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PROFESSOR BALDWIN ON THE PRAGMATIC UNIVERSAL.

In a very comprehensive and suggestive article on 'The Limits of Pragmatism' in the *PSYCHOLOGICAL REVIEW*, Volume XI., No. 1,¹ Professor Baldwin finds, as do many others, one of the chief 'limits' to be the inability of pragmatism to make universal judgments. He finds it "interesting to note that the word 'general' does not occur in the rather full index to the Chicago *Studies in Logical Theory*,"² which is freely cited as representative literature of pragmatism. Now if Professor Baldwin had but recalled what he must well know, that nothing is so fickle as an index, he would have turned to 'universal,' especially as he interchanges this term with 'general,' under which he would have found eight references, some of them extended with 'ffs.' And in the monograph on 'Existence, Meaning and Reality,' to which he also refers, there is space to the amount of five octavo pages given almost entirely to the discussion of universality. Indeed it is difficult to see how one could go through the 'Chicago Contributions' and emerge with an impression that this topic had been neglected.

As there is a conception of abstract universality, which is difficult to reconcile with any sort of pragmatism, so there is current, largely among its critics, a conception of pragmatism which is difficult to square with any kind of universality. So far as I have seen, the imputations of 'Atomism,' 'Nominalism,' etc., are based, not on a criticism of the fundamental conceptions of pragmatism, but on an atomistic interpretation of Professor James' pluralism. I say 'an atomistic interpretation,' for it seems to me that it does not require a second look to discover that Professor James' pluralism is not sheer atomism.

¹ The tardiness of this discussion has only the time-honored excuse — 'the press of other work.'

² Footnote, p. 53.

Everywhere there is 'inter-action,' 'stimulus and response,' 'generation' and 'growth.' The emphasis of the pluralistic character is simply a reaction against a lust for a unity so absolute that there is no room in it for any movement of differences. And here, to my mind, we touch the metaphysical nerve of the whole pragmatic movement. Pragmatism is not concerned primarily with the problem of unity and plurality, although experience is as manifestly a plurality as a unity. Its chief concern is with the problem of change, of development. It is an attempt to reach such a conception of unity, *and* differences, as shall permit of 'real' movement. It is a crusade to release Change from the limbo of Appearances, and Reality from the stocks of a changeless Unity.

Seeing that the champions of unity have almost with one voice insisted that the unity of reality involves its unchangeableness, some, who cherish convictions against such cashiering of change, have apparently accepted this verdict of absolutism and said in effect, 'if the choice is between absolute unity with absolute fixity on the one hand, and absolute plurality with movement, development, on the other, we accept the latter.' But the pluralist at once restores unity by his categories of 'interaction' 'stimulus and response,' etc.; only now he has a lynamic instead of a static unity. It is quite 'possible, then, that one may be a pragmatist' and insist emphatically upon this moving unity. At all events, the attempt to throw the pragmatist's case out of court at the start on the plea of 'atomism' is certainly premature.

Returning to Professor Baldwin's 'limit,' he finds that while perfectly capable of making particular judgments, pragmatic logic is impotent when it attempts to deal with the universal (pp. 50, 52 ff.). Now to many modern logicians, including perhaps most pragmatists, it would seem that such an indictment could be drawn only on the conception of a pretty separate and independent relation between the particular and the universal. Most pragmatists, I think, would regard it impossible to have a valid logic of particular judgments apart from a logic of universals. For every judgment is a development of experience through a universal. A standpoint, therefore, which is able to construct a valid logic of the particular judgment must have in it, whether or not it has actually been brought out, a logic of the general.

In Professor Baldwin's account of the universal it seems to play, as in the statements of Professor Royce and Mr. Bradley, two quite different rôles, and the relation between them is very difficult to

discover.¹ "It is just the meaning of a general mode of thought that it stands for the particular case in the sense of organizing it with other experiences" (p. 53). On the other hand 'the general concept pretends to be valid as a vehicle of the real apprehension of the world. Now this is capable of an interpretation quite in agreement with (1); and indeed Professor Baldwin comes near giving it such a treatment on the page quoted, as will be shown below. But on the very next page we read that this world, the real apprehension of which it is the business of the universal and normative aspects of experience to give us, is one that transcends the experiences of real life. "How can practical life adequately test the validity of modes which essentially claim to transcend the experiences of real life?" Here, indeed, I am inclined to think there is nothing for the pragmatist but to humbly confess his impotence.

On the test of the universal Professor Baldwin says (p. 53): "No appeal to a concrete situation can validate an aspect of reality which is *ipso facto* a systematization of various such situations or cases. There must be, therefore, if such thinking is to have any control or positive validation, certain principles of logically apprehended reality as such. This would throw us back upon the traditional 'laws of thought,' I suppose, or some analogous self-applying criteria of sound thinking."

