II.—ROUSSEAU'S DOCTRINE OF THE RIGHT TO BELIEVE.

BY NORMAN WILDE.

To admit the truth of Mme. de Stael's judgment on Rousseau that "il n'ait rien inventé mais tout enflammé," is not to admit its whole truth. Like all great preachers he was conservative in doctrine, his power lying in his appeal to the instinctive beliefs to which he called men back, rather than in any novelty of idea. He was not an innovator but a reformer. The ideas with which he inflamed the hearts of his generation were the primitive beliefs of the simplest domestic pieties, pieties the value of which had been ignored by the cultured of his day, but the practice of which had been part of the common life of the race.

But though a contemner of reason and a foe to the *philosophes*, Rousseau has yet his place in the history of thought. If his beliefs were old, the ground upon which he justified them was relatively new. In his passionate defence of these beliefs which to him were life, we have one more phase of the perennial protest raised by faith against the limits of thought. Forbidden by the philosophy of his day to cherish even the meagre hopes implied in the most attenuated of Christian theologies, and unable to find in even the most religious of systems sufficient upon which to build his faith, he abandoned reason and found in feeling the organ of religious truth. In this emphasis upon feeling and the right to believe he seems to anticipate the tendencies of the present, but so unsystematic is his teaching that, in spite of the studies his bi-centenary has evoked, his doctrine of belief seems not yet clearly defined. To understand that doctrine it is necessary to take into account both the content of his beliefs and their relation to his temperament.

The dominant factor in Rousseau's thought is his optimism, not the pedantic optimism of popular theology extracted from Leibnitz and ridiculed by Voltaire, but an involuntary, temperamental optimism, the expression of his incurably romantic temper. Sensitive and dreamy from a child, he had developed the habit of ecstatic enjoyment

of solitary nature. The world as felt in these deliciously delirious moments was for him the real world. The miseries of life, keenly as he felt them in his own experience, seemed only to drive him more surely into this world of his dreams, and to fix in him more firmly his belief in its reality. Against such revelations of the beauty and goodness of life, the mere facts of evil were of little avail. The Lisbon earthquake, so shattering to the complacency of Voltaire, left Rousseau unshaken. If men had been living as nature intended them to live, they would not have had such lofty houses to be shaken down about their heads, or such cities to be destroyed, he suggests. But it is not on facts that his optimism rests. It is not a matter of hedonic induction by which the various happinesses of the world are pieced together into the vision of a perfect whole. On the contrary, it is the vision of the perfect world that makes radiant its parts. "Au lieu de tout est bien, il vaudrait peut-être mieux dire le tout est bien, ou tout est bien pour le tout."¹ In other words, belief in God is the condition, not the result, of finding life good. Rousseau makes some attempt to argue the problem of evil in historic ways, but such arguments have little interest for him. His own emotional certainty is sufficient.

This optimism becomes explicit in his belief in God. Indeed, it is hardly to be distinguished from it. This gloriously beautiful universe with which he is in love can only be thought by him as the expression of a personal will and the embodiment of a moral purpose. "This being who wills and can perform his will, this being active through his own power, this being whoever he may be, who moves the universe and orders all things, is what I call God. To this name I add the ideas of intelligence, power, will which I have brought together, and that of kindness which is their necessary consequence, but for all this I know no more of the being to which I ascribe them. . . . I see God everywhere in his works; I feel Him within myself; I behold Him all around me; but if I try to ponder Him Himself, if I try to find out where He is, what He is, what is His substance, He escapes me and my troubled spirit finds nothing."² This indefiniteness of conception allows Rousseau to combine a double set of attributes in his idea of God, the naturalistic and the moral. By heredity and training he is a Genevan Protestant and a worshipper of the just God of Calvin, whose existence is the corner-stone of the moral order. This God is a transcendent God, an essentially personal God, whose

¹ *Letter à Voltaire*, 18th August, 1756.

