

THE HUMANIST THEORY OF VALUE.

MR. QUICK's article in this periodical for April had a special interest for me, arising from the circumstance that, in my anti-pragmatist days (now happily passed) I was vexed by the same difficulties and moved to urge substantially the same objections to pragmatism as those which are so well presented in Mr. Quick's Criticism of Humanism. In my discussions with Prof. James and Dr. Schiller (see *Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Method*, vol. iii., No. 22; vol. iv., Nos. 3, 11, 18 and 29) I charged my pragmatist friends with logical inconsistency in first asserting that truth is valuable, and then asserting that truth and value connote the same matter viewed from different points in experience. It seemed clear to me then, as it apparently now does to Mr. Quick, that the proposition which asserts, Every truth has value of some sort, logically implies that the truth itself or the true idea must be other than value; and only because it is other than value can it have valuable consequences in experience. This reduction of truth to value seemed as absurd to my anti-pragmatist mind as the confounding of the utility value of an instrument with the instrument itself. Who would say that, since the value of a knife consists in its cutting well, therefore this cutting well is the knife itself, or is the same thing as the properties of the steel and the structure of the knife on which this cutting value depends? But, not to continue this accident of my experience with pragmatism, I will merely say that it was by a more thorough re-examination of my own reasonings, under the stimulus of the counter-challenge of the pragmatist, to find any really significant and verifiable meaning of the terms truth, value, etc., if the pragmatist meaning is rejected, that I was led to the conviction that Pragmatism is not only a logically tenable doctrine, but it offers a more satisfactory solution of the problem of knowledge than does the theory it displaces.

In justification of this position, I will now indicate how a pragmatist can successfully meet Mr. Quick's criticism of his theory of value.

And first, I do not think the pragmatist will accept Mr. Quick's suggestion that the term pragmatism be restricted "to the logical method which asserts that the truth of all judgments is to be tested by the value they are found to possess, and to reserve the term humanism for the epistemological theory, that truth itself is a kind of value". Whatever may be the difference between pragmatism

and humanism, that difference is not based upon the relation of truth to value. It is upon this relation of truth to value that Mr. Quick centres his criticism of the doctrine that truth is a species of value. He appears to assume that the humanist derives this proposition from the proposition that the value of judgments varies as their truth. And this inference Mr. Quick maintains is invalid.

Now, what really does the pragmatist mean, when he couples these two propositions? True ideas or judgments are those which are valuable. The truth of an idea or judgment is its value in experience. Is not his meaning merely this, Value for our human purposes and needs is the necessary mark of a true idea, because it is all that can be meant by the trueness of this idea. Consequently where you find this mark, you may know that you have a true idea. Value is both the essence of a true idea, and the sign of its presence in an idea. The function of a true idea is to institute, control and guide experience processes to a satisfying issue. This manner of functioning is just what is meant by the truth of the idea; and an idea makes good its claim to truth by this functional value. Therefore the value of an idea and the truth of an idea are names for essentially the same thing. Now, it is against this fundamental proposition of pragmatism that Mr. Quick directs his criticism (pp. 222 ff.).

Against this theory of truth as value, he urges an objection which he apparently regards as an insuperable one. It is the existence of certain beliefs which he maintains "have value for our lives only in so far as they are held to be other than valuations". Of this character are the beliefs of religious people, belief in God, belief in a next world; and historical beliefs.

In the case of our religious beliefs, Mr. Quick contends that it is just because their belief in God is held to express truth irrespective of its value for life, that this belief has such enormous value for life. In the case of historic truths Mr. Quick's contention is that the belief that historic truth is other than a value is essential to the value of this belief. He further asserts that, in order to establish the truth of these beliefs by the method of pragmatism one must "assume the falsehood of the humanist's theory of truth" (p. 224).

Now, I do not think the Pragmatist doctrine of truth is open to the objections Mr. Quick urges. I can see no such crux before the humanist in the instance cited. Take the belief in God. Let me, as a pragmatist, ask Mr. Quick what content of truth is there left in his idea of God, when there has been subtracted from that idea all that connotes value for our human lives in the way of putting us into experientially good relations with God, such as trust, reverence, obedience, expectancy, satisfied wants, etc. Will Mr. Quick answer: "I mean by the truth of this belief, the objective reality of God, which must be other than value in order that it may be of value to us that God is"? Then, let him undertake clearly to define this reality in any other terms than those which do not

connote values either for our human lives or for conscious experience of a non-human type, and I am quite sure he will be unable to do so. Will Mr. Quick's answer be. "By a *true* idea of God, I mean an idea that agrees with or corresponds to what God really is"? Then, my challenge is, to give any significant and verifiable meaning to these terms, "agree with," "correspond to," which does not make them merely names for concrete experiences of realised purposes, satisfied wants, sustained moral endeavours, comforted sorrows, harmonised discords in thoughts or feelings, and the peace of mind that comes when our total experiences are brought into unity. Can Mr. Quick show what other function a true idea of God can have if it be not just this control and guiding of our experiences, to other experiential states, mean goals won, purposes fulfilled, dissatisfactions removed and wants satisfied? Is not *this* the real agreement with God which Mr. Quick ought to mean, and is his true idea of God other than an instrument of our thought to effect just this agreement? Now, if this functioning of the idea of God be itself not a value, pray what else can a value be?

Let Mr. Quick or any other objector to pragmatism tell us what there is left to a true idea of God that is not resolvable into value as I have indicated. I think the pragmatist can safely challenge his critic to point out this residuum of meaning that is not value of some sort. What I have maintained concerning the belief in God holds true of the other beliefs cited by Mr. Quick, and I need not discuss them in detail.

The conclusion of the matter is that, in my opinion, Mr. Quick's criticism of the humanist theory of value is not successful. He has not established his proposition, *viz.*, Truth can have value only if truth be other than value. He has not yet shown what that "other than value" is; and until he does so, the humanist theory remains intact.

Nor does it seem to me difficult for the humanist to discriminate a logical value of certain ideas from other values, say æsthetic, ethical or religious values. Ideas which function so as to effect harmonious, coherent and satisfying experiences, or which bring us into such experiential connexion with reality as to remove dissatisfactions, discontinuities, and lead to the fulfilment of purposes. *Such ideas* have logical value or truth value. And to define the truth of such ideas in terms of value is by no means to destroy the value of truth as Mr. Quick asserts.

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