

## MIRROR OF CONSCIOUSNESS

1. Suppose I have a certain experience which I articulate by means of the judgement 'Dynastic rule is bad'. Then there is a view of truth, which is generally called the Correspondence theory of truth, according to which this judgement is true, if it corresponds, concords, agrees, with the reality which it claims to be about or which it judges. To put it briefly, one may say that the judgement 'Dynastic rule is bad' is true, if the dynastic rule is bad, if it is indeed the case that the dynastic rule is bad. I may express myself differently also, by means of a metaphor, by saying that the judgement 'Dynastic rule is bad' is true, if the experience which this judgement articulates mirrors, simply mirrors, the reality which it claims to be an experience of, or if my consciousness which lies at the base of this judgement is wholly mirror like, or if this experience is such that I am a completely passive sufferer in its reception. As a result, the Correspondence theory of truth may also be called the Mirror theory of truth.

I have taken above a moral example to illustrate the Correspondence or Mirror theory of truth. I may now take a physical example to illustrate this theory. Suppose I have the experience of the sky being clouded, and articulate it by means of the judgement 'The sky is clouded'. Then, according to the Correspondence or Mirror theory of truth, to put it very briefly for the time being, this judgement is true, if the sky is clouded, or if the experience which this judgement articulates mirrors, simply mirrors, the reality which it is an experience of.

2. I am quite sure that this theory is not faced with just one difficulty, the one which I am going to mention and which I find insuperable. Thus, for example, there is also the difficulty of explaining the exact meaning of correspondence, concordance,

agreement, mirroring. But at present I am concerned with just one difficulty, the one which I find insuperable. And the difficulty is this: how do we find out that my judgement 'Dynastic rule is bad' or my judgement 'The sky is clouded', Corresponds, concords, agrees, with the reality which it claims to be about, which it judges? Or, how do we find out that the experience which the judgement 'Dynastic rule is bad' articulates or the experience which the judgement 'The sky is clouded' articulates, mirrors, simply mirrors, the reality which it is said to be an experience of? For the time being, in order to elucidate this criticism, let me concentrate on just one mode of expressing it and on just one of the two examples which I have mentioned. The point is this: I have, say, the experience of the sky being clouded. In order to find out whether this experience mirrors, simply mirrors, the reality which it is said to be an experience of, I must have before me both this *experience* and the *reality* which it is said to be an experience of, I must have before me both *experience* of the sky being clouded and the *fact* of the sky being clouded. But each time I try to have the fact of the sky being clouded before me, I succeed in having just another experience of the sky being clouded. As a result, I can never find out whether my experience of the sky being clouded mirrors, simply mirrors, the fact of the sky being clouded.

This difficulty obviously applies as much to the example of the experience of the dynastic rule being bad as to the example of the experience of the sky being clouded; and it can be expressed without any difficulty in terms of the other modes of formulating the correspondence theory as well.

3. This insuperable difficulty of the Correspondence theory of truth which I have mentioned above, has a grave corollary. And it is this, (i) it is now generally admitted that knowledge by definition must be true;

(ii) we have seen that, on the basis of the Correspondence theory of truth, we cannot ultimately find out whether the judgement which articulates an experience is true; and

(iii) consequently, we find that knowledge, at least in respect of judgement which articulates experience, is not possible.

This argument, in fact, gives us a clue to a good deal of scepticism about knowledge that there is in philosophy. Generally, and somewhat differently speaking, the argument is; (a) we have such and such experiences; (b) we have ultimately no means of going beyond or outside these experiences; and (c) therefore, we have ultimately no knowledge of the objects of which these experiences are said to be experiences. Specifically speaking, this argument may relate to our knowledge of particular classes of objects, like material objects, other minds, the past, in the following way; (a) we have experiences, say, of material objects; (b) we have ultimately no means of going beyond outside these experiences; and (c) therefore, we have ultimately no knowledge of material objects of which these experiences are said to be experiences.

4. There is a sense of truth, such that if we wish to find out whether our judgement 'The sky is clouded' is true, we have to find out whether it is the case that the sky is clouded. In this sense of truth, the judgement "The judgement 'The sky is clouded' is true" entails the judgement "It is the case that the sky is clouded".

But, as we have seen, although in this sense of truth, the Correspondence theory of truth is logically inevitable, there is an insuperable difficulty with which this theory is faced when we wish to apply it, with the corollary that, in the ultimate sense, a good deal of our knowledge is rendered impossible.

