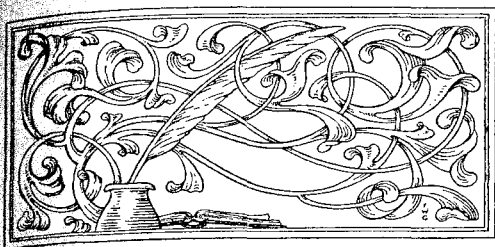


# Pseudo-Humanism

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## PSEUDO-HUMANISM



ALL philosophers are divided by William James into two types, which he calls respectively the "tender-minded" and the "tough-minded." The "tender-minded" are "rationalistic, intellectualistic, idealistic, optimistic, religious, free-willist, monistic, dogmatical." The "tough-minded" are "empiricist, sensationalistic, materialistic, pessimistic, irreligious, fatalistic, pluralistic, sceptical." "Traditionally, German philosophy was on the whole 'tender-minded,' British philosophy was on the whole 'tough-minded.'" <sup>1</sup> If we accept this division, there may reasonably seem to us an inconsistency in the attitude of some current British writers who have endeavored to show the

<sup>1</sup> Russell, *Philosophical Essays*, 128.

philosophical principles underlying the war and have complained of what, under James' distinction, would be the latter day *toughening* of the Teuton mind.

The distinction, however, can hardly be claimed to be final and definite, because each of the adjectives in James' statement represents a so-called system of philosophy, and nearly every philosopher has attempted to justify his work by offering its results as a reconciliation of two or more opposing systems. James himself is an illustration, as he claims that pragmatism satisfies the demands of each of the types of mind which he distinguishes. It would seem that by this time all the historical problems should have been thoroughly reconciled, and the reason why this is not so is contained in the comment made by a modern writer that "explicit controversy is almost always fruitless in philosophy, owing to the fact that no two philosophers ever understand one another." There is undoubtedly a further and fundamental reason which is that many of the problems are insoluble—but of this more anon.

When we consider these futile efforts at reconciliation and the apparently inevitable liability to misunderstanding, it is not to be wondered that we hesitate to accept another's classification and refuse to be

<sup>1</sup> Russell, *Scientific Method*, 19.

driven to choose between the alternatives "tender-minded" and "tough-minded." Probably many of us, after candid self analysis, would conclude that every state of mind suggested by James' adjectives is experienced at different times in varying degrees, and therefore, with a sense of pride in our superior personal expression of reality, we can appreciate the warning, so clearly given by L. P. Jacks<sup>1</sup> to philosophers, that he, the philosopher, must ever remember that his mind, himself, his system and every other system of philosophy, are all a part of reality.

In refusing to be labeled, we are certainly more *real* than the man who is exclusively dogmatical, or exclusively religious, or exclusively sceptical.

If this attitude of protest against the interminable bewilderment resulting from philosophical discussion is to be ascribed to the tough-mind bacillus, then the Teuton is not the only one infected, for in the popularity of pragmatism and of Bergson which has extended far outside of academic circles, as well as that of Nietzsche's notion of liberty and worship of force, a group of hardy thinkers finds an indication that the public has indolently accepted the first opportunity to drift out on a limitless but nebulous sea of exoteric imagination, where

<sup>1</sup>Jacks, *The Alchemy of Thought*.

the rhythmic rocking of the waves of instinct and intuition lull all hard thinking to sleep. Of true Cassandra quality may be the voice of warning that this sea also is subject to disastrous storms.

The fact remains that the anti-intellectualistic movement is a present-day phenomenon. It represents a claim for a more elastic universe in the place of what James termed the "block universe" of classical tradition, — the tidy, little, neat, efficient, and snug universe which could be taken to pieces, measured, counted, and restored again. It seeks a world of freedom and expansion, of adventure and romance, of change and novelty, of individual initiative, power and responsibility, replete with innumerable "phases of emotional experience," a world which can be overcome and in which the dream of omnipotence can be enjoyed without disturbance. It repudiates the rigorous determinism of both the materialistic and idealistic schools, a static world in which all is given, and insists that there be substituted a practical, hopeful, organic world, alive with uncertainty and competition and change, a dynamic, pushing, stirring, surging, enduring flux. In the effervescence of what it pleases to term "new vitalism," it exalts action over contemplation, searches for the concrete rather than the abstract, accepts generalizations in the place of definitions,

assumes to reject the rational, to supplant reason and logic with intuition, to compel will to displace the intellect, and quite consistently prefers the arrogance and efficiency of man to the insubstantial, monotonous, mediæval Absolute.

