

Lectures on Pragmatism.  
LECTURE V.

1/11/1911

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I discoursed to you, last time, on metaphysics, because I thought it would amuse you. But I must tell you that you are wholly unfit for the study of metaphysics. You might as well take up the theory of functions without knowing the differential calculus, or the calculus without knowing elementary geometry and algebra, or the theory of electricity without any clear notions of mechanics. For an acquaintance with logic, - by which I mean nothing like the logic of the inexact logicians, - but a thorough acquaintance with logic as separated sharply and radically from psychology, - the logic of relations, of multitudes finite and infinite, of continuity, which transcends all multitudes of abstractions in the sense in which is saporific vita



which is the

is an abstraction, in the sense as the sense in which a group or collection is an abstraction, the logic of inductive reasonings of different general, the logic of hypotheses, - a thorough acquaintance with all that, for which I am sorry to say that this university makes need to no provision although I do not hesitate to say that it alone affords the training that every man who is to belong to the world's intellectual upper class requires, - all that ~~one~~ must be acquired before one can ~~not~~ profitably open a book on metaphysics or speculate at all about reality as such.

If there had been time for me to give you thirty-six lectures instead of six or seven, that genuine exact logic should have been the subject of them. But still I should have begun with the categories.

I will now repeat the offer I made at the last lecture. If the philosophical students can, with the assent of those who govern philosophical studies, find the time to listen to two lectures or even to one concerning the logic of ~~some~~ multitude and continuity I should be happy to give them.

### I.

I trust, ladies and gentlemen, that I have not conveyed the idea that the three categories about which I have been discoursing are ~~my~~ a discovery of mine. If they were, that circumstance would be an almost conclusive proof of their falsity of the list. Ideas so fundamental as I hold these to be must have been in us when the Neanderthal man was a child. They must be traceable in the minds of the inferior animals. Much more must they have

permeated human thought since Theracydes.  
 No, all that I have done is to give an exposition  
 of them which, I hope, puts them in a clearer  
 light than that of Hegel.

The first year of my own serious study  
 of philosophy, in 1856, forty-seven years  
 ago was devoted to esthetics. My good  
 angel must have prompted me to take up first  
 that branch of philosophy which ought im-  
 mediately to follow the study of the catego-  
 ries, and to study it in a German book  
 which though it was too old to be sensibly  
 influenced by Hegel was nevertheless one of  
 those books in which the three <sup>categories,</sup> in an almost  
 unrecognizable disguise, played a great part.  
 It was Schiller's ästhetische Briefe, — a very  
 good book for an infant philosopher.

After ~~some~~ that I <sup>passed</sup> to Logic and to the  
 analytic part of the Critic of the Pure Reason,  
 and I am sorry to confess that I have



entirely neglected esthetics; so that, though I am now obliged to say a few words about it, I am constrained to preface them with the acknowledgment of my incompetence.

It is a pity that the English language has no more accurate term for esthetic goodness than beauty, which does not seem to me to convey that idea so ~~accurately~~ purely as even the French beauté. That a word for esthetic badness is still more strikingly absent I do not regret so much, because I do not feel sure that there is any such ~~thing~~ quality. Of course, some will say that there is no such Quality as beauty either, - that it is a name given to whatever we are inclined to ~~like~~ love to contemplate regardless of any reasons for liking it, and that what one man finds to his taste is not to the taste of another, and that de gustibus non est disputandum. Probably the majority

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of people regard that maxim as having no other possible meaning than that there is no valid standard of taste, ~~no beauty~~ and nothing *per se* beautiful. Yet there is equally no disputing whether the Sun is bright and hot, although even the physicist will allow the reality of radiant energy. It is not a question to dispute about; ~~simply because~~ <sup>but the reason is that</sup> it is self-evident; and perhaps the same thing may be true of beauty. So my instinct, would persuade me, if I interpret it rightly. On the other hand when I experience repugnance at the appearance of anything, an inward voice seems to admonish me that I am not making a pure esthetic judgment, but am distracted therefrom by consideration of the unsuitability of the object for some purpose. If one abstracts from moral considerations a clever thief or a naughty woman may be a very pretty spectacle. Even downright vulgarity and bad taste is not without its



charm, if I can get over the shudder which comes from imagining myself as imitating them. In short I am inclined in my esthetic judgments to think as the true Kentuckian about whiskey: possibly some may be better than others, but all are esthetically good.

Suppose a fairy were to say to you, "You have put me under such an obligation to you that now I will waive my name and you shall have any dream you like. This dream shall really occupy a thirtieth of a second of your life, but it shall seem to you just as long and varied a history as you like, but <sup>it shall be utterly disconnected from your</sup> ~~after it is over~~ <sup>past and future experience, shall</sup> it shall produce no effect, medicinal or otherwise, <sup>magical</sup>. You shall never remember a single detail of it. You shall only know you had it and bring along from it a perfectly unanalyzable impression of its totality. Now what will you dream? How would you like to have it

a dream of the perfume of attar of roses, or just a pure unalloyed sense of bliss? "If it were me, I should say "Not a bit! On the contrary, it must be a dream of extreme variety and must seem to embrace an eventful history extending through millions of years. It ~~should~~ <sup>shall</sup> be a drama in which numberless living caprices shall jostle and work themselves out in larger and ~~to~~ stronger harmonies and antagonisms, and ultimately <sup>execute</sup> into intelligent reasonablenesses of existence more and more intellectually stupendous and bring forth new ~~and~~ designs still more admirable and prolific." And if the fairy should ask me what the denouement should be, I should reply, "Let my intelligence in the dream develop powers ~~which~~ I infinitely beyond what I can now conceive, and let me at last find that that boundless reason utterly helpless to comprehend the glories of the thoughts that are to be

come materialized in the future, and that will  
 be denouement enough for me. I may then  
 return to the total unanalyzed impression  
 of it. I have described it. Now let one  
 experience it." My taste must doubtless  
 be excessively crude, because I have no  
 esthetic education; but as I am at present  
 advised the esthetic Quality appears to me  
 to be the total ~~and~~ unanalyzable impression  
 of a reasonableness that has expressed  
 itself in a creation. It is a pure Feeling  
 but a feeling that is the <sup>Impress</sup> ~~Image~~ of a Reason-  
 ableness that Creates. It is the First-  
 ness that truly belongs to a Thirdness  
 in its achievement of Secondness. As a  
 matter of opinion, I believe that that Glory  
 shines out in everything like the sun and  
 that any ~~odious~~ esthetic odiousness is merely  
 our Unfeelingness resulting from observations  
 due to our own moral and intellectual aberrations.



Only a few generations ago, the Alps, which so elevate our souls to a sublime sense of operative Thirdness had been regarded by every man who had looked upon them, even the dwellers in their valleys, as Night mare terrors. The oppressive sense of Secondness was there, while their minds were not aware of the Thirdness.

The problem of ethics is simply to define what it is that each man is deliberately prepared to accept as the object of his endeavors. Now he may wish to bring about this or that for a reason; ~~but then the question that is~~ to say, because it would be some special kind of result. But then the question will arise why he should desire such a result. Thus on the whole, he must come to some ideal state of things, whether static or kinetic, which he desires to bring about as an ultimate good and without any ulterior reasons.

Now that which <sup>I am</sup> ~~is~~ deliberately prepared to  
 try to bring about without any ulterior rea-  
 son, that is to say, without any reason  
 at all, must be something <sup>that appears</sup> ~~certainly~~  
 to be decidedly esthetically good; and besides  
 being esthetically good it is requisite that  
 it should appear to be ~~good~~ ~~esthetically~~ good  
 that I should try for it. But for me to try to  
 bring about, <sup>or create</sup> ~~one state~~ one state of things  
 is to try to bring the opposite state of  
 things to naught. In pure esthetics, the  
 one state of things may have its beauty  
 and the opposite state of things may have  
 its beauty. But to strive for one is to strive  
 against the other; so that here I am  
 brought to a dualism. I cannot pronounce  
 one state of things good <sup>to strive for</sup> without  
ipso facto pronouncing the opposite state  
 of things good for me to ~~free~~ <sup>be</sup> from. There is  
 a sharp dualism here which does not exist in

in the state of pure aesthetic enjoyment. Behind all reason soever, there, must be this double pronouncement, "this is better than that" for my striving. It is something superadded to the pure aesthetic and which, in a sense, is not rational. There is something toward which I have a sense of being attracted and ipso facto repelled from its opposite. The element of Secondness, of Reaction, is as obtrusive here as is the element of Firstness of pure Feeling in <sup>the</sup> aesthetic frame of mind. But as the one, though pure feeling, is the feeling that belongs to reasonableness, that is to Thirdness, so here it is not ~~to~~ mere, ~~of~~ brute impulse with which we have to do. Brute impulse is torn two ways at once. Pure villains are creations of wild fantasy or of wicked <sup>and wickedly ignorant</sup> misrepresentation. The ruffian negro whom our southern friends kinemen <sup>they are</sup> only too closely after



our own fashion, — take so much moral  
 satisfaction in tying to a tree and burning  
 to death, ~~so~~ such is their thrice refined  
 purity, — this ruffian did not do his deed of  
 darkness, you may be sure, without a  
 terrific struggle with himself. No, no!  
 You may do an habitual deed, or one quite  
 colorless by pure direct instinct, but you  
 do not commit your crimes that way. A  
 crime is a moral act, in the sense that you  
 have deliberately approved of it and disapproved  
 of ~~not~~ not committing it. It is an unen-  
 lightened moral doctrine, I grant, but it  
 is just as truly a moral action, involving  
 a struggle against impulses that are  
 disapproved, as <sup>was</sup> the finest thing in  
 the Book of Martyrs. Morality is some-  
 thing that cannot be escaped. The more  
 outrageous a man's villainy, the greater his  
 moral self-control. And behind all the

reasoning that may ~~take~~ be gone through with  
there must be a flat, unreasoned "I  
prefer this."