THE QUEST FOR CERTAINTY

CHAPTER I

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Man who lives in a world of hazards is compelled to seek for security. He has sought to attain it in two ways. One of them began with an attempt to propitiate the powers which environ him and determine his destiny. It expressed itself in supplication, sacrifice, ceremonial rite and magical cult. In time these crude methods were largely displaced. The sacrifice of a contrite heart was esteemed more pleasing than that of bulls and oxen; the inner attitude of reverence and devotion more desirable than external ceremonies. If man could not conquer destiny he could willingly ally himself with it; putting his will, even in sore affliction, on the side of the powers which dispense fortune, he could escape defeat and might triumph in the midst of destruction.

The other course is to invent arts and by their means turn the powers of nature to account; man constructs a fortress out of the very conditions and forces which threaten him. He builds shelters, weaves garments, makes flame his friend instead of his enemy, and grows into the complicated arts of associated living. This is the method of changing the world through action, as the other is the method of changing the self in emotion and idea. It is a commentary on the slight control man has obtained over himself by means of control over nature, that the method of action has been felt to manifest dangerous pride, even defiance of the powers which be. People of old wavered between thinking arts to be the gift of the gods and to be an invasion of their prerogatives. Both versions testify to the sense
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of something extraordinary in the arts, something either super-
human or unnatural. The souls who have predicted that by
means of the arts man might establish a kingdom of order,
justice and beauty through mastery of nature's energies and
laws have been few and little heeded.

Men have been glad enough to enjoy the fruits of such arts
as they possess, and in recent centuries have increasingly de-
veloped themselves to their multiplication. But this effort has
been conjoined with a profound distrust of the arts as a method
of dealing with the serious perils of life. Doubt as to the truth
of this statement will be dispelled if one considers the dis-
esteein in which the idea of practice has been held. Philosophers
have celebrated the method of change in personal ideas, and
religious teachers that of change in the affections of the heart.
These conversions have been prized on their own account, and
only incidentally because of a change in action which would
ensue. The latter has been esteemed as an evidence of the
change in thought and sentiment, not as a method of trans-
forming the scene of life. The places in which the use of the
arts has effected actual objective transformation have been
regarded as inferior, if not base, and the activities connected
with them as menial. The disparagement attending the idea of
the material has seized upon them. The honorable quality asso-
ciated with the idea of the "spiritual" has been reserved for
change in inner attitudes.

The depreciation of action, of doing and making, has been
cultivated by philosophers. But while philosophers have per-
petuated the derogation by formulating and justifying it, they
did not originate it. They glorified their own office without
doubt in placing theory so much above practice. But independ-
ently of their attitude, many things conspired to the same
effect. Work has been onerous, toilsome, associated with a
primeval curse. It has been done under compulsion and the

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pressure of necessity, while intellectual activity is associated
with leisure. On account of the unpleasantness of practical
activity, as much of it as possible has been put upon slaves and
serfs. Thus the social dishonor in which this class was held was
extended to the work they do. There is also the age-long
association of knowing and thinking with immaterial and
spiritual principles, and of the arts, of all practical activity in
doing and making, with matter. For work is done with the
body, by means of mechanical appliances and is directed upon
material things. The disrepute which has attended the thought
of material things in comparison with immaterial thought has
been transferred to everything associated with practice.

One might continue in this strain. The natural history of
conceptions about work and the arts if it were traced through
a succession of peoples and cultures would be instructive. But
all that is needed for our purpose is to raise the question: Why
this invidious discrimination? A very little reflection shows that
the suggestions which have been offered by way of explanation
themselves need to be explained. Ideas derived from social
castes and emotional revulsions are hardly reasons to be offered
in justification of a belief, although they may have a bearing
on its causation. Contempt for matter and bodies and glorifi-
cation of the immaterial are affairs which are not self-explan-
atory. And, as we shall be at some pains to show later in the
discussion, the idea which connects thinking and knowing with
some principle or force that is wholly separate from connection
with physical things will not stand examination, especially since
the whole-hearted adoption of experimental method in the
natural sciences.