All this is doubtless a part of the moving picture of humanity. The immediate scene may contain some odd light effects, but its apparent novelty consists in a different arrangement of the same old properties which have appeared again and again in the history of speculative thought. Doubtless, however, the change is welcome if it serves to rejuvenate philosophy, and more surely if that gregarious mass of stale human opinions which is called the "popular mind" is thereby induced to seek a course which leads to a larger vision of truth. But alas, the popular mind, controlled by its own inertia, soon separates from the true current, and with its original impulsion forms for a time a bubbling, gurgling eddy of its own, with a vacuous center around which revolves an ever increasing accumulation of foamy sentimentality.

One of these eddies which exists to-day may well be termed the "humanistic" eddy. Confounded and stampeded by our realization that the immeasurable labor expended for centuries in the search for ultimate reality has been unavailing, we rush toward

something equally elusive and adopt as our standard of all values what we call the "element of human interest." While the partial truth involved may be important, we unrestrainedly apply the test not only in our philosophy, but everywhere, to everything, and then babble and chortle about it. We announce with ostentation that we know nothing about art or music; then at once we proceed to pass judgment intuitively, insisting that we are qualified critics because we are human. In literature and the drama, the style may be impossible, the plot atrocious, the characters wooden and brainless, and the action cataleptic, but if the product contains sufficient evidence of the barbaric substratum of human nature, we laud its "realism" and rant about its "human interest!" We encounter verse containing so many metrical forms, crowded lawlessly together, and producing such a spasmodic succession of discontinuities, that even the most hypothetical ether must solidify in the attempt to give it rhythmic quality; yet if we find there a vague extravagant expression of generic human emotions, or a pretendedly naïve delight in the morbid charm of the sordid, salacious abnormalities of life—the "phosphorescent slime" of decadency—we admire its "spontaneity" and welcome it as "humanistic poetry."

We would condemn as criminally foolish

the hydraulic engineer, who from some impulse of sentiment should base his operations exclusively on the principle of the fluidity or relative incompressibility of liquids, entirely ignoring the law of gravitation; yet, impelled by our unverified intuitions, we submit ourselves for experiment to any theory of social or moral reform which our "feelings" designate "humanistic," without determining whether or not the theory has taken into consideration essential fundamental factors which might otherwise render its operation nugatory or disastrous.

In our exaggerated worship of the human, we have lost our sense of proportion. The lack of cosmic perspective manifestly is inevitable. As we attempt to retrace the course of this endless stream called life or consciousness, or believe that we can see distant landmarks in the direction whither it is tending, we are unable to comprehend the infinite world of reality which has always been on either side of the stream as well as behind and before it; we are reluctant to admit that what we see is a superficial picture taken as we, among the countless atoms, are poised momentarily on the surface. And so we tend to restrict our vision to the phenomena which cling to the thin fringe of this tiny planet, and forget that so far as we can apprehend, they all are expressions only of an indefinable and incomprehensible some-



thing which we sometimes name energy and which apparently pervades the universe under definite laws. Unmindful that these life phenomena would be transformed beyond recognition by a relatively minute modification in the amount of that energy received from the sun, we fix no limits to man's ambitions or his potentialities, and insist that Truth itself become humanized by making the standard of truth what we estimate as human success.

We catch a glimpse of a real truth and then proceed to generalize all our experience on the basis of what we have momentarily seen, ignoring the fact that our vision has been imperfect and infinitesimal. In this manner we have unduly emphasized now one and now the other of the elements of consciousness itself. Our glimpse of truth may have been obtained through the imaginative faculties—through insight or intuition if you will—but it has no guaranty of reality until reason has compared, tested, and harmonized it with other visions already verified. Knowledge has been said to consist of<sup>1</sup> "the correct apprehension of facts and the correct inferences as to the relations between them." This certainly demands the best use of all our faculties, and yet the traditional errors, existing dogmas, current fallacies, delusions, and false standards of

<sup>1</sup> Sumner, *Folkways*, 32.

any age not only demonstrate the infantile character of our knowledge, but reflect directly the disproportionate use of our faculties. To affirm that we are the victims of the excessive and undisciplined use of the imagination may be a gratuitous judgment, but the assertion is not unwarranted that the history of human thought is the record of the reactions between the mystical, imaginative, emotional, and intuitional attitude of mind on the one hand, and the analytical, intellectual, dispassionate, scientific attitude on the other hand. This would be my criterion, if any, for distinguishing between the tough and tender minded.

