

TRUTHS OF EXISTENCE AND OF MEANING

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Any reflection upon the meaning and nature of truth, any attempt to construe a theory of knowledge, is confronted by an initial paradox. We set out to know what knowing and what knowledge are. We endeavor to make true assertions about truth. Now, in every other instance where we try to understand the nature of anything, we stand off from it, survey it from without, and gradually close in upon it from a variety of different approaches. The object of our study is not, at the outset, within our grasp. The knowledge which we aim to possess is absent till comprehension and understanding arrive, if they ever do. If now we regard the aim to know what knowledge is as on all fours with the aim to know what, say, the stars are, we shall have to say that until we discover the nature of knowledge, we stand outside of knowledge. Our reflection and inquiry, our observation of knowledge ought then to be as external to and as independent of knowledge, as our telescopes are with respect to the stars. Eyes and telescopes do not imply stars, and they are not made of stars. But our assertions about truth should themselves be true, and every step in our perceiving and reflecting upon knowledge implies and is compacted of that which we aim eventually to obtain, namely knowledge. Yet, if the knowledge of knowledge is like the knowledge of anything else, we ought not to use and to possess knowledge till the consummation of our quest. It is as if, in order to build a telescope, we had already to possess that vision of the stars which only the completed telescope can provide. Were this the case, it is clear that we could never build telescopes. Yet the analogous and no less

paradoxical belief that we have to possess knowledge before we can acquire it was certainly held by Plato, and it bears witness, I believe, to an inescapable truth of the knowledge situation and problem. It is, as I hope to make evident, one aspect of this paradox which will enter into the subsequent discussion.

Suppose it should turn out to be the case that knowledge and truth are elusive and—in the words of one of the titles of the present series of papers—inaccessible. The paradox is even greater. I can well picture the possibility of contriving a trap to ensnare an animal and forever failing to catch it. The procedure becomes a bit complicated—as we have just now noted—when the process of trap-building presupposes that you have already caught your beast. But what are we to say if, in order to make the trap we must not only already have caught our animal, but also that the trap is of a kind which by its very nature is precluded from catching any prey whatever. If truth is inaccessible, it becomes a pious but forlorn hope that the statements made in support of that thesis shall themselves be true. I should be content if I could deal with the lesser paradox, that which is involved in the search for knowledge about knowledge itself, and in the admission that propositions concerning truth should themselves be true.

I begin with what might seem to be the least controversial statement that can be made about knowledge, the statement namely that knowledge is concerned with and is about that which in some sense exists and has existence. Whoever possesses knowledge, apprehends, grasps, portrays, images, represents, conceives, is confronted with, is compresent with, some situation, fact, relation, or entity which is just what it is and just what it is known as being. This would appear to be the minimum statement which could be made of any knowledge situation, if and when there is knowledge. This minimum statement commits us to no assertion that knowledge, the cognitive confronting of existence and a knower, is ever attainable, except indeed such knowledge as is conveyed by this assertion itself. It commits us to no special account of the mechanism which may be

supposed to render knowledge possible, if it is possible. Nor does it restrict in any fashion the kind or domain of existence—if there be a variety of such domains—with which knowledge is concerned. If I know that the product of $x + y$ and $x - y$ is $x^2 - y^2$, that light travels with a velocity of 299,796 kilometers per second, that Keats wrote *Endymion*, that envy corrodes the soul—if I or anyone indeed know these things or any things whatever, then it is something somehow existing with which I have cognitive dealings. Did nothing whatever exist, and could this be known, then the one existing object of knowledge would be the fact that nothing exists. If any such situation be barely conceivable, then of course the kind of existence which such a fact must have (in order to be known) will be quite different from the kind of existence which this fact denies, and perhaps different too from the kind of existence which belongs to the knowledge of this fact. Existence of some sort, and in some dimension, is ineluctably correlative with knowledge. This possession of existence, or this just being an existence of some kind, on the part of anything whatever which is the object of knowledge, lies at the root of the deep-seated conviction that the object of knowledge is and must be independent of its being known. Without this characteristic of “independence,” knowledge is meaningless and impossible. For to say of anything that it is independent of any knowledge of it, is just another way of saying that it has existence. If the ascription of an independent status to the object of knowledge goes beyond the ascription of existence, as it frequently does, it may easily prove to be ambiguous or positively misleading.

We are, I think, placing emphasis here upon what Mr. Loewenberg designated as the ‘terminal’ aspect and preposition of the knowledge situation. Existence is that which knowledge is *about*. Our human interest in knowledge and in the problem of its nature and possibility, bears witness to the most perdurable metaphysical bent of our nature, the desire to discover and to know that which has the maximum of existence, that which really exists. This marks indeed the goal of knowledge. It is

'terminal' and consummatory in a pregnant sense. For this reason it has, I think, a rightful ascendancy, the due recognition of which should not lay one open to the charge of the "fallacy of suppression" or "reduction." When the goal of your journey is indeed of surpassing importance, it matters relatively little what the conveyance is, or with what else it may chance to be freighted, and where it may have originated, or how rough the road may be, provided you do reach your terminus. Some vehicle and some road upon which it may travel are indeed indispensable and in this sense it were idle to suppress them. But the rôle which they play is subordinate, when measured against the significance and urgency of the terminus to which they are believed to lead. It is for the sake of that which exists that the arduous and tortuous journey of knowledge-seeking, of science and philosophy, is entered upon, and if the journey prove longer than we anticipated when, with light heart, we climbed upon our vehicle, even if every supposed terminus prove to be but a station en route, and we become so absorbed in the passing scenery as to forget our destination, nevertheless, the *raison d'être* of our journey is inevitably the goal. Yet, intriguing as is this metaphor, which I borrow from Mr. Loewenberg, it has, like all metaphors, its dangers, and we must now relinquish it, as we set forth upon our journey.

