THE PSYCHOLOGICAL BULLETIN

HUMANISM.¹

A reviewer of *Humanism* has an unusually hard task set him and one whose accomplishment he is bound to view with dissatisfaction. For he must either sacrifice its rich variety of concrete content to a statement of a few generalized features; or he must, in behalf of a scheduling and summarizing of detached essays on a multitude of different subjects—as different as ‘Mephistopheles,’ ‘Non-Euclidean Geometry,’ ‘Darwinism and Design,’ ‘Lotze’s Monism,’ etc.—forego a consideration of what gives the book a claim to be a representative of a single philosophic point of view, the herald of a philosophic system which, if not so new nor yet so unformed in the ages from Plato to Hegel as Mr. Schiller seems to suppose, yet issues in fresh, clarion tones from his trumpet. And in this dilemma the present reviewer elects to stand with the Schiller of the title-page and the preface rather than with the Schiller who in the dozen years between 1892 and 1902 wrote fifteen interesting and most suggestive, but somewhat detached, essays. In a word, it is the general tone and temper of the book that seem to me significant, and to which I shall devote myself, even at the expense of inevitable passing over of pages of fresh and pregnant philosophic construction and criticism—even at the cost (to which it is somewhat harder to reconcile myself) of not recording my almost total dissent from the positions taken in the essays entitled ‘Activity and Substance’ and ‘Philosophy and the Scientific Investigation of a Future Life.’

First, then, as to Humanism itself—not the name, but the fact. What is that attitude which as Mr. Schiller naïvely says—for as even Homer nods, so a sense of humor occasionally fails even Mr. Schiller—he ‘knows to be habitual in William James and in myself, and which seems to be sporadic and inchoate in many others’? The answer is

¹ *Humanism. Philosophical Essays.* F. C. S. SCHILLER, M.A. London, Macmillan & Co. 1903.

that as a philosophic standpoint and method it "takes Man for granted as he stands and the world of man's experience as it has come to seem to him. This is only the starting point, from which we can proceed in every direction, and to which we must return, enriched and with enhanced powers over our experiences from all the journeyings of Science" (pp. xvii-xviii). Or again, Humanism is "content to take human experience as the clue to the world of human experience, content to take Man on his own merits. * * * To remember that Man is the measure of all things, *i. e.*, of his whole experience world, and that if our standard measure be proved false all our measurements are vitiated; to remember that Man is the maker of the sciences which subserve his human purposes; to remember that an ultimate philosophy which analyzes us away is thereby merely exhibiting its failure to achieve its purpose, * * * is the real root of Humanism" (pp. xix and xx).

Humanism thus conceived seems to me a method not only sane and sensible, but inevitable almost to the point of the truistic, and it required the chorus of objections in which a dozen critics have joined in the last few months to persuade me that there was, as a standpoint, as a method, anything particularly novel, not to say revolutionary, involved. But the critics with one voice have acclaimed this point of view as subjective, irretrievably so, as individualistic, as solipsistic. When Mr. Schiller remarks that if Man as the standard measure be proved false all further measurements are thereby vitiated, he has, to my mind, answered the critics by anticipation. The standpoint cannot fairly be labelled as per the above, unless the human nature which is taken as furnishing the key and clue to human experience be purely subjective, be enclosed within an exclusively psychical individuality. And if such be the case, it is clearly impossible for this individual to transcend these limits in his philosophizing any more than in any other of his industries or pursuits. The critic has indeed, in such case, the right to condemn 'Humanism' as sceptical and solipsistic in tendency; but his right is earned and maintained only at the cost of putting his own critique and his own philosophizing in the same boat. He has pursued the expensive process of fatally disparaging the organ and medium of all science and philosophy in order to put in an unfavorable light a particular method which he does not like.

