

Philosophy's Search for the Immutable

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In the previous chapter, we noted incidentally the distinction made in the classic tradition between knowledge and belief, or, as Locke put it, between knowledge and judgment. According to this distinction the certain and knowledge are co-extensive. Disputes exist, but they are whether sensation or reason affords the basis of certainty; or whether existence or essence is its object. In contrast with this identification, the very word "belief" is eloquent on the topic of certainty. We believe in the absence of knowledge or complete assurance. Hence the quest for certainty has always been an effort to transcend belief. Now since, as we have already noted, all matters of practical action involve an element of uncertainty, we can ascend from belief to knowledge only by isolating the latter from practical doing and making.

In this chapter we are especially concerned with the effect of the ideal of certainty as something superior to belief upon the conception of the nature and function of philosophy. Greek thinkers saw clearly—and logically—that experience cannot furnish us, as respects cognition of existence, with anything more than contingent probability. Experience cannot deliver to us necessary truths; truths completely demonstrated by reason. Its conclusions are particular, not universal. Not being "exact" they come short of "science." Thus there arose the distinction between rational truths or, in modern terminology, truths relating to the relation of ideas, and "truths" about matters of existence, empirically ascertained. Thus not merely the arts of practice, industrial and social, were stamped matters of belief rather than of knowledge, but also all those sciences which are matters of inductive inference from observation.

One might indulge in the reflection that they are none the worse for all that, especially since the natural sciences have developed a technique for achieving a high degree of probability and for measuring, within assignable limits, the amount of probability which attaches in particular cases to conclusions. But historically the matter is not so simple as to permit of this retort. For empirical or observational sciences were placed in invidious contrast to rational sciences which dealt with eter-

nal and universal objects and which therefore were possessed of necessary truth. Consequently all observational sciences as far as their material could not be subsumed under forms and principles supplied by rational science shared in the depreciatory view held about practical affairs. They are relatively low, secular and profane compared with the perfect realities of rational science.

And here is a justification for going back to something as remote in time as Greek philosophy. The whole classic tradition down to our day has continued to hold a slighting view of experience as such, and to hold up as the proper goal and ideal of true knowledge realities which even if they are located in empirical things cannot be known by experimental methods. The logical consequence for philosophy itself is evident. Upon the side of method, it has been compelled to claim for itself the possession of a method issuing from reason itself, and having the warrant of reason, independently of experience. As long as the view obtained that nature itself is truly known by the same rational method, the consequences—at least those which were evident—were not serious. There was no break between philosophy and genuine science—or what was conceived to be such. In fact, there was not even a distinction; there were simply various branches of philosophy, metaphysical, logical, natural, moral, etc., in a descending scale of demonstrative certainty. Since, according to the theory, the subject-matter of the lower sciences was inherently of a different character from that of true knowledge, there was no ground for rational dissatisfaction with the lower degree of knowledge called belief. Inferior knowledge or belief corresponded to the inferior state of subject-matter.

The scientific revolution of the seventeenth century effected a great modification. Science itself through the aid of mathematics carried the scheme of demonstrative knowledge over to natural objects. The "laws" of the natural world had that fixed character which in the older scheme had belonged only to rational and ideal forms. A mathematical science of nature couched in mechanistic terms claimed to be the only sound natural philosophy. Hence the older philosophies lost alliance with natu-

ral knowledge and the support that had been given to philosophy by them. Philosophy in maintaining its claim to be a superior form of knowledge was compelled to take an invidious and so to say malicious attitude toward the conclusions of natural science. The framework of the old tradition had in the meantime become embedded in Christian theology, and through religious teaching was made a part of the inherited culture of those innocent of any technical philosophy. Consequently, the rivalry between philosophy and the new science, with respect to the claim to know reality, was converted in effect into a rivalry between the spiritual values guaranteed by the older philosophic tradition and the conclusions of natural knowledge. The more science advanced the more it seemed to encroach upon the special province of the territory over which philosophy had claimed jurisdiction. Thus philosophy in its classic form became a species of apologetic justification for belief in an ultimate reality in which the values which should regulate life and control conduct are securely enstated.