There is, it would seem, a necessary corollary to the statement that knowledge is ineluctably and supremely concerned with, or that it is about, existence. We are not, I may remind you, saying anything as yet as to the possibility or impossibility of obtaining knowledge, or of knowledge reaching its object or goal, which is existence. We are concerned with the concept of knowledge, with its nature, with what it would be, did it anywhere exist. To say that knowledge is directed upon and is about existence, appears to imply that knowledge is the possession of a being who, as knower, is a sheer spectator of the existences which are known. I say "appears to imply" because we shall find before we are finished that this assumption will require revision, and that knowledge is never such a confronting of sheer

existence by a purely contemplative and finding mind. But for the moment I shall depict a knower as if he were a bare spectator of existence. As such, it might appear that he must be careful not to intrude into his knowledge anything that does not come from the side of the existence to be known. Above all, he must be careful to exclude all that arises from his own nature, his own life and experience, his own hopes and interests. His business, as knower, is just to register existence. The medium in which such registering occurs ought to be diaphanous, with no thickness and life of its own, without bias, flaw, or perspective. This may, alas, be only an ideal of what knowledge should be, only remotely attainable by our minds harnessed as they are to animal bodies. But whether or not attainable by us, or to what extent, how deeply has this ideal of what knowledge really is when it is indeed knowledge, entered into the historical structures of philosophic thought about the nature of knowledge!

But no less clear is it that beings such as we are, are compelled to assume an attitude toward the things surrounding us, very different from that of contemplative gazing upon existence. We have wants and needs which impel us to do something to the objects in our world, to enjoy and to destroy, to escape dangers, to discriminate between friend and foe, to make, control, and exploit what exists so as to transform it to our own uses. All this implies that we are not disinterested spectators and knowers, but creatures with vital needs and impulses, compelled to take sides, to choose and select, to pronounce things good and bad, or better and worse. So imperious are these vital and practical exigences of our animal and human existence, that everything which transpires in our experience appears of necessity to be caught up by and subservient to the life and the needs of our bodies, our minds, or our body-minds. Where in all this living matrix of the wants and interests belonging to us, which are indeed just ourselves, can a place be found for any sheer neutral registering of existence, undistorted by the vital and human medium in which of necessity such registration of existence must occur? It is small wonder that the attempt should

be deliberately and frankly made completely to redefine knowledge in terms of our doing and living, trying and venturing, succeeding and failing, and wholly to relinquish any notion of knowledge as the faithful disclosure and registration of extra-human existence. Yet even if it be granted that all which calls itself knowledge is a plan of action, utilized in the service of some vital and practical need and demand of our nature, such an admission does not expunge the deeply metaphysical and realistic impulse to discover and disclose that which exists. It may condemn the realization of such an impulse and desire to perpetual and pathetic frustration. It ought not, I think, impel us to allege, in the manner of the fable of the sour grapes, that we have no desire for a sheer knowledge of existence regardless of what are our vital and practical interests. The interest in knowledge is the interest not in ourselves but in existence.

The interests which are other than cognitive and theoretic are diverse and multiform. Utilitarian and economic, moral and social, aesthetic and religious, is there any trait shared in common by all such non-theoretic interests, in terms of which they all fall within a common genus? Is there any one category germane to all these non-cognitive interests, as the category of existence is correlative with and pertinent to knowledge? I think that there is. What this common characteristic is becomes evident when we observe that it is never the bare existence of things and situations which elicits our non-theoretic interest. Not, at any rate, such objective existence as is the correlate and the goal of knowledge. It is rather, the import and use, the value and significance which things have for us, that comprise the domain of our non-cognitive interests. A hungry creature searches for that which is good for eating. He can of course satisfy his hunger only with food which really exists, as a physical thing. But it is not its existence as contemplated and known impassively, but its use to him as food, its value, with which he is vitally concerned. And so it is with all of the varied non-cognitive interests. With each of these there is correlated some species of use, value, or significance. And I

propose that we sweep all of these objectives or termini of our non-cognitive interests into the one category of meaning. I propose to use "meaning" as the generic term for the kind of thing with which all of our experience, attitudes, and interests other than theoretic and cognitive, have to do. Desiring and avoiding, selecting and using, loving and hating, admiring and enjoying, striving and purposing—all these are attitudes and interests which are surely different from the interest in just knowing things, in contemplating and recording existences, in merely letting "facts" announce and register themselves. Just as existence is the objective and correlate of cognition so meaning is the objective and correlate of our practical and vital, our aesthetic and moral, and all other non-theoretic concerns.

