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### The pragmatic concept of truth

John Prescott Johnson

*Kansas State Teachers College*

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THE PRAGMATIC CONCEPT OF TRUTH

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Division in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree  
of Master of Science

By

John Prescott Johnson

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KANSAS STATE TEACHERS COLLEGE

Pittsburg, Kansas

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	1
Importance of the Study.....	2
Definitions of Terms Used.....	3
Organization of Thesis.....	4
Review of Literature.....	5
II. TRUTH AS SATISFACTORY.....	10
A Subjective Philosophy.....	10
Truth as Agreement.....	14
Moral Truth.....	22
III. TRUTH AS CONSEQUENTIAL.....	26
Historical Perspective.....	26
The Impact of the Functional and Instrumental Perspectives.....	32
Truth as Workable.....	40
Truth as Dynamic.....	48
IV. CRITICAL EVALUATION.....	58
Consciousness and Experience.....	58
Concerning Satisfaction.....	64
Concerning Consequences.....	66
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	74



## ABSTRACT

The pragmatic concept of truth is both a reaction from and an attack against the older epistemology of the absolutists. Since Plato's time truth had been defined in terms of the idea's copying a transcendental reality. When the pragmatists arrived they felt that this immediate correspondence of the idea was insufficient to establish the content and proof of the truth of the idea.

Epistemology proposes two questions, namely, what is the source of knowledge, and is knowledge true when acquired? The pragmatists claim to have answered these problems by regarding truth from an experiential perspective. Knowledge originates from the matrix of experience, and truth occurs only in the experience continuum. Experience is the testing ground of truth. Truth obtains in the consequences of an idea as satisfactorily verified in experience. Truth is never an extra-experiential or transcendental affair, it is an immanent and humanized relation.

The pragmatic concepts of consciousness and experience as functional are necessary to a functional analysis of the truth relation. These concepts, however, experience certain difficulties in the over-emphasis of functionalism.

Pragmatism is especially significant in ascertaining when truth is arrived at, but it has its own difficulties

as to the definitive content of truth. The identification of the proof of truth with the nature of truth involves, the critics say, logical inconsistencies. The question is also raised as to the adequacy of a functional interpretation of truth which relegates the concept of goal.

Pragmatism stresses the dynamic element of truth. Truth alters reality and constantly builds up a body of knowledge which is verified as true. Pragmatic truth and the body of knowledge appear to be synonymous.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Statement of the Problem

The philosophers of the ancient Milesian school simply announced their theories, but did not concern themselves with the validity of their observations and thinking processes which gave rise to their philosophies of reality. Epistemology had not yet entered western philosophy.

Parmenides, however, in his denial of change, was constrained to support his static monism by the evidence which reason afforded. His work, "The Way of Truth," regards reason as the final test of truth.<sup>1</sup>

Since those days of Parmenides, and up until the advent of instrumentalism and neo-realism, philosophers have generally recognized that the knowledge of an objective order ultimately resolves itself into an analysis of the knowing process. "What is the object known?" rests upon "How is the object known in the first place?" The manner of cognition and method of validation are regarded as basic to a proper conception of reality.

Whenever knowledge is affirmed, two important questions are raised: What is the source of knowledge, and is knowledge

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<sup>1</sup>B. A. G. Fuller, A History of Philosophy, I, 61.

true when it is acquired?<sup>2</sup> These questions become implicated in philosophy.

The pragmatic concept of truth is a chapter in the history of epistemology. It purports to answer both of the above questions in, as yet, the most satisfactory manner. Pragmatism, as a theory of truth, faces the problem of attaching criteria to concepts so as to assure men the truth of those concepts. It is the purpose of this study to analyze the pragmatist's assertions especially concerning the validity of knowledge.

#### Importance of the Study

The pragmatic theory of truth is, in its essential nature, antithetical to absolutism. Both cannot at the same time be correct. Pragmatism, the more recent of the two theories of truth, has assumed an important place in contemporary philosophy. The pragmatists have relegated the absolute order of traditional philosophy as belonging to an outworn age. Men are satisfied if their ideas work and get them farther along in a biological and materialistic setting. The revolutionary impact this philosophy of truth has made demands diligent study of its principles.

The theory of truth so relates to one's philosophy of life that it is highly imperative to be well informed in

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<sup>2</sup>G. T. W. Patrick, An Introduction to Philosophy, p. 345.

order to evaluate properly one's life and universe. The question of truth is basic to other important questions which enlist intelligence. An exposition, therefore, of pragmatic truth is contributory to a more wholesome appreciation, not only of the issues of philosophy, but of the issues of life.

### Definitions of Terms Used

It will be advisable at the outset to define at least etymologically the terms appearing in the title of this work. Other terms used in connection with the pragmatic thesis will be defined as they appear.

Truth. The word truth as used by the Greeks is derivative of the particle "not" and the verb "to be unseen."<sup>3</sup> The Greek equates truth with clarity. Plato's illustration of the prisoners in an underground cave, endeavoring to perceive reality and truth instead of the shadows of sensible data, assigns the content of clarity to truth.<sup>4</sup>

While clarity is involved in truth, yet the manner by which a truth-concept becomes clear, constitutes the bone of contention between the pragmatist and absolutist. Thus a further definition of truth must wait the development of this thesis.

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<sup>3</sup>H. G. Liddell and Robert Scott, Greek-English Lexicon, p. 32.

<sup>4</sup>Ernest Rhys, Editor, Plato's Republic, Everyman's Library, p. 220.

Pragmatic. The term pragmatic is derived from the Greek "pragma," meaning action,<sup>5</sup> or "that which has been done, a deed ... an object of consequence or consideration."<sup>6</sup> This term indicates a relationship between the consequences of a concept and its truth.

### Organization of Thesis

The pragmatic theory of truth is a functional epistemology. Functionalism emphasizes especially two concepts, needs and ends. Following this order, the functional theory of knowledge "...emphasizes the two aspects of the validation of the knowledge-process: truth is that which satisfies a need, and truth must be tested by its results."<sup>7</sup>

The above mentioned logical divisions of pragmatic and functional truth occasion the manner in which the pragmatist's view of truth will be developed in this thesis.

Especially in absolutist and many religious circles, pragmatism has been bitterly opposed. An effort will here be made to evaluate correctly and without prejudice the pragmatist's analysis of truth. No criticisms shall be made except through logical warrant and necessity. A summation of the pragmatic position will conclude the thesis.

<sup>5</sup>William James, Pragmatism, p. 46.

<sup>6</sup>Liddell and Scott, op. cit., p. 581.

<sup>7</sup>H. H. Bawden, The Principles of Pragmatism, p. 200.



### Review of Literature

The pragmatic view of truth is but a chapter in the larger field of pragmatism. The literature reviewed concerns especially epistemological pragmatism. In many cases, however, general works on pragmatism include the theory of truth.

The pragmatic philosophy is largely the result of American and English endeavor, although there are other European works on pragmatism. Papini, the leader of Italian pragmatism has written for American consumption,<sup>8</sup> and in addition a book on the subject.<sup>9</sup>

In France Renouvier, Boutroux, and Bergson, members of the Neo-Critical school, have contributed, along with the pragmatists, to the movement of thought away from Hegelianism. Scientific writers, as Le Roy, Milhaud, Poincare, Brunschvicg, Abel Rey, and others, have an associational relationship with the pragmatic faith. M. Blondel wrote in 1893 a pragmatic work entitled *L'Action*. M. Lalande, writing in the Philosophical Review (1906), makes an application of pragmatism to religion.<sup>10</sup>

Ostwald, the German chemist at Leipzig, who utilized the pragmatic principle in his scientific lectures, indicated

<sup>8</sup>William Caldwell, Pragmatism and Idealism, pp. 23-25.

<sup>9</sup>James, op. cit., p. viii.

<sup>10</sup>Caldwell, op. cit., pp. 28-35.

his pragmatic attitude in correspondence with Professor James.<sup>11</sup> However, the spirit of German philosophy is not akin to that of pragmatism.

In America Charles Sanders Peirce kindled the pragmatic torch in his essay which bears the title, "How to Make Our Ideas Clear,"<sup>12</sup> in which he posited the pragmatic nature of belief.

In 1898 William James delivered an address entitled, "Philosophical Conceptions and Practical Results," which was reprinted in the volume, Collected Essays and Reviews.<sup>13</sup>

In November and December, 1906, James delivered a series of lectures on pragmatism at the Lowell Institute in Boston, and in January, 1907, at Columbia University, New York. They were reprinted to constitute the book, Fragmatism, A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking.<sup>14</sup> This book brings together in broad strokes the various issues and implications of the pragmatic philosophy. Chapter VI, "Pragmatism's Conception of Truth," is, as the title suggests, a treatise concerning the nature of truth.

James' article, The Will to Believe (1908), deals with the supremacy of sympathy and feeling as over against academic logic in choice and belief. The Meaning of Truth,

<sup>11</sup>James, op. cit., pp. 48-49.

<sup>12</sup>Popular Science Monthly, XIII (November, 1877-April, 1878), 286-300.

<sup>13</sup>John Dewey, Philosophy and Civilization, p. 17.

<sup>14</sup>James, op. cit., p. vii.



which appeared in 1909, is the official entrance of pragmatism into epistemology.

John Dewey, the Instrumentalist, has voluminously contributed to the pragmatic on-rush. His early pragmatic tendency is evidenced in his article appearing under the caption, "The Reflex Arc Concept in Psychology," in which he displaced the older psychological atomism entirely and regarded the mental processes as a continuity which could not be segregated from their ends.<sup>15</sup> Intelligence thus becomes an instrumental and functional factor. The Studies in Logical Theory, appearing in 1903, is an interpretation of logic from the standpoint of an objective psychology.<sup>16</sup>

Creative Intelligence, written by Dewey and others in 1917, deals with the relationship between intelligence and reality, and is an application of pragmatic thought to the various fields of philosophy. The book by Dewey, Reconstruction in Philosophy (1920), is his own analysis of the major issues of philosophy. Experience and Nature (1925), stresses experience as the method of philosophy rather than its subject matter. Reality is what is found by and through experience in a natural setting. The chapter, "The Development of American Pragmatism," in Philosophy and Civilization (1931), contains an accurate account of the development of pragmatism.

