Meaning of the Two Metaphysics

In one of his correspondences with Abby Bricout, Blondel defines metaphysics to the second power as that metaphysics which

...cherche à quelles conditions ces vérités que nous n'avons, ni en droit ni en fait, le pouvoir de considérer comme purement subjectives, peuvent être réelles indépendamment de notre pensée, réelles absolument. (Et c'est à ce propos que j'ai parlé de l'Emmanuel, cause réelle du dessein de la création.)⁴²

In contra-distinction to this last ontology of his, the first is an immanent metaphysics after the form of a Kantian metaphysics.⁴³ He defines this metaphysics to the first power as "...laquelle se borne à déterminer la liaison normale et nécessaire de nos concepts transcendants, dans la mesure où ils servent à régler les rapports de la pensée avec la pratique... ." ⁴⁴

Even as far as the second metaphysics is concerned, philosophy cannot alone provide real objectivity. The first metaphysics deals with the immanent necessity found within consciousness after the mode of the necessary laws and conditions within the phenomenology of action only. The second metaphysics, on the other hand, arises so as to answer the ontological question, and to find the real ground for all that has come before in the regressive analysis. Blondel is

42 Maurice BLONDEL, Lettres philosophiques, p. 126-127.

43 See Part Two, Chapter Two, p. 130-138, this thesis.

44 Maurice BLONDEL, Lettres philosophiques, p. 126.

looking for the laws by which we affirm in thinking the necessary relationship between thought and reality, and the real existence of being, the laws of the logic of action. The metaphysical option is the turning point which allows for us either to possess reality and have objective knowledge by taking the affirmative choice, or to merely have objective knowledge by selecting the privative option. Action is necessary for both the real possession of the objective real and the knowledge of objectivity. Further, action must be put into the really real:

On ne résout pas le problème de la vie sans vivre;
 et jamais dire ou prouver ne dispense de faire
 et d'être. Voilà donc absolument justifié, par
 la science même, le rôle de l'action: la science de
 la pratique établit qu'on ne supplée pas à la
 pratique.⁴⁵

c. Moral Truth and Metaphysical Truth

Concerning the measure of truth value in the area of metaphysics to the first degree, we should realize that because of the role of metaphysical ideals in the phenomenon of action, their truth value is reducible to psychological truth: "...explication du contenu de la conscience, pour élever davantage nos idées à leurs conditions et à leurs productions."⁴⁶ Metaphysical ideas (to the first power) serve as sources for a unifying idea by which we organize our actions.

45 Maurice BLONDEL, L'Action(1893), p. 463.

46 Maurice BLONDEL, "Vrai" in Vocabulaire, p. 1223-1224.

Consequently, it is but another step in the phenomenology of action. They are regulator-ideas, the ideas of the Uniquely Necessary, the world, and duty in this segment of L'Action(1893). The actual question of the status of metaphysical truth, therefore, is not in question at that time.⁴⁷

It was perhaps under criticism from his friend, the historian Victor Delbos that Blondel decided to add the second metaphysics to his doctoral thesis.⁴⁸ The gist of Delbos' criticism was that Blondel had reduced metaphysics to part and parcel of the will in action, whereas Delbos thought that metaphysics should have its own justification apart from the dialectic of action in the phenomenon of action.⁴⁹ Blondel's answer to his friend's criticism was to be the fifth chapter of L'Action(1893) - the metaphysics to the second power. Now, although he does say that this metaphysics is capable of being real in so far as it attains and makes us affirm the objectively real⁵⁰, there surely remains the question as to the importance of

47 See Part Two, Chapter Two, p. 130-147, this thesis.

48 See John J. MC NEILL, The Blondelian Synthesis, p. 285-9.

49 Victor DELBOS, "Dernier chapitre de 'L'Action'", in Archives de philosophie, tome xxiv, janvier-mars, p. 60.

50 "...et de cette métaphysique à la seconde puissance qui, succédant à l'étude du déterminisme complet de nos pensées, et remarquant que nous affirmons invinciblement la réalité objective de ce que nous avons invinciblement conçu et pensé, cherche à quelles conditions ces vérités que nous n'avons, ni en droit ni en fait, le pouvoir de considérer comme purement subjectives, peuvent être réelles indépendamment de notre pensée, réelles absolument." Maurice BLONDEL, Lettres philosophiques, p. 126.

action in that second metaphysics. It would appear, in light of what has already been said above, that, although Blondel may believe that he has adequately replied to Delbos' criticism, he has not. Metaphysics to the second degree cannot reach real objectivity even at the level of which we already spoke in the earlier parts of this section of Chapter Three without the constant presence of action, in this case, action of the option. Therefore, metaphysical truth cannot stand alone without the co-existence of the moral adequation of the self with the self through the choosing, either negatively or positively, of the metaphysical option. There is just no metaphysics to the second power without the play of action. And, even at that, philosophy itself is not attaining the really real of objectivity. Metaphysics to the second power is beyond philosophy in and of itself in that it demands real commitment in order to transcend theory. The real synthesis is only in action itself.

