

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.

The one condition of understanding humanism is to become inductive-minded oneself, to drop rigorous definitions, and follow lines of least resistance 'on the whole.' "In other words," Mr. Joseph may probably say, "resolve your intellect into a kind of slush." "Even so," I make reply,--"if you will consent to use no politer word." For humanism, conceiving the more 'true' as the more 'satisfactory' (Dewey's term) has to renounce sincerely rectilinear arguments and ancient ideals of rigor and finality. It is in just this temper of renunciation, so different from that of pyrrhonic scepticism, that the spirit of humanism essentially consists. Satisfactoriness has to be measured by a multitude of standards, of which some, for aught we know, may fail in any given case; and what is 'more' satisfactory than any alternative in sight, may to the end be a sum of *pluses* and *minuses*, concerning which we can only trust that by ulterior corrections and improvements a maximum of the one and a minimum of the other may some day be approached. It means a real change of heart, a break with absolutistic hopes, when one takes up this view of the conditions of belief.

That humanism's critics have never imagined this attitude inwardly, is shown by their invariable tactics. They do not get into it far enough to see objectively and from without what their own opposite notion of truth is. Mr. Joseph is possessed by some such notion; he thinks his readers to be full of it, he obeys it, works from it, but never even essays to tell us what it is. The nearest he comes to doing so is where<sup>[131]</sup> he says it is the way "we ought to think," whether we be psychologically compelled to or not.

Of course humanism agrees to this: it is only a manner of calling truth an ideal. But humanism explicates the summarizing word 'ought' into a mass of pragmatic motives from the midst of which our critics think that truth itself takes flight. Truth is a name of double meaning. It stands now for an abstract something defined only as that to which our thought ought to conform; and again it stands for the concrete propositions within which we believe that conformity already reigns--they being so many 'truths.' Humanism sees that the only conformity we ever have to deal with concretely is that between our subjects and our predicates, using these words in a very broad sense. It sees moreover that this conformity is 'validated' (to use Mr. Schiller's term) by an indefinite number of pragmatic tests that vary as the predicates and subjects vary. If an S gets superseded by an SP that gives our mind a completer sum of satisfactions, we always say, humanism points out, that we have advanced to a better position in regard to truth.

Now many of our judgments thus attained are retrospective. The S'es, so the judgment runs, were SP's already ere the fact was humanly recorded. Common sense, struck by this state of things, now rearranges the whole field; and traditional philosophy follows her example. The general requirement that predicates must conform to their subject, they translate into an ontological theory. A most previous Subject of all is substituted for the lesser subjects and conceived of as an archetypal Reality; and the conformity required of predicates in detail is reinterpreted as a relation which our whole mind, with all its subjects and predicates together, must get into with respect to this Reality. It, meanwhile, is conceived as eternal, static, and unaffected by our thinking. Conformity to a non-human Archetype like this is probably the notion of truth which my opponent shares with common sense and philosophic rationalism.

When now Humanism, fully admitting both the naturalness and the grandeur of this hypothesis, nevertheless points to its sterility, and declines to chime in with the substitution, keeping to the concrete and still lodging truth between the subjects and the predicates in detail, it provokes the outcry which we hear and which my critic echoes.

One of the commonest parts of the outcry is that humanism is subjectivistic altogether--it is supposed to labor under a necessity of 'denying trans-perceptual reality.'<sup>[132]</sup> It is not hard to see how this misconception of humanism may have arisen; and humanistic writers, partly from not having sufficiently guarded their expressions, and partly from not having yet "got round" (in the poverty of their literature) to a full discussion of the subject, are doubtless in some degree to blame. But I fail to understand how any one with a working grasp of their principles can charge them wholesale with subjectivism. I myself have never thought of humanism as being subjectivistic farther than to this extent, that, inasmuch as it treats the thinker as being himself one portion of reality, it must also allow that *some* of the realities that he declares for true are created

by his being there. Such realities of course are either acts of his, or relations between other things and him, or relations between things, which, but for him, would never have been traced. Humanists are subjectivistic, also in this, that, unlike rationalists (who think they carry a warrant for the absolute truth of what they now believe in in their present pocket), they hold all present beliefs as subject to revision in the light of future experience. The future experience, however, may be of things outside the thinker; and that this is so the humanist may believe as freely as any other kind of empiricist philosopher.