There are undoubted disadvantages in the historic manner of approach to the problem which has been followed. It may readily be thought either that the Greek formulation which has been emphasized has no especial pertinency with respect to modern thought and especially to contemporary philosophy; or that no philosophical statement is of any great importance for the mass of non-philosophic persons. Those interested in philosophy may object that the criticisms passed are directed if not at a man of straw at least to positions that have long since lost their actuality. Those not friendly to any form of philosophy may inquire what import they have for any except professed philosophers.

The first type of objection will be dealt with somewhat *in extenso* in the succeeding chapter, in which I shall try to show how modern philosophies, in spite of their great diversity, have been concerned with problems of adjustment of the conclusions of modern science to the chief religious and moral tradition of the western world; together with the way in which these problems are connected with retention of the conception of the relation of knowledge to reality formulated in Greek

thought. At the point in the discussion now reached, it suffices to point out that, in spite of great changes in detail, the notion of a separation between knowledge and action, theory and practice, has been perpetuated, and that the beliefs connected with action are taken to be uncertain and inferior in value compared with those inherently connected with objects of knowledge, so that the former are securely established only as they derived from the latter. Not the specific content of Greek thought is pertinent to present problems, but its insistence that security is measured by certainty of knowledge, while the latter is measured by adherence to fixed and immutable objects, which therefore are independent of what men do in practical activity.

The other objection is of a different sort. It comes from those who feel that not merely Greek philosophy but philosophy in any form is remote from all significant human concern. It is willing to admit or rather assert that it is presumptuous for philosophy to lay claim to knowledge of a higher order than that given by natural science, but it also holds that this is no great matter in any case except for professional philosophers.

There would be force in this latter objection were it not that those who make it hold for the most part the same philosophy of certainty and its proper object that is held by philosophers, save in an inchoate form. They are not interested in the notion that philosophic thought is a special means of attaining this object and the certainty it affords, but they are far from holding, either explicitly or implicitly, that the arts of intelligently directed action are the means by which security of values are to be attained. With respect to certain ends and goods they accept this idea. But in thinking of these ends and values as material, as related to health, wealth, control of conditions for the sake of an inferior order of consequences, they retain the same division between a higher reality and a lower that is formulated in classic philosophy. They may be innocent of the vocabulary that speaks of reason, necessary truth, the universal, things in themselves and appearances. But they incline to believe that there is some other road than that of action, directed by knowledge, to

achieve ultimate security of higher ideals and purposes. They think of practical action as necessary for practical utilities, but they mark off practical utilities from spiritual and ideal values. Philosophy did not originate the underlying division. It only gave intellectual formulation and justification to ideas that were operative in men's minds generally. And the elements of these ideas are as active in present culture as they ever were in the past. Indeed, through the diffusion of religious doctrines, the idea that ultimate values are a matter of special revelation and are to be embodied in life by special means radically different from the arts of action that deal with lower and lesser ends has been accentuated in the popular mind.

Here is the point which is of general human import instead of concern merely to professional philosophers. What about the security of values, of the things which are admirable, honorable, to be approved of and striven for? It is probably in consequence of the derogatory view held of practice that the question of the secure place of values in human experience is so seldom raised in connection with the problem of the relation of knowledge and practice. But upon any view concerning the status of action, the scope of the latter cannot be restricted to self-seeking acts, nor to those of a prudential aspect, nor in general to things of expediency and what are often termed "utilitarian" affairs. The maintenance and diffusion of intellectual values, of moral excellencies, the esthetically admirable, as well as the maintenance of order and decorum in human relations are dependent upon what men do.

