

I hope, be apparent that the purpose of this discussion has not been to take issue with Professor Dewey's view of the nature of thought and its function in experience. Rather, I have tried to point out minor points of detail in which, perhaps only through misplaced emphasis, the treatment of reflection in *How We Think* presents a systematic restatement of prior logical analyses which seem to belong in any working-out of the subject. Or, from another point of view, my purpose has been to indicate possible modifications in Professor Dewey's account of thought that may promote a more fruitful interaction of psychology and logic. I have tried to suggest, *e.g.*, in "direction of experiment to crucial instances," an objective form of definition for what he calls "profundity" or "depth" in conjecture. Or, more generally, to indicate, however inadequately, a method of transforming the results of logic into a shape relevant to the purposes of psychological investigation, and *vice versa*. It is no unimportant part of the instrumentalist contention that psychology and logic are essentially related, and that progress in either one depends upon progress in the other. All the more important is it that no view, no analysis, should be accepted in either field that may block the traffic between them.

LAURENCE BUERMEYER.

PRINCETON, N. J.

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#### THE METAPHYSICAL MONIST AS A SOCIOLOGICAL PLURALIST<sup>1</sup>

THE main purpose of this brief paper is to stress the fact that one may hold the numerically monistic conception of the universe as Absolute, and even as Absolute Self or Person, without thereby committing oneself to the conception of the social group as literally a person or self, a "being with a mind of its own."<sup>2</sup> There is, to be sure, a sense in which the conception of the social group as a self may be said to be facilitated by the Absolute-Self-doctrine. For if the universe is rightly conceived as One Self, including all the unnumbered lesser selves of the universe, there is apparent reason for describing races, societies, communities each as a sort of intermediate self of many interrelated persons. (The conception of a self as including selves is familiar to us not merely through the accumulating accounts of "subconscious" and "co-conscious" selves, but through the facts of the moral experience, the battling of "lower" against "higher" self, for example.) So far, however, the argument for

<sup>1</sup> A paper read at the meeting of the American Philosophical Association in Ithaca, December, 1919.

<sup>2</sup> Royce, *The Problem of Christianity*, Vol. I., p. 63.

sociological monism consists merely in the statement that for the personal absolutist there is no inherent difficulty in the conception of a genuine self which includes other lesser selves. This is true; but it is far from a proof that all social groups, or even some social groups, actually and literally are selves. This paper undertakes first to indicate the insufficiency of the empirical arguments advanced for the conception of the social group as literally a self; second to show the compatibility of the pluralistic conception of society with the monistic (absolutistic) philosophy of the universe.

I. Fundamental to both these purposes is a clear statement of what must be meant by the doctrine that a social group is literally a person. The doctrine evaporates into sheer metaphor unless it means that a social group is a being aware of itself as unique, or individual, relatively persistent or identical, and changing. In Fite's pregnant (and Hegelian) phrase a self or person must exist for himself and not merely as an appearance to others. Now all the arguments known to me for the self-conception of society fall far short of establishing the truth that a social group is in this sense a person. Such arguments seem to fall into two groups:

1. There is first the consideration, eloquently urged by Royce, that a man may love his country—church or country—and be loyal to it and sacrifice himself for it as if it were a self. In other words, Royce argues (and in my opinion very effectively) that a society is regarded by its members as a self. But this certainly does not prove that a society *is* a self. Laski, for instance, in asserting that “certain personalities, England, France, Germany are real to the soldiers who die for them”<sup>3</sup> certainly need not mean that England, France and Germany are literal “personalities.” For nothing is literally person or self which is not *for itself*, more fundamentally than for other men, a person.

2. The second group of arguments includes all those which set forth and illustrate the manifest fact that persons associated together bring about effects which are not the mathematical resultant of their separate ideas and volitions added or subtracted after any mechanical fashion. Royce makes use of this argument (and, unjustifiably as it seems to me, calls on Wundt as witness) in his insistence that because it is “the social mind” or “community which produces languages, customs, religions . . .—mental products which can be psychologically analyzed, which follow psychological laws and which exhibit characteristic processes of mental evolution—processes that belong solely to organized groups of men” that we are *therefore*

<sup>3</sup> *The Problem of Sovereignty*, Chap. I., p. 4.

justified in declaring that "community has or is a mind."<sup>4</sup> Miss Follett also bases her doctrine of the "group-person" on the fact that people associated together may (and sometimes do) create genuinely new experience (conception, emotion or will)—a creation impossible not only to any one of these selves singly, but to the lot of them together so long as each acts as a separate unit either foisting his conviction on the rest, or yielding it, or mechanically compromising it. This fact of social "interpenetration" on which Miss Follett so brilliantly insists seems to me uncontroversial. I take issue merely with her conclusion that "wherever you have a genuine common will you have a real person," that "the process of making decisions by the interpenetrating of thought, desire, *etc.*, transfers the center of consciousness from the single I to the group I, . . . [to] the two-self, three-self, several-self, perhaps village-self."<sup>5</sup>

II. Up to this point I have merely tried to discredit, not as statements of fact but as arguments, the empirical considerations actually adduced in favor of the genuine group-person. The more difficult question remains unsettled: is it not incumbent on the absolutist, whatever the empirical arguments *pro* or *con*, to deduce from his conception of the universe as All-including Person the conception of the social group as lesser person? Otherwise put, does not rejection of the group-person carry with it metaphysical pluralism?