The questions suggested have far-reaching issues. What is
the cause and the import of the sharp division between theory
and practice? Why should the latter be disesteemed along with
matter and the body? What has been the effect upon the
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various modes in which action is manifested: industry, politics, the fine arts, and upon morals conceived of as overt activity having consequences, instead of as mere inner personal attitude? How has the separation of intellect from action affected the theory of knowledge? What has been in particular the effect upon the conception and course of philosophy? What forces are at work to break down the division? What would the effect be if the divorce were annulled, and knowing and doing were brought into intrinsic connection with one another? What revisions of the traditional theory of mind, thought and knowing would be required, and what change in the idea of the office of philosophy would be demanded? What modifications would ensue in the disciplines which are concerned with the various phases of human activity?

These questions form the theme of this book, and indicate the nature of the problems to be discussed. In this opening chapter we shall consider especially some historic grounds for the elevation of knowledge above making and doing. This phase of the discussion will disclose that exaltation of pure intellect and its activity above practical affairs is fundamentally connected with the quest for a certainty which shall be absolute and unshakeable. The distinctive characteristic of practical activity, one which is so inherent that it cannot be eliminated, is the uncertainty which attends it. Of it we are compelled to say: Act, but act at your peril. Judgment and belief regarding actions to be performed can never attain more than a precarious probability. Through thought, however, it has seemed that men might escape from the perils of uncertainty.

Practical activity deals with individualized and unique situations which are never exactly duplicable and about which, accordingly, no complete assurance is possible. All activity, moreover, involves change. The intellect, however, according to the traditional doctrine, may grasp universal Being, and

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Being which is universal is fixed and immutable. Wherever there is practical activity we human beings are involved as partners in the issue. All the fear, disesteem and lack of confidence which gather about the thought of ourselves, cluster also about the thought of the actions in which we are partners. Man's distrust of himself has caused him to desire to get beyond and above himself; in pure knowledge he has thought he could attain this self-transcendence.

There is no need to expiate upon the risk which attends overt action. The burden of proverbs and wise saws is that the best laid plans of men as of mice gang agley. Fortune rather than our own intent and act determines eventual success and failure. The pathos of unfulfilled expectation, the tragedy of defeated purpose and ideals, the catastrophes of accident, are the commonplaces of all comment on the human scene. We survey conditions, make the wisest choice we can; we act, and we must trust the rest to fate, fortune or providence. Moralists tell us to look to the end when we act and then inform us that the end is always uncertain. Judging, planning, choice, no matter how thoroughly conducted, and action no matter how prudently executed, never are the sole determinants of any outcome. Alien and indifferent natural forces, unforeseeable conditions enter in and have a decisive voice. The more important the issue, the greater is their say as to the ulterior event.

Hence men have longed to find a realm in which there is an activity which is not overt and which has no external consequences. "Safety first" has played a large rôle in effecting a preference for knowing over doing and making. With those to whom the process of pure thinking is congenial and who have the leisure and the aptitude to pursue their preference, the happiness attending knowing is unalloyed; it is not entangled in the risks which overt action cannot escape. Thought has been alleged to be a purely inner activity, intrinsic to mind alone;
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and according to traditional classic doctrine, "mind" is complete and self-sufficient in itself. Overt action may follow upon its operations but in an external way, a way not intrinsic to its completion. Since rational activity is complete within itself it needs no external manifestation. Failure and frustration are attributed to the accidents of an alien, intractable and inferior realm of existence. The outer lot of thought is cast in a world external to it, but one which in no way injures the supremacy and completeness of thought and knowledge in their intrinsic natures.

Thus the arts by which man attains such practical security as is possible of achievement are looked down upon. The security they provide is relative, ever incomplete, at the risk of untoward circumstance. The multiplication of arts may even be bemoaned as a source of new dangers. Each of them demands its own measures of protection. Each one in its operation brings with it new and unexpected consequences having perils for which we are not prepared. The quest for certainty is a quest for a peace which is assured, an object which is unqualified by risk and the shadow of fear which action casts. For it is not uncertainty per se which men dislike, but the fact that uncertainty involves us in peril of evils. Uncertainty that affected only the detail of consequences to be experienced provided they had a warrant of being enjoyable would have no sting. It would bring the zest of adventure and the spice of variety. Quest for complete certainty can be fulfilled in pure knowing alone. Such is the verdict of our most enduring philosophic tradition.