But clearly, we need here to tread cautiously. We have distinguished meaning and existence. Existence is what we are bent upon when we seek just to know. Some sort of meaning it is—and meaning includes use or value—which concerns us when we do anything or everything except knowing. But do not meanings themselves exist? Some kind of existence they must assuredly have, else how could we talk about them, raise queries concerning them and inquire as to how they are related to existence? Indeed do we not try to know just what values and meanings are, that is, contemplate them as existences? And when we try thus to know them for what they are, as we do in the theory of value or the theory of meaning, they apparently cease to be definable in terms of a category which is contrasted with existence, and they become existences of some specific kind. What becomes then of our initial bifurcation between what things are, what things exist as being, and what they mean? I shall not consider these perplexing questions in this place. I merely note that this subsumption of meaning under existence occurs only under the influence of the cognitive intent and may thus appear to verify our original statement that existence, and existence alone, is the correlate of knowledge. The meanings and values which things appear to wear are there only for some vital, practical, or aesthetic interest. Such meanings seem per-

force to evaporate or to be transmuted into sheer neutral existence once we succeed in knowing them. And only if and when we are guided by some non-cognitive interest are we confronted with meanings and values. We might put it paradoxically and say that did nothing exist except existences, the only thing we could do would be just to know them. It is because meanings and values also exist or appear to exist, that there is grist for our vital, affective, emotional, practical, and purposive activities. We shall indeed before long have to face the question whether existences as sheer and detached from meaning and value could even be known. But the force and pathos of this question lies in the prior seeming necessity of divorcing existence and meaning. That divorce seems decreed by the inexpungable distinction between the ideal and aim of knowledge and that of the mass of our vital, practical, non-cognitive interests.

This bifurcation of knowledge directed upon sheer existence and all the non-cognitive modes of experience and of interest which are implicated with meanings, is a characteristic achievement and deposit of the impetus given to modern philosophy by the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century. Prior to that—if we neglect the possible foreshadowings of modern science in Greek atomism—there was no such clean-cut demarcation. Indeed, the outstanding trait of the classical Greek tradition in philosophy is the mutual interpenetration of that which is believed to exist, to be real, and that which is endowed with meaning, value, and significance. This tradition viewed human experience and human interests as integral to the total cosmic scene; that which was fraught with deepest significance within the boundaries of man's experience was at the same time taken as disclosing the framework of reality. Human use and want, man's needs and ideals, his purposes, the very grammar which lay imbedded within his discourse, the reason or Logos inherent in his thinking, this was all linked continuously with that which was most deeply and really existent in the nature of things. The interpretation of nature, within this tradition, was teleological. The course and destiny of natural processes were

thought to be intelligible only in so far as they disclosed a pattern of purpose or meaning. The idea of the Good, of a significant order of things and of events, was not to be abstracted from in any inquiry as to what nature or reality really is. The motions of the heavenly bodies, the downward fall of terrestrial bodies no less than the growth and behavior of living things, obeyed the compulsion of purposes, meanings, and of final causes. All such natural processes were indeed the realization of ends; they were not simply observable occurrences to be described for what they were and in their own terms. Existence itself was permeated with meanings. Existence was but the scaffold or the husk behind which were the ideas, the meanings, the intelligible forms and final causes, whose apprehension was the goal of the lover of true knowledge.

Such inseparability and fusion (if not confusion) of existence and meaning is, it might appear, the witness of an inability to determine where the meanings germane to human life and experience, human reason and discourse terminate, and where the bare existence of nature and reality begins. The world of significant human meanings overflows into the realm of objective existence. It is something like this which is meant, I suppose, when it is said that the cosmology and metaphysics of this tradition were essentially, if unwittingly, humanistic and anthropomorphic. It is this tradition which persists in the scholastic doctrine that the order of existence coincides necessarily with the scale of perfection and of value. The ontological proof for the existence of God may perhaps be viewed as the logical culmination of this long tradition. So indispensable is the maximum of existence to the maximum of meaning and perfection that a non-existing *ens perfectissimum* is a sheer contradiction. And it is still something derived from this same tradition, transplanted into a different intellectual horizon, which moves within the structure of modern philosophical rationalism.

The scientific revolution of the seventeenth century accustomed men's minds to the thought of an external reality notably

different from that which was portrayed in the classical Greek tradition. Instead of a reality which was all of a piece with the meanings and values which rendered human experience significant, men now believed themselves confronted by a causally and mechanically determined system of physical objects and events. This quantitative realm of metrical and primary motions was all that in truth really existed. The wealth of significant qualities, the meanings and forms which were woven into the very texture of existence in the older tradition, were now excluded from objective reality. Instead of aiming at an understanding of the meaning which really belonged to things, the new science seeks solely to describe how the observable occurrences in nature go on. Not *why* bodies fall, not the grasping of that which a falling body realizes, the potentiality which it makes actual, the form and end which it achieves, but the simple *how* of the existent occurrences themselves becomes the objective of scientific study. Meanings, like purposes and values, no longer lie within the realm of objective existence. They are of necessity expunged from that realm. Their association with and their dependence upon mind becomes far more pronounced than it ever was in the Greek tradition. Instead of being found by mind when it contemplates and truly knows reality, they are the creatures of mind, additions and fabrications adventitiously imputed to an existence to which they are wholly dissimilar and strange.