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<sup>15</sup>Edna Heidbreder, Seven Psychologies, pp. 209-210.

<sup>16</sup>Dewey, op. cit., pp. 27-28.

The outstanding works on pragmatism by F. C. S. Schiller, the English Humanist, are Humanism (1903), and Studies in Humanism (1907). Schiller gives man the central position in the development of philosophical content.

The Principles of Pragmatism, by H. H. Bawden, is a significant contribution in the interpretive field. William Caldwell, in Pragmatism and Idealism, points out the general characteristics of pragmatism as contrasted with idealism. Paul Carus, in Truth on Trial, presents a resume of the pragmatic position in the field of epistemology. A metaphysical view of pragmatism is established by Sidney Hook in his book, The Metaphysical Implications of Pragmatism. T. T. Lafferty presents a pertinent discussion of metaphysical pragmatism in the Journal of Philosophy, 1932.<sup>17</sup> I. W. Riley, Chapter IX, "Pragmatism," presents the pragmatic movement in his book, American Thought from Puritanism to Pragmatism and Beyond. S. S. White, in his comparison of Schiller and Dewey, shows especially the contrasting features of instrumentalism and humanism.<sup>18</sup> There are brief analyses of pragmatism in A History of Philosophy, vol. 2, by Fuller, and Introduction to Philosophy, by Patrick.

Excellent critical examinations of pragmatism are found in What is Pragmatism, by J. B. Pratt, and in Pragmatism and

<sup>17</sup>"Some Metaphysical Implications of the Pragmatic Theory of Knowledge," Journal of Philosophy, XXIX (April, 1932), 197-207.

<sup>18</sup>A Comparison of the Philosophies of F.C.S. Schiller and John Dewey.

its Critics, by F. W. Moore. The Philosophy of Personalism, by A. C. Knudson, presents a brief criticism of the tenets of the pragmatic philosophy. Professor Brightman critically evaluates the theory in his Introduction to Philosophy. William Hocking presents critical material in "Action and Certainty," Journal of Philosophy, April, 1930. Mary Whitten Calkins, the able exponent of Hegelian idealism, briefly considers the pragmatic theory of truth in her work, The Persistent Problems of Philosophy. Professor C. B. Pyle calls attention to the concept of a self as over against a mechanistic epistemology. Especially significant in this regard is his article, "Some Aspects of Dewey's Philosophy," in The Techné, January-February, 1930.

This review of literature is not, by any means, an exhaustive account of the literature available in the field, but claims only to present the more significant writings concerning the pragmatic concept of truth.

## CHAPTER II

### TRUTH AS SATISFACTORY

#### A Subjective Philosophy

Psychological functionalism places major emphasis on practical consequences and utility. The purpose for which activity is carried on is, however, bound up inextricably with organismic needs. While the concept of consequences or ends is the major and final concept, yet the needs which those consequences serve is logically prior to those consequences.

As previously suggested, pragmatic truth is a functional epistemology. It places the emphasis on truth as consequential. But just as ends are a projection of needs, so a consequence is true only in so far as it satisfies the needs. The concept of satisfaction assigns a definitive content to consequence. These two elements of the truth relation are inseparable in experience and exist as complementary to each other.

Professor Woodworth uses the word "need" to define activity, largely unlearned, which exists, not for ulterior ends, but for their own sakes.<sup>1</sup> James speaks of this same concept in terms of instinct, and explains activity on those

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<sup>1</sup>R. S. Woodworth, Psychology, p. 246.

subjective, instinctual grounds.<sup>2</sup> It is this appeal to subjective grounds for belief and action which he carries over into The Will to Believe, in which he reconstructs the intellectual concepts to meet the deeper emotional nature of man.

It is James' purpose to point out the impossibility of making all choices on pure intellectual grounds, and to show that thinking depends for its existence on the emotional, feeling tone. A hypothesis, he goes on to state, does not possess liveness intrinsically, but only in relation to the individual's "passional nature" to which that hypothesis appeals. It is upon this ground that the hypothesis becomes an option. The particular option is chosen because it appeals to and satisfies desire and emotional interest. In speaking of this subjective element in belief James says:

The thesis I defend is, briefly stated, thus:  
Our passional nature not only lawfully may, but must, decide an option between propositions, whenever it is a genuine option that cannot by its nature be decided on intellectual grounds....<sup>3</sup>

This freedom, or right to believe, then covers only those "...living options which the intellect of the individual cannot by itself resolve...."<sup>4</sup> This latter statement suggests that some hypotheses may be covered by the intellect alone. The question now remains: Can truth be assigned to

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<sup>2</sup>William James, The Principles of Psychology, II, 386-387.

<sup>3</sup>William James, The Will to Believe, p. 11.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 29.



a hypothesis by the intellect alone, without referring the hypothesis to the emotional interests of the passional nature?

According to the pragmatists the intellectual attempt to know truth has been a failure. The abstraction of classical philosophy is a notable example of the inadequacy of the intellect. The concrete particulars of this world are lost in the flight to the cloud-capped mountains of metaphysics. The acquisition of truth and goodness in this absolute, abstract realm leaves as yet unsolved the human struggle against confusion and evil. If truth consists in the acquisition of heavenly concepts and in the agreement with an abstract, ready made reality, what shall be done about the human world in which exist evil and error? The answer, the pragmatists assert, which the absolutists have given is simple, for they do nothing except to make evil only a small part in the larger glory of the total process or universe, as Leibnitz suggested when he spoke of God throwing the damned as a sop to the eternal fitness of reality.<sup>5</sup> This type of absolutism may suffice for the traditional intellectualist and his artificiality, but no such resolution of the truth-problem will suffice for the man who is faced with the exigencies of life.

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<sup>5</sup>James, Pragmatism, p. 27.

What, then, shall be said of the truth relation? In what does it consist since it cannot consist in an intellectual journey to another world? A certitude as found on philosophical objectivity must be given up on the grounds of its incompatibility with the issues and implications of human life. If truth cannot be found on intellectual grounds, truth must then exist, according to James, in the concept's relation to the needs and interests of the individual. This does not mean, however, that the search for truth must be given over to a hopeless despair as occasioned by the multiplicity of cross currents in experience. It means, rather, a reaffirmation of truth on the basis of working out the demands of human subjectivity.

We still pin our faith on its existence, and still believe that we gain an ever better position towards it by systematically continuing to roll up experiences and think. Our great difference from the scholastic lies in the way we face. The strength of his system lies in the principles, the origin, the terminus a quo of his thought; for us the strength is in the outcome, the upshot, the terminus ad quem. Not where it comes from but what it leads to is to decide. It matters not to an empiricist from what quarter a hypothesis may come to him; he may have acquired it by fair means or by foul; passion may have whispered or accident suggested it; but if the total drift of thinking continues to confirm it, that is what he means by its being true.<sup>6</sup>

Every man, then, notwithstanding the absolutist's precedent, has a right to believe any option that is live

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<sup>6</sup>James, The Will to Believe, p. 17.

enough to tempt his will,<sup>7</sup> that is, sufficient to warrant action because of its appeal to emotional interest and practical value.

Bawden shows this necessary relation between truth as felt and truth as thought by indicating that "...feeling is a fundamental mode of conscious activity related to cognition or thinking as the vague and undefined matrix within which the latter arises."<sup>8</sup> Truth is embedded in the subjective world of human nature.

#### Truth as Agreement

The concept of agreement constitutes the satisfactoriness of the truth relation. Truth as satisfactory is truth as agreement. An idea is satisfactory as it comes close up to the object, as it finds the terminus to which it is disposed.<sup>9</sup>

Agreement takes place in the sphere of reality. Reality exists in three aspects: concrete facts, mental ideas, and the body of previous truth.<sup>10</sup>

Factual agreement is the relation the idea holds between itself and the concrete fact of reality. Truth does

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 29.

<sup>8</sup>Bawden, op. cit., p. 128.

<sup>9</sup>William James, The Meaning of Truth, p. 158.

<sup>10</sup>William James, Pragmatism, p. 212.



not subsist in reality, for reality is neither true or false--it simply exists. Truth agrees with reality, but not in the sense of copying truth in reality. "Truth happens to an idea"<sup>11</sup> because of what is involved in the idea's relationship, in the continuum of experience, with existence or reality. The idea is viewed as functional, that is, it is to work satisfactorily in the experience continuum so as to lead to reality. This James clearly states when he says:

To 'agree' in the widest sense with a reality can only mean to be guided either straight up to it or into its surroundings, or to be put into such working touch with it as to handle either it or something connected with it better than if we disagreed.<sup>12</sup>

Whenever an idea leads "straight up to reality," truth exists as maximal.

The maximal conceivable truth in an idea would seem to be that it should lead to an actual merging of ourselves with the object, to an utter mutual confluence and identification.... Total conflux of the mind with the reality would be the absolute limit of truth, and there could be no better or more satisfying knowledge than that.<sup>13</sup>

Hence, maximal truth is the flowing of the mind so as to merge with reality. This would close up the epistemological gulf. Truth would be absolutely obtained, would happen to the idea, in its complete agreement and working with reality.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 201.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., pp. 212-213.

<sup>13</sup> William James, The Meaning of Truth, pp. 156-157.

This complete conflux of mind with reality in the obtaining of absolute truth is possible, according to James. Philosophers have usually held that the idea could only get up next to reality, but could never get so close that the mind and reality could actually meet. According to James, however, the idea, in its full obtaining of truth, is capable of pushing one right up into the surroundings of reality. This is the absolute limit of truth.

Suppose a man to be lost in the woods and overtaken by darkness. He is hungry, lonely, and deprived of the companionship of friends. While sleeping fitfully he dreams of home and upon waking thinks of home. Is his idea of home true because it corresponds to the reality home? The pragmatist would answer this in the negative, for truth is not a static property of the idea outside the experience continuum. Something must happen to the idea if it is to become true. If the idea home is to become a true idea, it must so implicate itself into the individual's experience as to lead him to the reality home. His idea of home must satisfactorily lead him home, placing him in working contact with reality.