Whether because of the emphasis of traditional religion upon salvation of the personal soul or for some other reason, there is a tendency to restrict the ultimate scope of morals to the reflex effect of conduct on one's self. Even utilitarianism, with all its seeming independence of traditional theology and its emphasis upon the general good as the criterion for judging conduct, insisted in its hedonistic psychology upon private pleasure as the motive for action. The idea that the stable and expanding institution of all things that make life worth while throughout all human relationships is the real object of *all* intelligent

conduct is depressed from view by the current conception of morals as a special kind of action chiefly concerned with either the virtues or the enjoyments of individuals in their personal capacities. In changed form, we still retain the notion of a division of activity into two kinds having very different worths. The result is the depreciated meaning that has come to be attached to the very meaning of the "practical" and the useful. Instead of being extended to cover all forms of action by means of which all the values of life are extended and rendered more secure, including the diffusion of the fine arts and the cultivation of taste, the processes of education and all activities which are concerned with rendering human relationships more significant and worthy, the meaning of "practical" is limited to matters of ease, comfort, riches, bodily security and police order, possibly health, etc., things which in their isolation from other goods can only lay claim to restricted and narrow value. In consequence, these subjects are handed over to technical sciences and arts; they are no concern of "higher" interests which feel that no matter what happens to inferior goods in the vicissitudes of natural existence, the highest values are immutable characters of the ultimately real.

Our depreciatory attitude toward "practice" would be modified if we habitually thought of it in its most liberal sense, and if we surrendered our customary dualism between two separate kinds of value, one intrinsically higher and one inherently lower. We should regard practice as the only means (other than accident) by which whatever is judged to be honorable, admirable, approvable can be kept in concrete experienceable existence. In this connection the entire import of "morals" would be transformed. How much of the tendency to ignore permanent objective consequences in differences made in natural and social relations; and how much of the emphasis upon personal and internal motives and dispositions irrespective of what they objectively produce and sustain are products of the habitual depreciation of the worth of action in comparison with forms of mental processes, of thought and sentiment, which make no objective difference in things themselves?

It would be possible to argue (and, I think,

with much justice) that failure to make action central in the search for such security as is humanly possible is a survival of the impotency of men in those stages of civilization when he had few means of regulating and utilizing the conditions upon which the occurrence of consequences depend. As long as man was unable by means of the arts of practice to direct the course of events, it was natural for him to seek an emotional substitute; in the absence of actual certainty in the midst of a precarious and hazardous world, men cultivated all sorts of things that would give them the *feeling* of certainty. And it is possible that, when not carried to an illusory point, the cultivation of the feeling gave man courage and confidence and enabled him to carry the burdens of life more successfully. But one could hardly seriously contend that this fact, if it be such, is one upon which to found a reasoned philosophy.

It is to the conception of philosophy that we come back. No mode of action can, as we have insisted, give anything approaching absolute certitude; it provides insurance but no assurance. Doing is always subject to peril, to the danger of frustration. When men began to reflect philosophically it seemed to them altogether too risky to leave the place of values at the mercy of acts the results of which are never sure. This precariousness might hold as far as empirical existence, existence in the sensible and phenomenal world, is concerned; but this very uncertainty seemed to render it the more needful that ideal goods should be shown to have, by means of knowledge of the most assured type, an indefeasible and inexpugnable position in the realm of the ultimately real. So at least we may imagine men to have reasoned. And to-day many persons find a peculiar consolation in the face of the unstable and dubious presence of values in actual experience by projecting a perfect form of good into a realm of essence, if not into a heaven beyond the earthly skies, wherein their authority, if not their existence, is wholly unshakeable.

Instead of asking how far this process is of that compensatory kind with which recent psychology has made us familiar, we are inquiring into the effect upon philosophy. It will not be denied, I suppose, that the chief aim of those

