

The Philosphy of William
James

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1911

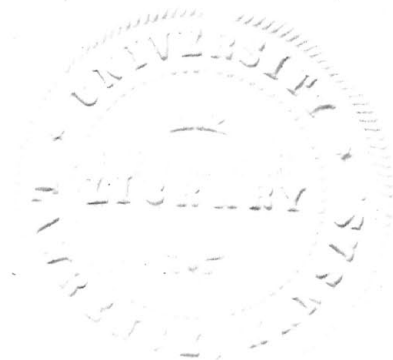
Submitted to the Department of Philosophy of
the University of Kansas in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts

Master Thesis

Pickens, Minne L. 1911

(Philosophy)

Philosophy of William James.



THE PHILOSOPHY OF WILLIAM JAMES.

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Submitted in partial requirement
for Master Degree, May, 1911.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF WILLIAM JAMES.

To attempt to portray the philosophy of a man like the late William James of Harvard in a paper of this length is merely to trace a few of his main lines of thought but it may serve to gather together from the many sources some of the most closely related ideas and to show to some extent his preeminent position among the great thinkers of the world.

Professor James believed that each person has a philosophy which determines the perspective in his world. He said "This philosophy is our more or less dumb sense of what life honestly and deeply means. It is our individual way of just seeing and feeling the total push and pressure of the cosmos." 2. Man's temperament determines his philosophy, though he does not give this as a reason for his conclusions, because this would not appear as competent authority. Many of us "hardly know our own preferences in abstract matters and so follow the most impressive philosopher."

In this day of fanaticism and agnosticism, Professor James saw the dangers in the path of the man unable to show the reasons for his beliefs. He saw that 3 "there is really no scientific or other method by which man can steer safely between the opposite dangers of believing too little or of believing too

1. Bibliography IV, p 4. 2. Bib. IV, pp. 7-8.
3. Preface to I, p. 11.

much." 4. "The trueist scientific hypothesis is that which works best and it cannot be otherwise with religious hypotheses." Religious history has proven that one hypothesis after another has worked ill "but some articles of fate have maintained themselves through every vicissitude and possess more vitality today than ever before."

5. "There is but one indefectibly certain truth, even scepticism has left this standing, that is, that the present phenomena of consciousness exists." 6. "No concrete test of what is true has even been agreed upon." There is nothing which someone has not thought absolutely true and absolutely false. The empiricist does not give up the quest of truth itself, although he cannot tell when he has gained it. By anything being true, he means that the total drift of thinking tends to confirm it. 7. "To get knowledge we must obey two distinct laws, we must know the truth and we must avoid error." 7. Clifford tells us it is better never to believe anything than to incur error, but James says, 8. "Our errors are not such solemn things that they need to take away our lightness of heart. We incur them in spite of all caution."

9. "When we stick to it that there is truth, moral or other-

4. Preface to I, p.12.

6. I, p. 15.

8. I, p. 19.

5. I, p. 14.

7. I, p. 17.

9. I, p. 23.

wise, we do so with our whole nature, "but the sceptic adopts the doubting attitude with his whole nature. We cannot tell which of us is the wiser. 10. "The desire for certain kinds of truth brings about the existence of that truth." 10. "A mans faith acts on the powers above him as a claim and creates his own verification." A desired result is achieved because in the co-operative scheme, individuals have faith in each other. 10? "Where faith in a fact can help create the fact, it would be an insane logic which would say that faith running ahead of scientific evidence, is the lowest kind of immortality." Faith, based on desire then, is lawful and, possibly indispensible.

James saw no reason why a man should be a sceptic, but he did find strong reasons why he must accept some things. 11. "Science says things are, morality says some things are better than others, religion says the best things are the more eternal things, " and 12. "that we are better off even now, if we believe her first affirmation to be true." We are supposed to gain, even now, by our belief and to lose by our nonbelief, a certain vital good. 13. If we remain sceptical "we avoid the error if religion be untrue but we lose the good if it be true." Scepticism is not then avoidance of error but it says, "13. Better risk the loss of truth, than chance of error." It is intellect

10. I, p. 25.
12. I, p. 26.

11. I, p. 25.
13. I, p. 26.

against one passion. 14. "Duperi through hope is no worse than Duperi through fear." 15. "We have the right to believe, at our own risk, any hypothesis that is live enough to tempt our will." "If we are empiricists, if we are not sure when truth is in our grasp, then it seems absurd to wait to know a truth before we ask." For belief is measured by action. We act in either case before we have full evidence. As Fitz James Steven says, "we can get nowhere by standing still, we must act for the best, hope for the best, and taken what comes."

Some people are not willing to do this. They know that they must encounter some evil and the uncertainty of what life is to bring to them causes them to become pessimistic and they prefer to destroy their lives. James Thompson in his poem "The City of Dreadful Night," has said that life is not worth living and you are free to end it when you will. James desires to show to the would-be suicide that life is worth living. 17. He says reflection would not stop it, if it came from a sudden, frenzied impulse. 18. "Too much questioning and too little active responsibility lead, almost as often as too much sensualism does, to the edge of the slope, at the bottom of which lie pessimism and the nightmare or suicidal view of life, "but further reflection can overcome this. 18. "Pessimism consists

14. I, p. 27.
17. II, p. 38.

15. I, p. 29.
18. II, p. 39.

16. I, p. 30.

in a religious demand to which there comes no normal religious reply."

19. What brings melancholy is our belief in a spirit which owns and encompasses us and with which we ought to have some communion, and then our knowledge of the character of such a spirit as revealed by the course of things in the world. No brute or irreligious man can have this melancholy. 20. "Nature on her visible surface reveals no such spirit but something in each one of us owns allegiance to such a spirit. 21. "If there be a divine spirit of the universe, nature, such as we know here, cannot possibly its ultimate work to man." "We, with our evolutionary theories and our mechanical philosophies, already know nature too impartially and too well to worship unreservedly any God of whose character she can be an adequate expression." 21. All we know of good and beauty proceeds from nature, and also all we know of evil. 21. It is a gain that the worship of the God of Nature, simply taken as such, has begun to loosen its hold upon the educated mind and the universe is beginning to rebel against the thought that any such God exists. 23. To make an idol of the spirit of nature and worship it causes souls that are religious and that would be scientific to become melancholy. The first step in the escape is to deny the idol.

