

THE PHILOSOPHICAL REVIEW.

PROFESSOR JAMES'S THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE.

I BELIEVE most readers who have followed the recent discussions about Pragmatism would agree that they leave something still to be desired in the way of a determination, clearly defined and consistently held to, of what the precise point at issue really is. The present article will have to do only with Professor James's position, as represented by his recent articles in *Mind* and in the *Journal of Philosophy*. I shall try to indicate the queries which these leave with me personally, assuming that I am not alone in needing further light on the matter. I shall dwell only upon the particular points which are most puzzling to me, with the intent to discover, rather than refute, his position.

Professor James begins in the October (1905) article in *Mind* by distinguishing his own early doctrine of pragmatism from the more ambitious theory of reality with which the word has now become identified. This said no more than that truth must have some practical consequences to be worth discussing. If it makes no concrete difference to any one which of two statements be true, then there is really no difference between them. There is naturally some danger in the application of this doctrine, unless it be interpreted in a very sympathetic and catholic spirit. What shall be called a *practical* difference is a nice question; and, without doubt, the criterion may be used by the practically minded man as a club for dealing summarily with any matter of theory whose direct bearing he does not himself appreciate. Still I should myself, on a broad understanding of it, freely accept this aspect of pragmatism, and, therefore, I do not call it in question