How, then, do we define metaphysical truth in so far as it is identified with Blondel's second metaphysics? It would seem that even metaphysical truth, "...intellectum in actu et intellectus in actu idem sunt"⁵¹, is made possible under the auspices of what Blondel calls moral truth. Metaphysical truth is not only fulfilled by means of committed action, but, once it is made real by action, the truth of metaphysics finds its place in the attempt of the total ego to find completion; the ultimate problem of L'Action(1893) is one

51 Maurice BLONDEL, "Vrai", in Vocabulaire, p. 1224.

of "...l'adéquation immanente de nous-même avec nous-même."⁵²

Attaining the objectively real, like all else is another step in the adequation of the self with the self, with, however this one exception. In light of the results of metaphysics to the second power we can look back on the entire set of analyzed conditions and see the totality from the view of the completed objectively real; we see the synthesis of action as real and the "substance" of which being is made as real, both as it is and in connection with us in the newfound adequation of thinking and the things thought. We must try to put

...en équation, dans la conscience même, ce que nous paraissions penser et vouloir et faire, avec ce que nous faisons, nous voulons et nous pensons en réalité: de telle sorte que dans les négations factices ou les fins artificiellement voulues se retrouveront encore les affirmations profondes et les besoins incoercibles qu'elles impliquent.⁵³

Possession of the objective real means the real possession of myself because it means that I am making adequate thinking and life, "...pour réaliser par nos intentions et nos actes l'accord de notre personnalité acquise avec les exigences de notre nature, dans le sens plein qu'a l'expression: 'c'est une âme vraie'."⁵⁴

52 Maurice BLONDEL, "L'illusion idéaliste", p. 110.

53 Maurice BLONDEL, "Lettre"(1896), p. 39.

54 Maurice BLONDEL, "Vrai", in Vocabulaire, p. 1224.

THE SOLUTION: ACTION

The real conclusion of the entire Blondelian endeavor is that only by action do we attain reality. Philosophy alone cannot suffice for the living action of life; it only shows by what necessary laws and procedures we can attain living reality and our own destiny. Central to the proper use of these laws and procedures is always, in every case, action on some level. The real necessity rests in the actual living of our choices and really moving towards our destiny by thinking and acting in a committed way in the totality presented to us. Here philosophy, and even speculative philosophy to the highest degree, must subordinate itself to action by going through

the Emmanuel in order to really attain living, objective reality.⁵⁵

55 "Or, ici je vous demande de méditer cette distinction: spéculativement, nous ne pouvons, à mon sens, justifier absolument la réalité objective de tout ce que nous affirmons nécessairement comme objectivement réel, sans passer par l'Emmanuel; et pourtant il n'y a là aucune trace d'ontologisme; car je ne dis nullement que les choses sont connues en Dieu, mais que nous ne pouvons expliquer pleinement qu'elles sont telles que nous les connaissons qu'en profitant d'une donnée dont la philosophie pure n'aura jamais le secret. Et il n'y a pas non plus en cela trace d'agnosticisme, parce que je reconnais à la philosophie le pouvoir et de montrer la légitimité ou la nécessité de ces affirmations objectives alors même qu'elle ne les justifie pas pleinement, et d'expliquer certaines des conséquences qui résultent de cette objectivation forcée, et de constater qu'elle ne saurait ici même prétendre à l'ἀντίρροια. Pratiquement, d'un autre côté, s'il est vrai que, pour opter utilement, nous impliquons dans notre choix le total de ce que la spéculation essaie de déterminer, pourtant, nous n'avons pas besoin de posséder cette connaissance explicite pour engager justement notre responsabilité; et cette connaissance explicite nous fût-elle donnée, nous n'en aurions pas moins besoin d'agir, pour que la réalité connue devînt réalité possédée. Avant cette option et cette action qui ne dépend pas essentiellement du caractère plus ou moins scientifique de la connaissance, la vérité objective est en nous comme une arme à double tranchant. Et pour prendre un langage et un exemple théologiques, Dieu n'est pas moins une vérité objective pour la damné que pour l'élus; mais pour le premier la vérité objective préalable est devenue la connaissance privative, pour l'autre, elle a permis la possession réelle. Vous voyez donc à la fois la solidité relative de l'élément intellectuel, et le rôle décisif de l'élément volontaire, actif, aimant, dans la solution du problème ontologique: le plus délicat, c'est de remarquer la mutuelle indépendance et la mutuelle solidarité de ces fonctions également essentielles dans notre vie, mais telles que l'une peut rester rudimentaire, tandis que l'autre est complète et que toutefois leur union est indispensable à la solution du problème." Maurice BLONDEL, Lettres philosophiques, p. 167-168.

a. Being, Relation, and Action

Let us presuppose with Blondel, that the positive consummative option is the one chosen. In this case, we have to discover the nature of the relationships that have to do with being. Because the subordination of the self to the Uniquely Necessary is of most central importance, the relationship between ourselves and Being is considered. That relationship is one centered around love; and it is the love relationship between Being and the human knower which sets the pace for all man's relationships. "Or nous ne pouvons agréer toutes choses, nous ne pouvons nous agréer nous-mêmes sans passer par 'l'unique nécessaire' où l'on a vu justement le principe du déterminisme total."⁵⁶

We must first strive to know the Uniquely Necessary. This always calls for sacrifice⁵⁷; we must give up egoism or the way of self-love and all the other relative ends. And, the only way to begin to know God really (in so far as He wishes us to know Him) "...c'est donc porter en soi son esprit, sa volonté, son amour. Nequaquam plene cognoscitur nisi cum perfecte diligitur."⁵⁸ The basic understanding of the term being, if we can even call it a term without rarifying it, is love; without love, there is no possession of real truth or even relative beings on any level. "L'être est amour; l'on

56 Maurice BLONDEL, L'Action(1893), p. 441.

57 "Le sacrifice est la solution du problème métaphysique par la méthode expérimentale." Ibid., p. 442.