The idea must always intervene between the knower and reality. The idea cannot immediately jump across the gulf to reality. Its truth cannot, from a causal standpoint, be regarded as abstract from experience. Truth is ambulatory, not saltatory, that is, truth exists, not in abstractions,

but in so far as the idea serves to "...ambulate towards the object under the impulse which the idea communicates."<sup>14</sup> The idea is a nexus in the chain of experiences and serves to get one either to reality or as close to reality as the idea's communicative ability admits.

This necessary intervention and ambulatory import of the idea in its relationship with reality, lays the ground for the successive relationships of ideas as necessarily involved in attaining reality. A single idea may be insufficient to communicate reality. Hence, the necessity of successive ideas in a sequential, ambulatory movement towards reality. This is the agreement of ideas as necessary in order to the agreement of reality toward which this former agreement progressively tends.

The truth, then, of an idea consists in its serviceableness in the process from a terminus a quo to a terminus ad quem.<sup>15</sup> Thus James says:

...the truth-relation is a definitely experienceable relation, and therefore describable as well as nameable; that it is not unique in kind, and neither invariable nor universal. The relation to its object that makes an idea true in any given instance, is, we say, embodied in intermediate details of reality which lead towards the object, which vary in every instance, and which in every instance can be concretely traced. The chain of workings which an opinion sets up is the opinion's truth, falsehood or irrelevancy as the case may be.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 140.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 235.

This utilization of tangible experience in arriving towards or to reality is aptly illustrated by James:

Suppose me to be sitting here in my library at Cambridge, at ten minutes' walk from 'Memorial Hall', and to be thinking truly of the latter object....

For instance, if you ask me what hall I mean by my image, and I can tell you nothing; or if I fail to point or lead you towards the Harvard Delta; or if, being led by you, I am uncertain whether the Hall I see be what I had in mind or not; you would rightly deny that I had 'meant' that particular hall at all, even tho' my mental image might to some degree have resembled it....

On the other hand, if I can lead you to the hall, and tell you of its history and present uses; if in its presence I feel my idea, however imperfect it may have been, to have led hither and to be now terminated; if the associates of the image and of the felt hall run parallel, so that each term of the one context corresponds serially, as I walk, with an answering term of the other; why then my soul was prophetic, and my idea must be, and by common consent would be, called cognizant of reality.<sup>17</sup>

The agreement of ideas with ideas, or of ideas with objects of reality, is never saltatory and extra-experiential. The idea and object are always surrounded by circumstances and events existing in the empirical world. The idea and object may, as suggested above, meet each other by a "short circuit" of the fundamentum of experiential circumstances, or by travelling the full length of the fundamentum.<sup>18</sup> This latter concept or agreement is the successive, ambulatory

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., pp. 104-105.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 165.

agreement of idea with idea in the process of bringing the starting idea through other ideas to reality.

In the progression through experiences towards reality, a given terminus is reached and held because of its satisfactoriness in the process. But there is "an ideal limit" to which thought leads. The notion of a possible ideal limit serves to render any given terminus below this limit unsatisfactory. It is perceived only as a provisional terminus, serving only as a means of acquiring a truer idea that will lead farther on to reality. The truth relation is dynamic. "The truer idea is the one that pushes farther; so we are ever beckoned on by the ideal notion of an ultimate completely satisfactory terminus."<sup>19</sup>

Maximal truth is determined by maximum satisfaction obtained in the idea's coming to its ideal terminus. Relative satisfaction is determined by the degree of proximity of idea to ideal terminus. The less removed a provisional terminus is from reality, the truer and more satisfactory the idea is.

The concept of "the satisfactory" as the definitive content of truth is not an arbitrary position, but one that enters into an account of truth through experiential and logical necessity. An individual, possessing as he does certain needs and demands, is naturally going to assign

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<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 159.



truth to a concept which, in the flux of experience, satisfies those needs and fulfills those demands. This is but a restatement of James' thesis as found in The Will to Believe. He substantiates his basic premise by writing thus:

I can conceive no other objective content to the notion of ideally perfect truth than that of penetration into such a terminus, nor can I conceive that the notion would ever have grown up, or that true ideas would ever have been sorted out from false or idle ones, save for the greater sum of satisfactions, intellectual or practical, which the truer ones brought with them. Can we imagine a man absolutely satisfied with an idea and will all its relations to his other ideas and to his sensible experiences, who should yet not take its content as a true account of reality. The matter of the true is thus absolutely identical with the matter of the satisfactory.<sup>20</sup>

It is by this time evident that the concept of satisfaction can be regarded only as subjective. An idea is true as it satisfies in a particular instance and for a particular individual. It cannot be made a universal truth to impinge itself upon all men. The truth of an idea is truth only for the owner of the idea. Truth is individual, subjective, and relative. The nominalism of James is at this point evident.

To be true, it appears, means, for that individual, to work satisfactorily for him; and the working and the satisfaction, since they vary from case to case, admit of no universal description. What works is true and represents a reality, for the individual for whom it works.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., pp. 159-160.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 243.

In considering satisfaction as one aspect of the truth relation, it is well to note that humanism, though primarily emphasizing truth as consequential, places emphasis on the goodness of those consequences. Professor James mentions this element of humanism when he says: "In England the word [pragmatism] has been used more broadly still, to cover the notion that the truth of any statement consists in the consequences and particularly in their being good consequences."<sup>22</sup>

The concept of good is defined by Schiller to mean its "...bearing upon some human interest."<sup>23</sup> The good is an assigned meaning to the concept of consequence. A concept is true, or good, in so far as it "...arouses an interest or forwards an end."<sup>24</sup> Truth must affect action and must do so in a good way, that is forward human interest. Good, as used by Schiller, is really an antonym of truth as rational and static.<sup>25</sup> It appears, then, that humanistic truth is essentially a dynamic tool in affecting and altering reality for the benefit of the human order. As such, it involves satisfaction, but basically regards truth as consequential, while James places a more distinct emphasis on truth as satisfactory in the agreement of ideas with ideas and with factual reality.

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 52.

<sup>23</sup> F. C. S. Schiller, Studies in Humanism, p. 5.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

Moral Truth

While James devotes little of his pragmatic writings to the moral life, yet his concept of subjective satisfaction would compel him to regard the moral in a nominalistic and subjective manner. Moral truths, as other truths, admit of no universal description. For anything to be true means for a particular individual. Because of this subjective description of truth, it seems necessary to regard moral truth as true only for him who holds the particular moral idea. The individual's own evaluation of a moral concept is the last word as far as moral import is concerned.

Moral standards have been evaluated by two methods, the historical and absolute. The empirical evaluation of moral standards from the standpoints of psychology or anthropology is inadequate at the point of involving or predicting future moral action. On the other hand, to examine abstract and eternal concepts of right and good which cannot be resolved into particulars or causally referred to the human situation, is, according to Tufts, also inadequate as far as the moral life is concerned. Moral truth must be pragmatically defined.<sup>26</sup>

The application of the pragmatic rule to the acquisition of moral truth is a relocation of moral responsibility. The moral situation, its good and value, is to be discovered by

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<sup>26</sup>John Dewey, et al., Creative Intelligence, "The Moral Life and the Construction of Values and Standards," J. H. Tufts, pp. 354-355.



intellectual inquiry in an experiential continuum, and not by the extra-experiential cognizance of the eternal world. This is essentially the moral reconstruction of the pragmatists. It is in this regard that Dewey writes:

Let us, however, follow the pragmatic rule, and in order to discover the meaning of the idea ask for its consequences. Then it surprisingly turns out that the primary significance of the unique and morally ultimate character of the concrete situation is to transfer the weight and burden of morality to intelligence. It does not destroy responsibility; it only locates it. A moral situation is one in which judgment and choice are required antecedently to overt action. The practical meaning of the situation--that is to say the action needed to satisfy it--is not self evident. It has to be searched for. There are conflicting desires and alternative apparent goods. What is needed is to find the right course of action, the right good. Hence, inquiry is exacted: observation of the detailed makeup of the situation; analysis into its diverse factors; clarification of what is obscure; discounting of the more insistent and vivid traits; tracing the consequences of the various modes of action that suggest themselves; regarding the decision reached as hypothetical and tentative until the anticipated or supposed consequences which led to its adoption have been squared with actual consequences. This inquiry is intelligence.<sup>27</sup>

The scientific intellect is regarded by Dewey as supreme in discovering moral values. While he gives due place to interest and desire; yet the subjective, emotional factors and the appeal which tentative concepts make to them, must be intellectually evaluated if the highest and most worthy

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<sup>27</sup>John Dewey, Reconstruction in Philosophy, pp. 163-164

moral life is to be pursued. However, intellectual appraisal is not carried on abstracted from experience, but within the stream of experience. Dewey gets farther from the subjective, emotional pole than does James. Dewey's emphasis on intelligence in the moral life rescues moral philosophy from hedonism and pure emotional subjectivity.

Tufts also places intelligence and reason, judgment and choice, as necessarily complementary to the primal and foundational factors of the biological processes and interrelations. The latter factors find their deepest meanings only as intelligence becomes involved in the moral situation.<sup>28</sup>

The pragmatic definition of the moral life, has in the words of Dewey, produced the following changes in moral philosophy:

First, Inquiry, discovery takes the same place in morals that they have come to occupy in sciences of nature....

In the second place, every case where moral action is required becomes of equal moral importance and urgency with every other....

We note thirdly the effect in destroying the roots of Phariseism.... No individual or group will be judged by whether they come up to or fall short of some fixed result, but by the direction in which they are moving....

In the fourth place, the process of growth, of improvement and progress, rather than the static outcome and result, becomes the significant thing.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>John Dewey, et al., Creative Intelligence, "The Moral Life and the Construction of Values and Standards," by Tufts, pp. 357-358.

<sup>29</sup>Dewey, Reconstruction in Philosophy, pp. 174-177.

