

NOTES AND NEWS

LETTER FROM PROFESSOR SHELDON

TO THE EDITORS OF THE JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY, PSYCHOLOGY, AND SCIENTIFIC METHODS:

The subject of discussion for the next meeting of the American Philosophical Association is, I believe, to be "The Problem of the Relation of Existence and Value, etc." Four members of the Committee which proposed this subject have suggested that the discussion concern itself with a certain group of questions formulated by them under five headings.¹ Against this formulation I have some objections to offer. The first question reads "Is Value (1) something which is ultimate and which attaches itself to 'things' independently of consciousness . . . or (2) it is a characteristic which a thing gets by its relation to the consciousness of an organic being . . . ?" This contains two distinct issues. First is that of ultimacy *versus* definability in terms of some other category, such as existence, tendency, or other ontological concept. This is an objective problem and of great interest, but it is quite other than the second issue, of the dependence or independence of value upon consciousness. The latter is simply an epistemological problem. It raises that same type of question with which, I am sorry to say, the Association has for some years past busied itself. I think there is a considerable, perhaps an increasing, number of philosophers among us, who feel that it is *not* of great importance whether reality is subjective or objective, but that it *is* of surpassing interest to know what is the structure of reality. So, too, in regard to value: what *is* it, what are *the specific* fundamental values, and is there evidence that the universe is tending to realize any of them? The ardent young "neo-realist" is avowedly interested in this sort of question; and there are, I think, many others who do not go with him in condemning "internal relations" or refuting (?) subjectivism, who are, nevertheless, quite as desirous as he of information about the characters of things. Let the epistemological problem, then, be replaced by the following task: to collect a list of cases that are generally acknowledged as values—industrial, artistic, scientific, practical, etc.,—and thence to derive a positive concrete definition of value. Surely this must be the first requisite for an investigation of the philosophic significance of *any* category; yet I find no such thing mentioned under the five headings. Perhaps, however, English and German traditions still have so strong a hold that we can not get away from epistemology; but even if that is the case, it seems foolish to discuss the subjectivity or objectivity of value before we are agreed upon what value is.

As to the other four points in the Committee's formulation, I think No. 2 is really the question of ultimacy over again. It reads: ". . . may . . . a theory of the nature of things be successfully developed without reference to a theory of values, and *vice versa*?" Nos. 3 and 4 seem to me

¹ This JOURNAL, Vol. X., page 168.

unintelligible. No. 5, I believe to be an important problem, whose solution would give us real information concerning the structure and behavior of the universe as a whole.

In short, I propose that we should amend the proposed formulation by inserting at the head, to emphasize its importance, the problem of definition, and by dropping the second problem under No. 1, and the whole of Nos. 2, 3, and 4, the problems to be discussed would then be stated thus:

(1) How should value be defined? (The answer to be based inductively upon analysis of a list of generally acknowledged specific cases of value 5).

(2) Upon the basis of this definition, is the concept found to be unique, irreducible, ultimate, or can it be reduced to terms of other categories?

(3) "Is there one fundamental standard of values, or is there more than one?" (first half of the Committee's No. 5).

These are specific questions in which we all have a deep interest on their own account; their solution makes a vast difference to our religious and scientific ideals; and they admit of definite evidence on one side or the other. Certainly they will suffice to occupy the full energies of any meeting. Their brevity, too, seems to me a merit. Let us not have too many questions, too many subdivisions, too much organization of things beforehand, lest, like some of the devotees of "efficiency," we have little else.

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HANOVER, N. H.

At the last session of the Legislature of Pennsylvania an appropriation of \$40,000 was made to aid in the development of courses in education at the University of Pennsylvania. Dr. Frank P. Graves, of the Ohio State University, has been appointed professor of the history of education, and Dr. Harlan Updegraff, of the Iowa State University, professor of educational administration. Professor A. Duncan Yocum, who now occupies the chair of pedagogy at the University of Pennsylvania, will continue as professor of educational research and practise.

At the University of Minnesota, Henry M. Sheffer, Ph.D. (Harvard), has been appointed instructor in philosophy, and Albert N. Gilbertson, Ph.D. (Clark), instructor in psychology, the latter to supply the place of Professor J. B. Miner, now on leave of absence in Europe. Assistant Professor David F. Swenson has been promoted to an associate professorship in philosophy.

In the review of Freud's "The Interpretation of Dreams" in the last issue of this JOURNAL (p. 554, line 6), the words "imitations of immortality in early childhood" should read "imitations of immorality in early childhood."

Professor John M. Mecklin, who recently resigned the chair of mental and moral philosophy at Lafayette College, has been appointed head of the department of philosophy at the University of Pittsburgh.