The critics of humanism (though here I follow them but darkly) appear to object to any infusion whatever of subjectivism into truth. All must be archetypal; every truth must pre-exist to its perception. Humanism sees that an enormous quantity of truth must be written down as having pre-existed to its perception by us humans. In countless instances we find it most satisfactory to believe that, though we were always ignorant of the fact, it always *was* a fact that S was SP. But humanism separates this class of cases from those in which it is more satisfactory to believe the opposite, e.g., that S is ephemeral, or P a passing event, or SP created by the perceiving act. Our critics seem on the other hand, to wish to universalize the retrospective type of instance. Reality must pre-exist to every assertion for which truth is claimed. And, not content with this overuse of one particular type of judgment, our critics claim its monopoly. They appear to wish to cut off Humanism from its rights to any retrospection at all.

Humanism says that satisfactoriness is what distinguishes the true from the false. But satisfactoriness is both a subjective quality, and a present one. *Ergo* (the critics appear to reason) an object, *quâ* true, must always for humanism be both present and subjective, and a humanist's belief can never be in anything that lives outside of the belief itself or ante-dates it. Why so preposterous a charge should be so current, I find it hard to say. Nothing is more obvious than the fact that both the objective and the past existence of the object may be the very things about it that most seem satisfactory, and that most invite us to believe them. The past tense can figure in the humanist's world, as well of belief as of representation, quite as harmoniously as in the world of any one else.

Mr. Joseph gives a special turn to this accusation. He charges me[133] with being self-contradictory when I say that the main categories of thought were evolved in the course of experience itself. For I use these very categories to define the course of experience by. Experience, as I talk about it, is a product of their use; and yet I take it as true anteriorly to them. This seems to Mr. Joseph to be an absurdity. I hope it does not seem such to his readers; for if experiences can suggest hypotheses at all (and they notoriously do so) I can see no absurdity whatever in the notion of a retrospective hypothesis having for its object the very train of experiences by which its own being, along with that of other things, has been brought about. If the hypothesis is 'satisfactory' we must, of course, believe it to have been true anteriorly to its formulation by ourselves. Every explanation of a present by a past seems to involve this kind of circle, which is not a vicious circle. The past is *causa existendi* of the present, which in turn is *causa cognoscendi* of the past. If the present were treated as *causa existendi* of the past, the circle might indeed be vicious.

Closely connected with this pseudo-difficulty is another one of wider scope and greater complication--more excusable therefore.[134] Humanism, namely, asking how truth in point of fact is reached, and seeing that it is by ever substituting more satisfactory for less satisfactory opinions, is thereby led into a vague historic sketch of truth's development. The earliest 'opinions,' it thinks, must have been dim, unconnected 'feelings,' and only little by little did more and more orderly views of things replace them. Our own retrospective view of this whole evolution is now, let us say, the latest candidate for 'truth' as yet reached in the process. To be a satisfactory candidate, it must give some definite sort of a picture of what forces keep the process going. On the subjective side we have a fairly definite picture--sensation, association, interest, hypothesis, these account in a general way for the growth into a cosmos of the relative chaos with which the mind began.

But on the side of the object, so to call it roughly, our view is much less satisfactory. Of which of our many objects are we to believe that it truly *was* there and at work before the human mind began? Time, space, kind, number, serial order, cause, consciousness, are hard things not to objectify--even transcendental idealism

leaves them standing as 'empirically real.' Substance, matter, force, fall down more easily before criticism, and secondary qualities make almost no resistance at all. Nevertheless, when we survey the field of speculation, from Scholasticism through Kantism to Spencerism, we find an ever-recurring tendency to convert the pre-human into a merely logical object, an unknowable *ding-an-sich*, that but starts the process, or a vague *materia prima* that but receives our forms.[135]

The reasons for this are not so much logical as they are material. We can postulate an extra-mental *that* freely enough (though some idealists have denied us the privilege), but when we have done so, the *what* of it is hard to determine satisfactorily, because of the oppositions and entanglements of the variously proposed *whats* with one another and with the history of the human mind. The literature of speculative cosmology bears witness to this difficulty. Humanism suffers from it no more than any other philosophy suffers, but it makes all our cosmogonic theories so unsatisfactory that some thinkers seek relief in the denial of any primal dualism. Absolute Thought or 'pure experience' is postulated, and endowed with attributes calculated to justify the belief that it may 'run itself.' Both these truth-claiming hypotheses are non-dualistic in the old mind-and-matter sense; but the one is monistic and the other pluralistic as to the world process itself. Some humanists are non-dualists of this sort--I myself am one *und zwar* of the pluralistic brand. But doubtless dualistic humanists also exist, as well as non-dualistic ones of the monistic wing.