Pythagoras has been referred to as an illustration of a curious mixture of these two tendencies;<sup>1</sup> the scientific attitude led him to his propositions on right-angled triangles; his intuition revealed to him that it is wicked to eat beans. His followers divided into two sects, the devotees of right-angled triangles and the abominators of beans. We identify ourselves in spirit with the latter sect when we become impassioned over the current significance of the fad-word "humanistic," forgetting that our knowledge in the sciences, our attainment of true results in the physical world, our control over natural forces, have all been accompanied by a corresponding elimina-

<sup>1</sup>*Scientific Method*, 19, 237, 27 and 242.

tion of what we term the "human interest," and that our much vaunted "power over nature" is not really mastery but is our conformity and adaptation to natural laws. Science, philosophy, and religion originally were one. The primitive mythological or animistic universe was the creation of the imagination and will. Early physics was full of ethical influences. One of its purposes was to show that the earth is good and worthy of admiration. The modern physicist does not seek to arrive at a predetermined or an agreeable result. His sole concern is to find facts—a *true* result. If required to demonstrate the ethical importance of his ions and electrons, his newest revolutionary work would cease. If the biologist were compelled to establish the ethical character and utility of all his plants and animals, he would close his laboratory. Astronomy once was studied because of the belief in astrology and the direct influence of the movements of the planets and comets upon the lives of human beings. Chemistry was preceded by the ultra-pragmatic alchemy. It is interesting and amusing to speculate about the number, and it is easy to visualize the type, of persons who, when these earlier beliefs decayed, abandoned astronomy and chemistry because these studies were, forsooth, found lacking in "human interest."

This is not intended as a diatribe against ethics or religion, although I am willing to confess that I belong probably in the class known as ethical skeptics. It is a commonplace that happiness is least often achieved by those who make it a definite end. *Goodness*, likewise, may be essentially a by-product rather than an objective in the process of seeking to know the truth. Our moral and religious beliefs are to a large extent inbred, an accumulated momentum of the past; they are ancestral, historical, institutional, standardized and therefore static. To the extent that they represent the preponderance of evidence of human experience, and have endured and can continue to endure the tests of verification, they are entitled to respect, but because all experience and all tests are based upon particular relationships which are infinitely various, ethical and religious judgments necessarily become the ultimate solitary affair of the individual. Only then do they become dynamic. If developed by the individual disproportionately, either on the mystical or analytical side, they are sure to become unsymmetrical and unserviceable. It is because this proportion is so infinitely variable that no two persons can arrive at a complete agreement in their consideration. A final ethical or religious conclusion is a generalization which requires an illimitable

understanding. An American statistical genius has calculated that nobody knows more than seven billionths of one per cent about anything. Allowing a reasonable margin for error in computation, it still remains impossible to conceive that our fractional interests are sufficiently co-extensive to warrant us in the attempt to establish a rigid and comprehensive system of ethics or religion for each other, and still less for those who are to follow us.

What is reality? What is the plan or purpose of the universe? Is there any unity of plan or purpose? If so, what is the criterion of progress? What is right and what wrong? What goodness and what badness? These are ultimate questions, the solution of which clearly has been, and, so far as we can see, always will be beyond human powers, but no less clearly does it appear that the reaction of the individual in relation to ultimate questions, the widening of the range of vision of reality to which he responds, is what determines those qualities in him which we consider to be the test of superiority over the primitive savage and summarize in the words, character and personality. But the reaction and the resultant qualities, while they involve the entire individual, are dependent on knowledge—the correct apprehension of facts and the correct inferences as to their relations—by whatever

method these facts and inferences are acquired. Beliefs can only become potent and compelling when honestly endorsed by the intellect. Intellectual emotion is not a meaningless term to those who have experienced it. There is an imperative spontaneity of insight higher than that of instinct.

Knowledge then becomes a means to an end, although we cannot discern what the end may be, and if we recognize that man's noblest thoughts, his loftiest ideals, his powers of renunciation, his highest aspirations, all are products of the life process of which he is a part, may not what is called "moral consciousness" be described (though necessarily vaguely) as the unification of all the elements of consciousness in an individual which enables him to exercise a certain judgment of direction relative to the seething segment of reality in which he finds himself. But the judgment is based no less on intellectual observation than on intuitional illumination. Both are required for the achievement of new knowledge. In order to apprehend facts correctly, there must be combined with the imaginative glow a cool, unbiased, unemotional observation and a willingness to accept without question the equal reality of what may seem to be either trivial or important. To make correct inferences from these facts it is necessary

that beliefs, feelings and conclusions be given logical form and expression.

