

TRANSCENDENT DIVINITY AND PROCESS PHILOSOPHY

I intend to take full advantage of the fact that this is a seminar paper which as such allows for the presentation of tentative suggestions, probing hypotheses and a simple and stark statement of one's assumptions. The hope, of course, is that such an approach will evoke a response—really a number of responses—which will serve as a stimulus and aid for any future refinement and development of the position which is offered. In the interest of time and space, therefore, allow me to make a blanket apology for the oversimplifications and the distortions which inevitably accompany an effort such as this.

Except as the emptiest of abstractions the concept of "transcendent divinity" has meaning only within a specific philosophical or theological context. Similarly, there does not exist any "process philosophy" as such—there are a multiplicity of process philosophies which defy reduction to clear and precise characteristics. I am going to restrict my considerations to how "transcendent divinity" might be understood within one expression of process philosophy which I will henceforth refer to as "pragmatism." I bracket the question as to whether historical American Pragmatism is merely a method and not a philosophy. As I will employ the term it signifies both a method of evaluating and resolving human problems and a metaphysics or world-view. By the latter I understand a set of principles, categories and metaphors in terms of which all phenomena are to be explained.

One final introductory note—though William James and John Dewey are the primary sources for the philosophical framework which I am employing, I am not attempting an exposition of their thought as such. Further, I do not wish to saddle them with my interpretations of pragmatism or to restrict myself to their conclusions.

The distinctive feature of the processive world which pragmatism affirms is that it is processive through-and-through.¹ There is no

¹ For a somewhat fuller though still quite sketchy description of what is involved in "pragmatism's world-view," see my, "Religious Truth in a Relational and Processive World," *Cross Currents* (Summer, 1967), pp. 287-301.

part or sphere of reality which stands outside and remains untouched by process. Further, the processive world as envisioned by pragmatism is characterized by the emergence of radically novel events and realities. That is to say, events and realities emerge which are not simply the actualization of preexisting potencies, whether such potencies are ultimately located in something called Nature or in the reality of God. Such a world, I must stress, allows for, and indeed insists upon, the need for order and regularities, but these are always relative and in great part result from man's transactions within reality. Hence, the processive world of pragmatism is neither an eternally ordered world nor a world of chaotic flux.

Not only is this world through-and-through processive—it is also through-and-through relational. Pragmatism rejects any world composed of atomistic individuals or substances whose relations are merely *accidental*. Alfred North Whitehead has expressed this relationship most succinctly and emphatically: "There is no entity, not even God, 'which requires nothing but itself in order to exist.' . . . Every entity is in its essence social and requires the society in order to exist."² James, in order to describe this world of relations with a minimum of distortion, employed the metaphor "field"—a metaphor which has been increasingly used in such diverse disciplines as physics, psychology and sociology. It is interesting to note that in a recent book Bishop John Robinson speaks of "the divine field" in an effort to overcome some of the traditional problems attached to any "God-talk."³

Combining the notes of process and relation we might describe the world or reality as an ongoing relational-continuum or "field" embodying and bringing-forth a plurality of sub-fields each with a unique focus but dependent upon and shading-off into other fields.

A crucial feature of pragmatism is a distinctive interpretation of experience. According to pragmatism, experience is not passive or merely subjective nor is it radically distinct from reason. Instead, in the language of Dewey, experience designates *all* transactions be-

² Alfred North Whitehead, *Religion In The Making*. New York: Meridian, 1960, p. 104.

³ John A. T. Robinson, *Exploration in God*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1967, Chapter five.

tween organism and environment. It is important to note, however, that neither the organism nor the environment is a radically independent entity—they are co-constitutive of one another. This view of experience rules out any and all metaphysical dualisms—in particular that which divides reality into subjective and objective. These latter terms express *functions* of experience rather than ultimate features of reality. An important implication of this position is that it does not allow faith or belief to be categorized as subjective and knowledge as objective.⁴

While faith and knowledge are and must be inter-twined and inter-acting, they do not play the same role and hence are distinguishable functions of man. I have argued elsewhere⁵ that while faith is a mode of experience, it is not a mode of knowledge. Nevertheless, faith will always utilize, involve and express itself in terms of concepts, metaphors, symbols and institutions which are drawn from or patterned after the philosophy, science and experience characteristic of a particular historical and cultural moment. This is an extremely important principle for the position which I am advocating. I believe that it allows for a maximum degree of development of faith while avoiding any anti-intellectual or emotionalistic fideism. On my terms, faith in general is justified inasmuch as human life is impossible without it. This does not mean, however, that every faith-claim is justifiable nor that all are of equal worth. Each claim must continually submit itself to the demanding test of ongoing experience.

