animal body; at other times, in its logical sense, of a coherent whole, systematized by an internal principle. Cf. Soc. and Social Org.

Organism (in biology). A discrete body of which the essential constituent is living protoplasm. The term originally indicated the recognition of organization as essential to life, and as opposed to unorganized or dead matter. Cf. Life, and Living Matter (q.v.).


The term has applications, with varying degrees of definiteness, in the phrases mental organisation (in which the systematic differentiation of the flow of the mental life is characterized), social organisation (q.v.), organisation of knowledge (the adjustment, in a philosophical view, of the details of knowledge as contributed by the different sciences).

The shading of meaning which distinguishes organisation from organisation (q.v.) is in the direction of relative looseness of relation as between the parts and the whole, and relative lack of independence, relation of conditions external to the system. An organisation is formed, controlled, modified, worked; etc., by an organism; these predicates are not applicable. Moreover, we do not speak of the "organ" of an organisation, but of its "members"; each being at once less dependent upon the whole, and less necessary to it. Hence the preference for mental organisation; it leaves open the question whether mind is the inherent principle of action, or whether it is the result of the organism's interaction with its environment.

The term organisation is preferable to characterise an organisation, or the constitution of the system so described.

Organism (Gen.); the same in the other languages. Since neither Aristotle nor the moderns defined a speculative science, nor of a practical science, nor of an art, seem to suit logic very well, the early physicists and commentators denied that it was either a science or an art, and called it an instrument, process; but they did not precisely define their meaning. It was negatively defined. The collection of Aristotle's logical treatises, wherein was made, thus came to be called the Organon.

Francis Bacon, disapproving of Aristotle's methods, wished all that to be laid aside; and he consequently called his work, which was designed to be a guide for establishing a systematic inductive procedure, Novum Organon. The name was afterwards imitated by many writers, and found in his Novum Organon (1620).

Oriental Philosophy (Religion). The group of religions treated in the following article includes those of Egypt, Babylon, Assyria, Persia, India, China (in geographical order from west to east).

Among these nations India alone can be said to have produced schools of philosophy analogous to those of Greece, though the ethical teachers of China have good claims to rank with the thinkers of Europe. In the systems of Egypt, Babylon, Assyria, and Persia, the philosophical element does not yield itself to self-conscious expression, it remains engangled in mythology. But all religions really involve a primitive philosophy. They seem to attempt to give some kind of rational explanation of the world of objects and of life by which they are confronted. This is obviously the case even in the animistic stage, and it is in general or with the more elaborated systems which have emerged out of that rank and acquired more or less consistency of higher thought. Only this aspect is here sketched.

Questions of ritual and hierarchical organisation are only touched when they involve the form and significance of belief.

1. Egypt. The wisdom of Egypt was famous in ancient Israel, and the Greeks copied and again expressed its independence to it. Thales, Pythagoras, and Plato are said to have studied there; Aristotle regarded it as the basis of mathematical investigation. The author of the treatise on 'Ion and Orphics', reckoned among the works of Plato, indicates the interest which the rational philosophers of the Roman Empire still felt in its venerable symbols.

2. In the spelling of proper names and technical terms, the standardized forms usually employed by scholars are here abandoned, and foreign words are represented in the English alphabet.