But although this is so, there is a further thought which I have on the subject. And it is this: when we say that, in the ultimate analysis, we cannot go beyond or outside our experiences to the objects themselves, then we assume that, in the ultimate analysis, our mind is not like a mirror. And indeed this assumption may be justified, for, *in the ultimate analysis*, our mind may not be like a mirror; *in the ultimate analysis*, there is no way of finding out that it is. But although this is so, the question which has been worrying me, and a question which I consider of the utmost importance from the point of scientific methodology, methodology of knowledge, is this: may we not, *in the non-ultimate*

*analysis*, be able to render our mind as much like a mirror as possible? And I find that there are certain well-known steps which one may, and hopefully does, take in that direction.

5. To repeat: in the ultimate analysis, we cannot be sure that our mind is like a mirror. But, in the non-ultimate analysis, there could be, and indeed often are, various distortions for which we are ourselves responsible and which we could avoid or get rid of. I would be satisfied with mentioning here just one or two of these distortions, these being well-known.

Suppose somebody maintains that within a particular society a member of a particular family alone should rule, because in that family there has been an ancestor who has rendered the greatest possible service to that society.

Now, suppose that, on investigation, we find that, in maintaining this, (1) this person has exaggerated, for whatever reason, the contribution which the ancestor in the said family has made to the said society, and/or (2) this person has gone wrong about there being a logical connection between the *fact*, if it be a fact, of the contribution which the ancestor in the said family has made to the said society and the *right* which a member of the said family has to rule the said society, and (3) this person is emotionally attached to the said family.

Then it is quite evident that if these distortions, intellectual or moral, are removed, then this person's mind or consciousness would have a greater innocence of a mirror than it would have in the presence of these distortions. In fact, if these distortions are removed, particularly the last one, then this person may no longer maintain what he does. He may no longer have anything like that 'before him to mirror, to passively suffer an experience of.

Let me take one more example, yet one more moral example.

Suppose the person A, in whose society pre-marital sexual

relationship is forbidden, maintains that there should be no pre-marital sexual relationship; and the person B, in whose society pre-marital sexual relationship is permitted, maintains that he has nothing against pre-marital sexual relationship. Then, suppose, on investigation, we find that the persons A and B say what they say on the basis of their social conditioning, on the basis of an emotional or moral bias ingrained in them. Then, there can be no doubt that, if this bias is removed, then the minds or consciousnesses of A and B would be more like a mirror than they would be in their presence. And as a matter of fact, if it is removed, then the persons concerned may no longer say that they do, they may no longer have anything like that before them to mirror, to purely passively suffer an experience of.

Let me not mention any more examples. But on the basis of these examples and other examples which one could go on to give, we may say the following:-

In the non-ultimate analysis, our mind or consciousness would be more like a mirror, if the following conditions were fulfilled;

(1) the conditions of intellectual clarity, exactitude and discrimination, and (2) the conditions of moral impartiality. It will be noted without any difficulty that these conditions are some of the most essential conditions or prerequisites of the acquisition of knowledge, some of the most essential ingredients of scientific methodology, methodology of knowledge. In the acquisition of knowledge, in the application of the scientific method, make our mind must be like a mirror. But although, in the ultimate analysis, we cannot be sure of this fact, in the non-ultimate analysis, we can take certain moral and intellectual steps which would our mind more like a mirror. Ancient wisdom is 'Trust in God and do the right'. For the purpose of our present problem of the pursuit of knowledge, let me somewhat amend this wisdom and say 'Do the right and trust in God (for the rest)'.

The thesis that our mind would be more like a mirror if the various distortions for which we are ourselves responsible and which we could avoid or get rid of are removed may be represented figuratively in the following way:



for which we are ourselves responsible and which we cannot avoid or get rid of, or it is given to us without any distortions whatsoever. For, in either case we are a helpless recipient of what is given to us.

I may express my point differently through a technical distinction. This will also enable me to say what is not my point. There is a distinction between epistemological realism and epistemological idealism. The former can be defined as the view that we can be given an object in experience as it is in itself. The latter can be defined as the view that we can only be given an object in experience through distortions for which we are ourselves responsible and which are contingent (avoidable) or necessary (unavoidable). The point which I have wanted to make is that, from the point of view of what is ultimately given to us in experience, it does not matter whether we take the position of epistemological realism or that of epistemological idealism of the second variety. For, in either case we are a helpless recipient of what is given to us. I have not wanted to make the point that there is no distinction between epistemological realism and epistemological idealism in any of its two varieties.

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