For pragmatism, all experiences, including faith and knowledge experiences, are primarily participational and creative rather than representational. Their basic function is not to mirror an "out-there" reality but to enable man to share more fully in reality and to contribute to its development. The task of man is not simply to discover

⁴ Dewey was strongly critical of the failure of the main tradition of western philosophy to recognize that knowledge and belief were distinguished functionally rather than ontologically. Cf., e.g., the following: "The habitual avoidance in theories of knowledge of any reference to the fact that knowledge is a case of belief, operates as a device for ignoring the monstrous consequences of regarding the latter as existentially subjective, personal and private." *Experience and Nature*. New York: Dover Publications, 1958, p. 424.

⁵ Fontinell, *Religious Truth*, pp. 301-304.

the world but also to create it and all worthwhile experiences work to that end.

The worth of an experience, according to pragmatism, is ultimately justified in terms of the "quality of life" to which it gives rise. This does not exclude or diminish the importance of such activities as abstracting, theorizing and speculating but it does insist that such efforts cannot be definitively evaluated in isolation from the long-range influence they have upon the developing human community. Such an approach is primarily life-oriented rather than knowledge-oriented. Knowledge is but one of a number of human experiences, each of which has an indispensable contribution to make to the development and enrichment of human life.

Where or how, one might ask, does God fit into this pragmatic world-view? Negatively, God is ruled-out as a philosophical or scientific principle of explanation insofar as "principle of explanation" is understood as an act of knowledge. Pragmatism, therefore, is a conscious and explicit *agnosticism* as regards God or any absolutely ultimate principle of reality. John Herman Randall has expressed this agnosticism most forcefully: "We never encounter *the* Universe," he tells us, "we never act toward, experience or feel being or existence as 'a whole'." Hence, there is "no discoverable 'ultimate context,' no 'ultimate substance' . . . 'Ultimate' . . . is always relative, never 'absolute'; it is always 'ultimate for'." Thus, Randall concludes that "'the Universe,' or 'Nature,' is not 'a process'—a single process." Further, "the 'Universe' or 'Nature' does not have any single meaning."⁶

It should be noted that the point which Randall is here making is central to and distinctive of the kind of process philosophy which I have designated pragmatism. It distinguishes this philosophy from other process philosophies such as Bergson's, Whitehead's, Hartshorne's or Teilhard's. The point of distinction is that the empirical process philosophy of pragmatism does not admit the possibility of knowing or experiencing the process of reality as a single, unified whole. At the same time, pragmatism is distinct from more positivistic

⁶ John Herman Randall, Jr., *Nature and Historical Experience*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1958, pp. 198-199.

empiricisms in that it does not deny the legitimacy of thinking of or believing in reality as a single process. The propriety of such speculative constructivism is affirmed by Randall when, after denying that the Universe can be known or experienced as "a whole" or a "single process," he maintains that nevertheless, "it is quite possible to take 'the Universe' as a single process, with a single 'meaning'." Most of the great philosophies have done just this, to say nothing of a multitude of religious schemes." When this is done, however, it is necessary to "invent a further 'context' for 'the Universe' or Nature"—it is necessary to construct "metaphysical myths" such as the "Unmoved Mover" or the "Unconditioned Conditioner" or the "First Cause." These myths, Randall maintains, "are logical constructions or extrapolations, like physical theories, and they possess similar functions." Without going into the more complex aspects of these functions, suffice it to say that they serve to unify and give direction to a plurality of human and natural processes. Randall insists, then, not only that these "metaphysical myths" are not meaningless but that "they have a perfectly definite function which can be objectively inquired into. They may well be basic in the living of human life, which often gets *its* 'meaning' from their use—or rather, which uses them to find and express its 'meaning'."⁷

God, then, is unknowable, but does not an empirical process philosophy such as pragmatism admit that he might be experienced? Yes, but only in a highly qualified sense. In the first place, there is no direct experience of God such as there is of other persons or of things. Still, I have maintained that faith is a mode of experience and I now add that pragmatism does not exclude in principle the possibility of an experience which might be described as "faith in God." What I must stress, however, is that "faith in God" is not the equivalent of "direct experience of God." Perhaps I can make my point a bit clearer by calling attention to Dewey's interpretations of mystical experience. Dewey does not deny the existence, authenticity and importance of experiences usually called "mystical." He insists, however, that they cannot be employed as proofs of God's existence either for the one who undergoes such experiences or for