The "humanism" of to-day ignores the subjective law of gravitation and dissipates itself through its own fluidity. It is the reflection of an unbalanced philosophy which endeavors to explain change and continuity in terms of the human only. In its effort to avoid baffling precedents, the popular contemporaneous form of this philosophy succeeds only in adding to the complexity of the explanation by introducing a superfluous unknown quantity "X," the "vital impulse," which is opposed to another unknown quantity "Y," the constraining force of inert matter. Each represents a movement, one climbing, the other falling. The universe is the clash and conflict of the two opposite motions. As a poetic picture this is conceded to be a legitimate effort when painted artistically, but as an explanation it results in the hopeless predicament of an algebraic student attempting to solve by a single equation a problem containing more than one unknown quantity. Yet these philosophers proudly announce that  $X + Y = \text{the universe}$ ; then proceed to subtract equals from equals, divide equals by equals, and so on, triumphantly pointing to the result as a true equation. Furthermore, with subtle and seductive sophistry, they seek to make their pronouncements im-

pregnable by a summary condemnation of the intellect, arbitrarily associating it with the perverse "Y," thus enabling themselves to assert that any criticism of their doctrines as self contradictory or undemonstrable is merely a foolish encounter with the irresistible "X" and proves that the critic is deluded and misguided. For them action, as opposed to contemplation, has become the distinctive quality of life.

The common interpretation of this kind of philosophy has resulted in an emotional muddle. Having dimly ascertained the endless flux and relativity of all things, and belatedly learning that the underlying principles of science are temporary hypotheses only, the "humanist" of to-day announces that there is nothing remaining to life but to *feel* and *expand*. He concludes with Rousseau that "The man who thinks is a depraved animal" and dismisses the intellect as "meddlesome." He therefore seeks to rid himself of all distinctions and limitations established by the intellect, in order to allow the human instincts to indulge in freedom untrammelled. Any extravagance or absurdity justifies itself by its very incomprehensibility. Liberty for him is undefined and tempered only by sympathy which in turn is indefinable but indiscriminate. He is obsessed by the "joy of creation," and easily falls into the fallacy of conceiving



that since a true creation must be unique, anything produced by him different from that with which he is conversant is evidence of originality and also a momentous addition to the landmarks of racial progress with which he so complacently identifies himself. So our neo-fiat experts proceed to "violate law laboriously,"—to exhibit their "tricks of singularity." If the greater part of those who seek with such utilitarian conceit to endow mankind with the results of their creative genius, would apply their unconstrained vigor to a thorough investigation of the existing evidence of man's constructive ability, they might share the cynical conclusions of the author of Ecclesiastes, but they would at least free from obstruction the way of the "saving remnant," as well as relieve the rest of us from much tedious searching after what is genuine.

The fallacy, however, is urged persistently. It is inferred that our prehistoric ancestors, from the very nature of their position at the beginnings of experience, lived in a world of novelty and invention, and possessed in its purest essence the essential power of originality which has subsequently become dulled by its alloy with the insidious intellect. We are asked, therefore, to overlook the fact that the premises and conclusions as to the evolutionary process are the

work of the intellect and to join rapturously in the worship of the primitive. Now I would not minimize the value of the quality of *wonder*, the genuinely naïve love of the marvelous and unknown, or the beautiful, unreflecting happiness of the child, but I do assert that the self-conscious man who drowns his understanding in the depths of his imagination, becomes not childlike, but childish. He surrenders the mastery of his personality to the influences of savagery and animism which have survived in his subconscious self as a part of the inheritance from his barbaric ancestry. He is the victim of the centrifugal forces in his nature.

When I read that by a return to the primitive we are to "*revitalize* the world," I am led to reflect that "the promise and potency of all terrestrial life" has been inherent from the beginning, and that the essential factors in its development are two-fold. Like the centripetal and centrifugal forces they must be maintained in equilibrium or disaster results.

In both literature and art the effect of this melodramatic philosophy can be found in the idea of beauty. God forbid that I should attempt to propound any definition of beauty, yet I have the temerity to reassert the doctrine<sup>1</sup> that its vital character is dependent upon two elements which we designate by

<sup>1</sup> See Babbitt, *The New Laokoön*, 217-252.

the words form and expression. The rare combination of the two in equilibrium is what we recognize as the highest art. The exponents of our "Humanism," however, both in art and music, consistently assert that there can be nothing vital in symmetry and proportion and continuity of purpose. Swollen with intuition, they urge the spontaneous and unpremeditated to assert itself without restraint until all traces of form have vanished and, like Alice's Cheshire Cat, nothing remains except expression.

