represented him in public and who lavished in the
newspaper columns so many facile witticisms.

Shaw's fundamental themes are philosophy and
ethics: it is natural and inevitable that he should not be
valued in this country, or that he be so only in terms of a
few epigrams. The Argentine feels that the universe is
nothing but a manifestation of chance, the fortuitous
concourse of Democritus' atoms; philosophy does not
interest him. Nor does ethics: the social realm, for him, is
reduced to a conflict of individuals or classes or nations,
in which everything is licit, save being ridiculed or
defeated.

Man's character and its variations are the essential
theme of the novel of our time; lyric poetry is the
complacent magnification of amorous fortunes or
misfortunes; the philosophies of Heidegger and Jaspers
make each of us the interesting interlocutor in a secret
and continuous dialogue with nothingness or the divinity;
these disciplines, which in the formal sense can be
admirable, foment that illusion of the ego which the
Vedanta censures as a capital error. They usually make a
game of desperation and anguish, but at bottom they
flatter our vanity; they are, in this sense, immoral. The
work of Shaw, however, leaves one with a flavor of
liberation. The flavor of the stoic doctrines and the flavor
of the sagas.

Translated by J. E. I.

A New Refutation of Time

Vor mir war keine Zeit, nach mir wird keine seyn,
Mit mir gebiert sie sich, mit mir geht sie auch ein.
Daniel von Czepko:
Sexcenta monodisticha sapientum, III, II

(1655)

PROLOGUE

If published toward the middle of the eighteenth century, this refutation (or its name) would persist in Hume's bibliographies and perhaps would have merited a line by Huxley or Kemp Smith. Published in 1947 -- after Bergson --, it is the anachronistic reductio ad absurdum of a preterite system or, what is worse, the feeble artifice of an Argentine lost in the maze of metaphysics. Both conjectures are verisimilar and perhaps true; in order to correct them, I cannot promise a novel conclusion in exchange for my rudimentary dialectic. The thesis I shall divulge is as ancient as Zeno's arrow or the Greek king's carriage in the Milinda Panha; the novelty, if any, consists in applying to my purpose the classic instrument of Berkeley. Both he and his continuers David Hume abound in paragraphs which contradict or exclude my thesis; nevertheless, I believe I have deduced the inevitable consequences of their doctrine.

The first article (A) was written in 1944 and appeared in number 115 of the review Sur; the second, of 1946, is a reworking of the first. Deliberately I did not make the two into one, understanding that the reading of two analogous texts might facilitate the comprehension of an indocile subject.

A word about the title. I am not unaware that it is an example of the monster termed by the logicians contradictio in adjecto, because stating that a refutation of time is new (or old) attributes to it a predicate of
temporal nature which establishes the very notion the subject would destroy. I leave it as is, however, so that its slight mockery may prove that I do not exaggerate the importance of these verbal games. Besides, our language is so saturated and animated by time that it is quite possible there is not one statement in these pages which in some way does not demand or invoke the idea of time.

I dedicate these exercises to my forebear Juan Crisóstomo Lafinur (1797-1824), who left some memorable endecasyllables to Argentine letters and who tried to reform the teaching of philosophy, purifying it of theological shadows and expounding in his courses the principles of Locke and Condillac. He died in exile; like all men, he was given bad times in which to live.

Buenos Aires,
23 December 1946
J. L. B.

A

1.

In the course of a life dedicated to letters and (at times) to metaphysical perplexity, I have glimpsed or foreseen a refutation of time, in which I myself do not believe, but which regularly visits me at night and in the weary twilight with the illusory force of an axiom. This refutation is found in some way or another in all my books: it is prefigured by the poems "Inscription on Any Grave" and "The Trick" from my Fervor of Buenos Aires (1923); it is declared by two articles in Inquisitions (1925), page 46 of Evaristo Carriego (1930), the narration "Feeling in Death" from my History of Eternity (1936) and the note on page 24 of The Garden of Forking Paths (1941). None of the texts I have enumerated satisfies me, not even the penultimate one, less
demonstrative and well-reasoned than it is divinatory and pathetic. I shall try to establish a basis for all of them in this essay.

Two arguments led me to this refutation: the idealism of Berkeley and Leibniz's principle of indiscernibles.

