INTRODUCTION

I. PURPOSE AND TITLE OF THIS STUDY

The purpose of this monograph is to trace throughout the history of philosophy the motivations, contents and effects of a number of views which may be grouped under the title "Theories of Macrocosms and Microcosms." According to these theories, portions of the world which vary in size exhibit similarities in structures and processes, indicating that one portion imitates another or others on a different scale. Most prominent among the theories are those to the effect that man is a microcosm, or "little world," in one way or another epitomizing a macrocosm, or "great world"—i.e., the universe, or some part thereof. At the outset it should be noted that the definition of the field of investigation is a matter of some difficulty—one is likely to conceive it in terms either too inclusive or too restricted. On the one hand, it may be urged that all philosophy is a discussion of the relations of man and the universe, and that every particular philosophy may be stated in terms of a comparison between the two; thus the field of investigation would be broadened to embrace the whole history of philosophy, and, if explored, would distort that history by presenting it as approached from one angle. On the other hand, one is likely to think of the subject solely with reference to man and the universe, neglecting related views such as the atomisms and monadisms, which deal specifically with portions of the universe apart from man. Any criterion which indicates an avoidance of both these extremes is difficult to formulate; but it may be said that, within the field of broader philosophical generalizations, it is the more special characteristic of the views with which we are concerned, that they base conclusions with reference to the nature of the universe and the relations of its parts, including man, to one another, upon parallelisms and analogies describing in more or less detail the structures and processes of those parts. These views attain their most pronounced development in the work of Fechner; in the works of other philosophers they range all the way from detailed parallelisms like those of the mediæval Jewish and Arabian thinkers to the great metaphysical generalizations of Descartes and Spinoza and the epistemological achievements of Kant.
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While in the writings of these men last named and others of their kind there are often traces of a feeling of peculiar kinship between man and the universe, there is not the attempt at a descriptive parallelism indicating, point by point, that one portion of the universe imitates another or others on a smaller scale—which is the clearest mark of the group of views with which we are concerned, and to which the term "theories of macrocosms and microcosms" is here applied.¹

2. Topical and Geographical Restrictions

Since the subject-matter is closely related to that of a number of other philosophical topics, it is well to indicate briefly that, while no exact line can be drawn, this study is not primarily concerned with animistic projections, or "collective representations," in primitive societies; nor with forms of theism which maintain, uncritically, that man is the image of God; nor, as partially indicated above, with systems of speculative metaphysics which trace the operation of highly abstract principles throughout the world or portions of it; nor with any form of the copy-theory of ideas; nor with metaphors and poetic expressions.

There is also a geographical restriction; for, although similar theories are found elsewhere, our consideration is usually confined to the philosophies of the Mediterranean and Atlantic regions.

3. Derivation of Terms

The words "macrocosm" and "microcosm," which are found in Latin, French, German, Italian and English forms, are equivalents for the inferred Greek term μακρός κόσμος, ² "great world," and the early Greek term μικρός κόσμος, "little world." Possibly the adjective μακρός was first intended to refer to the long duration of the universe as compared with man.² Aristotle, in place of this, uses a form of the adjective μεγάς; ³ the word "Megacosmus" ⁴ is found in Latin, and its equivalent sometimes in English. The term μικρός κόσμος has been ascribed, upon doubtful authority, to Democritus; ⁴ its first indisputable occurrence is in Aristotle.³

¹ In the following pages, the term "microcosmic theories," or "theories of epitomization," in the plural, is used to indicate the general field of investigation, while the term "microcosmic theory," in the singular, is used for the view that man, rather than any other portion of the universe, epitomizes the whole.
4. SUMMARY OF PREVIOUS WORKS IN THIS FIELD

1. Meyer's Monograph. Of previous works in this field, the only monograph is by Adolf Meyer—Wesen und Geschichte der Theorie vom Mikro- und Makrokosmos, in Berner Studien zur Philosophie und ihrer Geschichte, volume 25, pages i to 122 (1900). After a review which covers many of the historical theories, Meyer distinguishes four types—the mythological-physical, the psychical, the metaphysical, and the sociological. In his final estimate they are all dismissed as lacking scientific confirmation and depending too much upon reasoning from analogy. Acknowledgment is due to this work as the pioneer in the field, but attention should be called to a number of defects, especially omissions.