But surely a thinker may freely avow that he is going to take Man as he finds him, rather than as he might fix him up to be, and is going frankly to recognize that Man so taken is the measure of experience, without thereby having committed himself to 'finding' Man made of

stubble blown together on a quicksand. Even the Scriptures give us the right to think of Man as composed of a substance as tough, even if as plastic, as clay. It is not clear to me why it is not as open to Schiller, to James, to myself (it is the critics who embolden me to this temerity), as to others to make use of whatever universal and objective factors enter into the human make-up. But as for building upon a hypothetic universality which exists not in everyday concrete human nature, as observation and description, history and analysis reveal that human nature; which exists only in projections which are the special monopoly of philosophy, and which turn out to be projected by a humanity which in its immediately present constitution is only subjective and individualistic—that is a flight which I am willing to deny myself. Meantime there are those who do not share in these pessimistic views of human nature, even ‘as it is,’ those who take a more generous view not merely of its possibilities, but of its actualities; who, indeed, are loath to speak of its possibilities save as there is found for them a basis in the actualities.

Humanism necessarily assumes a sympathetic, not an antagonistic attitude towards all the natural sciences. This is not because it reduces philosophy to naturalism, but because it finds it can draw freely upon the methods and results of the sciences in forming its conception of Man as the Measure, or in applying this measure to this or that realm of experience. It is no surprise accordingly to find where Professor Schiller stands as regards the contemporary *crux*: the relation of philosophy to psychology. At many points, most notably throughout the important essay on Truth, he shows himself a thorough disbeliever in that modern revival of the old time heresy of two-fold truth, which holds that something may be true for psychology, and false or else meaningless for logic (and *vice versa*); while he insists upon the renascence of logic which is bound to come when thinking, when truth seeking and testing, is considered in its concrete implications with the emotive and voluntary life. And when the critics object that we have here confusion of merely descriptive science with normative and evaluative science, they make their point (as in the case already noticed) by first ignoring the real position of those whom they criticize, and then by attributing to them the critic’s own beliefs.

For the contention of the humanist is precisely the unreality of the separation from each other of describable facts and normative values. The humanist really believes that values *are* normal, even to the extent of being current in life itself. Hence, aims, ideals, standards, are a part of the facts which psychology itself has to reckon with.

The factual continuity of biological function and psychological operation with logical norm is one of the most significant things to be noted and described. Similarly the humanist, while feeling the social sciences to be especially near to him, will not balk at any method or datum of the physical sciences, because the physical sciences help one in forming a right conception of what Man the Measure is, and, as Mr. Schiller puts it, of how Man measures, and by what devices one may make concordant his measures with those of his fellow-man. The humanist is thus able to transfer the conception of the unity of all knowledge, which to the epistemological idealist is a barren postulate of an ultimate but unrealizable achievement, into a working postulate of present method. It becomes the idea of the *continuity* of experience; the only idea, so far as I can see, which saves us from the mutually sterilized, and hence sterile, nothing of the natural and the ideal in which the transcendentalist indulges, and from the wholesale merging of the spiritual in the natural which is the materialist's objective.

In the second place, characteristic of Mr. Schiller's work is a worthy and adequate recognition of the significance of experience in its *immediate* aspect. Were not the term sure to be misconstrued as one of denial (that is, of the mediate as real), humanism as expounded by Mr. Schiller might almost be termed *Immediatism*. This phase of his thought is so well wrought out in what seems to me the ablest essay in his volume, that 'On Preserving Appearances,' that I need hardly do more than refer to it. "The only reality we can start with is our own personal, immediate experience. We may lay it down therefore that *all immediate experience is as such real, and that no ultimate reality can be reached except from this basis, and upon the stimulation of such immediate experience.* * * * The distinction of 'appearance and reality' is *not* one which transcends our experience, but one which arises in it. It does *not* constitute a relation between our world and another, nor tempt us to an impossible excursion into a realm inexorably reserved for the supreme delectation of the Absolute" (p. 192). And the same may be said of course of the distinction between the absolute and the relative, the finite and the infinite, the real and the ideal, subject and object, and all the other antitheses which are dear to philosophy's heart. They all arise *within* immediate experience. And to quote further from Mr. Schiller: "The process of reaching them is everywhere the same; we experiment with notions which are suggested to our intelligence by our immediate experience, until we hit upon one which seems to be serviceable for

some purpose which engrosses us. * * * They remain on the same plane of interpretation, and all alike are attempts, more or less successful, to supplement some unsatisfactory feature or other in our primary experience" (pp. 193-194). Here I shall simply add what indeed Mr. Schiller does not deny, but hardly seems to realize the full force of: the necessity of the *genetic* method to put before us (1) the *meaning* of philosophic categories and philosophic antitheses, in terms of their *origin* in typical crises or junctures of immediate experience, and (2) the *validity* of such conceptions in terms of their relative success witnessed in their further career in 'supplementing the unsatisfactory features' which called them out. It is this methodological feature which, so far as I understand the matter, specially characterizes the recent *Studies in Logical Theory*, rather than a broader Humanism on one side, or a narrower Pragmatism on the other.

