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The Eternal and the Practical

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THE ETERNAL AND THE PRACTICAL.¹

THERE are two general tendencies of opinion which nearly all recent thinkers, whatever be their school, seem disposed to favor. The first of these tendencies is that towards a considerable, although, in different thinkers, a very varying, degree of empiricism. "Radical empiricism," such as that of Professor James, has its defenders in our days. A modified, but still pronounced, empiricism is found in more or less close and organic connection with the teachings of recent idealists, and of various other types of constructive metaphysicians. The second of the contemporary tendencies to which I refer is closely associated with these modern forms of empiricism. It is the tendency towards what has been lately named 'pragmatism,' the tendency, namely, to characterize and to estimate the processes of thought in terms of practical categories, and to criticise knowledge in the light of its bearings upon conduct.

I am speaking, so far, not of precisely definable theses, but expressly of tendencies. Whatever may be the rationalistic bias or tradition of any of us, we are all more or less empiricists, and we are so to a degree which was never characteristic of the pre-Kantian rationalists. Whatever may be our interest in theory or in the Absolute, we are all accustomed to lay stress upon practical considerations as having a fundamental, even if not the most fundamental, importance for philosophy ; and so in a general, and, as I admit, in a very large and loose sense of the term, we are

¹ Read as the Presidential Address at the third annual meeting of the American Philosophical Association, at Princeton, December 30, 1903.

all alike more or less pragmatists. These, then, are common modern tendencies, which thinkers of the most various schools share. In view of these facts, we have a right to rejoice in the degree to which we have come, despite all our differences, to a certain unity of spirit. On the other hand, even in recognizing this attainment of a certain degree of unity, we have also defined the central problems of modern investigation. They are, first, the problem as to the place which our acknowledged and indispensable empiristic tendencies ought to occupy in the whole context of our philosophical opinions; and, secondly, the problem as to the share which our practical postulates, our ethical undertakings, our doctrine of conduct, ought to have in determining our entire view of the universe.

I.

Empiricism, its worth, its justification, its limitations, its lesson—these together form an old story in controversy. I propose in this address, which the kindness of the Association has called me to prepare, to ask your attention to the other of the two tendencies which I have mentioned. I shall try to discuss some of the general relations between our ideals of conduct and our acknowledgement of truth. I need not pause to set forth, in any detail, the well-known fact that the question thus indicated is in its general form by no means a modern question. Both Stoics and Epicureans made it prominent. Earlier still, in consequence of the methods of Socrates, both Plato and Aristotle gave it a significant place in their theories of truth. In modern thought, again, as I also need not at length describe, this problem is by no means confined to contemporary philosophy. Kant's contrast between the theoretical and the practical reason gave our question central importance for the structure of his own system of doctrine. Fichte's philosophy is a deliberate synthesis of pragmatism with absolutism. Hegel made the question a fundamental one in various places in his Logic. In the *Phänomenologie*, the romantic biography of the *Weltgeist*, as Hegel there narrates, the tale has all the principal crises due to the conflicts of the theoretical with the practical reason, while all the triumphs of the hero of this

story consist in reconciliations of pragmatic with theoretical interests. Thus, then, the main problem of pragmatism is no more exclusively modern than is that of theism or of empiricism. The occasional efforts to represent the newer insights upon this topic as wholly due to the influence of the most recent doctrines of evolution, and as wholly replacing certain 'preevolutionary' tendencies of thought,—these efforts, I say, where they exist, result from fondness for over-emphasizing the adjective 'new,' — a fondness from which we all in this day suffer, whether we are philosophers or business men, promoters or investors, trustees of universities or humble investigators. There is, indeed, in a sense, a new pragmatism ; for the thought of to-day has its own inspirations, and, like any individual tendency in the spiritual world, it is no mere echo of other tendencies or ages. But pragmatism is ancient, is human, has been faced countless times before and will be considered countless times again, so long as men labor for the good, and long for the true. We are here dealing with pervasive tendencies of modern opinion indeed, but not with startling new discoveries,—with questions of to-day, but with ancient issues also,—with problems which modern democracy may emphasize, but which old religions and social orders already made familiar to the wise men of yore.

For this very reason, however, now that I attempt to discuss some aspects of our problem in the light of contemporary interests, it seems to me advisable not to limit my discussion by attempting to keep within the bounds of a direct polemic against such recent expressions of opinion upon the subject as I do not altogether accept. There are several very notable volumes that have been, of late years, devoted to making explicit certain forms of pragmatism. Professor James's inspiring *Will to Believe*, the recent Chicago *Studies in Logical Theory*, by the members of Professor Dewey's vigorous and productive school, Mr. F. C. S. Schiller's essays published under the title *Humanism*,—these are books of the day, all well known very probably, to every one of you. It would be a tempting task to try to review some one or perhaps all of them. But, as I have said, while the books and the persons are indeed new and unique, the

issues are old. I am deeply interested in the persons ; but I have time in this paper only for some few of the main issues. While I shall freely refer in general to the current literature of pragmatism, my main argument is one that would remain valid even if the issues of pragmatism were to come to our notice as ancient questions, and not as incidents of the literature of our times. While, then, I shall indeed refer now and then to this literature, I shall not try to treat it in any explicit way. Polemic, whenever it refers to any one author, must rest upon exposition ; exposition requires more time than this occasion allows me, raises questions of an exegetical character, and usually dissatisfies the author whom you expound, unless in the end you agree with him in opinion. As Wundt once remarked during a literary controversy : "We are all most erudite with respect to our own books" ("Sind wir doch alle in unseren eigenen Büchern am besten bewandert"). I constantly try to become more or less erudite regarding the contents of other men's books ; but this is no place to trouble you with an attempt to display such erudition, or to force my colleagues to point out how ill I may have succeeded in understanding them.

I propose, then, to try to state the relation of the doctrine of conduct to the theory of truth as if the question were not especially characteristic of to-day. I propose to treat it rather as a question of what I shall call eternal importance. This question is : How far is our knowledge identical with an expression of our practical needs ?

