STUDIES

IN

HUMANISM

BY

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PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

THAT a new edition of these *Studies* (as also of *Humanism*) is called for is one out of many indications[1] that the Pragmatic Movement is gathering momentum and that Humanism has come to stay. Even the most obstinate conservatives are beginning to abandon their attitude of speechless indignation, and to admit that it constitutes an intelligible novelty, though they are not yet reconciled to it. But as it takes more than a day or a generation to undo the cumulative blunders of 2000 years of Intellectualism, it will probably remain a novelty for another century or two, until its applications have been fully worked out. Its rate of progress will depend on how soon the chief philosophic disciplines can be re-written in a Humanist spirit. As a foretaste of this necessary process the logical tradition has been systematically criticized in my *Formal Logic* (1912), and shown to be fundamentally inconsistent nonsense, as resting on an abstraction from meaning and oscillating between verbalism and 'psychology,' both of which it vainly tries to disavow. This puts *Humanism*, *Axioms as Postulates*, and these *Studies* into the position of prolegomena to a future Logic of Real Knowing. Even under the most favourable circumstances, however, years must elapse before this can

[1] To the writer it is, of course, peculiarly gratifying that these *Studies* have been translated into French (Paris, Alcan, 1909), and a selection from them and from *Humanism* into German (Leipzig, Klinkhardt, 1911).

appear; so it seemed better to reprint these *Studies* with a minimum of alteration.

I must despair of cataloguing in this Preface the whole output of the Pragmatic Controversy. Much has been written since 1907 on both sides, but, mercifully, little that requires me to modify the views I had expressed. We have suffered, of course, an irreparable loss in the departure hence of the great initiator of the movement, William James, with his message but half told. The splendid series of his popular works, *Pragmatism* (1907), *A Pluralistic Universe* (1909), *The Meaning of Truth* (1909), *Some Problems of Philosophy* (1911), will live, but will always be somewhat too simple to be intelligible to the professorial mind, which finds them hard to 'categorize.' Lovers of thinking at first-hand, however, will enjoy them, and should not omit to read also H. V. Knox's article in the *Quarterly Review* (April 1909), Alfred Sidgwick's *Application of Logic* (1910), Dewey's *Influence of Darwin on Philosophy* (1910), and D. L. Murray's little primer of *Pragmatism* (1912).

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PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

OF the essays which compose this volume about half have appeared in various periodicals—*Mind*, the *Hibbert Journal*, the *Quarterly Review*, the *Fortnightly Review*, and the *Journal of Philosophy*—during the past three years. Additions have, however, grown so extensive that of the matter of the book not more than one-third, and that the less constructive part, can be said to have been in print before. That the form should still be discontinuous is due to the fact that the conditions under which I have had to work greatly hamper and delay the composition of a continuous treatise, and that it seemed imperative to deal more expeditiously with the chief strategic points of the philosophic situation. I hope, however, that the discontinuity of the form will not be found incompatible with an essential continuity of aim, argument, and interest. In all these respects the present *Studies* may most naturally be regarded as continuous with *Humanism* and *Axioms as Postulates*, without, however, ceasing to be independently intelligible. They have had to reflect the developments of philosophy and the progress of discussion, and this has rendered them, I fear, slightly more technical on the whole than *Humanism*. Nor can their main topic, the meaning of Truth, be made an altogether popular subject. On the other hand, they touch more fully than *Humanism* on subjects which are less exclusively technical, such as the nature of our freedom and the religious aspects of philosophy.

That in the contents construction should be somewhat largely mixed with controversy is in some respects