While the tradition has, as we shall see later, found its way into all themes and subjects, and determines the form of current problems and conclusions regarding mind and knowledge, it may be doubted whether if we were suddenly released from the burden of tradition, we should, on the basis of present

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experience take the disparaging view of practice and the exalted view of knowledge apart from action which tradition dictates. For man, in spite of the new perils in which the machinery of his new arts of production and transportation have involved him, has learned to play with sources of danger. He even seeks them out, weary of the routine of a too sheltered life. The enormous change taking place in the position of women is itself, for example, a commentary on a change of attitude toward the value of protection as an end in itself. We have attained, at least subconsciously, a certain feeling of confidence; a feeling that control of the main conditions of fortune is to an appreciable degree passing into our own hands. We live surrounded with the protection of thousands of arts and we have devised schemes of insurance which mitigate and distribute the evils which accrue. Barring the fears which war leaves in its train, it is perhaps a safe speculation that if contemporary western man were completely deprived of all the old beliefs about knowledge and actions he would assume, with a fair degree of confidence, that it lies within his power to achieve a reasonable degree of security in life.

This suggestion is speculative. Acceptance of it is not needed by the argument. It has its value as an indication of the earlier conditions in which a felt need for assurance was the dominant emotion. For primitive men had none of the elaborate arts of protection and use which we now enjoy and no confidence in his own powers when they were reinforced by appliances of art. He lived under conditions in which he was extraordinarily exposed to peril, and at the same time he was without the means of defense which are to-day matters of course. Most of our simplest tools and utensils did not exist; there was no accurate foresight; men faced the forces of nature in a state of nakedness which was more than physical; save under unusually benign conditions he was beset with dangers that knew
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no remission. In consequence, mystery attended experiences of good and evil; they could not be traced to their natural causes and they seemed to be the dispensations, the gifts and the inflictions, of powers beyond possibility of control. The precarious crises of birth, puberty, illness, death, war, famine, plague, the uncertainties of the hunt, the vicissitudes of climate and the great seasonal changes, kept imagination occupied with the uncertain. Any scene or object that was implicated in any conspicuous tragedy or triumph, in no matter how accidental a way, got a peculiar significance. It was seized upon as a harbinger of good or as an omen of evil. Accordingly, some things were cherished as means of encompassing safety just as a good artisan to-day looks after his tools; others were feared and shunned because of their potencies for harm.

As a drowning man is said to grasp at a straw, so men who lacked the instruments and skills developed in later days, snatched at whatever, by any stretch of imagination, could be regarded as a source of help in time of trouble. The attention, interest and care which now go to acquiring skill in the use of appliances and to the invention of means for better service of ends, were devoted to noting omens, making irrelevant prognostications, performing ritualistic ceremonies and manipulating objects possessed of magical power over natural events. In such an atmosphere primitive religion was born and fostered. Rather this atmosphere was the religious disposition.

Search for alliance with means which might promote prosperity and which would afford defense against hostile powers was constant. While this attitude was most marked in connection with the recurrent crises of life, yet the boundary line between these crucial affairs with their extraordinary risks and everyday acts was shadowy. The acts that related to commonplace things and everyday occupations were usually accompanied, for good measure of security, by ritual acts. The making of a weapon, the molding of a bowl, the weaving of a mat, the sowing of seed, the reaping of a harvest, required acts different in kind to the technical skills employed. These other acts had a special solemnity and were thought necessary in order to ensure the success of the practical operations used.