Nevertheless, I may still permit myself to make one merely personal confession before I go on to my main task, — a confession which relates, indeed, to a totally ephemeral matter. Being, as I just said, more erudite than are the rest of you regarding my own writings, I may venture to tell you that once in my life, before I fell a prey to that bondage of absolutism wherein now I languish, there was a time when I was not a constructive idealist of any sort, and when, if I understand the meaning of the central contention of pragmatism, I was meanwhile a very pure pragmatist. Accordingly, I published in the year 1881, in connection with the Kant centennial celebration of that year, an essay

entitled : "Kant's Relation to Modern Philosophical Progress." I was then twenty-six years old and had been deeply influenced by Professor James's earlier lectures and essays. My paper was printed in Dr. Harris's *Journal of Speculative Philosophy*. Nobody amongst you is likely to have remembered, even if he has ever read, that paper. It was a mere sketch. But since it expressed a sincere effort to state the theory of truth wholly in terms of an interpretation of our judgments as present acknowledgments, since it made these judgments the embodiments of conscious attitudes that I then conceived to be essentially ethical, and to be capable of no restatement in terms of any absolute warrant whatever, I may assert that, for a time at least, I did seriously struggle not only to be what is now called a pragmatist, but also to escape falling into the clutches of any Absolute. When later, however, I fell, and came to believe, as I now steadfastly do, that it is one function of the truth to be, amongst other things, actually true, I do not think that I ceased to be, in a very genuine sense, still a pragmatist, although no longer possessed, perhaps, of what Hegel would have called the pure agility which I then used most earnestly to cultivate. I still am of the opinion that judging is an activity guided by essentially ethical motives. I still hold that, for any truth-seeker, the object of his belief is also the object of his will to believe. I still contend that the truth cannot possibly be conceived as a merely external object, which we passively accept, and by which we are merely moulded. I still maintain that every intelligent soul, however confused or weak, recognizes no truth except the truth to whose making and to whose constitution it even now contributes,—no truth except that which genuinely embodies its own present purpose. I earnestly insist that knowledge is action, although knowledge is also never *mere* action. I fully accept the position that the judgment which I now make is a present reaction to a present empirically given situation, a reaction expressing my need to get control over the situation, whatever else my judgment may also express. I fully accept the position that the world of truth is not now a finished world and is now in the act of making. All this I accept, even although I may nevertheless

appear to be bound, by reason of my other convictions, fast in the chains of absolutism. All this I daily teach, even while, as a fact, my only final hope, as a seeker of truth and as a human being, is in the eternal.

At all events, however, now that I can say all this, perhaps it will not seem to you as if, when I undertake to discuss the relations of the principles of conduct to the theory of truth, I shall be doing so without any comprehension of the meaning and the human interest of pragmatism. As I said at the outset, we are totally, all of us, more or less pragmatists. The question is solely one regarding the due place of that side of our doctrine in the whole organism of our convictions.

II.

Without expressly expounding or criticising the opinions of anybody else, although of course without attempting to be original, let me first try to state a doctrine that, according to my conception of the matter, emphasizes, as fully as I am able to emphasize, the motives upon which I suppose pragmatism to rest. Then let me try to explain why I believe that this view of the nature of the knowing process must be, not merely set aside (for within its limits it is, as I conceive, a partial statement of the truth), but supplemented, so that it may be aided to state the whole truth.

To begin, then, the exposition of what I take to be the spirit of pragmatism,—thinking, judging, reasoning, believing,—these are all of them essentially practical activities. One cannot sunder will and intellect. A man thinks about what interests him. He thinks because he feels a need to think. His thinking may or may not be closely linked to those more worldly activities which common sense loves to call practical. But the most remote speculations are, for the man who engages in them, modes of conduct. As contrasted with other men, the thinker, so far as his thoughts do not directly link themselves to the motor processes usually called practical, appears, when viewed from without, to be an inactive person. An anecdote records how a servant woman in Darwin's household ventured to sug-

gest that the old gentleman must be so delicate as he was in health because, as she said, he lacked occupation, and only wandered about looking at his plants, or sat poring over his papers. Whether the anecdote is true or not, the thinker often seems to casual observers to be inhibited, held back from action, hopelessly ineffective. But this appearance we know to be but a seeming. The thinker plans motor processes, and in the end, or even constantly while he thinks, these processes get carried out. The thinker makes diagrams, arranges material objects in classes and in orderly series, constructs apparatus, adjusts with exquisite care his delicate instruments of precision ; or he takes notes, builds up formulas, constructs systems of spoken or written words to express his thoughts ; and ultimately, in expressing his thoughts, he may direct the conduct of vast numbers of other men, just as Darwin came to do. Meanwhile, even if viewed from within, from his own conscious point of view, the thinker's ideas are not mere objects of contemplation upon which he passively gazes. They are known to him as his own deeds, or at least as his plans of action, whose presence to his mind is determined by a series of acts of attention, — of acts, too, which are inseparably associated with tendencies to use words or other symbols, to arrange external objects in orderly series, to handle his instruments, to control the material objects which concern him, and inwardly to affirm and to deny. And even affirmation and denial have typical outward expressions in conduct. A thought which has no conscious reference to a deed, which involves no plan of conduct, which joins nothing together that was so far divided, which dissects nothing that was so far whole, which involves no play of active attention from object to object, which voluntarily asserts nothing, and which denies nothing, which neither accepts nor rejects, but only passively contemplates, is no thought at all, but is a vacant staring at nothing in particular by nobody who is self-conscious. Thought, indeed, often involves a temporary suppression of outer conduct, for the sake of considering plans of conduct. But plans of conduct, so far as they are not yet outwardly expressed, are known to our inner consciousness only when possible deeds are begun, but are more or less completely suppressed as soon as

they are fairly initiated, — and the passage to the outward expression of thought is not due to the appearance of a new sort of consciousness, which alone is to be called volitional, and which, as volitional, is to be distinguished from every intellectual process. No, the transition from thought to externally significant conduct is rather due to the removal of certain inhibitions. These inhibitions, so long as they persist, keep the thinker from letting those activities which he inwardly rehearses, go free in the form of outwardly manifest words, of arrangements of external objects, and of expressive bodily attitudes such as are those of affirmation and denial.