Mr. Joseph pins these general philosophic difficulties on humanism alone, or possibly on me alone. My article spoke vaguely of a 'most chaotic pure experience' coming first, and building up the mind.[136] But how can two structureless things interact so as to produce a structure? my critic triumphantly asks. Of course they can't, as purely so-named entities. We must make additional hypotheses. We must beg a minimum of structure for them. The *kind* of minimum that *might* have tended to increase towards what we now find actually developed is the philosophical desideratum here. The question is that of the most materially satisfactory hypothesis. Mr. Joseph handles it by formal logic purely, as if he had no acquaintance with the logic of hypothesis at all.

Mr. Joseph again is much bewildered as to what a humanist can mean when he uses the word knowledge. He tries to convict me[137] of vaguely identifying it with any kind of good. Knowledge is a difficult thing to define briefly, and Mr. Joseph shows his own constructive hand here even less than in the rest of his article. I have myself put forth on several occasions a radically pragmatist account of knowledge,[138] the existence of which account my critic probably does not know of--so perhaps I had better not say anything about knowledge until he reads and attacks that. I will say, however, that whatever the relation called knowing may itself prove to consist in, I can think of no conceivable kind of *object* which may not become an object of knowledge on humanistic principles as well as on the principles of any other philosophy.[139]

I confess that I am pretty steadily hampered by the habit, on the part of humanism's critics, of assuming that they have truer ideas than mine of truth and knowledge, the nature of which I must know of and can not need to have re-defined. I have consequently to reconstruct these ideas in order to carry on the discussion (I have e.g. had to do so in some parts of this article) and I thereby expose myself to charges of caricature. In one part of Mr. Joseph's attack, however, I rejoice that we are free from this embarrassment. It is an important point and covers probably a genuine difficulty, so I take it up last.

When, following Schiller and Dewey, I define the true as that which gives the maximal combination of satisfactions, and say that satisfaction is a many-dimensional term that can be realized in various ways, Mr. Joseph replies, rightly enough, that the chief satisfaction of a rational creature must always be his thought that what he believes is *true*, whether the truth brings him the satisfaction of collateral profits or not. This would seem, however, to make of truth the prior concept, and to relegate satisfaction to a secondary place.

Again, if to be satisfactory is what is meant by being true, *whose* satisfactions, and *which* of his satisfactions, are to count? Discriminations notoriously have to be made; and the upshot is that only rational candidates and intellectual satisfactions stand the test. We are then driven to a purely theoretic notion of truth, and get out of the pragmatic atmosphere altogether. And with this Mr. Joseph leaves us--truth is truth, and there is an end of

the matter. But he makes a very pretty show of convicting me of self-stultification in according to our purely theoretic satisfactions any place in the humanistic scheme. They crowd the collateral satisfactions out of house and home, he thinks, and pragmatism has to go into bankruptcy if she recognizes them at all.

There is no room for disagreement about the facts here; but the destructive force of the reasoning disappears as soon as we talk concretely instead of abstractly, and ask, in our quality of good pragmatists, just what the famous theoretic needs are known as and in what the intellectual satisfactions consist. Mr. Joseph, faithful to the habits of his party, makes no attempt at characterizing them, but assumes that their nature is self-evident to all.

Are they not all mere matters of *consistency*--and emphatically *not* of consistency between an Absolute Reality and the mind's copies of it, but of actually felt consistency among judgments, objects, and manners of reacting, in the mind? And are not both our need of such consistency and our pleasure in it conceivable as outcomes of the natural fact that we are beings that develop mental *habits*--habit itself proving adaptively beneficial in an environment where the same objects, or the same kinds of objects, recur and follow 'law'? If this were so, what would have come first would have been the collateral profits of habit, and the theoretic life would have grown up in aid of these. In point of fact this seems to have been the probable case. At life's origin, any present perception may have been 'true'--if such a word could then be applicable. Later, when reactions became organized, the reactions became 'true' whenever expectation was fulfilled by them. Otherwise they were 'false' or 'mistaken' reactions. But the same class of objects needs the same kind of reaction, so the impulse to react consistently must gradually have been established, with a disappointment felt whenever the results frustrated expectation. Here is a perfectly plausible germ for all our higher consistencies. Nowadays, if an object claims from us a reaction of the kind habitually accorded only to the opposite class of objects, our mental machinery refuses to run smoothly. The situation is intellectually unsatisfactory. To gain relief we seek either to preserve the reaction by re-interpreting the object, or, leaving the object as it is, we react in a way contrary to the way claimed of us. Neither solution is easy. Such a situation might be that of Mr. Joseph, with me claiming assent to humanism from him. He can not apperceive it so as to permit him to gratify my claim; but there is enough appeal in the claim to induce him to write a whole article in justification of his refusal. If he should assent to humanism, on the other hand, that would drag after it an unwelcome, yea incredible, alteration of his previous mental beliefs. Whichever alternative he might adopt, however, a new equilibrium of intellectual consistency would in the end be reached. He would feel, whichever way he decided, that he was now thinking truly. But if, with his old habits unaltered, he should simply add to them the new one of advocating humanism quietly or noisily, his mind would be rent into two systems, each of which would accuse the other of falsehood. The resultant situation, being profoundly unsatisfactory, would also be instable.

