

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

any other concrete cases whatsoever.

If, however, one were to urge this solemnly, Mr. Haldane's friends could easily reply that he only gave us such examples on account of the hardness of our hearts. He knew full well their imperfection, but he hoped that to those who would not spontaneously ascend to the Notion of the Totality, these cases might prove a spur and suggest and symbolize something better than themselves. No particular case that can be brought forward is a real concrete. They are all abstractions from the Whole, and of course the "through-and-through" character can not be found in them. Each of them still contains among its elements what we call *things*, grammatical subjects, forming a sort of residual *caput mortuum* of Existence after all the relations that figure in the examples have been told off. On this "existence," thinks popular philosophy, things may live on, like the winter bears on their own fat, never entering relations at all, or, if entering them, entering an entirely different set of them from those treated of in Mr. Haldane's examples. Thus *if* the digitalis were to weaken instead of strengthening the heart, and to produce death (as sometimes happens), it would determine itself, through determining the organism, to the function of "kill" instead of that of "cure." The function and relation seem adventitious, depending on what kind of a heart the digitalis gets hold of, the digitalis and the heart being facts external and, so to speak, accidental to each other. But this popular view, Mr. Haldane's friends will continue, is an illusion. What seems to us the "existence" of digitalis and heart outside of the relations of killing or curing, is but a function in a wider system of relations, of which, *pro hac vice*, we take no account. The larger system determines the *existence* just as absolutely as the system "kill," or the system "cure," determined the *function* of the digitalis. Ascend to the absolute system, instead of biding with these relative and partial ones, and you shall see that the law of through-and-throughness must and does obtain.

Of course, this argument is entirely reasonable, and debars us completely from chopping logic about the concrete examples Mr. Haldane has chosen. It is not his fault if his categories are so fine an instrument that nothing but the sum total of things can be taken to show us the manner of their use. It is simply our misfortune that he has not the sum total of things to show it by. Let us fall back from all concrete attempts and see what we can do with his notion of through-and-throughness, avowedly taken *in abstracto*. In abstract systems the "through-and-through" Ideal is realized on every hand. In any system, as such, the members are only *members* in the system. Abolish the system and you abolish its members, for you have conceived them through no other property than the abstract one of membership. Neither rightness nor leftness, except through bi-laterality. Neither mortgager nor mortgagee, except through mortgage. The logic of these cases is this:--*If* A, then B; but *if* B, then A: wherefore *if* either, Both; and if not Both, Nothing.

It costs nothing, not even a mental effort, to admit that the absolute totality of things *may* be organized exactly after the pattern of one of these "through-and-through" abstractions. In fact, it is the pleasantest and freest of mental movements. Husband makes, and is made by, wife, through marriage; one makes other, by being itself other; everything self-created through its opposite--you go round like a squirrel in a cage. But if you stop and reflect upon what you are about, you lay bare the exact point at issue between common sense and the "through-and-through" school.

What, in fact, is the logic of these abstract systems? It is, as we said above: If any Member, then the Whole System; if not the Whole System, then Nothing. But how can Logic possibly do anything more with these two hypotheses than combine them into the single disjunctive proposition--"Either this Whole System, just as it stands, or Nothing at all." Is not that disjunction the ultimate word of Logic in the matter, and can any disjunction, as such, resolve *itself*? It may be that Mr. Haldane sees how one horn, the concept of the Whole System, carries real existence with it. But if he has been as unsuccessful as I in assimilating the Hegelian re-editions of the Anselmian proof,[143] he will have to say that though Logic may determine *what* the system must be, *if* it is, something else than Logic must tell us *that* it is. Mr. Haldane in this case would probably consciously, or unconsciously, make an appeal to Fact: the disjunction *is* decided, since nobody can dispute that now, as a matter of fact, *something*, and not nothing, *is*. We must *therefore*, he would probably say, go on to admit the Whole System in the desiderated sense. Is not then the validity of the Anselmian proof the nucleus of the whole question between Logic and Fact? Ought not the efforts of Mr. Haldane and his

friends to be principally devoted to its elucidation? Is it not the real door of separation between Empiricism and Rationalism? And if the Rationalists leave that door for a moment off its hinges, can any power keep that abstract, opaque, unmediated, external, irrational, and irresponsible monster, known to the vulgar as bare Fact, from getting in and contaminating the whole sanctuary with his presence? Can anything prevent Faust from changing "Am Anfang war das Wort" into "Am Anfang war die That?"