There is, however, be it noted in passing, an extraordinary paradox which dogs the steps of the advancing theoretic conquest of nature in the modern scientific movement. Men set out to discover the independent, significantly neutral existence of the physical order. They seek to strip away from that order all secondary qualities (which are human meanings adventitious and eccentric to sheer existence), the tertiary aspects of value, of beauty, and of purposive, final causes. But the more this vast enterprise succeeds, the more do the existence and the nature thus disclosed coalesce with a structure which appears to have the very maximum of logical and theoretic significance, the

structure of mathematical truths and theorems, one which seems to be most completely independent of observation of fact and registering of sheer existence. Descartes' belief that matter, physical existence, is a *res extensa*, bears witness to the hold which the mathematical ideal had on his thought. For extendedness, spatiality, is the proper domain of geometrical forms and relations, rendered capable of algebraic development and deduction through the powerful instrument of analytical geometry. Here in this most highly developed region of knowledge, the existence of matter fuses with the meaning which mathematical symbols possess in a deductive and rational system. This insight of Descartes is deeply prophetic, I suspect, of the entire development of modern physics. We set out originally to know sheer existence, we were distrustful of meanings, of secondary qualities, of all that the mind's own creativeness imputed to existence. We discover, in the end, that the only existence with which physical science is concerned is well on the way to being transmuted into a system of symbols and meanings. It is, as Mr. Eddington calls it, a "shadow land," when measured against the solid, existential substance which we originally set out to know. If we still crave substance and existence, must we not shove them beyond the threshold which frames the farthest reaches of scientific knowledge?

Yet this paradox—that the physical sciences set out to capture sheer existence and return from the chase with little or nothing save mathematical symbols and meanings—need not, perhaps, vitiate the legitimacy of the quest. And to all this it may well be retorted that if physics has become mathematics, and geometry mechanics, it means merely that the knowledge of mathematical existence (or subsistence) has replaced or has come in part to overlap the knowledge of physical existence. However, I think that it is perhaps either a foolish philosopher or a very very wise one who will venture today to say anything about the implications for philosophy of the present state—or flux—of the physical sciences, and I should prefer not to be forced into either one of these two categories.

We have been speaking thus far of knowledge with existence as its objective or correlate, and of non-cognitive interests whose correlate is some species of meaning. As yet, nothing has been said about truth. And I think it is right that knowledge should be surveyed before truth if, as we have done, knowledge be viewed as directly concerned with existence. For, the relation between truth and existence is not so direct. It is not existence which is true, but knowledge of existence. Knowledge is the mediating link between truth and existence. There is a reflexive character about truth which appears to be lacking in knowledge. Truth supervenes upon knowledge or the claim to knowledge. It is the recognition, the certifying that knowledge is indeed knowledge. It is the result of passing judgment upon, of reviewing and appraising the claim which knowledge makes to apprehend existence. It presupposes that some or much or even all of what passes for knowledge is not really knowledge, just as legal judicial procedures, issuing in judgment, presuppose the possibility that some men who claim to be innocent and who pass as such, are really not innocent. There can be no erroneous knowledge any more than there can be an innocent man who is guilty. But a man can be judged guilty who claimed to be innocent, and who passed as innocent. Likewise, knowledge may appear to exist, yet really not exist. Truth denotes the tribunal before which knowledge is summoned, to determine whether or no, or in what degree, it really is knowledge.

The designation of judgment as the locus of truth thus indicates its reflexive and, with respect to knowledge, subordinate character. I have, or claim to have, knowledge of the shining sun and fleecy clouds as, in some sense, really existing. So far, all that is in evidence is knowledge—ideas, beliefs, perceptions—on my part, and on the side of my world, existence. It is only when and if this knowledge is challenged, when it is accused or indicted of not really being knowledge, or barely suspected of making a spurious claim, that I am called upon to plead before the tribunal of truth. The verdict is a judgment, judgment in a crucial sense, “It is true or it is false *that* the sun is

shining." Knowledge is concerned ineluctably with existence; truth is a judgment directly focussed upon knowledge, and consequently, but only indirectly, upon existence, through the medium of knowledge. We might say that while knowledge is a dyadic relation between a knower and some known existence, truth involves a triadic relation, adding to these two terms a third, something which, still to follow the analogy, plays the part of a judge or tribunal to pass judgment upon the validity of the presumed knowledge. The loyalties, so to speak, which we exact of knowledge and of truth are different. Of knowledge we ask fidelity to existence; of truth we require fealty to a standard, an ideal, a norm.

I do not think that this difference between knowledge and truth is trivial or negligible. The entrance into the knowledge situation of factors which are derived from the concept of truth will lead us to modify the assertion which so far we have clung to, the assertion that knowledge, unlike all non-cognitive attitudes, is concerned solely with existence. It will prompt us to regard as less intransigent the dichotomy of existence and meaning, of theoretical and non-theoretical interests. For the concept of truth brings to light a category, a dimension which might remain concealed were it not for the distinction between knowledge and truth. If this notion of truth were lacking, if we had before us only the dyadic relation which thus far has appeared adequate to the knowledge situation, we might easily suppose that we could get along quite well with the category of existence alone. I think that this is just what is implied and attempted in certain theories of knowledge. Take, for example, the correspondence theory of knowledge. Here you have on the one hand objective existences of various sorts such as physical objects and historical events. On the other hand you have subjective or mental existences, perceptions, ideas, memories. You have in the third place an existing relation of one to one correspondence between certain of the mental existences and certain of the objective existences. In so far as these three types of entities exist, there occurs an instance of knowledge. To be

sure, not all these three existent entities can be known. Perhaps the only one which is known is the subjective idea. The relation of correspondence, and the object which is other than the idea, may not be accessible. Nevertheless it is their sheer existence which defines and makes possible the existence of knowledge. The intent of any such theory is to move wholly within the area of entities which exist and occur. It exhibits the temper of positivism.