While it is difficult to avoid the use of the word supernatural, we must avoid the meaning the word has for us. As long as there was no defined area of the natural, that which is over and beyond the natural can have no significance. The distinction, as anthropological students have pointed out, was between ordinary and extraordinary; between the prosaic, usual run of events and the crucial incident or eruption which determined the direction which the average and expected course of events took. But the two realms were in no way sharply demarcated from each other. There was a no-man's-land, a vague territory, in which they overlapped. At any moment the extraordinary might invade the commonplace and either wreck it or clothe it with some surprising glory. The use of ordinary things under critical conditions was fraught with inexplicable potentialities of good and evil.

The two dominant conceptions, cultural categories one might call them, which grew and flourished under such circumstances were those of the holy and the fortunate, with their opposites, the profane and the unlucky. As with the idea of the supernatural, meanings are not to be assigned on the basis of present usage. Everything which was charged with some extraordinary potency for benefit or injury was holy; holiness meant necessity for being approached with ceremonial scruples. The holy thing, whether place, object, person or ritual appliance, has its sinister face; "to be handled with care" is written upon it. From it there issues the command: Noli me tangere. Tabus, a whole set of prohibitions and injunctions, gather about it. It is capable of transmitting its mysterious potency to other
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things. To secure the favor of the holy is to be on the road to success, while any conspicuous success is proof of the favor of some overshadowing power—a fact which politicians of all ages have known how to utilize. Because of its surcharge of power, ambivalent in quality, the holy has to be approached not only with scruples but in an attitude of subjection. There are rites of purification, humiliation, fasting and prayer which are preconditions of securing its favor.

The holy is the bearer of blessing or fortune. But a difference early developed between the ideas of the holy and the lucky, because of the different dispositions in which each was to be approached. A lucky object is something to be used. It is to be manipulated rather than approached with awe. It calls for incantations, spells, divinations rather than for supplication and humiliation. Moreover, the lucky thing tends to be a concrete and tangible object, while the holy one is not usually definitely localized; it is the more potent in the degree in which its habitation and form are vague. The lucky object is subject to pressure, at a pinch to coercion, to scolding and punishment. It might be discarded if it failed to bring luck. There developed a certain element of mastery in its use, in distinction from the dependence and subjection which remained the proper attitude toward the holy. Thus there was a kind of rhythm of domination and submission, of imprecation and supplication, of utilization and communion.

Such statements give, of course, a one-sided picture. Men at all times have gone about many things in a matter-of-fact way and have had their daily enjoyments. Even in the ceremonies of which we have spoken there entered the ordinary love of the dramatic as well as the desire for repetition, once routine is established. Primitive man early developed some tools and some modes of skill. With them went prosaic knowledge of the properties of ordinary things. But these beliefs were sur-

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rounded by others of an imaginative and emotional type, and were more or less submerged in the latter. Moreover, prestige attached to the latter. Just because some beliefs were matter-of-fact they did not have the weight and authority that belong to those about the extraordinary and unaccountable. We find the same phenomenon repeated to-day wherever religious beliefs have marked vitality.

Prosaic beliefs about verifiable facts, beliefs backed up by evidence of the senses and by useful fruits, had little glamour and prestige compared with the vogue of objects of rite and ceremony. Hence the things forming their subject-matter were felt to be lower in rank. Familiarity breeds a sense of equality if not of contempt. We deem ourselves on a par with things we daily administer. It is a truism to say that objects regarded with awe have perforce a superior status. Herein is the source of the fundamental dualism of human attention and regard. The distinction between the two attitudes of everyday control and dependence on something superior was finally generalized intellectually. It took effect in the conception of two distinct realms. The inferior was that in which man could foresee and in which he had instruments and arts by which he might expect a reasonable degree of control. The superior was that of occurrences so uncontrollable that they testified to the presence and operation of powers beyond the scope of everyday and mundane things.

The philosophical tradition regarding knowledge and practice, the immaterial or spiritual and the material, was not original and primitive. It had for its background the state of culture which has been sketched. It developed in a social atmosphere in which the division of the ordinary and extraordinary was domesticated. Philosophy reflected upon it and gave it a rational formulation and justification. The bodies of information that corresponded to the everyday arts, the store of
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matter-of-fact knowledge, were things men knew because of what they did. They were products and promises of utilities. They shared in the relatively low esteem belonging to such things in comparison with the extraordinary and divine. Philosophy inherited the realm with which religion had been concerned. Its mode of knowing was different from that accompanying the empirical arts, just because it dealt with a realm of higher Being. It breathed an air purer than that in which exist the making and doing that relate to livelihood, just as the activities which took the form of rites and ceremonies were nobler and nearer the divine than those spent in toil.

