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THE SCIENTIFIC VERSUS THE PHILOSOPHIC APPROACH TO THE NOVEL PROBLEM¹

By Professor TRUMAN L. KELLEY

STANFORD UNIVERSITY

It has been common to differentiate between science and philosophy, crediting the former with reliance upon facts and a kinship with data and the latter with a trust in logic and an affinity for the pure and ethereal verities of the mind. The expression "science proves" carries a very different connotation from "philosophy establishes." If it is held that "science proves" by a sound process, but one that is different from a second sound process whereby "philosophy establishes," I assert that the contention is wrong. The thesis of this paper is that there is but one method tending to establish truth in the world of phenomena. This issue can be reduced to

¹ Address of the retiring vice-president of Section Q—Education, American Association for the Advancement of Science, December, 1929. A part of this address in modified form was first given before Phi Delta Kappa, New York, 1929.

that of the places of data and of judgment in reaching decisions in the ordinary affairs of life. I believe you will all agree that if "science proves" data certainly are involved, and if "philosophy establishes" certainly there is a mind at work, but neither data nor the mind can operate alone. To draw a crude, though, I trust, not inaccurate parallel, we can say that life in the biological sense is the interaction of the atmosphere with the soil. Call the soil "data," the atmosphere "mind," then life is "fruitful thought"—the interaction of the two. Dust does not burgeon upon the surface of the moon or even fly into tornadoes, for there is no wind to stir it, and an atmosphere does not swirl in space where there is no dust or other gravitational field to hold it. We can not think without facts, even though we may have facts without thinking. No person or organization can

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