regrettable. But whether one can avoid controversy depends largely on whether one's doctrines are allowed an opportunity of peaceful development. Also on what one has undertaken to do. And in this case the most harmless experiments in fog-dispelling have been treated as profanations of the most sacred mysteries. It is, however, quite true that the undertaking of the new philosophy may be regarded as in some ways the most stupendous in the history of thought. Heine, in a well-known passage, once declared the feats of the German Transcendentalists to have been more terrific than those of the French Revolutionaries, in that they decapitated a Deity and not a mere mortal king. But what was the Transcendental boldness of Kant, as described by Heine, when armed only with the 'Pure Reason,' and attended only by his 'faithful Lampe' and an umbrella, he 'stormed Heaven and put the whole garrison to the sword,' to the Transatlantic audacity of a Jacobin philosophy which is seriously suspected of penetrating into the 'supercelestial' heavens of the Pure Reason, and of there upsetting the centre of gravity of the Intelligible Universe, of dethroning the 'Higher Synthesis of the Devil and the Deity,' the Absolute, and of instituting a general '*Götzendämmerung*' of the Eternal Ideas? Even its avowed aim of *humanizing* Truth, and bringing it back to earth from such altitudes, seems comparable with the Promethean sacrilege of the theft of fire. What wonder, then, that such transcelestial conflagrations should kindle burning questions on the earth, and be reflected in the heating of terrestrial tempers?

But after all, the chief warrant for a polemical handling of these matters is its strict relevance. The new truths are most easily understood by contrast with the old perplexities, and the necessity of advancing in their direction is rendered most evident by the impossibility of advancing in any other.[1]

That the development of the new views, then, should have been so largely controversial, was probably in-

[1] Cp. pp. 73-4.

evitable. It has been all the more rapid for that. For the intensity of intellectualistic prejudice and the intolerance of Absolutism have compelled us to attack in sheer self-defence, to press on our counter-statements in order to engage the enemy along his whole front, and to hurry every new argument into the line of battle as soon as it became available.[1]

The result has been an unprecedented development of converging novelties. Within the past three or four years (*i.e.* since the preface to *Humanism* was written) there have appeared in the first place the important *Studies in Logical Theory* by Prof. Dewey and his coadjutors. These, it is becoming more and more evident, have dealt a death-blow, not only to the 'correspondence-with-reality' view of Truth, but also to all the realisms and idealisms which involve it. And so far no absolutism has succeeded in dispensing with it. Prof. Dewey and his pupils have also contributed a number of weighty and valuable papers and discussions to the philosophic periodicals (*Mind*, the *Journal of Philosophy*, and the *Philosophical Review*). Mr. C. S. Peirce's articles in the *Monist* (1905) have shown that he has not disavowed the great Pragmatic principle which he launched into the world so unobtrusively nearly thirty years ago, and seemed to leave so long without a father's care. William James's final metaphysic, on the other hand, is still in the making. But he has expounded and defended the new views in a series of brilliant articles in the *Journal of Philosophy* and in *Mind*.[2] In England the literature of the question has been critical rather than constructive. In the forefront may be mentioned Mr. Henry Sturt's *Idola Theatri*, a singularly lucid and readable study of the genesis, development, and ailments of English Absolutism. But the masterly (and unanswered) criticisms by Capt. H. V. Knox and Mr. Alfred Sidgwick of the most

[1] Readers, however, who wish to avoid this controversial side as much as possible, may be counselled to read Essays i., v., ii., iii., vii., xvi.-xx. in the order indicated.

[2] *Journal of Philosophy*, I. Nos. 18, 20, 21, 25; II. Nos. 2, 5, 7, 9, 11; III. No. 13. *Mind*, N.S. Nos. 52 and 54. (Now reprinted in *A Pluralistic Universe*, *The Meaning of Truth*, and *Essays in Radical Empiricism*.)

essential foundations of absolutist metaphysics should not be forgotten.[1] And lastly, Prof. Santayana's exquisite *Life of Reason* should be cited as a triumph, not only of literary form, but also of the Pragmatic Method in a mind which has espoused a metaphysic very different from that which in general Pragmatism favours. For Prof. Santayana, though a pragmatist in epistemology, is a materialist in metaphysics.[2]