The pragmatic view of the moral life does not divide the traditionally ideal and the material. Intrinsic and extrinsic ends become one and the same thing. Those interests, such as economics, which once were regarded as instrumental, are now regarded as having essential worth in the moral progress of mankind. The material perspective is a moral one in that it serves to ameliorate existing ills. Scientific progress is valuable intrinsically because of its contributions to human welfare and progress. Materialism, as well as other concepts, is a final good.<sup>30</sup>

The moral life is socially elaborated. It is a process of education. The social setting is always contributing to moral thought and occasioning moral growth. "Moral independence ... means arrest of growth, isolation means induration."<sup>31</sup> Only as one's moral concepts are kept alive and growing by the contributions of a dynamic society can these concepts serve in fulfilling the demands of experience.

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., pp. 170-174.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 185.

## CHAPTER III

### TRUTH AS CONSEQUENTIAL

#### Historical Perspective

The ancient Greeks had two words for wisdom: "sophia" (speculative wisdom), and "phronesis" (practical wisdom). Intrinsically and internally they had nothing to do with each other. Pure knowledge was entirely unrelated to action.<sup>1</sup>

The pragmatic thesis is, essentially, that an idea must eventuate in consequence if it is to be true. Wisdom is essentially practical. This chord of practicality which pragmatism has struck is, in the main, a twentieth century reaction against the traditional absolutism which has characterized philosophy since the time of Plato.

Plato's absolutism was a reaction against both dynamism and staticism. The inconstancy of the Heraclitean flux rendered the mind incapable of knowing the concept before it was replaced by another. The static and unitary world of the Eleatics also made knowledge impossible in the exclusion of difference.<sup>2</sup> To overcome this difficulty, Plato introduced the concept of ideas, or an ideal world of divine reality laid up in heaven, related in an archetypal manner to the

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<sup>1</sup>F. C. S. Schiller, Humanism, p. 24.

<sup>2</sup>Schiller, Studies in Humanism, pp. 51-52.

sensible world, and constituting "...a stable centre for a fixed scheme of classification, whereby the fleeting flux of indefinite and infinite perceptions could be measured and apprehended."<sup>3</sup> Thus the famous correspondence theory of knowledge came into existence.

The correspondence theory of truth posits "... the well-known dictum that truth consists in an 'agreement' or 'correspondence' of thought with its object, viz. reality."<sup>4</sup> Truth resided in the absolute world, and became evident in the empirical world only in so far as the concept copied the eternal concept. Thus James says:

The vulgar notion of correspondence here is that the thoughts must copy the reality--cognitio fit per assimilationem cogniti et cognoscentis; and philosophy, without having ever fairly sat down to the question, seems to have instinctively accepted this idea: propositions are held true if they copy the external thought; terms are held true if they copy extra-mental realities.<sup>5</sup>

Plato's absolutism remained the dominant philosophy and became crystallized in early and medieval thought. The morning light of a new era became visible when Francis Bacon stood on Pisgah's height and saw from afar off a land of promise. The introduction of inductive logic and the assertion that knowledge is power in man's domination of nature is essentially pragmatic. However, the Jordan of English rationalism and empiricism, and German idealism intervened between

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 52.

<sup>4</sup>Schiller, Humanism, p. 45.

<sup>5</sup>James, The Meaning of Truth, pp. 78-79.



Bacon's vision and James' crossing.

When the pragmatists came on the scene, they found several flaws in absolutism. In the first place, there was the epistemological gulf and its attendant difficulties. An extra-experiential chasm existed between the knower and the object, over which the knower must leap to copy eternal truth. But in making the leap the knower abandoned the empirical world, disregarded the factors and demands of experience, and acquired a truth that by its very nature must remain on the other side of the chasm inapplicable to experience.

Secondly, the cognizance of an absolute truth is inadequate to determine truth. For how is one to know that his conception of absolute truth is really the acquisition of truth? In what way can a priori inspection establish the truth of a claim? To leap blindly over the gulf to absolute truth is to render impossible any method of evaluating a truth-claim. There is no way of knowing that one knows absolute truth, because he cannot, outside of experience, be sure his idea is really copying reality.<sup>6</sup> Absolutism is inadequate because it has no standard to determine whether a concept is really in agreement with reality.<sup>7</sup>

Again, speculative wisdom and scholasticism merely copied and reduplicated mentally the ideal world. Should not thought,

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., pp. 18-19.

<sup>7</sup> F. W. Moore, Pragmatism and its Critics, p. 131.

however, have a higher mission than imitation? The pragmatists have felt that thought ought to exist in order to elevate man.<sup>8</sup>

But if truth is to have value for experience, the gulf must be filled with the intermediaries of experience through which truth may obtain, and in which truth may become of practical consequence.

Absolutism found itself in a dilemma, for

...in order to effect a real connection of the absolute with human experience, purpose must be filled with all the rich content of human impulses, wants, and all the machinery of social organization for controlling and satisfying and developing these. But in order to preserve the changeless perfection of reality, purpose can have for its content only an algebraic correspondence with the absolute system of ideas which makes it even more vacuous than Plato's 'contemplation'.<sup>9</sup>

Truth, then, cannot be assuredly obtained apart from the validation in experience of a truth-claim. Secondly, truth has no value unless it becomes involved in human experience. Abstract truth is inadequate at the points of certain attainment and practical value. The pragmatists have resolved the dilemma of absolutism by abandoning absolutism altogether in favor of finding and making truth in the crucible of human experience.

The pragmatic germ is found in Kant's Metaphysic of Morals. A pragmatic imperative, Kant states, is dependent,

<sup>8</sup>James, The Meaning of Truth, p. 80.

<sup>9</sup>Moore, op. cit., pp. 68-69.

not on an objective necessity, but on a subjective necessity of human welfare.<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, he interprets "practical" to mean the validity of the a priori, because of its objective purity, to regulate conduct.<sup>11</sup> Practical necessity exists in the a priori, but pragmatic necessity exists in the "... precaution for the general welfare."<sup>12</sup>

Peirce, in noting this Kantian distinction of the two terms, refused to call his pragmatic system "practicalism," insisting rather that the rational purport of concepts involved necessarily the bearing they should have on human welfare and the conduct of life.<sup>13</sup>

Peirce was concerned with determining first what was a clear idea. The conventional notion of clarity asserted that a clear idea was one universally recognizable and capable of being defined in clear, precise terms.<sup>14</sup> Belief, Peirce states, does not exist merely in terms of passive awareness, and the truth of a belief does not consist simply in a subjective, psychological clarity. A subjective clarity cannot indicate the real clarity of the idea. Peirce was

<sup>10</sup> T. K. Abbott, translator, Kant's Critique of Practical Reason, "Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Morals," pp. 33-34.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 34, footnotes.

<sup>13</sup> Dewey, Philosophy and Civilization, p. 14.

<sup>14</sup> Peirce, op. cit., p. 286.



opposed to Locke at this point, for Locke regarded truth as the subjective agreement of ideas.<sup>15</sup>

Belief exists in order to produce habits, not just for intellectual past-time. Hence, Peirce wrote:

The essence of belief is the establishment of habit, and different beliefs are distinguished by the different modes of action to which they give rise. If beliefs do not differ in this respect, if they appease the same doubt by producing the same rule of action, then no more differences in the manner of consciousness of them can make them different beliefs, any more than playing a tune in different keys is playing different tunes.<sup>16</sup>

The clarity of an idea, then, consists in the effect it has on action. In speaking of consequences as the norm of clarity, Peirce says:

It appears, then, that the rule for attaining ... clearness of apprehension is as follows: Consider what effects which might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conceptions to have. Then, our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object.<sup>17</sup>

It is Peirce's basic concept of truth as consequential which has undergone elaboration by the three leading pragmatists, James, Dewey, and Schiller. In 1898 pragmatism got officially under way when James delivered his address, "Philosophical Conceptions and Practical Results," in which he contended that a philosophic concept could have meaning only in its particular and consequential application in experience.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>A. S. Pringle-Pattison, editor, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding by John Locke, p. 255.

<sup>16</sup>Peirce, op. cit., p. 291.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 293.

<sup>18</sup>Dewey, Philosophy and Civilization, p. 17.

The Impact of the Functional  
and Instrumental Perspectives

The absolutists regarded the self as a separate, unique entity or as "... the attribute or epiphenomenal manifestation of an entity...."<sup>19</sup> The intellect existed as a pure entity and functioned, in so far as truth was concerned, in a world of Platonic ideas. Reason, then, did not enter into experience, but existed as an abstraction. Reason and experience were antithetical.<sup>20</sup>

The epistemology which this philosophy of the self promoted has been known as the spectator view of knowledge. The prime function of the self was simply to look at and mentally reduplicate truth as existing in an absolute world. Knowledge thus had no relation to life's issues. This view of knowledge, Dewey says, was held by the absolutists as a

... purely compensatory doctrine which men of an intellectual turn have built up to console themselves for the actual and social impotency of the calling of thought to which they are devoted. Forbidden by conditions and held back by lack of courage from making their knowledge a factor in the determination of the course of events, they have sought a refuge of complacency in the notion that knowing is something too sublime to be contaminated by contact with things of change and practice. They have transformed knowing into a morally irresponsible estheticism.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Bawden, op. cit., p. 32.

<sup>20</sup> Dewey, "A Recovery of Philosophy," Creative Intelligence, p. 20.

<sup>21</sup> Dewey, Reconstruction in Philosophy, p. 117.

James has rejected the spectator theory by asserting the dynamic and practical import of the cognitive function. Cognition as a function of consciousness implies two things, a state of consciousness in which cognition takes place and the existence of a feeling.<sup>22</sup> Feeling is here meant a subjective state of consciousness which has no reference to possible functioning of consciousness.<sup>23</sup> But a subjective feeling, or idea, becomes knowledge only when it takes cognizance of realities. "For the feeling to be cognitive," James says, "in the specific sense, then, it must be self-transcendent...."<sup>24</sup> Knowledge is more than a subjective, psychical fact.

The idea resembles the reality, not by leaping across the gulf and imitating reality, but only as it "... knows whatever reality it resembles, and either directly or indirectly operates on [it]. If it resembles without operating, it is a dream; if it operates without resembling, it is an error."<sup>25</sup> Cognition, then, is functional. It renders knowledge possible as it operates on and agrees with reality in an experience continuum. Knowledge is valid, or truth obtains, whenever the idea is both consequential and in satisfactory agreement with reality.