² *Emile*, Book IV.

will is the standard by which we distinguish the evil from the good. It is this God whom Rousseau preaches in the *Emile* and confesses in his *Letter to the Archbishop of Paris* and *Letters from the Mountain*. It is by virtue of this faith that he can still profess himself a Christian, though banned by Geneva and Rome. But the God of his experience is of by no means so definite and austere a character as this. The object of the raptures of the sentimental nature worshipper is vague and ill-defined. He feels, he feels intensely, but what he feels he does not know. He is carried out of himself and lost in a delicious sea of being. Thought and will give place to emotion and the distinctions of subject and object are lost. Though the experience may be afterwards interpreted as the worship of the Christian God, in itself it is without form and void. Of this divine reverie Rousseau gives us many glimpses; here is one of the less emotional and more attractive, his morning worship at Isle Saint-Pierre: "Immediately I rose from my bed, I never failed, provided the weather was auspicious, to run to the terrace to breathe the fresh and wholesome air of the morning. . . . I know no homage more worthy of the divinity than the silent admiration excited by the contemplation of his works. . . . It is especially at rising, wearied by a want of sleep, that continual habit inclines me to this elevation, *which does not impose the fatigue of thinking*. But to this effect my eyes must be struck with the ravishing views of nature. In my chamber I pray less frequently, and not so fervently; but at the view of a beautiful landscape I feel myself moved, by what power I am unable to tell. I have read somewhere of a wise bishop, who, in a visit to his diocese, found an old woman whose only prayer consisted in the single interjection 'Oh!' 'Good mother,' said he to her, 'continue to pray in this manner. Your prayer is better than ours.'¹ This better prayer is mine also." In experiences such as these God is but the name which he gives to the stimulus for these transports of being. The beauty and wonder of the world mean God.

Beyond the assertions that God is the prime mover of the world, the basis of its goodness, and the source of its beauty, Rousseau professes himself unable to go. He cannot say that his nature is like man's, that he is the sole principle of reality, or that he has created the world. His functions can perhaps best be epitomised as being those of the principle of order in the universe. Rousseau's religious emotions are not those of love, but of admiration. He seeks no favours,

¹ *Confessions*, XII.

he asks no love in return, he is contented to know and feel the perfect harmony of the world.

But while on its naturalistic side the religion of Rousseau sometimes suggests the "amor intellectualis dei" of Spinoza, on its moral side, it shows marked contrasts. The second point in his doctrine is the immortality of the soul and the certainty of rewards and punishments after death. Here we have the position later to be formulated more completely by Kant. The justice of God is invoked for this tenet. Having made man sensitive and having laid on him the duty of virtue, God cannot in justice leave his legitimate demands unsatisfied. Rousseau, like Kant, had no intention of saying that happiness is the reward and sanction of virtue, but only that it is its reasonable completion. His attitude is that of the Psalmist grieved at seeing the wicked flourishing like the green bay tree. "Had I no other proof of the immaterial nature of the soul, the triumph of the wicked and the oppression of the righteous in this world would be enough to convince me. I should seek to resolve so appalling a discord in the universal harmony. . . . I do not say that the good will be rewarded, for what greater good can a truly good being expect than to exist in accordance with his nature? But I do assert that the good will be happy, because their maker, the author of all justice, who has made them capable of feeling, has not made them that they may suffer. . . . This feeling relies not so much on man's deserts as on the idea of good which seems to me inseparable from the divine essence. I only assume that the laws of order are constant and that God is true to Himself."¹

This soul of man is also only to be thought as free. "I am only aware of will through the consciousness of my own will, and intelligence is no better known to me. When you ask me what is the cause which determines my will, it is my turn to ask what cause determines my judgment; for it is plain that these two causes are but one; and if you understand clearly that man is active in his judgments, and that his intelligence is only the power to compare and judge, you will see that his freedom is only a similar power, or one derived from this. He chooses between good and evil, as he judges between truth and falsehood; if his judgment is at fault, he chooses amiss. What then is the cause that determines his will? It is his judgment. And what is the cause that determines his judgment? It is his intelligence, his power of judging: the determining cause is in himself. Beyond that, I understand nothing."² This freedom is thus a spiritual

¹ *Emile*, IV.

² *Ibid.*

spontaneity which distinguishes man from the animate, as well as inanimate, world. It does not involve indifference toward the good, but the absence of external constraint in the choice or rejection of it. It means that his choice is his own and not the effect of an external cause. That the root of the act lies in the judgment rather than in a non-intellectual factor, does not for him affect the moral significance of the choice, for man is responsible for the right use of his judgment. To his wrong choices is due all the evil of the world. "Evil in general can only spring from disorder, and in the order of the world I find a never-failing system. Evil in particular cases exists only in the minds of those who experience it, and this feeling is not the gift of nature, but the work of man himself. Pain has little power over those who, having thought little, look neither before nor after. Take away our fatal progress, take away our faults and our vices, take away man's handiwork, and all is well."¹ The intellectualism of this is perhaps only in apparent conflict with his earlier famous saying, "l'homme qui médite est un animal dépravé".²

