V.—DISCUSSIONS.

ON THE AMBIGUITY OF PRAGMATISM.

LIKE other readers of *MIND* I have been occupying myself lately with Prof. James's lectures, and with these I have been reading the defence of Pragmatism offered by Prof. Dewey in a late number of *MIND* (No. 63). Their account of the matter strikes me as in certain points calling for further explanation, and I am venturing to offer some remarks on this head. If Profs. James and Dewey do not yet know what Pragmatism means, there is no one, I imagine, who is likely to be in a better case. And this must be my excuse for having neglected, perhaps wrongly, the discussion of the subject by others. I may mention here that Dr. Schiller's unceasing manifestoes have for some time past failed to attract my attention. In what follows I am concerned therefore solely with Profs. Dewey and James, and I will begin with the latter.

I. While reading the lectures on Pragmatism, I, doubtless like others, am led to ask myself, 'Am I and have I been always myself a Pragmatist?'. This question I still find myself unable to answer.¹ The meaning of practice and practical is to my mind with Prof. James most obscure and ambiguous. On the one side he insists on a doctrine acceptable perhaps only to the minority. On the other side he extends so widely the limits of his creed that few indeed would in the end be left outside the fold. I will remark first on the wide and next on the narrow sense given to Pragmatism.

(i.) One of the objections raised against Pragmatism has been its alleged degradation of truth. All value except of a borrowed kind has apparently been denied to theory. What it is which in the end has ultimate worth for the Pragmatist, has remained to myself a matter of mere inference and conjecture. But what has seemed certain is that theorising has been condemned as worthless except as a means, while that which has value in itself has been left undetermined. Whether for instance the Pragmatist takes the world of art to belong to the region of the worthless-in-itself, I at least could not learn. This situation, surprising to myself, has on one understanding of Prof. James ceased, so far as he is concerned, to

¹ Cf. *MIND*, No. 62. For the ambiguity of Pragmatism I would refer the reader to Mr. McTaggart's admirable review in the last number of *MIND*. I saw this only after the whole of what follows had been written..

exist. For he takes the Good as a genus of which truth is one species. He denies or subordinates the distinction of theoretical and practical. Theory is one kind of practice and so apparently is theoretical enjoyment (217). And I suppose that fine art and the beautiful once more fall under this same head of practice. And I conjecture that Prof. James would also include under 'practical' all human enjoyment. And, if this is so, who, except perhaps some narrow Hedonist, would wish to dissent? Life in all its main aspects is allowed to be the end, and none of these aspects is excluded and degraded to the level of a mere external means. Theory, besides its use in altering the course of events, may be pursued independently within certain limits,¹ may be allowed to satisfy its proper want, and to use its own criterion. And the same thing again will hold good in the case of fine art. I indeed may wonder what purpose is served by torturing everything that is good and valuable under the head of practice. But, if the substance of all for which I have fought is conceded, I should think it unreasonable to dispute about a word.

In the ordinary sense of the word practice therefore, according to Prof. James, truth need not be directly concerned with practice. Truth indeed must not become transcendent. It must not turn itself to some other world out of relation with the world of our perceptions and actions. But, so long as truth maintains its connexion, however indirect, with the sphere of our doing and suffering, the Pragmatist is satisfied. "Any idea that helps us to deal, whether practically or intellectually, with either the reality or its belongings . . . will hold true of that reality" (p. 213). This denial of transcendence, this insistence that all ideas, and more especially such ideas as those of God or again the Absolute, are true and real just so far as they work, is to myself naturally most welcome. Most of us have, I think, now for some time accepted and tried to act on this principle. It hardly appears to me to be, at this time of day, revolutionary, but still if this is what Pragmatism means, so much the better for Pragmatism.