The new movement is also in evidence beyond the borders of the English-speaking world, either in its properly pragmatic forms or in their equivalents and analogues. It is most marked perhaps in France, where it has the weighty support in philosophy of Prof. Bergson of the Collège de France, who has followed up the anti-intellectualism of his *Données immédiates de la Conscience* by his *Matière et Mémoire*, and in science of Prof. Henri Poincaré of the Institute, whose *La Science et l'Hypothèse* and *La Valeur de la Science* expound the pragmatic nature of the scientific procedures and assumptions with unsurpassable lucidity and grace. He seems, indeed, as yet unwilling to go as far as some of the ultra-pragmatic followers of Prof. Bergson, *e.g.* MM. Leroy and Wilbois, and imposes some slight limitations on the pragmatic treatment of knowledge, on the ground that knowledge may be conceived as an end to which action is a means. But this perhaps only indicates that this pre-eminent man of science has not yet taken note of the work which has been done by philosophers in the English-writing world on the nature of the conception of Truth and the relation of the scientific endeavour to our total activity. At any rate he goes quite far enough to make it clear that whoever henceforth wishes to uphold the traditional views of the nature of science, and particularly of mathematics, will have in the first place to confute Prof. Poincaré.

In Italy Florence boasts of a youthful, but extremely active and brilliant, band of avowed Pragmatists, whose

[1] *Mind*, N.S. Nos. 54 and 53.

[2] I have discussed the relations of his work to the Pragmatic movement in reviewing it for the *Hibbert Journal* (January and July 1906).

militant organ, the *Leonardo*, edited by Signor Giovanni Papini, is distinguished by a freedom and vigour of language which must frequently horrify the susceptibilities of academic coteries. In Denmark Prof. Höffding is more than sympathetic, and the Royal Academy of Science has recently made the relations of Pragmatism and Criticism the subject for the international prize essay for which Schopenhauer once wrote his *Grundlage der Moral.*

In Germany alone the movement seems slow to take root *eo nomine.* Nevertheless, there are a goodly number of analogous tendencies. Professors Ostwald and Mach and their schools are the champions of a pragmatic view of science. Various forms of 'Psychologism,' proceeding from the same considerations as those which have inspired the Anglo-American pragmatisms, disturb the old conceptions of Logic. Among them Prof. Jerusalem's *Der kritische Idealismus und die reine Logik* is particularly noteworthy. The 'school of Fries,' and conspicuously Dr. Julius Schultz, the author of the brilliant *Psychologie der Axiome*, excellently emphasize the postulation of axioms, though as their polemic against empiricism still presupposes the Humian conception of a passive experience, they prefer to call them *a priori.*[1] The *humanistic* aspects of the movement find a close parallel in the writings of Prof. Eucken. But on the whole Germany lags behind, largely because these various tendencies have not yet been connected or brought to a common focus. I have, however, reason to believe that this deficiency may soon be remedied.

What, meanwhile, is the situation in the camp of Intellectualism, which is still thronged with most of the philosophic notables? Although the technical journals have been full of controversial articles, and the interest excited has actually sent up the circulation of *Mind*, singularly little has been produced that rises above the merest misconception or misrepresentation; and nothing to invalidate the new ideas. Mr. F. H. Bradley has

[1] Cp. *Mind*, xv. p. 115.

exercised his great talents of philosophic caricature,[1] but a positive alternative to Pragmatism, in the shape of an intelligible, coherent doctrine of the nature of Truth, is still the great desideratum of Intellectualism.

The most noteworthy attempt, beyond doubt, to work out an intellectualistic ideal of Truth, which has proceeded from the Anglo-Hegelian school, is Mr. H. H. Joachim's recent *Nature of Truth.* But it may be doubted whether its merits will commend it to the school. For it ends in flat failure, and avowed scepticism, which is scientifically redeemed only by the fact that its outspokenness greatly facilitates the critic's task in laying his finger on the fundamental flaw of all Intellectualism. With the exception of Plato's *Theaetetus*, no book has, consequently, been of greater service to me in showing how fatal the *depersonalizing* of thought and the *dehumanizing* of Truth are to the possibility and intelligibility of knowledge, and how arbitrary and indefensible these abstractions really are.