The change from religion to philosophy was so great in form that their identity as to content is easily lost from view. The form ceases to be that of the story told in imaginative and emotional style, and becomes that of rational discourse observing the canons of logic. It is well known that that portion of Aristotle's system which later generations have called metaphysics he called First Philosophy. It is possible to quote from him sentences descriptive of "First Philosophy" which make it seem that the philosophic enterprise is a coldly rational one, objective and analytic. Thus he says it is the most comprehensive of all branches of knowledge because it has for its subject-matter definition of the traits which belong to all forms of Being whatsoever, however much they may differ from one another in detail.

But when these passages are placed in the context they had in Aristotle's own mind, it is clear that the comprehensiveness and universality of first philosophy are not of a strictly analytic sort. They mark a distinction with respect to grade of value and title to reverence. For he explicitly identifies his first philosophy—or metaphysics—with theology; he says it is higher than other sciences. For these deal with generation and production, while its subject-matter permits of demonstrative, that is neces-

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sary, truth; and its objects are divine and such as are meet for God to occupy himself with. Again, he says that the objects of philosophy are such as are the causes of as much of the divine as is manifest to us, and that if the divine is anywhere present, it is present in things of the sort with which philosophy deals. The supremacy of worth and dignity of these objects are also made clear in the statement that the Being with which philosophy is occupied is primary, eternal and self-sufficient, because its nature is the Good, so that the Good is among the first principles which are philosophy's subject-matter:—yet not, it must be understood, the good in the sense in which it has meaning and standing in human life but the inherently and eternally perfect, that which is complete and self-sufficient.

Aristotle tells us that from remote antiquity tradition has handed down the idea, in story form, that the heavenly bodies are gods, and that the divine encompasses the entire natural world. This core of truth, he goes on to say in effect, was embroidered with myths for the benefit of the masses, for reasons of expediency, namely, the preservation of social institutions. The negative work of philosophy was then to strip away these imaginative accretions. From the standpoint of popular belief this was its chief work, and it was a destructive one. The masses only felt that their religion was attacked. But the enduring contribution was positive. The belief that the divine encompasses the world was detached from its mythical context and made the basis of philosophy, and it became also the foundation of physical science—as is suggested by the remark that the heavenly bodies are gods. Telling the story of the universe in the form of rational discourse instead of emotionalized imagination signified the discovery of logic as a rational science. Conformity on the part of supreme reality to the requirements of logic conferred upon its constitutive objects necessary and immutable characteristics. Pure contemplation of these forms
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was man's highest and most divine bliss, a communion with unchangeable truth.

The geometry of Euclid doubtless gave the clue to logic as the instrument of translation of what was sound in opinion into the forms of rational discourse. Geometry seemed to reveal the possibility of a science which owed nothing to observation and sense beyond mere exemplification in figures or diagrams. It seemed to disclose a world of ideal (or non-sensible) forms which were connected with one another by eternal and necessary relations which reason alone could trace. This discovery was generalized by philosophy into the doctrine of a realm of fixed Being which, when grasped by thought, formed a complete system of immutable and necessary truth.

If one looks at the foundations of the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle as an anthropologist looks at his material, that is, as cultural subject-matter, it is clear that these philosophies were systematizations in rational form of the content of Greek religious and artistic beliefs. The systematization involved a purification. Logic provided the patterns to which ultimately real objects had to conform, while physical science was possible in the degree in which the natural world, even in its mutabilities, exhibited exemplification of ultimate immutable rational objects. Thus, along with the elimination of myths and grosser superstitions, there were set up the ideals of science and of a life of reason. Ends which could justify themselves to reason were to take the place of custom as the guide of conduct. These two ideals form a permanent contribution to western civilization.