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<sup>22</sup>James, The Meaning of Truth, p. 1.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 28.

Dewey regards consciousness in even less existential terms than does James. The pragmatic self is not a "given" prior to experience. It is something to be wrought out in experience.<sup>26</sup> The only identity which a person has is a functional identity. Individuality is not a uniqueness of essential existence or the possession of a strictly personal and unsharable consciousness, but the ability to effect a concentration of the range of social forces.<sup>27</sup> There is no pure intellect whose purpose it is to function in the realm of abstractions. Mind is not a unique entity, whose function is to copy reality, but is the ability of the experiencing organism to transform experience. Knowledge, therefore, must issue from experience and be verified by its consequences in experience.

Lafferty defines consciousness in the following terms:

Consciousness is found in the actual organizing of perspectives, be they in terms of fields of force, or of environment, or of consentient sets, or more generally, of experience. The older parallelism located consciousness in the individual. But now consciousness is found in the reflective scientific activity of an individual already located in an experiential world.<sup>28</sup>

Dewey defines mind functionally, in terms of what it does rather than what it is. In this regard, he says, the

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<sup>26</sup>Dewey, Reconstruction in Philosophy, p. 194.

<sup>27</sup>Bawden, op. cit., p. 75.

<sup>28</sup>Lafferty, op. cit., p. 198.

"Ability to anticipate future consequences and to respond to them as stimuli to present behavior may well define what is meant by a mind or by 'consciousness.'"<sup>29</sup> Again he says, "... consciousness is not a separate realm of being, but is the manifest quality of existence when nature is most free and most active."<sup>30</sup>

Consciousness appears under tension. When the process of action is impeded or interrupted, consciousness comes into existence to resolve the difficulty so that action may continue in the proper direction.<sup>31</sup>

Since, according to the pragmatists, there is no essential self, experience is not simply a knowledge-affair.<sup>32</sup> It does not consist in a passive acceptance of an unyielding environment. Man does not need to fear experience as an unsafe guide for life; he does not need to flee for refuge to the world of pure reason as the ancients did. Man's refuge is his mind, functionally interpreted, which is to lay hold upon his environment, transform and adapt it to his own interests and needs. Experience, then is active and dynamic as the experiencing organism utilizes and

<sup>29</sup> Dewey, "A Recovery of Philosophy," Creative Intelligence, pp. 39-40.

<sup>30</sup> John Dewey, Experience and Nature, p. 393.

<sup>31</sup> Bawden, op. cit., p. 103.

<sup>32</sup> Dewey, "A Recovery of Philosophy," Creative Intelligence, pp. 7-8.



reshapes his environment. In the highest sense, man makes his experience and environment.<sup>33</sup>

In this regard Bawden says:

Experience, in this sense, is the whole web of life, the universe from an individual point of view.... Experience embraces what-I-call-myself-and-all-that-I-feel-and-know-and-do. It is the dynamic system or process of my life,<sup>34</sup> with its filling of facts and ideas and events.

Significant also is Dewey's statement that

Experience, to return to our positive conception, is primarily what is undergone in connexion with activities whose import lies in their objective consequences--their bearing upon future experiences.<sup>35</sup>

As to its origin, knowledge is secondary, not primary.

"Knowledge is not something separate and self-sufficing, but is involved in the process by which life is sustained and evolved."<sup>36</sup> Sensations have no cognitive value or quality per se; they are but inducements and invitations to act in a needed way. They are clues in behavior and directive factors in the adaptation of life to its environment.<sup>37</sup>

Reason, then, is not a priori and eternal, impinging itself upon experience. It is suggested and tested in experience, and utilized to enrich that experience. "For

<sup>33</sup>Dewey, Reconstruction in Philosophy, pp. 77-87.

<sup>34</sup>Bawden, op. cit., p. 52.

<sup>35</sup>Dewey, "A Recovery of Philosophy," Creative Intelligence, p. 20.

<sup>36</sup>Dewey, Reconstruction in Philosophy, p. 87.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid.



reason is experimental intelligence, conceived after the pattern of science, and used in the creation of social arts; it has something to do."<sup>38</sup> It follows that logic is not a matter of norms and laws of abstract reason, but is "... a clarified and systematized formulation of the procedures of thinking as will enable the desired reconstruction to go on more economically and efficiently."<sup>39</sup> Logic is empirical as well as normative. Its normative character is based on its empirical character. The leading principles of logic "... are interpreted not as intuitions but as habits of thought which, having proved effective in adjusting, modifying and reshaping our environment, have become fixed and normative for practice."<sup>40</sup>

Functionalism has reconstructed psychology, epistemology, and logic. The self is a functional identity, functioning in a reciprocal and dynamic manner within the matrix of its environment, creating thereby an experience in which, by which, and for which any normative quality takes on existence. It is evident, therefore, that truth may exist only in reference to a functional and dynamic experience.

Dewey has called his functionalism "instrumentalism." Instrumentalism means that "... ideas are instrumental to

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 96.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 135.

<sup>40</sup> Sidney Hook, The Metaphysics of Pragmatism, p. 63.

action: they are secondary, derived from action, and they are teleological, dynamogenic, point forward to action, and, in so far as they win a permanent place as ideas, it is just as delicate types of action-systems."<sup>41</sup> An instrument is defined by Dewey as "... a thing used as an agency for some concluding event."<sup>42</sup> In another work he says:

Instrumentalism is an attempt to establish a precise logical theory of concepts, of judgments and inferences in their various forms, by considering primarily how thought functions in the experimental determinations of future consequences.<sup>43</sup>

Thought is instrumental in that it enables the reconstruction of experience or the instrumentalization of nature.<sup>44</sup> Thought is nascent action and is to terminate in overt, instrumental activity.

While instrumentalism deals mainly with thought and logic as empirical, nevertheless, it does pertain to the theory of truth as consequential. The instrumental character of thought necessitates a functional definition of truth. The influence of instrumentalism on the theory of truth is excellently stated by William Hooking:

The central thesis of instrumentalism I take to be this:

<sup>41</sup>Bawden, op. cit., p. 25.

<sup>42</sup>Dewey, Experience and Nature, p. 128.

<sup>43</sup>Dewey, Philosophy and Civilization, p. 26.

<sup>44</sup>Hook, op. cit., p. 19.

(1) That the meaning of conceptions and propositions is always functional. They spring not out of blank presentation, but out of hesitation, perplexity: they are projects of solution, promissory and hypothetical in character. Their validity or truth consists in doing what they thus claim to do, namely, in resolving the difficulty and in being, in this sense, verified.

From this would necessarily follow these corollaries:

(2) That there is no strictly immediate truth;

(3) That there is no strictly stable or eternal truth;

(4) That there is no a priori truth; and, in sum,

(5) That there can be no significant theoretical certainty.<sup>45</sup>

These conclusions are evident, following from the psychological and epistemological alterations of the functional approach. Stating the above in a positive manner: Truth must be mediated in experience; truth, then, is relative to experience and changes as experience undergoes and effects transformations; truth as regulative is developed out of, and based on experience; and, finally, truth as verified in action and consequences is the only certainty--a certainty for only the immediate circumstance to which the concept is relevant.

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<sup>45</sup>W. G. Hocking, "Action and Certainty," Journal of Philosophy, XXVII (April, 1930), 228.

Truth as Workable

Thought must do more than symbolize reality; it must actually work and bear fruits if it is to be true. The pragmatic view of truth is "The attitude of looking away from first things, principles, 'categories,' supposed necessities; and of looking towards last things, fruits, consequences, facts."<sup>46</sup>

Truth is a relation between two things, the idea and objective reality. If the idea serves only to copy reality, the idea is useless in so far as serving human ends are concerned. If thinking has no consequential bearing on life, why think in the first place? Indeed, it is illogical to suppose that thought has no consequential import. A man does not think so he can think some more, anymore than he walks in order to walk or sleeps in order to sleep. Thinking is futile when defined in terms of itself. It must be filled with purpose and consequence.<sup>47</sup>

Absolutism does not assign definiteness to an idea. The pragmatists ask what really consists in the idea's likeness to its object? If the idea exists "as" the object, what goes to make up this "as"-ness? The "as"-ness has definite and assignable meaning only as it is interpreted functionally. Thus James says:

<sup>46</sup>James, Pragmatism, pp. 54-55.

<sup>47</sup>Hook, op. cit., pp. 42-43.

I myself agree most cordially that for an idea to be true the object must be 'as' the idea declares it, but I explicate the 'as'-ness as meaning the idea's verifiability.... I maintain that there is no meaning left in this notion of as-ness or trueness if no reference to the possibility of concrete working on the part of the idea is made.<sup>48</sup>

James illustrates the incompetency of the absolutist's analysis of truth by the vocable "skrkl." This idea can have no possible working, yet claims to be true. It is, however, impossible to assign trueness to the idea because it cannot lead to the object which it means. On the other hand, the idea may be true; it may agree with a heretofore unnoticed object in the universe.<sup>49</sup> But the absolutist who disregards verifiability is lost in an epistemological wilderness.

If truth is to be found it must be discovered in some way other than in immediately copying reality. Hence, James makes a functional demand of truth.

I, on the other hand, demand a cosmic environment of some kind to establish which of them [truth or falsity] is there rather than utter irrelevancy.<sup>1</sup> I then say, first, that unless some sort of natural path exists between 'skrkl' and that object, distinguishable among the innumerable pathways that run among all the realities of the universe, linking them promiscuously with one another, there is nothing there to constitute even the possibility of its referring to that object rather than to any other.

<sup>48</sup>James, The Meaning of Truth, p. 170.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., pp. 170-171.

I say furthermore that unless it have some tendency to follow up that path, there is nothing to constitute its intention to refer to the object in question.

Finally, I say that unless the path be strewn with possibilities of frustration or encouragement, and offer some sort of terminal satisfaction or contradiction, there is nothing to constitute its agreement or disagreement with that object, or to constitute the as-ness (or 'not-as-ness') in which the trueness (or falseness) is said to consist.<sup>50</sup>

A true idea possesses a truth tendency. Truth tendency is the ideo-motor content of an idea by which it is determined to work in a particular manner.