For the rest, you have only to observe the motor activities of any vivacious disputant or lecturer who freely expresses his thought, to observe how intensely practical are the attitudes in which even decidedly abstract thinking processes inevitably display themselves, so soon as such inhibitions are actually removed. The vivacious disputant or expounder points out imaginary objects with his extended forefinger, and imitates their contour, their movement, their arrangement, their inner structure, by an elaborate display of gestures. His pointings are indices of his subjects ; his mimicry portrays his predicates. He affirms by pounding with clenched fist against the palm of his other hand, or upon his desk. Or, again, in case of his more abstract and less contentious assertions, he perhaps gently lays his forefinger across the palm of the opposing hand, or lays it upon the forefinger of this hand, thereby quietly, but impressively, showing you how he has learned to lay his finger upon the very truth itself. He denies by means of gestures of avoidance, of aversion, or of destruction. He harmlessly, yet in a spiritual sense seriously, threatens you, his opponent, with frown, with glittering eye, with shaking fist, with attitudes of defiance, or of crushing intellectual hostility. He invites you, if you are nearer to him in opinion, by winning gestures to come to his embrace. If the controversy is vigorous, then as he affirms or denies, he clenches his jaws and shows his teeth. Or in scorn perhaps at your errors, he makes the well-known but less marked facial gesture that Darwin describes as the act of slightly uncovering the canine tooth on

the side towards the enemy. If he becomes very calm, pursuing in his thought extremely abstract and elusive truths, his eye, or his pointing hand, begins to search out small or distant objects. I know a distinguished public lecturer who, whenever his topics grow problematic, follows cautiously with his eyes the lines where the wall and ceiling of the room meet, then perhaps lets them run down the corner of the room, where the two walls meet, and then calmly announces in words the result of his quest. I remember an aged and optimistic philosopher, now dead, whose every expository period was wont to begin with the suggestion of a problem, but to end with its often highly abstract, yet always triumphant solution. His thoughtful and extremely mobile countenance was a mass of wrinkles, which time and the defense of the truth had worn. As each new sentence set out upon its lengthy course, and as the problem grew intense, this venerable thinker's facial wrinkles used to twist into a marvelous and often terrifying lack of symmetry. One wondered whether those tangled curves could ever again acquire a restful aspect. But as the end of the sentence approached, they always, at the fitting moment, triumphantly passed back again into a beautiful symmetry, and through this blessed relief of tension the evenness of the truth was at the close made quite manifest to everybody present. I do not indeed well remember what this philosopher's opinions were, so busy was I wont to become in watching his countenance. But I gathered that his optimism was a sort of inner comment of his consciousness upon his ceaseless joy in discovering how every muscular strain, whereby his facial wrinkles could possibly be complicated, was certain in the end to pass over into symmetry and quiescence. As he had for many years carefully experimented upon this topic, and as no twist of his wrinkles had ever yet failed to yield to this mode of treatment, he seemed to feel very sure about the universe. The subjects of his assertions might be as contorted as fortune chanced to make them ; his predicates were sure to consist of symmetrical curves of relief, and so of peace. Such, you see, was the pragmatism of this venerable sage.

What such seemingly trivial facts illustrate holds true, in

principle, of at least one aspect of the inner life of all of us. Our thinking is indeed from moment to moment a consciousness of our adjustment to our present experience. This adjustment is our own act. We perform this act, not capriciously, but because we find therein our conscious relief, our movement in the direction of the fulfillment of our own purpose. Unless I am interested in expressing myself, in actively reading my own purpose into my world, you shall not induce me, by any device, to know or to express any truth whatever about what is not myself.

III.

These, then, are considerations which suggest an attempt, not only to define our thoughtful consciousness in essentially practical terms, but also to define the objects about which we think, yes, the very reality of which we are conscious, in similarly pragmatic fashion. For, in the first place, although objects of experience seem, from a well-known realistic point of view, to be given to us whole, with all their properties and relations, as objects independent of our will, and so as objects in their essence extraneous to our consciousness,—still an equally well-known critical method of reflection, when linked with the pragmatism whose basis we have now expounded, tends to destroy this realistic seeming. For what is directly given to us at any moment (that is, what is immediately and *merely* given to us) is simply the fact of our special momentary need for further insight and for further action. What at any moment we actually see, what we clearly think, what we make out of the given, that is not merely given to us, but is also *ours*,—not ours as our mere caprice, independent of the given need, but ours as what Professor Dewey rightly calls our response to the situation, our furnishing of the needed predicates, our recognition of the object, our adjustment of deed to present want, in brief, as I should say, our expression of ourselves under the conditions.

Hence it is not true that we merely find outer objects as independent of our will, and as nevertheless possessed in all their independence of their various predicates, qualitative, relational, substantial, individual. We find them possessed of characters,

only in so far as we ourselves coöperate in the construction, in the definition, in the linkage of these very predicates, which we then ascribe to the objects. Since, to be sure, our need of thus defining our objects is indeed given to us, as this brute fact of our momentary need itself, as the bare datum that we must indeed act in order to succeed, and since, in case we are said to come to an understanding of our objects, we succeed in dealing with our need by virtue of just these special acts of ours, that is, by virtue of making these assertions, of ascribing these predicates, of living out just these beliefs,—since, I say, all this is true, we are accustomed to say that it is the object itself whose nature forces upon us just these predicates. For, in order to relieve our need, we are indeed constrained, in general, to define our object thus and thus. But, as a fact, nothing can force you except your own need. If you have no interest in the object, its supposed independence of your will can impose upon your will no recognition of this its barely external nature. You observe what you need to observe ; and in observing you partly fulfill your purpose by diminishing your need ; and what you find, as you thoughtfully review your observations, is the expression of your own thoughtful nature in the object,—an expression always conditioned by your need, but also always conditioned by your devices as a thinker, by your categories, by your modes of activity. For instance, does your observed object, as you dwell upon it, come to be possessed for your consciousness of definite numerical complexity ? Then that is because you have needed to count, and, counting, have not merely found, but have constructed, both your numerical predicate and the relation of one to one correspondence between the constituents of your predicate and the attentively seized constituents that you now indeed find in your object, but find only in so far as your need has led you, dwelling upon these elements, to divide by your attention what sense furnishes to you only in that problematic confusion which constituted your very need of counting. Thus counting is an expression of your purposes ; and sense, when uncounted, shows you no definitely numerical groups ; but, at best, furnishes the stimulus and the support of the need to count. This case is typical.