At the risk of appearing captious, the discussion at this point will have to run somewhat to an exposition of terms. If we take 'concrete' etymologically it should mean the unified harmonious grown-together stage of experience which does not need 'systematizing.' It is the immediate outcome or forerunner of systematization. It is only when experience ceases to be 'concrete' in this sense that organization is required. The general, therefore, is not a system 'of various concrete experiences as such.' It is only when experience is broken up and becomes material, a 'matrix,' a 'platform,' to use a term of Professor Baldwin's, for further experience, that it needs organization.

¹ As another illustration of the strange *tête-à-tête* a philosophical discussion may bring about the following is interesting: On p. 53 Professor Baldwin says: "This may be a way of saying, with many modern logicians, that only particular, not universal judgments carry the affirmation of reality: if we limit ourselves to pragmatic tests, available only in concrete experience, I see no way of avoiding such a view. But such a position it seems to me allies pragmatism with extreme nominalism." But what about the 'many modern logicians' holding this view, who are not pragmatists? (Indeed I know of no pragmatist who holds it.) And it is just the absolutists who are the chief expounders of this view. Behold then, according to our author, the pragmatist and the absolutist sitting together in the tent of nominalism!

The point can be stated in terms of the conception of 'system.' Why should various 'concrete' experiences need systematizing anyway? And in just what does the systematization consist? And how is it known when systematization is reached? Professor Baldwin says that systematization consists in 'organizing a particular case with other experience.' Here, of course, we have only exchanged terms. For we have forthwith to answer for 'organization.' Nor are we much better off in the next sentence. "It introduces organization, relationship and systematization into experience just to the dropping off those aspects which are individual." Thus, experience becomes general by being organized with other experiences, and it is organized by becoming general, that is, by 'leaving off the individual aspect.' And what, by the way, are these individual aspects? Does every experience have a certain quality that is in itself individual and a certain other that is in itself universal? But of this more below. So far, at any rate, we have made little progress in finding a criterion of organization and system. And the difficulty in starting out to systematize and organize experiences just at large is very great. None of this is intended to call in question the fact of system and organization in experience. It desires only to call for an interpretation instead of a mere assumption of them.

Nor do I see that we gain much by 'falling back upon the traditional laws of thought'—consistency, contradiction, etc. For we must at once face the question: What is the meaning of 'consistent,' or, as Professor Baldwin calls it, 'flawless' thinking, in terms simply of the process itself? Professor Baldwin does not explicitly deal with this question, but I imagine the only answer he could make is the one generally made, viz., that it is simply 'the sense of a harmonious, unified, unimpeded flow of the thought process within itself.' If so, are we not caught on the very sands of 'subjectivism' and 'atomism' from which we have been so frantically warning the pragmatist? If the test of thinking is consistency and the mark of consistency is simply the immediate sense of harmony and freedom in the process in itself, apart from any limit in further experience, and if we take this as in itself yielding truth, reflecting reality, is not this the very essence of subjective atomism? The abstract universal is thus just as subjective and atomistic as the abstract particular. Nor can we escape by an appeal to 'the essential uniformity of intelligence as such.' This is as gigantic a *petitio*—to say nothing of 'the facts in the case'—as its 'empirical' correlative 'the uniformity of nature.'

There appears, then, to be need for some further analysis of 'sys-

tem,' 'organization,' 'consistency,' 'contradiction,' etc. Roughly sketched, the pragmatist's contribution to this demand runs somewhat as follows: he points out that every experience (and the distinction between 'experience in general' and 'my experience' matters not just here) has two values; (1) it has a unique value of its own as immediate experience; (2) it has a value as the basis, the 'platform' of further experience. And it is to this latter function that the categories of organization, consistency, universality and particularity, validity, truth and error belong. Taken in its bare immediacy, experience is neither valid nor invalid, true nor false, systematic nor chaotic, consistent nor inconsistent. It is only as a means to, or as an outcome of other experience that any content takes on these characteristics. Of course the process of systematizing has its own immediate sense value. But the point is that when we get at the conditions and significance of this 'sense' we find they lie in *its relation to further experience*. Shorn of this developmental character, organization, system, validity, etc., are indeed left without any 'limits' by which to define them. They remain terms referring to immediate qualities of experience offering and requiring no credentials of any sort.