What that something is in the case of truth psychology tells us: the idea has associates peculiar to itself, motor as well as ideational; it tends by its place and nature to call these into being, one after another; and the appearance of them in succession is what we mean by the 'workings' of the idea. According to what they are, does the trueness or falseness which the idea harbored come to light.<sup>51</sup>

The truth of an idea means its ability to convey the knower into a working agreement with reality. The notion of truth as a working agreement with reality assumes such epistemological importance only because of the importance of reality. An idea possesses practical value only because of the practical value and importance of the object. Having granted the importance of the object, its idea can become true only as it leads to working agreement with the object.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid., pp. 171-173.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., pp. 174-175.

<sup>52</sup> James, Pragmatism, p. 205.



Truth as functional is an affair of leading--"leading that is useful because it is into quarters that contain objects that are important."<sup>53</sup> If the idea leads as the object would, if, in following the leadings of the idea, the idea benefits as the object would, then on the ground of these consequences, the idea may be regarded as true.<sup>54</sup>

James states explicitly this functional definition of truth by saying: "'The true,' to put it very briefly, is only the expedient in the way of our thinking, just as 'the right' is only the expedient in the way of our behaving."<sup>55</sup>

Thinking is instrumental in that a difference is to result from thinking. It is in this difference wherein truth becomes evident. "The idea is thus, when functionally considered, an instrument for enabling us the better to have to do with the object and to act about it."<sup>56</sup>

In the case of a tooth-ache, the pragmatist would ask, why is thought added to the already existing tooth and ache? A connection already exists between the tooth and the ache. Is thought added only to symbolize that connection between the tooth and the ache? If thought is a static addition of a factor which makes no difference in the situation, the ache may as well be referred "... to the phase of the moon,

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., p. 215.

<sup>54</sup>James, The Meaning of Truth, p. 167.

<sup>55</sup>James, Pragmatism, p. 222.

<sup>56</sup>James, The Meaning of Truth, p. 140.

the day of the week, or anything else we may fancy."<sup>57</sup> If thought has any excuse for existence it must be because of its purpose in effecting changes and making differences. If truth is to be applied to an idea, it follows, therefore, that the idea must bear fruits in experience. Truth can obtain only in consequences--satisfactory consequences.

The practicality of truth is found only in a relative and concrete perspective. No abstract reality is held to exist as a determiner of truth, conduct, and destiny. Man exists in a reality which is his own personal, immediate experience.<sup>58</sup> Experience cannot be understood from without, or by referring it to another world. It is impossible to leap out of the multiplicities of experience to a transcendental vantage ground so as to give experience an other-worldly direction or content. Hence the method of arriving at the truth is immanent.

By saying that its method is immanent we mean that experience must be interpreted from within. We cannot jump out of our skins, as Professor James says; we cannot pull ourselves up by our own bootstraps. We find ourselves in mid-stream of the Niagara of experience, and may define what it is only by working back and forth within the current. "We don't know where we're going, but we're on the way."<sup>59</sup>

A concept can exist only in a concrete instance. A man is prudent only as he acts prudently; he is not prudent

<sup>57</sup>Moore, Pragmatism and its Critics, p. 91.

<sup>58</sup>Schiller, Humanism, p. 192.

<sup>59</sup>Bawden, op. cit., pp. 44-45.

abstractly. Particular instances of prudential acts constitutes prudence.<sup>60</sup> Prudence, viewed as an abstract concept, is legitimate only as an aid in handling particulars. But when this abstract concept comes to mind, it must point to particulars. The use of abstract concept is legitimate "... only when we get back into concrete particulars by their means, bearing the consequences in our minds, and enriching our notion of the original objects therewithal."<sup>61</sup>

Truth obtains, then, not in an absolute, generic sense, but in particular and concrete instances in which a given idea operates successfully. "There is no truth in general or in the abstract: there are only truths."<sup>62</sup> Truths are the beneficial consequences of given ideas in given circumstances.

If truth exists only in consequences, is it necessary to wait consequences before predicating truth of a concept? Can ideas be regarded as true before they are in operation and terminate successfully? This question was answered by James in terms of verifiability. An idea need not wait verification, it is true if verifiable.

Essentially, of course, truth comes through the route of verification. The verity of an idea is "... an event,

<sup>60</sup>James, The Meaning of Truth, pp. 149-150.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., p. 246.

<sup>62</sup>Bawden, op. cit., p. 48.

a process: the process namely of its verifying itself, its verifi-  
cation. Its validity is the process of its valid-  
ation."<sup>63</sup> These terms, in turn, refer to the practical con-  
sequences of the idea.

Verification is effected in the fundamentum of exper-  
iential circumstances. It has already been suggested that  
the idea may travel the full length of the verification pro-  
cess, but that it also may be short circuited. The verifica-  
tion may be curtailed when it is, on a credit basis, seen  
that the idea is capable of verification. So long as an idea  
is capable of being verified, "... and a satisfactory passage  
through it between the object and the idea is possible, that  
idea will both be true, and will have been true of that ob-  
ject, whether fully developed verification has taken place  
or not."<sup>64</sup>

Truth is largely a "credit system." Hence, James  
states:

Our thoughts and beliefs 'pass', so long as  
nothing challenges them, just as bank-notes pass  
so long as nobody refuses them. But all this  
points to direct face-to-face verifications some-  
where, without which the fabric of truth collap-  
ses, like a financial system with no cash-basis  
whatever.

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Indirectly or only potentially, verifying  
processes may thus be true as well as full

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<sup>63</sup>James, Pragmatism, p. 201.

<sup>64</sup>James, The Meaning of Truth, p. 165.

verification-processes. They work as true processes would work, give us the same advantages, and claim our recognition for the same reasons.<sup>65</sup>

The statement that a man is mortal is true before the man dies. Its trueness lies in its verifiability. Thus James says:

... an idea may practically be credited with truth before the verification process has been exhaustively carried out--the existence of the mass of verifying circumstances is enough. When potentiality counts for actuality in so many other cases, one does not see why it may not so count here.<sup>66</sup>

Verifiability necessarily presupposes an outer reality. If the verifiable idea is at the present out of experience and yet regarded as true, it is imperative that the idea's point of departure and return be located in concrete situations. Now, this ability of the idea to short-circuit the fundamentum of experiences, or to pass over a series of experiences, exists only because there are "... certain objective structural permanencies or natural conformations that condition practical manipulation."<sup>67</sup> In other words, when an idea exists along with objective reality a mass of verifying circumstances also exists, making it possible, on a potential basis, to assign truth to the idea.

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<sup>65</sup> James, Fragmatism, pp. 207-209.

<sup>66</sup> James, The Meaning of Truth, p. 164.

<sup>67</sup> Hook, op. cit., p. 104.

Truth as Dynamic

It is evident that if truth is immanent in and relative to concrete situations, truth changes as the situation changes. Whenever a new instance makes its demands, the applicability of the idea to the previous instance vanishes and truth will again obtain only as another idea becomes applicable to the new situation. What may prove consequential in one instance may not so prove in another instance. Truth then is dynamic and not a static ready-made body. Hawden clarifies the dynamic character of the truth criterion.

If judgment is the act of hypothesizing in the presence of an obstacle, a process which is ever being renewed because of fresh difficulties, then the criterion, which is simply the judgment in its aspect as re-organizing experience, must likewise undergo alteration from situation to situation.<sup>68</sup>

If truth is dynamic and relative to a given situation, can truth possess formal character? How may consequences viewed subjectively constitute a body of objective truths? What is to save pragmatic truth from solipsism? And, if truths do exist objectively in what manner do they constitute standards and criteria for human action?

Man must have a standard by which to evaluate his ideas. He cannot logically escape authority. Unbelief itself is authoritarian in that it is a coercion away from a concept and a search for something better. The pragmatists

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<sup>68</sup> Hawden, op. cit., p. 208.



do not reject a standard; they reject the abstract standard of the absolutists. James remarks: "To admit, as we pragmatists do, that we are liable to correction (even tho we may not expect it) involves the use on our part of an ideal standard."<sup>69</sup>

Schiller lists the requirements which an idea must meet if it is to be an adequate standard. The pragmatic ideal, he believes, fulfills these conditions.

1. The ideal must be attainable by a thought which starts from our actual human standpoint.

2. When constructed it must be relevant to actual human life.

3. The ideal must be realizable by the development of man's actual life.

4. Yet it must have 'independent' authority over actual human life. Or, more briefly, the ideal must (a) be an ideal for man, and yet (b) have authority over man.<sup>70</sup>

James defines truth absolute as "... an ideal set of formulations towards which all opinions may in the long run of experience be expected to converge."<sup>71</sup> James postulates a converging tendency of opinions, but he leaves room for any alterations occasioned by experience. Opinions are not absolute postulates, but present indications of what is probable in the future.

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<sup>69</sup>James, The Meaning of Truth, p. 264.

<sup>70</sup>Schiller, Studies in Humanism, pp. 163-164.

<sup>71</sup>James, The Meaning of Truth, p. 267.

The pragmatic ideal is established experientially and socially. The ideal is a part of the social environment and takes its rise from the environment. As thus elaborated, the ideal constitutes an objective reference by which men may evaluate their concepts. But the pragmatic ideal is not absolute, it is socially objective and dynamic. Alterations and revisions will occur.<sup>72</sup>

Schiller recognizes the necessity of an objective truth when he says: "Truth, then, to be really safe, has to be more than an individual valuation; it has to win social recognition, to transform itself into a common property."<sup>73</sup>

There is, however, a consistency in the subjective evaluation of truth. The individual tends to evaluate concepts on the basis of their value to the main interests of life. Truth is thus pragmatically extracted, and becomes more than feeling. Truth is value sustained for the individual, and in this sustenance of value there is evident a consistency of subjective truth. This value which originates in the subjective world, gains social recognition and becomes socially regarded as true. Hence, truth, built out of the grounds of subjectivity, obtains objective standing and import in the social order.<sup>74</sup>

Dewey contrasts the dynamic view of truth with the older static view. When the universe was regarded as a

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<sup>72</sup>Ibid., pp. 266-271.

