NOVELTY, INDETERMINISM, AND EMERGENCE

THE purpose of this paper is entirely analytical. It is not my aim to put forward any positive or constructive thesis. My object is, if possible, to introduce some measure of clarity into what seems to me to be a fog of vague ideas connected with the concept of novelty as that concept is found in the writings of such authors as Bergson, William James, Samuel Alexander, and other contemporary philosophers. I simply want to try to help in clearing up what seems to me to be a sphere of very confused thinking.

Before entering on the detail of this I want to make three introductory remarks. First, the concept of novelty in contemporary philosophy (except perhaps in Alexander) is part and parcel of a philosophical revolt against the overweening pretensions of science. Science finds, or used to find, the world completely governed by law. All events are reduced to cases of causal or functional determination. This means, it is alleged, that there can be no genuine novelty in the world. We shall have a mechanical universe, an eternal repetition of unalterable sequences, the everlasting turning of wheels upon wheels. All change is mere rearrangement of old elements in new patterns. The end is foreseeable in the beginning, is contained in the beginning. The universe cannot produce anything which was not implicitly present from the very beginning, that is, it cannot produce any novelty. The concept of novelty in philosophy is a revolt against this mechanical view of the world which is the product of science.

Secondly, it is a revolt based upon an emotional revulsion. The philosophers of novelty dislike the scientific picture. They desire a world in which what they call genuine novelty shall be possible. And because they wish for such a world they attempt to prove that the world really is of this sort. I do not want to be considered here as making a cheap accusation of wishful thinking. Their objections may, for all I know, be philosophically justifiable. I merely wish that this background of emotional revulsion be noted.

Thirdly, it is not altogether clear to me what these philosophers hope for from novelty. Evidently they consider that a universe with novelty in it is very desirable, that it is a fine and grand idea. And evidently they consider that a universe without novelty in it is
somehow a very poor affair. But why this is so is not self-evident. Novelty *per se* is not a good. That something is new does not seem to be *in itself* a rational recommendation of it. It may be something better or it may be something worse than what we already have. Of course one can understand that the possibility of novelty is also the possibility of improvement, and may therefore give hope. But it is also the possibility of greater anguish and darkness. And I can see no ground, inherent in the bare idea of novelty itself, for betting on the optimistic alternative. It is rational to wish for the better. But is it rational to wish for the new as such? I cannot rid my mind of the impression that these philosophers vaguely and absurdly suppose that novelty is something *per se* desirable. Is it possible that they are influenced by that thirst for change for its own sake, for excitement, for thrills and surprises, which is apt to consume men who have no serious purpose in their lives, men who in consequence suffer from ennui? To the man who is bored, any change appears a blessing. Why do these philosophers throw a halo round the concept of novelty? I ask the question and I leave it unanswered.

These remarks are purely desultory. It is not my purpose to *evaluate* the concept of novelty. I shall not again raise the question whether it is rational to desire a world with novelty in it. I will assume, if you like, that it is rational, that novelty is a fine thing in itself. Henceforth I shall confine myself to analysis. But I could not refrain altogether from these human reflections. Now that I have got them off my chest I can proceed with my real task.

I do not know who in our own time first emphasized the notion that novelty is a fundamental feature of the world-process, that it is one of the universal categories by which we are to understand our world. Perhaps it was Bergson. Emphasis upon it, at any rate, is comparatively modern; nor is this emphasis found widely in philosophical literature until about thirty or forty years ago.

Now a new concept cannot be left simply suspended in mid air. It has to be linked up in some definite relations with all the other ideas which are already parts of our philosophies. It is here as it is with the process of introducing a new member into a club or a society of people. We have to see whether they harmonize. And much may depend upon the method of introduction. Now what the
philosophers of novelty have done, by way of introducing their new idea into the circle of what we may call respectable philosophical society, has been to seek to link it with some other philosophical idea which is already well known, and to get this other idea to introduce it into philosophical respectability. To perform this office three ideas have been successively chosen. These have been the concepts, respectively, of life, of indeterminism, and of emergence. The concept of novelty, being unable by itself to gain an entrance into philosophy, has sought to ally itself with one or other of these and to gain admittance through these alliances. I wish to study each of these three alliances in turn.

It was, indeed, a fairly obvious proceeding to link the notion of novelty with the notion of life. For what the philosophers of novelty were seeking was a means of escape from the dull routine of a mechanical universe. Now mechanism and organism are opposites. They are the opposites of death and life. A mechanical universe, it seems, rules out the possibility of genuine novelty. A living universe, perhaps, would admit its introduction. Life, perhaps, not being mechanical, might well produce, and keep on producing, new things. Accordingly, life is declared by Bergson to be the moving force of the cosmic process. This will ensure a universe with novelty in it. The creation of novelties seems to be a characteristic of life. If anyone doubts this let him be reminded of the amazing monsters which now, and in past time, have walked upon the earth or swum in the sea, and of the frightful freaks and abortions which are, from time to time, born into the world. Life is the very creator of novelties. Let our philosophy, then, declare that the universe is actuated by the force of life. We shall then have a universe provided with a constant stream of novelties upon which to feed our emotions of surprise and wonder. This is the motivation of the doctrine of the élan vital.

But the attempt to introduce the concept of novelty into philosophy by linking it with the concept of life cannot, without further help from the outside, succeed. By itself this alliance is insufficient to overthrow the philosophy of mechanism. Life, replies the mechanist, only seems to produce novelties, and to do unexpected and unpredictable things. It does not really do so. Monsters and freaks impress us, but there is nothing more really new in them
than in the strange shapes which mountains, clouds, or other inorganic products sometimes assume. The products of life seem unpredictable because the conditions which govern them are so complicated and subtle that prediction is, in our present state of knowledge, impracticable. The laws of eclipses of the sun and moon are now known. Before they were known an eclipse was unpredictable. The laws of life will some day be discovered. And then the phenomena of life will be predictable. Or at any rate there must be such laws, whether anyone ever discovers them or not. We must believe that whatever happens in the universe happens in accordance with law. And if life is governed by law at all, whether known or unknown, then it is reducible to regular causal sequences, and therefore to routine. So once again we shall have a universe in which there will be no novelty in the sense desired by Bergson and James. It should be noted that this argument is not the same as that which is commonly attributed to mechanistic biologists. It does not assert that the laws of life must in the end be reducible to the laws of chemistry or mechanics. That question is quite irrelevant to what we are discussing. The point is that if life is governed by any laws at all, even by special laws of its own which are admitted to be irreducible to lower laws, you will still have a deterministic routine which will exclude real novelty. If life is governed by law, then it is an affair of repeatable sequences, regularities, routine. Hence, even if life is the moving force of the whole cosmic process, yet if the operations of life are governed by law, then everything which happens in the universe will be theoretically predictable, and there will be no genuine novelty in the universe. Hence merely to ally the concept of novelty to that of life does not avail to make of novelty a philosophically tenable conception.

For these reasons the philosophers of novelty have sought to find for their conception a second alliance, this time with the concept of indeterminism. Not that novelty will, in order to link itself with indeterminism, give up its alliance with life. Rather it will seek to retain both associations. In other words it will reject the argument that life, being governed by law, can yield no true novelty. Life, it will now be asserted, is not governed by law at all. Life is indeterministic. And therefore it may or will produce novelty. Accordingly both James and Bergson tend to deny that the world
is completely deterministic. Both introduce into their philosophies the concept of indeterminism.

The next question we have to face, therefore, is this. Suppose we admit the validity of the concept of indeterminism. Suppose we admit that life is indeterministic. Suppose that we go even further, and admit that the universe at large—and not merely that part of it which is living—is in some radical and fundamental way indeterministic, will this really validate the concept of novelty? In fine, if the world is indeterministic, does this imply that the world will contain novelties?

We cannot proceed any further with our enquiries until we have attempted to give an answer to a question which, I hope, has been puzzling my readers for some time. This is the question, what is meant by the concept “novelty”? What is the proper analysis of the concept? To give a complete and final analysis of it is a task which I shall not attempt to carry out. For I think that the matter can be sufficiently clarified for our purposes in this paper if I make a distinction between two possible senses of the word novelty. When we speak of novelty, I will say, we may be thinking either of absolute novelty, or of relative novelty. Suppose we have a causal sequence A . . . B. Suppose the cause A is an explosion, and the effect B is my death. Now in one possible sense of the word there is present here the arising of novelty. For death is very unlike an explosion. The effect B is something which is different from, and very unlike, the cause A. Something new has therefore arisen, something, that is, which was not there before. In fact there must be something new coming into being in every case of change. Change implies that something comes into being which was not in being before. If what is red turns green, then the green is something new. It is a novelty. But this kind of novelty is merely relative. The new elements of such a situation are new in that situation and relatively to that situation. But they are not absolutely new entities in the universe, for they may have appeared in the universe millions of times before. This is the case with death and with the appearance of the color green. I would only call anything an absolute novelty if it were a phenomenon the like of which had never appeared before in the whole history of the universe. Suppose that up to the present time there never had existed anything green in
the universe, and that now suddenly something green should appear. Then I should call green color an absolute novelty. Or suppose that there was a time, many millions of years ago, when life first made its appearance in the world. Then life would have been at that time an absolute novelty in the universe.