But with all our gratitude for these enduring gifts, we cannot forget the conditions which attended them. For they brought with them the idea of a higher realm of fixed reality of which alone true science is possible and of an inferior world of changing things with which experience and practical matters

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are concerned. They glorified the invariant at the expense of change, it being evident that all practical activity falls within the realm of change. It bequeathed the notion, which has ruled philosophy ever since the time of the Greeks, that the office of knowledge is to uncover the antecedently real, rather than, as is the case with our practical judgments, to gain the kind of understanding which is necessary to deal with problems as they arise.

In fixing this conception of knowledge it established also, as far as philosophies of the classic type are concerned, the special task of philosophic inquiry. As a form of knowledge it is concerned with the disclosure of the Real in itself, of Being in and of itself. It is differentiated from other modes of knowing by its preoccupation with a higher and more ultimate form of Being than that with which the sciences of nature are concerned. As far as it occupied itself at all with human conduct, it was to superimpose upon acts ends said to flow from the nature of reason. It thus diverted thought from inquiring into the purposes which experience of actual conditions suggest and from concrete means of their actualization. It translated into a rational form the doctrine of escape from the vicissitudes of existence by means of measures which do not demand an active coping with conditions. For deliverance by means of rites and cults, it substituted deliverance through reason. This deliverance was an intellectual, a theoretical affair, constituted by a knowledge to be attained apart from practical activity.

The realms of knowledge and action were each divided into two regions. It is not to be inferred that Greek philosophy separated activity from knowing. It connected them. But it distinguished activity from action—that is, from making and doing. Rational and necessary knowledge was treated, as in the celebrations of it by Aristotle, as an ultimate, self-sufficient and self-enclosed form of self-originated and self-conducted
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activity. It was ideal and eternal, independent of change and hence of the world in which men act and live, the world we experience perceptibly and practically. "Pure activity" was sharply marked off from practical action. The latter, whether in the industrial or the fine arts, in morals or in politics, was concerned with an inferior region of Being in which change rules, and which accordingly has Being only by courtesy, for it manifests deficiency of sure footing in Being by the very fact of change. It is infected with non-being.

On the side of knowledge, the division carried with it a difference between knowledge, in its full sense, and belief. The former is demonstrative, necessary—that is, sure. Belief on the contrary is only opinion; in its uncertainty and mere probability, it relates to the world of change as knowledge corresponds to the realm of true reality. This fact brings the discussion around once more to our special theme as far as it affects the conception of the office and nature of philosophy. That man has two modes, two dimensions, of belief, cannot be doubted. He has beliefs about actual existences and the course of events, and he has beliefs about ends to be striven for, policies to be adopted, goods to be attained and evils to be averted. The most urgent of all practical problems concerns the connection the subject-matter of these two kinds of beliefs sustain to each other. How shall our most authentic and dependable cognitive beliefs be used to regulate our practical beliefs? How shall the latter serve to organize and integrate our intellectual beliefs?

There is a genuine possibility that the true problem of philosophy is connected with precisely this type of question. Man has beliefs which scientific inquiry vouchsafes, beliefs about the actual structure and processes of things; and he also has beliefs about the values which should regulate his conduct. The question of how these two ways of believing may most effectively and fruitfully interact with one another is the most general and significant of all the problems which life presents to us. Some reasoned discipline, one obviously other than any science, should deal with this issue. Thus there is supplied one way of conceiving of the function of philosophy. But from this mode of defining philosophy we are estopped by the chief philosophical tradition. For according to it the realms of knowledge and of practical action have no inherent connection with each other. Here then is the focus to which the various elements in our discussion converge. We may then profitably recapitulate. The realm of the practical is the region of change, and change is always contingent; it has in it an element of chance that cannot be eliminated. If a thing changes, its alteration is convincing evidence of its lack of true or complete Being. What is, in the full and pregnant sense of the world, is always, eternally. It is self-contradictory for that which is to alter. If it had no defect or imperfection in it how could it change? That which becomes merely comes to be, never truly is. It is infected with non-being; with privation of Being in the perfect sense. The world of generation is the world of decay and destruction. Wherever one thing comes into being something else passes out of being.