<sup>73</sup>Schiller, Humanism, p. 58.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., pp. 58-59.

closed order, truth could have no instrumental and dynamic character. But the present regard of the universe is an open, evolutionary one. Change is now the measure of reality. Knowledge does not consist of a hierarchical classification of the factors of a closed, fixed, universe. Knowledge is dynamic and instrumental. Knowledge is scientific; truth is adverbial. Truth is socially elaborated in terms of its functional value in enhancing man's growing experience.<sup>75</sup>

Reality is ever growing as a result of the instrumental character of thought. Truth is a matter of degrees. Knowledge becomes truer as reality to which it refers becomes higher and more complete. But there is no place where reality becomes fixed, hence there is no place where truth becomes fixed. As reality grows and develops in an experience continuum, truth develops. Dynamic reality occasions an ever-expanding truth.<sup>76</sup>

The dynamic process of reality and the truth relation necessitates the abandonment of ideas which turn out to be false. Constant revision is necessary. This discarding of older truths is made possible because of new truths which are more useful and applicable. The new truths promise a better means of dealing with existing problems, and therefore find their place in the body of knowledge. The borders of truth are enlarged.

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<sup>75</sup>Dewey, Reconstruction in Philosophy, pp. 53-76.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., p. 108.

Experience always presents novel situations. A growing reality makes novel demands. A new concept, then comes into existence to meet the imperatives of development. But what does the new truth do to the existing body of truth? Does new truth invalidate previous truths? How may a new concept be incorporated into the existing body of knowledge?

The Ptolemaic theory was at one time held to be the true explanation of the movement of heavenly bodies around a stationary earth. This theory was true for the ancients because it proved useful in their relationships with reality. The Ptolemaic theory was then invalidated by the Copernican theory, which assumed its place in the body of knowledge on the basis that it better explained the problems of astronomy.

A new idea is incorporated with previous knowledge because it proves more useful than the old idea. The novel concept becomes true because it is a valuable addition which better collaborates with realities so as to effect a clearer result.<sup>77</sup> The conflict which at first the new idea occasions for an individual becomes resolved when

... at least some new idea comes up which he can graft upon the ancient stock with a minimum of disturbance of the latter, some idea that mediates between the stock and the new experience and runs them into one another most felicitously and expediently.

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<sup>77</sup> James, The Meaning of Truth, p. 60.

This new idea is then adopted as the true one. It preserves the older stock of truths with a minimum of modification, stretching them just enough to make them admit the novelty, but conceiving that in ways as familiar as the case leaves possible.... The most violent revolution in an individual's belief leave most of his old order standing.<sup>78</sup>

Truth grows, according to James, for subjective reasons. The new concept becomes true only in so far as it appeals to the demands of the individual and works expediently for him.

When old truth grows, then, by new truth's addition, it is for subjective reasons. We are in the process and obey the reasons. That new idea is truest which performs most felicitously its function of satisfying our double urgency. It makes itself true, gets itself classified as true, by the way it works; grafting itself then upon the ancient body of truth, which thus grows much as a tree grows by the activity of a new layer of cambium.<sup>79</sup>

The manner of incorporating new truth with the previous body of knowledge constitutes the stability of pragmatic truth. Stability is not found in an absolute ideal, but in the necessity of selecting the hypothesis which meets the exigencies of the new situation and which is at the same time congruous with previous experience.<sup>80</sup> This process keeps truth both growing and amenable to direction.

The pragmatists posit a reality that is both independent and empirically perceived. The independence of reality is evident because experience involves elements which are

<sup>78</sup>James, Fragmatism, p. 60.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid., pp. 63-64.

<sup>80</sup>Bawden, op. cit., p. 209.



beyond arbitrary control.<sup>81</sup> Sensations and perceptions obtain empirically; hence reality must be interpreted empirically.<sup>82</sup> It is however hard to find reality in the raw; it is being made over. Reality lends itself to a humanistic reconstruction.<sup>83</sup>

Reality, according to the pragmatists is a term used only to denote everything which happens. Reality has loose ends and admits of development. It is plastic and may be manipulated so as to become more complete and applicable to human ends. Reality has a "practical character" and its practicality is to be enhanced by human manipulation and control.<sup>84</sup> This type of reality is necessary in order to an instrumental view of intelligence and the truth relation.

Reality, while in one sense independent, is also capable of manipulation and exists more truly when developed by human endeavor. Reality, then, is the reciprocal relation between the fact as physically objective and the fact as mental. "The reality is the movement of the situation as a whole; it is the interaction of these factors."<sup>85</sup>

Reality is axiological; that is, reality is value.

<sup>81</sup>James, The Meaning of Truth, p. 69.

<sup>82</sup>James, Pragmatism, pp. 244-245.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid., p. 249.

<sup>84</sup>Dewey, Philosophy and Civilization, pp. 36-55.

<sup>85</sup>Bowden, op. cit., p. 248.



Reality is relevancy, congruity, adequacy, satisfaction. The real is the expression of concrete individual purpose: it is the needful, the important, the useful, the necessary. The real is the individual, and individuality is determined by interests, motives, desires, utilities.<sup>86</sup>

Reality has a humanistic import, for reality exists and has meaning only in its relation to man. Truth comes into existence as it proves consequential in creatively adapting reality to man.

Schiller admits his affinity with Protagoras' statement that man is the measure of all things. Protagoras refused to believe in a ready-made reality, which was inapplicable to man. He insisted rather that action must alter reality and that reality be altered so as to be applicable to man. Man is both the measure and maker of all things.<sup>87</sup>

Protagoras' emphasis on man's central position in reality is consistent with his statement "that which appears to each, is."<sup>88</sup> Truth may be evaluated in terms of human interest and applicability of the concept. The concept becomes, then, "... the true for us, the true for us as practical beings, just as the good is the good for us."<sup>89</sup>

Truth is not only being discovered, truth is being made. A concept is made true through the satisfactory consequences which issue from the concept. Knowledge is extended and the

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., p. 238.

<sup>87</sup> Schiller, Studies in Humanism, pp. 320-321.

<sup>88</sup> Schiller, Humanism, p. 31.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., p. 30.

system of facts enlarged. The truth of the concept brings a new revelation of reality. In fact an addition is made to reality whenever an idea becomes true through its consequences. Truth, then, is consequential in the highest sense in that it makes a contribution to existence and exerts a creative influence on reality. The plasticity of primary reality admits of a making of reality. Both truth and reality become transformed. Truth obtains in the most significant sense in its creative bearing on reality. "Hence", Schiller states, "to establish the bearing on reality of the making of truth, we must not confine ourselves to this fragmentary 'mere knowing,' but must consider the whole process as completed, i. e., as issuing in action, and as sooner or later altering reality."<sup>90</sup>

Thus Truth and Reality grow for us together, in a single process, which is never one of bringing the mind into relation with a fundamentally alien reality, but always one of improving and extending an already existing system which we know.<sup>91</sup>

The making of truth is in a real sense the making of reality. The validation of a truth-claim is, finally, the transformation of reality.<sup>92</sup> The transformation and making of reality is essentially humanistic. The criterion of this supreme consequence is man. In speaking of his humanistic position Schiller says:

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<sup>90</sup> Schiller, Studies in Humanism, p. 440.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., pp. 185-186.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., p. 425.

It cannot but look favorably on an attempt thoroughly to humanize the world and to unify the behavior of its elements, by tracing the occurrence of something essentially analogous to the human making of reality throughout the universe.<sup>93</sup>

The highest significance of the truth-consequence is found in its import on a dynamic reality. Truth and reality are made on the basis of human subjectivity, and obtain only in the manipulatory area of a creative intelligence.

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<sup>93</sup>Ibid., p. 437.

## CHAPTER IV

### CRITICAL EVALUATION

The validity of pragmatic truth is evident only if the pragmatist's definition of consciousness and experience is correct. Furthermore, the pragmatic notion of truth can become impregnable and stand in its own right only if it can logically show that the pragmatic ascertainment of truth is also the nature and content of truth. An attempt will be made to evaluate the pragmatist's assertion concerning truth by evaluating the pragmatist's interpretation of the nature of consciousness, experience, and the truth -essence.

#### Consciousness and Experience

The pragmatists have rejected an essential self and interpret self and consciousness functionally. But the pragmatist must show that a functional self is adequate in meeting all the demands which a self makes.

Dewey has illustrated the functional self by the analogy of the camera in photographing the railway tracks. The picture which the camera takes shows the rails to be convergent, as does the eye; hence, the convergence of the tracks need not be explained in terms of a mental content. The camera which thus functions is not a psychological entity; therefore, the comparable function of the eye may be satisfactorily

explained in terms of physical laws. The self, then, is defined in terms of biological and organismic functionings.

But Dewey has overlooked the evident fact that, while the camera does register the convergence of the tracks, it does not know and think the rails parallel.<sup>1</sup> A mind, then, which is but comparable to a camera cannot meet the demands placed on it. Mind must be psychical if it is to possess the ability to know the exact nature of a reality which is physically given in terms other than its nature. The ability to regard the rails as parallel is what is meant by mind. And this the camera fails to do. If mentality be other than biological and functional, it is difficult, then, to assign only a functional character to truth. If the self can be adequately explained only in terms of the psychical, truth must have a mental import beyond a mere functional import.

Having defined consciousness functionally, the pragmatists have gone on to show that experience is functional and that truth obtains as the concept is functional in experience. Truth does not involve categories held by a self, but involves only the functional self's adjustment in experience. A transcendental view of knowledge is thus rejected.

The illustration of the noise disturbing the worker serves to expose the incompetency of truth as functionally

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<sup>1</sup>C. B. Pyle, "Some Phases of Dewey's Philosophy," The Techné, XIII (January-February, 1930), 9.

interpreted.<sup>2</sup> The worker hears a noise which interrupts him. He assigns the noise to the curtain, is satisfactorily relieved, and goes on with his work. He, being a pragmatist, regards it true that the curtain made the noise, because by so regarding it he makes a satisfactory adjustment in the experience continuum. But suppose the noise was actually made by the awning instead of the curtain? Would it follow, nevertheless, that it is true that the curtain made the noise just because by so regarding the situation a satisfactory adjustment ensued?

