

The [Soul-Problem]¹

The word “soul” cannot be uttered without evoking the two-fold problem of our essence and our destiny. It is impossible to separate the soul from the I and it is impossible to confuse them. It is impossible to separate them because the soul evinces within the I itself its connection with the absolute such that outside the I there are merely *things*² of which we say precisely that they have no soul; or if they have one it is because, not content to make them objects for the I, we lend them an I comparable to our own which has soul for [its] essence. And it is impossible to confound [the soul and the I] because doubtless no one can challenge the I’s existence, of which he has an intimate daily experience, whereas the soul provides that experience with a foundation and a meaning.³ Also, materialists who deny the existence of the soul do not in any way deny the existence of the I.

1. THE SOUL DEFINED AS WHAT IS NEAREST AND MOST DISTANT.

The soul is for us therefore what is nearest and most distant: it is what is nearest because it is more intimate to the I than the I itself since, if the soul

¹ Introduction to *Of the Human Soul*.

² My italics.

³ The argument implies that the I is otherwise ungrounded and without meaning. In other texts its ground and meaning are supplied by the act. Here the soul appears as a kind of personal stand-in for the act.

exists⁴, it is the very ground into which [the I] plunges its roots but from which it is ever divided, either owing to the character of duality and inadequacy which is inseparable from consciousness as soon as it arises (and which it always tries to overcome) or owing to the very activity it exerts which ever turns it outwards in the connections it maintains with things or with beings; thus the I is in a perpetual state of “diversion” [whereas] the nature of the soul is to be gathered into itself so to speak in the unity of its pure essence. But at the same time the soul is for us what is most distant because the I does not go beyond the experience of its acts and its states, and we might even say that it is reduced to them. Also, it can deny the existence of the soul which resides in that very beyond—not in the sense that it is [something] the I will be able to grant itself through its [own] enlargement but [in the sense of] what renders such enlargement possible and makes it a duty. Consequently the soul always escapes the I’s grasp. It is beyond every effort the I can make to seize it precisely because it is, [there] within the I, the principle and internal exigency of its temporal development, though not an object it can apprehend or coincide with.

Nonetheless [make no] mistake: it is *because*⁵ it is what is nearest that it is also what is furthest away. It is distant from the I not because it is exterior to it and separated from it by a gap [the I] does not manage to cross but because it is the very perfection of an inwardness [the I] never manages to equal and from which each of its particular initiatives only separates it. Compared with the soul the I therefore remains in a state of diversion. It is because all its roots [are buried] in the soul that it can so easily forget it and, in the [half-] light that illumines it, believe it is capable of sufficing itself. But the I does no more than put our deepest being into rapport with the phenomena that manifest it and through which it realises itself by witnessing at once its initiative and its limits and by entering into relation with other beings in a [common] experience. Yet our deepest being is not a thing but an activity which is precisely up to the I to employ—and to which it remains ever unfaithful. [The I constantly probes that profound being], not to uncover it as we uncover an object but to put into play the powers it conceals, whose responsibility has been entrusted to it so to speak. It [can] happen that it corrupts [its deepest being] or lets it fade. Then it loses its soul.

2. THE BARRIER BETWEEN IMMANENCE AND TRANSCENDENCE ABOLISHED.⁶

⁴ Of course this condition tends to undermine the assertion of intimacy.

⁵ My italics.

⁶ See “Transcendence” in *Of the Act* for an earlier treatment of this theme.

The relation between the I and the soul allows us to define the relation between immanence and transcendence, which are contrasted with one another but cannot be separated. For it is not true that we are encased in immanent experience since we never apprehend this as ready-formed but always in the act through which it is [being] formed. Nor is it true that the transcendent is for us nothing more than a gratuitous faith that finds no confirmation in our experience. For every act we carry out is transcendent with respect to its effect. It serves no purpose to say that it is immanent because it is ours: for on the one hand the most confirmed [advocates of immanence]—clearly seeing that [the act] cannot be reduced to the content of our experience—declare that we have no consciousness of it, [while] on another hand we know [very] well that we can say of this act that it is a power which is originally beyond the I and which the I [merely disposes] in such a fashion that it can only ever make it its own and not produce it. Now the relation of the I to the soul reveals to us the exact relation between immanence and transcendence, [with] the I always being immanent to itself yet unable to nourish this immanence save through a continual return to the transcendence from which it draws both the activity that makes it be—without which it would be, as in the strictest empiricism, only a succession of states—and that reference to the absolute without which it would be unable to posit even its relative existence.