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 199-201.

others who recognize them in their fellow-men. "In reality," Dewey asserts, "the only thing that can be said to be 'proved' is the existence of some complex of conditions that have operated to effect an adjustment in life, an orientation, that brings with it a sense of security and peace."⁸

In my opinion, Dewey has quite properly distinguished "mystical experience" as a phenomenon from "mystical experience" as conclusive evidence of God's existence. I would add that if a mystic says he has experienced God, or the Absolute or Being-as-such, he is thereby making an act of faith. I am here emphasizing the radical and inescapable dimension of faith in man's relationship to God, even in those who appear to be favored with experiences of great depth and intensity. Thus, while the philosophical viewpoint which I am espousing does not recognize either the possibility of knowing or directly experiencing God, it does not thereby foreclose the possibility of faith in him.

It seems to me that the way of describing the Christian faith in God which gives rise to the least distortion and allows for a maximum of speculation and creative reflection is to describe this faith as a personal-communal-existential orientation and relationship—a dynamic and developing relationship in virtue of which man is moved beyond himself not toward some outward or external object or goal but to a richer life which is at once a fuller realization of himself and a sharing in the life of that mysterious *Other* whom we have traditionally called God. A crucial implication of such a view of Christian faith is that any and all concepts of God, faith-symbols or religious institutions are human constructs. Note well—this does not thereby render them subjectivistic or *merely* psychological. Rather they are functions in the service of an ongoing existential relationship which one may *believe* is a divine-human relationship, at once personal and communal, immediate and mysterious.

It would seem that the Christian as much if not more than any other believer would insist upon the constructed and tentative as-

⁸ John Dewey, *A Common Faith*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960, p. 13.

pects of those concepts, symbols or institutions concerning that inexpressible mystery whom *we* have termed God. Such an attitude is a protection against that temptation designated "idolatry," which attributes human expressions to God thereby avoiding our responsibility for them. Further, the recognition that our concepts of God are products of our own making enables us to avoid that fanaticism and intolerance which follows from believing that we are the chosen defenders of God's attributes. In my opinion, only a faith which allows—indeed which demands—continual reconstruction of its conceptual, symbolic and institutional expressions can enable man to avoid worshipping his own handiwork.

To insist that our concepts of God are human constructs is not equivalent to unreflectively accepting as of equal worth all God-assertions. Hence it is of utmost importance that we develop criteria by which we evaluate any and all such speculation. I have already expressed some of these criteria by implication but I would like now to state them explicitly. "Rational or natural theology," Randall maintains, "has an undying appeal, for it performs an essential function for intelligent men. But the experiments of history make clear," he goes on to say, "that the scheme of understanding employed must be a scheme which illuminates man and his experience."⁹ Randall has really expressed the primary and controlling criterion for a pragmatic evaluation not only of God-speculation but of all speculation. As I have indicated above, the "quality of life" is the touchstone whereby all experiences are evaluated, and philosophical theology, or any theology for that matter, is no exception. Now I cannot possibly go into the refinements and difficulties attached to the notion of "quality of life," but I must emphasize that this is no abstract or transcendent norm or standard against which particular acts are judged. The human community at every moment of its existence and in its various manifestations involves a quality of life. Since the human community is and is becoming, the quality of life of any segment or of any moment of the life of this community is never absolute and definitive. Inasmuch as man has the power of idealization, or, to put it in other

⁹ John Herman Randall, Jr., *The Role of Knowledge in Western Religion*. Boston: Starr King Press, 1958, p. 37.

terms, the power to imaginatively construct new ways of being, man is never restricted to the past or present forms of life. But just as life is ongoing, so is any evaluation and that is why all judgments are tentative and relative. This does not mean that we are reduced to a whimsical individualism or a destructive nihilism; human experience is cumulative and some values have manifested and continue to manifest their worth by the benefit which they render man.