Nothing in earth or heaven. Only the Anselmian proof can keep Fact out of philosophy. The question, "Shall Fact be recognized as an ultimate principle?" is the whole issue between the Rationalists and the Empiricism of vulgar thought.

Of course, if so recognized, Fact sets a limit to the "through-and-through" character of the world's rationality. That rationality might then mediate between all the members of our conception of the world, but not between the conception itself and reality. Reality would have to be given, not by Reason, but by Fact. Fact holds out blankly, brutally and blindly, against that universal deliquescence of everything into logical relations which the Absolutist Logic demands, and it is the only thing that does hold out. Hence the ire of the Absolutist Logic--hence its non-recognition, its 'cutting' of Fact.

The reasons it gives for the 'cutting' are that Fact is speechless, a mere word for the negation of thought, a vacuous unknowability, a dog-in-the-manger, in truth, which having no rights of its own, can find nothing else to do than to keep its betters out of theirs.

There are two points involved here: first the claim that certain things have rights that are absolute, ubiquitous and all pervasive, and in regard to which nothing else can possibly exist in its *own* right; and second that anything that denies *this* assertion is *pure* negativity with no positive context whatsoever.

Take the latter point first. Is it true that what is negative in one way is thereby convicted of incapacity to be positive in any other way? The word "Fact" is like the word "Accident," like the word "Absolute" itself. They all have their negative connotation. In truth, their whole connotation is negative and relative. All it says is that, whatever the thing may be that is denoted by the words, *other* things do not control it. Where fact, where accident is, they must be silent, it alone can speak. But that does not prevent its speaking as loudly as you please, in its own tongue. It may have an inward life, self-transparent and active in the maximum degree. An indeterminate future volition on my part, for example, would be a strict accident as far as my present self is concerned. But that could not prevent it, *in the moment in which it occurred*, from being possibly the most intensely living and luminous experience I ever had. Its quality of being a brute fact *ab extra* says nothing whatever as to its inwardness. It simply says to *outsiders*: 'Hands off!'

And this brings us back to the first point of the Absolutist indictment of Fact. Is that point really anything more than a fantastic dislike to letting *anything* say 'Hands off'? What else explains the contempt the Absolutist authors exhibit for a freedom defined simply on its "negative" side, as freedom "from," etc.? What else prompts them to deride such freedom? But, dislike for dislike, who shall decide? Why is not their dislike at having me "from" them, entirely on a par with mine at having them "through" me?

I know very well that in talking of dislikes to those who never mention them, I am doing a very coarse thing, and making a sort of intellectual Orson of myself. But, for the life of me, I can not help it, because I feel sure that likes and dislikes *must* be among the ultimate factors of their philosophy as well as of mine. Would they but admit it! How sweetly we then could hold converse together! There is something finite about us both, as we now stand. We do not know the Absolute Whole *yet*. *Part* of it is still negative to us. Among the *whats* of it still stalks a mob of opaque *thats*, without which we cannot think. But just as I admit that this is all possibly provisional, that even the Anselmian proof may come out all right, and creation *may* be a rational system through-and-through, why might they not also admit that it may all be otherwise, and that the shadow, the opacity, the negativity, the "from"-ness, the plurality that is ultimate, *may* never be wholly driven from the scene. We should both then be avowedly making hypotheses, playing with Ideals. Ah! Why is the notion of

hypothesis so abhorrent to the Hegelian mind?