What holds of numerical complexity, holds of every intelligible aspect of experience. What you find, then, as barely given in your experience, are needs that can be thus or thus met, tensions that can be thus or thus relieved by the response of your intelligence, and objects that possess a meaning, only in case you behold in these objects the expression of your own work in meeting your needs. As Kant said, you can get nothing defined and intelligible out of your object except what you have put into it. Yes, as Kant might have said, you get nothing defined and intelligible out of your object except when you merely reflect upon what even now you are putting into it, by active responses to stimuli, that is, to needs,—responses which tell you what your object is only by letting you see what just now you must do about your object. To be sure, since your need at every point accompanies, and so moulds your deed, you never feel free to think this or that of your presented object. For you are bound fast by your own need. The object is therefore yours to construct, but not yours to create ; and this again is what Kant said. And this is the aspect of the object which realism falsely emphasizes. My need is the controller of my will ; though even my need, although given, is not given as an object independent of my will. When realism asserts that, independently of me, my object is possessed of the characters that my intelligence is forced to find in it, the truth of the realistic assertion, as it is usually formulated, seems to lie mainly in the validity of the social judgment that anybody, possessed merely of my needs and of my present resources, would perforce define his world just as I now do mine. This social judgment is human ; but it is itself only the expression of one of our deepest needs, namely, the need of companionship, the need to acknowledge the presence of our fellows and to sympathize with their needs. Apart from this social basis of realism, the ordinary realistic interpretation of experience would turn upon the most barren of fancies. The object is never merely given to me, but is given only as the result of a process. It is that which, through my own construction, I find as the momentary expression of my own effort to satisfy my needs. Now sunder that which I thus find from that constructive life whose

expression it is. Say that not only before I needed, but before anybody needed, and quite independently of my need, or of any need, there was and is that which my need led me to find as my construction. To say this is realism. And this is what I call a barren fancy, because, when one looks closer, one finds that to say this becomes needless.

Over against such realism, the pragmatism that we are now defining rightly insists, I think, that what you find in experience is what it is found to be, namely, an object in so far as it is characterized through and in your thoughtful deeds.

IV.

So far we have, then, the statement of the foundations upon which rests, if I rightly understand the matter, what I shall call pure pragmatism. This pure pragmatism, as we shall soon see, is held unmodified by nobody. Yet there exist those who often speak as if this were their whole doctrine of knowledge. Let us, then, for the moment, take this doctrine as it stands, and try to be for a moment pure pragmatists. If what we have just stated shows the nature of our thought and of its objects, what room is there left for any form of absolutism? This fluent realm of transient meanings, where whatever is merely found, as brute datum, is nothing more than a query, a problem, a need, while whatever is both found and characterized, that is, whatever is experienced as a whole, intelligible, present object, is inevitably an at least partial fulfillment of a present need,—well, to what universal laws of thought or being can such a realm conform? Can such a realm be the expression of any truth that is either eternal, or absolutely authoritative? You have your needs, I mine. We both change our needs. What youth hopes is not what age demands. The morning and the evening bring different needs. Let us be pluralists. If, like my venerable friend, any one of us is in need of such objects as, when conceived, give his facial wrinkles symmetry, and his soul peace, and if, by chance, he can uniformly get what he needs,—well, what he gets is his truth. Who amongst us has any better truth? Who wants anything but a prevailing triumphant state of mind? If thinking

gives us such a state, we call our thoughts true. Has the word 'truth' any universal meaning whatever except this? When I say: "This belief of mine is true," what can I mean but: "This belief of mine just now meets my conscious needs"?

As soon as we raise this question, we all indeed begin, even as pure pragmatists, to observe, just a little uncomfortably, one need which we have indeed already mentioned, but which we have not yet explicitly defined. It is the need that I before called the need of companionship, the need not only of thinking for ourselves, but of finding somebody who either will agree with us, or else at least, to our mode of thinking, *ought* to agree with us. This need also is a human, and so far, in our account, is an empirical fact, a brute datum, like our other needs. Perhaps it has no deeper meaning than has any rival need of our wavering wits. But, at all events, it is a need that goes along with his other interests to make the philosopher. For a philosopher, however much he may love to speak with tongues, becomes uncomfortable if he chances to observe that he seems to be edifying only himself and not the brethren. My venerable friend aforesaid obviously desired that we who listened to him should all somehow learn to wrinkle our faces just as he did and just when he did, and should so attain the same blessedness as that which he enjoyed. I notice a human weakness of a similar sort even in the most stubborn pluralists,—even in those who come nearest to being pure pragmatists. I find, namely, that a pluralist, when he criticises me, always wants me to come into unity with him. And I notice that this weakness also shows itself in a very marked and, as I think, partially justified disposition to expound pragmatism in forms which are not altogether pure. There are those who often speak as if they were pure pragmatists. Yet their doctrine has always another side; and the existence of such additions as are often made to doctrines that at first seem to be pure pragmatism shows, I judge, that there is some difficulty involved in leaving the problem of knowledge just where our previous exposition has so far left it. Something is still lacking to complete our picture of what we call truth. For consider: You shall open some accounts of modern pragmatism which, to judge by some of the

expressions used, seem to be attempts at pure pragmatism. Yet, as you read further, you shall learn that philosophers ought to take especially careful account of that greatest of modern discoveries,—the doctrine of evolution. Everything is a product of evolution. Must not thought be such a product? Obviously it must. But now, as you further learn from such expounders of pragmatism, one great merit and recommendation of such pragmatism as I have just tried to illustrate is that it shows how, not only thought, in general, but the special categories of thought, categories such as truth, objectivity, reality, are all products of evolution, and of a process of evolution which is determined by need, by stimulation, by the environment, by the growth of our organisms. What we believe thus appears as a result, like our other reactions,—like fire-making, like engine-building, like money-getting, like art, like the family, or like eating and football playing,—a result brought about by the character of our organisms, by the environment that plays upon us, by the desires that burn within us. Thought and its inner products show you, much as these other incidents of evolution do, reality in the making. The processes of thinking, the acknowledgment of these and these objects as real, of these and these principles as true, the toils of science, the warfare of the creeds, the speculations of the philosophers,—these are all like the cat's pursuit of the mouse, or like the kitten's flight after its tail, simply forms of adjustment to the environment. It is, then, a great recommendation of pragmatism that it comes into line with natural history, that it drops the methods which were common in 'preëvolutionary' ages of thought, and that it conceives truth, being, logic, and all the rest of the objects of philosophical reflection, as, like eating and living, mere incidents of that well-known universal process of evolution. You accept evolution. Well, then, pragmatism is a corollary of evolution. Thus are philosophy and science to be reconciled. Now all these observations about the relations between pragmatism and the doctrine of evolution may have their great value in another context. I am not doubting their intrinsic interest. What I inevitably note is, however, that when a man talks in such terms, he seems to me not to be any

longer expounding a pure pragmatism. I do not blame him for this. But I do wonder that he will often speak as if he meant to be a pure pragmatist.

