

Darwin wrote: "The safest conclusion seems to me that the whole subject is beyond the scope of man's intellect; but man can do his duty."

To prop up morality by an appeal to what is at best an uncertainty, and may be an illusion, does not strike one as sound philosophy. Nor will it suffice to resort to the easy-going method of a certain noisome body of writers known as Pragmatists who say that it is legitimate to believe what you please at your own risk; therefore, if you wish to believe in immortality because it is helpful for your life, by all means do so, and the believing makes the belief true for you. Let us pass over the helpless subjectivism and impracticable reservation involved in the claim to believe what you please at your own risk, as if human beings were not members of a social order and their beliefs, so far as they receive outward expression, did not affect the lives of others as well as their own. The will to believe, which has been recommended as the irresistible solvent of all outstanding philosophical problems by those who think that an analysis of what certain people actually believe affords a criterion of what they ought to believe and that truth will be arrived at by taking a poll, resolves itself in practice into an unbridled license of uncritical assertion, and leads to the erection of peculiarities of private feeling into general standards of conduct. The criterion of practical utility by which Pragmatists who, lacking a cosmic attitude and erecting certain psycho-physical limitations into an ideal, are now trying to impose on mankind as a test of truth, has no applicability, even if the utility be conceived not individualistically but socially: for there is simply no necessary connexion between the truth and the usefulness of beliefs, not to speak of the difficulty which these thinkers are under of determining the criterion of usefulness. It cannot be shown that the truth of a belief is proportionate to its moral usefulness in promoting practical goodness. Otherwise I think there might be ground for saying that, among Christians, belief in a hell, owing to its practical influence, is truer than belief in any other form of eternal existence for finite beings. But moral