58 Ibid., p. 441-442.

ne connaît donc rien si l'on n'aime."⁵⁹ The sacrifice of self and relativity, then, does not mean that we sever ourselves from others; on the contrary, in the case of interpersonal relationships especially, God is the beginning, the end, the communication.⁶⁰

Love is essentially relationship; if being is love, then the whole understanding of Being as Love is really one of Being as Relation. Blondel takes pains to show that he is not reducing contingent individual beings to God as would pantheism. Instead of assimilating the many contingent individuals into a unity with no differentiation whatsoever, the presence of the action of the Uniquely Necessary makes for real individuality. Because a relationship presupposes a term from- and a -term to in love-relation, there could be no unity of diversity (by which we define being) if there were not

59 Ibid., p. 443.

60 "Si l'on ne parvient à Dieu que par l'oblation de tout ce qui n'est pas lui, on retrouve en lui la réalité véritable de tout ce qui n'est pas Dieu. On ne se présente jamais seul en sa présence; parce que dans l'aveu qui le reconnaît vraiment l'on enveloppe l'hommage et le don de l'univers entier; mais on ne le retrouve jamais seul, parce qu'après avoir sacrifié à l'Être tous les Êtres qui ne seraient pas sans lui, on acquiert en lui tous les Êtres qui sont par l'Être." Idem. And, "Ce cercle est donc justifié: sans cet amour agissant des membres de l'humanité les uns pour les autres, il y n'a point de Dieu pour l'homme; qui n'aime pas son frère n'a pas la vie en soi: mais aussi c'est en vain qu'on tenterait de grouper les esprits comme une famille en repoussant le Père des esprits, de tromper les exigences de la raison, de dissimuler par l'exaltation d'autres sentiments ce grand vide; dans la pratique commune de la vie, dans la logique secrète des consciences, sans Dieu il n'y a point d'homme pour l'homme." Ibid., p. 446.

more than one individual. "...car si nous ne nous réalisons qu'en participant à ce qu'ils sont, nous ne sommes réels et distincts qu'autant qu'ils le sont eux aussi."⁶¹ Completion of the self is the byword; destroying the other, destroys the self: "...la vérité du dehors objectif est indispensable au maintien du dedans subjectif des êtres."⁶² Thus, there is being only in relation, whether that relation be constitutive of the individual subjective ego, or of society, or of the many other real unities of diversities.

But in the light of all that has gone before, we must surely see that Blondel is saying much more than being is relation in the sense of simple connection. Being is relation because action itself constitutes the relations. Further, action is quite independent of any one of the many terms it constitutes in our thinking. In Itinéraire philosophique Blondel defines action as the vinculum substantiale that,

...constitue l'unité concrète de chaque être en assurant sa communion avec tous. N'est-elle pas, en effet, le confluent en nous de la pensée et de la vie, de l'originalité individuelle et de l'ordre social et même total de la science et de la foi? En traduisant ce qu'il y a de singulier, d'inédit, d'initiateur en chacun, elle n'en subit pas moins les influences du monde inférieur, du monde intérieur, du monde supérieur: elle vient de l'universel, elle y retourne, mais en y introduisant du décisif; elle est le lieu géométrique où se rencontrent le naturel, l'humain, le divin.⁶³

Action does make for all the connections in L'Action(1893) and beyond

61 Ibid., p. 447.

62 Idem., See p. 448-450 for the role of matter in the relationship.

63 Maurice BLONDEL, Itinéraire philosophiques, p. 36.

into the realm of real thinking and acting.

b. Action as the Unity of Self

Most certainly action is the vinculum substantiale in man; and that most essential human action is contemplation, the action par excellence. This is why Blondel studies living, thinking human action. Thinking or contemplation is what distinguishes man from all else in nature. He never simply experiences a stimulus and produces a response, in the way a brute does by means of his instinctual powers. Man adds an infinite 'plus' to the world around him. The unity that makes for man's capacity to contemplate is his synthetic a priori nature as a reflective, conscious subjectivity - the ego. The universe and the human organism himself is conquerable in an entirely new and different way by the reflective subjective consciousness that is man. It is in this sense that Blondel defines both synthetic prospection and retrospective analysis as reflective in Lalande's Vocabulaire. Reflective conscious subjectivity is "...un redoublement, plus ou moins spontané ou plus ou moins volontaire, et comme un repliement de la vie psychologique sur elle-même (d'où inhibition apparente et provisoire)... ." ⁶⁴ This is a distinguishing characteristic of human consciousness, this self-conscious activity. But, even more than that, human subjectivity is synthetic a priori, the transcendence of all the subaltern conditions and powers in

64 Maurice BLONDEL, "Réflexion", in Vocabulaire, p. 905.

it.⁶⁵ It is a new fact in the world realm, "...elle constitue d'autre part un fait nouveau, une initiative originale, une force ultérieure et supérieure à celle des éléments qui en ont été l'occasion."⁶⁶

Man is a microcosm, and a creative one, at that. Reflection, in the sense of the Vocabulaire, is the human action of thinking or contemplation.