19. II, p. 42.

20. II, p. 43.

21. II, p. 44.

22. II, p. 43.

23. II, p. 46.

23. "There are in most men instinctive springs of vitality that respond healthily when the burden of metaphysical and infinite responsibility rose off." "The thought that suicide is no longer a guilty challenge gives comfort. Curiosity as to what the next day will bring also helps. Then there is the thought that one can help to overcome evils. Sufferings do not lessen the love of life but make it keener. Struggle inspires us, triumph brings the void. Life is worth living, no matter what it brings, if one may combat and help to triumph over evil. This is a resignation based on manliness and pride." 24. "We are bound to take some suffering and some self-denial upon ourselves in return for all those lives upon which ours are built. 25. "To him who has cast away all metaphysics and will own nothing to religion, mere instinctive curiosity, pugnacity, and honor may make life worth living."

"Religion is here used in its supernatural sense, 25. "the order of nature which constitutes this world's experience, is only one portion of the total universe and that there stretches beyond this visible world an unseen world of which we now know nothing positive but in its relation to which our present mundane life consists." 25. "A mans religious faith means his faith in an unseen order of some kind, in which the riddles of the

natural order may be found explained." 25. "We have a right to believe the physical order to be only a partial order. We have a right to supplement it by an unseen spiritual order which we assume on trust if we may thereby make life more worth living." 26. "Our science is only a drop of knowledge, our ignorance a sea." To wait for evidence as to what the unknown world of science contains, or even the spiritual world before we believe anything would not do, because action is a part of belief and action often becomes necessary. 27. If needs of ours outrun the visible universe, why may not that be a sign that an invisible universe is there." 27. "Beliefs were given us only to live by and not to trust our religious beliefs means to live by them and act as if the invisible world were real. "Destroy this inner assurance and all the light and radiance and existence for many people is extinguished." The most adverse life would seem worth living if we knew the life was to bear fruit in an unseen world. 29. Vivisection can mean nothing good to the dog but we see the good of it. We see his world and ours. Another world may encompass ours as our world does his world and to believe in this world may be the most essential function which our lives have to perform. This is only a hypothesis but all science is based upon hypotheses.

26. II, p. 54.

27. II, p. 56.

28. II, p. 56.

29. II, p. 58.

Believing in the line of one's needs helps the need to be fulfilled. 30. "Have faith that you can make a leap and your feet are nerved to do it. Refuse to believe and, if standing upon the edge of a precipice, you must perish." 31. Mistrust of life removes the part that is worth living. This life is what we make it, from the moral point of view. 31. "God himself may draw vital strength and increase of being from our vitality." Professor James says, 31. "I do not know what the sweat and blood and tragedy of this life mean, if they mean anything short of this. It means nothing if it is not a real fight but it appears to us to be a real fight. It seems as if there were something really wild in the universe which we were needed to redeem."

Professor James believed the work of the philosopher to be to make things seem more rational. He said, "When anything appears rational, there is a strong feeling of ease, peace and rest. The thought seems rational when we are able to think with perfect fluency." Mystical minds seek the peace of rationality through ecstasy when logic fails. 32. If two conceptions equally fit the logical demand, the one will be accounted more rational which awakens the active impulses or satisfies other aesthetic demands." "Empiricists have believed that the feeling of

30. II, p. 59. 31. I, p. 61. 32. III, pp. 76-77.

familiarity and rationality are one and the same and that no other kind of rationality exists." So long as an object is unusual, our expectations are baffled but as soon as it becomes familiar, our expectations are fully determined. A philosophic conception must be such as to banish uncertainty from the future.

33. "Novelty ought to irritate in order that one may protect himself from danger." However much a philosophy may give a conception of clearness and consistency, it will never triumph if it refuses to legitimate in an emphatic manner the more powerful of our emotional and practical tendencies. Materialism fails for this reason. It says the real meaning of the impulses is something which has no emotional interest for us. We feel that there is an outward cause for our emotions while materialism objects. Each one desires to feel that his action at sometime is necessary for the success of the whole.

Philosophers have tried to keep the element of faith out of sight. 34. "Faith is the readiness to act in a cause, the prosperous issue of which is not certified to us in advance. It is the same moral quality which we call courage in practical affair. Scientific philosophers insist that an ingredient of faith is necessary in our mental make up but they say it is only legitimate in one proposition, that is, that nature is uniform. We

must assume that nature will follow the same laws today that she did yesterday. Many philosophers hold that it is a shame to have faith in other things, that is merely a religious dogma. 35. Professor James has said, "We know that the whole individual is at work when we form our philosophical opinions. Intellect, will, passion, and taste co-operate." "The only escape from faith is mental nullity." "If our inborn faculties are good and we yield to our belief, we become prophets, if they are poor, we are failures. We stake all and if our persons will help us to a conclusion, we should stake them there. Faith is synonymous with working hypothesis." We cannot live or work at all without some degree of faith.

In regard to the good and evil in the world, evolution has said, "that is to be called good which is destined to prevail or survive." Professor James objected to this because if men simply wanted to find out the good here, there would be no progress. He said, "This violates our general wish to lead and not to follow. No wise evolutionist doubts that the course of destiny may be altered by individuals. The best, according to evolution, is that which has the biggest endings. The evolutionary standard measures action by the winning side.³⁶" Again and again success depends upon energy of act; energy again depends

35. III, pp. 94,95.

36. III, p. 100.

on faith that we shall not fail and that faith in turn on the faith that we are right - which faith thus verifies itself," As James Hinton says, "Existence becomes worthless if we succeed in putting away all the little inconvenience, exertions and pains. The enjoyment in endurance is according to intensity of life, that pains are unendurable does not mean that they are too great but that we are ill. We have not our proper life, thus pain is not necessarily an evil but an essential element of the highest good."

37. The materialist says 'that judgments of worth are themselves mere matters of fact, that the words good and bad have no sense apart from subjective passions and interests which we may play fast and lose with as we will, so far as any duty of ours as to the non human universe is concerned. It is best for our social interests to keep a promise, there is no right or wrong in it.'