Now which kind of novelty is it that James and Bergson would have us believe in? I think it is quite obvious that what they are thinking of is what I have called absolute novelty. There would have been no point whatever in insisting that the world should contain relative novelty. For everyone who admits the existence of change would have to admit the existence of relative novelty. Only philosophers who deny the existence of change, the Eleatics for example, could possibly deny that relative novelty occurs in the world. Obviously what James and Bergson wanted was a universe which might from time to time throw up existences and experiences which should be utterly new. And it is evident that this is also what is meant by those emergent evolutionists who claim that emergence ensures novelty. In the system of Alexander, for example, the primitive stuff, space-time, suddenly gives rise to the secondary qualities of matter. Later on life emerges, and later still mind. These new qualities, or existents, are declared by Alexander to be novel precisely in the sense that they had never, until the moment of their emergence, appeared in the universe before. Clearly then we are not concerned with mere relative novelty. And we may define the concept of novelty which we are discussing in this paper to mean the arising of something hitherto unknown in the history of the universe. I admit that this a very vague definition, and that all sorts of questions might be raised about it. But it is, I think, sufficiently clear for our purposes here.

The question which we have to ask therefore is: Does indeterminism imply, or even make possible, novelty in this sense of absolute novelty? Clearly James and Bergson thought it does. Now I take it that the notion of indeterminism might be explained in some such way as this. In a deterministic world every event will be completely determined by its causes, so that if A . . . B constitutes a causal sequence, then whenever A happens B will happen, B and nothing else. But if there were a world in which A might sometimes be followed by B, sometimes by C, sometimes by
D, and so on, and in which absolutely no antecedent conditions existed to determine which of these events should follow A, such a world would be to that extent indeterministic. It is alleged, whether truly or not I do not know, that the sub-atomic world is, in certain respects, like this. Given a certain set of circumstances X, then the electron may jump either to the right or to the left, and there is nothing in the antecedent set of circumstances X to determine which way it will jump. Let us assume for the sake of example that the world is, either in regard to the whole of it or in regard to some part of it, indeterministic, in this sort of sense. Then the question is, Will such indeterminism carry with it novelty of the kind demanded by James and Bergson?

Let us revert to the example of the electron. Even if all the relevant antecedent circumstances are completely known, we are to assume, it is still uncertain whether the electron will jump to the left or to the right. It may be that for some reason or other I expect it to jump to the left. Actually it jumps to the right. Now where, I ask you, is the novelty? In what way is a jump to the right more intrinsically novel than a jump to the left? Has there been introduced into the world anything whatever, entity, quality, or experience, which has never occurred in the universe before? Obviously not. Objects moving right, left, and in all other directions are perfectly familiar features of experience. There is nothing new in an object moving to the right. Of course, if we expected it to move to the left, then what has happened is something unexpected. But the unexpected is not the same as the new. An indeterministic world would no doubt be a world of constant surprises. But there is no guarantee that anything new would ever arise in it. It might be the case, even in a completely indeterministic world, that nothing ever occurred except the same old experiences repeated ad infinitum, although these old experiences might keep turning up in the most unexpected places and times. No one would ever know what was going to happen next. But this would not imply that what was going to happen next would be something which never happened before. To argue in this way would be a complete non-sequitur. From the fact that I do not know what is going to happen tomorrow you cannot argue that something novel will occur. Clearly there is no necessary con-
connection whatever between the conception of indeterminism and the conception of novelty.

The philosopher of novelty may, however—while admitting that indeterminism does not logically or necessarily imply novelty—suggest that at least it renders novelty possible. In a deterministic world, he may say, novelty is downright impossible. We know beforehand that it cannot occur. But in an indeterministic world, though we cannot be certain that there will be novelty, yet it is at least possible that there might be. And therefore it is desirable to believe in indeterminism if we want to believe in novelty. Determinism rules out the possibility of novelty, while indeterminism does not.

Unfortunately, however, this contrast between determinism as rendering novelty impossible and indeterminism as rendering it possible is quite false. For in point of fact novelty is just as much possible in a deterministic world as in an indeterministic one. This may be seen in two ways. First, suppose that in a completely deterministic world you have the following case. There exists in the sun a chemical element X, which does not exist anywhere else in the physical universe. And there exists in the star Canopus another chemical element Y which also is not duplicated anywhere else in the world. Owing to their spatial separation these two elements X and Y may have never in the whole history of the world come into chemical combination with one another. Now suppose that tomorrow they are brought together. They combine and form a compound substance which has never before existed in history. This will be a case of absolute novelty, and it will have occurred in a physical world governed by known chemical laws, in a universe wholly deterministic. Indeed without going so far afield as Canopus and the sun I see no reason to think it impossible that our earthly chemists do, or at least might, occasionally bring together and combine elements found on the earth which have never been combined in nature. In that case too we shall have absolute novelty combined with determinism.

There is a second way in which the same point may be made. We find in such a system as that of Alexander an actual example of a philosophy which successfully and quite self-consistently combines determinism and novelty in the same world-picture. Alex-
 ander's universe is completely deterministic. And yet according to him novelty appears every time that what he calls a new "quality" emerges in the universe. For example, when the motions within space-time become sufficiently complex, the secondary qualities emerge and with them matter comes into existence. The emergence of matter was completely determined by the previous motions in space-time. And yet it was an absolute novelty in the universe. Again when the motions within the living organism become sufficiently complex, the quality of consciousness emerges. The sudden appearance of mind in the world is something utterly new, and yet it was completely determined by the previous motions in the nervous system of the organism. We see from these examples that novelty is quite compatible with determinism. And therefore it is false that novelty is any more possible in an indeterministic world than it is in a deterministic one.

The conclusion which I reach is that there is absolutely no connection whatever between the two concepts of novelty and indeterminism. Indeterminism does not imply novelty. Novelty does not imply indeterminism, since it may occur in a deterministic world. Indeterminism does nothing to render novelty either possible or probable. Thus the two concepts are entirely independent. The supposition of James and Bergson that they are connected is a sheer delusion. They are in no sense friends or natural allies. Hence the concept of novelty cannot be smuggled into polite philosophical society by pretending that it is a friend or relative of indeterminism.

What is the source of this curious delusion on the part of James and Bergson? The explanation, I think, is as follows. What is introduced into the world by indeterminism is not novelty but—what is quite a different thing—unexpectedness. The difference between the two is this. Novelty, if there is such a thing, is an objective character of the world. If anything occurs which has never occurred before, then it is an objective fact that it never has occurred before. But unexpectedness is merely a subjective attitude of an observer's mind. Now those who praise indeterminism in the belief that it will yield novelty are simply confusing unexpectedness with novelty. It is quite true that, in an indeterministic world, one would not know what to expect, and therefore
occurrences would be unexpected. And the philosophers of novelty have falsely concluded that the occurrences would therefore be novel. They have projected their subjective state of surprise at the unexpected upon the objective world and called it novelty. And the cause of this confusion seems to me to be one of the most elementary fallacies in logic, that, namely, of simply converting a universal affirmative proposition. All novel things are surprising. Therefore, it has been thought, all surprising things must be novel.

The attempts to introduce the concept of novelty into philosophy by allying it first with the concept of life and then with that of indeterminism have thus proved to be failures. I pass now to the third concept with which it has been sought to ally it, namely that of emergence. And I shall take as my example of this the philosophy of Alexander.

It will be remembered that, according to Alexander, the world is entirely deterministic. Everything that happens is determined by its antecedent conditions. But there are two possible cases. First, a set of conditions X and their resultant Y may both be on the same level of existence. In that case the resultant is predictable in terms of its conditions, and we have no novelty. Thus billiard balls impacting cause certain changes of motion. But the effect is entirely predictable and nothing radically new comes into existence. The cause is mechanical motion and the effect is mechanical motion. But secondly the set of conditions X may be on one emergent level, the resultant Y may be on a higher level. If so we have a case of emergence, and also a case of novelty. Thus a set of motions in empty space-time has as its resultant the sudden appearance of matter in the world. Matter has emerged, and matter is at the same time something completely new in the universe. Again, a set of motions in a living organism has as its resultant the emergence of consciousness which, when it first appears, is an absolute novelty. In this way the concept of novelty is linked with the concept of emergence. Emergence produces novelty.

Now the idea of emergence is, as someone has pointed out, a development of Mill's distinction between homopathic and heteropathic effects. A homopathic effect is one which is compounded out of its causes, and is predictable in terms of them. A heteropathic effect is one which is not. For example, if a billiard ball
strikes another similar ball, at a certain angle and with a given velocity, the resulting motions, directions, and velocities can be predicted. This is a homopathic effect. But if two colorless liquids are mixed in the laboratory, the mixture may turn suddenly deep blue. A blue liquid could not have been predicted as a resultant of two white liquids. This is therefore a heteropathic effect. The concept of the heteropathic effect is practically identical with the concept of emergence. In the impact of the billiard balls we have cause and effect on the same level, we have mere rearrangement of old elements in new patterns, we have predictability. In the blue liquid we have something new, something which could not be found in the two white liquids, something therefore which is unpredictable.

But this distinction between heteropathic or emergent effects and homopathic or non-emergent effects is not tenable. Emergentists make the distinction twofold. They say (1) that non-emergent effects are predictable, emergent effects unpredictable. And they say (2) that emergent effects are novel, non-emergent effects non-novel. Neither of these contrasts can be maintained. First, as to predictability. The heteropathic effect, the blue liquid, it is said, could not be predicted from the two white liquids without experience. Once I have experienced the sequence I can, of course, predict its recurrence, relying on the uniformity of nature. But without experience I could never predict it. This is certainly quite true. But is it not equally true that, without experience of impacts, I could not predict the angles or velocities of the new motions of the billiard balls? Indeed I could not even predict that there would be any motions at all. When a moving billiard ball strikes a ball at rest, why should both not thereupon stand still? Or why should they not turn and go backwards upon their tracks? For the matter of that why should they not turn into watermelons, or disappear out of existence altogether? One can give no reason why they do what they do, or why they do not do any of these other strange things. One has to wait on experience to find out what will happen as the result of an impact just as much as to find out what will happen when one mixes two white liquids. Once we have experienced the sequence, in either case, then of course we can predict future sequences of the same kind upon the basis of the uniformity of nature.
I am, of course, merely repeating here considerations which have been familiar to everyone since the time of Hume. And it is accordingly unnecessary for me to elaborate them. It is only necessary to note that what Hume said really disposes of the alleged difference between emergent and non-emergent effects in the point of predictability. Both are equally predictable after experience. Both are equally unpredictable before experience.

I now turn to the second point of alleged distinction between them. Emergent effects are said to possess a novelty which is absent from non-emergent effects. This distinction is also untenable. The two white liquids become blue when mixed. The blue was not there before, it is said, and therefore this is something new. There is no novelty of this kind in the case of the impacting billiard balls. The cause in that case is motion, and the effect is also motion. Cause and effect are essentially alike. Nothing new enters upon the scene.

But I cannot admit this contrast. In all cases of cause and effect there are points of difference between the cause and the effect, and also there are points of resemblance. The supposed distinction between the two kinds of effect which we are discussing arises from arbitrarily ignoring the likenesses in one case and the unlikelinesses in the other. In the case of the billiard balls we concentrate on the likenesses between cause and effect, ignoring the differences, and then declare that the effect entirely resembles the cause. In the case of the liquids we concentrate on a single point of unlikeness, that of color; we ignore the points of resemblance, and then declare that the effect is unlike the cause and that we have here a case of novelty.

For consider. What is it that is unlike in the case of the liquids? Nothing except the color. All the other qualities in the cause and effect are the same. The cause, the unmixed liquids, has the quality of liquidity. So has the effect. The unmixed liquids have a certain volume and weight. The volume and weight of the mixture is merely the combined volumes and weights of its components. Nothing is changed except the color. Only one quality is different as between cause and effect, all the rest remaining the same.

Now take the case of the billiard balls. It is true that there is a resemblance between cause and effect which is expressed by saying that both are motion. This corresponds to the resemblance
in the other example which was expressed by saying that both cause and effects are liquids. But the *velocities* of the two balls will be changed by the impact, and so also (in the majority of cases) will the *direction* of motion. In the case of the liquids we have a change of color. In the case of the billiard balls we have a change of velocities and direction.

Now why is a change of color a novelty, and a change of velocity and direction not a novelty? Would it be rational to say that a change of color involves novelty, but that a change of smell does not? And can there be any more justification for saying that a new color is novel, but that a new velocity and direction are not? I cannot see the slightest justification for such a distinction in any of these cases. If I am right, this second distinction between emergent and non-emergent effects collapses as certainly as did the first.