We see therefore [how] the problem of the soul [stands]. It is the problem the I poses as soon as it examines itself. For if the I implies consciousness of an activity that surpasses it (yet which it assumes) and that, far from being exhausted in its exertion, gives being to itself before giving it to its effect then we can say that the I resides at the very point where there is within us a transcendence that [becomes immanent]⁷ and that in [becoming immanent]⁸ both manifests and produces that internal operation wherein we see our essence [being] formed. The peculiarity of science is to define the barrier which at every instant separates the phenomenon such as it is given to us from the act that founds it. The peculiarity of metaphysics is not to hurdle [the barrier] but to abolish it. It teaches us how to overcome the opposition between immanence and transcendence and how, by deepening the one, to penetrate the other.

3. THE MYSTERY OF AN “ESSENCE” THAT SHAPES ITSELF.

For that [reason, and] in accordance with an opposition [that has] become almost classical, it is fitting to speak of the mystery rather than the problem of the soul. For if the soul were a transcendent [sphere] alien to the I it would indeed be a problem for it, and the solution it would provide for it would be a

⁷ Literally “is immanentised” or “immanentises itself”.

⁸ Literally “being immanentised”.

purely intellectual solution. But the I seems separated from its soul only in order to find it. All its powers are borrowed from it, even that of saying "I"; and all the initiatives [the I] carries out seem to ring back to the very essence of its soul and transform it. Thus [the soul] figures in relation to the I [as] both its origin and its destiny. It is through the I that the soul constantly becomes what it is. However this origin and destiny which would allow us to grasp the soul in its fullness eludes the I. Hence the soul is hidden in a kind of penumbra, [admittedly] not as a thing that shrinks from sight but as a creation of self by self, of which we only ever have – when it is realised – an imperfect and divided consciousness. Our I tries to take possession of our soul: it is the soul itself in so far as [the soul] is a power [whose illumination and actualisation depend on the I] but [the soul] is such that [the I] can sometimes make it blossom and sometimes suppress it, according to the use made of it. [The I] is therefore always on the surface of its soul. It has plans with respect to the latter but always happens to forget or neglect them. Thus it creates for itself a kind of subjective and momentary experience of which it is the centre and in which concern for its soul is somehow sacrificed.

However no circle can be drawn around the I: it cannot be confined to the ring of light [cast] by the consciousness it has of itself. It is of-a-piece with an infra-conscious where all the obscure natural impulses which often determine it without its knowledge emerge in [a] zone of clarity, producing a sort of terror at all we carry inside us; it is of-a-piece as well with a supra-consciousness where all the lessons that experience has taught us sometimes seem to acquire a kind of brilliance that transfigures them, which the I thinks it receives rather than imparts to itself. If it is obvious that we cannot separate the I from the consciousness it has of itself – without which it would be at a loss to distinguish itself from the body, or from the world of bodies – we must say at least that this consciousness incessantly communes with that twofold unconsciousness [springing] from below and above, which is such that the first aspires to consciousness while [consciousness] is resolved in the second. The I is like a constant transition from one to the other.

But this transition points directly to the link between the soul and the I. For that twofold unconsciousness in which the I constantly takes root and is surpassed is inseparable from our soul itself considered in [relation to] all the possibilities offered to it, from which it must loose the essence it will impart to itself in the course of the I's life.⁹ Yet that unconscious which the I considers beneath itself – which it had to pass through in order to become what it is and which, whenever it arises within it anew, strikes it as a victory of malefic forces from which it thought itself delivered – still cleaves to our soul as the obstacle

⁹ There is a circularity here, anticipated in this section's title. How can the soul release an essence it apparently does not yet have? I gather it has one but only in a potential and indeterminate state, i.e. as a possibility or direction, that requires conscious ratification and exact determination through concrete acts. The matter is far from clear.

and means without which it would not have managed to be incarnated (i.e. to acquire an individual form) but which it hopes to shed in the measure that it realises its unique spiritual essence. [By contrast] the unconscious the I considers above it—and with respect to which it feels a fresh subordination, though [one] which exalts and fulfils it rather than reduces and humbles it—is the living soul in so far as, [in] constantly surpassing its limits and responding to its deepest vocation, it regains contact with the absolute from which it was separated only so as to make it its own. There is also a singular difference between these two sorts of unconscious: for the first is alien to consciousness whose role is to overcome it and indefinitely drive it back, so that when it invades consciousness it [goes] against the law of conscious development and [serves] to show that the soul is ever in peril; [meanwhile,] the second expresses the very summit of consciousness, [where it is purest and most nearly perfect], such that it is unconscious for the I only so as to permit it to feel its insufficiency at every step and to compel it to mend [its ways].¹⁰