If we pass now to the process of systematization itself, Professor Baldwin says that it proceeds by 'dropping off those aspects which are individual.' Taken as it stands, this certainly has in it a suggestion of old-time 'realism.' It reads as if there were in experience something *per se* individual and something else *per se* universal. But even if this were the case, why should the 'dropping' of the individual characteristics produce system or organization? Why would not the individual aspects themselves make as good a system as the universal? Now I do not think that any one who has read Professor Baldwin's most suggestive chapter on 'Selective Thinking'¹ and his debate with Mr. Bosanquet² on it, could regard any such statements as the above as representing his 'settled views.' Just as we there are taught that a content of experience 'is not selected because it is true, *but is true because it is selected*'; so, while the point is not explicitly treated, the whole trend and tenor of 'Selective Thinking' would lead us to say that systematization is not something determined wholly in and to itself, but is a process which is relative to and has its goal in a further concrete experience.³ The doctrine of that chapter, also,

¹ PSYCHOLOGICAL REVIEW, January, 1898, and Chap. XVII. of *Development and Evolution*.

² PSYCHOLOGICAL REVIEW, Vol. X.

³ Here it must be remembered that 'concrete' is used, not as the correlative of universal, *i. e.*, not in the sense of particular, but as meaning that stage

would lead us to say, not that certain elements of experience are 'dropped' because they are *per se* particular, and others are retained because *per se* general, but the rather that they are particular because they are dropped and general because they are retained. It is just the fact that a certain content persists as the basis, the 'platform,' the *point d'appui* of further concrete experience, that makes it general. Also since Locke's analysis of Essence it has been well understood that what is 'dropped' as particular in one situation is retained as general in another. Generality, therefore, is not a kind or quality of content, but is the relation which any content bears to the further development of experience. In short, universality does not mean an absolutely changeless possession of all intelligence. It means rather the *continuity* of experience—the fact that experience is a self-developing process.

If this be the meaning of universality, and if by 'concrete' we mean just the further experience in which both the general and the particular disappear, then what else but the 'concrete' can be the 'test' of the universal? To be sure, it cannot test it as a representation or reflection of a reality which 'transcends all real life.' But it can test it as a developmental device *inside* the process of 'real life.' It is when we lose sight of this productive, developmental, this forward-moving function of the universal, that we have nothing left but to 'fall back on the traditional laws of thought' for the test of its validity.

Now pragmatism is not an attempt to sponge these 'traditional laws of thought' from the statutes. It simply insists that in themselves they do not constitute the final test of truth. *They constitute the cues and guides of the generalizing process.* They are part of the *technique* of thinking. In terms of habit they are, as Professor Baldwin well shows, part of the machinery whereby an hypothetical selection of material for adjustment is made. Here is where the so-called 'universal judgment' appears with its technique of 'consistency,' 'contradiction,' etc. The universal judgment is an expression of the habit elements involved in *every* judgment.¹ Hence, indeed, its 'hypothetical' character. But again not 'hypothetical' *in* or 'aspect' of experience to which the universalizing and particularizing process leads and in which they, as such, disappear.

¹Here may be the place to remark that it is possible that the treatment in logics of the Universal Judgment as *kind* of judgment, apparently complete in itself, tends—despite subsequent qualifications—to nourish the notion that there must therefore be a special kind of reality corresponding to it—which, not being found of course in 'real life,' must exist in a 'transcendent' realm.

itself. As an immediate experience it is as 'categorical' and 'real' as any other. It is 'hypothetical' only with reference to further experience, only because *it is not only an immediate but at the same time a mediating experience*. And in this latter rôle, the test of its validity cannot lie merely 'within itself.'

And this suggests that the solution of the different views of the function of the universal in 'real life' is perhaps to be found in the avoidance of a confusion of the immediate and mediating values of experience. The critics of pragmatism insist that thought is just as 'good' and 'real' and 'true' an experience as any other; to all of which the pragmatist enthusiastically subscribes. Aye, the intellectually tempered pragmatist (paradoxical as this may sound to some) may go even further and say with some of his critics that instead of being merely instrumental (in any *subordinate* sense) thought may well be regarded as the *end* to which all the other aspects of experience may be considered as means.

Even so, this yields the pragmatist's whole contention, viz., *that thought is not sufficient unto itself*. It must have 'means.' It can renew and feed itself only in and through the great stream of instinctive emotional and volitional content. It too must lose its life to find it. In insisting on the 'real,' 'true,' valid-in-itself character of thought the critic is taking thought in its immediate character. But this is not thought as a logical process; and 'true,' 'real,' 'valid' are here not logical categories. It is the mediating function of thought that gives it its logical quality, and to speak here of 'truth' and 'validity' with no reference to the goal of the mediation is surely a flagrant case of Hamlet without the Prince.