The evidence for pure pragmatism, if there is such evidence, must rest on what you now can observe as to your present thought and its objects. The evidence for the doctrine of evolution must rest upon beliefs that relate to vast numbers of objects such as are supposed somehow to have existed long before you or I or any human being could have been there to acknowledge their existence. Tell me first that you are a pure pragmatist, and that you accordingly believe whatever you just now find it needful for you to believe ; and I can, up to a certain point, understand you. Then add that, having read modern books, or having worked in the field, or in laboratories, you just now find it needful to believe in something called evolution, and accordingly to believe in a world that existed before all human beings existed, to believe also in an object called an organism, in an object called an environment, and in various other such conceived objects, and still I follow you. But tell me that you are a pragmatist because pragmatism logically follows from the truth of this doctrine of evolution, and then indeed I fail to see what you mean. For when you say : "The doctrine of evolution is true," I ask you : "In what sense true ?" If you reply : "True in the pragmatist's sense, viz., as the object of my present conscious and constructive thought, which conceives evolution as a truth, because just now I need so to conceive it";—well, then you state your pragmatism first, and define your belief in evolution solely in terms of your pragmatism. How, then, can this belief in evolution,—a belief which is a mere instance of your pragmatism,—lend back any of its borrowed authority to furnish a warrant for your belief in the very doctrine called pragmatism, a belief which you presuppose in expressing your evolutionary creed ?

But, on the other hand, if you say : "The doctrine of evolution, as a universally valid result of modern science, is to be accepted, not in the pragmatist's sense at all, but because this doctrine, whether we happen to need to believe it or not, is

true"; well—then you have once for all either abandoned, or else have profoundly modified, your pragmatism. You have, perhaps, become a realist, or maybe an absolutist. In any case, your belief in evolution can then furnish no warrant for your pragmatism; because in that case you have denied pragmatism in order to define the sort of truth that you attribute to the doctrine of evolution.

Why, then, does a pragmatist, who often speaks as if he meant to be a pure pragmatist, nevertheless boast of his fidelity to the doctrine of evolution? Because, I answer, despite his occasional speech as if he meant pure pragmatism, he is not a pure pragmatist. For all his pragmatism, he does not quite like to confess that he is an evolutionist *merely* because he just now feels the personal need of being an evolutionist, precisely as other people may feel their need of being Mormons, or of believing in witchcraft, or of squaring the circle in some particular way. And, as a fact, he is not an evolutionist in the sense of such pure pragmatism. He is an evolutionist in the sense of supposing not only that he does just now need to believe in the doctrine of evolution, but that he *ought* to need so to believe. And he strengthens in himself this sense of the ought by reflecting that he lives in an evolutionary age, and that the experts have settled the question in favor of evolution, and that, by appealing to this well-known presupposition, he can get hearers for his doctrine of pragmatism. For a pragmatist, I repeat, is a companionable person; and, moreover, he rightly thinks that he ought to be so. He is not content to see for himself that his opinions have merely the pragmatic sanction; he wants us to agree with him about this very matter. In fact, he needs that we shall find ourselves needing what he needs.

Two motives that tend to modify pure pragmatism appear even in this brief sketch of its complications. Even a pragmatist who wants to be a pure one has an inevitable conception, not only of what he now needs, as he utters this judgment, but of what he ought to need in order to get a warrant for the judgment. And he also has a conception of the need of finding companions who shall be persuaded to agree with him, or who at least ought to be persuaded. Pure pragmatism would be, after all, a lonesome

kind of doctrine. I need, and need just now, to assert myself thus. Hence, I judge thus. Hence this is true for me. How obvious all that is! Yes, but how barren, unless I can add: "My need is the human one; it defines a ruling, a standard need. I *ought* to need just this assertion of just this object in view of this situation. I ought; you ought; humanity ought, to characterize this object thus." Only when I can speak thus do I feel at home. Hence a natural fondness of the pragmatist for using terms that suggest appeal to current popular opinion. Evolution is to-day not only a result of science; it is a catch-word, a name for a celebrated 'merger' of all sorts of securities. If you only join the two words 'social' and 'evolution' in your speech nowadays, everybody at once listens to find out what you have to say. Hence, if you want really to feel at home with even your innermost reflective doctrine, you must characterize it as having an important bearing on the structure of society; and you must show it to be a corollary of the doctrine of evolution. Then only are you quite sure of it!

But, then, in what sense do these perfectly normal and natural tendencies inevitably modify your pure pragmatism? I reply, on one side, they illustrate the pragmatist's main thesis; on the other side, they indeed do modify it. They illustrate it; for this tendency to define pragmatism in terms of evolution is itself the expression of an inner need of the pragmatist who makes the evolutionary appeal. This fondness for companionship, which shows itself in a tendency to confirm pragmatism by a use of popular catch-words, notwithstanding the obvious fact that the only logical basis for pragmatism, apart from purely expository illustrations, must be a purely individual and interior reflective process, whereby we notice what happens when we judge,—this fondness for social confirmation, I say, is again the expression of one of the needs of the pragmatist thinker, who all the while teaches that truth, for him, is merely the result of his need for control over his own experience.

Yet if these tendencies, on the one hand, illustrate pure pragmatism, on the other hand, they, with equal obviousness, modify the form that it assumes in the consciousness of the pragmatist him-

self. He needs,—but *what* he needs is to recognize that his truth is something *more* than the result and expression of his present need. He judges of his objects as he needs to judge; but one of his needs is to be satisfied that his need ought to be what it is. He expresses himself as he just now is; but he aims to express himself so that his fellow may also be one with himself. Inevitably, therefore, the very need of the moment needs control by another than itself, yet by somewhat that is not alien to itself. It needs control; for so soon as it recognizes that it is logically no better than any other possible will to believe, as for instance, no better than a will to believe in witchcraft, or in fairyland, it recognizes its own emptiness. It needs, therefore, control by some other than itself; for a valid principle that should determine what, under given conditions, is the right and rational need, is not identical with the passing content of any merely momentary need. But when the need of the moment thus needs to be controlled, the control that it seeks is not that of a realistic object, independent of itself, but that of some universal expression of need,—an expression that simply makes conscious what the need of the moment is trying, after all, to be, namely, a rational and binding need. Hence, at the moment of expressing one's pragmatism, one loves to appeal to well recognized objective truths,—to evolution, to common sense, to whatever is likely to seem universally valid.