This spontaneity of the mind he illustrates further in his theory of knowledge. The fundamental fact is the experience of the self in its sensations. The sensations are of objects which are to be conceived as external to the self and causally related to its sensations, which arise independently of the will. Whether these external objects are themselves ideas or not, is not important; they are at least another than the self. "Through sensation objects present themselves to me separately and singly as they are in nature; by comparing them I rearrange them, I shift them so to speak, I place one upon another to decide whether they are alike or different, or more generally to find out their relations. To my mind, the distinctive faculty of an active or intelligent being is the power of understanding this word 'is'. I seek in vain in the merely sensitive entity that intelligent force which compares and judges; I can find no trace of it in its nature. . . . This power of my mind which brings my sensations together and compares them may be called by any name; let it be called attention, meditation, reflection, or what you will; it is still true that it is in me and not in things, that it is I alone who produce it, though I only produce it when I receive an impression from things. Though I am compelled to feel or not to feel, I am free to examine more or less what I feel."³ Here Rousseau breaks

¹ *Emile*, IV.² *Discours sur l'inégalité*.³ *Emile*, IV.

squarely with Helvétius and ranges himself with "the illustrious Clarke" and the English rationalists.

So, too, in his theory of conduct, the spontaneity of the individual is his principle. There is in man, taken by himself, a native tendency to self-expression and self-preservation, *amour de soi*. This tendency, since man is by nature good and reasonable, is identical with the love of order and justice, and is the root of all the virtues. Had man but remained in the state of nature in which he was created, his goodness would have been but the natural unfolding of a flower in a peaceful garden. Having made the fatal step of organising a social life, however, this same self-love became the root of all the evils. Man learned to compare himself with his fellows, and, with his consciousness of inequality, came pride, envy, and ill-will. Instead of *amour de soi* was *amour propre*. Yet still in our corrupt condition there remains to us the original voice of reason bidding us express our true nature and realise justice in the world. Morality is thus neither a seeking of pleasure nor obedience to law, but the self-expression of a nature fundamentally good.

Rousseau's optimism thus penetrates his whole creed: a benevolent God, who has created a marvellously beautiful world, in which He has placed noble and generous men, who, through the exercise of their wholly desirable freedom, have brought upon themselves evils, which, however, are bound to be redressed in a life beyond the grave, to the reality of which the justice of God is pledged.

If we ask where Rousseau found this optimistic world view, the answer is not far to seek. In its outlines it was identical with that rationalised Christianity then known as Deism and now prevalent as liberal Protestantism. It was Christian Theism minus the doctrines of the fall and redemption. "Born in a family where morality and piety reigned, educated with kindness by a minister full of wisdom and religion, I received from my tenderest childhood principles and maxims, others would say prejudices, which have never entirely left me."¹ Under the influence of Mme. de Warens and nature, he became "*dévot presque à la manière de Fénelon*". Instinctively averse to authoritative dogma, his reading of philosophy and his first intercourse with the sensationalists and naturalists at Paris developed his naturalistic tendency and helped pare down his inherited Christianity. Repelled by the anti-religious extremes of consistent sensationalism he seems to have fallen back upon the

¹ *Rêveries*, III.

English rationalists and sentimentalists, especially Clarke and Shaftesbury, to the former of whom he refers as "the illustrious Clarke who gives light to the world and proclaims the Being of beings and Giver of things,"¹ whose system, so simple yet so great, seems to him freer from contradictions and difficulties than any he has found. The influence of the sentimental optimism of Shaftesbury, known to him through Diderot's translation of the *Inquiry*, is evident throughout his moral theories as well as in his theology.² For the positive contents of his creed, therefore, Rousseau seems to have been indebted to these English believers in a rationalised Christianity. Even for the enthusiasm with which he held it, faint parallels may be found in the Platonising theologians and in Shaftesbury. But the life and spirit of it were his own, and it was these that made it the living force it was for his generation.