Berkeley (Principles of Human Knowledge, 3) observed: "That neither our thoughts, nor passions, nor ideas formed by the imagination, exist without the mind, is what everybody will allow. And it seems no less evident that the various sensations or ideas imprinted on the sense, however blended or combined together (that is, whatever objects they compose) cannot exist otherwise than in a mind perceiving them. . . The table I write on, I say, exists, that is, I see and feel it; and if I were out of my study I should say it existed, meaning thereby that if I was in my study I might perceive it, or that some other spirit actually does perceive it. . . For as to what is said of the absolute existence of unthinking things without any relation to their being perceived, that seems perfectly unintelligible. Their esse is percipi, nor is it possible they should have any existence, out of the minds or thinking things which perceive them." In paragraph twenty-three he added, forestalling objections: "But say you, surely there is nothing easier than to imagine trees, for instance, in a park or books existing in a closet, and no body by to perceive them. I answer, you may so, there is no difficulty in it: but what is all this, I beseech you, more than framing in your mind certain ideas which you call books and trees, and at the same time omitting to frame the idea of any one that may perceive them? But do not you your self perceive or think of them all the while? This therefore is nothing to the purpose: it only shows you have the power of imagining or forming ideas in your
mind; but it doth not shew that you can conceive it possible, the objects of your thought may exist without the mind. . ." In another paragraph, number six, he had already declared: "Some truths there are so near and obvious to the mind, that a man need only open his eyes to see them. Such I take this important one to be, to wit, that all the choir of heaven and furniture of the earth, in a word all those bodies which compose the mighty frame of the world, have not any substance without a mind, that their being is to be perceived or known; that consequently so long as they are not actually perceived by me, or do not exist in any mind or that of any other created spirit, they must either have no existence at all, or else subsist in the mind of some eternal spirit. . ."

Such is, in the words of its inventor, the idealist doctrine. To understand it is easy; what is difficult is to think within its limits. Schopenhauer himself, when expounding it, committed culpable negligences. In the first lines of the first volume of his Welt als Wille und Vorstellung -- from the year 1819 -- he formulated this declaration which makes him worthy of the enduring perplexity of all men: "The world is my idea: this is a truth which holds good for everything that lives and knows, though man alone can bring it into reflective and abstract consciousness. If he really does this, he has attained to philosophical wisdom. It then becomes clear and certain to him what he knows is not a sun and an earth, but only an eye that sees a sun, a hand that feels an earth. . ." In other words, for the idealist Schopenhauer, man's eyes and hands are less illusory or apparent than the earth and the sun. In 1844 he published a complementary volume. In its first chapter he rediscovers and aggravates the previous error: he defines the universe as a phenomenon of the brain and distinguishes the
"world in the head" from "the world outside the head."
Berkeley, however, had his Philonous say in 1713: "The
brain therefore you speak of, being a sensible thing, exists
only in the mind. Now, I would fain know whether you
think it reasonable to suppose, that one idea or thing
existing in the mind, occasions all other ideas. And if you
think so, pray how do you account for the origin of that
primary idea or brain itself?" Schopenhauer's dualism or
cerebralism may also be licitly opposed by Spiller's
monism. Spiller (The Mind of Man, chapter VIII, 1902)
argues that the retina and the cutaneous surface invoked
in order to explain visual and tactile phenomena are, in
turn, two tactile and visual systems and that the room we
see (the "objective" one) is no greater than the one
imagined (the "cerebral" one) and does not contain it,
since what we have here are two independent visual
systems. Berkeley (Principles of Human Knowledge, 10
and 116) likewise denied the existence of primary
qualities -- the solidity and extension of things -- and of
absolute space.

Berkeley affirmed the continuous existence of
objects, since when no individual sees them, God does;
Hume, with greater logic, denies such an existence
(Treatise of Human Nature, I, 4, 2). Berkeley affirmed
the existence of personal identity, "I my self am not my
ideas, but somewhat else, a thinking active principle that
perceives. . ." (Dialogues, 3); Hume, the skeptic, refutes
this identity and makes of every man "a bundle or
collection of different perceptions, which succeed each
other with an inconceivable rapidity" (op. cit., I, 4, 6).
Both affirm the existence of time: for Berkeley, it is "the
succession of ideas in my mind, which flows uniformly,
and is participated by all beings" (Principles of Human
Knowledge, 98); for Hume, "a succession of indivisible
moments" (op. cit., I, 2, 2).