2. Chapters and Sections on Special Periods. Several other works, some of which will be referred to later, contain chapters or sections on the history of these theories during special periods. C. A. Lobeck, in his famous Aglaophamus (Berlin, 1829), volume II, chapter IX, "De Macroclosmo et Microcosmo," discusses various obscure aspects of the theories in connection with the Greek mystery religions. A. Jellinek's edition of Joseph Ibn Zaddik's Olam Katan (Der Mikrokosmos, Ein Beitrag zur Religionsphilosophie und Ethik. . . Leipzig, 1854) contains an introduction with a section (4), giving a summary of the theory among Jewish writers. Jellinek thinks that the theory helps to explain some points otherwise difficult to interpret. B. Beer's review of the foregoing in Frankel's Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums, volume III, pp. 159 ff., 197 ff. (1854), contains additional suggestions. F. Dieterici, referring to the theory as a "Jahrtausende beherrschende Gedanke," familiar in his day, divides the general introduction and resumé of his translations of the encyclopaedic treatises of the mediaeval Arabian Brethren of Sincerity (Die Philosophie der Araber im IX-ten und X-ten Jahrhunderten. . . Books I and II—Berlin, 1875-6) into two parts, one entitled "Einleitung und Makrokosmos," and the other, "Der Mikrokosmos." L. Stein, who suggested the work of Meyer, has, in the first volume of his Psychologie der Stoa (Berliner Studien für klassische Philologie und Archäologie, III, 1—1886), a supplement entitled "Mikro- und Makrokosmos der Stoa." He thinks that in the Stoa we have the first clearly expressed microcosmic theory and that as soon as it is established that a philosopher had the conception of man as a micro-

1 p. 104.  
cosm, one is justified in supposing that wherever there are striking analogies between man and the world there is an intended reference to the theory. W. Windelband in his *History of Philosophy* (English translation by Tufts, New York, 1901) devotes a section (29) to the theory during the humanistic period. He says that the revival of this “Peripatetic-Stoic” \(^1\) doctrine helped to offset other tendencies. There is a valuable article by I. Broydé in the *Jewish Encyclopædia*, vol. VIII, page 544 (1904), reviewing the development of the theory in Jewish philosophy. J. Kroll, in *Die Lehren des Hermes Trismegistos (Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie des Mittelalters, XII, 1—Münster, 1914)*, has a brief chapter on “Der Mensch als der μικρός κόσμος,” noteworthy for some of its references.

3. Briefer References. Attempts, sometimes misleading, to deal with the history of the theory that man is a microcosm are made in paragraphs and footnotes of other works, some of which will also be cited later. In T. Gataker’s edition of Marcus Aurelius’s *De rebus suis* (1652), there is a note (on IV, 27), with quotations from ancient writers. S. Münk, in his translation of Maimonides’s *Moreh Nebuchim* (Le guide des égarés, Paris, 1856) says that the theory has its source with Pythagoras and Plato rather than with Aristotle.\(^2\) M. Joël, in *Ibn Gebirol’s Bedeutung für die Geschichte der Philosophie* (a supplement to vol. I of *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Philosophie*—Breslau, 1876), says that the microcosmic theory is more influential in the Neo-Platonic philosophers than in Plato, but that the Arabians elaborated it most thoroughly.\(^3\) P. E. M. Berthelot, in *Les origines d’alchimie* (Paris, 1885) says that the theory of correspondence between the parts of the macrocosm and the microcosm is of Babylonian origin.\(^4\) J. Guttmann, in *Die Philosophie des Salomon Ibn Gabirol* (Göttingen, 1889), corrects Joël by tracing the expression for “microcosm” to Aristotle, and gives references to Jewish writers.\(^5\) M. Stein-\(\text{schneider}, in *Die Hebraischen Übersetzungen des Mittelalters* (Berlin, 1893), traces the theory through obscure Jewish sources which he thinks not dependent upon the Arabian Brethren.\(^6\) M. Baumgartner, in his *Die Philosophie des Alanus de Insulis (in Beiträge zur Gesch. der Philos. des Mittelalt., II, Münster, 1898)*, p. 88, has a note with references, especially to twelfth-century sources. A. Bouché-Leclercq, in his *L’astrologie grecque* (Paris, 1899) devotes unusual care to the analysis of the theory. He says that practically every ancient system of philosophy