It would seem, therefore, that the situation is rapidly clearing itself. On the one hand we have a new Method with inexhaustible possibilities of application to life and science, which, though it is not primarily metaphysical, contains also the promise of an infinity of valuable, and more or less valid, metaphysics: on the other, opposed to it on every point, an old metaphysic of tried and tested sterility, which is condemned to eternal failure by the fundamental perversity of its logical method. And now at last is light beginning to penetrate into its obscurities. It is becoming clear that Rationalism is not rational, and that 'reason' does not sanction its pretensions. Absolutism is ending as those who saw its essentially inhuman character foresaw that it must. In its 'Hegelian' as in its Bradleian form, it has yielded itself wholly up to Scepticism, and Mr. Bradley was evidently not a day too soon in comparing it to Jericho.[2] For its defences have crumbled into dust, without a regular siege, merely under the strain of attempts to man them. Its

[1] Cp. Essay iv. [2] Cp. p. 119.

opponents really are not needed for their demolition; they need merely record and applaud the work of self-destruction.

But that this process should provoke dissatisfaction and disintegration in the ranks of the absolutists is no wonder, nor that the signs of their confusion should be multiplying. No one seems to know, *e.g.*, what is to be done about the central point, the conception of Truth; whether the 'correspondence-view' is to be reaffirmed or abandoned, and in the former case, *how* it can be defended, or in the latter, *how* it can be discarded.[1] Nay, the voice of mutiny is beginning to be heard. The advice is openly given to the 'idealist' host to shut up their Bradley and their Berkeley, and to open their Plato and their Hegel.[2] As regards Hegel this recommendation is not likely to be fruitful, because nothing will be found in him that bears on the situation: Plato, on the other hand, is likely to provide most salutary, but almost wholly penitential, reading. For I believe, these *Studies* will be found to fulfil a pledge given in *Humanism*,[3] and to show that Intellectualism may be confuted out of the mouth of its own founder and greatest exponent. For Plato had in fact perceived the final consequence of Intellectualism, viz. that to complete itself *it must dehumanize the Ideal and derealize the Real*, with superior clearness. His unwillingness either to avoid or to conceal this consequence is what has engendered the hopeless crux of the 'Platonic problem' from his day to this, and from this difficulty no intellectualism can ever extricate itself. It may rail at humanity and try to dissolve human knowledge; but the only real remedy lies in renouncing the abstractions on which it rests. Our only hope of understanding knowledge, our only chance of keeping philosophy alive by nourishing it with the realities of life, lies in going back from Plato to Protagoras, and ceasing to misunderstand the great teacher who discovered the Measure of man's Universe.

[1] Cp. Essays iv. § 7; vii. § 1; xx. § 2.

[2] *Mind*, N.S. No. 59, xv. p. 327.

[3] P. xvii.

I cannot conclude this Preface without recording my indebtedness to my friend Capt. H. V. Knox, who has read a large part of these *Studies* in proof and in manuscript, and with whom I have had the pleasure of discussing some of the knottiest points in the theory of knowledge. I have profited thereby to such an extent that I should find it hard to say how far some of the doctrines here enunciated were his or mine.

SILS MARIA, *September* 1906.

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I

THE DEFINITION OF PRAGMATISM AND HUMANISM

ARGUMENT

The need of definitions. I. Importance of the problem of Error. Truth as the evaluation of claims. The question begged and burked by Intellectualism. The value of the consequences as the Humanist test. Why 'true' consequences are 'practical' and 'good.' Impossibility of a 'purely intellectual' satisfaction. First definition of Pragmatism: *truths are logical values*. II. Necessity of 'verification' of truth by use or application; the second definition, *the truth of an assertion depends on its application*; and the third, *the meaning of a rule lies in its application*; the fourth, *all meaning depends on purpose*. Its value as a protest against the divorce of logic from psychology. Fifth definition, *all mental life is purposive*, a protest against Naturalism, as is the sixth, *a systematic protest against ignoring the purposiveness of actual knowing*. No alien reality. Finally this leads to a seventh definition as a conscious application to logic of a teleological psychology, implying a voluntaristic metaphysic. III. Humanism as the spirit of Pragmatism, and like it a natural method, which will not mutilate experience. Its antagonism to pedantry. It includes Pragmatism, but is not necessitated by the latter, nor confined to epistemology. IV. Neither is as such a metaphysic, both are methods, metaphysical syntheses being merely personal. But both may be conceived metaphysically and have metaphysical affinities. Need of applying the pragmatic test to metaphysics.