Though the quality of life to which any concept gives rise is the controlling criterion of the worth of that concept, there are important sub-criteria which must also be acknowledged. Any significant philosophical theology must first of all have a reasonable inner coherence. By that I mean that it must not be shot-through with gross contradictions and inconsistencies. Secondly, it must manifest a continuity with past thought and experience, for only by taking advantage of earlier human achievements can we hope to advance. Thirdly, any system of thought must have a high degree of contemporary consistency—that is, it must show itself to be in touch with the best knowledge and experience of its time. Finally, it must suggest new possibilities for the continuing development of human life.

Now the point I would stress here is that no one of these sub-criteria is, in isolation, a fully adequate criterion for evaluating a philosophy or theology—they are all relative to and in the service of the life of the community. Of course, even the greatest of philosophies do not possess all of these features to the same degree. Nevertheless, I think that it can safely be said that experience has shown that the only philosophies which prove worthwhile in the long-run are those characterized by some degree of inner coherence, continuity with the past, consistency with the present and novel insights.

Within the philosophical framework which I have suggested, "transcendent divinity" is viewed as a human construct. I must again emphasize, however, that this does not necessarily render it a mere subjectivistic or psychological projection. I believe that at its best the notion of transcendent divinity expresses an attempt to articulate and develop an experience which, while it will always defy precise and definitive description, is indispensable in man's effort to continually expand his horizons and thereby enrich his life. Despite the inevitable inadequacies which surround all formulations concern-

ing this experience, we are not excused from attempting at all times to give the best and most serviceable description possible. Faith itself, understood as the concrete, historical experience which I described above, accounts for the continuity of faith. At every moment this faith will involve and employ concepts, symbols and institutions, but no particular concept, symbol or institution can be held to be absolutely necessary for such faith. This does not exclude the possibility that some concepts, symbols or institutions might be indefinitely renewable, reformable and reconstructable, but the key point is that they must continually be shown as such in terms of concrete experience and not merely accepted as *given* and beyond critical scrutiny. Needless to say, not every concept, symbol and institution can be called into question simultaneously, either by an individual person or the community. Again I am stressing the radical nature of a faith which must continually be affirmed and affirmed in the absence of any absolutely certain underpinnings. It is most ironic that the radical openness which I am insisting upon for Christian faith is found most fully, though by no means perfectly, in the modern scientific community. The willingness to live and act and think without absolutely certain truths or without principles which are beyond being questioned has not impeded scientific development, yet we are often told by so-called "men of faith" that unless some principles and truths are absolutely certain and unchangeable we cannot avoid the destruction of faith and the emergence of nihilism. Between the two positions, which, we might ask, manifests a deficiency of faith?

To return to the question of transcendent divinity, it is by now evident, I hope, that I consider the phrase itself of secondary importance. The question, as I see it, is whether or not this phrase can any longer serve the community in its effort to deepen and develop its faith. My answer would be a qualified yes. The qualification, of course, is that transcendent divinity must undergo a radical reconstruction. While I suspect that such reconstruction can be undertaken from a number of perspectives, I would like to suggest something of what would follow from a reconstruction of "transcendent divinity" within a pragmatic, processive and relational world-view.

Negatively, of course, any objectified transcendent divinity, any being considered as existing complete in itself and transcending the ever-changing world of experience—such a being is inadmissible. Absolute and total transcendence is unacceptable because it denies the reality of a mutual relationship between man and God and because it lessens the seriousness of the human effort to progressively transform and create the world.¹⁰ It is not accidental that the escape mentality which has so plagued Christianity in modern times is bound up with the notion of a God who is not of this world but who prepares a haven for us in *his* world once we have served our time in this “vale of tears.”

What I am rejecting, of course, is a transcendent divinity which is “supernatural.” In my opinion, the category of the supernatural was developed over against a specific view of nature—a nature which was fundamentally closed and finished. Given such a view of nature, I think that the construction of the category of the supernatural was a necessary and liberating moment in the development of human consciousness. If, however, one views nature as open, as alive with unrealized but realizable possibilities and as radically developmental, then the category of the supernatural would appear less useful and indeed quite misleading.

A further implication of the position I am advocating is the rejection of God conceived as untouched by that change, suffering, novelty and growth which so characterize the reality we experience. Also unacceptable is any divinity who, possessed of unlimited power, can move in and out of man’s world as he wills and at no risk to himself. Finally man can no longer revere a God fashioned after an Olympian spectator who, from his transcendent watch-tower, observes the passing parade and simultaneously knows all things past, present and future.