37. For the absolute moralist, the interests are not there merely to be felt, they are to be believed and obeyed. "He who believes this to be a radically moral universe must hold the moral order to rest on either an ultimate and absolute should or on a series of shoulds all the way down." There is a vast difference between this objective moralist and the subjective one.

The subjectiveist in morals is always free to seek harmony by toning down his feelings or lulling them to sleep in any way possible. "To the absolute moralist, "resistance, poverty, martyrdom or tragedy are the feasts of his inward faith, rather these than give up his ideals."

39. Professor James has said in regard to faith, "verification of our faith cannot occur in the life of one philosopher but the experience of the entire human race must make the verification and all the evidence will not be in until the last man has said his say." "The world may be likened to a lock whose inward nature, moral or unmoral, will never reveal itself to our simply expectant gaze. Instead of waiting until all the evidence is in, we may try the moral key and if it fits, it is a moral lock, if we try the immoral key and it fits, it is an immoral lock." It is our business to try the key which we prefer. "Doubt is in itself a decision, scepticism in moral matters is an active ally of immorality, and whatever we do not hinder, if it is in our power, we are helping."

In regard to the existence of God, Professor James says,
40. Some outward reality of a nature defined as God's nature must be defined, is the only ultimate object that is at the same time rational and possible for the human mind's contemplation."
"If we allow that the human mind is the triadic structure of

impression, reflection and reaction, then anything short of God is not rational and anything more than God is not possible." It is essential that God be conceived as the deepest power in the universe and he must be conceived under the form of a mental personality. Extrinsicly considered, God's personality is to be regarded like any other personality as something lying outside of my own and whose experience I simply come upon and find. "A power not ourselves then, which not only makes for righteousness but means it and which recognizes us. In whatever other respects the divine personality may differ from ours or may resemble it, the two are consanguineous at least in that both have purposes for which they care and each can hear the others call." Nothing will pass as rational which violates the activity of either of the three departments of the mind or leaves them without a chance to work. Theism, because of its practical rationality, will survive all lower creeds. Materialism and agnosticism could never gain popular acceptance, for they give a solution of things which is irrational to the practical third of our nature. Theism always stands ready with the most practical rational solution it is possible to conceive. It appeals to every energy of our active nature. 41. If science rules out all other appetites and becomes the ruling God, the nation will just as surely go to ruin and fall a prey to their more richly constituted neighbors as the beasts of the field, as a whole, have fallen a prey to man. 40. V, pp. 116-122.

41. "The sense of emotional reconciliation with God which characterizes the highest moments of the theistic consciousness may be described as "oneness" with him and so from the very bottom of theism, a monistic doctrine seems to arise, but this consciousness of self-surrender, of absolute practical union between one's self and the divine object of one's contemplation, is a totally different thing from any sort of substantial identity. Still the object God and the subject I are two. His existence is given to me but I am something radically other than the Divinity with whose effulgence I am filled. How the mind and will which are not God, can know him and leap to meet him, how it came to be separated from him and how God himself came to be at all are problems the theist cannot solve but it is sufficient for him to know that he himself simply is and needs God and that behind this universe God simply is and will be forever and will in some way hear his call."

42. "It is more than probably that to the end of time our power of moral and volitional response to the nature of things will be the deepest organ of communication therewith we shall ever possess. In every being that is real, there is something that is external to and sacred from the grasp of every other. God's being is sacred from ours. To co-operate with his creation

by the best and rightest response, seems all he wants of us. In such co-operation with his purposes, (not in any chimerical speculative conquest of him,) not in any theoretic drinking of him up, must lie the real meaning of our destiny. The mere turning of our character, the dumb-willingness to suffer and to serve this willingness, is more than all theories about it put together." "The most any theory about is can do, is to bring us to that. A resolute moral will, no matter how inarticulate or unequipped with learning its owner may be, extorts from us a respect we should never pay, were we not satisfied that the essential root of personality lay there."

Not only a mans philosophy but also his ethical position, Professor James attributes to temperament. He has said that the "deepest difference practically in the moral life of the man is the difference between the easy going and the strenuous mood. The ruling consideration in the easy going mood is shrinking from present ills while the strenuous mood makes us indifferent to present ill if only the greater ideal be obtained." "The capacity of the strenuous mood lies so deep down among our natural human possibilities that even if there were no metaphysical or traditional grounds for believing in a God, men would postulate one simply as a pretext for living hard and getting out of the game of existence its keenest possibilities of zest." "Exactly

what the thought of the infinite thinkers may be is hidden from us even were we sure of his existence, so that our postulation of him, after all, serves only to let loose in us the strenuous mood but this is what it does in all men, even those who have no interest in philosophy."

The determinists object to the idea of chance in the world. "If a particle of it exists," they say, "what is to prevent entire chaos." James says, 44. "Do not all the motives that assail us, all the futures that offer themselves to our choice, spring equally from the soil of the past, and would not either one of them, whether realized through chance or necessity, the moment it was realized, seem to us to fit that past and in the completest and most continuous manner to interdigitate with the phenomena already there." Indeterminism does mean chance, but §5. "the world must not be regarded as a machine whose final purpose is the making real of any outward good but rather as a contrivance for deepening the theoretic consciousness of what goodness and evil in their intrinsic natures are. Not the doing either of good or evil is what natures cares for but the knowing of them. Life is one long eating of the fruit of the tree of knowledge." This is a branch of subjectivism which regards every thing which happens in the universe as subsidiary to what we

think or feel about it." James saw the tragedy of life and could not get rid of evil in the world as easily as Royce did by saying, "the best in evil setting becomes the worse." James said, "It is not easy to escape pessimism when we try to make the principle of absolute perfection agree with the facts of life. If God be good, how came he to create - or if he did not create, how came he to permit the powers of evil? Subjectivism tries to make the bad seem less bad. It says, "There is something rather absurd in our ordinary notion of external things being good or bad in themselves. They cannot be bad without any one to feel their badness and paradise could not be good unless the goodness was perceived." Outward goods and evils seem practically indistinguishable except in so far as they result in getting moral judgments made about them, then the moral judgments seem the main thing, and the outward facts mere perishing instruments for bringing them about. "Regarded as a stable finality, every outward good becomes a mere weariness to the flesh." "It must be menaced, be occasionally lost, for its goodness to be fully felt as such. No one knows the worth of innocence until he knows it is gone forever and that money cannot buy it back. Not the saint, but the sinner that repenteth is he to whom the full length and breadth and height and depth of life's meaning is revealed." "Not the absence of vice but vice there and virtue holding her by the throat, seems the ideal human

state, according to subjectivism and it sees no reason to suppose it not a permanent human state." The final purpose of our creation seems most plausibly to be the greatest possible enrichment of our ethical consciousness through the most intense play of contrasts and the widest diversity of characters.

