

Tenth Lecture.Commitment (continued)The Personal, the Universal and the Subjective

1. I have described how the personal and the universal mutually require each other within the commitment situation. *That* a subjective state is raised to the level of a personal commitment by the act of submitting to something held to be universally binding; and ^{that even} while the person ^{has} emerges by ~~xxx~~ recognising an absolute, it constitutes itself as the ultimate witness thereof.

Thus every intellectual commitment offers in miniature all the main features of the paradox of dedication. Those who give themselves wholly to a cause, to the cause of God or ^{of} any other transcendent obligation, do so under a compelling necessity; they follow the dictates of their conscience. Yet at the same moment they rise to the highest measure of independence, for it is their own conscience which has gained supreme power over them. In every personal belief there is the same paradoxical combination of utmost passivity with intensely personal responsibility. The words 'I believe' can be paraphrased by 'I am in a state of belief' to express the fact that I have no choice but to believe; but this can be ^{once more} legitimately expanded to saying: "I have committed myself to a state of belief" in order to express that I take responsibility for accepting the belief which I cannot help holding.

Both aspects must be present whenever a belief is sincerely held. If 'I believe' were truly transitive, believing would be arbitrary; if it were ^{quite} ~~truly~~ intransitive, believing would not be ~~responsible~~. The fiduciary mode acknowledging a state of commitment should keep the act of believing balanced in its true position; or - more precisely - in what I believe to be its true position.

2. Since ^{the} two poles of commitment, the personal and

the universal are logically complementary, we may expect them to arise simultaneously from an antecedent state of subjectivity. That is in fact how the child's early intellectual development has been described by psychologists. The early behaviour of children indicates that they live in a world of their own which they believe to be shared by everybody else. "If a child believes that rivers flow backwards, he will see the Seine and the Rhone flowing backwards towards their sources; if he believes the sun to be alive, he will see it walking about on the sky; if he believes it inanimate he will see it always motionless, etc" writes J. Piaget. ^{x)} When small children talk in the company of other children, it is impossible to say whether they speak to themselves or address the others. The child always believes himself to be understood and therefore can make no effort to make himself understood. ^{**)} This stage of infancy has been called 'artistic' by Bleuler and 'ego-centric' by Piaget; but the insufficient distinction between self and non-self which underlies the child's state of mind here might as well be described as 'self-less'.

We may say that at the early stage in question, the child is not yet capable of commitment to the extent to which its later development enables ~~it~~^{him} to engage in it. So long, or insofar as the external and internal world of the child are not felt to conflict with each other, there has not arisen any effective polarisation along the dimension of self and non-self and hence no committal of self to ~~conceptions of~~^{an interpretation of things that are true/false.} non-self can ~~occur~~. As the polarisation increases, occasions for the counterprocess of commitment also become increasingly apparent; as we become ^{divided} from the outside world, we achieve a personality capable of giving itself consciously to beliefs concerning that world

+ "Language and Thought", p. 133

** loc. cit. pp. 99-101

3. Before trying to define more closely the ultimate structure of commitment I shall describe some more of its different aspects. I have said that conscious commitment is a responsible action to which we ^{feel irresistibly} ~~irresponsibly~~ ~~are~~ compelled. But there is a sense in which all commitment is a gamble; indeed a gamble with indefinite stakes for indeterminate prizes. Columbus sailed out to find a Western route to the Indies; in this he failed and after repeating his voyage three times to prove that he had reached ^{the Indies,} ~~them~~ he died in shame for having discovered only America. Yet Columbus did not merely blunder into America. He was wrong in accepting on the evidence of Toscanelli's map that the Westward distance ^{of} ~~in~~ Japan from Spain was only twice that of the Azores, but he was right in concluding that Japan could be reached from the West. He staked his life and reputation ^{on} what appear now to be insufficient grounds for an unattainable prize, but ^{he} ~~he~~ won another ^{prize} ~~prize~~ instead, far greater than he was ever to realise. He had committed himself to a belief which we now recognise as a small distorted fragment of the truth, but which impelled him to make a move in the right direction; it was right to assume from what he knew that the road to discovery lay in the West. If within his limited and rather mercenary outlook he failed to recognise the vastness of the possibilities on which he was embarking, we may say today that the vision which guided him was beyond his own comprehension.