Such an omission too would seem to be pretty nearly equivalent to cutting off the second part of what Prof. Baldwin in his 'Selective Thinking' gives as, 'The test of truth in the external world.'¹ 'The first test is that of assimilation to established habits.' Instead of 'test,' etc., I should prefer to say, 'step towards constructing truth,' and instead of 'assimilation to' I should prefer 'response of.' Professor Baldwin continues: 'This is the test of the general character of a new experience.' Again, instead of 'test of' I should write 'constitutes.' Second, 'there is the environmental test or test of fact.' That is, 'there is a further selection from these established habits of those which work in the specific environment.' Here, for 'selection from,' etc., I should say 'reconstruction or modification of.' At any rate it is here clearly recognized that there may be an internal technique of

¹ Section 6 of the chapter.

generalization that does not as such give truth. Thought does not become 'true,' is not 'validated,' until it is tested by its results under the specific conditions. "A truth is an item of content which is expected when issuing in a movement to work under the exactions of fact." Again: 'There is no question of truth until *both* these selective functions have been operative.' Here it is certainly implied that in the first 'test' alone we get only the abstract, formal universal—the mere statement that whatever the outcome is to be, it will be some kind of a reconstruction of certain established habits.

But from the standpoint of his paper on 'The Limits of Pragmatism' Professor Baldwin might be expected to reply, "Ah, but you have been quoting from my account of 'tests of truth *in the external world*,'" whereas my point here is that there is a realm of purely universal truth as expressed in the universal judgment, which is independent of 'the test of fact' or environment." The rejoinder obviously would repeat the burden of the whole preceding discussion, the net outcome of which is that when thought is thus cut off from the rest of 'real life' and is regarded as a self-sufficient, self-perpetuating process, it becomes essentially a subjective and atomistic affair. Truth and error consist merely in an immediate sense of harmony or contradiction unchecked by any 'limits' in further experience.

As already intimated this consequence is masked under the assumption of 'the essential unity of intelligence as such.' This really is a back door resumption of the social and other 'real-life' tests and checks of thought denied in the premises. For this means that the established habits which are the basis of the universal judgment have been developed, as Professor Baldwin has long contended, in a thoroughly social matrix. Hence we can trust the sense of consistency in the responses of these habits for a working hypothesis in the world of 'real life,'—the world in which the habits grew and to which therefore they are relevant.

To this Professor Baldwin could say that he has freely admitted that in a social pragmatism (and who has ever preached any other?) 'a strain of universality and generality is imparted to knowledge in the aspect which constitutes it public to a social group.' 'But,' he adds, 'the limitation remains that such a theory would give a logic of a stage of cognitive process, that at which pragmatic tests are transferred to the social group, rather than a philosophy of the entire movement of reality.'

¹ *Development and Evolution*, p. 251; italics mine.

² Italics mine.

³ *The Limits of Pragmatism*, p. 51.

Now, in his Logic, the pragmatist does not profess to state *all* the content of 'the entire movement of reality.' The business of logic is to discuss the part thought plays *in* reality. This, of course, cannot be done without giving a general statement of one's view of the nature of reality. Hence, any logic seems bound to this extent 'to blow itself up into the dimensions of a philosophy.'¹ However, it is true that in so far as he is thus forced to state his view of reality the pragmatist confesses that the only reality he can find in which thought is playing a discoverable part is just the world of instinctive, emotional, volitional, social, 'real life,' and this he says too without prejudice to the conviction that this world of 'real life' may have in it things not dreamed of in our philosophies. And he would insist that when thought is thus placed in such a world it can claim not a mere 'strain' of universality but all it is capable of — all it can use and verify.

And elsewhere it seems to me Professor Baldwin has regarded this sort of verification as quite sufficient, not merely as a confirmation of a theory of the 'genesis' of thought, but as logical verification, — as a criterion of truth. In his effective rejoinder to Mr. Bosanquet² he says: "Genetic theory therefore explains both under what influence we have come to hold (often wrongly) certain judgments to be true and *also by what character judgments are true.*"³ To be sure this is prefaced with such statements as, "I agree with Dr. Bosanquet in confining genetic theory to questions of genesis. * * * Personally I am not a pragmatist. * * * I think pragmatism is not able as such to explain the general or universal aspects of reality." But if it is valid as a theory of genesis and if genetic theory can explain '*just by what character judgments are true,*' it has gone beyond the question of *mere* genesis. It is in the thick of Logic. And if truth involves universality, and if truth must be conceived in some sort of intelligible relation to reality, it is difficult to see just what there is left to be explained or interpreted by some other *kind* of metaphysic.⁴

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¹ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

² THE PSYCHOLOGICAL REVIEW, July, 1903.

³ Italics mine.

⁴ The MSS. of this article was received October 6, 1904. — ED.