Thus, with such crude brevity, I dispense with the traditional divine attributes of immutability, omnipotence and omniscience. I have made no pretence nor will I of having “proved” that God is not the possessor of such traits. In accordance with the philosophical

¹⁰ The phrase “to progressively transform” is deliberate and not a grammatical mistake. The construction is intended to emphasize the directional dimension to the world-transformation in which man is involved.

position which I am maintaining, the matter is not provable either way. As a working principle, however, I would suggest that any concept of God is unacceptable which fails to illuminate human experience and which destroys or severely lessens human creativity and autonomy. A God who is absolutely transcendent and thereby complete in himself, possessed of all possible creative power and knowledge, is quite irrelevant to ongoing human experience except, perhaps, as a magical divinity with whom we constantly plead to bail us out of our miserable situation. A further consequence of this concept of God is that man's belief in his own creativity and autonomy is reduced to the most deceptive of fictions. At best such a concept of transcendent divinity renders man little more than a servile imitator.

Each of these concepts—immutability, omnipotence and omniscience—I am suggesting, has been spawned by man and hence he can drop them or modify them as the situation demands. If, as I would contend, they are obstacles both to thought and to action—if they no longer serve to illuminate and enrich human life as they once did, then we must not continue to adhere feverishly to them. To do so is to give the impression that the Christian faith is inseparably bound-up with these concepts and if the time of these concepts has passed, as I believe it has, both ourselves and others are tempted to think that the time of the Christian faith has also passed.

Thus far, I have been quite negative concerning the notion of transcendent divinity but I would not care to leave you with the impression that I find this way of conceiving God as completely worthless. On the contrary, I do not believe that any concept which has served so many men for such an extended time—I do not believe that such a concept could be completely empty and without value. I would like, therefore, to indicate the more positive features of this concept—those which I believe must somehow be accounted for in any reconstruction of God.

I find great significance in the fact that at a moment in man's history when the notion of a transcendent divinity is severely criticized by a majority of the reflective members of society—that at this moment man is conceived as an essentially self-creative and self-transcending being. As you all know, this is a position held in

various forms by contemporary existentialists and phenomenologists—atheist, secular and Christian.

Such an affirmation is also to be found in James and Dewey and other American pragmatists. A strength of the pragmatic recognition of human self-creativity is that the promethean element receives a balance and a corrective from an assertion of man's continuity with and dependence upon nature. Nature, for these thinkers, is not a hostile or absurd reality nor is it only superficially related to man—something to be neutralized and transcended. Rather, nature is the locus of man's being and his and its becoming are inseparably bound-up one with the other. There can be no false deification of man—no temptation to think of man as the be-all and end-all of reality. "The sense of dignity of human nature," Dewey asserts, "is as religious as is the sense of awe and reverence when it rests upon a sense of human nature as a cooperating part of a larger whole."¹¹ I cite Dewey here rather than similar texts from James because Dewey was so explicitly hostile to the notion of "transcendent divinity" as he understood it and as it was generally understood at the time. Nevertheless, Dewey was unalterably opposed to any tendency of man to close in upon himself or to conceive himself as the apex of reality. Indeed he accuses both "militant atheism" and "traditional supernaturalism" of being guilty of a common sin, namely, "the exclusive preoccupation . . . with man in isolation."¹² My concern here is not with whether Dewey was just in his criticism of either atheism or supernaturalism—I am simply calling attention to Dewey's fervent affirmation of a "beyond" or, if you wish, "transcendent" dimension to human experience. Nowhere in his writings does Dewey express this more forcefully and beautifully than in the following text from his great work, *Art As Experience*:

A work of art elicits and accentuates this quality of being a whole and of belonging to the larger, all-inclusive whole which is the universe in which we live. This fact, I think, is the explanation of that feeling of exquisite intelligibility and clarity we have in the presence of an object that is experienced with esthetic intensity. It explains also the religious feeling

¹¹ Dewey, *A Common Faith*, p. 25.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 52-53.

that accompanies intense esthetic perception. We are, as it were, introduced into a world beyond this world which is nevertheless the deeper reality of the world in which we live in our ordinary experiences. We are carried out beyond ourselves to find ourselves. I can see no psychological ground for such properties of an experience save that, somehow, the work of art operates to deepen and to raise to great clarity that sense of an enveloping undefined whole that accompanies every normal experience. This whole is then felt as an expansion of ourselves. For only one frustrated in a particular object of desire upon which he had staked himself, like Macbeth, finds that life is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing. Where egotism is not made the measure of reality and value, we are citizens of this vast world beyond ourselves, and any intense realization of its presence with and in us brings a peculiarly satisfying sense of unity in itself and with ourselves.¹³