The same may be said of any approach to the knowledge problem which supposes that one may view knowledge from without as an existing event or fact in the same manner as one may presumably observe any other sort of occurrence in nature, such as an eclipse of the moon, the ebbing of the tide, or the contraction of a muscle.

A similar temper of positivism, the supposal that knowledge may be surveyed from without as a set of existing occurrences, is evident, I think, in a pragmatic theory of knowledge. Knowing is now to be viewed as a specific sort of process occurring in the life-history and behavior of certain organisms. One will study knowing precisely as one would observe digesting or walking. Knowing comes to exist whenever the continuity between stimulus and response which characterizes instinctive or habitual behavior is obstructed. Such obstruction may be due to competing and divergent stimuli. Or, a given stimulus may tend to arouse various conflicting responses not all equally appropriate and useful. The organism thus finds itself in a state of doubt and suspense, because its established modes of response to stimuli do not meet the requirements of its present environment or its existent needs. Knowledge is a name for the resolution of this suspense, and the reestablishment of adequate modes of response. Such restitution is the result of analysis and discrimination, memory and inventiveness, the hypothetical projection of tentative modes of response, an experimental embarking upon one of them, and a resultant success or failure. We cannot pause to develop the details either of this type of theory, or of correspondence theories. I cite them as instances

of the assumption that the knowledge situation is a set of existent facts and processes, as capable of description from without as any other existences. It is just this assumption which I am forced to challenge. If by nature one means the existing totality of facts and occurrences in space and time, including the entirety of biological phenomena, then the ingredient which makes knowledge knowledge, simply is not an existent, natural occurrence or entity. We are led into supposing that it is in part by the naturalistic assumption that everything falling within the category of meaning or of value is an adventitious and anthropomorphic accretion to sheer existence, and that consequently to know things for what they really are is to know them solely in terms of existence stripped bare of all such meaning. And this assumption is the corollary of the sharp dichotomy between knowledge concerned with existence alone, and all non-cognitive interests which are implicated with meanings. I should say that the one outstanding merit and achievement of the modern pragmatic movement is its insistence upon the untenability and inadequacy of just this bifurcation and dichotomy. But I am far from being convinced that the pragmatic theory of the way in which theory and practice, existence and meaning, are to be brought together, points in the right direction.

It is the concept of truth which stands in the way of any description of the knowledge situation as something which just exists or occurs, and whose nature is capable of revealing itself to an outside spectator. This is why the knowledge of knowledge presents a different kind of problem from the knowledge of sheer existences and occurrences which the ingredients of nature are commonly supposed to be. Knowledge, which thus far we have taken to be primarily concerned with its terminus which is existence, reveals a new trait and a new ingredient when the concept of truth supervenes. There is an ideal and normative impact upon knowledge which comes, so to speak, from a direction opposite to that from which facts and things, data and existence press upon us. Janus-like, knowledge faces

in two directions; toward existence, the given, the presented, and toward ideal standards fetched from the domain of truth. There is, for better or for worse, an intrusion of such ideal standards into all knowledge of existence. Truth grips existence, if at all, only through the medium of knowledge, and knowledge thus lies between truth and existence, subject to the constraint both of ideal standards and of existence. It is the intrusion of such ideal and normative factors into the knowledge situation which makes it impossible in the end to remain content with out initial bifurcation of the cognitive interest concerned solely with existence, and non-cognitive attitudes implicated with meanings. The theoretical and cognitive response of the mind to existence is shot through with ideals and purposes which, while they are genuinely theoretical, are nevertheless generically similar to the demands with which we confront existence in any region of experience.

If this intrusion of ideal criteria, of demands which we make even when we are bent solely upon knowledge, be resented as illegitimate, as obstructing or preventing the unalloyed knowledge of pure existence, existence uncontaminated by meaning, then knowledge is condemned *ab initio*. We construct a trap to catch sheer existence, but the only trap which it lies in our power to contrive, is one which catches existence permeated with meaning or, it may be, even meanings alone, divorced from existence, as in mathematics. In this case, existence is a veritable *ding-an-sich*, a substance transcending the area of meanings which are lodged in knowledge. I mention this possibility in this place merely to point out that the concept of such a thing-in-itself or substance is the concept of existence uncontaminated by such meanings, by such ideal factors and standards as are incorporated in knowledge, and which, I have said, spring not from the linkage between knowledge and existence, but from that between knowledge and truth. Could this normative and ideal constraint upon knowledge from the side of truth be eliminated, then nothing would stand in the way at least of the possibility that existence could be known for what it is,

unspoilt by any intrusion of ideal considerations and standards, of interpretation and normative appraisal, of meanings, in short. But even so, even if it be supposed that this is what knowledge ought to be, a disclosure of existence purified from the dross of meaning, it should not be forgotten that this is itself the statement of an ideal of knowledge. It purports to tell what knowledge ought to be, even if in fact it always falls short of the ideal through a failure to grasp pure existence—substance—not qualified and distorted by the matrix of meanings in which knowledge such as we have is imbedded. And this is a highly important characteristic of the knowledge situation and problem. It takes us back to the paradox which we noted at the outset. We want to know what knowledge is, and we discover that we can only state what knowledge ought to be. A procedure which we supposed to be descriptive turns out to be normative. We might suppose that we could survey knowledge from without, with no prepossession, no bias, committed to no judgment until after knowledge shall have delivered up its secret and disclosed its existing nature. But we find that our report as to what knowledge is implies a prior judgment as to what knowledge ought to be, that is, an ideal standard, as to what knowledge means when it is true knowledge. We thought we could get along with sheer existence and its disclosure to an external spectator or knower who may faithfully report the "facts" without intruding any demands or ideals of his own. What we find is that we have all along been using a criterion of what knowledge ought to be, derived from the ideal which belongs to truth. We began by assuming that knowledge was, in intention and aim, directed solely upon existence, and that this intention of the cognitive interest, whether realizable or not, was sufficient to discriminate it from all non-theoretical and practical interests. What confronts these latter is never sheer existence, but existence invested with meaning. This distinction between existence and meaning appeared to run parallel with the difference between two diverse functions or even kinds of mind. On the one hand there is a mind which is wholly con-