\(^1\) P. 369. \(^2\) Note on I, 72. \(^3\) P. 29. \(^4\) P. 51. \(^5\) P. 117, n. 3. \(^6\) P. 997, n. 1.
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contributed something to it; that the Neo-Pythagoreans, Orphics, Neo-Platonists, hermetics and Christian Platonists insisted most upon it; but that the theory was greatly misused in astrology. The modicum of truth in the theory, according to him, is that man, being able to conceive only the human, has made God or the gods in his own image, and therefore finds everywhere the analogies of which he is the unconscious and sole author.\(^1\) S. Horovitz, in *Die Psychologie bei den judischen Religionsphilosophen des Mittelalters* (in Jahresbericht des Judischen Theologischen Seminars zu Breslau, 1900), follows Siebeck in ascribing the theory to Heraclitus and has a note with references, notably one to Xenophon.\(^2\) M. De Wulf, in his *History of Medieval Philosophy* (1900; English translation by Coffey, N. Y., 1909), says that Gundisallinus modified this "Alexandrian conception."\(^3\) S. Karppe, in *Études sur l'origin et la nature du Zohar* (Paris, 1901), finds the theory, although not the term, in Plato, and says it was familiar among the Neo-Platonists from the time of Jamblichus, and known among the Neo-Pythagoreans, as well as in Philo.\(^4\) F. Cumont, in *Les religions orientales dans le paganisme romain* (Paris, 1906), says that the theory goes back to an animistic doctrine of "sympathy" common to all primitive peoples.\(^5\) D. Neumark, in his *Geschichte der judischen Philosophie des Mittelalters* (Berlin, 1907), says that the theory among the Greeks had a psychological (i.e., an animistic) background, but that Plato, Aristotle and the Neo-Platonists did not work it out in detail as did the Arabians.\(^6\) E. V. Arnold, in *Roman Stoicism* (Cambridge, 1911) says that the doctrine, of unknown antiquity, is apparently implied in Heraclitus.\(^7\) E. Underhill, in *Mysticism* (New York, 1912), emphasizes the part which the theory has played in occult speculations.\(^8\) R. M. Jones, in *Spiritual Reformers in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (London, 1914), calls attention to the many strains of thought—ancient Greek and Graeco-Roman philosophy, mediæval mysticism, Persian astrology, Arabian philosophy, and the Jewish Cabala—which were blended in and with the theory at the period with which he deals.\(^9\) E. O. von Lippmann, in his *Entstehung und Ausbreitung der Alchemie* (Berlin, 1919), thinks the theory bears witness to an oriental origin, and calls it a Babylonian idea,\(^10\) the first clear expression of which is to be found in the later works of Plato.\(^11\)

4. References in Dictionaries and Encyclopædias. Works of reference

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\(^1\) Pp. 77-78.  \(^2\) Anmerkung 110.  \(^3\) Eng. transl., p. 273.  
\(^4\) P. 452, n. 1.  \(^5\) P. 207.  \(^6\) Vol. I, pp. 61-62.  \(^7\) P. 240.  
\(^8\) P. 191.  \(^9\) P. 134.  \(^10\) Pp. 196, 666.  \(^11\) P. 188.
which, under the word "microcosm" or "macrocosm," contain useful citations and summaries are W. Fleming's *Vocabulary of Philosophy* (1857); Larousse's *Grand dictionnaire universel* (1874); Eisler's *Wörterbuch*; Baldwin's *Dictionary of Philosophy*; *The New English Dictionary*. Their wide variations show how fragmentary is investigation in this field.

One of the most noteworthy of such articles is that in F. Mauthner's *Wörterbuch der Philosophie* (Leipzig, 1910; vol. II, pp. 88, ff.). He points out that the word "macrocosm" is artificial, probably constructed more for alliteration than for content, and that it would be more accurate to substitute the term "makranthropos" for it. He says the term "microcosm" is at bottom a mechanistic conception applied to man, while the term "makranthropos" is a panpsychic conception applied to the world. Of the two, the latter ascription, although not the term, is doubtless older. From the modern point of view the idea of a macrocosm is only a poetic fancy, and the conception of a microcosm only a mechanistic inversion of it.