The philosophy of uncontrolled expansion has led to its inevitable results. Every day in our newspapers we are made aware of this appalling fact. With the intellect largely discredited or at best inert, its use has been concentrated in the few who have proceeded to exploit the corresponding predominance of primitive instincts in the many. When these primitive impulses had gathered momentum on a vast scale, the question as to which nations should be allowed to expand unrestrainedly could be solved only by an appeal to force and arms. The immediate consequences are far from humane; they are characteristic of epochs of decadence, or, in more optimistic terms, of periods of transition.

That the primitive naïve may in such a period attain Titanic proportions is disclosed

by a recent "Ethnocentric" declaration<sup>1</sup> of the Apostle of the "independent spiritual life," by which he gives the assurance that in spite of their deep sorrow over the ingratitude and misunderstanding encountered, he and his people will still persist in their effort to overcome the benighted unreceptiveness about them, and will magnanimously impose upon all of humanity the beneficence of their consummate Kultur.

In our own country, in connection with the rational endeavor to demonstrate the irrelevancy and futility of war, we have the phenomenon of emotional expansion which harmlessly vents itself in a display of peace-buttons and in the cultivation of a hope that by some mystic power of induction there will appear on the European continent a "subliminal uprush" of idealistic passion which will accomplish peace for the sole sake of peace itself. It could not be expected that our humanists who scorn analysis should be able to distinguish between the vitality of rationalized belief and the volatility of uncontrolled sentiment.

Our inability—or our failure—to make this distinction, to maintain the equilibrium between the intuitional and intellectual, is demonstrated by the docility with which we indulge so many visionary experiments

<sup>1</sup>*Literary Digest*—March 20, 1915, summarizing essay by Eucken.

incited by effusive appeals to such impressionistic generalizations as "Human Brotherhood" and "Social Service." In our confusion we assume that through intuition one human judgment is as effectual as another, and that a sufficient volume of sentiment will determine the way of truth. So, without analysis we stake the results of our experiments on the investigations of inexperienced boards and committees, too often considering the validity and potency of the conclusions to depend directly upon the magnitude of the committee.

A similar confusion appears in certain popularized forms of idealism which deny altogether the existence of matter, and yet base their claims for sanction upon their pragmatic efficacy in the preservation of physical health and material prosperity.

In education, the emphasis on "versatility" and "initiative" may yet become so pronounced that it will not be preposterous to conclude that the ideal evolutionary product is to be a generation of children who will select their own parents and exchange them at will. Probably none of us would disapprove of any theory of education in so far as it seeks to avoid the standardization of worn and commonplace opinions and the resulting production of a fixed orthodox type, but when a form of egotism which fixes for its standard human success, depen-

dent wholly on the unrestrained development of instinctive impulses, is extolled as the ideal of wisdom, we are entitled to make the comment that unconstrained instincts have been customarily termed sensuality, and that the "humanism" of the Italian Renaissance ended in depravity.

We have had drastic lessons teaching that moral traditions, though narrow and mistaken, are better than moral anarchy. We need still to learn also that our knowledge is subject to unlimited verification and revision; that the *summum bonum* of education is a well developed critical faculty. The absence of this critical faculty in the individual may well explain the evolutionary necessity for an adjustment of the balance between life's interdependent forces by the method of opposing one mass against another. These collective growths are inconceivably slow and tedious, both in formation and action, and therefore the despair often of the historian. The inertia involved may be found, however, in each individual unit. Conscious mental work is everywhere ingeniously avoided if possible. The enormous vogue of pathological fiction, so characteristic of our own day, has been explained<sup>1</sup> as the direct outcome of the desire for relaxation from the labor of analysis on the part of the weary workman, the exhausted scien-

<sup>1</sup>*The New Laokoön*, 207.

tist, the jaded business man, and the poor, tired members of the professions.

In the period of the earlier humanism, the neo-classicists, in their reverence for the truth and authority of the ancients, ignored the law of continuity and change and in their endeavor to assume and rely on permanent formulæ, relaxed into a dull mechanical imitation. The present day humanist, in his reverence for relativity and change, refuses to acknowledge that there can be any law underlying change, and disclaiming all rules and authority, relaxes into an indolent revery of "feeling oneself go." Our own personal experiences are a repetition of this process in miniature. Formerly we found it impossible to *feel* what we supposed we *believed*; now we are unable to *believe* what we seem to *feel*, and we lazily hesitate to undertake the never ending work of reconciliation.