V.

We have thus prepared the way to state wherein our first statement of pragmatism has to be modified, even in order that its own need should be expressed.

"I believe what now, with my conditions, and my needs, my judging activity constructs as the present truth for me :" there is one form of the assertion of pure pragmatism. All this, we have said, is obvious and barren. Why barren? Because one of the things that I seek, when I judge, is to express something that shall have some value as a standard. A judgment is not only a construction, but a resolve; not only a response, but a precept; addressed possibly to other men, to myself at other times, to whatever reasonable being there may be who has wit to under-

stand me. It not only says : "I believe ;" it says : "This is to be believed." The one who judges wills not only his own state of mind, but other states of mind, which he conceives to be constructed in accordance with the rule laid down in his judgment. Unless he does this, he does not judge ; he merely croons, or wrinkles his face, or plays with his mental images. Whoever judges is a pragmatist ; but, as we have already seen, he means to require you to believe him. And therein he becomes more than a pragmatist.

And so, in case you first judge, and then as a pure pragmatist observe that your judgment is merely your present reaction to this present conscious situation, the very observation, if it is sufficient to your mind to characterize your whole process of judging, at once takes the whole life out of what was but just now your assurance. That is precisely what I do not want my present judgment to be, namely, this momentary feat of attentive agility. I want it to have authority. Suppose that I assert something, and that thereupon my critical neighbor pityingly says : "Yes, no doubt *you* think so." Why may this retort seem insulting ? Because it pretends to reduce my judgment to a mere attitude of my own. Now that is just what I do not want my opinion to be. But suppose that just this retort is the *only* one that I am able upon reflection to make to myself. Well, then indeed I am a pure pragmatist. But hereupon my judgments lose all their deepest interest. They do not meet the principal need that they all the while believed themselves to be meeting. It is as when one wakes from a dream-conversation and finds himself talking alone in the darkness. He was but just now responding to the situation according to his insight. He hereupon observes that both situation and response were merely his own momentary datum and construction. How lonesome is this new insight ! Now pragmatists, indeed, do not usually feel lonesome. They are excellent companions and very fond of rational society. We have seen why they do not feel lonesome. It is because, like others, they take their judgments about evolution, society, humanity, the good, and the like, to be possessed of a character that no pure pragmatism could express. Having

first believed these judgments in the ordinary way, namely, as having an authority which is not of the moment, they then add to all these insights that of their pragmatism; and their pragmatism now seems to them an interesting addition to the rest of their natural history. And so at moments they can speak as if this were a pure pragmatism. This, however, they never really mean.

"But," you may object, "in answering thus the contention of the pure pragmatist, one only illustrates the more, as has already been admitted, the pure pragmatist's own position. For this need to give our judgments authority, this longing not to be merely expressing ourselves as now we are, but to be laying down a rule for ourselves at other times, and for other selves, what is this but one of our present and conscious needs? Do we get authority by merely willing to have it? Do we legislate for other individuals merely by longing to legislate? What have we, after all, when we judge, but the resolve to speak for others than ourselves? Is the resolve the accomplishment, except precisely in so far as it accomplishes itself in just the present judgment?"

You see the point that we have reached in following our problem. The situation is indeed baffling. If the pure pragmatist speaks to us, and so speaking asserts himself, he speaks as one having authority. He may talk of evolution, or he may otherwise bring his doctrine into line with what he conceives to be natural facts or general human concerns and beliefs. He will talk of such matters as if he were a realist, or an absolutist. And there is one thing that at the very least he will assert, namely, that his account of the process of judgment, and of the relations of the judgment to its objects, is a sound and true account, which everybody who rightly examines the process of judgment will see for himself to be true. As a teacher, then, the pragmatist is much like any other professor. He has his little horde of maxims; he proclaims the truth; he refutes errors; he asserts that we ought to believe thus or so; and thus lays down the law as vigorously as do other men. But, on the other hand, if the pragmatist, trying for the moment to be a pure pragmatist, reflects upon all this that he has uttered, and upon all this labor

that he has done under the sun, then he must observe that in case his own view is as a pure pragmatism correct, he has instructed nobody at any time but himself as to any genuinely common truth; since, at every instant, he has merely been assuming fluent attitudes of his own, attitudes precisely as significant as were my venerable friend's symmetrical wrinkles. For upon each occasion of thought, he has faced an inner situation of his own, and has opposed thereto a certain gesticulation called a predicate, and has therein found a certain triumph of what some would call his reason, while he now might well merely call it his own state of mind.

These, then, are the two aspects of the situation of the pragmatist himself. If the pragmatist has taught us a truth, then he has done something more than assume his needful inner attitudes. But if he has merely adjusted himself to his conscious environment by means of his own inner mental construction, then he has instructed nobody and has refuted nobody; and has said nothing that has any genuine meaning for anybody but himself. Accordingly, even when he has contradicted absolutism, in uttering such a contradiction he has merely assumed an anti-absolutist inner attitude of his own. Hence that attitude has involved no refutation of anybody else. The pure pragmatist, therefore, contradicts nobody but himself when he asserts that other people, say absolutists, are wrong. For none of his assertions can relate to anybody but himself as he happens to be when he makes them. So much, then, for the situation of the pragmatist, just in so far as he tries to be a pure pragmatist. But our situation, as his critics, seems to be for the moment at least decidedly complicated. For we can criticise him only by pointing out to him conscious needs that his account of the judging process somehow does not meet. If these needs are not his own, we have not refuted him. If they are his own, then their presence refutes him only because his doctrine, namely, the doctrine that a true judgment is such by reason of its success in meeting the needs that it attempts to meet, is illustrated by our proposed refutation.

How shall one sum up the meaning of these complications? They are not arbitrary inventions of anybody. They belong to

the very essence of the situation of any finite thinker. I know of no way but to accept the conscious situation that we find, as well as to observe with the pragmatist that all this our finding is inevitably no merely *passive* acceptance. When we *both* act and reflect, both observe and construct, are both pragmatists and theorists, what we make out about the meaning of all this fluent process of knowledge is to be summed up, I think, as follows. Hereby our pragmatism will be, not abandoned, but modified.

VI.