philosophies which I have called classical, has been to show that the realities which are the objects of the highest and most necessary knowledge are also endowed with the values which correspond to our best aspirations, admirations and approvals. That, one may say, is the very heart of all traditional philosophic idealisms. There is a pathos, having its own nobility, in philosophies which think it their proper office to give an intellectual or cognitive certification to the ontological reality of the highest values. It is difficult for men to see desire and choice set earnestly upon the good and yet being frustrated, without their imagining a realm in which the good has come completely to its own, and is identified with a Reality in which resides all ultimate power. The failure and frustration of actual life is then attributed to the fact that this world is finite and phenomenal, sensible rather than real, or to the weakness of our finite apprehension, which cannot see that the discrepancy between existence and value is merely seeming, and that a fuller vision would behold partial evil an element in complete good. Thus the office of philosophy is to project by dialectic, resting supposedly upon self-evident premises, a realm in which the object of completest cognitive certitude is also one with the object of the heart's best aspiration. The fusion of the good and the true with unity and plenitude of Being thus becomes the goal of classic philosophy.

The situation would strike us as a curious one were it not so familiar. Practical activity is dismissed to a world of low grade reality. Desire is found only where something is lacking and hence its existence is a sign of imperfection of Being. Hence one must go to passionless reason to find perfect reality and complete certitude. But nevertheless the chief philosophic interest is to prove that the essential properties of the reality that is the object of pure knowledge are precisely those characteristics which have meaning in connection with affection, desire and choice. After degrading practical affairs in order to exalt knowledge, the chief task of knowledge turns out to be to demonstrate the absolutely assured and permanent reality of the values with which practical activity is concerned! Can we fail to see the irony in a situation wherein desire and emo-

tion are relegated to a position inferior in every way to that of knowledge, while at the same time the chief problem of that which is termed the highest and most perfect knowledge is taken to be the existence of evil—that is, of desires errant and frustrated?

The contradiction involved, however, is much more than a purely intellectual one—which if purely theoretical would be innocuously lacking in practical consequences. The thing which concerns all of us as human beings is precisely the greatest attainable security of values in concrete existence. The thought that the values which are unstable and wavering in the world in which we live are eternally secure in a higher realm (which reason demonstrates but which we cannot experience), that all the goods which are defeated here are triumphant there, may give consolation to the depressed. But it does not change the existential situation in the least. The separation that has been instituted between theory and practice, with its consequent substitution of cognitive quest for absolute assurance for practical endeavor to make the existence of good more secure in experience, has had the effect of distracting attention and diverting energy from a task whose performance would yield definite results.

The chief consideration in achieving concrete security of values lies in the perfecting of *methods* of action. Mere activity, blind striving, gets nothing forward. Regulation of conditions upon which results depend is possible only by doing, yet only by doing which has intelligent direction, which takes cognizance of conditions, observes relations of sequence, and which plans and executes in the light of this knowledge. The notion that thought, apart from action, can warrant complete certitude as to the status of supreme good, makes no contribution to the central problem of development of intelligent methods of regulation. It rather depresses and deadens effort in that direction. That is the chief indictment to be brought against the classic philosophic tradition. Its import raises the question of the relation which action sustains to knowledge in fact, and whether the quest for certainty by other means than those of intelligent action does not mark a baneful diversion of thought

from its proper office. It raises the question whether mankind has not now achieved a sufficient degree of control of methods of knowing and of the arts of practical action so that a radical change in our conceptions of knowledge and practice is rendered both possible and necessary.

That knowing, as judged from the actual procedures of scientific inquiry, has completely abandoned in fact the traditional separation of knowing and doing, that the experimental procedure is one that installs doing as the heart of knowing, is a theme that will occupy our attention in later chapters. What would happen to philosophy if it wholeheartedly made a similar surrender? What would be its office if it ceased to deal with the problem of reality and knowledge at large? In effect, its function would be to facilitate the fruitful interaction of our cognitive beliefs, our beliefs resting upon the most dependable methods of inquiry, with our practical beliefs about the values, the ends and purposes, that should control human action in the things of large and liberal human import.