REAL definitions are a standing difficulty for all who have to deal with them, whether as logicians or as scientists, and it is no wonder that dialectical philosophers fight very shy of them, prefer to manipulate their verbal imitations, and count themselves happy if they can get an analysis of the acquired meaning of a word to pass muster instead of a troublesome investigation of the behaviour of a thing. For a real definition, to be adequate,

really involves a complete knowledge of the nature of the thing defined. And of what subject of scientific interest can we flatter ourselves to have complete knowledge?

The difficulty, moreover, of defining adequately is indefinitely increased when we have to deal with subjects of which our knowledge, or their nature, is rapidly developing, so that our definitions grow obsolete almost as fast as they are made. Nevertheless definitions of some sort are psychologically needed: we must know what things are, enough at least to know what we are discussing. It is just in the most progressive subjects that definitions are most needed to consolidate our acquisitions. In their absence the confusion of thought and the irrelevance of discussion may reach the most amazing proportions. And so it is the duty of those who labour at such subjects to avail themselves of every opportunity of explaining what they mean, to begin with, and never to weary of redefining their conceptions when the growth of knowledge has enlarged them, even though they may be aware that however assiduously they perform this duty, they will not escape misconception, nor, probably, misrepresentation. The best definitions to use in such circumstances, however, will be genetic ones, explaining how the matters defined have come into the ken of science, and there assumed the shape they have.

All these generalities apply with peculiar force to the fundamental conceptions of the new philosophy. The new ideas have simultaneously broken through the hard crust of academic convention in so many quarters, they can be approached in such a multitude of ways, they radiate into so many possibilities of application, that their promoters run some risk of failing to combine their labours, while their opponents may be pardoned for losing their tempers as well as their heads amid the profusion of unco-ordinated movements which the lack of formal definition is calculated to encourage.

Even provisional definitions of Pragmatism and Humanism, therefore, will possess some value, if they succeed in pointing out their central conceptions.

I

The serious student, I dare not say of formal logic, but of the cognitive procedures of the human intelligence, whenever he approaches the theory of actual knowing, at once finds himself confronted with the problem of error.[1] All 'logical propositions,' as he calls them, make the same audacious claim upon him. They all claim to be 'true' without reservations or regard for the claims of others. And yet, of course, unless he shuts his eyes to all but the most 'formal' view of 'truth,' he knows that the vast majority of these propositions are nothing but specious impostors. They are not really 'true,' and actual science has to disallow their claim. The logician, therefore, must take account of this rejection of claims, of this selection of the really 'true' from among apparent 'truths.' In constituting his science, therefore, he has to condemn as 'false' as well as to recognize as 'true,' *i.e.* to evaluate claims to truth.

The question therefore is—How does he effect this? How does he discriminate between propositions which claim to be true, but are not, and claims to truth which are good, and may be shown to be valid? How, that is, are valid truths distinguished from mere claims which may turn out to be false? These questions are inevitable, and no theory of knowledge which fails to answer them has any claim on our respect. It avows an incompleteness which is as disgraceful as it is inconvenient.

Now from the standpoint of rationalistic intellectualism there is no real answer to these questions, because

[1] Contrast with this the putting of the question in an absolutist logic, *e.g.* Mr. Joachim's instructive *Nature of Truth*, which I had not seen when this was written. Mr. Joachim begins at the opposite end with 'the Ideal,' and avoids the consideration of Error as long as he can. But when he does come to it, he is completely worsted, and his system is wrecked. Thus the difference between the Absolutist and the Humanist theory lies chiefly in the standpoint; the facts are the same on either view. The question, in fact, resolves itself into this, whether or not 'Logic' is concerned with *human* thought. This the humanist affirms, while the absolutist is under the disadvantage of not daring to deny it *wholly*. Hence the incoherence and inevitable collapse of his theory. Cp. Essay ii. §§ 16-17.

a priori inspection cannot determine the value of a claim, and experience is needed to decide whether it is good or not.[1] Hence the obscurity, ambiguity, and shiftiness, the general impotence and unreality, of the traditional logic is largely a consequence of its incapacity to deal with this difficulty. For how can you devise any practicable method of evaluating 'truths,' if you decline (1) to allow practical applications and the consequences of the working out of claims to affect their validity, if you decline (2) to recognize any intermediate stage in the making of truth between the mere claim and a completed ideal of absolute truth, and if, moreover, (3) you seek to burke the whole question of the *formation* of ideals by assuming that prior to all experience and experiment there exists one immutable ideal towards which all claims *must* converge?