cerned with and absorbed by the existences with which it is confronted, content solely with remarking and registering data, without intruding into the discovered existences any ideal ingredients whatever. This is mind contemplative and cognitive. On the other hand there is the mind whose energies and activities spring from wants and needs, the mind which is devoted either to wresting from the surrounding world that which is useful and good and significant, or in making over the bare neutral existences of nature into meaningful structures. This is mind vital and practical, instrumental and purposive. This was the situation with which we were left until the concept of truth came upon the scene. And it is this concept which brings into the knowledge situation an ideal factor, a normative ingredient, a regulative standard whose impact upon knowledge is no less than that which comes from the side of existence, of facts and data of whatever sort. It results from this that in knowledge, we have to do not with existence simply, but also with meanings which are either derived from or correlated with such ideal factors as originate not in sheer, neutral existence but in the requirements of truth. In the remainder of this paper, I shall first expand this statement and then consider the question whether or not the presence in knowledge of such ideal ingredients operates so as to frustrate the hope that in some measure what really exists may become accessible to our knowledge.

Every sustained pursuit of knowledge in mathematics, science, history, or wherever else, is guided and directed not only by the material, the data, with which the knower is confronted, but also by certain ideals of explanation and of intelligibility. There is operative throughout every cognitive enterprise some specific pattern which the knower would like to see exemplified by and embodied in the area with which he is at work. And it is only because of some discrepancy between what the knower would like to find and what he does find that there are scientific and theoretical problems. That thought and reflection, science and philosophy, are called into being by a problem is undeniably the case. That the given is problematic is indeed

true. But these are elliptical and condensed statements of a situation which is more complex than might at first be supposed. What I mean is that the problematic character of the given, of existences of any and every sort which are experienced, perceived, intuited, imaged, or thought, does not fall entirely on the side of the given and the presented. It is not as if the given announced itself as a problem to a mind which is a mere spectator, bent wholly upon receiving and absorbing that which confronts it and is presented to it. The problematic character of the given has its source in the clash and discrepancy between that which is given and that which the mind wants but doesn't find in the given as merely given. A mind which isn't looking for something, which has nothing at stake, which is wholly pervious and diaphanous, would never find itself in the presence of a problem. Every teacher knows how impossible it is really to give students problems. You may give them data as much as you like. But these data become problematic, they stimulate search and reflection only to an active and inquiring mind, which wants and needs something which is not found in the given and which cannot be anything in the nature of a gift. No less true is it that the domains of existence which experience offers to our mind as data and as gifts, are problematic only because our minds are in search of something other than what is presented. A problematic datum implies a dissatisfied seeker. Just as it takes two to make a quarrel, so it requires a factor other than mere givenness or immediacy to make a problematic situation. In all literalness, data are never problematic in their own simple being or givenness. The *esse* of their problematic nature lies, not in its *percipi*, to be sure, but in the presence of something no less mind-dependent, that is, a character of unsatisfactoriness, a felt lack of meaning and of theoretical value. It is thus the discrepancy between what the mind has and what it wants, between the datum and some ideal, which lends to the given its problematic aspect. Were it not for the tension produced by this discrepancy, the mind might well be content to watch the panorama of things experienced float by,

asking no questions, having no doubts, untroubled by truth or error. And a mind such as this would indeed have no knowledge. If I might turn to my own uses Mr. Santayana's dictum that "nothing given exists," I should accept it as pointing to just this fact. To say that whatever is indubitably and literally given is an essence and not an existence, is to say that the discovery and recognition of reality—of what really exists—is never possible for a mind which passively intuits and acquiesces in the given. The distinction between essence and existence (in Mr. Santayana's sense), like that between appearance and reality, arises only for a mind whose experience and whose searchings are guided, in part at least, by ideals, by some notion of what it wants, and a perennial dissatisfaction with what it has in the shape of the given. What could possibly lead a sheer spectator, with no interests of his own, with nothing at stake, to institute discriminations of ontological worth among the entities which float by before his intuition? Everything experienced, whether sensed, perceived, imaged, dreamed, or thought of, has being and exists for the thing it is. The judgment that some or all of these are unreal, are but appearances or illusions, is the achievement of a mind which has standards and ideals, which actively wants something and in some measure knows what it is that it wants.