Such a view renounces the traditional notion that action is inherently inferior to knowledge and preference for the fixed over the changing; it involves the conviction that security attained by active control is to be more prized than certainty in theory. But it does not imply that action is higher and better than knowledge, and practice inherently superior to thought. Constant and effective interaction of knowledge and practice is something quite different from an exaltation of activity for its own sake. Action, when directed by knowledge, is method and means, not an end. The aim and end is the securer, freer and more widely shared embodiment of values in experience by means of that active control of objects which knowledge alone makes possible.¹

From this point of view, the problem of philosophy concerns the *interaction* of our judgments about ends to be sought with knowledge of the means for achieving them. Just as in science the question of the advance of knowledge is the question of *what to do*, what experiments to perform, what apparatus to invent and use, what calculations to engage in, what branches of mathematics to employ or to per-

fect, so *the* problem of practice is what do we need to *know*, how shall we obtain that knowledge and how shall we apply it?

It is an easy and altogether too common a habit to confuse a personal division of labor with an isolation of function and meaning. Human beings as individuals tend to devote themselves either to the practice of knowing or to the practice of a professional, business, social or esthetic art. Each takes the other half of the circle for granted. Theorists and practitioners, however, often indulge in unseemly wrangles as to the importance of their respective tasks. Then the personal difference of callings is hypostatized and made into an intrinsic difference between knowledge and practice.

If one looks at the history of knowledge, it is plain that at the beginning men tried to know because they had to do so in order to live. In the absence of that organic guidance given by their structure to other animals, man had to find out what he was about, and he could find out only by studying the environment which constituted the means, obstacles and results of his behavior. The desire for intellectual or cognitive understanding had no meaning except as a means of obtaining greater security as to the issues of action. Moreover, even when after the coming of leisure some men were enabled to adopt knowing as their special calling or profession, *merely* theoretical uncertainty continues to have no meaning.

This statement will arouse protest. But the reaction against the statement will turn out when examined to be due to the fact that it is so difficult to find a case of purely intellectual uncertainty, that is one upon which nothing hangs. Perhaps as near to it as we can come is in the familiar story of the Oriental potentate who declined to attend a horse race on the ground that it was already well known to him that one horse could run faster than another. His uncertainty as to which of several horses could outspeed the others may be said to have been purely intellectual. But also in the story nothing depended from it; no curiosity was aroused; no effort was put forth to satisfy the uncertainty. In other words, he did not care; it made no difference. And it is a strict truism that no one would care about *any* exclusively

theoretical uncertainty or certainty. For by definition in being *exclusively* theoretical it is one which makes no difference anywhere.

Revulsion against this proposition is a tribute to the fact that actually the intellectual and the practical are so closely bound together. Hence when we imagine we are thinking of an exclusively theoretical doubt, we smuggle in unconsciously some consequence which hangs upon it. We think of uncertainty arising in the course of an inquiry; in this case, uncertainty until it is resolved blocks the progress of the inquiry—a distinctly practical affair, since it involves conclusions and the means of producing them. If we had no desires and no purposes, then, as sheer truism, one state of things would be as good as any other. Those who have set such store by the demonstration that Absolute Being already contains in eternal safety within itself all values, have had as their interest the fact that while the demonstration would make no difference in the concrete existence of these values—unless perhaps to weaken effort to generate and sustain them—it would make a difference in their own personal attitudes—in a feeling of comfort or of release from responsibility, the consciousness of a “moral holiday” in which some philosophers have found the distinction between morals and religion.

Such considerations point to the conclusion that the ultimate ground of the quest for cognitive certainty is the need for security in the results of action. Men readily persuade themselves that they are devoted to intellectual certainty for its own sake. Actually they want it because of its bearing on safeguarding what they desire and esteem. The need for protection and prosperity in action created the need for warranting the validity of intellectual beliefs.