Turning now from this inherited content of his faith to that part of his teaching which is more peculiarly his own, we come to the problem of logical method and the basis of belief. And perhaps first it is well to note that Rousseau believes that he had a method. He tells us in his *Rêveries*³ that he had reached the age of forty before he had attained any rational principles of living. Up to that time he had drifted at the mercy of chance influences, distracted from his duties "without scorning them but often without rightly knowing them". In his youth he had fixed upon that age as the limit of his drifting, and now that it had arrived, he withdrew from the world, changed his habits, his costume, and his friends, and thought out for himself a system of principles that might serve him for the rest of his life. These, once adopted after the most earnest investigation, he believed that he ought not again to subject to criticism since he could not hope ever again to be in a better position to test their truth. Constant revision would mean growing uncertainty and practical instability, a condition incompatible with the best conduct of life. Whether it was his years at the Hermitage and at Montmorency, issuing in the publication of his three main works, the *Contrat Social*, the *Nouvelle Héloïse*, and the *Emile*, to which he refers, or the period following the first *Discours* is not quite clear. At any rate, he gives us to understand that, following the

¹ *Emile*, IV.

² For Rousseau's debt to English thought, cf. Ch. Borgeaud, J. J. Rousseau's *Religions-philosophie*, i., 2. Cuendet, *La phil. religieuse de J. J. Rousseau*, I., iii., 111.

Rêveries, III.

example of Descartes, his opinions were the result of systematic doubt and the adoption of a conscious method. To this account it is not possible to give full credence. As usual, Rousseau has read back into his motives the reasons which justified the results. But though we have to explain his retirement and philosophic activity by motives more human than youthful resolve, it is true that in his fifth decade he was forced, in self-defence, to examine the grounds of his instinctive beliefs and to justify them before his world. That his doubt at this time extended beyond the proofs of his beliefs to the beliefs themselves is far from likely. Rousseau's temper was too strongly emotional and too little intellectual to subject him to any agonies of doubt. "They had not persuaded me," he writes of his former friends, "but they had disquieted me. Their arguments had shaken me, without ever convincing me. I could find no good reply but I felt there must be one. I accused myself of unskillfulness rather than of error, and my heart replied better than my reason."¹ His task during these critical years, therefore, consisted in making clear to himself the grounds of his faith, in finding, as Mr. Bradley would say, bad reasons for what he believed upon instinct.

And in the first place it is significant that Rousseau does offer reasons for his beliefs. He has no intention of dividing human nature sharply against itself, and relying upon instinct to the exclusion of reason. His inclination seems rather to go with reason as far as it will carry him and then in its extremity take refuge in feeling. As in orthodox scholastic circles, reason is a good propaedeutic to faith. And so in the *Profession of Faith* in the *Emile*, we find the usual rationalistic proofs for the existence of God, based upon the natural inertia of matter and the necessity for a Prime Mover, whose intelligence and benevolence are implied in the order and goodness of the world. It might be the voice of Newton or Clarke we hear in these physical considerations, adduced for the support of this theological tenet. So, too, in the discussion of the nature and immortality of the soul, while it is the moral argument upon which he ultimately relies, he is at pains to make clear the metaphysical point as to the natural distinctness of soul and body and the consequent possibility of their separation. Nor is there any suggestion that these reasonings are not valid or even that their validity rests upon their utility. He seems as dogmatic as the rationalistic theologians.

But in the next breath his voice may be raised against

¹ *Réveries*, III.

reason and its friends, especially against its friends. No term is too harsh for him to use about the members of the materialistic group of whom he was once the associate. Any doctrine advocated by them was for Rousseau suspect. The frivolity and insincerity of their lives vitiated for him their teachings. "Their passions which governed their doctrines, their interest in making this or that believed, rendered it impossible to discover what they themselves believed. Can one look for good faith among party leaders?"¹ Conscious of the part played by the passions in his own life, he is inclined to demand moral integrity as the condition of intellectual leadership, if not of the attainment of truth itself.

Whether this distrust of the pronounced votaries of reason in his own circle had anything to do with it or not, we find him advocating a conception of belief in which reason plays a minor rôle. Undoubtedly the main explanation of his position is to be found in the felt inadequacy of reason to prove that which he believed. He could not but realise that that perfect world which was the object of his enthusiasm, and that moral order which was the standard of his life, were not capable of demonstration by any logical processes known to man. The severe and barren theodicy of the rationalistic deist might rest on such a logical basis, but not the emotionally satisfying system of Rousseau. Hence after having discussed the attributes of God he concludes: "If I have succeeded in discerning these attributes of which I have no absolute idea, it is in the form of unavoidable deductions, and by the right use of my reason ; but I affirm them without understanding them, and at bottom that is no affirmation at all. In vain do I say, God is thus, I feel it, I experience it, none the more do I understand how God can be thus. In a word, the more I try to envisage His infinite essence, the less do I comprehend it ; but it is, and that is enough for me ; the less I understand the more I adore. I abase myself saying, 'Being of beings, I am because Thou art : to fix my thoughts on Thee is to ascend to the source of my being. The best use I can make of my reason is to resign it before Thee ; my mind delights, my weakness rejoices, to feel myself overwhelmed by Thy greatness.'"² And in his letter to Voltaire he writes: "I admit frankly that neither the affirmative nor the negative seem to me demonstrated by the light of reason alone, and that if the theist only founds his faith on probabilities, the atheist still less

¹ *Rêveries*, III.