Why is it, then, that we all tend to think that there is some distinction? For I think it does seem to most of us that the case of the liquids is somehow unlike the case of the billiard balls. This is, I believe, a sheer illusion, and I account for it as follows. I suggest that what are called homopathic or non-emergent effects are simply those which are more common in our experience, more familiar, less surprising, less striking. The so-called heteropathic, or emergent, effects are those which are comparatively rare, so that when they do occur they seem more striking and unexpected, and so we get the impression that we are in the presence of some kind of novelty which is absent in the other cases. Every human being, even every savage, has experience of bodies impacting. The effects, therefore, are so familiar and expected that we think we could predict them and that there is no novelty in them. But the experience of the two white liquids becoming blue is a very rare experience in comparison with the other. In nature it is scarcely ever seen, but only in the laboratory. The savage has probably never seen it or anything like it. Even to the civilized man, unless he happens to be a chemist, it is a very odd and unusual experience. Most of us have seen it perhaps once or twice in our lives when we were schoolboys and spent our weekly hour of relaxation and amusement amid explosions and magical transformations in the 'stinks' lab. Or perhaps we have only seen it when, as adults,
we have been shown, as gaping and astonished laymen, through a chemical laboratory. This effect, then, is so unfamiliar, so striking, that it arrests our attention. We fasten on this difference between cause and effect and forget the similarities. This change of color has the quality of being surprising, unexpected. And as happened in the case of indeterminism, we confuse the unexpected with the novel. We think that this possesses a novelty which is lacking in the case of the impacting billiard balls. In short, the difference between the two kinds of causation, the emergent and the non-emergent, is not objective at all. It is subjective. It is a difference in our mental attitudes.

I do not deny that absolute novelties may appear in the world. Life and mind were perhaps once such. If the concept of emergence is merely intended to draw attention to this fact, it is unobjectionable. But it is false in so far as it implies a radical distinction between emergent effects as novel and unpredictable and non-emergent effects as predictable and non-novel. Absolute novelty will arise whenever an event or entity appears which has never appeared before. And this may happen either as a so-called emergent effect or as a so-called non-emergent effect. On the first occasion on which life or mind appeared we should have absolute novelty. And this would ordinarily be classed as an emergent. But it is also true that on the first occasion on which a new velocity or direction of motion occurred we also have absolute novelty, although this would ordinarily be classed as a non-emergent effect. The only difference between these cases is that, for subjective reasons, the sudden appearance of life or mind in the world seems to us very striking and important, while the sudden appearance of a new velocity seems to us trivial and unimportant. Thus emergence seems to dwindle into unimportance as a philosophical concept. At any rate it ought to be clear by now—and this is my main point—that the concept of novelty has nothing to hope for from an alliance with the concept of emergence. We can admit the possible appearance of absolute novelties, such as life and mind, in the world without any theory of emergence at all. Therefore the theory of emergence does not really help the cause of those who are anxious for a universe in which novelty is possible.

Nothing in this paper is to be construed as an attempt to show
that absolute novelty is impossible. On the contrary the result is the very opposite. The philosophers of novelty thought that they could not have novelty in the world unless they could prove either that life is the principle of things, or that the world is indeterministic, or that there is emergence. Our analysis has shown that none of these alliances and connections is essential to the idea of novelty, that it is dependent on none of these conditions. It can stand on its own feet. There seems no reason to doubt that absolute novelties do come into existence. Life and mind must, I suppose, have come into existence at some time. And even in the chemical laboratory I dare say it may be the case that new chemical compounds with new qualities sometimes make their appearance. And what I have attempted to show is that absolute novelty may exist whether the world is living or dead, whether it is deterministic or indeterministic, whether it is mechanical or organic, whether there is or is not such a thing as emergence.

I said that I would not attempt to evaluate the concept of novelty. But I cannot refrain from pointing out that if our analysis is correct, it loses most of the significance which its authors attached to it. Just because it is consistent with almost any philosophy, with idealism or materialism, with an organic philosophy or a mechanical philosophy, with determinism or indeterminism, with a living world or a dead world, it is reduced, in my opinion, to a very low degree of importance. The philosophers of novelty thought that by means of their new conception they could relieve us of the crushing weight of a dead soulless mechanical universe. They could introduce us to a world instinct with poetry and life. This, I think, was their main object. But if I am right, they have failed in this aim. For even if there be novelty in the world, in spite of it the world may yet be nothing but a soulless machine. Of course I am not saying that it is so. That is not the point. For all I know the world may be alive, organic, creative, soulful, poetical, noble. But the concept of novelty does not help us to show that it is so.

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