After a distinctively intellectual class had arisen, a class having leisure and in a large degree protected against the more serious perils which afflict the mass of humanity, its members proceeded to glorify their own office. Since no amount of pains and care in action can ensure complete certainty, certainty in knowledge was worshipped as a substitute. In minor matters, those that are relatively technical, professional, “utilitarian,” men continued

to resort to improving their methods of operation in order to be surer of results. But in affairs of momentous value the requisite knowledge is hard to come by and the bettering of methods is a slow process to be realized only by the cooperative endeavor of many persons. The arts to be formed and developed are social arts; an individual by himself can do little to regulate the conditions which will render important values more secure, though with shrewdness and special knowledge he can do much to further his own peculiar aims—given a fair share of luck. So because of impatience and because, as Aristotle was given to pointing out, an individual is self-sufficient in that kind of thinking which involves no action, the ideal of a cognitive certainty and truth having no connection with practice, and prized because of its lack of connection, developed. The doctrine worked out practically so as to strengthen dependence upon authority and dogma in the things of highest value, while increase of specialized knowledge was relied upon in everyday, especially economic, affairs. Just as belief that a magical ceremony will regulate the growth of seeds to full harvest stifles the tendency to investigate natural causes and their workings, so acceptance of dogmatic rules as bases of conduct in education, morals and social matters, lessens the impetus to find out about the conditions which are involved in forming intelligent plans.

It is more or less of a commonplace to speak of the crisis which has been caused by the progress of the natural sciences in the last few centuries. The crisis is due, it is asserted, to the incompatibility between the conclusions of natural science about the world in which we live and the realm of higher values, of ideal and spiritual qualities, which get no support from natural science. The new science, it is said, has stripped the world of the qualities which made it beautiful and congenial to men; has deprived nature of all aspiration towards ends, all preference for accomplishing the good, and presented nature to us as a scene of indifferent physical particles acting according to mathematical and mechanical laws.

This effect of modern science has, it is notorious, set the main problems for modern philosophy. How is science to be accepted and

yet the realm of values to be conserved? This question forms the philosophic version of the popular conflict of science and religion. Instead of being troubled about the inconsistency of astronomy with the older religious beliefs about heaven and the ascension of Christ, or the differences between the geological record and the account of creation in Genesis, philosophers have been troubled by the gap in kind which exists between the fundamental principles of the natural world and the reality of the values according to which mankind is to regulate its life.

Philosophers, therefore, set to work to mediate, to find some harmony behind the apparent discord. Everybody knows that the trend of modern philosophy has been to arrive at theories regarding the nature of the universe by means of theories regarding the nature of knowledge—a procedure which reverses the apparently more judicious method of the ancients in basing their conclusions about knowledge on the nature of the universe in which knowledge occurs. The “crisis” of which we have just been speaking accounts for the reversal.

Since science has made the trouble, the cure ought to be found in an examination of the nature of knowledge, of the conditions which make science possible. If the conditions of the possibility of knowledge can be shown to be of an ideal and rational character, then, so it has been thought, the loss of an idealistic cosmology in physics can be readily borne. The physical world can be surrendered to matter and mechanism, since we are assured that matter and mechanism have their foundation in immaterial mind. Such has been the characteristic course of modern spiritualistic philosophies since the time of Kant; indeed, since that of Descartes, who first felt the poignancy of the problem involved in reconciling the conclusions of science with traditional religious and moral beliefs.

It would presumably be taken as a sign of extreme naïveté, if not of callous insensitivity, if one were to ask why all this ardor to reconcile the findings of natural science with the validity of values? Why should any increase of knowledge seem like a threat to what we prize, admire and approve? Why should we

not proceed to employ our gains in science to improve our judgments about values, and to regulate our actions so as to make values more secure and more widely shared in existence?

I am willing to run the risk of charge of naïveté for the sake of making manifest the difference upon which we have been dwelling. If men had associated their ideas about values with practical activity instead of with cognition of antecedent Being, they would *not* have been troubled by the findings of science. They would have welcomed the latter. For anything ascertained about the structure of actually existing conditions would be a definite aid in making judgments about things to be prized and striven for more adequate, and would instruct us as to the means to be employed in realizing them. But according to the religious and philosophic tradition of Europe, the valid status of all the highest values, the good, true and beautiful, was bound up with their being properties of ultimate and supreme Being, namely, God. All went well as long as what passed for natural science gave no offence to this conception. Trouble began when science ceased to disclose in the objects of knowledge the possession of any such properties. Then some roundabout method had to be devised for substantiating them.