I have accumulated transcriptions from the apologists of idealism, I have abounded in their canonical passages, I have been reiterative and explicit, I have censured Schopenhauer (not without ingratitude), so that my reader may begin to penetrate into this unstable world of the mind. A world of evanescent impressions; a world without matter or spirit, neither objective nor subjective; a world without the ideal architecture of space; a world made of time, of the absolute uniform time of the Principia; a tireless labyrinth, a chaos, a dream. This almost perfect dissolution was reached by David Hume.

Once the idealist argument is admitted, I see that it is possible -- perhaps inevitable -- to go further. For Hume it is not licit to speak of the form of the moon or of its color; the form and color are the moon; neither can one speak of the perceptions of the mind, since the mind is nothing other than a series of perceptions. The Cartesian "I think, therefore I am" is thus invalidated; to say "I think" postulates the self, is a begging of the question; Lichtenberg, in the eighteenth century, proposed that in place of "I think" we should say, impersonally, "it thinks," just as one would say "it thunders" or "it rains." I repeat: behind our faces there is no secret self which governs our acts and receives our impressions; we are, solely, the series of these imaginary acts and these errant impressions. The series? Once matter and spirit, which are continuities, are negated, once space too has been negated, I do not know what right we have to that continuity which is time. Let us imagine a present moment of any kind. During one of his nights on the Mississippi, Huckleberry Finn awakens; the raft, lost in partial darkness, continues downstream; it is perhaps a bit cold. Huckleberry Finn recognizes the soft
indefatigable sound of the water; he negligently opens his eyes; he sees a vague number of stars, an indistinct line of trees; then, he sinks back into his immemorable sleep as into the dark waters.* Idealist metaphysics declares that to add a material substance (the object) and a spiritual substance (the subject) to those perceptions is venturesome and useless; I maintain that it is no less illogical to think that such perceptions are terms in a series whose beginning is as inconceivable as its end. To add to the river and the bank, Huck perceives the notion of another substantive river and another bank, to add another perception to that immediate network of perceptions, is, for idealism, unjustifiable; for myself, it is no less unjustifiable to add a chronological precision: the fact, for example, that the foregoing event took place on the night of the seventh of June, 1849, between ten and eleven minutes past four. In other words: I deny, with the arguments of idealism, the vast temporal series which idealism admits. Hume denied the existence of an absolute space, in which all things have their place: I deny the existence of one single time, in which all things are linked as in a chain. The denial of coexistence is no less arduous than the denial of succession.

* For the convenience of the reader I have selected a moment between two periods of sleep, a literary moment, not a historical one. If anyone suspects a fallacy, he may substitute another example, one from his own life if he so chooses.

I deny, in an elevated number of instances, the successive; I deny, in an elevated number of instances, the contemporary as well. The lover who thinks "While I was so happy, thinking of the fidelity of my love, she was deceiving me" deceives himself: if every state we experience is absolute, such happiness was not
contemporary to the betrayal; the discovery of that
betrayal is another state, which cannot modify the
"previous" ones, though it can modify their recollection.
The misfortune of today is no more real than the
happiness of the past. I shall seek a more concrete
eexample. In the first part of August, 1824, Captain Isidore
Suárez, at the head of a squadron of Peruvian hussars,
decided the victory of Junin; in the first part of August,
1824, De Quincey published a diatribe against Wilhelm
Meisters Lehrjahre; these events were not contemporary
(they are now), since the two men died -- one in the city
of Montevideo, the other in Edinburgh -- without
knowing anything about each other. . . Each moment is
autonomous. Neither vengeance nor pardon nor prisons
nor even oblivion can modify the invulnerable past. To
me, hope and fear seem no less vain, for they always refer
to future events: that is, to events that will not happen to
us, who are the minutely detailed present. I am told that
the present, the specious present of the psychologists,
lasts from a few seconds to a minute fraction of a second;
that can be the duration of the history of the universe. In
other words, there is no such history, just as a man has no
life; not even one of his nights exists; each moment we
live exists, but not their imaginary combination. The
universe, the sum of all things, is a collection no less
ideal than that of all the horses Shakespeare dreamt of --
one, many, none? -- between 1592 and 1594. I add: if
time is a mental process, how can thousands of men -- or
even two different men -- share it?