Hence we can rightly say that the soul is a mystery but [only] because it is for the I the unknown of itself. However this unknown is that twofold zone of obscurity [surrounding] the luminous and mobile point where each [person's] consciousness of self resides. Yet this point always throws some new ray [of light] either into those subterranean depths where our life was germinated or toward those invisible summits it seeks to mount. Thus is illumined the soul's mystery, little by little. Or better, the I—[in] taking consciousness not only of what is given to it or what it is capable of doing but of the career the soul needs to travel in order to realise itself—recognises that it is [the soul's] witness and vehicle and that within it [the soul] unveils its veritable essence: [that] of being a possibility which is actualised. Therefore to say that the soul is a mystery for the I is also to say that it is a mystery for itself, which [should] not surprise us if it is true that the soul is not an object prior to the knowledge the I might have of it but an essence that reveals itself only in [the process of] creating itself, thanks to an operation of which the I is indivisibly spectator and agent.

4. ESCHATOLOGICAL¹¹ CHARACTER OF THE [SOUL-PROBLEM].

However the soul is not simply a transcendent existence that always eludes us, though we have never ceased giving it access to our consciousness. It is not simply a mystery that forever draws away, though light does not cease to penetrate it. It gathers in itself the meaning of our existence and the end toward which it leads us. The idea of soul has an “eschatological character” and this

¹⁰ The above comments are almost certainly in response to writers like Freud and Jung whose theories about the cloudy regions of the psyche are reflected in Lavelle's depiction of sub-surface impulses and of a dimly realised ideal. Of course “psyche” originally means soul.

¹¹ Originally referring to that branch of theology devoted to final things, i.e. death, judgment, heaven, hell.

character is constitutive of its very essence. Perhaps it is even necessary to say that the idea of soul is born of [our] need to overcome not just a repulsion but a contradiction inseparable from [the] thought that an existence (namely, our own) can one day fall back into nothingness. It¹² is the affirmation that this existence comes down to neither the body nor the I and that, despite the testimony of others who will see my body corrupted and no longer be able to communicate with me, the very inwardness of this I is anchored in being and survives all the vicissitudes of temporal life. [Herein lies] the very source of the distinction we make between the soul and the body, and even between the soul and the I if it is true that the I's temporal life cannot be dissociated from the body's life. For that [reason] it is right to say that the soul can only be an object of faith, though a faith constantly reborn. But ejecting it from the domain of knowledge—far from being equivalent to denying it—is intended only to remind us that it is by definition beyond all proofs and verifications. We can indeed try to construct a concept of soul, [attributing] to it all those traits which can be subtracted from that incessant ruin which is inseparable from the life of the body or the life of the I: but nothing proves there is an existence corresponding to this concept. We therefore must turn to the experience we have of our own I which shows us how, in this experience itself, we apprehend a manifest existence but such that through this manifestation we [also] apprehend an essence in the process of becoming, which instead of being shaken by the disappearance of the I's states demands this disappearance in order to found its independence and subsistence.

[For that very reason] the soul is associated with the life of the body: it cannot be defined simply as its negation for the body is indispensable to the very formation the soul. It is the meaning, not exactly of the body, but of our existence itself in so far as it is individual, i.e. inseparable from the body; and if it happens that at a certain moment it is detached from the body it is doubtless because the body has ceased to serve it. It is not, as the Ancients maintained, the soul's prison but the instrument of its creation. The soul therefore appears here not as a finished¹³ being but as a being [with] a task to fulfil—which is a putting-into-play of its possibilities—or if one prefers, [with] a destiny to accomplish. Still, we can say that the I has responsibility for its soul: and the use it makes of the responsibilities [the soul] offers it determines what [the soul] will one day be. [That is why] the soul always appears as a beyond the I never succeeds in attaining, either through knowledge or action, so that [the I] will often reduce to [a small matter] the soul which will be its own at the end.

But the soul's eschatological character again raises the problem of the relations between time and eternity. We do not doubt that there is a path the soul is obliged to follow in order to shape its own destiny. Consequently the soul's life appears to us [as] engaged in time. However we believe that the soul is also a

¹² The idea of soul.

¹³ Literally, given.