46. To James subjectivism seemed a more rational scheme than pessimism. "When the healthy love of life is on one and all its forms and appetites seem so unutterably real, when the most brutal and the most spiritual things are lighted by the same sun and each is an integral part of the total richness - then it seems a grudging and sickly way of meeting so robust a universe," said James, "to shrink from any of its facts and wish them not to be. Rather take the strictly dramatic point of view and treat the whole thing as a great unending romance, which the spirit of the universe, striving to realize its own content, is eternally thinking out and representing to itself." While he saw these reasons in favor of subjectivism yet he saw reasons against it which are stronger than these.

In discussing subjectivism he said, 47. "Once dismiss the notion that certain duties are good in themselves and that we are here to do them, no matter how we feel about them; once consecrate the opposite notion, that our performances and our violations of duty are for a common purpose, the attainment of subjective knowledge and feeling, that the deepening of these is the chief end of our lives and at what point on the downward slope

are we to stop."

"Everywhere subjectivism fosters the fatalistic mood of the mind. It makes those who are already inert, more passive still. It renders wholly reckless those, whose energy is already in excess. Its optimism turns to an ethical indifference in practical life, which infallibly brings dissolution in its train."

The only escape from subjectivism is by the practical way, the philosophy of objective conduct. With the vision of certain work to be done, of certain outward changes to be wrought or resisted, our intellectual horizon terminates. "No matter how we feel, if we are faithful in the outward act and refuse to do wrong, the world will in so far be safe and we quit of our debt toward it. The essence of this philosophy is the willingness after bringing about some external good, to feel at peace - for our responsibility ends with the performance of that duty and the burden of the rest we may lay on higher powers."

48. He believed that the indeterminist way is the only consistent way of a world whose parts may effect one another through their conduct being either good or bad. "There can be no interest, zest or excitement in achieving the right way unless we are enabled to feel that the wrong way is also a possible and a natural way - nay more a menacing and an

imminent way - and what sense can there be in condemning ourselves for taking the wrong way unless the right way was open to us as well." He says further, "I cannot understand the willingness to act, no matter how we feel, without the belief that acts are really good or bad. I cannot understand the belief that an act is bad without regret at its happening. I cannot understand regret without the admission of real genuine possibilities in the world. Indeterminism offends only the native absolutism of my intellect which perhaps deserves to be kept in check. Determinism violates my sense of morality through and through. If we think of some of the crimes of the universe as necessary expressions of the universe as a whole, we cannot but shrink from complicity with such a whole. The plainest pessimism so that it be straight-forward is a thousand times better than such systematic corruption of our moral sanity but far better than either is the world of chance. Chance means pluralism and nothing more. The world with a chance in it of being altogether good, even if the chance never come to pass, is better than a world with no such chance at all."

Determinism has said, 'banish chance from the view of the future for it means the suicide of reason but James says 49. "chance means that in moral respects, the future may be other and better than the past has been." This is the only 'chance' we have any motive for suffering to exist. Its presence 49. VII. pp. 176-183.

is the vital air which lets the world live, the salt which keeps it sweet. The admission of an unguaranteed chance or freedom does not preclude the notion of a providence governing the world, for the belief in freewill is not, in the least, incompatible with the belief in providence, provided we do not restrict providence to fulminating nothing but fatal decrees. If you allow him to provide possibilities as well as actualities to the universe and to carry on his own thinking in these two categories, chances may be there, uncontrolled even by him and the course of the universe be really ambiguous and yet the end of all things may be just what he intended it to be from all eternity. The creator himself would not need to know all the details of actuality until they came, and at any time, his own view of the world would be a view, partly of facts and partly of possibilities, exactly as ours is now. Of one thing, however, he might be certain and that is his world was safe and that no matter how much it might zigzag, he would surely bring it home at last. It makes no difference who decides the possibilities as long as we admit that the issue is decided nowhere else than here and now. Determinists say it was all settled long ago."

50. "The actually possible in this world is vastly narrower than all that is demanded and there is always a pinch between the ideal and the actual which can only be got through by leaving

part of the ideal behind. Since everything which is demanded is by that fact a good, must not the guiding principle for ethical philosophy be simply to satisfy at all times as many demands as we can, but there is nothing final in any actually given equilibrium of human ideals but the new conquer the old and the new will in turn be overthrown." In point of fact, there are no absolute evils and no non-moral goods, and the highest ethical life consists in the breaking of rules which have grown too narrow for the actual case. 50. "There is but one unconditional commandment which is that we should seek incessantly with fear and trembling so to vote and to act as to bring about the very largest total universe of good which we can see."

51. The trouble with many philosophies is that they seem to have nothing to do with the concrete things of human life. James wanted a philosophy that is loyal to scientific facts and is at the same time religious, with the old confidence in human values. He shows why he considers some of the systems inadequate. The superficiality of Leibnitzs rationalistic system is shown when he tries to prove that although many more are condemned than are saved in the world, yet this is not an evil, because the universe, being so much greater than the world, the good in it overshadows the evil. The shallowness of rationalism may be

50. VI. pp. 204-207. 51. IV. pp. 15 - 29.

shown today as well as in Leibnitz's time. Practical men think perfection is still in the process of achievement, while to the rationalist the absolute ground of things is a perfection eternally complete. Royce and Bradley say that the evil in the world only shows more plainly God's presence. "These men are not dealing with realities. The thinking feeling mass are coming to judge the world for themselves. One fact of this world is a workman killing himself and family. All the treatises on God or love cannot destroy or make this fact less." Morrison Swift says, "God will not give religion twenty centuries more to prove itself. Its probation is ended."