The argument of the preceding paragraphs,
interrupted and encumbered with illustrations, may seem
intricate. I shall seek a more direct method. Let us
consider a life in whose course there is an abundance of
repetitions: mine, for example. I never pass in front of the
Recoleta without remembering that my father, my grandparents and great-grandparents are buried there, just as I shall be some day; then I remember that I have remembered the same thing an untold number of times already; I cannot walk through the suburbs in the solitude of the night without thinking that the night pleases us because it suppresses idle details, just as our memory does; I cannot lament the loss of a love or a friendship without meditating that one loses only what one really never had; every time I cross one of the street corners of the southern part of the city, I think of you, Helen; every time the wind brings me the smell of eucalyptus, I think of Adrogué in my childhood; every time I remember the ninety-first fragment of Heraclitus "You shall not go down twice to the same river," I admire its dialectical dexterity, because the ease with which we accept the first meaning ("The river is different") clandestinely imposes upon us the second ("I am different") and grants us the illusion of having invented it; every time I hear a Germanophile vituperate the Yiddish language, I reflect that Yiddish is, after all, a German dialect, scarcely colored by the language of the Holy Spirit. These tautologies (and others I leave in silence) make up my entire life. Of course, they are repeated imprecisely; there are differences of emphasis, temperature, light and general physiological condition. I suspect, however, that the number of circumstantial variants is not infinite: we can postulate, in the mind of an individual (or of two individuals who do not know of each other but in whom the same process works), two identical moments. Once this identity is postulated, one may ask: Are not these identical moments the same? Is not one single repeated term sufficient to break down and confuse the series of time? Do not the fervent readers who surrender

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themselves to Shakespeare become, literally, Shakespeare?

As yet I am ignorant of the ethics of the system I have outlined. I do not know if it even exists. The fifth paragraph of the fourth chapter of the treatise Sanhedrin of the Mishnah declares that, for God's Justice, he who kills one man destroys the world; if there is no plurality, he who annihilates all men would be no more guilty than the primitive and solitary Cain, which fact is orthodox, nor more universal in his destruction, which fact may be magical. I understand that this is so. The vociferous catastrophes of a general order -- fires, wars, epidemics -- are one single pain, illusorily multiplied in many mirrors. Thus Bernard Shaw sees it (Guide to Socialism, 86):

"What you can suffer is the maximum that can be suffered on earth. If you die of starvation, you will suffer all the starvation there has been or will be. If ten thousand people die with you, their participation in your lot will not make you be ten thousand times more hungry nor multiply the time of your agony ten thousand times. Do not let yourself be overcome by the horrible sum of human sufferings; such a sum does not exist. Neither poverty nor pain are cumulative." Cf. also The Problem of Pain, VII, by C. S. Lewis.

Lucretius (De rerum natura, I, 830) attributes to Anaxagoras the doctrine that gold consists of particles of gold, fire of sparks, bone of tiny imperceptible bones; Josiah Royce, perhaps influenced by St. Augustine, judges that time is made of time and that "every now within which something happens is therefore also a succession" (The World and the Individual, II, 139). This proposition is compatible with that of this essay.

2.
All language is of a successive nature; it does not lend itself to a reasoning of the eternal, the intemporal. Those who have followed the foregoing argumentation with displeasure will perhaps prefer this page from the year 1928. I have already mentioned it; it is the narrative entitled "Feeling in Death":

"I want to set down here an experience which I had some nights ago: a trifle too evanescent and ecstatic to be called an adventure, too irrational and sentimental to be called a thought. It consists of a scene and its word: a word already stated by me, but not lived with complete dedication until then. I shall now proceed to give its history, with the accidents of time and place which were its declaration.