The point of the seemingly crass question which was asked is thus to elicit the radical difference made when the problem of values is seen to be connected with the problem of intelligent action. If the validity of beliefs and judgments about values is dependent upon the consequences of action undertaken in their behalf, if the assumed association of values with knowledge capable of being demonstrated apart from activity, is abandoned, then the problem of the intrinsic relation of science to value is wholly artificial. It is replaced by a group of practical problems: How shall we employ what we know to direct the formation of our beliefs about value and how shall we direct our practical behavior so as to test these beliefs and make possible better ones? The question is seen to be just what it has always been empirically: What shall we *do* to make objects having value more secure in existence? And we approach the answer to the problem with all the advantages given us by increase of

knowledge of the conditions and relations under which this doing must proceed.

But for over two thousand years the weight of the most influential and authoritatively orthodox tradition of thought has been thrown into the opposite scale. It has been devoted to the problem of a purely cognitive certification (perhaps by revelation, perhaps by intuition, perhaps by reason) of the antecedent immutable reality of truth, beauty and goodness. As against such a doctrine, the conclusions of natural science constitute the materials of a serious problem. The appeal has been made to the Court of Knowledge and the verdict has been adverse. There are two rival systems that must have their respective claims adjusted. The crisis in contemporary culture, the confusions and conflicts in it, arise from a division of authority. Scientific inquiry seems to tell one thing, and traditional beliefs about ends and ideals that have authority over conduct tell us something quite different. The problem of reconciliation arises and persists for one reason only. As long as the notions persist that knowledge is a disclosure of reality, of reality prior to and independent of knowing, and that knowing is independent of a purpose to control the quality of experienced objects, the failure of natural science to disclose significant values in its objects will come as a shock. Those seriously concerned with the validity and authority of value will have a problem on their hands. As long as the notion persists that values are authentic and valid only on condition that they are properties of Being independent of human action, as long as it is supposed that their right to regulate action is dependent upon their being independent of action, so long there will be needed schemes to prove that values are, in spite of the findings of science, genuine and known qualifications of reality in itself. For men will not easily surrender all regulative guidance in action. If they are forbidden to find standards in the course of experience they will seek them somewhere else, if not in revelation, then in the deliverance of a reason that is above experience.

This then is the fundamental issue for present philosophy. Is the doctrine justified that knowledge is valid in the degree in which it is a revelation of antecedent existences or

Being? Is the doctrine justified that regulative ends and purposes have validity only when they can be shown to be properties belonging to things, whether as existences or as essences, apart from human action? It is proposed to make another start. Desires, affections, preferences, needs and interests at least exist in human experience; they are characteristics of it. Knowledge about nature also exists. What does this knowledge imply and entail with respect to the guidance of our emotional and volitional life? How shall the latter lay hold of what is known in order to make it of service?

These latter questions do not seem to many thinkers to have the dignity that is attached to the traditional problems of philosophy. They are proximate questions, not ultimate. They do not concern Being and Knowledge "in themselves" and at large, but the state of existence at specified times and places and the state of affection, plans and purposes under concrete circumstances. They are not concerned with framing a general theory of reality, knowledge and value once for all, but with finding how authentic beliefs about existence as they currently exist can operate fruitfully and efficaciously in connection with the practical problems that are urgent in actual life.

In restricted and technical fields, men now proceed unhesitatingly along these lines. In technology and the arts of engineering and medicine, men do not think of operating in any other way. Increased knowledge of nature and its conditions does not raise the problem of validity of the value of health or of communication in general, although it may well make dubious the validity of certain conceptions men in the past have entertained about the nature of health and communication and the best ways of attaining these goods in fact.

In such matters, science has placed in our hands the means by which we can better judge our wants, and has aided in forming the instruments and operations by which to satisfy them. That the same sort of thing has not happened in the moral and distinctly humane arts is evident. Here is a problem which might well trouble philosophers.