And there is a further point on which Prof. James seems once more to endorse our ideas. I had been, I confess, led to think that, where the Pragmatist took successful practice as the test of truth, he meant this to hold of the individual agent. The idea that worked best in the furthering of my individual existence, I thought, was truth for me. I understood in short that good for the individual and true for the individual were much the same thing, and that further the individual could apply this criterion. And naturally I found that this led to difficulty. We speak, for instance, of a man's life being ruined by the useless discovery of some truth, say of his deceased wife's infidelity, and we hardly see our way to set down a truth of this kind as error. But the whole difficulty, we now learn from Prof. James,

¹ I have endeavoured to define these limits elsewhere. See *MIND*, N.S., No. 51.

was manufactured by ourselves. It is a living witness to our blindness, our incompetence and injustice, not to use terms still more abusive (p. 233). For Pragmatism, I now understand Prof. James to say, does not pretend to hold of the individual. The idea that in a man's case does not work, or that works to his ruin, may for all that be true. For the true is "the expedient in the long run and on the whole" (p. 222). And, this being understood, the whole difficulty so far disappears.

It is succeeded however, I would urge, by fresh troubles. For what is "the long run" and "the whole," and how does the individual get to know about things like these, which seem really beyond him? On this vital matter Prof. James, it seems to me, leaves us without much assistance. We may conjecture that "the long run" is the process that leads (if it really does lead) to the final victory of Good. We are reminded perhaps of that

One far-off divine event,
To which the whole creation moves.

But I am very far from sure that we are reminded rightly. And what "the whole" is to mean seems, to my mind, beyond probable conjecture. Is it this or that set of beings inhabiting our planet, or is humanity but a small, a microscopical and an inconsiderable element among the beings that have value? In speaking of that which he terms "humanism" Prof. James would have felt himself compelled, we might have supposed, to deal with such dangerous ambiguities and such distressing uncertainties. But another course unfortunately seemed to him more desirable. The result, however, so far as I see, is that "the expedient in the long run and on the whole" remains unknown and unknowable. And yet it is this apparently by which the individual has to regulate his life.

And possibly Prof. James holds that the individual must walk here by faith (296). The individual does not know and he cannot see that truth and goodness now are one, or how they ever will become one. But he must do what seems to him to be best, and again accept what seems to him to be true, and he must trust and believe that truth and goodness in the end will not be divergent. But, with this, the relative independence for us of truth, beauty and practical goodness, seems fully justified, and, so far as the practice of the individual is concerned, Pragmatism seems in short admitted not to work.

And with such a result I, in the main, naturally find myself in accord. To me, as to many others, it seems that in the end truth, fact and goodness are one, though I am forced to admit that we cannot perceive and verify this unity in detail, and that therefore in and for the individual a relative divergence must be recognised. Hence between Prof. James and myself the difference in the end would be practically trifling. But, on the other hand, theoretically, as soon as Prof. James attempts to deal with first principles, the

case, I think, will be altered. For, as against our principle of immanent Reality, he seems to have adopted a transcendent Ideal. And that, I imagine the history of philosophy has tended to show, is a thing which, as an ultimate principle, will not work.

(ii.) If the above interpretation of Prof. James is correct, Pragmatism is no militant creed. It is in harmony with views against which it is commonly understood to protest, and to imagine that it portends a new dawn of philosophy (6) would be obviously ridiculous. And I hasten to add that I have not imagined that Prof. James would accept his doctrine as it is above interpreted. I think it at least possible that he takes the whole theoretical side of mind to be an instrument worthless in itself, used to gain a valuable end which he finds it convenient to leave in darkness. I am sure that the common antithesis of intellectual or theoretical and practical appears in his pages (*e.g.*, p. 188), and that the former of these words is used derogatorily. The conclusion that, at least for the practice of the individual, Pragmatism is untrue, seems to me contrary to the whole tendency of Prof. James's teaching. And, if I rightly understand him, Pragmatism, far from being a view which tends to reconcile extremes, is committed to the denial of anything contrary to pluralism. It is committed to the assertion of the absolute mutability of the Universe and the absolute reality of individual disaster and evil. With regard to Prof. James's doctrine of human Freedom, here, as elsewhere, I find it impossible to decide what it means.¹ But the pragmatic doctrine of Free Will, as it appears in this volume, seems to myself to be repeating that which I, for instance, under Hegelian influence sought to urge, in my *Ethical Studies*, some thirty years since. And Prof. James's view of Freedom, whatever else it may be, must, I assume, be something which leaves him at liberty to denounce Hegel and his followers.