"I remember it as follows. The afternoon preceding that night, I was in Barracas: a locality not visited by my habit and whose distance from those I later traversed had already lent a strange flavor to that day. The evening had no destiny at all; since it was clear, I went out to take a walk and to recollect after dinner. I did not want to determine a route for my stroll; I tried to attain a maximum latitude of probabilities in order not to fatigue my expectation with the necessary foresight of any one of them. I managed, to the imperfect degree of possibility, to do what is called walking at random; I accepted, with no other conscious prejudice than that of avoiding the wider avenues or streets, the most obscure invitations of chance. However, a kind of familiar gravitation led me farther on, in the direction of certain neighborhoods, the names of which I have every desire to recall and which dictate reverence to my heart. I do not mean by this my own neighborhood, the precise surroundings of my childhood, but rather its still mysterious environs: an area I have possessed often in
words but seldom in reality, immediate and at the same
time mythical. The reverse of the familiar, its far side, are
for me those penultimate streets, almost as effectively
unknown as the hidden foundations of our house or our
invisible skeleton. My progress brought me to a corner. I
breathed in the night, in a most serene holiday from
thought. The view, not at all complex, seemed simplified
by my tiredness. It was made unreal by its very typicality.
The street was one of low houses and though its first
meaning was one of poverty, its second was certainly one
of contentment. It was as humble and enchanting as
anything could be. None of the houses dared open itself
to the street; the fig tree darkened over the corner; the
little arched doorways -- higher than the taut outlines of
the walls -- seemed wrought from the same infinite
substance of the night. The sidewalk formed an
escarpment over the street; the street was of elemental
earth, the earth of an as yet unconquered America.
Farther down, the alleyway, already open to the pampa,
crumbled into the Maldonado. Above the turbid and
chaotic earth, a rose-colored wall seemed not to house the
moonlight, but rather to effuse an intimate light of its
own. There can be no better way of naming tenderness
than that soft rose color.

"I kept looking at this simplicity. I thought, surely
out loud: This is the same as thirty years ago. . . I
conjectured the date: a recent time in other countries but
now quite remote in this changeable part of the world.
Perhaps a bird was singing and for it I felt a tiny
affection, the same size as the bird; but the most certain
thing was that in this now vertiginous silence there was
no other sound than the intemporal one of the crickets.
The easy thought 'I am in the eighteen-nineties' ceased to
be a few approximate words and was deepened into a
reality. I felt dead, I felt as an abstract spectator of the world; an indefinite fear imbued with science, which is the best clarity of metaphysics. I did not think that I had returned upstream on the supposed waters of Time; rather I suspected that I was the possessor of a reticent or absent sense of the inconceivable word eternity. Only later was I able to define that imagination.

"I write it now as follows: That pure representation of homogeneous objects -- the night in serenity, a limpid little wall, the provincial scent of the honeysuckle, the elemental earth -- is not merely identical to the one present on that corner so many years ago; it is, without resemblances or repetitions, the very same. Time, if we can intuitively grasp such an identity, is a delusion: the difference and inseparability of one moment belonging to its apparent past from another belonging to its apparent present is sufficient to disintegrate it.

"It is evident that the number of such human moments is not infinite. The elemental ones -- those of physical suffering and physical pleasure, those of the coming of sleep, those of the hearing of a piece of music, those of great intensity or great lassitude -- are even more impersonal. Aforehand I derive this conclusion: life is too poor not to be immortal as well. But we do not even have the certainty of our poverty, since time, which is easily refutable in sense experience, is not so in the intellectual, from whose essence the concept of succession seems inseparable. Thus shall remain as an emotional anecdote the half-glimpsed idea and as the confessed irresolution of this page the true moment of ecstasy and possible suggestion of eternity with which that night was not parsimonious for me."

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Of the many doctrines registered by the history of philosophy, perhaps idealism is the oldest and most widespread. This observation was made by Carlyle (Novalis, 1829); to the philosophers he alleges it is fitting to add, with no hope of completing the infinite census, the Platonists, for whom the only reality is that of the archetype (Norris, Judas Abrabanel, Gemistus, Plotinus), the theologians, for whom all that is not the divinity is contingent (Malebranche, Johannes Eckhart), the monists, who make the universe an idle adjective of the Absolute (Bradley, Hegel, Parmenides). . . Idealism is as ancient as metaphysical restlessness itself; its most acute apologist, George Berkeley, flourished in the eighteenth century; contrary to what Schopenhauer declares (Welt als Wille und Vorstellung, II, i), his merit cannot be the intuition of that doctrine but rather the arguments he conceived in order to reason it; Hume applied them to the mind; my purpose is to apply them to time. But first I shall recapitulate the diverse stages of this dialectic.