The presence within knowledge of ideal ingredients which have a source other than in the given, is likely to be masked in proportion as we take smaller and smaller bits of knowledge and fasten our attention upon them. A scientific or philosophical theory purports to explain a mass of facts, or data. A theory about the facts appears to contain much more which is ideal and hypothetical, which is the product of ideal construction, than do the facts, the data, with reference to which the theory is constructed. We easily come to suppose and to say that we know the facts with a great deal more of certainty and assurance than we have with respect to any theory about the facts. But the situation is not so easily disposed of. We have to be on our guard against a perplexing ambiguity in the

notion of knowledge. Do we know the brute problematic data presented to us in experience? We have them indeed; they are experienced and presented. But they are problematic because they are not the sort of thing which will satisfy us, which will meet our ideals of intelligibility and of truth. Knowledge of them, theoretical mastery of them, is not yet in our possession. When we come to know the data of perception, the solid massive things we see and touch, they all but disappear from the world known to exist. Knowledge of what the facts themselves really are awaits the formulation of a theory, and is subject to constant revision as one theory is supplanted by another.

I have elsewhere¹ defended the view that nowhere along the entire cognitive front from the most elementary sensory awareness to the most speculative of theoretical constructions, do we find any place characterized by immediacy and nothing but immediacy. In our present context, this is tantamount to the assertion that nowhere in our cognitive experience is there a coalescence of what the mind has presented as a datum (and hence immediate) and what the mind wants, what some ideal of explanation and of intelligibility demands. And for this reason, every datum is also the focus of interpretations, ideal constructions and meanings which, whatever their origin and their validity, are co-present with every immediately presented datum. If you will have it that they are likewise immediate because such ideal constructions are there along with the immediate datum, you must at least recognize the very great difference between the two sorts of presentations. Such difference renders it ill advised, I think, to apply the adjective "immediate" to both sets of entities.

This is one ground for my rejection of any definition or theory of knowledge as the correspondence between ideas and objective facts. The ideas, judgments, and theories which, in a sense, we contrive and build up, penetrate and reconstruct the

¹ "Immediacy and Meaning," *The Philosophical Review*, XXXVIII, No. 2.

very facts to which, on the correspondence theory, they ought to conform. This intrusion of theory, interpretation, and meanings into facts, this unstable transmutation of initial problematic data into facts, is due to the operation within knowledge of ideal standards, of ideals of explanation, having their source not in data or in facts, but in the ideal requirements imposed by truth. The recognition that knowledge is not acquiescence in the given, but the incessant interpretation of the given in accordance with ideal standards does not, of course, by itself provide any insight into the specific nature of such ideals of explanation and of intelligibility. To recognize the discrepancy between what we have and what we want need not presuppose any full and clear knowledge of what it is that we really want. Is it a world of independent things with reciprocal causal relations which our ideals of explanation demand? Or shall we fasten upon the Parmenidean axiom that since identity alone is intelligible, the scientific intelligence demands the annihilation of diversity, and see with M. Meyerson in all science the effort to identify the diverse? Or shall we define intelligibility in terms of some species of continuity, which is a little less than Parmenidean identity, admitting some measure of change and transition, provided it be not too abrupt? Or shall we envisage intelligibility as the systematic organization and coherence of diversity and unity, bound together into a concrete universal? Is all knowledge guided by the search for a single unconditioned totality? What specific types of meaning do we search for in the effort to comprehend and grasp theoretically some province of existing facts and occurrences? We cannot proceed to any consideration of these questions here, but must content ourselves with the statement that in every sustained cognitive enterprise there are ideals of explanation which denote the formal characteristics of what the knowing mind is seeking. They are the source of the discrepancy between the given and the wanted, between data—brute data if you will—and intelligible data, between a problem and its solution. Cognition has its ideals, norms and purposes, no less than do our practical and non-

theoretical interests. Some theoretical ideal always directs the explanation and interpretation of any mass of data whatever. And this ideal, like any genuine ideal, has to express the life, the nature, and the interests of the mind or self which posits it. In proportion to the degree of success which the knowing mind attains, the objects of its knowledge cease to be sheer existences and become existences suffused with meanings, with theoretical values.

But now, in admitting and stressing such considerations as these, are we not caught between the horns of a dilemma, that dilemma which perennially trails along in the wake of every attempt to deal with the nature of truth? You admit, it will be urged, that every organized body of knowledge, of known and understood data, is permeated by meanings derived from the ideals of explanation and intelligibility which express the theoretical interests and demands of the knowing subject. But the intent of knowledge is nevertheless existence itself, existence which is independent of and unmodified by any interests or ideals of the knower. You are then faced with this alternative. Either independent existence is inaccessible to us because we can know only existences which are caught within the net of our meanings, of our human categories and discourse; or you must be willing completely to ignore and deny any existence untrammelled by meanings which we impute to and weave into the objects of our attention and interest. You must go either the way of skepticism, agnosticism, and radical dualism, or the way of humanism and pragmatism. In neither case is there any genuine possibility of a metaphysics, a knowledge of the independently real. This whole situation is of course nothing but the ego-centric dilemma, writ large.

I believe that there is still another possibility. The two alternatives just now indicated, antithetic as they are, nevertheless issue from a common assumption and premise. They both presuppose that there can be no correlate in existence of the meanings which spring from the mind's own ideals of explanation and of intelligibility. Both types of theory assume that

the interpretations and ideal constructions of which all science and knowledge are compacted, are barred from being discoveries and disclosures of objective meanings precisely because they arise through the construction and purposive activities of the mind as theoretical. The mind, through its activities, theoretical as well as practical, is conceived on the analogy of a factory whose products reveal the machinery which turns them out. Such products in no way disclose the nature of anything which exists independently of the processes of manufacture. If such artificial products existed *in rerum natura*, awaiting discovery, it were idle and foolish for us to construct them.