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If the slowly widening comprehensiveness of philosophy must be accompanied by the phenomena of inertia and unbalanced tendencies in group formations, it seems to me that a glad welcome should be given to a realistic reaction which has appeared during the last few years in British and American philosophy. While the first protests against the romanticism and egotism of the current philosophy were made by G. E. Moore, the recognized leader in the com-

paratively small literature of the movement is Bertrand Russell, whose writings combine the exact thinking of a mathematician with subtle, satirical wit, unusual candor, and charm and brilliancy. Mr. Santayana, in writing of Russell, "marks the pure love of truth, the freshness, the vivacity, the self forgetfulness, the logical ardor belonging to that delightful reformer" and says,<sup>1</sup> "It may seem a paradox, but at bottom it is not, that the vitalists should be oppressed, womanish and mystical, and only the intellectualists keen, argumentative, fearless and full of life."

Mr. Russell is essentially a mathematician. Apart from his technical works, his *Philosophical Essays* and *The Problems of Philosophy*, published in 1910 and 1911, can be read with pleasure by any one interested. His last book, *Our Knowledge of the External World as a Field for Scientific Method in Philosophy*, comprises the Lowell Lectures of 1914.

Like most modern philosophers Mr. Russell offers a method and disavows his intention to construct a complete system of philosophy, but unlike the others he fulfils his assurance and consistently denies the possibility of such a system. For this departure from precedent he has been unduly criticized.

<sup>1</sup> Santayana, *Winds of Doctrine*, 112.



This method, which "for want of a better name," he calls<sup>1</sup> "logical atomism" has been rendered possible, he asserts,<sup>2</sup> "by the growth of mathematical logic without which it is practically impossible to manipulate ideas of the requisite abstractness and complexity." It represents, he believes<sup>3</sup> "the same kind of advance as was introduced into physics by Galileo," "the simultaneous acquisition of new facts and logical methods," "the substitution of piece-meal, detailed and verifiable results for large untested generalities recommended only by a certain appeal to imagination." Its temper must<sup>4</sup> "combine the hopefulness, patience and open-mindedness of science with something of the Greek feeling for beauty in the abstract world of logic and for the ultimate intrinsic value in the contemplation of truth.

Logic is the essence of Philosophy;<sup>5</sup> not, however, the "scholastic collection of technical terms and rules of syllogistic inference" taught since the Middle Ages. "The trivial nonsense embodied in this" Aristotelian "tradition," he says, "is still set in examinations, and defended by eminent authorities as an excellent 'propaedeutic,' i.e. a training in those habits of solemn hum-

<sup>1</sup> *Scientific Method*, 4.   <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Preface.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 4 and 239.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, Lecture II.

ing which are so great a help in later life."

The new mathematical logic is difficult and abstract. An adequate summary is impossible here on account of the limitations of this paper and of my own ability as well. It is an elaboration of pure mathematics, and to become intelligible there must be an understanding of various definitions and principles which involve detailed explanation. It is not the work of a single mind, but Mr. Russell has largely contributed to it and has presented the results with much force and cogency. The method is first of all one of analysis, demanding as its *sine qua non* a "necessary mental discipline." "All the facts that we seem to know suffer from vagueness, confusion and complexity,"<sup>1</sup> he says, therefore before the process of analysis can be developed it is necessary "to create an apparatus of precise conceptions as general and as free from complexity as possible." As the analysis continues, each stage grows "more abstract, more refined and more difficult to apprehend" until finally no further progress seems possible. Then what is needed is "some new effort of logical imagination, some glimpse of a possibility never conceived before and then the direct perception that this possibility is realized in the case in question."

<sup>1</sup> *Scientific Method*, 241.

After this hypothetical judgment has been accomplished, the work is "synthetic and comparatively easy."

In his last book Mr. Russell has given an illustration<sup>1</sup> of the application of this method of mathematical logic in the construction of a logical hypothesis which meets the arguments of the idealist and shows "that the account of the world given by common sense and physical science can be interpreted in a way which is logically unobjectionable" and which succeeds in reconciling psychology and physics. Naturally this effort has provoked much critical comment.