52. Professor James offers pragmatism as a philosophy that can satisfy both kinds of demands. "It can remain religious as the rationalist and at the same time preserve the richest intimacy with facts." "Pragmatism is a method of settling disputes which could not otherwise be settled. Disputes are continuous over 'the one and the many, over materialism and spiritualism. All disputes are idle if the consequence makes no practical difference. In serious dispute, we should be able to show that some practical difference would result from the right. Many disputes collapse when subjected to the simple test of tracing a concrete consequence. There is no difference in abstract

truth that does not express itself in concrete fact." "The whole function of philosophy ought to be to find out what definite difference it will make to us, at definite times in our lives if this world formula or that world formula be the true one." "The words God, Matter, Reason, Absolute, and Energy appear now not as a solution of the universe but as a program for more work, as an indication of the ways in which existing realities may be changed." Pragmatism sets all our theories to work. It agrees with nominalism in always agreeing with particulars, with utilitarianism in emphasizing practical aspects, with positivism in its disdain for verbal solutions, useless questions and metaphysical abstractions. "It is the attitude of looking away from first things, principles, categories, supposed necessities and looking toward last things, fruits, consequences and facts."

Pragmatism has come to be used in a wider sense also, "meaning a theory of truth." "Inductive logic, a branch of philosophy, is the study of the conditions under which our sciences have evolved. When the first laws of mathematics, logic, and natural uniformities were discovered, men believed that they saw things so clearly that they were thinking "the eternal thoughts of the Almighty" but as sciences have developed, men

have seen that the laws cannot be counted because of their number, that they are merely theories which may be of use. They are a man made language used to help one understand the reality within the universe." Sigwart and Ostwald and later Schiller and Dewey with other logicians say that 'truth, in our ideas and beliefs', means the same as truth in science, that is that ideas, which are themselves parts of experience, become true just in so far as they help us to get into satisfactory relation with other parts of our experience, that is any idea which will be satisfactory link one part of our experience with another, thus simplifying and saving labor, is true for just so much, true instrumentality. This view of truth taught at Chicago and Oxford, that truth in our ideas means their power to work, is called 'instrumental truth." This method of discovering truth is used by geologists, biologists and philologists. They take some simple process which they could observe in operation and then make it apply to all times and sum up its effect through the ages. Schiller and Dewey generalized the process of how any individual settles into new opinions. A man has a set of old beliefs. Another comes which disturbs the former. He feels he cannot give up the first and finds a new idea finally which he can graft on the first which will not very much disturb his

first ideas and so he runs one experience into another. "New truth is always a go between, a smoother over of transitions." "A theory satisfies us to the extent that it does not interfere with our preconceived idea of truth but the same theory does not satisfy all alike." "Truth gets itself classed as true by the way it works. Truth may simply add new facts to experience or it may cause the rearrangement of experience." It seemed that radium would change all our ideas of the conservation of energy but it was found that the old ideas of energy need only be extended." Truth is plastic and changes to fit the human need and it must do this and have a practical result if it is living truth." This is the scope of pragmatism, first a method and second a genetic theory of what is meant by truth.

53. Rationalism has ridiculed Schiller's and Dewey's theory because the rationalist deals only with abstract truths while pragmatism deals with their utility, satisfactoriness and the way it works. Rationalism says it must be what we ought to think unconditionally but logic instead of psychology should govern our thinking. "For the one truth, is an abstraction, for the other, a class name for all sorts of definite working values in experience. The idea of a monarch working above things is hard for the empiricist to accept because it has no conception with concreteness. They accept rather a God working

in things." The rationalist thinks that no matter what the facts of the world are, God is father of them. "The God of earth and heaven," James says, "is needed more in human trials than in any visionary life." Pragmatism has no materialistic bias as empiricism has. "She has no objections to abstractness if it carries you somewhere. She has no apriori prejudices against theology. If they prove to have a value for concrete life, they will be true, how much more they are true must depend upon their relation to other acknowledged truths." In so far as the Absolute of transcendental idealism affords comfort to anybody, it performs concrete function and this far, according to pragmatism, it is true. By applying the pragmatic method, we understand them to mean by comfort that they need have no responsibility because the world is in better hands than theirs and will go on all right. This is the way the pragmatist looks upon this belief in the Absolute.

54. "Truth is one species of good and not a category distinct from good and co-ordinate with it. The true is the name of whatever proves itself to be good in the way of belief and good too for definite assignable reasons, for if there were no good in true ideas, then only the false ones would be useful. It would be our duty to shun truth." Certain ideas are not only agreeable but helpful in practical life. What is better for us to believe is true unless the belief incidentally

clashes with some other vital benefit. "The greatest enemy of one of our truths may be the rest of our truths," Truths want to preserve themselves. Pragmatism unstiffens our theories. She will entertain any hypothesis or consider any evidence. She widens the field of search for God.

54. "Truth," said James, "is the agreement of ideas with reality. Pragmatists and intellectualists both accept this definition as a matter of course. They quarrel about the terms agreement and reality. If our ideas cannot copy definitely their object, what does agreement with that object mean?" Some idealists think ideas are true when they are what God would have us think about an object, others think our ideas true just in proportion as they are copies of the Absolute's eternal way of thinking. The great assumption of the intellectualists is that truth means a lifeless, motionless relation. When you get your true idea of anything, there's an end of the matter, you are in possession and know and there is nothing more to follow. Pragmatism asks what concrete difference will an idea being true make in any one's actual life. "True ideas are those that we can assimilate, validate, corroborate and verify. False ideas are those that we cannot. This is the meaning of truth." "The truth of an idea is not a stagnate property inherent in it.