Berkeley denied the existence of matter. This does not mean, one should note, that he denied the existence of colors, odors, tastes, sounds and tactile sensations; what he denied was that, aside from these perceptions, which make up the external world, there was anything invisible, intangible, called matter. He denied that there were pains that no one feels, colors that no one sees, forms that no one touches. He reasoned that to add a matter to our perceptions is to add an inconceivable, superfluous world to the world. He believed in the world of appearances woven by our senses, but understood that the material world (that of Toland, say) is an illusory duplication. He observed (Principles of Human Knowledge, 3): "That neither our thoughts, nor passions, nor ideas formed by
the imagination, exist without the mind, is what everybody will allow. And it seems no less evident that the various sensations or ideas imprinted on the sense, however blended or combined together (that is, whatever objects they compose) cannot exist otherwise than in a mind perceiving them. . . The table I write on, I say, exists, that is, I see and feel it; and if I were out of my study I should say it existed, meaning thereby that if I was in my study I might perceive it, or that some other spirit actually does perceive it. . . For as to what is said of the absolute existence of unthinking things without any relation to their being perceived, that seems perfectly unintelligible. Their *esse* is *percepi*, nor is it possible they should have any existence, out of the minds or thinking things which perceive them." In paragraph twenty-three he added, forestalling objections: "But say you, surely there is nothing easier than to imagine trees, for instance, in a park or books existing in a closet, and no body by to perceive them. I answer, you may so, there is no difficulty in it: but what is all this, I beseech you, more than framing in your mind certain ideas which you call *books* and *trees* and at the same time omitting to frame the idea of any one that may perceive them? But do not you your self perceive or think of them all the while? This therefore is nothing to the purpose: it only shows you have the power of imagining or forming ideas in your mind; but it doth not shrew that you can conceive it possible, the objects of your thought may exist without the mind. . ." In another paragraph, number six, he had already declared: "Some truths there are so near and obvious to the mind, that a man need only open his eyes to see them. Such I take this important one to be, to wit, that all the choir of heaven and furniture of the earth, in a word all those bodies which compose the mighty frame of
the world, have not any substance without a mind, that their being is to be perceived or known; that consequently so long as they are not actually perceived by me, or do not exist in any mind or that of any other created spirit, they must either have no existence at all, or else subsist in the mind of some eternal spirit. . ." (The God of Berkeley is a ubiquitous spectator whose function is that of lending coherence to the world.)

The doctrine I have just expounded has been interpreted in perverse ways. Herbert Spencer thought he had refuted it (Principles of Psychology, VIII, 6), reasoning that if there is nothing outside consciousness, consciousness must be infinite in time and space. The first is certain if we understand that all time is time perceived by someone, but erroneous if we infer that this time must necessarily embrace an infinite number of centuries; the second is illicit, since Berkeley (Principles of Human Knowledge, 116; Siris, 266) repeatedly denied the existence of an absolute space. Even more indecipherable is the error into which Schopenhauer falls (Welt als Wille und Vorstellung, II, i) when he shows that for the idealists the world is a phenomenon of the brain; Berkeley, however, had written (Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous, II): "The brain therefore you speak of, being a sensible thing, exists only in the mind. Now, I would fain know whether you think it reasonable to suppose, that one idea or thing existing in the mind, occasions all other ideas. And if you think so, pray how do you account for the origin of this primary idea or brain itself?" The brain, in fact, is no less a part of the external world than is the constellation of the Centaur.

Berkeley denied that there was an object behind our sense impressions; David Hume, that there was a subject behind the perception of changes. The former had
denied the existence of matter, the latter denied the existence of spirit; the former had not wanted us to add to the succession of impressions the metaphysical notion of matter, the latter did not want us to add to the succession of mental states the metaphysical notion of self. So logical is this extension of Berkeley's arguments that Berkeley himself had already foreseen it, as Alexander Campbell Fraser notes, and even tried to reject it by means of the Cartesian *ergo sum*. "If your principles are valid, you your self are nothing more than a system of fluctuating ideas, unsustained by any substance, since it is as absurd to speak of a spiritual substance as it is of a material substance," reasons Hylas, anticipating David Hume in the third and last of the *Dialogues*. Hume corroborates (*Treatise of Human Nature, I, 4, 6*): "We are a bundle or collection of different perceptions, which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity. . . The mind is a kind of theatre, where several perceptions successively make their appearance; pass, re-pass, glide away, and mingle in an infinite variety of postures and situations. . . The comparison of the theatre must not mislead us. They are the successive perceptions only, that constitute the mind; nor have we the most distant notion of the place, where these scenes are represented, or of the materials, of which it is compos'd."