As such, it has a two-directional view. As a backward directional view, reflection is called analytic retrospection. The point of retrospection is to disclose the laws of conscious action. Thus, Blondel defines retrospective analytic reflection as referring to "...les conditions antécédentes et efficientes du fait de conscience ou de la réalité donnée qui est l'objet de son étude et qu'elle rattache à des idées générales ou à des lois... ." ⁶⁷ This is the action of philosophical thinking. It studies contemplation *en toto* (and it is subordinate to it), whether it be forward or backward looking, in order to find the necessary laws for its execution. Essentially, this definition of retrospection agrees with Blondel's understanding of the proper mode of philosophical thinking in both L'Action (1893) and the two part essay, "Le Point de départ de la

65 See Part Two, Chapter One, p. 106-111, this thesis.

66 Maurice BLONDEL, "Réflexion", in Vocabulaire, p. 905.

67 Idem; see also "Prospection", Ibid., p. 845.

recherche de la philosophie."⁶⁸

As a microcosm - a reflective, conscious ego - man deals in the concrete primarily by contemplation in the fullest sense of the term. The entire set of human actions of doing moral deeds, or making something, or attaining reality by possession, or changing oneself are possible only because he is a reflective thinker. He rejoins himself to the concrete which is outside of him or which comes from him by means of thinking . This is the sense in which Blondel seems to be speaking of synthetic propection in the Vocabulaire; it is the real living done by man through thinking. From its other view, reflection (human conscious thinking) "...se porte pour ainsi dire en avant vers l'intention et la réalisation finale, concrète et singulière qui est le terme pratique de son mouvement complexe et total... "⁶⁹ Living human action, then, joins together, synthesizes by means of reflective conscious action, i.e., thinking. At each stage it is oriented towards the singular solution to the problem of human action by seeing, at one and the same time, the necessary

68 See L'Action(1893), Introduction, p. xviii ff, and "Le Point de départ" where retrospective analysis is considered to be no less natural than the forward looking action of knowing. It is "...la connaissance tournée vers les résultats obtenus ou les procédés employés, tels que par abstraction on les analyse rétrospectivement." "Le Point de départ", I, p. 342. Retrospection, however, does not call for the dismissal of the forward moving gaze of knowing; it cannot reproduce it or supply for it. What makes it specifically philosophical, however, is the fact that it would study the integral synthesis of living and thinking action, which is both backward looking and forward moving. See Ibid, II, p. 226.

69 Maurice BLONDEL "Réflexion", in Vocabulaire, p. 906.

universal solution to that problem and the particular solution for me. In this sense, prospection is most definitely not spontaneous since it is essentially the proper action of the human conscious ego. Real possession of beings, of self, and of our destiny is its goal. Philosophy properly studies living human action; living human action is characteristically reflective consciousness. Consequently, Blondel studies conscious human reflection, which is the transcendent a priori synthesis of all the subaltern forces and conditions immanent to it.

c. The Integration of the Results of Philosophical
Retrospection and the Direct Method of Approach

Blondel finds that there is a third kind of knowledge which is neither strictly retrospective nor purely prospective and that knowledge is philosophical knowledge. Those philosophies that depend upon pure retrospection are dead;

...et elle n'a vècu, elle ne vit que par une sorte de fidéisme initial et latent, par un emprunt tacite et un inconscient recours à la "prospection", à l'acte subjectif d'une pensée qui poursuit implicitement des fins qu'elle n'a pas besoin de connaître pour s'exercer encore utilement.⁷⁰

In the Blondelian philosophy, we are studying action - the interior adequation of the self with the self; therefore, the philosophical method properly involves prospection as well as retrospection. "La réflexion ne devient strictement philosophique qu'en se proposant

70 Maurice BLONDEL, "Le Point de départ", I, p. 350.

initialement comme tâche d'élucider la synthèse intégrale de la prospection."⁷¹ That is to say, that all its reflections are constantly subordinate to effective, direct, living action; thus, it is prospection that philosophy is analyzing. On the other hand, the relationship also goes the other way. In philosophy the two are not joined for the sake of retrospection alone. It is just as necessary to realize that "...prospection ne devient strictement philosophique qu'en se proposant...de réintégrer en elle toutes les conquêtes fragmentaires de la réflexion."⁷² There is a kind of reciprocity between the two: retrospection, depending upon the living synthesis of prospection to guide it and to prevent it from becoming quite dead; prospection, depending upon the reflection of indirect knowledge to supply it with the necessary rules and conditions for its own proper progress toward the total solution in living action. Yet, at the same time, speculation never supplies for life. In fact, the disclosed laws never reach completion unless we use them in the

71 Ibid., II, p. 226.

72 Ibid., II, p. 226-227.

direct way of real action.⁷³

L'action effectuée est une condition intégrante de la connaissance philosophique; que la pensée théorique n'y supplée pas et n'en n'est pas le simple miroir; que si la réflexion à certains égards, éclaire et commande la pratique, en revanche la pratique apporte à la réflexion un enseignement qu'on n'obtient par aucune autre voie; que, contrairement à une parole de Descartes, "l'action et l'idée de l'action" ne sont nullement équivalentes.⁷⁴

Moreover, philosophy, as with all the other sciences, is an effort of the will in its attempt to become really adequate with itself. "Au point de départ de toutes les sciences, de tous les arts, de toutes les industries se retrouve un besoin à contenter, un besoin sans lequel la réflexion ne se serait point produite et n'aurait rien produit."⁷⁵

73 Our discussion of prospection and retrospection is not intended to be an attempt at solving the problem in interpretation of the meaning of these terms in the three sources: L'Action(1893), Introduction; "Le Point de départ"; and the Vocabulaire. Henry DUMERY notes the difficulty well in his Raison et religion dans la philosophie de l'action, p. 482-494. The purpose here is to show, again, the place prospection has in philosophy, and the role of retrospection as the method of philosophy. Of course, the possibility of a solution of these seemingly contradictory texts may lie here: the ones in the Vocabulaire may be referring to the nature of man according to Blondel, while the other two texts are referring to the spontaneous, unquestioning way that we live our lives, of course with the use of our intellects, but without digging down for the why and wherefor of our actions and the meaning of our destiny. In other words, these second set of texts may be only opposing the philosophical, indirect method to the unquestioning method of our everyday acts which are always direct in mode.