The idea is made true by events. It must verify itself. It's validity is the process of its validation. Verification and validation mean that our ideas agree with reality." It is our duty to gain true thoughts because they are invaluable instruments of action. "It is an advantage to have a general stock of extra truths of merely possible situations on hand. We store them away in our memory. When such an extra truth is needed in an emergency, it passes from cold storage to do work in the world and our belief in it grows active. You can say of it then that it is useful because it is true or true because it is useful." "True is the name for whatever idea starts the verification process, useful is the name for its completed function in experience." On the common sense level, the truth of a state of mind means this function of a leading towards other ideas which will be worth while. A man, who is lost sees a path and follows it, thinking there is a house at the other end. He verifies this idea when he finds the house. Some truths we verify and others we feel so certain that we can verify them that we do not try it. Our thoughts and beliefs pass as true as long as nothing challenges them. They have been verified by somebody. Things exist in kind and not simply so when one is verified, we can in most cases be sure of the rest.

54. There is a realm of mental relations where truth is to be considered as well as with facts. Truth here has an eternal character. Here also truth is an affair of leading. Our ideas must agree with realities, whether the realities are concrete or abstract, whether facts or principles. Realities mean either facts or abstract kinds of things and relations perceived intuitively between them. They must take account also of the truth already in possession. To copy a reality is one very important way of agreeing with it but it is far from being essential. The essential thing is the process of being guided. "Any idea that fits and adapts our life to the whole setting of reality will agree sufficiently to meet the requirements of truth." "We must talk consistently as well as think consistently for thus truth is made available for every one." Agreement thus turns out to be essentially an affair of leading that is useful because it is into quarters that contain important objects. All true processes must lead to the fact of directly verifying sensible experiences somewhere, which somebody's ideas have copied.

55. Truth, then according to Professor James, is simply a collective name for verification process, just as health, wealth, strength, etc., are names for other processes connected with

life and also pursued because it pays to pursue them. Truth is made, just as health, wealth and strength are made in the course of experience. The rationalist says, "Truth is not made. It has nothing to do with experience," but for James, the true is only the expedient in the way of our thinking, just as the right is only the expedient in the way of our behaving. "Experience has ways of boiling over and making us correct our present formulas." The absolutely true, meaning what no farther experience will ever alter, is that ideal vanishing point toward which we imagine that all our temporary truths will some day verge. "Truths emerge from facts but they dip forward into facts again and add to them which facts again create or reveal new truth and so on indefinitely." The facts meanwhile are not true. They simply are. This is the difference between pragmatism and rationalism. The rationalist will not agree that either reality or truth can change. Truth claims abstractly to be recognized but it is only necessary to recognize concrete truth when it is expedient.

56. James applies the pragmatic method to the question, "What is matter? He says, we find that it makes no difference whatever whether the world is run by matter or not, as far as the past of the world goes." The theist may show how a God made the world and a materialist may show how it resulted from

blind forces and if the world has no future development, then pragmatism cannot apply its test because according to either theory, all the consequences have been shown and are identical. "If the world was finished, God's work would be done and he, by his presence, could not make it any more living, that is if it is completed, calling God the author or matter the author could not make it any more or less." There is no use for a discussion between materialism and theism, if there is no future detail of experience or conduct to be deduced from our hypothesis. The common man and the scientist have no use for this discussion unless the philosopher can show one of these to have a practical outcome. In this world in which we live that has a future, this question of materialism or theism is intensely practical.

56. Spencer urges that we throw away these two opposing terms and use "the primal mystery" or "the unknowable energy" or "the one and only power," because 'if matter has accomplished this, it is what you mean by God. James says Spencer "is looking only at the past and forgets the future of the world and the question "What does the world promise?" If by the laws of this matter it were bound to lead the world to success and perfection, all would accept it, but science has foretold the

death tragedy of every cosmically evolved thing or system of things." These two, theism and materialism, are entirely different when taken in regard to the future instead of the past, for according to the laws of redistribution of matter and motion, they will undo their work again. Mr. Balfour shows the belief of science in his pictures of the end of the world when it is as a man had never lived. This final wreck and tragedy is the essence of scientific materialism. It is not, as Spencer holds, that we complain of materialism for its grossness, but we complain of it because it is not a fulfiller of our remotest hopes or our more ideal interests. The notion of God, on the other hand, is superior in that it guarantees an ideal order that shall be permanently preserved. "No matter what may happen to a world, with a God in it, we believe he will, somewhere, bring the old ideals to fruition, so there can be no final tragedy. The deepest need of life is this need of an eternal moral order." This is the real difference between materialism and spiritualism. Materialism denies that the moral order is eternal while spiritualism affirms it. Some people say that the future of the world is not man's concern but the superior minds feel seriously on this subject. Spiritualistic faith deals with a world of promise. Any religious view gives us moral holidays. The evidence for God lies primarily

in inner personal experience. The truth of God has to run the gauntlet of all our other truths. Our final opinion about God can only be settled after all the other truths have straightened themselves out together."

57. God's existence has been considered for a long time to have been proven by design in nature, the eyes and light being adapted to each other, etc. Darwin showed how chance happenings fitted each other and he showed the waste in nature while the adaptation was taking place. "The aim of God is not merely to make men and save them but rather to get this done through the agency of nature's vast machinery." No matter what nature produces, the means must have been fitted to that production. "The words design or designer can have no meaning to the pragmatist except as a vague confidence in the future."

58. The rationalist thinks of freewill as a virtue added to man which increases his dignity. Determinists diminish man by saying he transmits nothing to the future that is original. Free will has been discussed pragmatically and both freewillist and determinists have taken the ground of accountability and merit or demerit. The freewillist say, "if we merely transmitted the push of the whole past, how could we be praised or blamed for anything." The determinists say, "how can they be responsible for any act if it is simply tacked on

to them." "The trouble is that human ethics should not revolve about the question of merit," said James, "God alone can know our merits, if we have any." Free will pragmatically, means novelties in the world, "the right to expect that the future will not imitate and repeat the past." There is general uniformity of nature. Free will holds up improvement as at least possible. "If the past and present were entirely good, then we might wish the future to be no different. If the world were already perfect, freedom could only mean 'to be worse.' Freewill has no meaning unless it be a doctrine of relief. The words, God, freewill, design have no other practical significance. Pragmatism alone can read a positive meaning into this. She turns her back upon the intellectualist point of view altogether. "Gods in his heaven, alls right with the world," that is the real heart of theology and needs no rationalist definition. Pragmatism thus ceases to look back upon principles and looks toward the future. The vital question for all is, "What is the world going to be?" Philosophy must deal with things of earth. These questions must be treated by minds less abstract and more scientific but not less religious.