The conclusion then which I would submit to the reader is that Prof. James's Pragmatism is essentially ambiguous, and that he throughout is unconsciously led to take advantage of its ambiguity. It can at discretion be preached as a new Gospel which is to bring light into the world, or recommended as that old teaching of common sense which few but fools have rejected. The reader may, I think, be helped to appreciate this attempt to make the most of both worlds, if I sketch briefly for him another and, as I think, a better working creed.

I perhaps may here recall the fact that I have advocated elsewhere certain views on first principles. But on the other hand I have seen, if I may say so, far too much of metaphysics to think of staking vital issues on the result of speculative inquiry. And for practical purposes I hold in reserve a belief, in common, I imagine,

¹ I have remarked on this point some years ago in a former number of *MIND*, a reference to which in writing the above I unfortunately cannot give.

with an increasing number of persons, a belief, the advantages of which Pragmatism would, it seems, like to appropriate surreptitiously. According to this practical creed there is in the end no truth for us save that of working ideas. Whatever idea is wanted to satisfy a genuine human need is true, and truth in the end has no other meaning. Our sense of value, and in the end for every man his own sense of value, is ultimate and final. And, since there is no court of appeal, it is idle even to inquire if this sense is fallible. It is this which in the end decides as to human interests, and, whatever ideas are needed to serve those interests, are true, however much these ideas are in contradiction with one another or even with themselves. The one question in the end is whether the ideas work. But there are degrees of truth because ideas may work better or worse, and because again the interests which ideas subserve are more or less valuable. The above is scepticism, if you please, but it is not the stupid scepticism which offers itself as positive theoretical doctrine. It is the intelligent refusal to accept as final any theoretical criterion which actually so far exists. And there is here no mutilation of human nature, since every side of life, practical, æsthetic and intellectual, is allowed its full value. We are emancipated once and for all from the narrowness of all one-sided attempts at consistency.

When a man, holding to this less one-sided Pragmatism, says that he for instance believes in God, not *a* God but a God through whom perfect goodness in spite of appearance is real—how futile in the case of such a man are Prof. James's findings. Prof. James will tell this man that he is a quietist, that he wants to "give up" and to "lie back," and to avoid paying the just price of salvation through individual sacrifice and effort (276, 289, 292, 295). But the man will answer that, while he believes in the reality of perfect goodness, he believes also that nothing is more intensely real than individual action for good, and that he believes in these two things not one in spite of the other, but one even because of the other. And he will regret that Prof. James should be so wanting in experience as to be unable to perceive obvious facts, and should be in such bondage to the traditional worship of theoretical consistency. And as against such a position, which I do not suppose Prof. James will call novel, what has he to offer and to object in the name of Pragmatism? He has offered at present nothing, so far as I see, beyond one-sided prejudices, and a blind appeal to theoretical consistency, and an uncritical faith in the ultimate validity of some undiscussed Law of Contradiction.

But that Prof. James could accept the position I have sketched above to myself seems impossible. I do not suggest that the result is too sceptical for a Professor to endorse, but beyond this there are other obstacles which seem insurmountable. For, if the above is accepted, there is at once apparently an end of the new Gospel, with all its promises and all its boasts about a new dawn of philo-

sophy, together with its anticipatory outbreak of dithyrambic ecstasy (p. 257). And something perhaps even worse than this would follow. For Prof. James would forfeit all right to emphasise as ultimate truth the absolute mutability and incoherence of the world, and the absolute value of this or that individual success or disaster. In short all those prejudices on which he rides to the attack on Absolutism would have to be foregone. These ideas could, none of them, claim more than a relative worth, and their opposites would also and at the same time possess truth.

But if Prof. James cannot be content with so broad a "pragmatism," his alternative, I submit, is to develop his theory of first principles. Assuredly I am not alone in the desire that he would turn his back for a time on sporadic articles and on popular lectures, with their incoherence and half-heartedness and more or less plausible ambiguities, and would work in the way in which a man who seriously aims at a new philosophy is condemned to work, and with a result which I at least feel sure would repay his labour. And perhaps in the meantime he might remind his followers on this side of the Atlantic that, of course without prejudice to the future, it is not yet true that the crowing of the cock brings the sun above the horizon.