² *Emile*, IV.

exact founds his on the contrary probabilities."¹ And again he complains that men are "ignorant of just that which it is the most important for them to know, man. We see neither the soul of another, because it is concealed, nor our own, for we have no mirror of the mind. Born blind, we have no conception of sight and, unconscious that any faculty is lacking, wish to measure the limits of the world, though our short telescopes, like our hands, reach but two feet before us!"² "The jargon of metaphysics has never led to the discovery of a single truth, and it has filled philosophy with absurdities of which we are ashamed as soon as we strip them of their long words."³ And in a letter to Moulton he explains that he has used this "jargon" because the materialists, whom he wishes to refute in the *Profession of Faith*, understood no other.⁴ His conclusion of the matter is: "Sans le sentiment interne, il ne resterait bientôt plus traces de verité sur la terre".⁵

But when we come to consider what Rousseau offers as substitute or supplement for reason, exact statements fail us. That there is an organ of religious and moral truth other than reason he asserts freely, but what it is and what are its relations to reason, he nowhere clearly says. The names for it are various, *sentiment*, *sentiment interne* or *intérieure*, *conscience*, *lumière naturelle*, *instinct moral*. By these terms he means to indicate a kind of immediate and infallible source of truth native to man and free from the possibility of error inherent in the reasoning processes. By this means man comes in contact with super-sensible reality and is furnished with the spiritual facts upon which his moral and religious life is built. Although these facts may not be explicable or reducible to system or even consonant with ordinary scientific views, they have a certainty and necessity which makes them the fixed points in any complete philosophy of life. Against these rocks the waves of rational scepticism and dogmatism beat in vain.

As applied to moral truth, the term conscience is the usual one, and we have the orthodox doctrine of its infallibility. He defines it as "an innate principle of justice and virtue". "Too often does reason deceive us; we have only too good a right to doubt her; but conscience never deceives us. She is the true guide of man; she is to the soul what instinct is to the body; he who obeys his conscience is following nature

¹ *Lettre à Voltaire*, 18th August, 1756.

² *Lettres sur la vertu et le bonheur*.

³ *Emile*, IV.

⁴ *Lettre à Moulton*, 1st August, 1763.

⁵ Cf. Cuendet, *op. cit.*, ii., 1. *Le scepticisme de Rousseau*.

and need not fear that he will go astray.”¹ And yet although he claims infallibility for it, he insists that “the decrees of conscience are not judgments but feelings. Although all our ideas come from without, the feelings by which they are weighed are within us, and it is by these feelings alone that we perceive the fitness or unfitness of things in relation to ourselves, which leads us to seek or shun these things.”² “To know good is not to love it; this knowledge is not innate in man; but as soon as his reason leads him to perceive it, his conscience impels him to love it. It is this feeling which is innate.”³ In a note he tries to minimise this distinction between idea and feeling by pointing out that it is a matter of emphasis, “when we are chiefly concerned with the object and only think of ourselves as it were by reflection, that is an idea. When, on the other hand the impression received excites our chief attention, and we only think secondarily of the object causing it, it is a feeling.” Conscience is thus the instinctive emotional reaction to situations the nature and meaning of which are learned from experience. It is not the imperative of Kant or even the intuition of the neo-Stoics, but the moral sense of Shaftsbury.

But this organ of truth is not merely moral in its function, it is the source of an ultimate world view. By it we know that God is, and that there is a future life of rewards and punishments. Here the theory meets with more difficulty. It is not so hard to conceive that there is an instinctive reaction by which we respond to the value for us of various situations, our satisfactions and dissatisfactions indicating the real worth of conduct, for the world of values seems naturally related to our feelings, but when these same feelings are made the basis for belief in an objective order, the matter becomes not so clear. Apparently, as in the case of the conscience, strictly so called, he does not mean to assert the power of the feelings to give us new ideas for he recognises clearly enough that his religious ideas have had a history and are due psychologically to the associations of his childhood and youth.⁴ This sentiment, therefore, must be also a subjective evaluation or test of the truth of ideas elsewhere derived. It is our emotional touchstone by which we distinguish the true gold from the false. Hesitating between theism and atheism, finding no compelling objective reason for decision, the strong emotional value of the former forces it upon our acceptance with an intensity and intimacy which are a substitute for reasons. It ought to be true therefore

