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PSYCHOLOGY AND SCIENTIFIC METHODS

FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTS AND METHODOLOGY OF DYNAMIC REALISM

THE recent illuminating discussions of functional psychology make it opportune to indicate some of the metaphysical counterparts of this method as embodied in that form of monism which is most appropriately termed dynamic realism. It would consume too much of the time courteously extended to me by the editor for this purpose to indicate how generally (albeit not always consciously) this tendency in philosophy has permeated recent literature, but none can deny a notable advance in this direction during the last ten years.

The extension of the term 'functional' into philosophy may be deprecated as bringing an assumption into a sphere whose chief glory it is to avoid all postulates which have not been critically examined. 'Dynamic,' as descriptive of a form of realism, seems more happy in that it agrees with the psychological idea that conscious processes are always a 'doing' but does not drag in, even by a form of popular allusion, the thought of something behind which is 'functioning.' It may be the claim of realism to escape as long as possible from preinterpretations, whether of science or of philosophy.

Accordingly, it erases from its vocabulary such words as 'matter,' 'force,' 'cause' and 'effect'; the former pair as unwarrantable philosophical postulates masquerading as scientific facts, and the latter pair as scientific generalizations transported non-critically into the citadel of philosophy, where, breaking from their wooden horse, they traitorously betray their too hospitable host. Since science herself is pretty generally admitting the necessity of a reinterpretation of the matter idea, we need do no more than baldly state the dynamic position that matter is a revelation of energy in complex equilibrated form, and that the attribute of materiality is a name for certain relations, or correlations, of psychic modes, and so is a creation of judgment in the same sense that *substance* is. There is found neither philosophical justification nor scientific advantage in

postulating a matter behind these phenomenal centers to serve, as it were, as a precipitant for energy or a vehicle for its expression—a thing whose properties, by which it alone can be conceived to exist, are simply expressions of something else, viz., energy; which, however, can not exist without this unknowable. The logical hocus pocus involved deserves to be scourged out of philosophy as well as out of science.

But perhaps all that can here be attempted is to indicate some of the limitations which the dynamic method finds it necessary to impose.

METHODOLOGICAL APHORISMS OF DYNAMIC REALISM

I. It demands the closest adherence to the direct data of experience. As a point of departure, all realism endeavors to imitate common sense, though it must avoid the naïve errors of popular conceptions. It is open to us either to select as units of a system the logical elements produced by the most abstract reflection, or to take the postulates of physical sciences, but either process leaves a haunting sense of insecurity by reason of the fact, which all must recognize, that the determinants of idealism, on one hand, and the units of science, on the other, are of secondary origin, while the units really given are presented as immediate experiences. Whatever validity the elements of either materialism or idealism may have rests upon processes or assumptions based on these experiences and the truth or falsity of relations supposed to be found between them.

Realism stands between these extremes, so far as its material is concerned, but back of both by virtue of its method, which is genetic and fundamental. It begins the inquiry with the question which logically precedes all others—the inquiry as to the genesis of reality. It is idle to seek for the validity of the real till its source and nature are known.

II. Do not introduce, as a cause for an unexplained phenomenon, an element itself unexplained or depend on analogies which cross from one sphere to another and unallied one.

This aphorism is violated by materialism when it postulates an inexplicable matter back of phenomena as an explanation of their relation or coherences. If it be a fact that sound-waves will not be transmitted through a vacuum, air is stated to be the *medium* of sound. Light, however, *does* pass through a vacuum and consequently there must be some more refined kind of air in the vacuum to account for the transmission of the light. Along such lines and by such reasoning we reach a conclusion that all forms of energy require a medium for their transmission, the medium being other than energy, although necessary to its expression. The

curious series of logical fallacies concealed here it is unnecessary to discuss in detail. Energy-not-acting is a nonsense concept. If energy be limited in its expression by something not energy, we have two antagonistic things, yet mutually necessary to each other, and a dual universe, *i. e.*, energy, which can not exist without matter, and matter only revealed by energy.

The energetic conception, which considers creation but a self-limitation of spontaneous energy, does not go out of its own category for the ground of *mode*. It does not require an explanation that light may pass through unfilled space but, if it be proved, as it some day doubtless will be, that something must exist in space in order that light may pass through it *as light*, the something will be identified in terms of energy, just as the action of air, etc., on the original energy of sound, forming the determinant of its special mode, is so identified in last analysis.

III. Definitions of terms must be sufficiently close to prevent the introduction of ambiguity by the application of the same term to diverse elements in the same discussion.

To the violation of this maxim, though it be simply the statement of a self-evident truth, most of our philosophical disagreements may be attributed. It is not alone the difficulty (which must be admitted to be inherent in the conditions and unavoidable) that different schools use the same word in different senses, but the fundamental incongruity of using the same word uncritically in one and the same discussion, which is here alluded to. It may be that Wolff taught philosophy to speak German, but certainly we await with impatience the genius who shall induct the heavenly muse into the mysteries of the English tongue.

For the purposes of the present discussion the closer definition of a small group of terms may be attempted, in the hope that, even if others do not care to employ the same restrictions, at least what is meant in the present connection may be ascertainable. The laxity in the use of such words as 'real,' 'true,' 'actual' and 'valid' makes it all but impossible to follow recent epistemological discussions.

Our usage shall be as uniformly as possible as follows: Wherever a general term is required for the idea of agreement with the requirements of thought, of whatever kind, we use '*valid*' or '*validity*.' A question of the criterion or sphere of validity is not implied. '*Reality*' refers to that species of validity whose ground is immediate experience and which, by virtue of its implication of a participation of the subject, is inscrutable and undeniable. It is a form of validity that can be neither challenged nor explained. To challenge it is to deny self—the ground of all knowledge, to explain, is to suppose a thinker behind the thinking or set over

against his thought, and this leads to an endless series devoid of significance.

Truth is the validity predicated of relations discovered between modes of experience. It implies but does not create reality and a relation may be true but not real. True relations become '*actual*' by their participation in the real. The statement that the sun was shining yesterday and will shine to-morrow, is true, but the other sentence, the sun is now shining, implies a present experience of reality. The judgment may be erroneous—it may not be the sun which is shining—but real experience is present.

Validity, in its widest sense, is the expression of faith that God is not mocked, but that there is a teleological universe or organism. This is prerequisite to all thinking.

If we speak of the validity of reality this can not be a question of reality itself as a direct fiat of our being, but simply a seeking for theoretical justification of the primacy which we *must* accord to it. This justification is, as already hinted, solely the law of congruousness—a faith in the unity and organic nexus of all things. The element of validity, when applied to the complicated processes of thought, consists in the recognition of relations. The statement 'That is a dog,' may prove to be founded on false relations or an incomplete assemblage of elements in a group. Whatever reality the presentation had is something apart from this identification upon which truth of the concept depends. If it be an *actual* dog, these elements of reality must be present.

Other contrasted terms requiring definition in this connection are 'existence' and 'manifestation.' Existence brings into the realm of validity the idea of continuance. We can not avoid the belief that the permanence which our judgment creates from frequent repetition of identical experiences resides in temporal extension of attributes as well as their coherence in an object. On the other hand, 'manifestation' implies an observer and is existence from the standpoint of the percipient. Dynamically considered, existence is a doing, and, in a universe of energetic limitation, the doing of any particular thing implies an influencing of that universe—a reaction with other energetic modes. Viewed from one point of view we might say that a thing would exist independently of the percipient, but in a world endowed (even partially and potentially) with sentient receptivity such activity will be potentially perceived. We may ignore the thought of the reaction while considering action, but this does not deny the reaction. As reacting it is potentially perceived—it has put forth what manifests it. This is then the relation of *essence* and *attribute*. Pure (unrelated) being when expressed as a definite essence owes this limitation to reaction. Attribute, or this

expression, is therefore potentially real. Its reality consists in the reaction. In the sentient world or world of realities, it is affirmed when it comes to be. To say that the essence exists prior to its attribute is to confound essence with pure being—to use an abstraction for a reality. Reality never awakens till the subject affirms the attribute. To deny that there is essence not realized is not necessary. But to claim that there is an essence not real in this sense is to limit the sphere of subjectivity unwarrantably. We must at least believe that all essence has its attributes affirmed by God. Or to put the same idea in another way, its ‘becoming’ is also a becoming intelligible.

To the naïve mind the analysis of being into essence and attribute seems unnecessary. There are many reasons for respecting naïve impressions. The history of grammar might lead to a suspicion as to the validity of distinctions based on the separation of verbs and subjects which belong together.

Analytically we discover that our distinction amounts merely to a separation of the subjective and objective in the consideration of a subject of consciousness. If there be an affirmation of the attribute, either the attribute affirms itself or the affirmation is made by the percipient. Obviously it must be the latter, or, if it were conceived as though the attribute affirmed itself, this would be equivalent to saying that its doing *is* its essence, for all attribute is necessarily active. (Should any one be inclined to doubt the last statement, let him reflect that even such attributes as unchangeability or inertness are only conceivable as contrasted to a world of change or a world of action, and, as activities are relative to the objects compared, it would be optional with us to say that the world is inert and unchanging and these changes inhere in our object. In fact, we know, physically speaking, that resistance and stability imply as much energy and reaction as any other attributes.)

But the affirmation is subjective and being becomes, like reality in general, the harmony of the subjective and objective.¹ But does

¹ Professor Dewey somewhere says: “The copula gives the statement of being, asserts the reality, and should not be treated as a mere representation of an act of mental predication. If it is merely subjective it contradicts itself. The judgment implies the existence of an object, and if being is simply in the mind of the person forming the judgment, the judgment is a contradiction.”

The first part or premise of this summary is precisely equivalent to our ‘reality is affirmation of attribute’ and, if the logic is good in both cases, the result should be the same. But we rest our case on the statement that the affirmation is subjective and the attribute objective, while others say, No; the affirming (asserting) is objective, and there is appeal to common sense as well as to science to support the statement. We make bold to suggest that neither science nor common sense has made this ruling.

not the mind require us to conceive of a reality underneath the attributes in which they inhere? It is a question difficult to answer in this form. We can not trace our mental activities far enough back to ascertain by introspection what would take place in our consciousness if a single manifestation of reality should occur alone with no historical setting to build it out. It is not possible to say that the mental act of perceiving the light, or pain, or organic subsensation, which constitutes our affirmation of that fact, would be accompanied by an appreciation, even in the vaguest form, of an essence of which the sensation should be the attribute. In fact, all that we can gather, by the indirections permitted us, is in the direction of evidence that facts of somatic experience affect consciousness in infancy without our recognizing them as attributes of any essence. Yes, we *feel* them, but we do not *know* them. True, when we begin to know, the separation of essence and attribute is effected, but essence is not 'essence' simply, but a something else which we call 'substance.' The idea of substance is other and more than that of essence, which latter is a metaphysical creation that, as such, is not an element of our knowledge.

Substance is not only that which 'stands under' and forms a foundation for attributes, but is that which subsists from moment to moment in our apprehension of these attributes. Substance is a product of the integrating faculty of the mind. When the same experience repeats itself, either alone or in constant relation to others, these repetitions are, by this apperceptive power, piled one upon the other, their individuality is lost, and the uniformity and identity give rise to the judgment of a substance continuing and underlying the repeated similar or identical experiences. The

But, first of all, as to reality. Whose reality? It must surely be the reality of the realizer, not, as Dewey seems to imply, a reality of the on-looker or philosopher. Real implies the act of *realizing*, if we are to remain true to a dynamic position. So also subjective and objective are relative terms here. Subjective to whom? Why, of course, to the realizer. Now if we make any distinction between essence and attribute (which common sense does not, so that it need not be appealed to here) the affirming is done by *me*, it is subjective if anything is. What actually happens might better be represented by 'Lo, light.' If the question of reality arises, the change is to 'Light is.' 'Yea, verily light.' The light sensation has coupled itself to *me*. 'I affirm (there is) light.' To which of these terms does the distinction of objectivity come to attach? To the affirming? Certainly not, but to light.