74 Ibid., II, p. 239.

75 Ibid., I, p. 356-357.

Substantially, then, philosophical knowledge differs both from prospective knowledge alone because it is analytic and searching for the necessary laws of action, and from retrospection because it is essentially dependant upon the direct mode of living action.

SUMMARY

Our last chapter of this thesis has for its purpose the delineation of the Blondelian solution to the problem of the relationship between thought and reality in thought. This chapter has included two sections, one on the second of Blondel's metaphysics, and the other on the resolution of the problem.

Out of the necessity of the science of action and its phenomenological method, the ontological question arises and must be answered in some way. The question can only be asked after a complete inventory of the phenomena of action. In its final analysis, this ontological question takes on an epistemological formulation: what is the relationship between human thought and its contents, and the objective reality which we know? What Blondel wants to know is the connection between these two poles of thought and objective reality. An answer to the question is the goal of metaphysics to the second power. In the process of this last chapter of L'Action(1893) there is a change of perspective from the analytic retrospective view of the phenomenological investigation of action to a synthetic view of real ends to be achieved. These potentially obtainable ends are achievable only by means of the real commitment of real action.

Objectivity is understood in more than one way in the last chapter of Blondel's thesis. The idea of objectivity is a subjective necessity before the metaphysical option. In the first phase of our knowledge of objectivity, we know the order of phenomena both as revealed in the necessary expansion of causalities and as subjectively generated by human action. These necessary conditions and means revealed by the regressive analysis of the human phenomena of action are seen synthetically as a totality of real ends. Objectivity is also grasped in another way subjectively. This mode of objective knowledge is only obtained in the presence of metaphysical option, where the subject has the opportunity to affirm the metaphysical option and gain a real sense of objective possession. In refusing the option, the subject loses possession, but still retains a real speculative knowledge of objectivity. But if he positively takes the free option, the subject has real and full possession by subordinating his will to the order of necessities in the intellect and to the order of the Uniquely Necessary. The positive affirmation of the option involves the total system of beings; affirming the order of necessities and the Uniquely Necessary affirms all else. Although this second objectivity is possessed subjectively by a personal commitment, the objective real is not reduced to simple subjectivity. They (the subject and the object) each still retain their proper perspective in relation to the other.

Objectivity is also present in the contents of consciousness because all ideas are syntheses of human a priori action and the objective representations received from experience. Without this represented objective experience, there would be no knowledge; without the a priori initiative of the subject, the source of these experiences could not be grasped by the intellect. Thirdly, objectivity finds a place at the junction of the descending creativity of God and the ascension of created beings moving towards God as final cause.

But Blondel's solution to the problem of the relationship between thought and objective reality involves more than simply placing objectivity in its proper perspective in relation to thought. Quite pointedly, the solution is committed action: the action of choosing the metaphysical option, the action of committing oneself to the laws of action disclosed in the Blondelian analysis, the action of committing oneself to actions executed by free choice and contemplation, as fits our human nature. Only in these terms is there a real solution to Blondel's formulation of the epistemological problem of the one and the many.

Blondel has, therefore, considered human action throughout his effort, from his introduction, through his study of the phenomenon of human action, to his last chapter on the metaphysical option and its results. He never considers the phenomena which he analyzes as solidified ideas, but as a priori syntheses of subjective and objective elements. The a priori synthesis is action itself,

which cannot be reduced to either of the poles that it connects. However, his solution is still only a potential solution. By this we mean that, as Blondel has said so often, that philosophy, not even metaphysics to the second power, can suffice for the living commitment of human action. The solution in philosophy is a solution in theory. It is up to us to recognize the necessary law of the necessity to act and all those laws of action which show us how we do act in a committed way. But, even that is not enough: we must make the actual commitment. From that instance, we take the real possession of the solution to the problem of the relationship between thought and the objective real; the problem solves itself because of the real being of action, the vinculum substantiale.

As a result, metaphysical truth is dependant upon the human action of choosing, either privatively or positively, the metaphysical option. There is no metaphysical truth (i.e., thought in act and thinking in act are the same thing) without committed action. And, the primary purpose of committed action is to make the ego adequate to itself and its needs because the ego is essentially action. Action, then, is the real substantial unity which makes for unity of diversity, whether the compound be the human self, human society, or any other such interconnection among beings. But, most especially Blondel is considering the only natural contemplative being and his essential unity, a unity which holds within it all the diversity of the universe while, at the same time, adding to that universe through its artistic creations. What is left for us to do, and this is

something that neither philosophy nor Blondel can do for us, is to recognize the fullness of the action of our being as contemplative egos and to follow these necessary laws of action which have been disclosed in the investigation of the contents of consciousness and its ideogeneses. Then we, individually, will have both conquered the problem of the relationship between thought and reality in a real way and reintegrated the indirect methods of the philosophical problem of human destiny with those of the direct method of approach. In a sense, the indirect mode of approach in philosophy never really does leave the direct mode of life. It must every time subordinate itself to living action. So much so, that the real resolution of the philosophical problem, irrespective of which level of that problem we speak, demands real living, active commitment.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

SUMMARY

The purpose of this thesis was to delineate the methods used by Blondel in solving the epistemological problem of the relationship between thought and objective reality. This particular problem is a branch of the all-encompassing philosophical problem of the one and the many which does, in fact, have a multiplicity of formulations, covering all levels of the philosophical sciences. We have also presented the actual solution to this epistemological mode of the problem. The thesis is broken into two major segments, corresponding to the above distinction of method and solution.