II. I pass on now to consider the account of Pragmatism given by Prof. Dewey in *MIND*, No. 63, and here, as with Prof. James, I find much which to myself seems ambiguous. I am again left uncertain whether in the end I also am a Pragmatist, or where and how on the other hand I fail to deserve that title. But I have to begin by putting on one side what to my mind are sheer irrelevancies. I myself have long ago (1883) pointed out that theory takes its origin from practical collision, and again for myself theory implies a theoretical want and its satisfaction. And it is obvious that, if Pragmatism means no more than this, I, as I presume Prof. Dewey is aware, have been for many years a Pragmatist, and, however well he preaches, he is preaching here to one long ago converted.

Certainly I must suppose therefore that for Prof. Dewey more than this is wanted for Pragmatism, and I must go on to inquire how much more is wanted. In the first place Prof. Dewey, I understand, insists that theory is only an instrument. Now we all know that there are instruments and activities which have no value but a borrowed one. They may be necessary, but still in themselves they may be valueless or even worse. Hence we naturally ask if this is to be the case with theory, and again with fine art. And, if this is to be the case with one or both, we naturally want to be informed as to the ultimate source of the value which is transferred to them. But, so far as I see, Prof. Dewey leaves us here without any answer. And I do not myself understand how any thinking person is justified in accepting a doctrine left in this am-

ambiguous state. In philosophy surely one has no right to teach that something is only a means, unless one is prepared to state the end to which it conduces and by which it is measured.¹ And I must even be allowed to set this down as to my mind elementary.

Passing on then unsatisfied from this point let us ask what is meant by the practical nature of thinking and truth. Let me say here at once that I have failed, I am sure, to understand what practical means for Prof. Dewey.² But an idea, it appears, is true only so far as it issues in behaviour. Now, as applied to the early life of the soul, I am prepared for the sake of argument to accept this statement unreservedly. It is not, I think, even as applied to the beginnings of intelligence, entirely correct. But I need not here enter on any reservation which seems to me to be required. Let us for the sake of argument agree that early soul-life (as I, for instance,

¹Prof. Dewey (p. 328) certainly denies that the end is the abstraction of "mere practice," but such a denial is obviously no positive answer. And when he adds that he cannot believe that "any empiricist has ever entertained" "such a thoroughly intellectualistic construction," I confess that he amazes me. The "empiricist" in my own experience is precisely the man who more than others takes mere abstractions for realities. In any case if the Pragmatist cannot even attempt to state his own doctrine of ultimate value, that, it seems to me, is something like an admission of bankruptcy.

²"By practical," he says, "I mean only regulated change in experienced values" (p. 328). But, if Prof. Dewey means no more than this, his whole article is surely one long *ignoratio elenchi*. How does such a definition exclude the existence of pure theoretical activity and practice? And, if it does not, what becomes of Prof. Dewey's polemic? Pragmatism on this understanding is in agreement with even an extreme one-sided intellectualism, so long as that asserts an intellectual need and activity. The reason, I venture to think, why Prof. Dewey fails to realise this, is that he uses 'practical' in a further sense and passes unconsciously from one sense to another. In this further sense there is the usual opposition between practice and mere theory, and it is, I presume, with this sense in his mind that Prof. Dewey asserts (p. 335) that the truth of a mechanical idea is inseparable from the construction of a working model. In short, Prof. Dewey seems to define practice in one sense and then to slide, wherever it is convenient, into another sense. Either this, or he fails wholly to realise the nature of the position which he believes himself to be attacking.