Once the idealist argument is admitted, I see that it is possible -- perhaps inevitable -- to go further. For Berkeley, time is "the succession of ideas in my mind, which flows uniformly, and is participated by all beings" (*Principles of Human Knowledge, 98*); for Hume, "a succession of indivisible moments" (*Treatise of Human Nature, I, 2, 2*). However, once matter and spirit -- which are continuities -- are negated, once space too is negated, I do not know with what right we retain that continuity.
which is time. Outside each perception (real or conjectural) matter does not exist; outside each mental state spirit does not exist; neither does time exist outside each present moment. Let us take a moment of maximum simplicity: for example, that of Chuang Tzu's dream (Herbert Allen Giles: *Chuang Tzu*, 1889). Chuang Tzu, some twenty-four centuries ago, dreamt he was a butterfly and did not know, when he awoke, if he was a man who had dreamt he was a butterfly or a butterfly who now dreamt he was a man. Let us not consider the awakening; let us consider the moment of the dream itself, or one of its moments. "I dreamt I was a butterfly flying through the air and knowing nothing of Chuang Tzu," reads the ancient text. We shall never know if Chuang Tzu saw a garden over which he seemed to fly or a moving yellow triangle which no doubt was he, but we do know that the image was subjective, though furnished by his memory. The doctrine of psycho-physical parallelism would judge that the image must have been accompanied by some change in the dreamer's nervous system; according to Berkeley, the body of Chuang Tzu did not exist at that moment, save as a perception in the mind of God. Hume simplifies even more what happened. According to him, the spirit of Chuang Tzu did not exist at that moment; only the colors of the dream and the certainty of being a butterfly existed. They existed as a momentary term in the "bundle or collection of perceptions" which, some four centuries before Christ, was the mind of Chuang Tzu; they existed as a term \( n \) in an infinite temporal series, between \( n-1 \) and \( n+1 \). There is no other reality, for idealism, than that of mental processes; adding an objective butterfly to the butterfly which is perceived seems a vain duplication; adding a self to these processes seems no less exorbitant. Idealism
judges that there was a dreaming, a perceiving, but not a
dreamer or even a dream; it judges that speaking of
objects and subjects is pure mythology. Now if each
psychic state is self-sufficient, if linking it to a
circumstance or to a self is an illicit and idle addition,
with what right shall we then ascribe to it a place in time?
Chuang Tzu dreamt that he was a butterfly and during
that dream he was not Chuang Tzu, but a butterfly. How,
with space and self abolished, shall we link those
moments to his waking moments and to the feudal period
of Chinese history? This does not mean that we shall
never know, even in an approximate fashion, the date of
that dream; it means that the chronological fixing of an
event, of an event in the universe, is alien and external to
it. In China the dream of Chuang Tzu is proverbial; let us
imagine that of its almost infinite readers, one dreams
that he is a butterfly and then dreams that he is Chuang
Tzu. Let us imagine that, by a not impossible stroke of
chance, this dream reproduces point for point the
master's. Once this identity is postulated, it is fitting to
ask: Are not these moments which coincide one and the
same? Is not one repeated term sufficient to break down
and confuse the history of the world, to denounce that
there is no such history?

The denial of time involves two negations: the
negation of the succession of the terms of a series,
negation of the synchronism of the terms in two different
series. In fact, if each term is absolute, its relations are
reduced to the consciousness that those relations exist. A
state precedes another if it is known to be prior; a state of
G is contemporary to a state of H if it is known to be
contemporary. Contrary to what was declared by
Schopenhauer* in his table of fundamental truths (Welt
als Wille und Vorstellung, II, 4), each fraction of time
does not simultaneously fill the whole of space; time is not ubiquitous. (Of course, at this stage in the argument, space no longer exists.)