In fact, all of Blondel's problems, whether they be explicitly connected to his effort to found a philosophy of religion or not, are centered around the relationship between thought and reality, between what is immanent to us and what is other than us or transcendent to us in some way. Most certainly the epistemological problem of the relationship between thought and reality includes the problem of the correspondence between what we know and what is, what we will and what we do in the realm of nature as well as in the realm of the supernatural in our connections with the Uniquely Necessary.

In an attempt to remain within the modern spirit of Spinoza and the idealist schools of Kantian criticism and German **absolutism**, Blondel adopts the methods of criticism, immanence, and phenomenology. He expects much the same things from philosophy as a science as did

his intellectual predecessors. Philosophy has to be an organized system that incorporates a doubt. Philosophy must study the totality in such a way that it does justice to that totality without going outside of its competence. Blondel sees philosophy's proper scope as the supplier of a total explanation of life and being within the context of human action, meaning, and values. Hence, the science of philosophy and the science of action are equivalent studies. Nevertheless, Philosophy cannot suffice for life, although it does supply the explanation for living action in the form of the laws of action, laws which we may or may not completely disregard.

Philosophy supplies this explanation, first, by retaining an attitude of doubt throughout. With this attitude of doubt, Blondel hopes to follow the necessarily correct path towards the solution to the problem of human destiny (this is the problem of the adequation of the will-willing and the will-willed) and the solution to the problem of the relationship between thought and the objectively real in thought. He expects that because of this attitude he will obtain clarity and certainty of solution in a scientifically ordered way. An immediate result follows from the Master of Aix's careful approach, however. He shows that we cannot deny willing. Instead of a geometrically modeled intellectual intuition like the Cartesian Cogito ergo sum, Blondel has a moral cogito: Si non fallor, sum, a formula immune to further doubt. However, this first appearance of the moral intuition is not the last one by any means. The quality of that intuition is only realized in the subsequent investigations of the relationship between the will-

willing and the will-willed.

If we will, we must will something. In order to scientifically investigate these somethings without really prematurely making any ontological declaration, Blondel adopts a phenomenological description and epoche. To broach and answer the question of the real objective existence of things before we find it absolutely necessary within the science of action would not only disregard philosophy's scientific nature, but would also give a false solution to the epistemological problem of the relationship between thought and reality because ontological status would be given to "something" that should not have it.

Blondel's phenomenological description entails a complete analytic inventory of the totality of the phenomena of thought and action as that totality is present in consciousness. This totality includes even the Uniquely Necessary and religious action. Blondel's phenomenological method is that of the epoche, a bracketing of the ontological question and any ontological affirmations. Within the order of phenomena, the question has no place, until it must have a place in the science itself.

But, if we understand Blondel's phenomenology as essentialistic, a search for meaning in itself, we sorely misinterpret his designs. Of immediate and constant concern to Blondel is the singular, acting man. It is this acting ego that he wishes to scientifically investigate. And, in order to remain faithful to this singular existing entity, Blondel must always refer philosophy, even as it is phenomono-

logical, to existing egos' living action. Philosophy is always subservient to living action. For this reason, we cannot couple the Blondelian philosophy with doctrinal phenomenology which defines the first principle of reality in terms of essential meaning alone. Blondel defines the first principle of reality in terms of living action, a point brought out in our last chapter.

The phenomenological approach finds itself completed and validated when coupled with Blondel's immanent dialectic of the will-willing and the will-willed. His method of immanence is not doctrinal; it is not a systematic acceptance of the principle of immanence as the total explanation of all that is. Rather, Blondel's method of immanence is an attempt to equate in consciousness what we appear to think, will and do with that which we do think, will and do. This is done by way of a phenomenological investigation which brackets the ontological question unless it arises by scientific necessity in the progression of the dialectic of action in the will's search for adequation. Judgment in this realm becomes a problem of adequation on all levels of human existence.

The secret to Blondel's solution to the problem of the relationship between thought and reality is his methodology and the object of his study. The methodology serves to put off any ontological considerations until the time is ripe. The object of Blondel's philosophy, namely living action, serves to prevent the solidification of philosophy into closed system of dead ideas. Despite the phenomenological epoche philosophy must always remain subservient to the living

action of the ego which is essentially a priori synthesis. This synthetic a priori remains present from beginning to end in L'Action (1893). In the body of his doctoral thesis Blondel studies, not the products of thought, but the processes - the actions. The real object of his study is contemplation, the properly human action of ideogenesis. Both the ideogenesis of freedom and obligation and that of metaphysical ideas within the phenomenon of action have served to exemplify this study. We find that the study of ideogenesis discloses certain basic characteristics of the genesis of ideas. All ideas are a priori syntheses of a posteriori experience and a priori ego action; all idea formation occurs because of a contrast-synthesis dialectic in progressive movement; all truth is immanent in that it is the measure of the adequation of the self with the self and all that it contains by reason of that self's essential nature as a contemplative being.

We do not come to the solution to the problem of the relationship between thought and reality as such until we enter into Blondel's last chapter of L'Action. There he presents his metaphysics to the second power which has the role of raising the question of the above problem, presenting the metaphysical option, and showing the solution to the above problem. We find that the question of objectivity arises because of the scientific necessity due to the insufficiency of the phenomenology to satisfy the will's exigencies. But, the possibility of showing the relationship between thought and objective reality does not arise until we actually come upon the option, where we can

~~subordinate~~ ourselves to the complete order of necessity and the Uniquely Necessary by choosing the positive option. If, by our freely committed action, we accept the metaphysical option we gain a real and full possession of the objectively real. If, on the other hand, we refuse the option, we still gain objective knowledge, but in a privative way.

Thus, the real solution to the problem of the relationship between thought and reality (in thought) is always a matter of living action. Blondel has come full circle. He begins with philosophy ~~subordinated~~ to living action, and he ends by finding his solution to the epistemological problem to be living action. However, it is beyond philosophy itself to actually solve the problem; only real committed action solves this problem. Philosophy elucidates the provisions under which that solution is possible and viable.

CONCLUSION

By necessity, a necessity self-imposed, we must consider our conclusion in terms of the introduction to this thesis. We must attempt to classify Blondel's solution to his particular aspect of the general problem of the one and the many. In this respect, then, we must question whether Blondel's solution is primarily epistemological and what aspect, if any, of his solution could fall under what we call the metaphysical problem of the relationship between being-as-such and individual existing beings. Moreover, we must decide which of the two distinct epistemological questions Blondel is con-

cerned with. Much of what will be said below will, admittedly, become a matter of imposing our classification onto the Master of Aix's philosophy. However, with this assuredly in mind, we shall hopefully be able to fairly place Blondel's endeavor within its proper spectrum.

First of all, it seems to go without saying that Blondel is not immediately concerned with the metaphysical problem of the one and the many as outlined in our introduction. He does not set before himself the task of explaining the relationship between being-as-such and individually existing beings. But that does not really dismiss this metaphysical problem; something that we will return to shortly. With the entirety of this thesis now behind us, we can safely say, on the other hand, that Blondel is most certainly caught up with the epistemological problem of the relationship between thought or what is known and objective reality. This problem Blondel inherits from his Spinozist tradition along with the various aspects of his method.

La difficulté fondamentale reste donc d'expliquer comment la pensée et l'être, se pénétrant sans se confondre, partagent la souveraineté et ne la divisent pas. ...la solution du problème que le spinozisme laissait ouvert sous cette forme imparfaite...¹

If we accept Blondel's problem as primarily epistemological, we must decide what kind of epistemology it is. When evaluating this,

1 Maurice BLONDEL, "L'Illusion idéaliste", p. 121-2.

we must always remember two things. The first is that Blondel never was really exposed to what we call Aristotelian-Thomistic Realism.² Therefore, to measure his epistemology strictly in those terms would be to do him a grave injustice. His choice between realism and idealism is one between Spinoza, and the Germans, in the case of absolute idealism, and Kant, in the instance of critical idealism. Secondly, Blondel himself believed that he was providing a realistic solution to the problem by transcending his predecessors, all of whom he criticized for being really idealist. Therefore, as far as these traditional divisions between idealism and realism are concerned, they are quite unsatisfactory here.

But we do have left open to us another parallel division, one based upon two distinctly different epistemological questions. It is possible that Blondel is asking the question: "how does man know, that is, by what process does he take in his experiences and make them his own?" On the other hand, Blondel may be asking "how do we know that we know?", casting an original shadow of doubt on the very possibility of any valid knowledge of reality.

The problem with classifying Blondel after the above question-criterion is that he does ask the first question in the particular formulation of "By what process do we know?", while, at the same time, presupposing the other question and overemphasizing one aspect of reality, specifically action, and human subjective contemplative action,

2 See, Introduction, foot-note 6, p. ix, this thesis.

at that. Blondel, as we saw in our chapter on ideogenesis, is centrally concerned with the "processus de l'esprit qui spontanément produit les idées scientifiques."³ However, he cannot even just accept the real existence of the things which we know by our processes of contemplation if he is to remain consistent with modern methods, as he does wish to do. Consequently, he is secondarily and implicitly asking the other question as well: "how do we know that we know?" because he is, by method, casting doubt on the validity of our knowledge of reality at the start of his query. Blondel is not, and cannot be, intrigued by the difference between the objects in thought and the individual existent and experienced sensation at the beginning of his inquiry. For him to be faithful to the methods he has chosen as proper to philosophy, he cannot accept the objective reality of things and then explain the process by which they are internalized. But we must remember that he is still asking about the process - so his epistemology does primarily fall under the first question. The difference is that, within the Blondelian methodology he must ask, not about reality, but about the phenomena (and that means everything in consciousness, unlike the Kantian phenomena-noumena division), even though it may very well be that the phenomena and reality are really one and the same thing. Yet, critically and, therefore, properly philosophically, he cannot presuppose this. Therefore, if we equate the question of process with a realistic position and the 'doubt' question with an idealistic inquiry, we have a middle of the road result. Blondel asks a realistic

3 Maurice BLONDEL, Lettres philosophiques, p. 185.

question; he uses an idealistic method to pose it and to answer it. The consequences of the half-breed is that, according to Blondel, and quite consistent within his system, philosophy cannot by itself (i.e., without committed living action) solve the problem of the relationship between thought and reality. It can only provide the laws of action. Hence, his method and his doctrine cannot help but to affect and limit each other, as much as Blondel seems desirous of separating the two. We must be satisfied with a philosophy that shows us how we must attain adequation and correspondence between what we know and what is. Hence, while realizing the wish of all philosophers to find a philosophy to really suffice for reality and to really find the real relationship between thought and the objectively real, Blondel sees it as a wish impossible to fulfill:

-En ce concept, deux éléments distincts et solidaires semblent toujours impliqués: connaissance spéculative de la vérité vraie, solution pratique et ferme du problème de la destinée humaine; en un mot: règle de vie et de caractère fondée sur une certitude pensée, sur une assise de réalité aussi adéquatement connue et aussi résolument tenue que possible. Et le problème ultime qui résulte de cette dualité et de cette solidarité, c'est la question de savoir si l'unité ou pour ainsi dire l'homogénéité de la connaissance et de l'action peut être obtenue par la philosophie, ou, sinon, de chercher à quelles conditions elle peut l'être; car nous tendons invinciblement à cette totalisation de la vérité intégrée en nous, comme à l'adaptation salutaire de notre être à l'Être.⁴

We have made another statement above; Blondel emphasizes an aspect of reality over and above the others. This overemphasis

4 Maurice BLONDEL, "Philosophie", in Vocabulaire, pp. 775-6.

involves two things: first of all, Blondel, like the majority of modern and contemporary philosophers, is caught up with the human subject. Consequently, such branches of philosophy as cosmology fall under the domination of a primarily subjective science, the science of action. And, that is what philosophy is for Blondel. The real reason for this is the object of the Blondelian philosophy, which is, naturally, action. Herein rests the real difficulty in labeling the Philosophy of Action.