Another point which I may notice is the connexion, according to Prof. Dewey, between having an idea and holding it for true. There are statements as to "assumption" (328) and "hypothetic" (341) which I probably have failed to understand. They look to myself, however, as if Prof. Dewey was assuming the reality of "floating ideas" when in controversy with persons some of whom at least regard these ideas as a delusion untenable both in psychology and logic. And it seems to me further that the rejection of floating ideas tends to raise difficulties, the existence of which Prof. Dewey fails to recognise. I cannot but think that here, as elsewhere, a reference to Dr. Bain's views would have been useful. But in any case the existence and possibility of mere ideas, Prof. Dewey should remember, is denied, and cannot in controversy be assumed.

urged some twenty-five years ago) has no ideas about things except the ideas of its own practical attitude towards them. And let us agree that, except so far as an idea actually issues in practical behaviour, it cannot be retained.¹ Still does it follow from this that later on a theoretical need and satisfaction is not in fact developed? Apart from such a hazardous conclusion the entire argument from origin appears to me to be worthless. And I presume therefore that Prof. Dewey's main contention is this, that there is not now in fact any theory which is not practical and practical essentially.

I would repeat that I have failed to understand Prof. Dewey's real position. And I have remarked above on the fatal ambiguity that attaches to the word practical. But if we take practical in the sense in which it is opposed to theoretical—and if we do *not* take it so the whole controversy seems to vanish—objections to such a position present themselves at once. (1) Suggested ideas—some of them apparently remote from anything which I am to do or could do—are accepted as true. And not only this, but in many cases these ideas appear to coalesce with and to qualify my world, without any experienced collision and apart from anything which I myself seem to do. This account holds good of a large amount of actual present beliefs. And, though Prof. Dewey fails to recognise the extent to which this takes place, he appears to admit that in the case of "tested" ideas (341) we have judgments not issuing in actual behaviour. Further, even where ideas do concern my conduct, I would submit that even here they need not be entertained practically and need not in this sense be practical. But in any case as we have seen, a large number of ideas at least appear in no sense to relate to my behaviour either in themselves or in their results. (2) I have so far dealt with cases where no actual preceding want or desire for the result can be shown to exist. But, even where the attained truth is the satisfaction of an actual desire, that desire and that want may be in a word a desire for truth itself. Knowledge here, practical in one sense, will still not be practical in the sense of being concerned merely with my behaviour. And 'concerned' is not the word, for according to Prof. Dewey, if I rightly understand him, truth consists merely in my practical behaviour and is itself nothing otherwise. And, when I apply such a description to the solution of every possible historical or abstract problem, I appear to myself to have arrived somewhere out of contact with actual facts. I can keep hold of them only when I admit that practice itself may be essentially theoretical.

Prof. Dewey to some extent seems to be aware of these objections, but how he considers himself to meet them I am unable except in part to understand. I can therefore do little more than set down what seem to me to be possible ways of reply. The reader will

¹ I do not discuss here the doubt which might be raised with regard to the ideas of suffering as apart from doing. If you go back far enough I should not suppose that such ideas exist.

understand that in what follows, except where this is stated, I am not pretending to criticise Prof. Dewey's account. I am detailing some points on which it seems to me that clearness is essential and has not been secured. (i.) The first answer to the above objections would consist in urging that truth is the behaviour of an idea rather than that of a man. When an idea acts and works in me in a certain manner that is truth, and therefore truth in this sense is practical. I mention this view though I do not suppose that Prof. Dewey would accept it. (ii.) Another way of showing that an idea is practical, although I really do not act on it, is to urge that I should act on it if the conditions were otherwise, or shall act on it perhaps in the future (339). This is the position taken long ago by Dr. Bain who, for some reason that I do not understand, is here ignored. It is of course open to the obvious reply that the question is about the actual and not about the possible or future, and that to identify these is not permitted.¹ We may perhaps put the same point otherwise by asking in what my knowledge that conditionally or in the future I should or shall act, itself now actually consists. To answer for instance that with an idea there is a more or less tentative struggle to act, and that therefore there is an act—seems unsatisfactory. We do not always seem concerned with any struggle, and as to what "tentative" is to mean we require information. Any such phrase we recognise as an old device for going on saying that a thing is so, when obviously and visibly it is not so. But whether, and, if so, how far any of the above is applicable in the case of Prof. Dewey I am unable to say. (iii.) Let us then pass from the view that thought implies essentially an issue in external behaviour. Let us suppose that thought is always an act, and implies therefore of course a psychical alteration of myself. But let us suppose that this psychical alteration, though necessary, is not the main essence of thought. And let us take that main essence to lie in a qualification of reality which is ideal. If this is the view urged by Prof. Dewey, as I can hardly imagine it is, I must lament that he has so failed to express it clearly. With such a view it is obvious that in the main I agree, and how it should be urged against myself I am unable to understand. (iv.) And yet, agreeing in the main with such a view, I cannot wholly endorse it. For in the word "act" there is still too much ambiguity or else downright mistake. There are truths suggested and at once accepted where certainly there seems no act in the sense of my will or of my act. The idea seems to coalesce with, or, let us say, to be apperceived by my world or one of my worlds. In this case I am altered of course, but in what sense do I act? And can we even say here that, so far, the idea's truth for me lies in its working and in its theoretical conse-