Thus the depreciation of practice was given a philosophic, an ontological, justification. Practical action, as distinct from self-revolving rational self-activity, belongs in the realm of generation and decay, a realm inferior in value as in Being. In form, the quest for absolute certainty has reached its goal. Because ultimate Being or reality is fixed, permanent, admitting of no change or variation, it may be grasped by rational intuition and set forth in rational, that is, universal and necessary, demonstration. I do not doubt that there was a feeling before the rise of philosophy that the unalterably fixed and the absolutely certain are one, or that change is the source from which comes all our uncertainties and woes. But in philosophy
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this inchoate feeling was definitely formulated. It was asserted on grounds held to be as demonstrably necessary as are the conclusions of geometry and logic. Thus the predisposition of philosophy toward the universal, invariant and eternal was fixed. It remains the common possession of the entire classic philosophic tradition.

All parts of the scheme hang together. True Being or Reality is complete; in being complete, it is perfect, divine, immutable, the “unmoved mover.” Then there are things that change, that come and go, that are generated and perish, because of lack of the stability which participation in ultimate Being alone confers. These changes, however, have form and character and are knowable in the degree in which they tend toward an end which is the fulfillment and completion of the changes in question. Their instability is not absolute but is marked by aspiration toward a goal.

The perfect and complete is rational thought, the ultimate “end” or terminus of all natural movement. That which changes, which becomes and passes away, is material; change defines the physical. At most and best, it is a potentiality of reaching a stable and fixed end. To these two realms belong two sorts of knowledge. One of them is alone knowledge in the full sense, science. This has a rational, necessary and unchanging form. It is certain. The other, dealing with change, is belief or opinion; empirical and particular; it is contingent, a matter of probability, not of certainty. The most it can assert is that things are so and so “upon the whole,” usually. Corresponding to the division in Being and in knowledge is that in activities. Pure activity is rational; it is theoretical, in the sense in which theory is apart from practical action. Then there is action in doing and making, occupied with the needs and defects of the lower realm of change in which, in his physical nature, man is implicated.

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Although this Greek formulation was made long ago and much of it is now strange in its specific terms, certain features of it are as relevant to present thought as they were significant in their original formulation. For in spite of the great, the enormous changes in the subject-matter and method of the sciences and the tremendous expansion of practical activities by means of arts and technologies, the main tradition of western culture has retained intact this framework of ideas. Perfect certainty is what man wants. It cannot be found by practical doing or making; these take effect in an uncertain future, and involve peril, the risk of misadventure, frustration and failure. Knowledge, on the other hand, is thought to be concerned with a region of being which is fixed in itself. Being eternal and unalterable, human knowing is not to make any difference in it. It can be approached through the medium of the apprehensions and demonstrations of thought, or by some other organ of mind, which does nothing to the real, except just to know it.

There is involved in these doctrines a whole system of philosophical conclusions. The first and foremost is that there is complete correspondence between knowledge in its true meaning and what is real. What is known, what is true for cognition, is what is real in being. The objects of knowledge form the standards of measures of the reality of all other objects of experience. Are the objects of the affections, of desire, effort, choice, that is to say everything to which we attach value, real? Yes, if they can be warranted by knowledge; if we can know objects having these value properties, we are justified in thinking them real. But as objects of desire and purpose they have no sure place in Being until they are approached and validated through knowledge. The idea is so familiar that we overlook the unexpressed premise upon which it rests, namely that only the completely fixed and unchanging can be real.
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The quest for certitude has determined our basic metaphysics. Secondly, the theory of knowledge has its basic premises fixed by the same doctrine. For knowledge to be certain must relate to that which has antecedent existence or essential being. There are certain things which are alone inherently the proper objects of knowledge and science. Things in the production of which we participate we cannot know in the true sense of the word, for such things succeed instead of preceding our action. What concerns action forms the realm of mere guesswork and probability, as distinct from the warrant of rational assurance which is the ideal of true knowledge. We are so accustomed to the separation of knowledge from doing and making that we fail to recognize how it controls our conceptions of mind, of consciousness and of reflective inquiry. For as relates to genuine knowledge, these must all be defined, on the basis of the premise, so as not to admit of the presence of any overt action that modifies conditions having prior and independent existence.