The great triumph of mathematical logic, however, is claimed in its application to the old problems of infinity, continuity, space and time, a detailed account of which is contained in this same book.<sup>2</sup> The possibility of infinite collections as logical constructions, if this mathematical demonstration be accepted, robs of their value the Kantian and idealistic doctrines of the unreality or subjectivity of space and time, and restores realism to the place of honor.

But if Mr. Russell is a realist in results, he is fundamentally *a priori* in his methods. His realism is of a Platonic character—a pure idealism if you will—for mathematical

<sup>1</sup> *Scientific Method*, Lecture III.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Lectures V, VI and VII.

logic forces us to the conclusion that all knowledge of truths demands acquaintance with certain fundamental irreducible self-evident principles or concepts which are *a priori* in the sense that they are *logically* independent of experience but yet are elicited and caused by experience.

These fundamental principles or concepts, which he calls "universals," have a reality of their own, external to space, time, and the mind of man. They *subsist* in a supra-sensible, timeless, unchangeable world which he frankly identifies<sup>2</sup> with Plato's world of ideas, though he refuses to pass on into the mystical endeavor to *see* the ideas as we see objects of sense. In this world of universals,<sup>3</sup> *qualities*, the universals represented by adjectives and substantives, have no greater reality than *relations*, the sort of universals represented by verbs and prepositions. Every general proposition involves certain of these universals and transcends the bounds of sensible knowledge which is limited to the particular case.<sup>4</sup> "In logic, no reference to actual particulars is involved."

We have direct "*knowledge by acquaintance*" of universals, as we have of "*sense-data*"; that is, what is immediately known in sensation as distinguished from its cause.

<sup>1</sup> Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy*, 76, 81 and 115.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 142.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

Of material objects on the other hand existing in space and time independently of our subjective perceptions, we can only have "*knowledge by description*" which<sup>1</sup> "is ultimately reducible to knowledge concerning what is known by acquaintance"; that is, a combination of the universal ideas and sensible experience. "The fundamental principle in the analysis of propositions containing descriptions is this: Every proposition which we can understand must be composed wholly of constituents with which we are acquainted."

When we speak of a fact,<sup>2</sup> we mean that a certain thing has a certain quality or that certain things have a certain relation, and the test of the truth of any belief is that there<sup>3</sup> is a *fact corresponding to the belief*. Beliefs therefore depend on minds for their existence, but do not depend on minds for their truth.<sup>4</sup> "What we firmly believe, if it is true, is called *knowledge*"; "what we firmly believe, if it is not true, is called *error*." "What we firmly believe, if it is neither knowledge nor error, and also what we believe hesitatingly, because it is, or is derived from something which has not the highest degree of self evidence, may be called

<sup>1</sup> *The Problems of Philosophy*, 91.

<sup>2</sup> *Scientific Method*, 51.

<sup>3</sup> *The Problems of Philosophy*, 202, and *Philosophical Essays*, "The Nature of Truth," 170-185.

<sup>4</sup> *The Problems of Philosophy*, 217.

*probable opinion*. Thus the greater part of what would commonly pass as knowledge is more or less probable opinion."

Mr. Russell therefore concludes<sup>1</sup> that such things as the dogmas of religion, the essential rationality or ethical character of the universe, the unreality of matter and evil, cannot be established by metaphysical reasoning, that no attempt to "prescribe to the universe by means of *a priori* principles" can succeed, and that all the supposed knowledge in the traditional systems of philosophy must be swept away and a new beginning made. Just as modern mathematicians have shown the possibility of several kinds of space differing from the one Euclidean space which the old logic postulated and then condemned as impossible, so the new logic shows that no limits can be set to the extent and nature of the unknown.<sup>2</sup> "While our knowledge of *what is* has become less than it was formerly supposed to be, our knowledge of *what may be* is enormously increased."<sup>3</sup> "Instead of being, as formerly, the bar to possibilities, logic has become the great liberator of the imagination, presenting innumerable alternatives which are closed to unreflective common sense, and leaving to experience the

<sup>1</sup> *The Problems of Philosophy*, 220, and *Scientific Method*, 240.

<sup>2</sup> *The Problems of Philosophy*, 230.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 231.

task of deciding, where decision is possible, between the many worlds which logic offers for our choice." Absolute scepticism, though logically irrefutable, is practically barren. The positive revelations reported by the mystic cannot be disproved, but they can be made to form no consistent whole, and can afford no assurance of truth until they have been compared and harmonized with other beliefs and revelations no less trustworthy. We are therefore justified in accepting the mass of common knowledge as affording data for philosophical analysis.