This description seems to me applicable to all great discoveries in science. In abandoning the Ptolemaic view and adopting his heliocentric system, Copernicus was guided by a vision which his own cycles and epicycles expressed but inadequately. Had he lived another ⁶⁶ ~~70~~ years to hear the announcement of Kepler's laws, he would have rightly claimed that these confirmed his own surmise and revealed that its true content

was different from what he had thought and greater than he had realised. And had Kepler lived another ⁷⁸ ~~70~~ years after his discovery and read Newton's "Principis", he would have been amazed to be faced with a ~~pre~~-phrasing of his own laws in the wider context of general gravitation and ~~thus~~ ^{to realise} recognise that by his laws he had anticipated one aspect of this greater truth.

◁ I have spoken before in ~~more general terms~~ of the powers of scientific conceptions to penetrate indefinitely beyond their originally perceived import. I have described this as the capacity of an interpretative framework, as for example the atomic theory of matter, to produce ever new surprising evidence in its ^{own} support and of assimilating other new experience by continually correcting and deepening its ~~constitutive~~ suppositions. (The continuity of natural science on which the very existence of science as a systematic entity depends, ~~was seen to be~~ ^{is} inherent in this hidden fore-knowledge of yet unfathomed depth which ^{(the further progress of / is expected to} science ~~reveals at each new step~~ of its progress. ^{For the continued} ~~The~~ cultivation of science ~~as a process of discovery based on a given system of conceptions~~ assumes that ^{The principles of science} ~~this system~~ continues to harbour still more such foreknowledge, which will be revealed in its turn by the work of future investigators.

The presence in the established body of science of such hidden intimations bears witness to the ^{heuristic} process by which science comes into existence. Each particle of science first comes to light dimly in the mind of its prospective discoverer as a hidden intimation of itself. ^{Most} ~~Some~~ of this embryonic vagueness is eliminated later when demonstrable conclusions are reached, but it is ^{inevitable} ~~understandable~~ that a residue of anticipation remains concealed in them which lends them unsuspected powers of further development. → ^{run on}

no para

The active scientific investigator stakes bit by bit the whole of his professional life on a series of ^{such} shapeless surmises and this day-to-day gamble represents his most responsible activity. It takes to the utmost his capacities as a scientist and often absorbs his energies beyond repair.

I have spoken of this before and repeat it here only to round off this aspect of commitment, as illustrated by the example of scientific discovery. It shows ~~us~~ the creative mind deciding on grounds which are admittedly insufficient, when examined from outside ^{of} the commitment situation, to embrace beliefs the contents of which are vague and often appear later to go far beyond the understanding of those who originally formulated and expounded them.

Turn on

Commitment is in this sense always ultra vires. I could have exemplified this by quoting Hume's critique of inductive inference. I preferred to introduce my argument by the more dramatic evidence ^{from the history of science and from} of scientific development ~~and the~~ ^{process of} scientific ^{discovery,} ~~life~~ in the hope that this may bring out by correspondence some ^{general} features of the ~~general~~ inductive process which otherwise do not so readily strike the eye. ^{It suggests that all} ~~All~~ inductive inference is in the nature of a guess, inasmuch as ^{in the light of} ~~on~~ subsequent reflection we shall always find that the evidence ~~on~~ which we based it was not inescapable. Moreover, inductive generalisations are always somewhat indeterminate. When you say 'all men are mortal' this sounds clear enough; ^{for the dying of men occurs} ~~in~~ in a fairly definite manner. ^{on closer scrutiny it appears} But ~~this~~ impossible to say what is exactly excluded if it be true that all men are mortal. It does not exclude that a man may live a million years. It is compatible with any instance of longevity which does not extend to the end of time and since we cannot ever reach the end of time it would not be controverted by experience

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on transfer)

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(par. 4 & 5)

even though some men were actually immortal. We see that even ^{some} ~~the~~ most obviously sensible empirical generalisations carry their true import in ^{the} form of tacit assumptions of which we remain unaware so long as the statement is not put to the test in respect to them.