59. The relation between abstract ideas and concrete realities, as pragmatism concerns it, may be shown by the

following illustration given by Professor James: "Look up through a tumbler of clear water with a light above it. The Water may represent the world of sensible facts, and the air above, the world of abstract ideas. Both worlds are real but the locus of all experience is the water. The abstract principles are necessary for life but their only function is directing. This shows how something, not sufficient for life, may yet determine life. Professor James thought the problem of the 'one and the many' the most important of all philosophical problems. He believed that he could tell the character of a man if he knew whether he is a monist or pluralist.

60. Philosophy has manifested, above everything else, its interest in unity but the intellect needs not only unity but variety. "The aim of the intellect is neither unity nor variety by themselves, but totality." "The thought of the world being one, of its unity instead of its manyness is so prevalent, that it might be called a part of the philosophical common sense." Both empiricists and rationalists say the world is one or it could not be a world. The empiricists, however, are still curious to know the special facts, while the rationalists think of an abstract mystical unity.

60. The pragmatic method asks, "What is the practical value of the 'oneness' for us?" Thus we come from the vague to the concrete. Following are some of the ways in which the

oneness of the universe might make a difference. First, the world is at least one subject of discourse. "If there could be no union of its parts, we could not speak of the whole of it at once, but by world or universe we mean the whole of it, but the chaos has just as much unity of discourse as a cosmos. Second, "Are the parts of the universe continuous?" Do the parts of the universe hang together instead of being like detached grains of sand? Grains of sand hang together in the space in which they are embedded and if you can pass through this space, you can go from one to two. "Space and time are thus vehicles of continuity by which the world's parts hang together." The practical result to us from these forms of union is then, that our whole motar life is based upon them. In the third place, "lines of influence may be traced by which things hang together." This is true of the whole universe. "In the physical world, such uniting influences as gravity and heat" conduction, also electric luminous and chemical influences but here the first lines of influence are interrupted by inert or opaque bodies." Things are joined together by many kinds of systems. Men are joined by acquaintanceship. "You may carry a message any place in this system if you have a conductor but it will go wrong if you have a non-conductor." There are smaller systems within the larger. The world is

becoming unified in definite systematic ways through human efforts. The same part may figure in many different systems. Everything that exists is influenced in some way by something else. "Any kind of influence helps to make the world one just so far as you can follow it from next to next." From this systematic point of view, the pragmatic value of the world's unity is that all these definite networks actually and practically exist. "If you have non-conductors instead of conductors, then the world is not one but many. The oneness and the manyness are absolutely co-ordinate here just as space separates things and unites them."

60. The most important sort of union that obtains among things, pragmatically speaking, is their generic unity, that is things exist in kinds. If no two things were alike in the world, we could not argue from the past to the future. This generic unity is perhaps the most momentous pragmatic specification of what it may mean to say 'the world is One.' We would have absolute generic unity if everything could be put in one class. The class 'Beings,' thinkables, experiences, would be candidates for this position.

60. That the world is one may mean also its unity of purpose. "It is possible to conceive of all the many purposes in the world being enveloped in one single purpose."

Appearances conflict with this view. Theologians, as they see the warring interests of the parts of the world grow more concrete, cannot imagine what the final purpose is like. "We can generalize all that the evil in the world means its greater perfection but the veil is so great in the world that a God who can relish such horrors is not the God for human beings to appeal to, not the manlike God of the common people."

60. Idealism says that the many exist only as objects for the thought of the one Knower. The Absolute has far reaching practical consequences but to James none of the proofs of such beings existence seem sound. The notion of the All-Knower is simply a hypothesis and is on the same par logically with the pluralistic notion. Professor Royce says that God's conscience in its wholeness forms one luminously transparent conscious moment. Empiricism thinks that the greatest knower of all may not know all things at once, in one case knowledge would be unified, in the other strung along. "The great intellectualist achievement of our time is that the notion of the eternal or instantaneous knower has driven out the conception of substance, universal substance which alone has being in and from itself. To those who take it intellectually today, it always means the one Knower. This involves, they think, all

the rest which Christian science calls the 'One Life, 'One Truth,' 'One Love', 'One Principle', 'One Good and One God'." "The authority which absolute monism possesses over some persons is mystical rather than intellectual." An example of this is the Nirvana state in Buddhism. You do not reason but after certain stages, you see and can report the truth. James says, "We all have this germ of mysticism in ourselves and many feel that logic or no logic, Absolute Oneness must somehow, at any cost, be true." Treating the problem in a purely intellectual way, pragmatism abjures absolute monism and absolute pluralism.

James held that pragmatic principles can not reject any hypothesis if consequences useful to life flow from it. Universal conceptions may be as real for pragmatism as particular sensations are. They have no meaning or reality if they have no use. The only way to extract a term's meaning is to use the pragmatic method on it. When you say a thing is possible, it makes at least this difference, that if anyone calls it actual or impossible or necessary you can contradict him. When you say a thing is possible, it makes this negative difference, that there is nothing existing, which is capable of preventing the possible thing. The absence of real grounds of interference may thus be said to make things not impossible,

therefore possible in the bare or abstract sense. Pragmatically this means, not only that there are no preventative conditions present, but that some of the conditions of production of the possible thing are actually present. His belief in regard to future of the world may be seen from the following quotation: 61. "To say pragmatically that the salvation of the world is possible means that some of the conditions of the world's deliverance do actually exist." "The more of them that exist and the fewer preventing conditions you can find, the better grounded is this possibility of salvation and the more probably does the fact of the deliverance become." "It would contradict the very spirit of life to say that our minds must be indifferent and neutral in questions like that of the world's salvation." Pessimists think the salvation of the world impossible. Optimism thinks the world's salvation inevitable. Between these two stands meliorism which treats salvation as neither necessary or impossible. It treats it as a possibility which becomes more probable, the more numerous the actual conditions of salvation become. Pragmatism must incline toward meliorism. 61. "Some conditions of the world's salvation are already existent. Every ideal realized will be one moment in the world's salvation. These ideals are not bare abstract possibilities. They are live

possibilities "for", says Professor James, "we are their live champions and if the complimentary conditions come and add themselves, our ideals will become actual things. The complimentary conditions are such a mixture of things as will in time give us a chance to act and then the acts themselves. Our acts are the parts of the world to which we are closest, the parts of which our knowledge is the most intimate and complete." Professor James asks, "Why not take them then at their face value? Why may they not be the actual turning places and growing places of the world, which they seem to be, why not the workshop of being, where we catch fact in the making, so that nowhere may the world grow in any other kind of way than this? Thus our acts create the world's salvation as far as it makes room for itself, so far as it leaps into the gap." "Of course it does not create the whole world's salvation but just so much of this as itself covers of the world's extent." This is called irrational that single parts of the world should grow. James says there is no ultimate reason why anything should grow at all.