¹ This point has been dealt with by me many years ago. I have ventured to remark that the uncritical identification of the real and the possible is a leading characteristic of English empiricism. I would now venture in addition to invite the attention of Prof. James to this point.

quences? Have we not got in such a case, so far as I am concerned, something like passive acceptance of the idea? I agree that, when we reflect and when we come to the criterion of truth, the truth of an idea is inseparable from its theoretical results. And, if you like to add that here I always act, I am not concerned to deny this. But how this is to hold in the case of all acceptance of truth I am unable to see. Prof. Dewey seems to perceive the above difficulty, not wholly but so far as it applies to "tested ideas" (341). But his answer is, I regret to say, to myself unintelligible. What is "permanent status"? What is "energy of position" (p. 341)? To my mind these phrases seem to be no better than mere mythology. And to me they come as a tacit admission that the theory will not work when applied to facts.¹ And I have already dealt above with the apparent attempt to revive Dr. Bain's method of escape. (v.) Finally (to pass on) the issue of the idea in behaviour may be admitted not to hold now and here, at this time or of this agent. No more may be meant than that at some time the true idea will also be true practically. I hesitate however to understand Prof. Dewey in this sense even more than I hesitated in the case of Prof. James. With such a conclusion I should agree, if for 'at some time will' I may be allowed to write 'somehow does'. Still in neither case, I submit, can such a criterion be used in detail. To some extent obviously therefore, I urge, we must remain content with mere theory. And really this is all for which I myself have contended and contend. And if you insist that such a state of things is only provisional, then, so far as I see, the provisional state of things will last as long as there are finite beings.²

Against the preceding it may be urged, though I do not say by Prof. Dewey, that the question is about the main and general tendency of things. That general tendency is that the true idea is the idea which works best even externally. And it may be added that this general tendency justifies the ultimate definition, although we cannot verify this definition in detail and in the case of all ideas. But such a position, if occupied by Prof. Dewey, would to my mind be wholly untenable, if at least he is committed to the doctrine that nowhere for us in our experience can truth be other than that which works practically. For such a denial is not only (as we have seen) out of harmony with fact, but in the end it would itself destroy the general conclusion and the ultimate definition.

For how, I ask, are we to arrive at ultimate knowledge of the main tendency of things? Take this very question which seems to be at issue between Prof. Dewey and myself. We each of us are

¹ Cf. Prof. James's "cold storage". Why not "hibernation" or "slumber" or "on half-pay" or any other mythological metaphor, whichever for the moment seems to bring most conviction?

² The above, of course, justifies the distinction in practice between the idea which is really true and the idea which works best practically (p. 337 note).

face to face here with a colliding situation, and as to this and so far we are agreed. Now what are we trying to do with this situation? I on my side say that we seek primarily a theoretical solution. We are each of us attempting to find an idea which will work, work in the sense of qualifying reality ideally in such a way that the collision so far is at an end.¹ And I urge that this true idea does not in respect of its truth or falsehood imply a passage into any practical behaviour on my part. The idea involves a psychical change in me certainly, but that, I contend, is not the essence. If Prof. Dewey replies (as I think probably he does not), that this aspect of psychical change in me is the essence of truth and of falsehood then I would ask him to state this plainly and to attempt to face the problem on this basis. And I would ask him to remember that the question is *not* whether with belief and judgment there is a psychical change in me. The question is what we are to say about this psychical event, and how otherwise it must be qualified, so that it is not merely a psychical event but is specially a true or false belief and judgment. But if Prof. Dewey falls back upon practical result and non-theoretical behaviour, then I would invite him here to say what this is. What is it that I do here and what is it that he does here, each of us, I presume, differently in the case of the diverse ideas which we accept? I myself am unable to verify this issue in practical behaviour, and in any case the contention that this issue makes truth's essence remains to my mind untenable.