(X) 4. Yet another aspect of the indeterminacy of intellectual commitments may be added here under the general heading of 'transfer'. When an animal or a human recognises a sign-event relation, or invents a means-ends relation or interprets alternative part-whole relations, his mind works within the

framework of a given problem situation presumed to be fixed. Having mastered this he may subsequently come up against an indefinite range of other problem situations which in certain respects may be said to resemble, in others to contrast with those previously encountered. Take an example at the lowest level of animal life. An earthworm was taught in a famous experiment of Yerkes' to take the right turn at the branching of a T shaped tube - through the stem of which it was made to crawl - by inflicting on it an electric shock whenever it tried to penetrate into the left branch. It took about 160 trials to establish this habit. A later investigator L. Heck confirmed this experiment and carried it a stage further. After the earthworm's training was completed, he inverted the conditions -

between right and left. The new problem set to the worm was the reverse of that which ^{it} ~~he~~ had first solved, but it ^{still} resembled it in the fact that one branch of the tube was painful to enter and the other had no such sting in it. The earthworm's behaviour in this second test was determined both by the contrast and the similarity of the two consecutive problems. At first the worm consistently turned to the ^{right where} ~~side on which~~ it was now met with an electric shock. During this phase its previous training may be said to ^{have} ~~exercised~~ a misleading effect on it. But presently (after about 30 runs) the worm

began to turn with increasing frequency into the branch now free from electrical obstruction and it eventually acquired the habit of turning in the direction opposite to that which it had been trained to take in the first place, within a much shorter series of trials than it had taken to establish the original reverse habit. The primary training which taught the worm to turn in one direction thus proved a powerful help in training it subsequently to turn in the opposite direction. The similarity which the second problem bears to the first asserted itself therein.

Thus every intellectual commitment establishes a bias in respect to an indefinite range of subsequently arising problems, ^{a bias} which may be either a help or a hindrance in finding a solution for these. This is called 'transfer' and described as positive or negative transfer, according to whether it helps or hinders. Since the range of problems which may arise in future is unlimited and totally unpredictable, the bias which we adopt in respect to these problems by committing ourselves to any particular belief today is equally inexhaustible and unpredictable. Confrontation with these problems may bring to light an indeterminate range of hidden implications that are inherent in any of our present beliefs.

The examples I have given before from the history of science to show that the true and deeper meaning of great discoveries was often realised only much later in a context which lay far beyond their originally envisaged scope, are instances of positive transfer. I could give counterexamples, representing negative transfer, where discovery was hampered by previous scientific generalisations. The Democritan theory which Galileo and Gassendi laid down as a foundation of modern science hampered the discovery of the electron. The scientific method may be said to be justified to the extent to which the body of scientific beliefs held at one time has proved subsequently

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to include true implications in respect to hitherto unexplored
constituted by an indefinite series of positive transfers, which
utilise the solutions of earlier scientific problems for the
solution of later scientific problems.

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A continuously creative process is similarly constituted
by the Common Law in respect to

judicial problems. It is based on the assumption that the
correct decision of any new case brought into court can be
found by extending ^{to it} ~~the~~ the practice embodied in previously
decided cases. This ^{earlier} practice is brought to light for the
purpose of the case in hand by regarding ^{the later} ~~it~~ against the back-
ground of past decisions. ^{the new case} It is analysed in terms of
similarities which tend to assimilate it to some and of
differences which discriminate it from other, relevant pre-
cedents. This process is creative and continuous to the
extent to which it succeeds in revealing ever new hidden ~~valid~~
implications of past decisions.