Action is the real answer to the question: "By what process do we know?" That much should now be obvious. We also learned in our last chapter of the Second Part that being is relation and relation is action. Blondel, with his emphasis on action throughout his work, has to, finally, equate being and action because action is the vinculum substantiale, the unity of diversities. Now, whether Blondel would explain natural beings aside from man in terms of interiority is a mute point. At least he does 'define' man in terms of the a priori subjective action, the ego. Further, he also interprets God and His relationship with man and His creations strictly in terms of action, whether it (action) be totally free and creating from nothing, or free and necessary in the case of man, or completely necessary, in the case of natural beings aside from man. Hence, it seems as if even the metaphysical problem of the relationship between Being-as-such and individual beings is centered around action both because action gives unity of diversity in the singular being and because the relationships among these beings and their connection to being-as-such is an action rela-

tionship. If we may summarize, any metaphysical problem of the one and many in Blondel's philosophy seems to be dependent upon the results of his epistemological problem of the relationship between thought and reality. Only after he has solved this problem in so far as he is able within philosophy, it becomes possible to show the relationship between being-as-such and individual existing beings.

But action can also be seen as the saving grace of the Blondelian effort. As the object of Blondel's philosophy and as its very control (philosophy must always bow to effective action), Blondel cannot miss - he must hit reality, if only in potency in philosophy alone. The sum total of his solution, option and all, is a fine answer to the paradoxes of Zeno - the simple interaction between the subject and the world through action makes the paradoxes superficial. How can you question its objective reality in the last analysis if philosophy must study and remain subservient to living action?

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APPENDIX I

The raison d'être of this thesis is to delineate the Blondelian solution to the epistemological problem of the relationship between thought and reality in thought. It is our contention that the Philosopher of Aix's solution to this problem is only one in theory. This potential solution gives the laws and conditions by which we are able to make the solution real. The key law upon which all the others depend is the necessary law of committing oneself to effective action within the spectrum of the necessary laws of human action. Only by committed action do we truly possess the objectively real in thought.

In order to present the Master of Aix's solution to this perpetual philosophical dilemma, we have presented two major sections. The first of these sections presents the methods for the Blondelian solution. The second of the segments presents the solution itself.

Part One is divided into three chapters. The first chapter gives the requirements imposed by Blondel on philosophy as a science. The first chapter also investigates the preliminary aspect of the Blondelian method, an attitude of doubt. Chapter Two discusses the Blondelian notion of phenomenology and shows that the Philosopher is phenomenological both descriptively and methodologically, but not doctrinally. Chapter Three investigates the immanent retrospective dialectic of the Philosopher of Aix in so far as it is a method.

Part Two is again divided into three chapters. The first of these chapters considers the key Blondelian intuition of the ego-acting and discusses its nature. Chapter Two shows the Philosophy of Action as it is the study of ideogenesis, or the process of contemplation. Contemplation is action par excellence for Blondel. The ideogeneses of freedom and obligation, and of metaphysical morality are examined. The essential characteristics of the ideogenesis are distilled. In Chapter Three the elements of the solution are tied together in two parts: the option and the second metaphysics, and the resolution. We find that in the second metaphysics that Blondel is forced, by the necessity of the philosophical science, to pose and somehow answer the ontological question of the objectively real and its relationship to what is thought. In the "Resolution" we find that philosophy by itself cannot supply the real solution to the problem of the relationship between thought and reality in thought, even in light of the second metaphysics. Only when philosophy, with its laws found through an immanent retrospective phenomenological analysis, is coupled with real, living, committed action does the problem of the relationship between thought and objective reality become actually solved.

ERRATA

- p. 20 foot-note 28, line 6, should read: n'y a rien au delà: néant."
- p. 34 foot-note 5, line 3, should read: événements et des faits empiriques, des "essences", c'est-à-dire
- p. 38 foot-note 10, line 2, should read: considère précisément l'intelligibilité sous la forme d'une relation interne et d'une synthèse
- p. 61 foot-note 17, line 9, should read: un écheveau préalablement formé qu'à expliciter par analyse un implicite où "tout est intérieur à tout", qu'à réaliser un inventaire sans
- p. 87 line 2, should read: sophy provides a method of transcending the limitations of philosophy itself in the infinite thrust of the primordial will toward self-adequation.
- p. 101 line 7, should read: "L'action peut consister à réaliser la pensée en ce
- p. 107 quotation 5, line 1, should read: Ce n'est pas comme un produit, c'est comme une synthèse
- p. 113 quotation 17, lines 7-8, should read: la solidarité de tous les problèmes qui intéressent notre être et les êtres: car nous ne pouvons aller aux autres
- p. 180 foot-note 60, line 14, should read: sentiments ce grand vide; dans le fond des choses, dans la pratique commune de la vie, dans
- p. 190 line 16, word 2, should read: committing
- p. 213 line 8, word 1, should read: committing