I have spoken of the need for companionship in our judgments as itself merely one of our given and human needs. But my illustrations have brought to mind, I hope, what I now venture to state as a general principle. It is this: When we feel the need of appealing to somebody else, or to ourselves at other times, in order even to express our opinion that our judgments have a warrant, this our need for companionship is precisely coincident with our need to regard our judgment as true. When the cat pursues the mouse, she presumably does so because she needs the mouse. But if she consciously asserted: "This is a mouse," she would need another cat, or some other critic of truth, as the being who ought to agree with her as to the truth of this assertion. I react to my environment as this present self. But if my reaction is a judgment, it is not only a bit of pure pragmatism; it is an appeal to a judge of truth whom I conceive either to be judging as one ought to judge, or else to be in the wrong. That I feel the need of such appeal, is itself at any moment, indeed, a mere datum, like any other momentary need of mine. But it is just this need that constitutes me a rational being. Let a pure pragmatist undertake to deny this assertion if he will. In denying he will merely assert that I ought not to make it; and in so denying he will appeal to a sound and rational mode of judgment passed upon consciousness in general. As for his own pure pragmatism, he either judges himself that it is a true account of judging in general, or he is no believer in his own doctrine. But if he is a believer in his own doctrine, then he judges that he characterizes our judging consciousness as another person than his present self ought to characterize it.

In brief, to believe that my judgment is true, is to believe that another point of view than my present point of view, in case this other point of view is what it ought to be, actually confirms my own judgment about this object. This other point of view, however, is a point of view that relates to the same object, or else it could not be conceived as confirming my judgment about this object. Whoever believes seriously in the truth of his judgment, not only explicitly makes this present judgment, but implicitly believes two further things, namely : (1) That there is another conscious point of view than his own, and a point of view from which this same object is viewed ; and (2) that this other point of view, without being a mere copy of his own, and without his own being a mere copy of it, is so related to his own point of view that each ought to agree with, to supplement, to enlarge, and to confirm the other. Now while the need to assert the reality of this other point of view is, indeed, one of the needs of the present judging consciousness, it is utterly vain to say that this need is fully *met* by any fact that the present judging consciousness of a finite being itself now constructs and finds present. For if what I find is for me merely my present opinion about my present object, and if I view this opinion merely as my present construction, then I simply do not view my opinion as true at all. I then view it merely as my state of mind. But if I view my opinion as true, I demand that another than my present self shall accept this opinion. This is the very nature of the truth-asserting consciousness. Such a consciousness lives in the light of another than itself. Yet it conceives this other than itself not as a realistic outer and independent object, but as a constructive self, like itself, yet other than its present self,—its own companion, because its own extension and wider expression. The judging self conceives itself as not fully expressed in this judgment, but as needing its own *alter ego* to aid it in its own expression. Herein the cognitive reactions of finite beings are different from other reactions. They seek, indeed, their own ; but they seek it not merely as their own. They view themselves as essentially partial functions in a process whose unity is subject to one rule, the *ought* of the truth-seeking activity, whose object is this iden-

tical object, but whose variety is the actually required variety of points of view regarding this one object.

If this is of the essence of the judging consciousness, then all that pragmatism asserts is, indeed, as far as it goes, valid ; but a pure pragmatist is nevertheless self-refuting. We must be pragmatists, but also more than pragmatists. For if I need what is not my present self, if I need another than the present judging consciousness, in order to make it possible for me to assert the truth of my judgment, then, although my predicates are, as pragmatism asserts, the constructions of the present moment, still the truth of my judgment is not a mere construction of the present moment, but belongs to the unity of the various constructive processes of momentary selves, all of which are various expressions of the purpose which each one of them shares, so that, despite their variety, their selfhood is one.

Yet with this result we cannot pause. Our account is still incomplete. The assertion : "My judgment is true," amounts so far to the judgment : "I have companions, other selves who view the same object from other points of view,—but who, as others, are still so one with myself that despite their variety they still *ought* to agree with me, since my *ought* is theirs, and since we are but various functions in the unity of one knowing process." All this implies the notion of the *ought*, a notion without the consciousness of which my present judgment, as we have seen, becomes even for myself, in case I reflect, a vain crooning, a mere wrinkling of the countenance, an empty pounding of my desk, a helpless shouting at nobody and about nothing. But this ought, what can it mean ? A realist would say : "It means that if you judge falsely about the independent object, the independent object will perchance eliminate you as an unfit variation from the evolutionary process, or will in any case catch you and hold you to facts, squirm though you may." This realistic view, so far as it is sound at all, obviously denies the very independence which it pretends to attribute to the object. Nothing can refute me but an experience that is in unity with my own, and that is a function of the very selfhood which is expressed in me. So realism must be translated into conscious, and so, apparently, into directly

pragmatic terms. Plainly the *ought* means that my judging activity has a purpose that goes beyond my present partial expression. In other words, my present judging activity has a place in a process of experience such that if my judgment, despite its present success, still on the whole and in the end fails, this process, of which the judgment itself is a part, contains somewhere conscious contents which will show my partial failure. But since no self whose purposes are foreign to mine, or are in any way such as not to include mine, can possibly observe my failure in judgment, or can be conscious of what I mean and how and where I fail of my own purpose, it follows that to say: "I *ought* to judge thus or thus" is to say: "I myself, in a more fully enlightened expression of myself, am so constituted as to detect whether my judgment wholly fulfills or only partially fulfills my purpose." But to say: "We companions, who judge together the same object, we are all subject to the same *ought*," is therefore to say: "All our various selves are functions not only one of another, but of one conscious Self that somewhere and somehow pragmatically constructs an expression of itself in the light of which our various partial expressions are judged." Such a self I need just in so far as I need my judgment to be true. Such a self is real if my judgment has either truth or falsity.