Statutory law is not essentially different in this
respect from case law. There have been resolute attempts to
codify the law so completely that it should cover all future
contingencies without recourse to new interpretations by the
courts, but these have always failed. A code of law cannot
function rationally except by admitting that it ^{entails} contains an
indefinite range of unpredictable consequences in respect to
unforeseeable ^{circumstances.} ~~cases.~~

5. The conjectural and indeterminate character
of intellectual commitments which I have ^{just} exemplified ~~here~~
come under observation ^{here} by reflecting on past commitments.
Within the original commitment situations, say of Copernicus
of Kepler, the grounds on which they reached their conclusions
appeared ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ fully to justify these and to them

residual character
of responsibility
in ethics is it infallible?
(hand) no
only ultimately
competent.

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their conclusions seemed to be precisely circumscribed. Yet their claims must appear on reflection to have been ultra vires, for their inferences involved an element of personal judgement. Without this personal force the evidence would not have yielded the conclusions which were arrived at and these conclusions could not have been invested with precious surmises of which their formulstors themselves were unaware. ^{Yet to} those who were exercising this personal judgement ^{their judgement is} it ~~was~~ a necessary act, because it ^{is} ~~was~~ completely determined by their responsibility in respect to the situation confronting them. As, or insofar as, they ^{are} ~~were~~ acting responsibly, their personal participation in drawing their ~~own~~ ^{is} conclusions ~~was~~ completely compensated for by the fact that they ^{are} ~~were~~ ascribing a universal status to the hidden knowledge which they ^{are} ~~were~~ seeking to discover.

If on later re-consideration it appears that the knowledge which an intellectual commitment was postulating and claiming to discover was actually not there, the personal participation of the discoverer in drawing his erroneous conclusions is reduced in our eyes to the level of mere subjectivity. ^{on the other hand} If ~~his~~ formulation turns out to be inadequate in the opposite sense, as was that of Columbus who claimed less than he had discovered, then we recognise on the contrary that the explorer had made contact with ^a deeper ^{reality} truth than he himself realised. >

6. But what if we reflect on the justification of intellectual commitment in general? I have argued this question indirectly in the previous chapters by exposing the inadequacies of a critical programme which would acknowledge as valid only declarations made with absolute detachment from personal factors and would classify accordingly all intellectual performances in which our passions and desires are necessarily

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involved as manifestations of pure subjectivity. Having subsequently postulated - and substantiated up to a point - the conception of commitment, any attempt to justify this conception ^{new} against ~~against~~ the critical position to which it is repugnant must lie in a re-appraisal of the inadequacies of this position in the light of the new conception.

I can do this very concisely by taking a strictly formalised logical process as envisaged through the centuries by Leibniz, Baplace, Boole, ^{Hilbert} Hilbert, Carnap, etc. as the ideal of dispassionate thought. This ideal necessarily took the shape of reducing all intellectual operations to mathematical terms. The complete formalisation of mathematics itself should eliminate the last vestiges of indeterminacy from its own system. I believe this programme to be logically fallacious; ^{and} precisely inasmuch as it would eliminate all personal participation in the performance of intelligent actions. *Let me show this now.*

The process of
Formalisation ~~proceeds by~~ ^{is} threefold ~~with~~ 1) ~~of~~ designating undefined terms 2) ~~of~~ ^{it} specifying unproven asserted formulae (axioms) and 3) ~~of~~ ^{it} prescribing the handling of such formulae for the purpose of writing down new asserted formulae (proofs). Throughout this process there prevails the desire of eliminating what are called 'psychological' elements. The undefined terms are not intended to signify anything, but are complete in themselves ^{as marks on paper;} unproven asserted formulae are to replace 'statements believed to be self-evident'; operations constituting 'formal proof' are intended to replace 'merely psychological' proof.