Theoretic truth is thus no relation between our mind and archetypal reality. It falls *within* the mind, being the accord of some of its processes and objects with other processes and objects--'accord' consisting here in well-definable relations. So long as the satisfaction of feeling such an accord is denied us, whatever collateral profits may seem to inure from what we believe in are but as dust in the balance--provided always that we are highly organized intellectually, which the majority of us are not. The amount of accord which satisfies most men and women is merely the absence of violent clash between their usual thoughts and statements and the limited sphere of sense-perceptions in which their lives are cast. The theoretic truth that most of us think we 'ought' to attain to is thus the possession of a set of predicates that do not contradict their subjects. We preserve it as often as not by leaving other predicates and subjects out.

In some men theory is a passion, just as music is in others. The form of inner consistency is pursued far beyond the line at which collateral profits stop. Such men systematize and classify and schematize and make synoptical tables and invent ideal objects for the pure love of unifying. Too often the results, glowing with 'truth' for the inventors, seem pathetically personal and artificial to bystanders. Which is as much as to say that the purely theoretic criterion of truth can leave us in the lurch as easily as any other criterion.

I think that if Mr. Joseph will but consider all these things a little more concretely, he may find that the humanistic scheme and the notion of theoretic truth fall into line consistently enough to yield him also intellectual satisfaction.

## FOOTNOTES:

[129] [Reprinted without change from *Mind*, N. S., vol. XIV, No. 54, April, 1905, pp. 190-198. Pages 245-247, and pp. 261-265, have also been reprinted in *The Meaning of Truth*, pp. 54-57, and pp. 97-100. The present essay is referred to above, p. 203. ED.]

[130] ['Humanism and Truth' first appeared in *Mind*, N. S., vol. XIII, No. 52, October, 1904. It is reprinted in *The Meaning of Truth*, pp. 51-101. Cf. this article *passim*. Mr. H. W. B. Joseph's criticism, entitled "Professor James on 'Humanism and Truth,'" appeared in *Mind*, N. S., vol. XIV, No. 53, January, 1905. ED.]

[131] *Op. cit.*, p. 37.

[132] [Cf. above, pp. 241-243.]

[133] *Op. cit.*, p. 32.

[134] [This] Mr. Joseph deals with (though in much too pettifogging and logic-chopping a way) on pp. 33-34 of his article.

[135] Compare some elaborate articles by M. Le Roy and M. Wilbois in the *Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*, vols. VIII, IX, and X, [1900, 1901, and 1902.]

[136] [Cf. *The Meaning of Truth*, p. 64.]

[137] [Joseph: *op. cit.*, p. 36.]

[138] Most recently in two articles, "Does 'Consciousness' Exist?" and "A World of Pure Experience." [See above, pp. 1-91.]

[139] For a recent attempt, effective on the whole, at squaring humanism with knowing, I may refer to Prof. Woodbridge's very able address at the Saint Louis Congress, "The Field of Logic," printed in *Science*, N. Y., November 4, 1904.

## XII

## ABSOLUTISM AND EMPIRICISM[140]

No seeker of truth can fail to rejoice at the terre-à-terre sort of discussion of the issues between Empiricism and Transcendentalism (or, as the champions of the latter would probably prefer to say, between Irrationalism and Rationalism) that seems to have begun in *Mind*. [141] It would seem as if, over concrete examples like Mr. J. S. Haldane's, both parties ought inevitably to come to a better understanding. As a reader with a strong bias towards Irrationalism, I have studied his article [142] with the liveliest admiration of its temper and its painstaking effort to be clear. But the cases discussed failed to satisfy me, and I was at first tempted to write a Note animadverting upon them in detail. The growth of the limb, the sea's contour, the vicarious functioning of the nerve-centre, the digitalis curing the heart, are unfortunately *not* cases where we can *see* any *through-and-through* conditioning of the parts by the whole. They are all cases of reciprocity where subjects, supposed independently to exist, acquire certain attributes through their relations to other subjects. That they also *exist* through similar relations is only an ideal supposition, not verified to our understanding in these or