Special theories of knowledge differ enormously from one another. Their quarrels with one another fill the air. The din thus created makes us deaf to the way in which they say one thing in common. The controversies are familiar. Some theories ascribe the ultimate test of knowledge to impressions passively received, forced upon us whether we will or no. Others ascribe the guarantee of knowledge to synthetic activity of the intellect. Idealistic theories hold that mind and the object known are ultimately one; realistic doctrines reduce knowledge to awareness of what exists independently, and so on. But they all make one common assumption. They all hold that the operation of inquiry excludes any element of practical activity that enters into the construction of the object known. Strangely enough this is as true of idealism as of realism, of theories of synthetic activity as of those of passive receptivity. For according to them

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"mind" constructs the known object not in any observable way, or by means of practical overt acts having a temporal quality, but by some occult internal operation.

The common essence of all these theories, in short, is that what is known is antecedent to the mental act of observation and inquiry, and is totally unaffected by these acts; otherwise it would not be fixed and unchangeable. This negative condition, that the processes of search, investigation, reflection, involved in knowledge relate to something having prior being, fixes once for all the main characters attributed to mind, and to the organs of knowing. They must be outside what is known, so as not to interact in any way with the object to be known. If the word "interaction" be used, it cannot denote that overt production of change it signifies in its ordinary and practical use.

The theory of knowing is modeled after what was supposed to take place in the act of vision. The object refracts light to the eye and is seen; it makes a difference to the eye and to the person having an optical apparatus, but none to the thing seen. The real object is the object so fixed in its regal aloofness that it is a king to any beholding mind that may gaze upon it. A spectator theory of knowledge is the inevitable outcome. There have been theories which held that mental activity intervenes, but they have retained the old premise. They have therefore concluded that it is impossible to know reality. Since mind intervenes, we know, according to them, only some modified semblance of the real object, some "appearance." It would be hard to find a more thoroughgoing confirmation than this conclusion provides of the complete hold possessed by the belief that the object of knowledge is a reality fixed and complete in itself, in isolation from an act of inquiry which has in it any element of production of change.

All of these notions about certainty and the fixed, about the nature of the real world, about the nature of the mind and
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its organs of knowing, are completely bound up with one another, and their consequences ramify into practically all important ideas entertained upon any philosophic question. They all flow—such is my basic thesis—from the separation (set up in the interest of the quest for absolute certainty) between theory and practice, knowledge and actions. Consequently the later problem cannot be attacked in isolation, by itself. It is too thoroughly entangled with fundamental beliefs and ideas in all sorts of fields.

In later chapters the theme will, therefore, be approached in relation to each of the above-mentioned points. We shall first take up the effect of the traditional separation upon the conception of the nature of philosophy, especially in connection with the question of the secure place of values in existence. We shall then pass on to an account of the way in which modern philosophies have been dominated by the problem of reconciling the conclusions of natural science with the objective validity of the values by which men live and regulate their conduct:—a problem which would have no existence were it not for the prior uncritical acceptance of the traditional notion that knowledge has a monopolistic claim to access to reality. The discussion will then take up various phases of the development of actual knowing as exemplified in scientific procedure, so as to show, by an analysis of experimental inquiry in its various phases, how completely the traditional assumptions, mentioned above, have been abandoned in concrete scientific procedure. For science in becoming experimental has itself become a mode of directed practical doing. There will then follow a brief statement of the effect of the destruction of the barriers which have divided theory and practice upon reconstruction of the basic ideas about mind and thought, and upon the solution of a number of long-standing problems as to the theory of knowledge. The consequences of substituting search for security by practical

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means for quest of absolute certainty by cognitive means will then be considered in its bearing upon the problem of our judgments regarding the values which control conduct, especially its social phases.