“substance”—let us say an eternal essence—and that it thereby escapes that dissolution which is inseparable from temporal existence. For us the destiny of the soul is above all a future, yet a future that continues beyond death, i.e. the very limit that closes the future to us. Nonetheless time would cease to exercise its destructive action in this new future. It would be an eternal future, i.e. similar to a present that would never be broken off. Now we can [make sense of] these notions only by showing how the present is inseparable from time in our experience of life, and how death consumes only that abolition and spiritualisation of all the events of corporeal existence which are, as we have shown in *Of Time and Eternity*, the very laws of becoming. Thus the soul’s eschatological significance finds not only its fundament and image but already its application in each of the instants through which our life continually passes.

A final remark is still needed, for [people] often believe that the soul has been invented solely to [satisfy] the deepest desires of our consciousness, which have always been thwarted here below but would be fulfilled in an imaginary world. Yet we cannot grant that this is so, for on the one hand it is possible that true wisdom resides in restrained rather than gratified desire and on the other hand, if belief in immortality has always joined menaces to promises, it is because this hope and this fear engendered by desire begin to bring us right now [the] sort of achievement we expect after death. Finally if someone thought that the desire for immortality—that abstraction [compounded] of pleasures and pains—were the result of a simple attachment to [an] existence from which we would never want to be delivered, it would suffice to recall the attitude of the Orient, which aspires to this deliverance and precisely seeks the means to obtain it, [all the while] dreading failure, in order to see that [it is possible] to have with respect to existence feelings at odds with those we experience when we call upon an afterlife to eternalise that existence instead of breaking it off.¹⁴ But in these two cases we find the same testimony: namely, that in the very midst¹⁵ of our lives we believe we can distinguish what takes place with [respect to] our body from what cleaves to our souls, over which the accidents of our bodies have no purchase.

5. [IT IS UP TO US, THROUGH OUR WAY OF ACTING, TO PRONOUNCE ONE OF TWO DOCTRINES AS TRUE: MATERIALISM OR SPIRITUALITY.]¹⁶

As a consequence the question about the truth of materialism or spirituality is no longer as simple as we think. [At any rate] it is a question that [cannot be

¹⁴ I.e. attention should be given to those oriental sages who abhor the prospect of an eternal life on the model of this one.

¹⁵ Literally, presence.

¹⁶ The sentence has been extensively restructured.

answered] by a choice between [mutually-exclusive] alternatives.¹⁷ [When asked whether the soul exists we cannot answer with a “yes” or “no”.] For it belongs to the category of things which become and [therefore] might or might not be. The soul [exists]¹⁸ in so far as it is the being of that very power it has of becoming. But if we [locate] being in the actualisation of this power it might not [exist]¹⁹. And for that [reason] materialism and spirituality are doctrines that have no truth in themselves; rather, only in our way of acting can we pronounce one or the other true. There is no soul-object we can [refer to in order] to know whether we must say that it is present or absent. To seek such an object is already to materialise it. And no rejoinder is [left] to those savants who declare that [they have] never encountered [the soul] if it is agreed that it might [exist]. But we understand very well that it is possible to have two different perspectives on consciousness: one in which we [attend] only to things or states, persuaded that there is no existence elsewhere, [thereby affirming] determinism everywhere without thinking that [we may] at least sometimes abandon ourselves to it and sometimes take charge of it—then we pronounce materialism as true; [and] the other [perspective] in which the world, on the contrary, makes sense to us only in the measure that we recognise and introduce into [the world] the presence of a creative and valorising²⁰ activity—then we ourselves [bring forth] the truth of spirituality²¹. And it is insufficient to say that a radical choice [is involved] which [justifies making] a scission between two sorts of men. It is also necessary to say that this choice defines our human essence, i.e. this freedom we dispose through which we distinguish ourselves from the animal nature to which we are joined but which [stipulates] that we can be human only on the condition that we choose to be human and not animal. Also it is necessary to recognise that the two tendencies which allow materialism or spirituality to arise through the assent we give them are already present at the very heart of each consciousness so that the choice we can make between them is never decisive and so that there is no materialism so compelling as to [leave no] grounds for spirituality, either in its aspirations or in its deeds, nor [is there] a spirituality so pure that materialism does not seduce it and threaten to carry it away in certain moments of doubt and discouragement.

