

The Paradox of Objectivity

The paradox of objectivity is twofold. In its contemporary form it is the contrast between the learned philosopher, who denies objectivity, and the man in street, who knows countless things with perfect objectivity. But this contemporary form must be supplemented with a more ancient form. Primitives are quite objective about sowing and harvesting but, as soon as one moves from certain strictly limited topics, one finds everything ~~xxxx~~ shot through with magic and myth. The ancient high civilizations ~~xx~~ mastered the arts of organizing men and dominating nature; their bureaucrats wrote and calculated; their engineers and architects raised monuments that still are standing; their warriors and mariners fought on land and sea; but their political and religious ideas were mythical. It sometimes seem to be thought that the non-realist philosopher would be cured if he were taken to the nursery to pour over picture-books and then led off to the zoo to see real lions and tigers, real giraffes and kangaroos, real wolves and bears. But it is not amiss to bear in mind that, if a totemist visited the zoo, he would calling on his relatives, while an animal worshipper would be going to church.

It is with this compound paradox that we propose to deal and we begin with a set of distinctions. Knowledge of objectivity may be a natural knowledge; it may be a spontaneous development of natural knowledge; it may be formulated fragmentarily in the proverbs of commonsense wisdom; it may formulated partially in ~~terms of~~ systematic accounts of the objects that there are to be known; and it may be formulated completely in an

account of the nature of objectivity.

An account of the nature of objectivity has been given in the preceding section and, quite obviously, it presupposes some other knowledge of objective knowledge. Without such other knowledge we would not know how to investigate objectively the nature of objectivity and, when we reached an answer, we would not know objectively whether our answer was objective.

Any such problem, if it is to avoid both the logical impossibility of ~~the~~ the vicious circle and the real impossibility of the infinite regress, must make some appeal to nature. By nature we are capable of experience, intelligent, and rational. Such natural ability to know, is also an ability to know objectively. This follows if ~~about~~ "objectivity" is understood as a mere intensive, for then "knowing" and "objective knowing" are identical. But it also follows if "objectivity" is understood as the nature of objectivity. For we cannot avoid experience; our native intelligence grounds our efforts to understand ^{and} our partial successes in understanding; our native rationality does not allow us to judge without reaching a virtually unconditioned. If we carry out our cognitional activities, we do so in a fashion that combines experiential, normative, and absolute objectivity in the required fashion. Of itself, human knowing is objective human knowing. Immanent ~~then~~ and operative in human knowing there exists, not indeed in actu reflexo, but in actu exercito, a natural knowledge or a natural component of knowledge of objectivity. It has often been observed that, before we study logic, we already are logical and that, after studying logic and forgetting it, we ^{still} are logical. In the same fashion as we have an operative knowledge of logic that is