I regard such an attempt as fallacious for the following reasons: 1) No undefined term can be introduced without an explanation, given in ordinary speech and amplified by some examples of its use. ~~By~~ ^{The} The acceptance of a mark

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on paper as a symbol^{emphatic} that a) we believe that we can identify the mark in various instances of it and b) that we know its proper symbolic use. In both these beliefs we may be mistaken and they constitute therefore commitments. 2) In agreeing to regard an aggregate of symbols as a formula we accept it as something that can be asserted. This implies that we believe that such an aggregate says something about something. We expect to recognise things which satisfy a formula as distinct from other things which fail to do so. Since the whole process by which our axioms will be satisfied is necessarily left unformalised, our countenancing of it constituted an act of commitment. 3) The handling of symbols according to mechanical rules cannot be said to be a proof unless it carries the conviction, that whatever satisfies the ~~axioms~~ axioms from which the operation starts will also satisfy the theorems arrived at. 'Proof', as Ryle would say, is a success-word. No handling of symbols to which we refuse to award the success of having convinced us that an implication has been demonstrated can be said to be a proof. And again, the award of this is an unformalised process which constitutes a commitment.

Thus at a number of points a formal system of symbols and operations can be said to function as a deductive system only by virtue of unformalised supplements to which we accede by personal commitment. Symbols must be identifiable and their meaning known, axioms must be understood to assert something, proofs must be acknowledged to infer something. This identifying, knowing, understanding, acknowledging, are unformalised operations on which the operation of ~~the~~ a formal system depends. We may call them the semantic functions

of the formal system, which are performed by a person with the aid of the formal system if the person commits himself to their use. Formalisation can be extended to hitherto unformalised semantic operations, but only if the resulting formal system can in its turn rely on hitherto unformalised semantic supplements. The legitimate purpose of formalisation lies in the reduction of informal functions to what we believe to be more limited and obvious operations; but it is nonsensical to aim at their elimination.

Mathematical discovery has continued to reveal in the past ever new hidden implications of hitherto accepted premisses. Gödel's work has shown that such indeterminacy is inherent in any formal system which comprises arithmetics. The assumption of its consistency can never be demonstrated except by resorting to a wider set of assumptions of which the consistency is not yet demonstrated. It has happened in the past that formal systems which were believed to be consistent turned out not to be so; for example Frege's system of formal logic which had hitherto been believed to be consistent, was proved self-contradictory by Russell's discovery that the class of all classes which are not members of themselves could be formulated in this system. If a formal system is not self-consistent its implications are boundless since such a system implies any proposition; yet we are left in serious doubt as to whether this is so or not. This would obviously be impossible if we were fully aware of the implications of the formal system which we are postulating.

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The indeterminacy of mathematical beliefs is indeed apparent from the direct observation of mathematics. Mathematical discovery has continued to reveal in the past ever new hidden implications of hitherto accepted premisses. Gödel's work has shown that such indeterminacy is essentially inherent in any formal system which comprises arithmetics. The consistency of such a system can never be demonstrated except by resorting to a wider set of assumptions of which the consistency is not yet demonstrated. Nor can we feel confident about our intuitive judgment in this respect. It has happened in the past that formal systems which were believed to be consistent turned out not to be so; for example Frege's system of formal logic which had hitherto been believed to be consistent, was proved self-contradictory by Russell's discovery that the class of all classes which are not members of themselves could be formulated in this system.

If a formal system is not self-consistent, its implications are boundless since such a system implies any proposition; and yet we find that we are necessarily uncertain as to whether that is so or not. This uncertainty shows that we can never be aware of more than an insignificant fraction of the implications entailed in a formal system which we are postulating.

7. Our conception of commitment has helped us to recognize the residue of personal participation that remains inherent in the most completely formalised system of intellectual performance and this in its turn has widened our

conception of commitment. Commitment has been taken to include beyond the conscious deliberation of a problem the more primitive act of accepting a particular idiom as a means of articulation. I want to confirm this extension now and examine how it modifies the characteristic features of commitment. An explicit conclusion can be drawn responsibly and it constitutes a commitment precisely to the extent to which it rests on the thinking person's own ultimate responsibility. But we do not accept the multiplication table by any such responsible act. < We learn to speak and to count as children, and acquire at the same time the whole conceptual framework embodied in language and numbers, without ever making a deliberate intellectual decision. We are guided instead by placing our confidence in the adults whose utterances we try to understand and imitate. Our innate gift of speech makes us assume that these utterances are identifiable and consistently express a true meaning. This is a far-reaching commitment which we must enter as children if we are ever to learn to speak, count and think articulately, but this acceptance is instinctive and not responsible.