And once down on our common level of hypothesis, we might then admit scepticism, since the Whole is not yet revealed, to be the soundest *logical* position. But since we are in the main not sceptics, we might go on and frankly confess to each other the motives for our several faiths. I frankly confess mine--I can not but think that at bottom they are of an æsthetic and not of a logical sort. The "through-and-through" universe seems to suffocate me with its infallible impeccable all-pervasiveness. Its necessity, with no possibilities; its relations, with no subjects, make me feel as if I had entered into a contract with no reserved rights, or rather as if I had to live in a large seaside boarding-house with no private bed-room in which I might take refuge from the society of the place. I am distinctly aware, moreover, that the old quarrel of sinner and pharisee has something to do with the matter. Certainly, to my personal knowledge, all Hegelians are not prigs, but I somehow feel as if all prigs ought to end, if developed, by becoming Hegelians. There is a story of two clergymen asked by mistake to conduct the same funeral. One came first and had got no farther than "I am the Resurrection and the Life," when the other entered. "I am the Resurrection and the Life," cried the latter. The "through-and-through" philosophy, as it actually exists, reminds many of us of that clergyman. It seems too buttoned-up and white-chokered and clean-shaven a thing to speak for the vast slow-breathing unconscious Kosmos with its dread abysses and its unknown tides. The "freedom" we want to see there is not the freedom, with a string tied to its leg and warranted not to fly away, of that philosophy. "Let it fly away," we say, "from us! What then?"

Again, I know I am exhibiting my mental grossness. But again, *Ich kann nicht anders*. I show my feelings; why *will* they not show theirs? I know they *have* a personal feeling about the through-and-through universe, which is entirely different from mine, and which I should very likely be much the better for gaining if they would only show me how. Their persistence in telling me that feeling has nothing to do with the question, that it is a pure matter of absolute reason, keeps me for ever out of the pale. Still seeing a *that* in things which Logic does not expel, the most I can do is to *aspire* to the expulsion. At present I do not even aspire. Aspiration is a feeling. What can kindle feeling but the example of feeling? And if the Hegelians *will* refuse to set an example, what can they expect the rest of us to do? To speak more seriously, the one *fundamental* quarrel Empiricism has with Absolutism is over this repudiation by Absolutism of the personal and æsthetic factor in the construction of philosophy. That we all of us have feelings, Empiricism feels quite sure. That they may be as prophetic and anticipatory of truth as anything else we have, and some of them more so than others, can not possibly be denied. But what hope is there of squaring and settling opinions unless Absolutism will hold parley on this common ground; and will admit that all philosophies are hypotheses, to which all our faculties, emotional as well as logical, help us, and the truest of which will at the final integration of things be found in possession of the men whose faculties on the whole had the best divining power?

FOOTNOTES:

[140] [Reprinted from *Mind*, vol. IX, No. 34, April, 1884.]

[141] [In 1884.]

[142] ["Life and Mechanism," *Mind*, vol. IX, 1884.]

[143] [Cf. P. Janet and G. Séailles: *History of the Problems of Philosophy*, trans. by Monahan, vol. II, pp. 275-278; 305-307. ED.]

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Transcriber's note:

The following changes were made to the text.

Page 98: Yet when so broken it is less consistent then ever. Changed to Yet when so broken it is less consistent than ever.

Page 180: some comtemptibly small process on which success depends. Changed to some contemptibly small process on which success depends.

Note 93: XXV aud XXVI Changed to XXV and XXVI

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Note 109: either as a syuonym for 'radical empiricism' Changed to either as a synonym for 'radical empiricism'

Note 109: For other discussions of 'humauism,' Changed to For other discussions of 'humanism,'

Note 130: 'Humanism and Truth' first appeared iu Changed to 'Humanism and Truth' first appeared in

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