¹ *Emile*, IV.² *Ibid.*³ *Ibid.*⁴ *Réveries*, III.

it must be true. It fits in with the ideas we cherish, and gives organic unity to life. Lost in rapture at the vision of the divine there can be no question of doubt for Rousseau: "Quand je veux m'élever à lui je ne sais où je suis; n'apercevant aucun rapport entre lui et moi, je ne sais pas où l'atteindre, je ne vois ni ne sens plus rien, je me trouve dans une espèce d'anéantissement."¹ It is not a case of his accepting an idea but of being possessed by it.

Granted, then, that the feelings are not a revelatory, but a ratifying, faculty, there comes the question of validity. And here there meets us the problem of the pragmatism of Rousseau. In spite of the fact that the ambiguity of the term makes the use of it relatively safe, it also makes it undesirable to apply it without care. Recently Prof. Schinz² has included Rousseau among the objects of his anti-pragmatism crusade and has been followed in his classification by Cuendet and Hibben.³ That there is some ground for this classification is beyond doubt. Rousseau by temper and inclination is true to the type. The theory would have found him a willing convert, offering him salvation from the mechanical logic of his time. But to recognise that this modern theory of truth would have answered his needs and clarified his thought, is not to attribute it to him. The distinctions in the history of thought are as real as the continuity and a doctrine of preformation is no more useful in history than in biology. While Rousseau, therefore, exhibits points of agreement with James and Schiller, his points of difference are equally vital.

In the first place he agrees with them in his emphasis upon useful knowledge. Emile is to be guarded from useless science: "The question is not to know what is, but only what is useful".⁴ "I am content if he knows the 'wherefore' of his actions and the 'why' of his beliefs. For once more my object is not to supply him with exact knowledge, but with the means of getting it when required, to teach him to value it at its true worth, and to love truth above all things."⁵ These passages Prof. Schinz cites as evidence that truth for Rousseau means "practical truth" in opposition to science. It is evident enough that he is drawing such a contrast here, but the slightest acquaintance with the remainder of the book should suffice to show that far from identifying truth in general with useful truth, such utilities are for him but fragments of the great body of knowledge

¹ *Nouvelle Héloïse*, v., 5.

² *The Monist*, 1909.

³ Cuendet, *op. cit.*, i., 11. Hibben, *Phil. of the Enlightenment*, p. 157.

⁴ *Emile*, III.

⁵ *Ibid.*

from which must be carefully selected the parts suitable for youth. As the former quotation implies, there is a knowledge of what is, apart from what is useful, though it is not for the child and rarely for the man. The doctrine is educational not logical. Were we to take such practicality as evidence of pragmatic logic we must accuse most of the moralists of the age of Queen Anne.¹ That he agrees with Pope as to the proper study of mankind implies that there are other studies which the unwise may improperly pursue, improperly, not because they do not lead to knowledge but because they do not lead to virtue. So too, his comment on himself that "I have never seen him listen calmly to any theory that he believed harmful to the public weal,"² refers to no theory of truth but indicates the primacy of his moral interest or the hastiness of his moral prejudice. To the same effect is his statement: "I know only that the truth is in the things and not in my mind which judges them, and that the less I put of my own in my judgments about them, the surer I am to come near the truth: thus my rule, to listen to sentiment more than to reason, is supported by reason itself".³ Whatever we may think about the consistency of this testimony of reason against itself, it is clear that Rousseau has in mind no doctrine of subjectivity here but is appealing to an intuitive sentiment which, as giving immediate contact with an objective order, is more reliable than those mediate processes which are liable to be vitiated by the disturbing effects of conscious purpose. The mind does not create or form truth, it finds it, and its organ is this feeling or intuitive reason.⁴

In the second place, his doctrine shows pragmatic colouring in the place given to the feelings as grounds of belief. Not merely do they determine our judgments, but they have a right to do so. Passages could be multiplied in illustration of this contention: perhaps the following are typical. "You say that my reason chooses the sentiment that my heart prefers, and I do not deny it. That is what happens in every deliberation where the judgment has not enough light to decide without the help of the will."⁵ With reference to the immortality of the soul he writes: "As this assumption is consoling and in itself not unreasonable, why should I fear to

¹ Cf. J. Texte, *J. J. Rousseau and the Cosmopolitan Spirit in Literature*.