Every mental process by which we surpass the animals is rooted in this early apprenticeship by which the child absorbs the idiom of the community to which it is born and indeed absorbs the whole cultural heritage to which it succeeds by birth. Yet each of us can be brought up only in one specific system of traditional beliefs. > All our thinking presupposes at its inception our unqualified acceptance of one specific idiom of beliefs, and this remains logically anterior to all our articulate thought and determines the scope of all explicit convictions which we may ever/adopt.

I have illustrated before in Lectures 7-9 how narrow are in consequence of this specifically committed condition of the human mind the limits within which our powers of disbelief can operate. *This parochial conditioning of our conceptions is a sharp sharp challenge to our reasonableness.* How can we countenance the fact that all our thoughts are grounded a priori on the acceptance of a particular system of beliefs which are chosen for us from many other different systems by the mere accident of our birth? From the point of view of a critical philosophy this ^{fact} would reduce all our convictions to the mere products of a particular place and time. > But to a believer in the justification of deliberate intellectual commitments our acceptance of these *accidents of our incidents of personal existence* will appear as a *necessary correlatives of our extension of deliberate commitment* into a sphere of lesser consciousness. << The child which is prompted to listen and acquire the speech and conceptions of adults is an active intellectual centre. Though its efforts are not conducted deliberately, they are yet the intellectual gropings of a person in search of a valid result. This process fulfils in my belief the purpose of the child's mental powers ^{within} in the circumstances of its upbringing and should be relied upon to operate within this framework, just as we rely on our own personal judgement for the solution of consciously envisaged problems. As I acknowledge ^{reflecting on} in the process of discovery the gap between the evidence and the conclusions which I drew from them, ^{and} ~~accounting~~ for my bridging of this gap in terms of my personal responsibility, so also will I acknowledge that in childhood I have formed my most fundamental beliefs by exercising my native intelligence within the social milieu of a particular place and time. I shall submit to this fact as defining the conditions within which I am

aburdity or callous.

called upon to exercise my responsibility.

I accept these limits
 For it is impossible to hold myself responsible beyond
such
~~this~~ limits. To ask how I would think if I were brought up
 outside any particular society is as meaningless as to ask how
 I would think if I were born in no particular body, relying on
 no particular sensory and nervous organs. I believe therefore
 that as I am called upon to live and die in this body, struggling
 to satisfy its desires, recording my impressions by aid of
 such sense organs as it is equipped with, and acting through
 the puny machinery of my brain, nerves and muscles, so I am
 called upon also to acquire the instruments of intelligence
 from my early surroundings and to use these particular instruments
 to fulfil the universal obligations to which I am subject. A
 sense of responsibility within situations requiring deliberate
 decisions requires as its logical complement a sense of calling
 in respect to the processes of intellectual growth which are
^{necessary,}
 its logical antecedents. >>

8. When I first started constructing the concept of
 commitment I said that it would apply eventually to all levels
 of intellectual performances. Its extension from deliberate
 judgements to innate intelligent impulses achieves part of
 this programme and points at its further fulfilment. The
 line on which we have entered should take us even further and
 extend commitment in its widest sense beyond any hitherto
 recognised intellectual performance. For once our innate
 urges are accepted as conditions of our calling, we shall have
 to include as the ^{more} comprehensive form of ^{our} commitment the whole
 ordered array of processes occurring within ^{all} living organisms,
~~by which they are constituted as such and~~ ^{shall have to accept} perhaps even beyond
 that the ^{commitment of the} whole cosmic order which gave rise to these organisms

This generalisation shall be sketched in only by
 recognising their principles as...
 legitimate as relying on that in the pursuit of its...
 seek almost of the... of the...

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few touches for the moment. We first caught sight of commitment as the action of a person seeking passionate satisfaction in something impersonal; something to be discovered or achieved outside the person. But all persons except God are incarnate, and hence all commitment is of the body as well as of the mind. The commitment of the body is life itself. It is true that the cravings of the body seek only its own satisfaction and to this extent they are subjective. Thirst and hunger are subjective conditions and so is also the enjoyment of food and drink. But if we consider these self-regarding ends as given, ~~then they~~ define a problem of a universal character. By its drives ~~an~~ organism defines subjective aims and by its functions exhibits a rational solution for ~~it~~. ^{its achievement.} A living organism ~~embodies~~ ^{is} one vast stratagem. It has grown from seed by a procession of changes affecting in concert its thousands of separate features. Having achieved maturity these several features acquire the status of organs, each undergoing processes which form part of a comprehensive scheme carried out in the service of the individual of whose body they form part. This body may be said to live to the extent to which its parts are functioning as elements in a joint operation. In animals these joint operations are known as breathing, feeding, digestion, locomotion, procreation, to which in some animals are added the regulation of temperature, lactation, voice production, etc.

Organisms function like machines and their principles could no~~d~~ doubt be patented but for the objection that they are not novel. In describing these functions, we recognise these principles as universal and consider the organism as relying on them in the pursuit of its own drives. Each element of the stratagem operates in the assumptions

that the others will support it and each step of the sequence is taken in the hope that the next will follow on it. Risk is of the essence of stratagem. ^{higher x} The ~~higher~~ the organism, the more involved is its plan of action and the more completely does each section of it ~~manifestly in space and time rely on~~ ^{rely on the location and timing in the location and timing of} all the others for its usefulness to the whole; the more useless does each become in itself. ^{so that at the same time} The more fully ~~is~~ ^{is the more fully} the living body ~~body~~ committed to comprehensive governing principles of a universal standing.

9. Thus we can see the same fundamental structure of personal commitment revealed on extremely different levels with a correspondingly wide variation of its internal balance. The most strictly universalised processes of inferences are shown to rely ultimately on their inarticulate interpretation by a person accepting them, ~~manifestly in space and time~~ and life pursuing its self centred primitive urges is shown to rely on universal principles of technology; ~~and while~~ ^{we apprehend} between the two ~~is presented~~ the region of responsible commitment, made by persons who accept their own starting point in space and time as the condition of their own calling. >

With this preliminary outline in mind we may now return briefly to the problems to which our acceptance of commitment in principle was intended to supply an answer.

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I have started these Lectures by assigning to philosophy the task of voicing today our fundamental beliefs. Through the first three Lectures I surveyed all forms of intelligence until I reached a point where the necessity for this fiduciary function of philosophy became apparent. It was when I mentioned various forms of social lore, such as science, law, etc. that my references became clearly seen to be ambiguous unless I either subscribed to the validity of science, law, etc., or dissented from it.

Moreover, the beliefs which I found myself holding in these matters were seen to be open to powerful challenges. With this problem in mind I faced the postulates of objectivism which required that I should accept only such beliefs as were impersonally determined by the evidence, and gave reasons for rejecting this demand as logically absurd and as patently conflicting with the nature of my intellectual passions. Turning away then from the delusions of objectivism, I reduced my programme to the mere expression of my own beliefs, while demanding at the same time the liberty consciously to declare these beliefs.

The construction of the concept of commitment was undertaken with the purpose of establishing a satisfying framework for the affirmation of personal beliefs with universal intent. Commitment is a primary undefined conception in which I believe, and its construction is to be regarded as a fiduciary act of the very kind which is covered by this conception. <This act demonstrates its self-consistency by finding itself justified in its own result. And as on further reflection my belief in commitment will always appear satisfying to itself, the comprehension of this circularity sets an ultimate limit to the self-transcendence of philosophic reflection. For instead of indefinitely shifting an ever open problem within the regress of objectivist criticism, our reflections now move from an original state of intellectual contentment to a succession of equally satisfying positions; so that by rising above this movement and reflecting on it as a whole we find its continuance unnecessary.>

When reflecting on any, however humble, act of intelligence - on the way I follow the flight of a bird or utter a word to designate the bird by name - I always find myself in a state of commitment, whence I conclude that even within any succession of reflections my intelligence never operates outside a state of commitment. But I can reduce or increase my commitment in respect to the same situation. I consciously increase it when I make up

my mind about a difficult problem, deliberately reduce it when I critically analyse the grounds on which I had formed by judgment. The confirmation of a belief that I hold consists in re-committing myself to it from a state of tentatively reduced commitment.

When I speak of science, law, etc. in a confident manner, fully participating in the intellectual passion which upholds these forms of social lore, I grant them a universal standing which is a reflection of my personal dedication to their support. Inasmuch as all commitment is an actual or putative submission of ourselves to something not ourselves, its every act constitutes universalities. But as I reduce my commitment by abandoning such major beliefs as are embodied in science, law, etc., or merely tentatively abandon them for the purpose of analysing the grounds on which I hold them, I dissolve the major universals constituting science, law, etc. and replace them by others of a minor order, such as constitute merely a certain range of observed objects, or desires, or impressions of my senses. In doing so I question the appositeness of such words as 'knowledge', 'truth', 'explanation', 'justice', 'right', 'beauty', while referring for this purpose unquestioningly to objects, measurements, inference, desire, utility, power and the like. According to the objectivist framework which I repudiate, the unquestioned targets of my reduced commitments are regarded as given external data from which we must try to construct our beliefs in science, law, etc. by impersonally operating rules. This objectivist framework is abandoned here by reason of its absurdity, on account of which it shows itself as either indefinitely regressive or self-contradictory; but it is yet worth considering how the objectivist formulation of validity is transformed when re-stated in fiduciary terms.

The relationship between the two points of view will be more readily recognisable if for the sake of expediency we use for the purpose of our juxtaposition some of the expressions of

the objectivist language, even though these are not accepted in their usual sense. In these somewhat loose terms we may describe the relationship in question as follows. Objectivism requires that the data should universally determine the inferences drawn from them; fiduciarism regards these inferences as personal commitments which are guided by the data in the fulfilment of universal intentions. X Within the procedure of commitment the mind is warranted to exercise much ampler powers than those by which it is supposed to operate under objectivism, but by the very fact of assuming this new freedom it submits to a higher power to which it had hitherto refused recognition. Objectivism is a flight from responsibility. Its ideal is to relieve us from all responsibility for the holding of our beliefs: that is why it can be logically expanded to systems of thought in which the responsibility of the human person is eliminated from the life and society of man. In recoiling from objectivism, we would acquire a nihilistic freedom of action but for the fact that our protest is made in the name of higher allegiances. We cast off the limitations of objectivism in order to fulfil our responsibilities in making up our minds about the whole range of matters with which ^{man is} ~~we are~~ properly concerned. X

I have shown before that the roots of all our conscious commitments go back to the very process of living and that they are necessarily circumscribed by the conceptual framework in which we were first brought up. These circumstances I have regarded as defining the particular calling within which it has fallen to us to exercise our responsible judgment. I should like to conclude this Lecture and with it this First Series of my Lectures, by reflecting within this framework to the process of empirical inference, the critique of which at the hands of David Hume first manifested the self-destructive tendencies of objectivism. The connection existing between a sign and an event, or a cause and its effect, could be established according to a strict rule only if these were to be found recurring on an infinite number of occasions in an otherwise unchanging world. But in actual fact we have to

draw our inferences in short time within a turbulent world full of unknown influences. So we must come to a decision, or decide not to come to a decision, without any strict rule as our guide.

As time goes ticking by we irrevocably commit each second of it for all times. There is no escape from this responsibility. Each second in which we have not reached a conclusion will have been used for pondering further on our conclusions: and meanwhile the world is pressing on, and while it may be rash to decide it may be reckless to remain undecided. Seen in this light the problem of inductive inference becomes a question of right action, to which we must answer according to our conception of the condition of man. My answer is that we must accept the obligation to commit irrevocably each consecutive moment of our lives to convictions which we hold to be definitive, knowing that while we can never hope to arrive at universally valid conclusions it is not demanded of us that we should achieve, but only that we should ^{try to} ~~almost~~ achieve this aim.