The world community as presently constituted is increasingly pluralistic. The various cultures of the world are intermingling, physically and electronically, and this is a trend which is unlikely to be reversed in any immediate future. The global village is at hand, inspiring in us both hope and fear. Included among our hopes is the ideal of a grand social structure, a cosmopolitan world order in which individual diversity is transformed into collective strength and in which the characteristics we share in common are valued more highly than the features that distinguish us. Faith in our mutual humanity inspires us to believe that a world order of this sort is a worthy aim, indeed a goal we have the powers to attain. Since thought precedes solutions, the goal can be approached in a philosophical manner that is at one and the same time clear headed and practical. But once an approximation of the goal is reached, it may in its own turn have to be abandoned.

Philosophy at the dawn of the third millennium is in a state of unique transition. We strive to anticipate the directions our thinking will take in the coming decades. Anticipations do not
arise de novo; they have historical routes that bind the past to the present even as we reach for the future. Among our hopes we find a deeply rooted yearning for solutions to certain specters that have haunted us in the past, such as war, famine, poverty, and disease. Conceivably these are problems a world community could solve, but in what sense would the solutions be true?

We desire that our beliefs be true, and that the statements we make about those beliefs be irrefutable. Among the early Greek philosophers the search for truth was to a large extent a quest for certainty. From Parmenides onward it was widely assumed that truth is grounded in permanent structures, which is to say, realities that do not change with the passage of time. Such structures neither come into existence, nor do they pass away. Detached from time, they are immutable and eternal, and there can be no evolution of successive states within them. Parmenidean thought culminated in the Platonic view that Truth, capitalized, is an intelligible ideal in which we participate, at least up to a point, and Truth can never be corrupted by developments awaiting us in the future.

Social and political structures, on the other hand, invariably have futures which are not yet actualized and which are far from permanent. Such structures are episodic, having beginnings and endings in time. The quest for certainty does not extend to them. Social reforms are episodic and each will, in its own turn, inevitably become unstable. Episodes are inherently successive,
one following upon the other as each fleeting moment gives way to the next.

Plutarch in his Lives recalls the ship of Theseus, which lay rotting at port, one board at a time being replaced as it decayed. Fewer and fewer original boards remained, until philosophers began to ask: is it the same as it was? The vessel always bore the same appearance, but what of the underlying reality? The philosophers were engaged in a quest for certainty, striving to locate a principle of substantive continuity immune to change, as plank after plank was replaced.

Societies can be compared to the ship of Theseus in one important respect. They are in a condition of perpetual decay and renewal. The principle of continuity by virtue of which a society may be said to be the same throughout its succession of changes is not a substantive principle, but a vector continually in flux. Any true beliefs or statements we may entertain, with respect to a given society, will therefore fail to satisfy the epistemological demands of the quest for certainty; and any true solutions we may propose for reform will eventually become obsolete.

I

The history of philosophy reveals a number of strands of influence from ancient Greece to the present day. Among them is a progression in which the names of Plato, Kant, and Dewey are prominently featured. Within this progression the concept of truth
has become modified in a way that lends strength to our hopes for world community.

**PLATO: THE SPECULATIVE ERA.** Whitehead once remarked that Western philosophy may be understood as "a series of footnotes to Plato."² This was of course a generalization, though not a flippant one. Plato discounted the Heraclitean world of becoming in favor of a metaphysical world of archetypal ideals, beyond which we fail to discover any essence more fundamental. The quest for certainty takes these ideals as objects. True thought thus conforms to objective structures existing outside us.

Aristotle, though by no means a Platonist, later echoed this objectivist sentiment in suggesting that truth is grounded in reality: "To say of what is that it is not, or of what is not that it is, is false, while to say of what is that it is, and of what is not that it is not, is true."³ Reality is conceived to be external and is what it is.

The speculative tradition of Plato sharply distinguished reality from appearance. But societies are intrinsically in a state of constant change, and the conception of static Truth does not pertain. The ship of Theseus was, with each repair, returned to its original appearance, even though the inner reality had been altered. But social reform is not a reversion to a former state, in conformity with the demands of an objective measure. A new reality is generated, which did not exist before and which neither
consists of the identical reality nor bears the exact appearance of the previous configuration.

In matters of social and political reform, Plato sought to superimpose epistemic standards appropriate to the realm of ideal knowledge upon the quite separate and distinct realm of concrete action. Not surprisingly, his personal efforts in Syracuse ended in failure. Unable to attain his goals, he was fortunate to escape with his life.

