

at any rate, leave them untouched.

FOOTNOTES:

[119] [Reprinted from *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods*, vol. II, No. 9, April 27, 1905.]

[120] [B. H. Bode: "'Pure Experience' and the External World," *Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods*, vol. II, 1905, p. 128.]

[121] Vol. II, [1905], pp. 85-92.

X

MR. PITKIN'S REFUTATION OF 'RADICAL EMPIRICISM'[122]

Although Mr. Pitkin does not name me in his acute article on radical empiricism,[123] [...] I fear that some readers, knowing me to have applied that name to my own doctrine, may possibly consider themselves to have been in at my death.

In point of fact my withers are entirely unwrung. I have, indeed, said[124] that 'to be radical, an empiricism must not admit into its constructions any element that is not directly experienced.' But in my own radical empiricism this is only a *methodological postulate*, not a conclusion supposed to flow from the intrinsic absurdity of transempirical objects. I have never felt the slightest respect for the idealistic arguments which Mr. Pitkin attacks and of which Ferrier made such striking use; and I am perfectly willing to admit any number of noumenal beings or events into philosophy if only their pragmatic value can be shown.

Radical empiricism and pragmatism have so many misunderstandings to suffer from, that it seems my duty not to let this one go any farther, uncorrected.

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Mr. Pitkin's 'reply' to me,[125] [...] perplexes me by the obscurity of style which I find in almost all our younger philosophers. He asks me, however, two direct questions which I understand, so I take the liberty of answering.

First he asks: Do not experience and science show 'that countless things are[126] experienced as that which they are not or are only partially?' I reply: Yes, assuredly, as, for example, 'things' distorted by refractive media, 'molecules,' or whatever else is taken to be more ultimately real than the immediate content of the perceptive moment.

Secondly: "If experience is self-supporting[127] (in *any* intelligible sense) does this fact preclude the possibility of (a) something not experienced and (b) action of experience upon a noumenon?"

My reply is: Assuredly not the possibility of either--how could it? Yet in my opinion we should be wise not to *consider* any thing or action of that nature, and to restrict our universe of philosophic discourse to what is experienced or, at least, experienceable.[128]

FOOTNOTES:

[122] [Reprinted from the *Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods*, vol. III, No. 26, December 20, 1906; and *ibid.*, vol. IV, No. 4, February 14, 1907, where the original is entitled "A Reply to

Mr. Pitkin." ED.]

[123] [W. B. Pitkin: "A Problem of Evidence in Radical Empiricism," *ibid.*, vol. III, No. 24, November 22, 1906. ED.]

[124] [Above, p. 42. ED.]

[125] ["In Reply to Professor James," *Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods*, vol. IV, No. 2, January 17, 1907. ED.]

[126] Mr. Pitkin inserts the clause: 'by reason of the very nature of experience itself.' Not understanding just what reason is meant, I do not include this clause in my answer.

[127] [See above, p. 193. ED.]

[128] [Elsewhere, in speaking of 'reality' as "conceptual or perceptual experiences," the author says: "This is meant merely to exclude reality of an 'unknowable' sort, of which no account in either perceptual or conceptual terms can be given. It includes, of course, any amount of empirical reality independent of the knower." *Meaning of Truth*, p. 100, note. ED.]

XI

HUMANISM AND TRUTH ONCE MORE.[129]

Mr. Joseph's criticism of my article 'Humanism and Truth'[130] is a useful contribution to the general clearing up. He has seriously tried to comprehend what the pragmatic movement may intelligibly mean; and if he has failed, it is the fault neither of his patience nor of his sincerity, but rather of stubborn tricks of thought which he could not easily get rid of. Minute polemics, in which the parties try to rebut every detail of each of the other's charges, are a useful exercise only to the disputants. They can but breed confusion in a reader. I will therefore ignore as much as possible the text of both our articles (mine was inadequate enough) and treat once more the general objective situation.

As I apprehend the movement towards humanism, it is based on no particular discovery or principle that can be driven into one precise formula which thereupon can be impaled upon a logical skewer. It is much more like one of those secular changes that come upon public opinion over-night, as it were, borne upon tides 'too full for sound or foam,' that survive all the crudities and extravagances of their advocates, that you can pin to no one absolutely essential statement, nor kill by any one decisive stab.

Such have been the changes from aristocracy to democracy, from classic to romantic taste, from theistic to pantheistic feeling, from static to evolutionary ways of understanding life--changes of which we all have been spectators. Scholasticism still opposes to such changes the method of confutation by single decisive reasons, showing that the new view involves self-contradiction, or traverses some fundamental principle. This is like stopping a river by planting a stick in the middle of its bed. Round your obstacle flows the water and 'gets there all the same.' In reading Mr. Joseph, I am not a little reminded of those Catholic writers who refute Darwinism by telling us that higher species can not come from lower because *minus nequit gignere plus*, or that the notion of transformation is absurd, for it implies that species tend to their own destruction, and that would violate the principle that every reality tends to persevere in its own shape. The point of view is too myopic, too tight and close to take in the inductive argument. You can not settle questions of fact by formal logic. I feel as if Mr. Joseph almost pounced on my words singly, without giving the sentences time to get out of my mouth.