* And, earlier, by Newton, who maintained: "Each particle of space is eternal, each indivisible moment of duration is everywhere" *(Principia, III, 42).*

Meinong, in his theory of apprehension, admits the apprehension of imaginary objects: the fourth dimension, let us say, or the sensitive statue of Condillac or the hypothetical animal of Lotze or the square root of minus one. If the reasons I have indicated are valid, then matter, self, the external world, world history and our lives also belong to this same nebulous orb.

Besides, the phrase "negation of time" is ambiguous. It can mean the eternity of Plato or Boethius and also the dilemmas of Sextus Empiricus. The latter *(Adversus mathematicos, XI, 197)* denies the existence of the past, that which already was, and the future, that which is not yet, and argues that the present is divisible or indivisible. It is not indivisible, for in such a case it would have no beginning to link it to the past nor end to link it to the future, nor even a middle, since what has no beginning or end can have no middle; neither is it divisible, for in such a case it would consist of a part that was and another that is not. *Ergo*, it does not exist, but since the past and the future do not exist either, time does not exist. F. H. Bradley rediscovers and improves this perplexity. He observes *(Appearance and Reality, IV)* that if the present is divisible in other presents, it is no less complicated than time itself, and if it is indivisible, time is a mere relation between intemporal things. Such reasoning, as can be seen, negates the parts in order then to negate the whole; I reject the whole in order to exalt
each of the parts. Via the dialectics of Berkeley and Hume I have arrived at Schopenhauer's dictum: "The form of the phenomenon of will... is really only the present, not the future nor the past. The latter are only in the conception, exist only in the connection of knowledge, so far as it follows the principle of sufficient reason. No man has ever lived in the past, and none will live in the future; the present alone is the form of all life, and is its sure possession which can never be taken from it... We might compare time to a constantly revolving sphere; the half that was always sinking would be the past, that which was always rising would be the future; but the indivisible point at the top, where the tangent touches, would be the extensionless present. As the tangent does not revolve with the sphere, neither does the present, the point of contact of the object, the form of which is time, with the subject, which has no form, because it does not belong to the knowable, but is the condition of all that is knowable" (Welt als Wille und Vorstellung, I, 54). A Buddhist treatise of the fifth century, the Visuddhimagga (Road to Purity), illustrates the same doctrine with the same figure: "Strictly speaking, the duration of the life of a living being is exceedingly brief, lasting only while a thought lasts. Just as a chariot wheel in rolling rolls only at one point of the tire, and in resting rests only at one point; in exactly the same way the life of a living being lasts only for the period of one thought" (Radhakrishnan: Indian Philosophy, I, 373). Other Buddhist texts say that the world annihilates itself and reappears six thousand five hundred million times a day and that all men are an illusion, vertiginously produced by a series of momentaneous and solitary men. "The being of a past moment of thought -- the Road to Purity tells us -- has
lived, but does not live nor will it live. The being of a future moment will live, but has not lived nor does it live. The being of the present moment of thought does live, but has not lived nor will it live" (op. cit., I, 407), a dictum which we may compare with the following of Plutarch (De E apud Delphos, 18): "The man of yesterday has died in that of today, that of today dies in that of tomorrow."

And yet, and yet... Denying temporal succession, denying the self, denying the astronomical universe, are apparent desparations and secret consolations. Our destiny (as contrasted with the hell of Swedenborg and the hell of Tibetan mythology) is not frightful by being unreal; it is frightful because it is irreversible and iron-clad. Time is the substance I am made of. Time is a river which sweeps me along, but I am the river; it is a tiger which destroys me, but I am the tiger; it is a fire which consumes me, but I am the fire. The world, unfortunately, is real; I, unfortunately, am Borges.

FOOTNOTE TO THE PROLOGUE

There is no exposition of Buddhism that does not mention the Milinda Panha, an apologetic work of the second century, which relates a debate whose interlocutors are the king of Bactriana, Menander, and the monk Nagasena. The latter reasons that just as the king's carriage is neither its wheels nor its body nor its axle nor its pole nor its yoke, neither is man his matter, form, impressions, ideas, instincts or consciousness. He is not the combination of these parts nor does he exist outside of them... After a controversy of many days, Menander (Milinda) is converted to the Buddhist faith.

The Milinda Panha has been translated into English by Rhys Davids (Oxford, 1890-1894).