Pragmatism, on the other hand, essays to trace out the actual 'making of truth,'[2] the actual ways in which discriminations between the true and the false are effected, and derives from these its generalizations about the method of determining the nature of truth. It is from such empirical observations that it derives its doctrine

[1] The complete failure of intellectualism to apprehend even the most obvious aims of Pragmatism is amusingly illustrated by Mr. Bradley's fulminations against us on the ground that we cannot possibly distinguish between a random claim and an established truth. He pontifically declares (*Mind*, xiii. p. 322) that "the Personal Idealist . . . if he understood his own doctrine must hold any end, however perverted, to be rational, if I insist on it personally, and any idea, however mad, to be the truth, if only some one will have it so." Again, on p. 329, he ludicrously represents us as holding that "I can make and I can unmake fact and truth at my caprice, and every vagary of mine becomes the nature of things. This insane doctrine is what consistency demands," but Mr. Bradley graciously concedes that "I cannot attribute it even to the protagonist of Personal Idealism." Of course if there is one subject which pragmatist logicians may be said to have made their own from the days of Protagoras downwards, it is that of the evaluation of individual claims and their gradual transformation into 'objective' truths (cp. Essay ii. § 5). Intellectualists, on the other hand, have ever steadfastly refused to consider the discrepancies arising from the existence of psychological variations in human valuations (cp. p. 132), or lazily preferred to attribute to 'the human,' or even to 'the absolute,' mind whatever idiosyncrasies they discovered in themselves. Thus inquiry into the actual making of truth has been tabooed, the most important questions have been begged, and both the extent and the limitations of the 'common' world of intersubjective social agreement have been left an unaccountable mystery, sometimes further aggravated by the metaphysical postulation of a superhuman mind conceived as 'common' to all human minds, but really incompetent to enter into relation with any of them, and *a fortiori* incapable of accounting for their individual differences.

[2] Cp. Essay vii.

that when an assertion claims truth, *its consequences are always used to test its claim.* In other words, what follows from its truth for any human interest, and more particularly and in the first place, for the interest with which it is directly concerned, is what established its *real* truth and validity. This is the famous 'Principle of Peirce,' which ought to be regarded as the greatest truism, if it had not pleased Intellectualism to take it as the greatest paradox. But that only showed, perhaps, how completely intellectualist traditions could blind philosophers to the simplest facts of cognition. For there was no intrinsic reason why even the extremest intellectualism should have denied that the difference between the truth and the falsehood of an assertion must show itself in some visible, observable way, or that two theories which led to precisely the same practical consequences could be different only in words.

Human interest, then, is vital to the existence of truth: to say that a truth has consequences and that what has none is meaningless, means that it has a bearing upon some human interest. Its 'consequences' must be consequences *to* some one engaged on a real problem *for* some purpose. If it is clearly grasped that the 'truth' with which we are concerned is truth *for man* and that the 'consequences' are human too, it is, however, superfluous to add either (1) that the consequences must be *practical*, or (2) that they must be *good*,[1] in order to distinguish this view sharply from that of rationalism.

For (1) all consequences are 'practical,' sooner or later, in the sense of affecting our action. Even where

[1] In *Mind*, xiv. N.S. No. 54, p. 236, I tried to draw a distinction between a narrower and a wider 'pragmatism,' of which I attributed only the former to Mr. Peirce. In this I was following James's distinction between the positions that 'truths should have practical consequences,' and that they 'consist in their consequences,' and that these must be 'good.' Of these he seemed to attribute only the former to Mr. Peirce, and denominated the latter Humanism. But Humanism seems to me to go further still, and not to be restricted to the one question of 'truth.' If, as Mr. Peirce has privately assured me, he had from the first perceived the full consequences of his dictum, the formulation of the whole pragmatic principle must be ascribed to him. But he has also exhibited extensive inability to follow the later developments, and now calls his own specific form of Pragmatism, 'pragmaticism.' See *Monist*, xv. 2.