KANT: THE REFLECTIVE ERA. In the late 18th century the quest for objective truth was challenged by the Copernican revolution of Kant. Reacting against the Platonic notion of a knowable external reality, Kant suggested that we must be content with inner appearances, since our minds are unable to intuit the real. Possible objects of experience conform to subjective conditions we ourselves have furnished a priori. Knowledge occurs within the framework of limiting factors inherent within us. We can only discover how things appear to us according to our uniquely human ways of sensing and thinking. The reality behind the appearance remains forever inaccessible. The laws of nature are the laws of human thought. Among the Greeks, Protagoras had come the closest to realizing this principle in saying, "Man is the measure of all things: of things that are, that they are; of things that are not, that they are not."

When subjectivity is located at the epistemic center, truth is no longer determined by external structures. Experimentation
becomes possible and new horizons can be explored. Social and political strides can be made.

In Platonism our thinking is conformal, not innovative. Objective realities define the form which social and political institutions subsequently must assume. Eternal archetypes lodged in our past determine our thinking in the present. Subjectivism of a Kantian sort, however, opens the door to alternative conceptual landscapes. Speculation shifts from preoccupation with the past to exploration of the present. Our subjective conditioning factors allow us in the present to consider a wider range of possible futures. One such future is a world community and, in matters of social and political reform, we are, since Kant, in a better position to become the measure.

Kant, more clearly than any of his predecessors, was inspired by the vision of a cosmopolitan world order, a "great union of nations" no longer disposed to warfare. A panfederalism of this sort is theoretically banished in the Republic, where the state is at all times prepared for war with its neighbors, and the guardians must study military science along with their other pursuits.

DEWEY: THE PRACTICAL ERA. The pragmatic movement in philosophy attained its zenith in America in the early decades of the 20th century. Among the most influential voices was that of Dewey, who saw Kant's Copernican revolution as a transitional stage leading to a pragmatic method, instrumental and experimental, preoccupied with testing and with future consequences. Philosophy finds application
in concrete human situations. Present thoughts and actions are aimed at future ends-in-view. Outcomes are projected in the form of goals toward which our present efforts, taken as means, may be directed.

Pragmatists in general, including Dewey, argued that philosophy should make a greater effort to enter the marketplace. Abstract thought need not be detached from the commonplaces of day to day existence. Theory and its application can become more closely united. Dewey himself was instrumental in paving the way to an important later shift in speculative emphasis, a practical development that has come to be known as applied philosophy.

Applied philosophy, a fairly recent trend which came to prominence in the 1970s, seeks to bring general conceptions to bear on particular social and political issues. The problems engaging the attention of most philosophers in previous centuries have been metaphysical and epistemological. The focus now has shifted to include a wider range of problems. Applied philosophy has, for example, addressed matters such as: (1) crime, in an effort to transform the quality of urban life; (2) improved contraception, so that the question of population control may be more forcefully confronted; (3) sex, love and gender issues, to foster family values; (4) environmental concerns, to protect the future of the planet; and (5) war and violence, to promote the concept of a more pacific world community.
Dewey, more than his fellow pragmatists, anticipated this trend; and he was on the right side of the issue. It is of the utmost practical concern that philosophy expand its scope to include problems that extend beyond the more narrow preoccupation with metaphysics and epistemology. The applied philosopher has a diminished interest in such traditional concerns as other minds or the nature of personal identity, realizing that discussion of these matters can turn in an endless circle and that for every argument there is a counterargument. The problems are never resolved, and the journals become clogged with Smith's reply to Jones' reply to Smith.

The contemporary investigator, having first become immersed in a field of real persons grappling with serious interpersonal imbalances, looks beyond both Athens and Königsberg, realizing that in order to confront the problems that face us today, the theoretician needs but one foot in the ivory tower. Philosophers can learn to speak less to each other and more to the tasks at hand. Pragmatic solutions for social and political problems are authenticated by success, that is to say, they are true provided that they lead to desired results. One practical result, which may be achieved, is the establishment of a stable world community that could discipline the balkanizing forces which would threaten it from within.

Whenever we address social and political problems, however, the objects to which our beliefs and our terms of discourse refer
are in every case shifting and impermanent. Problems arising in this domain do lend themselves to solutions which, in a manner of speaking, may be said to be true. But with the passage of time our remedies erode, and today's truth becomes the falsehood of tomorrow. Therefore a world community, once in place, may not possess the practical advantages we had desired, and it may in its own turn be supplanted by a truer alternative.