In favor of the view that the metaphysical monist is of necessity an upholder of the group-self, the community as person, the following argument may be urged. The Absolute, unless the word is to lose its specific meaning, certainly must be defined as a genuinely and ultimately single being—a being (not indeed "*beyond*" or "*over and above*") but *fundamental* to the many beings which are its parts or members. The many, in a word, are parts of the Absolute; the Absolute is not a composite of the many. Now, in a universe thus conceived there is—so the argument runs—no room for communities or social groups which are mere pluralities of interrelated selves, conscious indeed of mutually influencing each other yet constituting each a mere system or organization of distinct though related selves and not a single being.

This argument, it should be noted, is based on no mere analogy but on the monistic doctrine of relation. The absolutist, or monist, has rejected pluralism precisely because of its theory of relations as external. He holds, on the other hand, that relation is ultimately the characteristic of a whole, or including entity; that "two things can

<sup>4</sup> *Op. cit.*, I., p. 65.

<sup>5</sup> "Community is a Process," *Philosophical Review*, November, 1919, XXVIII., p. 578.

be related only as both are included in a third as their common ground;”<sup>6</sup> and (if he is personalistic as well as absolutist) that relation is *relating*, and “relating is a specific characteristic of those complex entities known as selves.”<sup>7</sup> Obviously, therefore, the critic urges, the absolutist must abjure the conception of community or group as constituted by distinct yet related selves, in favor of the doctrine of the community as a genuine self relating its members.

The reply of the metaphysical monist, or absolutist, who is also a sociological pluralist is briefly the following: It is indeed true, he asserts, that “two things” can be related “only as both are included in a third as their common ground,”<sup>8</sup> and that consequently the interpenetrating selves of a social group are members of an including greater self. But no *a priori* consideration forbids the conclusion that between the human and near-human selves (each a relating self) and the all-including Absolute Self, the ultimate relater, there are no intervening self-conscious persons. Community, association, and state, so far as they are personified, are therefore sociological and neither psychological nor metaphysical units, constructs of the socially minded selves who compose them. Each of these members of society is distinctively conscious of himself as in close mutual relation with his fellows and each may personify the social group and conceive it, feel toward it, or behave toward it as if it were a person. But the social group, even when personified, remains a plurality, larger or smaller, of the selves who are ultimately related as members of the Absolute Self. After this fashion, sociological pluralism is harmonized with a genuine metaphysical monism.

It should be noted, in conclusion, that it would be possible to maintain the literally personal existence of *natural* social groups while denying that of *artificial*, or voluntary, societies, because of their apparent dependence on the impulses or purposes of human selves. One might then conceive the race, or even the community in the wide sense, as a person, without so regarding the trade-union or the bar association. A sociological monism could thus be maintained without thereby entailing the consequences of political absolutism, the doctrine of state or church or any other organization as possessing

<sup>6</sup> L. W. Stern, *Person und Sache*, p. 346.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. “The New Rationalism and Objective Idealism,” *Philos. Review*, 1919, XXVIII., p. 605 and note.

<sup>8</sup> L. W. Stern, *loc. cit.*, p. 346. It should be noted that the absolutist does not propose to exclude from science and from every-day life the “impersonal” or “external” relation. This he conceives as relating “seen from below”—relating as it appears when abstraction is made from the relating self.

a reality more ultimate than that of its members, and a consequent sovereignty over them.

MARY WHITON CALKINS.

WELLESLEY COLLEGE.

“A LOVER OF THE CHAIR”

PHILOSOPHY is philosophizing; it is the human activity of deliberate reflection, and its historic sum is the sum of the recorded expression of consciously thinking minds. Its subject is experience, nature, phenomena, being—whatever we choose; but its essence is always the same—a man’s thoughtful effort to right himself in the course of his life’s events, and its essence is, therefore, always imbedded within the subject. We who are by profession philosophers, or teachers of philosophy, are sometimes prone to forget that our subject-matter is no segregated corpus of writings, narrowed to neatly debatable problems, but is, in sooth, as broad as the reach of impersonalized judgment—of any concern which a man may have when for the moment he withdraws from his own foreground and views himself as a nature in the midst of natures. Philosophy is, in fact, a branch of literature, and, even when its consideration is of the truth, of fictive literature. Aristotle’s dictum about poetry, that it is a higher and more philosophic thing than history, invites the entirely sound inference that philosophy is indeed but poetic sublimation—a transcendental personification of our simpler humanity. Not all its rigors of dialectic and mathematic method, not all its authoritarian apriorisms, its belligerent empiricisms, can quite purge it of that stain (as so many deem it) of imagery which is, in final honesty, its deeper matter. A sophisticated poetry, Pascal called metaphysics, voicing in his own way the hidden cousinship; to which should be added that the final sophistication is its recognition of the cousinship, and hence of the spreading wealth of its own domain.

These reflections ensue upon the perusal of a book by a man who is neither by training nor profession initiate in the thiasus of the metaphysicians, who assumes no familiarity with its rituals, no gift for its chants. *A Lover of the Chair*, by Sherlock Bronson Gass,<sup>1</sup> is the work of a humanist, untaught of the metaphysical schools (though not unilluminated by the philosophers, for the light of Plato is everywhere reflected), a man professing what the strait-laced metaphysician inherently feels are the softer humanities of belles-lettres. Nevertheless, it is a work which is philosophic not only in mode, for its truly subtle art of expression is in the great in-

<sup>1</sup> Marshall Jones Company, Boston, 1919.