In the third place, a feature which used to be called Voluntarism, which is now termed Pragmatism, and which personally I should, for reasons which I shall not go into, prefer to call Instrumentalism, is characteristic of Mr. Schiller's thought. In his own words: It is the "thorough recognition that the purposive character of mental life generally must influence and pervade also our most remotely cognitive activities. * * * It is a systematic protest against the practice of ignoring in our theories of Thought and Reality the purposiveness of all our actual thinking, and the relation of all our actual realities to the ends of our practical life. It is an assertion of the sway of human valuations over every region of our experience, and a denial that such valuation can validly be eliminated from the contemplation of any reality that we know" (p. 8). Or, as he develops one phase of it in a footnote which contains some of the most pregnant thinking of the entire volume (pp. 11 and 12), it is the recognition that knowing is itself a kind of action, which like any mode of action modifies the world of reality in which it occurs, the objects at which it is directed. In my judgment the volume would be noteworthy if it advanced only this one idea: that it is sheer superstition, crude survival, that knowing simply reveals a nature which Reality already has, not affecting or transforming or farther determining it in any way. "The determinate nature of reality does *not* subsist 'outside' or 'beyond' the process of knowing it," and all our knowing is a mode of action in which the known reality gains more specifically determined character — this is an Idealism which is experimental, not merely epistemological, and which is ethical, not merely intellectualistic, and which, so far as I can see, alone makes possible a metaphysic which in truth and not merely in word acknowledges Evolution.

This is little enough to say of Mr. Schiller's Pragmatism. But it ought to be enough to suggest, (1) that it is *one* feature of Mr. Schiller's thought, not the 'whole thing.' It is an important feature, indeed; but it gains its especial prominence just now because of the persistent ignoring in current epistemology of psychological, biological and sociological teachings as to the intimate connections of thought processes with larger emotive and volitional issues. I confess to surprise that its critics have not recognized that if this phase of the new philosophic movement is at times exaggerated beyond its due import, this exaggeration is simply a natural reflex of the prevalent minimizing of it. In any case, there is no excuse for the view which identifies this philosophic movement, in head and in members, with just and only pragmatism. Mr. James, who surely ought to know since he gave the term its present currency, has used it only to express a certain method of testing and evaluating philosophic conceptions. He has never designated the *substance* of his philosophy (as distinct from one aspect of its method) anything but Radical, or Pluralistic, Empiricism. The category of purpose is *a* category, not the only one, and it is a category which, like any other, has its own specific conditions and function within experience; it is not *a priori*, and externally determinative.

(2) There is nothing in pragmatism which commits it to a narrow or offensively practical conception of 'Practice.' I would not say that there are no serious problems involved in getting a sufficiently broad and comprehensive conception of Practice, of conduct: to define Practice is no easy matter. I would not say that Mr. Schiller, in particular, has not moments in which he gives coloring to the claims of the critics that knowledge is relegated to a mere utilitarian device. But how unnecessary this is appears from the scope of his own definition: "The purposive character of mental character must influence and pervade also our most remotely cognitive activities."

(3) And the sapient remark of almost all the critics that theory is itself a form of action, that knowing too is a mode of practice, instead of standing as a charge or accusation, only repeats one of the most cherished convictions of pragmatism. The only difference is that pragmatism in holding to knowledge, to intellectual operations as a mode of activity, does not believe in the reality of an activity which is confined merely to mirroring, to re-presenting, a preëxisting reality. It believes that activity really effects, really counts, really constructs; and that in so doing, it actually modifies Reality, entering into its own inherent evolution. And this by its inherent and primary, not by a derived and accidental law.

JOHN DEWEY.

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY.