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PRAGMATISM AND THE NEW MATERIALISM

THE most striking and significant phenomenon in recent American philosophy and psychology has, manifestly, been an extensive recrudescence of materialism. To or towards this outcome have converged several theories diverse in name and, in part, in the logical considerations which have given rise to them. The tendency finds its most unequivocal expression in behaviorism, whenever behaviorism, as in the recent writings of Professor J. B. Watson, abandons the modest status of a special subdivision of psychobiology, and sets itself up as—or as a substitute for—a general psychological theory. To say that in the processes commonly known as sensation, feeling and thought nothing whatever occurs, or need be presupposed, except gross or microscopic movements of various portions of the musculature of an organism, is obviously equivalent to the reduction of the entire content and implications of experience to motions of matter and transfers of physical energy. In many of the American forms of neo-realism a scarcely less thorough-going materialism has been manifest, so far as the world of concrete existence is concerned; though the tendency here has been curiously conjoined with a revival of a species—a very unplatonic species—of “Platonic realism.” In most of our neo-realists, the latter seems an essentially otiose addition to their doctrine. Universals are asserted to “subsist” merely; and though subsistence is declared to be a status independent of consciousness, this independence renders it only the more alien to nature and irrelevant to experience. Since *mere* subsistents have neither date, nor place, nor causal efficacy, they are pertinent to the phenomenal order only in so far as they are embodied in particular existences; and by the neo-realist their embodiment is apparently construed in the literal sense of the word. For him too the only entities existing in time and in the causal nexus are physical masses, and—if the two be ultimately distinct—physical energy.

American pragmatism has often manifested a disposition to join forces with behaviorism and neo-realism in their campaign against the belief in the reality of psychical entities; indeed, if certain utterances of its spokesmen be considered separately—apart

from certain other utterances which to the uninitiated appear simply to contradict them—no contemporary philosophical school has given plainer expression to the materialistic doctrine. In some recent papers in this JOURNAL¹ I cited several instances of this sort; one of them it is pertinent to repeat here:

A careful inventory of our assets brings to light no such entities as those which have been placed to our credit. We do not find body and object and consciousness, but only body and object. . . . The process of intelligence is something that goes on, not in our mind, but in things. . . . Even abstract ideas do not compel the adoption of a peculiarly "spiritual" or "psychic" existence, in the form of unanalyzable meanings.²

In the papers mentioned I attempted to show, among other things, that this materialistic strain is incongruous with the most characteristic and essential thesis of pragmatism, at least in its later formulations. That thesis is to the effect that "intelligence" is efficacious and "creative." By "intelligence" the pragmatist appears to mean nothing mysterious or metaphysical; the word is for him merely a name for a familiar type of experience, that, namely, of practical reflection, of forming plans of action for dealing with specific concrete situations. This process of reflection is, he maintains, in certain cases a determinant of motions of matter, *i.e.*, of the movements of human bodies and of other masses with which they physically interact. But upon the materialistic hypothesis practical reflection itself is nothing but a motion of matter; if "bodies and (physical) objects" are the only factors involved in "intelligence," it should be possible to describe the phenomenon called "planning" wholly in physical terms—*i.e.*, in terms of masses actually existing, of positions actually occupied, of molar or molecular movements actually occurring, *at the time when the planning is taking place*. The laws of that class of physical processes called "practical judgments" may, of course, be unique, incapable of reduction to the laws of physics or chemistry; and pragmatism declares that they are in fact thus unique and irreducible. But the things whose behavior these laws describe must—if the pragmatist is to avoid psychophysical dualism—consist solely of real parts of the material world.

Now since "intelligence," in the pragmatist's sense, is an observable and analyzable phenomenon, the question whether any entities are involved in it which are *not* real parts of the material world is a question of empirical fact, to be settled by analysis of the specific type of experience under consideration. And in my previous papers I sought to show that this question must be answered

¹ Vol. XVII, pp. 589–596 and 622–632, 1920.

² Professor B. H. Bode, in *Creative Intelligence*, pp. 254–5, 245.

in the affirmative. A plan of action, as I pointed out, obviously requires the presentation of both past and possible future states or contents of some part of the material world. But a past or possible future state of the material world is not, at the moment at which it is represented in the experience of the planner, a part of the real material world. The content of my memories or of my expectations, as such, would find no place in any inventory of then existing "bodies and objects" which would be drawn up even by a perfected physical science. It is of the very essence of the planning-experience that it is cognizant of and concerned with things, or configurations of things, which have yet to be physically realized, and are therefore not yet physically real. Thus in fixing his attention especially upon "intelligence" in its practical aspect, the pragmatist is brought face to face with that type of experience in which the empirical presence of non-physical entities and processes is, perhaps, more plainly evident than in any other.

This fact, it may be remarked parenthetically, is the reason why I have thought it useful to select pragmatism as the immediate point of attack in a critical examination of the new materialism in general. The pragmatists have rendered a service to philosophers of all schools by directing attention to the significance of certain undeniably real aspects of the cognitive experience, which happen also to be the best possible touchstone for the determination of the issue between those who assert and those who deny the existence of psychical or immaterial entities. That issue has hitherto been discussed mainly in connection with the problem of perception; with that problem, in fact, the neo-realists seem to have been somewhat obsessed. The believer in the presence of distinctively mental factors in the cognitive situation has not failed to meet the issue on this the favorite ground of his adversary. But in this part of the field the controversy, if not logically indecisive, has at any rate grown somewhat tedious and repetitious. There remains, meanwhile, a region of experience in which the dispute seems capable of being brought more speedily to a decisive conclusion; and it is with this region that the pragmatist is especially preoccupied. He is primarily interested, not in the question how we can know an external, coexistent object, but in the question how one moment of experience can know and prepare for another moment. It is, in short, to what I have elsewhere named intertemporal cognitions that his analysis is devoted; it is by man's habit of looking before and after that he is chiefly impressed. Now to look before and after is—as my previous papers pointed out—to behold the physically non-existent; it is to possess as data in experience objects

which can not be conceived to be simultaneously present in the material universe. Since, moreover, the pragmatist affirms the potency of intelligence, that is to say, of this function of foresight and recall, in the causation of (some) physical events, his philosophy, if consistently worked out, should lead him to an interactionist view upon the psychophysical problem.

Such, in brief, was the argument previously set forth. To that argument Professor Bode has very courteously replied in an article in this JOURNAL.³ Certain phases, I will not say of pragmatism, but of the opinions and doctrinal affinities of pragmatists, are greatly illuminated by his paper, which is, moreover, manifestly inspired by a genuinely philosophic desire to coöperate in an endeavor to promote a common understanding. Nevertheless—such are the difficulties of philosophical discussion!—even this most generous and fair-minded of critics has apparently altogether overlooked the principal point of my argument; and the reasonings which he presents appear to me to be not only inconclusive, but almost wholly irrelevant to the particular issue upon which I had hoped to focus attention. Yet they are apparently believed by their author to controvert the conclusions I defended; and it seems needful, therefore, to examine carefully the chief considerations which Professor Bode contributes to the discussion.

1. A great part of his reply is devoted to an explanation of what the pragmatist means by "consciousness." He is not disposed wholly to reject this term; he too is ready to formulate, in his own way, a "differentia of the psychic" and a criterion "which makes it possible to draw a sharp line between conscious and mechanical behavior." This, of course, is of much interest in itself; but it has no pertinency to the reasons for affirming the existence of "psychical" entities which were presented in my paper. To say that for the instrumentalist "consciousness is identifiable with" such and such a "type of behavior," is equivalent to the two propositions (1) that by the word "consciousness" the instrumentalist means the defined type of behavior; (2) that such a type of behavior is empirically discoverable. The first, being a verbal proposition, requires no proof. The second is a proposition of fact and therefore subject to verification. But its truth might be conceded without the least logical detriment to the considerations which I had advanced. For I have not questioned the pragmatist's right to define the word "consciousness" as he likes; I have not denied that the "peculiar type of behavior" to which Professor Bode prefers to apply that name is a fact of experience; and I have not

³ Vol. XVIII, 1921, pp. 10-17.

maintained that this type of behavior affords evidence that "mental entities," in my sense of the term, exist. What I have maintained is that there is *also* found in human experience a phenomenon differing in certain important respects from that which Professor Bode describes; and that this does afford evidence of the existence of mental entities. This other sort of experience, exemplified in planning and all forms of practical reflection, is what I had supposed the pragmatist to mean by "intelligence"; but I am less interested in ascertaining the pragmatic name for the thing than in pointing out that the thing is a fact. Throughout most of his paper, then, Professor Bode, instead of looking at the evidence offered for this conclusion, which he ostensibly rejects, appears to fix his gaze upon another object altogether. Let me show this in detail by outlining more specifically the pragmatic account of "consciousness," as set forth by him. The pragmatist observes that some stimuli are of a "peculiar kind," *i.e.*, have specific characteristics which others lack. For example, a noise in some cases has, in addition to the "various properties or qualities that are appropriate subject-matter for the physicist, a further trait or quality" of which the physicist takes no cognizance. This further trait is, it appears, an "elusive" one, difficult to express in words; but its nature is indicated by such expressions as "an indescribable 'what-is-it' quality," an "inherent incompleteness." When a noise possesses, besides its mere noisiness, this special and unique quality, it "causes the individual concerned to cock his ear, to turn his eyes, perhaps to step to the window in order to ascertain the meaning of the noise." Stimuli (a term which is for Bode apparently synonymous with complexes of sensible qualities) are, then, said to be "conscious" if they have this peculiarity; and "consciousness" is a name for the "function of a quality in giving direction to behavior." The conscious stimulus, in other words, is differentiated by its tendency "to set on foot activities which are directed towards getting a better stimulus." The word "directed" here, however, must not be understood to imply any representation of the better stimulus *as* future; for a reaction possesses the "psychical" character "irrespective of any explicit reference to the future." There need be no actual anticipation, of the "conceptual" sort. Any case of organic response which exhibits the phenomenon of trial-and-error would apparently exemplify "conscious" behavior, in the pragmatist's sense; in fact I can not see that there is any kind of actual response which would not correspond to the definition.

There are—it may be observed incidentally—some inconveni-

ences in using the words "psychical," "mental," *etc.*, in this manner. One of them is that "psychical" apparently does not exclude "physical." If I understand Bode's language, a real physical object would also be a "psychical existence" whenever it "set on foot activities directed towards getting a better stimulus." It is also a somewhat confusing feature of this usage that the adjectives "conscious," "psychical," *etc.*, seem applicable both to stimuli and to the bodily behavior which the stimuli evoke, though it is difficult to see how they can be attached to both substantives univocally.

This, however, is by the way. What I wish to point out is that my argument rested entirely upon an analysis of the particular kind of reaction in which there *is* an "explicit reference to the future"—in which actual foresight is an essential feature of the experience. By transferring the adjective "psychical" to a kind of reaction defined as lacking this feature, Professor Bode does not answer that argument; he simply ignores it. Is it a fact that explicit reference to the future sometimes occurs, that when we form a plan of action unrealized possibilities are present as such to our thought? Or again, is it a fact that when we think of such unrealized concrete possibilities we have present in thought objects which can not be regarded as parts of the present content of the material world? Only by answering the first of these questions in the negative, or, if that were answered affirmatively, then by answering the second in the negative, could Bode join issue with the reasoning actually contained in the papers upon which he comments. A radical behaviorist, I suppose, would answer one or the other of these questions with an unequivocal negative. But it is not clear from Professor Bode's article that he shares the behaviorist's fine *a priori* contempt for the facts of experience.

2. There is, however, a further aspect of the pragmatist's conception of "conscious behavior" which is not fully brought out in the summary above given; and this we must now examine, since it is this aspect chiefly which makes it clear "why instrumentalism is so reluctant to bring in mental states or psychic existences." (The latter expression is presumably here used in the sense defined in my previous papers; for Professor Bode has just told us that in another sense, pragmatism itself recognizes psychic existences.)

The argument, if I have understood it, rests upon a distinctive thesis about the attributes of "objects." The pragmatist, it would seem, holds that what are usually called the effects of a stimulus upon an organism should properly be called "parts" of the stimulus, or attributes of the object (for Bode apparently uses the two

terms interchangeably). In the case of a noise which causes a dog to cock his ear, the attribute of causing-ear-cocking, "by which the present stimulus makes provision for its own successor," is designated in pragmatist terminology the "incompleteness" of the present stimulus; and this "incompleteness is intrinsic to the stimulus, or inherent in it"; in other words, it is "as much a part of the noise as any of its other traits." Since the behavior resulting, or capable of resulting, from a given stimulus is thus read back into the stimulus itself, and since the stimulus in turn is identified with physical objects (and, in the case of perception, apparently with *the* physical object perceived), there results for the pragmatist a radical revision of the conception of physical objects. "Traditional theory" has been wont to regard such an object as "characterized by stark rigidity and close-clipped edges"; to the pragmatist, on the contrary, it seems to be a soft and plastic entity with boundaries so wide that almost anything might be found within them. The notion of the "inherent properties of an object" is thus so enlarged as to include either (Bode does not seem to me to be clear here) all organic responses which the object's presence ever evokes, or, at any rate, an inherent *tendency* to evoke *whatever* responses in fact occur when it is present. Physical objects are consequently things which can control behavior directly, by virtue of their own nature and attributes; and it therefore becomes unnecessary to introduce mental entities in the explanation of behavior, in man or other animals. "The emphasis shifts inevitably from mental states in the traditional sense to this peculiar type of control as exercised by *objects*."⁴ It is precisely because pragmatism has become aware of "this distinctive character of the stimulus" that it "can not afford to give countenance to entities or existences the chief purpose of which," as it seems to Professor Bode, is to obscure this character—to "translate it into mechanical equivalents."

To judge of the pertinency of this reasoning it is needful to recall once more—however wearisome the repetition—the precise argument against which it is supposed to be directed. That argument, it will be remembered, (*a*) dealt exclusively with the evidence for the existence of non-physical entities to be found *in a particular phase of human experience, viz.*, in intelligent planning, involving an explicit representation of things past and future; (*b*) used the expressions "psychical" or "non-physical entity" *in a specific and clearly defined sense, viz.*, as meaning "an entity not assignable to real space and to the complex of matter and forces recognized by

⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 15; italics in original.

the physical sciences, at the moment at which the entity is actually present in experience." The reasoning offered as the principal reply to this argument (a) still wholly ignores the specific type of experience to which the argument related. It offers, not an analysis of anticipation and memory, but an analysis of sensory stimulation. I ask the pragmatist about "intelligence," and am given a description of responses for which no intelligence is requisite. I ask what precisely it is that happens when an architect plans a building, or when an engineer endeavors to analyze the causes of the collapse of the St. Lawrence bridge several years ago; Professor Bode replies by telling me what it is that happens when a dog cocks his ear. As described, moreover, "conscious behavior" is not distinguishable from the kind of phenomenon which occurs when a phototropic plant is touched by a ray of light. In the case of the plant also the initial stimulus "makes provision for its own successor" and "sets on foot activities directed towards getting a better stimulus." (b) With respect to the question, irrelevant to my argument, with which Bode's reply is actually concerned, his conclusion is reached by a series of partly explicit and partly tacit alterations in the meanings of terms. He first includes the adaptive motor-responses to a sensation among the "traits" of the sense-datum itself; he next tacitly identifies the sense-datum ("the noise as heard") with the "stimulus" (which in the ordinary use of terms means, in the case of audition, the air wave set up by the vibration of an elastic body); he then identifies the stimulus with the "object"—presumably the object from which it proceeds, e.g., an automobile-horn. By this process of freely substituting one meaning for another, it is assuredly not difficult to prove that the dog's cocking his ear is merely an instance of "the control of behavior by objects." But the entire argument is of an essentially verbal character; and the first two steps in it—the identification of responses with sense-data, and of sense-data with external stimuli—beg the only question to which the argument can be said to be directed. For that question is whether sensory content is totally identical with either the stimulus or the physical state of the sensory nerves; and whether the stimulation passes over into a motor response without the generation or interposition, anywhere in the process, of any factor which is not "physical" in the ordinary sense, previously defined. That is a question of fact which is hardly to be settled by the short and easy method of defining physical objects *ab initio* as having an inherent *virtus excitativa* sufficient of itself to account for behavior.

What might at first be taken for a further distinct argument

against psychophysical dualism and interactionism is suggested by Professor Bode's repeated remark that those doctrines imply a "mechanistic" conception of behavior. "Unless we abandon the category of interactionism we are back on the level of mechanistic naturalism, from which the position of instrumentalism is intended to provide a means of escape." But it is obvious that the adjective must here be used in some peculiar sense; for nothing is more alien to "mechanistic naturalism," as that designation is usually understood, than the doctrine that non-physical entities or processes can affect the movements of bodies. When, then, we seek to determine precisely what Bode means by "mechanistic," we find that the word apparently denotes any view which regards as incorrect or insufficient the account of the "distinctive nature of conscious behavior" given by the pragmatist. "Mechanical behavior," in short, is expressly antithetic to "conscious behavior," in the pragmatist's sense; and "conscious behavior" in his sense means, as we have seen, behavior controlled by physical objects directly, by virtue of their "inherent incompleteness"—this last expression, in turn, meaning a capacity to initiate in an organism (without the intervention of any other factors) a series of adaptive responses. In brief, the charge that psychological interactionism is "mechanistic" means, when translated, that that doctrine affirms the presence and efficacy of factors other than physical objects in at least some modes of human behavior. The charge, in short, is that interactionism is—interactionism. There is here, therefore, no argument which seems to demand separate discussion.

3. After having, through nearly all of his article, vigorously assailed the belief in mental or psychical entities (in my sense of the terms), Professor Bode in his penultimate paragraph suddenly and surprisingly utters a profession of faith in the creed which he had seemed to be attacking. "We need not," he writes, "take serious exception to Lovejoy's contention that concepts are 'mental entities,' in the sense that they may be 'actually given . . . but can not be regarded as forming a part, at the same moment, of the complex of masses and forces, in a single public space, which constitutes the world of physical science.' That concepts exist in some form and that there is a discernible difference between them and physical objects is an indubitable fact." These "concepts," moreover, are functional. "They function in much the same way as physical objects;" they "control behavior." Here, it will be observed, it is explicitly in the sense which I had given to "mental" that Professor Bode grants the reality of mental entities. He adds, it is true, that "the important issue is not whether concepts exist,

but whether the classification of them as 'mental' is to be made to accord with the foregoing (*i.e.*, the pragmatic) theory of conscious behavior." This might be taken to mean that, after all, he regards concepts as "mental" solely in the pragmatic sense, not in the sense given in the definition which he quotes from my paper. But to construe his meaning thus would be to imply that he denies in one sentence what he had affirmed two sentences before; and no such interpretation, happily, is necessary. For a "concept"—*e.g.*, a representation of a building yet to be erected—may be "mental" *both* in the sense expressed by my definition and in a sense which includes at least the distinctive positive differentia of the "psychical" in the pragmatic definition. A non-physical factor in experience may—and if it be efficacious, must—*function* like any other stimulus. The idea of the house to be built will necessarily have what Bode calls an "unfinished quality;" it too will be "directed towards the end of completing the present incompleteness." But its possession of this character does not alter the fact that, unlike other possible varieties of "psychical" stimuli—in the pragmatic meaning of the term—it consists in a representation of a future object, and is therefore "psychical" in another sense, a sense which excludes it from the class of physical things, *i.e.*, of things belonging to the objective spatial system.

Professor Bode, then, though he has elsewhere represented the psychical as merely a special variety of the physical, now seems to tell us plainly (*a*) that there are two distinct classes of factors in our experience, "physical objects" and "mental entities;" (*b*) that both are efficacious in the causation of physical changes. These two propositions taken together seem to constitute the plainest possible affirmation of psychophysical dualism and interactionism—as, I take it, those terms are commonly understood. Yet the same passage concludes: "There is no ground for Lovejoy's contention that, if concepts are admitted to their legitimate place, it follows that, rightly constructed and consistently thought through, pragmatism means interactionism." Here I must confess myself baffled. How this conclusion is to be reconciled with the admissions which immediately precede it, I am unable to conjecture. I therefore can not feel that Professor Bode has succeeded in making his position, or that of pragmatists in general, unmistakably clear. After careful study of his paper, I remain in some doubt whether he holds that pragmatism implies materialism or not.

It still seems to me desirable, however, that the matter should be made clear, and that pragmatists (not to speak of others) should actually give some consideration to the reasons offered in support

of the view that the pragmatic doctrine of the efficacy of intelligence properly implies psychophysical dualism and interactionism. And in the hope that Professor Bode himself, or others of the same way of thinking, may again deal with the subject, I venture, by way of conclusion and résumé, to set down a few questions to which I think it would be illuminating to have clear answers. (1) Does the pragmatist hold that only physical things exist, *i.e.*, that they alone are disclosed by, or present as factors in, experience ("physical" meaning "occupying a position in objective space and existing as a part of the sum of masses and forces dealt with by physical science")? (2) Is it not a fact that in the formation of intelligent plans of action there are involved both "imaginative recovery of the bygone" and imaginative anticipation of objects and situations not yet physically realized? (3) If so, can every bit of the content presented in the two types of experience just mentioned be regarded as forming a real part of the physical world, as constituted at the moment of such experience? (4) If so, *where* in that world, and in what form or manner, does the "bygone" that is "imaginatively recovered," or the future that is not yet realized, exist? (5) If it does exist physically at the moment of the experience in question, precisely what is meant by calling it "bygone" or "future"? To the last four of these questions I can not but think that all partisans of the new materialism might profitably address themselves.

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A PARTIAL ANALYSIS OF FAITH

BELIEVING with Eucken, James, Bergson, and other philosophers of like mind, that faith plays a very vital part in the lives of us all, it has nevertheless been a mystery above other mysteries to me when I attempted seriously to describe it, analyze it, and classify it. A multiplicity of questions have arisen, some of which have become so defined that an answer seems at least worth while seeking. Some of them are: What is the function of faith, what does it contribute to the happiness or the achievements of mankind? What is the attitude of mind, what the emotions, what the nature of the contents which go to make up the faith states? Is it something that grows within us by exercise and cultivation as the perceiving and reasoning processes do? Does it correspond to something outside of us, or is it entirely subjective, something within us?

A first difficulty with the problem lies in the fact that few of us