What is striking in this passage, I believe, is that Dewey is affirming something of what an older vocabulary called transcendence and immanence. I am not for a moment suggesting that Dewey is merely saying the same thing as earlier thinkers while using different words. On the contrary, the processive metaphysics which I am assuming does not allow for truth remaining the same while its conceptualization or verbalization changes. It does, however, allow for and insist upon continuity and so it can acknowledge a deep similarity of both situation and direction as regards developing experience. The assertion of novel experiences and realities does not involve the obliteration of earlier experiences and realities, though it does imply their transformation.

The recognition that thinkers of the stature of an Aquinas or a Hegel have attempted to account for something which they called Divine Transcendence and Divine Immanence should not wed us inseparably to their formulations. At the same time we should not overlook the possibility that they have given us a direction which must be received and continued however much it might be transformed. Whether the categories of Divine Transcendence and Divine

¹³ John Dewey, *Art As Experience*. New York: Capricorn Books, 1958, p. 195.

Immanence carry too much historical baggage to be any longer useful is a question on which reasonable men are at the moment divided. Personally, I prefer the categories of *otherness* and *presence* for, vague and imprecise as both are and despite the fact that in an age of instant communication they are almost already hackneyed, I think that they have an experiential dimension that the more traditional categories lack.

Another advantage of substituting otherness for transcendence and presence for immanence is that this makes possible a much richer dialogue between those who believe in God and those who do not. While avoiding a superficial indifferentism, it does bring both groups of thinkers into contact in a non-polemical way. At the same time it imposes on both the obligation to attempt to deepen their own faith-interpretations of this experience while remaining open and responsive to the faith-interpretation of the other. Again, however, the experience of cooperative search is more important than the language employed to describe that search. For example, the following text from the atheist Roger Garaudy indicates the possibility for a deep sharing between Marxist and Christian in spite of the fact that they adhere to profoundly different faiths:

As far as faith is concerned, whether faith in God or faith in our task, and whatever our difference regarding its source—for some, assent to a call from God; for others, purely human creation—, faith imposes on us the duty of seeing to it that every man becomes a man, a flaming hearth of initiative, a poet in the deepest sense of the word: one who has experienced, day by day, the creative surpassing of himself—what Christians call his transcendence and we call his authentic humanity.¹⁴

What is important, then, is not that we retain the phrase “transcendent divinity” but that we acknowledge certain features of reality some of which in the past have been associated with transcendent divinity. A partial list of these crucial features would include openness, possibility, meaningfulness beyond what is now realized and increased significance and seriousness attached to the human struggle.

¹⁴ Roger Garaudy, *From Anathema To Dialogue*. New York: Herder and Herder, 1966, p. 123.

A further requirement is that whether we call the transcendent aspect of reality God or Nature or simply The Other, the experience be such that it calls forth faith, hope and love.

I would like to close by reading a passage from Dewey's *Experience and Nature* in which he manifests a sense of balance and proportion that I think can serve us well as a guideline in any reflections upon the meaning of man and that mystery in which he is intimately involved but which is always beyond his encompassing:

Men move between extremes. They conceive of themselves as gods, or feign a powerful and cunning god as an ally who bends the world to do their bidding and meet their wishes. Disillusioned, they disown the world that disappoints them; and hugging ideals to themselves as their own possession, stand in haughty aloofness apart from the hard course of events that pays so little heed to our hopes and aspirations. But a mind that has opened itself to experience and that has ripened through its discipline knows its own littleness and impotencies; it knows that its wishes and acknowledgements are not final measures of the universe whether in knowledge or in conduct, and hence are, in the end, transient. But it also knows that its juvenile assumption of power and achievement is not a dream to be wholly forgotten.

It implies a unity with the universe that is to be preserved. The belief, and the effort of thought and struggle which it inspires are also the doing of the universe, and they in some way, however slight, carry the universe forward. A chastened sense of our importance, apprehension that it is not a yard-stick by which to measure the whole, is consistent with the belief that we and our endeavors are significant not only for themselves but in the whole.¹⁵

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¹⁵ Dewey, *Experience and Nature*, pp. 419-420.