Why have not the arts which deal with the wider, more generous, more distinctly humane

values enjoyed the release and expansion which have accrued to the technical arts? Can it be seriously urged that it is because natural science has disclosed to us the kind of world which it has disclosed? It is easy to see that these disclosures are hostile to some beliefs about values which have been widely accepted, which have prestige, which have become deeply impregnated with sentiment, and which authoritative institutions as well as the emotion and inertia of men are slow to surrender. But this admission, which practically enforces itself, is far from excluding the formation of new beliefs about things to be honored and prized by men in their supreme loyalties of action. The difficulty in the road is a practical one, a social one, connected with institutions and the methods and aims of education, not with science nor with value. Under such circumstances the first problem for philosophy would seem to be to clear itself of further responsibility for the doctrine that the supreme issue is whether values have antecedent Being, while its further office is to make clear the revisions and reconstructions that have to be made in traditional judgments about values. Having done this, it would be in a position to undertake the more positive task of projecting ideas about values which might be the basis of a new integration of human conduct.

We come back to the fact that the genuine issue is not whether certain values, associated with traditions and institutions, have Being already (whether that of existence or of essence), but what concrete judgments we are to form about ends and means in the regulation of practical behavior. The emphasis which has been put upon the former question, the creation of dogmas about the way in which values are already real independently of what we do, dogmas which have appealed not in vain to philosophy for support, have naturally bred, in the face of the changed character of science, confusion, irresolution and numbness of will. If men had been educated to think about broader humane values as they have now learned to think about matters which fall within the scope of technical arts, our whole present situation would be very different. The attention which has gone to achieving a purely theoretical certainty with respect to them

would have been devoted to perfecting the arts by which they are to be judged and striven for.

Indulge for a moment in an imaginative flight. Suppose that men had been systematically educated in the belief that the existence of values can cease to be accidental, narrow and precarious only by human activity directed by the best available knowledge. Suppose also men had been systematically educated to believe that the important thing is not to get themselves personally "right" in relation to the antecedent author and guarantor of these values, but to form their judgments and carry on their activity on the basis of public, objective and shared consequences. Imagine these things and then imagine what the present situation might be.

The suppositions are speculative. But they serve to indicate the significance of the one point to which this chapter is devoted. The method and conclusions of science have without doubt invaded many cherished beliefs about the things held most dear. The resulting clash constitutes a genuine cultural crisis. But it is a crisis in culture, a social crisis, historical and temporal in character. It is not a problem in the adjustment of properties of reality to one another. And yet modern philosophy has chosen for the most part to treat it as a question of how the realities assumed to be the object of science can have the mathematical and mechanistic properties assigned to them in natural science, while nevertheless the realm of ultimate reality can be characterized by qualities termed ideal and spiritual. The cultural problem is one of definite criticisms to be made and of readjustments to be accomplished. Philosophy which is willing to abandon its supposed task of knowing ultimate reality and to devote itself to a proximate human office might be of great help in such a task. It may be doubted whether it can indefinitely pursue the task of trying to show that the results of science when they are *properly* interpreted do not mean what they seem to say, or of proving, by means of an examination of possibilities and limits of knowledge, that after all they rest upon a foundation congruous with traditional beliefs about values.

Since the root of the traditional conception of philosophy is the separation that has

been made between knowledge and action, between theory and practice, it is to the problem of this separation that we are to give attention. Our main attempt will be to show how the actual procedures of knowledge, interpreted after the pattern formed by experimental inquiry, cancel the isolation of knowledge from overt action. Before engaging in this attempt, we shall in the next chapter show the extent to which modern philosophy has been dominated by effort to adjust to each other two systems of belief, one relating to the objects of knowledge and the other to objects of ideal value.

NOTES

[LW 4:21-39.]

1. In reaction against the age-long depreciation of practice in behalf of contemplative knowledge, there is a temptation simply to turn things upside down. But the essence of pragmatic instrumentalism is to conceive of *both* knowledge and practice as means of making goods—excellencies of all kinds—secure in experienced existence.