But at this point logic is prone to outrun experience and to attempt to confound simple apprehension with judgment of substance. It also confuses what is *true* with what is *real*. The predicates of truth and reality are not discriminated in common parlance but must be in philosophy. Truth is predicated of relationships while reality does not exist apart from the experience of it. My experience is real or non-existent, my judgments are true or false.

greater the number of experiences and the greater the range of their variety that can be brought into constant relations, the greater the security we have in our concept of substance. An object that we can see and feel and hear and smell and taste in such relations of constancy as suggest organic connection between these various sensations, produces in us a sense of substantiality that is more impregnable than that which results from a fleeting glimpse. Yet a rainbow is presented to sense in as substantial a way as the distant mountain on which it seems to rest, and the sense of substantiality is undermined only by the final discovery that the perceived relations are false. The appearance is real but the predicate of substantiality is erroneously placed. The substance exists, but is not where and what we supposed.

It may be objected that substance is framed to connote certain uniformities in experience and thus is a result of the impossibility of keeping separate impressions which are exactly alike in a mechanism like the brain. Well, what of it? Our mental furnishing is formed of uniformities variously classified, and the classification depends on the classifying organ and not the external relations only. The judgment of substance is formed so early and takes such hold on our mental life that we may claim that it is innate, or rather that the necessity for it is structurally innate, and that whatever value such classification may have to life will be propagated through natural selection.

There is then a reality back of the attribute—not exactly, but back of the uniformity in attributes psychology gives us substance, and it remains for philosophy to postulate essence if she can prove a necessity for it.

We hold this distinction to be most important, viz., that the material out of which the mind forms its objective units is not properties or activities, as such, but coincidences, uniformities, repetitions and the like. A process of identification and correlative differentiation is necessary to all of the classificatory work of the intellect. All changes reflected upon our minds become properties or attributes of some substance as soon as we observe or infer a uniformity in their repetition, relation, etc. We might even speculate upon the reason for the outward projection of this new validity—a reality of identification, or truth.

Lotze's definition of being (essence) as the 'standing in relations' involves part of the idea expressed above but it is somewhat awkwardly put. If the thing is defined by the relations in which it stands, these relations can only be perceived of its attributes. These attributes must be activities. Relation implies change, as it could not be predicated of actual homogeneity. Relation implies ex-

perience of change, yet it is uniformity in the midst of change that produces the judgment of substance. Again, to stand in relation has no significance unless the relation be perceived. Standing in relation is no different from standing out of relation till the relation is perceived. Thus we are driven to our first conclusion that in reality we have attribute and the affirmation of it by the percipient. The latter, or essence, is subjective and the reality is the union of subjective and objective.

But for all practical purposes, we may be satisfied with the result of analysis. We know that an experience is real and are indifferent whether philosophy recognizes the criterion of validity or not.

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HERBERT SPENCER AS A PHILOSOPHER¹

IT is probably too soon to speak with confidence of Mr. Spencer's services to philosophy. The enthusiasm which greeted his philosophy more than a generation ago has waned under the growing conviction of looseness and inconsequence, and the result is that in recent years his genuine service to philosophy—and to science—has not been adequately recognized. What I shall say of him is that he introduced into science and philosophy a method which has resulted in a greater advance of thought than any since the beginning of modern science, but that his own use of this method was often superficial, and that his type of mind was in many respects distinctly unphilosophical.

He was unphilosophical in the sense that he was uncritical. His cast of mind was that of a blind empiricist. He was one of those who hold that knowledge is to be found simply by opening your eyes, that disagreement and error must be due either to negligence in observation or to blind prejudice. He sets out with the assertion of a fixed world-order. This world-order is not merely *postulated* as a necessity of thought—as a condition which must be realized in fact if we are to have knowledge—but is asserted as a positive and realized fact—as something not to be worked out and proven, but simply to be recognized. And Mr. Spencer betrays the *naïveté* of his assumption in his impatience with those who are slow to recognize—who fail to see the plain fact of universal causation. If he had examined his position he must have asked—as Kant had asked long before—whether this recognition of universal causation was not in

¹ Read at a meeting of the Texas Academy of Science, held in memory of Mr. Spencer, at the University of Texas, March 24, 1904.