If however in this ultimate appeal to fact we are forced to recognise theoretical truth, then to go on from this basis to deny such truth, would be suicidal. To upset by knowledge about the main tendency of the world something for us more ultimate than such knowledge, seems to destroy knowledge altogether. To build further upon the foundation on which we stand is of course legitimate. To insist that truth, to reach perfection, must also in every case somehow issue in act, does not deny that truth for us, at least to some extent, must be sought and found otherwise.² On the other hand to insist on the practical result of the idea everywhere as the criterion of truth, and wholly to deny truth as existing otherwise, is, I submit, to insure disaster. But I must end as I began, both in the case of Prof. Dewey and of Prof. James, by deploring their ambiguity or my blindness, which in the end leaves me uncertain what it is that they mean to affirm and to deny.

So much indeed of what Prof. Dewey urges seems to me so true and so admirably stated, that I can only applaud and regret that it should seem to be directed against views which I hold. I agree that practical collision is the origin of truth, and I agree that for

¹ On p. 330 Prof. Dewey appears to traverse this statement directly.

² In the same way when a too ardent Darwinian teaches that the true idea is the idea which prevails, his position so far is consistent. But, when he goes on perhaps to insist that truth is nothing but prevalence, he falls into inconsistency if he now offers at least *this* truth as more.

truth to pass into a new practical result may be called (if we speak at large) truth's natural and normal end. But that by us men theoretical truth, as well as fine art, must be cultivated, at least to some extent, independently, I am no less assured. The denial of this appears to me to violate facts and to threaten us with the mutilation of our human ideal. And if theory and fine art, or either of these, is to have no worth of its own, let us at least be informed what is the end it is which really possesses value. On such a point to state no positive doctrine, and to leave it to opponents to lose themselves in more or less mistaken conjectures, is a course, I would submit, unworthy of such writers as Profs. Dewey and James.

Prof. Dewey's article raises a number of interesting questions which would well repay discussion. Among these the apparent contention (334) that truth is nothing but that which I do with an idea, and that truth therefore is made by me, could hardly be dealt with except at length. That contention would become less ambiguous and more instructive, if the problem of falsehood were included, and again that of beauty and ugliness. The question whether and in what sense I can bring into being truth and beauty, ugliness and error, good and evil, and in one word value, has of course the highest interest. The answer that not only do I bring all this into existence, but that the distinctive essences of all these things are nothing beyond what I do and make—I hesitate to attribute to Prof. Dewey. And his isolated treatment of this question so far as regards truth, ignoring even the difficulties caused by falsehood, seems to me obviously insufficient. But to deal with this and other interesting issues raised in Prof. Dewey's article, is here clearly impossible.

I propose again to say nothing here in reply to Prof. Dewey's discussion of certain views held by me. It is not that I do not value his criticism, or again that in most cases I should find it difficult to make an explanation or a reply which, to myself perhaps, would be satisfactory. But I think it far better to defer anything which I have to say to another opportunity. Pragmatism proclaims itself, I understand, as a great new way in philosophy. Hence, if it is true, it is not true because those particular views with which I for instance am identified, are demonstrably false. Such an alternative might be convenient but it is, of course, indefensible, and with the injustice which it would offer to other views I could not associate myself. Pragmatism is true, if at all, because it can successfully deal with all ultimate issues. It may indeed be shown otherwise to be invalid, but it cannot otherwise be shown to hold good. And I will venture to add that in my opinion some such reminder as this (though perhaps not in the case of Prof. Dewey) seems desirable and necessary.

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