² *Dialogues*, II.

³ *Emile*, IV.

⁴ Cf. Parodi, *La phil. religieuse de J. J. Rousseau, Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*, 1913.

⁵ *Dialogues*, II.

accept it?" "All the subtleties of metaphysics would not make me doubt the immortality of the soul and the reality of a benevolent Providence. I feel it, I believe it, I wish it, I hope it, and I will defend it to my last breath."¹ And in his reply to the Archbishop of Paris he suggests that some day, when wearied of fruitless discussions about creeds, men will come together in an assembly from which theologians would be excluded, and will agree upon the creed most useful to man for "We may by this means hope to approach as near to the truth as possible to men; for we may assume that what is most useful to the creature of his hand is most agreeable to the Creator".² "The inner proof or that of sentiment is the only one which can render all the others invincible."³ And the Vicar's final appeal to Emile begins: "My son, keep your soul in such a state that you will always desire that there should be a God and you will never doubt it."⁴

Confining our attention to passages such as these, and ignoring those in which the belief is one which concerns values, for here Rousseau recognises that "*La vérité morale n'est pas ce qui est, mais ce qui est bien,*" we find that while his doctrine is almost identical with that of the will to believe, it is not pragmatic. What he is contending for is just that which James explained was his own real object, the right to believe in cases where objective and conclusive evidence is lacking. So far is he from ignoring the existence and value of such objective grounds that his own position was assumed only *after critical, or would-be critical, examination* of such evidence. He admits: "I do not doubt, it is true, that the prejudices of childhood and the secret longings of my heart have weighed down the balance on the side most comforting for me. It is hard to keep from believing what one desires with so much ardour, and who can doubt that the interest for or against the judgments as to the future life decides the faith of most men as to their hopes and fears? All that might fascinate my judgment, I am sure, but not affect my good faith, for I feared deceiving myself on every point." The issue being the grave one of risking eternal life for the pleasures of the world, it was necessary to reach some conviction. Unable to solve all the mysteries involved, "I adopted in each question the belief which seemed to me the best established immediately, the most credible in itself, without stopping for objections which I could not resolve, but which were confuted by other objections not less strong in the opposed system".⁵

¹ *Lettre à Voltaire.*

² *Lettre à Ch. Beaumont.*

³ *Nouvelle Héloïse*, V., v.

⁴ *Emile*, IV.

⁵ *Rêveries*, III.

Whether this account of his own procedure is biographically correct or not, there is no doubt that it gives the key to the interpretation of his various statements of doctrine. However slight his interest was in pure science he never meant to substitute for it faith. So far as an objective procedure could go he was willing to go with it. But when the path of reason lost itself in a confusion of issueless alternatives he claimed the right of committing himself to this "instinct of the soul". He took no pains to mark out the limits of reason as did Kant, nor did he, as James, define the conditions under which it was reasonable to exercise the right to believe, but his thought is similar; there is a field for reason but it is limited, and there are conditions under which we must believe without proof. Those conditions, as implied in the passage just quoted, are a vital issue, a living option, and the silence or contradictions of reason. In such a situation it is the part of wisdom to fall back upon that which commends itself immediately to our natural feeling. It is a case of rationalist rogues falling out and honest men getting their due. In Rousseau's conception this honest common-sense nature which comes to its own expresses itself in the form of an emotionally welcomed intuition, rather than in the will, as in the doctrine of James. His emphasis is upon the feeling of the truth or the seeing of the fact, rather than upon the legitimacy of the conduct based upon an assumption. The right to cherish a lovely vision, rather than to lead a strenuous life, is that for which he contends, to be a hearer, rather than a doer, of the word.

The passage in the letter to the Archbishop of Paris seems to suggest, perhaps, more of a pragmatic tendency than has been admitted, but when we consider its context it loses its significance. Far from discussing the nature of truth, Rousseau is here concerned with the question of external unity in public worship, with *la religion civile*, as he calls it in the *Contrat Social*. A pronounced individualist in personal religion, he recognises the necessity for, and at the same time the difficulty in attaining, some unity in the religious life of a people. The state cannot tolerate every variety of belief. Unable to reach a common body of doctrine upon rational grounds, the only resource is to agree upon a system useful to the state, in the belief that the promotion of the welfare of man is the object of the divine will. The problem is a purely practical one, essentially a political rather than a philosophical matter. That Rousseau believes that the useful doctrine is true, is quite probable, but he has no intention here of making its utility the essence of its truth.