But the situation becomes altogether different if there should really exist, independently of us, any entities or intrinsic constituents of entities, whose very discovery is dependent upon active processes of ideal construction and interpretation. The meanings which existences seem to acquire when they are thus interpreted, explained, or in any way made significant, would in this case be disclosed and discovered through those constructive activities of the mind which formerly appeared only to generate them.

There is nothing strange or surprising about this possibility. The disclosure to any organism of what exists in its environment is dependent upon the presence of an appropriate organ. If objects are to be touched and felt there must be sense organs of touch. If things are to be seen there must be eyes. The biological evolution of sense organs is at the same time a growth and modification of the segments and dimensions of the accessible environment. Not much more than the environment immediately contiguous with the skin can be perceived through touch. The eyes are distance receptors. Memory and anticipation do for the time dimension what the eyes do for space. If now the larger sweep of rhythms and patterns in nature is capable of being disclosed at all, there is needed for their apprehension the whole apparatus of scientific inventiveness, scientific instruments, processes of thought and reasoning, the elaborations of mathematical invention, ideal constructions of the most varied

kind. Were it not for these ideal constructions, we would be as blind to the relational and intelligible structures of our world as we would be to colors did we not have eyes. If we are to get at them at all, it can only be because we are willing to give free play to such processes of ideal construction. They are discoverable, if at all, only through such types of inventiveness. And by what else could these ideal constructions be guided if not by ideals of explanation and intelligibility lodged in the reason as theoretical? I do no more here than to present this as an alternative hypothesis to both of those positions which would otherwise constrain our choice. You must either—so runs the usual alternative—take the notion of independent reality, of substance, of the indefeasible existence of things and occurrences and energies in all seriousness, or you must forego the hope of any genuine knowledge, of any metaphysics, of any science which does more than take into its reckoning the nature and order of the experiences which are vouchsafed to us, wholly contingent as they must perforce be upon our sense organs and nervous systems, our grammar and discourse, our perspective and ordering. Either realism and dualism, or humanism and positivism. And if you go the first of these two ways, if you affirm the existence and reality of substance, you are still compelled to admit that every alleged description, knowledge, or judgment about substantive existences is shot through with terms, categories, and meanings originating in our ways of thought, belief, and discourse. So that all of the significant terms which we apply to existence are the fruits of our interpretations and ideal constructions woven around and imputed to an existence which has no claim to them in its own right. The initial premise is here the belief that ideal constructions in thought and discourse cannot be vehicles through which objective meanings are disclosed. It is this premise which I question. How else could objective meanings be revealed to our minds save through active processes of ideal construction? I confess I do not know. And I do know of instances where something like this surely occurs. The markings on the Rosetta Stone do

really, I suppose, possess a kind of meaning which the glacial markings of rocks do not have. What these inscriptions of the Rosetta Stone mean could never be disclosed to a mind content to resume or to echo or contemplate merely the existing marks themselves. Nor would these meanings become evident, if the entire causal series of occurrences initiated by the neuro-muscular events in the bodies and hands of the ancient Egyptians were completely presented to a contemplatively cognitive mind. The apprehension of such objective meanings is dependent upon active processes of interpretation and ideal construction. Just as the problematic character of data is not presented in any sheer datum itself as a gift and hence cannot be simply found, so it is with meanings, with the theoretically significant aspects of data which render them understandable. The intelligible and theoretical meanings of the glacial markings too, though they express no human or conscious intent, are likewise accessible only to a mind willing to enter upon a sustained process of reflection and hypothetical construction. But it does not necessarily follow that the theoretical meanings which are thus elaborated in thought, inference, and reflection may not be the very meanings which the glacial markings themselves really own.

I take it that the central problem about all inference and reflection is this. Wherever there is thinking there is, to use the term of Locke and Bradley, an "operation." It is an operation performed upon some datum. But the extraordinary and paradoxical thing about such operations is that their results are ascribed to and appropriated by the datum itself. How can this be? That it should be so shocks us only because we assume that the existence disclosed in the datum is a bare nucleus around which we weave our meanings and then illegitimately impute them to the object. It is this assumption and the whole conceptual framework which supports it, that I think we need to scrutinize. I am not content with the view according to which the categorial characters of existence, those which make existence theoretically significant, are spread out before the mind in the same way as are existential and occurrent data.

This was, as I see it, the theme of the classical Greek tradition, restated in our time by Mr. Alexander. Nor am I content with the drift of the naturalistic tradition, powerfully imparted to our modern thought by the scientific revolution of the seventeenth century, that the significant aspects of our world—all that makes it intelligible and livable—are essentially human and artificial constructs, adventitious to a substantive existence which is wholly neutral with respect to all meaning and all value. This tradition finds its classical expression both in the philosophy of Kant, as usually interpreted, and in that of Hume. Knowledge is indeed concerned with existence. But the quest of knowledge is throughout guided by ideals, evincing at every stage from perception to the elaboration of hypotheses and theories, the constraint of theoretical ideals. The hypothesis that these active operations of the mind provide the one indispensable vehicle through which the inexhaustible wealth of objective meanings native to existence can be known and disclosed, seems to me an hypothesis worth the venture. Itself, like all metaphysical ventures, is an ideal construction, and not, if we are right, thereby precluded from disclosing the nature of things.