But now, regarding any grade or type of socially communing selves that might have reached, from various points of view, such judgments regarding their common objects as rightly expressed so much of their *ought* as had yet come to their own consciousness, the same question that we have now repeatedly asked about our present selves would arise afresh. You do not escape the needs which pragmatism feels by merely multiplying the judges, while leaving them all finite. Is their view of the *ought* the view that they *ought* to hold? Are their conscious ways of judging this object only the expression of their social, but still relative, temporary, passing, unstable point of view? Mere multiplicity of opinions alters not in kind the difficulty that first arose in our path as we studied the single momentary judgment. I appeal to my companions to confirm my judgment in case I believe my judgment to be true. If they disagree, I appeal to

our common *ought*, that is, to our consciousness of our one self-hood. But even if my companions all agree with me, and even if we all believe together that we ought to agree, we shall no sooner see this to be our common pragmatic attitude towards our experience than we shall need, in order to maintain that our common judgment is actually true, to face the further question : “ Is there possibly any other point of view than ours regarding this object,— and one which renders ours in any sense false ? Is there any *ought* that a still more inclusive view of our common purpose would see to be still higher than our *ought*? ” If there is, then our common judgment is merely our present reaction, which is not true even of its own object. We shall need, I say, need in the pragmatic sense, to seek for the answer to these questions. The penalty of not being able to answer them will simply be that we shall have to call our intellectual constructions, so far as we shall then have reached them, mere attitudes of ours, and not any genuine truths at all. For truth is conformity to an *ought*. And a true *ought* is one that from every point of view confirms or refutes. Are such questions in themselves answerable ? Does the real world contain anywhere the experiences that do answer them ? Is there any final *ought* of judgment at all ? Upon this question depends the whole issue as to whether you and I ever make any true judgments at all, or for that matter, whether we make any false judgments. Truth and falsity are indeed relative to insight, to experience, to life, to action, to the constructions which pragmatism emphasizes. But unless these constructions are what they ought to be they are not true. And unless there is an objective *ought* they are not even false. But if there is a true and a false, then there is a view for which the *ought* is known,— known not as simply a single, transient, unstable, chance point of view, but as the object of one self-possessed and inclusive insight such that it *remains invariant whatever other points of view you attempt to conceive added to it*. Such an insight would belong to a self that did not fail to include pragmatisms of all kinds, but that simply and consciously *included them all*, in such wise that if you conceived other points of view, other reactions to situations, other judgments added, no change would

result in the characterizations of its object which this self could view as fitting, permissible, and so true. For the ought is either a real ought or it is nothing. A judgment has its place in a complete system of truth, or else it is not true.

Now when we declare that our judgments are true, we appeal to such a self to confirm them. Of such an appeal our desire for social support and comradeship is merely a special instance, a fragmentary example. When we doubt whether our judgments are true, we doubt whether such a self does confirm them. When we need to call our judgments true or false, we need to conceive, to define, to address, such a self. If there is such a self, then there is truth. If there is no such self, pragmatism can truly assert nothing, can truly deny nothing, stands in the presence of no genuine reality, and can only continue to be conscious of how it wrinkles its wholly unreal countenance in the echoless void, where its assertions meet no genuine response, have not even any real spectators, and are meaningless both to God and to man, since then neither man nor God exists to fill the void.

But if there is such a self, then for every finite instance of life pragmatism remains a perfectly genuine truth,—genuine as our ceaseless longing for the eternal is genuine,—genuine as love and aspiration are genuine. Everything expresses itself according to its momentary light. Everything finite passes, changes, evolves, asserts itself and resigns itself, utters rules that are sincerely meant to be authoritative, but gives way to the authority of its own higher expression. Everything is practical ; and everything seeks nothing whatever but its own true self, which is the Eternal.

For the Eternal is not that which merely lasts all the time. Only abstractions temporally endure. And they are not the life ; they are either only a dead image, or again, they are only an aspect of the life. That alone is eternal which includes all the varying points of view in the unity of a single insight, and which knows that it includes them, because every possible additional point of view would necessarily leave this insight invariant.

The possibility of such an eternal is, of course, the possibility of the existence, in a genuine sense together, as a *totum simul*,

of the contents of an infinite series of practical and evolutionary processes. I have elsewhere set forth at length my grounds for believing both in the possibility and in the actuality of such an eternal existence. It is not my purpose, in this address, however, to expound a metaphysical theory for its own sake. I have desired merely to indicate what we need when we attempt to make true assertions.

I conclude, then, First : That pragmatism is right in asserting that every judgment, whatever else it may prove to be, is the expression of a present activity, determined by a consciousness of need, is responsive to this need, and is such as this need determines,—in brief, is a constructive response to a situation, and is not a mere copying of an externally given object.

Secondly : That nevertheless, in so far as we ourselves observe that our present judgment has *only* this character of being our present and passing response to a given situation, we find that we need the judgment to be more than this. This need is the peculiar need that our judgment should be not only ours but true.

Thirdly : That this need for truth is the need that there should be other points of view, other actual judgments, responsive to the same situation, in other words, to the same object. These other points of view we first conceive as belonging to ourselves at other times, or to other selves, those of our companions. We conceive that all these judgments ought, despite their diversity of points of view, so to agree as to confirm one another, and so to unite in one system of truth as to characterize harmoniously the same object.

Fourthly : That these various points of view (in order thus to harmonize) and this *ought* (in order to hold for all of them) must be conceived as belonging to, and as being included within, a single self, whose partial functions these various selves are, and whose common conscious purpose defines the ought to which each of the various judgments is to conform. Such a self we need to conceive in order to conceive our judgments as true ; and we need to conceive it as having the same sort of embodiment in concrete experience that our present judgment now has.

Fifthly : Meanwhile, in so far as we conceive this self as like ourselves transient, passing, variable,—its inclusive constructive

judgments become once more like our own, not genuinely true, but only special points of view, which determine no genuine ought, and which are mere states of mind, or stages of its experience. Mere magnitude and multiplicity cannot constitute that aspect of consciousness which makes possible a genuine *ought*.

Accordingly, in the sixth place, in order to conceive our judgments as true, we need to conceive them as partial functions of a self which is so inclusive of all possible points of view regarding our object as to remain invariant in the presence of all conceivable additional points of view, and so conscious of its own finished and invariable purpose as to define an ought that determines the truth or falsity of every possible judgment about this object.

Seventhly, and lastly: If there is such an inclusive and invariant self, it is of course complete at no moment of time. It is inclusive of all temporal processes of evolution that could alter our view or any view of our object. Such a self is invariant and eternal, without thereby ceasing at any and every point of time to be expressed in finite and practical activities, such as appear in our own judgments. If there is such a self, our need to make judgments that can be true or false is satisfied. If there is no such self, no judgment is either true or false. The need for the Eternal is consequently one of the deepest of all our practical needs. Herein lies at once the justification of pragmatism, and the logical impossibility of pure pragmatism. Everything finite and temporal is practical. All that is practical borrows its truth from the Eternal.

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