It is therefore necessary to observe that while materialism and spirituality are doctrines [whose realisation] depends on us this realisation can nonetheless never be absolute or [once and for all]²². For *realised* spirituality, i.e. finished or accomplished [spirituality], such that freedom could no longer opt in favour of

¹⁷ In apparent contradiction of the section’s title. The author is speaking in objective or absolute terms. In reference to the actions of individuals the situation is different, as will be seen

¹⁸ Literally, is. Strictly speaking the notion of existence is inappropriate to potentiality.

¹⁹ Literally, be.

²⁰ Value-imparting.

²¹ I.e. we evince the truth of spirit by manifesting it.

²² Literally, without recourse or resort.

materialism is still materialism. And materialism itself, in so far as [it is not] a fact imposed on us [but] an act [we must] accomplish and indeed hold in place with an almost ascetic rigour, confirms spirituality in a certain fashion. In reality spirituality resides in this very choice we consent to entertain between materialism and spirituality. It is inseparable from the exercise of freedom which infinitely raises the I above the world of things and which again reveals its presence in the act through which it denies itself. Will we say that materialism is in some way imposed on us by our intellectual probity as soon as knowledge of the real [comes] into play? But what is this probity we might lack, this knowledge that distinguishes itself from the real to which it is applied and that we cannot lay hold of? Is there no evidence here of a certain independence of the mind and of its [vice-grip] on the real at the moment it thinks itself subjected to it?²³ The point of this analysis is precisely to show that there is no *reality*²⁴ [that is] properly spiritual and that the soul, [or what] is considered as such, is only ever a possibility [whose realisation] depends on us. But perhaps it never succeeds [in being realised]. Or indeed its essence is even not to succeed. For if it succeeded it would [only] be in some work where its activity would be consumed and die, whereas it exists only there, where it incessantly surpasses all its works; where, ever remaining itself, it never vanishes into its own effect.²⁵

6. THAT THE SOUL IS INDIVIDUAL.

Nonetheless the soul cannot be confounded with spirit.²⁶ For if the peculiarity of spirit is to be a self-creating activity which, precisely because there is nothing outside it to which it might be subordinated, not only carries its own reasons within itself but creates them in creating itself, [then] we see without difficulty that spirit harbours within itself no individual determination—or that it surpasses all [determinations], or again that there is only one spirit. By contrast there is no soul but individual [soul], such that if the soul is spiritual it can be only a participation in spirit. It is therefore necessary to distinguish it by the determinations that limit yet individualise it. [We might indeed speak of] a plurality of spirits but we do not doubt that this plurality resides in various modes of participation in an identical spirit; which explains rather well [how] we could speak of a communion of spirits which confront one another only in the measure they receive limitations that distinguish them, i.e. are not properly

²³ I.e. intellectual integrity cannot be a product of sheer materiality.

²⁴ I.e. nothing that can be observed in the material domain.

²⁵ A rare instance where Lavelle appears to assent to the prospect of an essence being unrealised. His emphasis is typically on actualisation and vocation.

²⁶ One of the central themes in *Of the Human Soul*: soul is individual while spirit is universal. It is useful to recall here that for Lavelle spirit is virtually identical with being and the act.

spirits. However it is not true that the soul [exists] *only*²⁷ by way of its limitation: that would be to say that it is non-spiritual. It is soul by way of this act of participation in spirit, which is spirit itself precisely in so far as, wherever it acts, it is the putting-into-play of a liberty. If there is a plurality of liberties such that each of them has an initiative which is its own, and if all [of them] nonetheless harmonise in the measure that each becomes a more [nearly] perfect expression of pure spirit, here is doubtless the supreme condition for [ensuring] that Spirit does not remain a simple possibility, or that it does not remain locked in a stationary perfection where its creative activity would be consumed and annihilated in a single stroke. This is not only the secret of creation, it is the secret of spirit considered in its sheer essence. But if the soul is spirit or freedom it must—in order to be individualised, in order to be *my*²⁸ soul and to allow me to say “I”—be determined and limited, though it is not confounded with any of these limitations or determinations. Yet the theory of the soul²⁹ will be precisely the theory of these limitations or determinations: the dialectic of the connections our freedom will maintain with them, of the means they provide it and of the obstacles they [put in its way], of the subjugation in which they hold it and of the efforts by which it is delivered from them.³⁰

But first of all it is necessary to recognise that with respect to the spirit a liberty³¹ can [be limited] only by another liberty.³² For whence could proceed our limitation if we consider, not that negative force which discloses our own bounds to us but that positive force which imposes them on us? If that is the case we can foresee that the world in which we live, which is a world of phenomena, should be regarded not only as a world of freedom’s manifestations but as a world where mutual limitations are expressed, owing to which various liberties are distinguished yet communicate. The nature of the soul is to be a spirit engaged in a world, [a spirit] which, even if we suppose it can be detached from [the world], ought to be engaged in it in order to realise its destiny. It is therefore necessary that there be only one world in which all souls jointly fulfil their destinies. And if we can say that each soul in this world has a particular situation which defines the circumstances in which freedom will be exercised, the soul—considered with respect to the activity that makes it be—must necessarily entail the union of

²⁷ My italics.