II

The impetus for creating a world community will not derive from presently constituted governments. Nations cannot reasonably be expected to legislate their sovereignty out of existence.

Nor can the impetus come from examination of earlier paradigms of past success, since none exist. Conservative perspective fixates upon the past and is useful when a former triumph is being ignored. But nothing resembling a world community has ever been established.

The inspiration must come from philosophy, specifically that aspect of applied philosophy which is forward looking, hence liberal. A solution that is true, at least for its season, will satisfy the defining characteristics of the liberal temperament and will therefore be futuristic, optimistic, and pragmatic.

In a viable world community, the price we must pay for collective success is contingent upon the coercive suppression of certain institutions, each of which will be placed in quarantine. A society under quarantine is deprived of the power of infection. Otherwise the dream of world community remains empty. Thus the
forces that would defeat it must necessarily be defeated. Contagion is controlled, without regard to the convenience or to the interests of the ailing party. A philosophy that is forward looking, optimistic, and pragmatic will recommend three instrumentally true coercions necessary to the health of a world community.

First, the power of quarantine must take precedence over national sovereignty. In a functional panfederalism of states there can be but one authoritative center. Nations will be persuaded to pool their autonomy.

Successful unions that have been formed in the past among non-sovereign states have consisted of people bound by like minded values. The United States, as a prime example, is a confederation of peoples sharing a language in common, as well as a set of valued social and economic aspirations; this nation is in no sense a colonial gaggle of competing tribes chained by the ankles under a common flag. But many "nations" are conglomerates of formerly warring groups whose ancient blood feuds have spilled over into the modern era. Statehood in a defined unpartitioned territory must be provided to all peoples in possession of a uniquely defined ethos. For instance there could be a Kurdistan, a Punjab, a Palestine. But confederations of incompatible groups, as in Lebanon, must be fractionated into smaller and smaller units, until a common ethnic denominator is reached, defined by the respective ethos of each group. A nation may be small, and yet qualify as a nation. But
any state of whatever size that demands autonomy must submit to quarantine.

A second coercion is the right to wage war. Pericles in his funeral oration, eulogizing the Athenian dead, cautioned his listeners to remain perpetually on guard against the enemy. "It is not simply a question of estimating the advantages in theory," he observed. Pericles assumed a future in which warfare would always threaten the security of the state. Anyone making this assumption will be less than sanguine about the prospect of a world community. But if warfare were to be converted into civil conflicts instead of disputes between sovereign nations, our collective powers of containing it would be vastly increased. This conversion is surely within our powers.

Dewey, like Kant before him, recognized the need for an international confederation. But, he added, the subscribing nations must address not only the question of war but also the prior social and economic factors that have historically resulted in war.

This is a worthy sentiment, but warfare may, as Pericles suspected, be a proclivity more deeply rooted than we would like to believe. If it should turn out to be the case that war is an unavoidable consequence of human interaction, and that its causes cannot be eradicated, then world community is an ideal which must embrace civil wars as inevitable. Pragmatic means would be required to quarantine the rebelling factions. There must, for instance, be
strict federal control over the production and sale of armaments; the gunrunners must also be quarantined.

Third, theocracy must be banished as an admissible form of government. A state may choose to be democratic or totalitarian, but the confusion of religion with politics is disallowed. There is no reason to believe that a world community can possibly succeed, if fundamentalist religious fevers are allowed to rage ungoverned. The ayotollahs of life, by whatever name, are to remain in quarantine.

* * *

There has been a remarkable progression in philosophy from Plato to the present. In the speculative era, knowledge was grounded in timeless structures inherited from the past. True thinking was conformal. In the reflective era, with the Copernican revolution, the conditions of knowledge were seen to be constitutive of the forms in which reality could be represented to us in the present. Truth was subject to the limiting factors that made it possible. In the practical era, truths shape our future, leading to outcomes that transcend the limits of traditional philosophical constraints.

We must incline ourselves toward perspectives that aim at desired futures rather than verities inherited from the primordial past. A world community of the sort we envision has never been realized except as an ideal. History affords no example that can be reinstated here and now. We cannot look to the past for solutions that lie in our future. True thoughts and deeds can achieve them,
but they are not objects to be recovered. Once realized, however, a true solution does not become a metaphysical entity, perfect and unchanging, but remains in a sense a ship of Theseus requiring continual attention and repair. The reality no less than the appearance of our social and political fabric is altered with each new intervention. But a corner has been turned. We have at last become the measure, not of a timeless ideal, but of a process of continual renewal and regeneration from within.

1. Plutarch

8. Pericles