On the contrary, the implication is rather that there is an objective order of truth to which we can at best but approximate. As good citizens it is the part of contentious sectaries to lay aside their private dogmas and realise the true end of civic religion, the welfare of the state.

Nor in his advice to Emile, does Rousseau mean to found belief in God upon desire. To desire the existence of God means for him to be in a state of mind free from pride and self seeking and accordingly more ready to recognise the objective truth revealed in feeling. "The silence of the passions" is for him an indispensable condition for the reception of truth, and it is this that is implied in the desire for the existence of God. The real ground for that belief would be not in the desire but in the inner voice which makes itself heard in this silence, in the conviction felt when nature has had a chance to speak.

If now, we ask what ground there is for believing that these intuitive convictions are true, we are thrown back again upon Rousseau's fundamental optimism. Human nature, as the product of a good God, is essentially and primitively good. Our original instincts and cognitive data are given by God and are adapted by him to our practical and cognitive needs. If we can only free ourselves from the disturbing influences of civilisation, strip ourselves of the accretions of error due to our wilful mistakes, and regain something of the simplicity of vision with which we were originally endowed, we may hope to attain truth. It is this optimistic prejudice which lies at the root of the popular Stoic and even Christian doctrine, that gives to immediate feeling its weight with Rousseau. The ideas thus accredited are not man-made, but are part of the universal heredity from God.

The apparent circle involved in making belief in God depend upon feeling and feeling depend for its validity upon belief in God, means that Rousseau has reached his ultimate here. His optimism, or his belief in God, is his primary postulate, rooted in his emotional temper. It has no logical ground but only psychological fixity. Accepting it as he must, its existence and validity then seem natural upon the basis of its content. Like Descartes, he feels that whatever has the same kind of certainty, as this idea of God, must be true, for God would not deceive him, only with Rousseau the certainty is one of feeling and not of insight. This optimistic postulate he does not make explicit in his logic, but it lies at the root of his thinking not only in religion, but in politics, social theory, and education. Thinking is

one of the artificialities of life, one of the luxuries of a corrupt civilization, and as such its results are less trustworthy than the simple intuitions of a state of nature.

If, then, we understand by pragmatism a general theory of knowledge which denies the objectivity of truth, and places its essence in its utility, we must refuse to identify with it this theory of Rousseau. At the same time we must recognise his likeness in personal temper to pragmatists of the type of James, a likeness which shows itself in his impatience of useless knowledge and his interest in defending a sphere for the exercise of faith. But his real place is with the intuitionists of the Platonising school, with the men of enthusiasm and of vision, believers in an Absolute to be felt and seen, rather than to be thought. In this respect he is the forerunner of Jacobi and the faith philosophers with their opposition of *Vernunft* and *Verstand* and their rejection of demonstration. To Pascal, too, we can recognise his debt in spite of the contrast in spirit. There is the same distrust of reason in matters of faith, the same sense of the necessity of practical choice in the absence of knowledge, the same reliance on the reasons of the heart—but here the likeness ends. Pascal is a Christian, Rousseau, in spite of his profession, is not. For the former, the only escape from the ignorance and misery of life is by the *salto mortale* of faith in the supernatural revelation of God. Even this faith itself is a gift of God to a human nature too radically evil to will its own salvation. For the latter, truth is to be had by a return to the natural innocence of the heart. For Rousseau there is no tragedy, no agony, no great gulf fixed between fallen man and his salvation, his destiny is in his own hands. In Pascal's classification it is with the Stoics that Rousseau would belong. With Kant his relation is more largely one of stimulus than of logical likeness. It was to his preaching of anti-intellectualism in morals and religion that Kant recognised himself as indebted.¹ But, while they are at one in their belief that these aspects of life have a foundation other than that of science, they differ in their conception of what it is. Instead of the postulates of the moral life, Rousseau relies upon the primitive instincts of human nature, upon an intuition which, while not the *intellectuelle Anschauung* which Kant rejects, is, in its immediacy, liker to the *Vernunft* of the faith philosophers than to the practical reason of Kant. In this respect he is not so far along the path to pragmatism as is his more illustrious successor.

¹ Hartenstein, ed., viii. 618, 642; cf. V. Delbos, *Rousseau et Kant, Revue de métaphysique et de morale*, 1912, also his *La phil. pratique de Kant*, ch. ii.