²⁸ My emphasis.

²⁹ To be set forth in the main body of this work.

³⁰ Having asserted that the soul is distinct from its limitations and determinations the author declares that his “theory of the soul will precisely be the theory of these limitations and determinations.” For a justification of this see the first paragraph. From another angle it might be said that the soul *can* be, and practically always is, confused with various limitations, often not recognised as such. By clarifying their nature and showing the sort of efforts needed to deliver oneself from them the author hopes to provide an understanding if not a direct experience (see the final sentence of Section 7) of the soul-in-itself. In other words the soul is to be defined in contrast to what it is not.

³¹ I take this as practically a synonym for a free being, even though it might be also an inward state.

³² A tenet of Lavelle’s philosophy: I am limited by other beings. In Sartre’s philosophy this becomes the now-famous dictum from his play *Huis Clos (No Exit)*: “Hell is other people.”

freedom and a situation. As for the world itself, it gathers in itself all the conditions of possibility that allow different liberties to act both separately and together. And if there is a dialectic which allows the world to be defined as a system in which space, time and the [various] categories [of being] constitute the lineaments³³ this dialectic can have recourse to no other principle of deduction than the notion of a liberty which provides itself with the means through which it is grounded in its two-fold rapport with the activity in which it participates and with all other liberties.

7. A REFLEXIVE DIALECTIC.

Consequently, though the soul evinces a character of inalienable inwardness, even to the extent that it inscribes its own existence in the absolute, this existence is nonetheless a relational existence, we might say, such that in order to describe it, it is first necessary to analyse the relation of the soul to itself such as it is manifest in the constitution of the I through its union with the body (which will be the goal of our Book I)³⁴; then [to analyse] that distinctive relation characteristic of its essence which compels us to consider it as a possibility actualised in time by way of value (which will be the goal of our Book II); then [to analyse] the entirety of relations it maintains with the world and with other souls, which in so far as they deliver to us the very content of its essence comprise what we properly call its powers (which we will study in Book III). Finally we will devote Book IV to the examination of the soul's relation to pure spirit, which will lead us to pose the three-fold problem of its unity, its original vocation and its immortality.

In this work we will therefore continue [to apply] a method which might be given the name "reflexive dialectic" which we will shortly elucidate in an independent work³⁵ of which the three previously published volumes—*Of Being, Of the Act, Of Time and Eternity*—were the first steps. [The method], it seems, will be particularly suited to the analysis of the soul if it is true that the soul completely resides in the two-fold movement by which it constantly detaches itself from the absolute being and rejoins with it, divides itself into powers which

³³ Literally fish-bones or outlines. The influence of Kant is apparent here.

³⁴ Here and in what follows the author outlines the contents of his study of the soul. The four books referred to are "The Soul's Inwardness", "The Soul's Genesis", "[A] New Classification of the Soul's Powers" and "Immortality and Eternity."

³⁵ In terms of the "three previously published volumes" Lavelle's intended volume on wisdom seems indicated. However the phrase "independent work" could refer to an altogether different work. A text titled *Manuel de méthodologie dialectique* (Presses Universitaires de France) was published posthumously in 1962.

put it into rapport with all modes of being and wrests back that unity which it is at every instant in danger of losing. [This method] alone will furnish us with that articulated description which will allow us to grasp the soul in the very act through which it creates itself by founding its independence within the whole of being, with which it remains united: to this orderly description each of us must grant his assent by recognising within it the operations he constantly carries out in order to be. We are here beyond all demonstration yet [face-to-face with] an evidence surpassing every demonstration: for the soul is an existence, and no existence can be demonstrated. But the initiatives that constitute it can have an ontological bearing only on the condition that in making them we feel it is we ourselves that make them, [compared to] which the most rigorous demonstrations have value only as notions, i.e. for the construction of a system in which logic alone counts.³⁶

³⁶ In other words Lavelle 's theses are to be verified by direct experience. In this he shows his affinity with Descartes.