The only real reason why anything should ever come is that someone wished it. It is demanded, perhaps demanded to give relief to only a small fraction of the world's mass. The only fully rational world would be the Absolute's own world where

every desire is fulfilled instantly without having to consider or placate surrounding or intermediate powers. He calls upon the phenomenal world to be and it is, exactly as he calls for it, no other conditions being required. In our world the wishes of the individual are only one condition. Other individuals are there with other wishes and they must be propitiated first but in regard to the worldgrowing piecemeal by the contribution of its several parts, Professor James says, 61. "Take the hypothesis seriously and as a live one. Suppose that the world's author put the case to you before creation saying, 'I am going to make a world not certain to be saved, a world the perfection of which shall be conditional merely, the condition being that each several agent does his own 'level best". I offer you the chance of taking part in such a world. Its safety, you see, is unwarranted. It is a real adventure, with real danger, yet it may win through. It is a social scheme of co-operative work genuinely to be done. Will you join the procession? Will you trust yourself and trust the other agents enough to face the risk?"

James asks, 61. "Would you say that rather than be part and parcel of so fundamentally pluralistic and irrational a universe, you preferred to relapse into the slumber of non-entity from which you had been momentarily aroused by the tempter's voice?"

61. If we are normally constituted, the world proposed would seem rational to us in the most living way. "Most of us would therefore welcome the proposition. It would be just like the world we practically live in." "There are moments of discouragement in us all when we mistrust the chance of things and would be absorbed into the Absolute or find the peace of Nirvana as the Hindoo and Buddhist who are afraid of more experience." 61. "In the salvation of the world, must all be saved? Is no price to be paid in the work of salvation? Doesn't the very seriousness that we attribute to life mean that losses form a part of it and that there are genuine sacrifices somewhere and that something permanently drastic and bitter always remains at the bottom of its cup?"

Professor James says, 61. "I cannot speak officially as a pragmatist here: all I can say is that my own pragmatism offers no objection to my taking sides with this more moralistic view and giving up the claim of total reconciliation. The possibility of this is involved in the pragmatistic willingness to treat pluralism as a serious hypothesis. In the end it is our faith and not our logic that decides such questions and I deny the right of any pretended logic to veto my own faith. I am willing that there should be real losers and real losers and

take part in scenes of whose significance, they have no inkling, but just as many of the dogs and cats ideals coincide with our ideals, and the dogs and cats have daily living proof of the fact, so we may well believe, on the proofs that religious experience affords, "that higher powers exist and are at work to save the world on ideal lines similar to our own."

The part of James' philosophy which has created the most widespread discussion has been his doctrine of pragmatism. It has roused antagonistic feelings. It has been misconstrued and misunderstood. James, in his volume on the meaning of Truth has said that most of the "pragmatist and anti-pragmatist warfare is over what the word 'truth' shall be held to signify and not over any of the facts embodied in truth situations: for both pragmatists and anti-pragmatists believe in existent objects, just as they believe in our idea of them." James thinks they have accepted each others ideas to the extent that there is nothing left to quarrel over. "When the pragmatists speak of truth they mean exclusively something about the ideas, namely their workableness: whereas when anti-pragmatists speak of truth they seem most often to mean something about the objects. The pragmatist, if he agrees that an idea is 'really' true also agrees to whatever it says about its object: and most anti-pragmatists have already come round to agreeing

no total preservation of all that is. I can believe in the ideal as an ultimate, not as an origin and as an extract, not as a whole. When the cup is poured off, the dregs are left behind forever, but the possibility of what is poured off is sweet enough to accept."

The genuine pragmatist is 61. "Willing to live on a scheme of uncertified possibilities which he trusts, willing to pay with his own person, if need be, for the realization of the ideals which he frames." "He expects his fellowmen to co-operate with him in a universe of such a type, but he also looks to superhuman forces such as religious men of the pluralistic type have always believed in."

The Absolute has nothing but its superhumanness in common with the theistic God. On pragmatistic principles, if the hypothesis of God works satisfactorily in the widest sense of the word, it is true. "Whatever its residual difficulties may be, experience shows that it certainly does work and that the problem is to build it out and determine it so that it will combine satisfactorily with all the other working truths."

Professor James does not believe that human experience is the highest form of experience in the universe. "Rather, he says, "we stand in much the same relation to the whole of the universe as our domestic pets do to the whole of human life." They

that, if the object exists, the idea that it does so is workable."

63. It seemed to Professor James that if he could successfully establish the pragnostic theory of truth it would be one important step in making another doctrine of philosophy prevail in which he was much interested. To this he gave the name of radical empiricism. Of this latter doctrine he has said, "Radical empiricism consists first of a postulate, next of a statement of fact, and finally of a generalized conclusion. The postulate is that the only things that shall be debatable among philosophers shall be things definable in terms drawn from experience. The statement of fact is that the relations between things, conjunctive as well as disjunctive, are just as much matters of direct particular experience, neither more so nor less so, than the things themselves. The generalized conclusion is that therefore the parts of experience hold together from next to next by relations that are themselves parts of experiences. The directly apprehended universe needs, in short, no extraneous trans-empirical connective support, but possesses in its own right a concatenated or continuous structure."

Of course rationalism and Absolute idealism both would

seriously object to this radical empiricism of Professor James. These cannot be discussed any further here as the object of this thesis has been only to give a fair statement of James' own views. It is safe to say that the influence of William James will never cease to have an important part in the great world of philosophical thought.

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