Philosophical knowledge then differs essentially from scientific knowledge only in its characteristic critical attitude, which "considers each piece of apparent knowledge on its merits, and retains whatever still appears to be knowledge when this consideration is completed." Its value is to be found exclusively among the "goods of the mind" and cannot depend upon any supposed definite answers to ultimate questions.

In his essay<sup>2</sup> *The Free Man's Worship*, one of the most impressive prose writings of the last decade, Mr. Russell eloquently assures us that this value is attainable, that we may emerge from the narrow private world of instinctive interests, and, learning

<sup>1</sup> *The Problems of Philosophy*, 236.

<sup>2</sup> *Philosophical Essays*, 59-70.

to be great through the greatness of the eternal things which we contemplate, may join the company of intellectual freemen, and become "citizens of the universe."

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Naturally Mr. Russell's philosophy is meeting with opposition. Many are inclined to condemn summarily any philosophy which involves *a priori* ethics, or can be termed logical, mathematical, intellectual or Platonic. Without doubt the attempt to fathom the relationship between consciousness and the ideal subsisting world and the real existing world must lead to metaphysical tenuities which were baffling problems to both Plato and Aristotle, and have been sources of bewilderment to all subsequent philosophers. I certainly am not competent to dispute the claim that this new logical philosophy represents no more than the prophesied oscillation from the romantic to the scientific and analytical extreme. When, however, it is dogmatically dismissed as scholastic, I am able to find in its concern for logical reasoning and in its frank acknowledgment of the limitations of knowledge a close analogy to the method of the first great and perhaps the greatest humanist of history, who, by persistent analysis, exposure of ignorance, and insistence upon clear thinking, irritated beyond endurance the elephantine complacency



of his day, and became a martyr for freedom of thought.

I believe that a philosophy is opportune, however difficult, which denies that we are the "blind slaves of instinct" and allows room for "moments of contemplative insight," in which we discern the possibilities of life that redeem man from the existence of the brutes. We require a vitalism which is capable of producing more than a titillation of emotional rapture; we must have the intellectual thrill of a larger vision of the eternal vastitudes into which the thought of man has only begun to penetrate. The spontaneity to be desired is not the confused state of flighty sensibilities which comes when the instinctive subliminal self is released from rational control; it is the emancipation from the *sub*-conscious which is achieved by the rational self in its effort to realize the *super*-conscious. Then it is that through an alliance of the intellect and the imagination there may come a new understanding of vital law which will transcend the authority of the past.

This revival on my part of an old thesis I believe to be not untimely, because of the prevalent assumption to-day of an implacable antagonism between instinct and reason, intuition and intellect. Leaving the metaphysicians to their refinements, I maintain that personality includes the intellect

and the imagination in one indivisible whole; that they correspond to the reciprocating forces in physics, and when equilibrium is lost, their power is dissipated. Equilibrium, however, does not imply direct opposition by which the energy of each is neutralized. The whole of life includes both; development and creative activity are measured by their balanced intensity. So long as this balance can be maintained only by the opposition of one collective mass against another, each saturated with its own solution of the essence of life, and each striving to discredit the quality of the other, so long will the two factors tend to counteract each other and the history of human evolution become correspondingly monotonous. The predominant characteristic of these opposing masses will be inertia, the ability to overcome which must be the basis of any appraisal of human progress. The only availing leaven in the mass will be the true individual humanist. Upon him depends any advance towards the solution of social problems.

The true humanist will recognize the complementary constituents of his nature and effect an equipoise between them: not by making a confused negative composite, but by a deliberate self-government. He will accustom himself to the dual attitude and exercise complete control over both.

He will be able to establish inner standards to take the place of any outer standards he may have lost, though these too will be subject to revision. He will keep alive his sense of wonder by forming calm and lofty habits of mind. His passions and aspirations will be accompanied by the courage and serenity of confident self-discipline. He will have not only the Bergsonian<sup>1</sup> "intellectual sympathy by which one places oneself within an object in order to coincide with what is unique in it," but also the intellectual impartiality by which one disassociates oneself at will from an object and from one's sympathies in order to determine their true relations.

In the effort to accomplish this result lies the possibility of any effectual comprehension of life and of entering the regions of genuine freedom, where customary beliefs and traditional prejudices, personal hopes and fears may all be lost in the exclusive desire for knowledge,—the true knowledge which in action becomes justice, and in emotion becomes universal kindliness. These two are of the essence of religion.

<sup>1</sup> Bergson, *An Introduction to Metaphysics*, 7.

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