If the pragmatist answers this question in the negative and maintains that the solution is actually not a true case of knowledge, it follows, then, that knowledge is not simply the satisfactory functioning of a concept in experience, or the substitution of one experience for a more satisfactory one. This, in turn, would mean that knowledge has a transcendental character. Such a negative answer would invalidate the entire pragmatic thesis that truth consists in its ability to lead the individual to a better and more satisfactory adjustment, and that there need be no correspondence with an outer reality.

But the question still remains, what actually caused the noise? By what logical process may it be said the curtain

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<sup>2</sup>J. B. Pratt, What is Pragmatism? pp. 163-164.



caused the noise, when really the awning caused the noise? Must not truth be referred or referable to a realm outside of experience if truth is to obtain. Hence, Pratt says:

It [knowledge] is more than 'an answering or telling experience in which an unquestioned thing replaces a dubious thing.' It must not merely be an answering experience; it must give the true answer ('true' here being used in the non-pragmatist sense.) And it cannot then be defined in terms of experience alone as a 'doubt-inquiry-answer experience.' The complete definition of knowledge must include something which distinguishes the true from the false, a reference to a reality beyond the experience itself which makes it true. It must be defined in terms not essentially different from those of Plato--'true opinion with reason.'<sup>3</sup>

If the absolutist's concept of truth is invalid because it fails to posit a criterion for truth as resembling reality beyond experience, it then follows that the pragmatist's concept of truth is also invalid for the same reason that it fails to posit an adequate criterion for truth as functionally discovered and made in its reference to experiential reality.

James affirmed the necessity of successive experiences in the ambulatory function of cognition.<sup>4</sup> He illustrated the ambulatory process of ideas by Memorial Hall, which started the process going. But the originating idea must give way to successive, intermediate ideas in order to approach reality.

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 164-165.

<sup>4</sup>James, The Meaning of Truth, Chapter 1.

This Memorial Hall which started the process going is also the terminus of the thought process. It necessarily follows that Memorial Hall can become a knower only after it has vanished and been successively replaced by intermediary ideas. In like manner, Memorial Hall is never known as the terminus until the process is completed and gives way to the final concept, Memorial Hall, which has, incidentally, ceased to exist because it was replaced by other ideas in the ambulatory process. Hence, Pratt feels that truth cannot pragmatically obtain.

Where, then, one naturally asks, does knowledge come in? Not at the terminus a quo, for the idea has not yet become a knower--its knowing, according to the pragmatist, consists in the intermediaries and the fulfilling experience. Not at the terminus ad quem, for now there is no longer a knower but merely a direct experience. Not in the intermediaries, for with them we have neither knower nor fulfillment.<sup>5</sup>

According to James, knowledge is never transcendental. Knowledge outside of experience is impossible.<sup>6</sup> How, then, is one to know an object which does not exist in one's experience? If truth obtains only in concrete experiences, how may truth be attributed to an idea which is wholly outside experience? The knowledge of the battle of Thermopylae is regarded as true, yet it is outside the range of present experience. James meets this situation by saying a past event

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<sup>5</sup>Pratt, op. cit., pp. 160-16.

<sup>6</sup>James, The Meaning of Truth, p. 235.

had effects and the present thought also has effects. If these effects merge they provide a medium wherein valid knowledge of the historic event may obtain.<sup>7</sup> This makes possible knowledge of an event outside of the individual's experience that does not involve transcendence.

But is not this begging the question? If knowledge is valid only in the intermediaries of experience, how may knowledge be valid in a situation outside the given realm of experience and its intermediaries? But, on the other hand, if knowledge of such an event as the battle of Thermopylae is possible, does not this by its very nature involve a mental transcendence?<sup>8</sup>

Experience as regarded by Dewey is biological.<sup>9</sup> Adjustment to and adaption of experience are considered in biological terms. Truth is tested in the crucible of biological experiences. Truth is applicable only to the biological.

This narrow range of experience and truth fails to consider other factors of life. There are non-biological facts, as consciousness, which must be taken into account. It is not legitimate to evaluate these non-biological experiences by an irrelevant biological norm. While biological truth is warranted and necessary, the criterion of truth must not be

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 222.

<sup>8</sup>Pratt, op. cit., p. 153.

<sup>9</sup>Dewey, Reconstruction in Philosophy, pp. 84-85.

limited to one class of truth. The criterion must take into account all types of experiences and classes of truth. The biological pragmatism of Dewey has shortcomings at this point. It lends itself to arbitrariness by picking out the special sciences as the norm of all truth.<sup>10</sup>

### Concerning Satisfaction

James grounded his conception of truth in human subjectivity. Satisfactory working was interpreted in terms of the individual.<sup>11</sup> The passional nature is necessarily involved in the making of truth.<sup>12</sup> A relationship was declared between feeling and truth. The satisfaction which a concept becomes to feeling is the truth of the concept. Feeling was regarded as an integral part of the idea and necessary to the proper destiny of the idea.

While it is true that ideas apart from feeling are impotent, yet it is also true that feeling apart from ideas are powerless. There may exist a strong feeling to which a vague idea is presented, but the feeling will waste itself in non-directed activity and consequently afford little satisfaction.<sup>13</sup> The satisfactoriness of a concept cannot be found entirely in its appeal to feeling. The concept must possess an intrinsic quality which will admit a satisfactory working of it. Truth

<sup>10</sup> E. S. Brightman, An Introduction to Philosophy, pp. 56-58.

<sup>11</sup> James, The Meaning of Truth, p. 243.

<sup>12</sup> James, The Will to Believe, p. 11.

<sup>13</sup> W. E. Hocking, The Meaning of God in Human Experiences, p. 69.

cannot obtain merely in the matrix of subjectivity, it must be involved in the idea if it is to prove satisfactory to the subjective feeling-ground.

The definition of truth as subjectively satisfactory is itself vague and unclear. This analysis of truth admits of a vicious subjectivity and relevancy which is incapable of satisfying the demand of truth. For what is satisfactory to one may not be satisfactory to another.<sup>14</sup> In the event that two contradictory ideas proved satisfactory for different people, it would be necessary to regard each idea as true, if true-ness consists in satisfaction. No other conclusion can be reached if satisfaction is interpreted subjectively, as James does.

It is also an obvious fact that many desires can never be satisfied, and that many desires when fulfilled eventuate in error and evil instead of truth and goodness.<sup>15</sup> Hence, the fallacy of making satisfaction the content of truth is evident. No subjective philosophy can possibly establish standards and distinctions of right and wrong. As long as truth is subjectively evaluated in terms of satisfaction, there can be no essential difference between right and wrong.<sup>16</sup> Even the transference of morals to the social realm leaves,

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<sup>14</sup> Brightman, op. cit., p. 51.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 52.

<sup>16</sup> Pratt, op. cit., p. 168.



in the last analysis, "... the question of the standard of efficiency quite open."<sup>17</sup> If morals are made and are dynamic in character, certainty as to moral distinctions cannot obtain.

### Concerning Consequences

According to the instrumentalists ideas are plans of action, and intelligence has something to do.<sup>18</sup> A concept is not validated by referring it to an antecedent reality wherein truth inheres, but is validated by consequences. A concept, in turn, is an indication of consequences.<sup>19</sup> But there is no one-to-one relation between the concept and its action potential. "Water," Dewey says, "for example suggests an indefinite number of acts; seeing, tasting, drinking, washing without specification of one preference to another."<sup>20</sup> Since the meaning of a concept is found in consequences, the correspondence between meaning and working is therefore very loose. A variety of workings result from the same idea. Hence, the working test of truth is itself ambiguous and inadequate to establish the entire meaning and validity of a concept because only a part of a concept can do work at any time.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>Caldwell, op. cit., p. 138.

<sup>18</sup>Dewey, Reconstruction in Philosophy, p. 96.

<sup>19</sup>John Dewey, The Quest for Certainty, pp. 159-160.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 158

<sup>21</sup>Hocking, "Action and Certainty," Journal of Philosophy, XXVII (April, 1930), 231.



It is also evident that different ideas, even those which are antithetical to each other, yield practical results. "Christian Science," Brightman states, "and Roman Catholicism, for example, are both systems of belief that have led to practical results; yet both cannot be true at the same time unless the universe is a mad-house."<sup>22</sup> Both of these concepts work out satisfactorily for the possessors of them, but if both cannot at the same time be true truth must then involve something beyond satisfactory working. If the pragmatist means that the right or more expedient working is determined by the environment, then the norm of truth is lifted out of consequences and placed in the conditioning environment. And this would involve a transcendence, which is the very thing the pragmatists have denied.<sup>23</sup>

The fact that a belief works in these ways has nothing to do with its truth. Any belief, if it is truly believed, will work in the sense that people will act according to the belief and will suffer or enjoy the consequences of so acting. The pragmatic test is no way to truth.<sup>24</sup>

The fact that a truth eventuates in consequences cannot thereby mean that consequences are the nature and content of truth. Consequences may inform one when he has arrived at truth, but they cannot indicate what the trueness of the idea is which they signify. "In other words, the meaning or

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<sup>22</sup>Brightman, op. cit., p. 56.

<sup>23</sup>Pratt, op. cit., pp. 167-168.

<sup>24</sup>H. N. and Regina W. Wierman, Normative Psychology of Religion, p. 121.

nature of a material, a quality, a relation, is one thing; the sign by which you make sure of its presence is another."<sup>25</sup> Pragmatism may indicate the presence of truth and still be unable to define the essential nature of truth.

The pragmatists make trueness consist in consequences. Schiller affirms truth not only to be tested by its consequences, but to be "... established by the value of its consequences...."<sup>26</sup> Then the conclusion is drawn that truth is made.<sup>27</sup> The logic of this is that since the usefulness of the idea proves it true, then its trueness consists in its being useful and consequential. "The test of truth and the meaning of truth are thus completely identified."<sup>28</sup> The intermediary workings between the idea and its object not only proves the concept true, "... but also makes it true, and constitutes its truth."<sup>29</sup>

In speaking of the radical pragmatist's position on the identification of the norm of truth with its nature, Pratt says:

Radical pragmatism maintains that these [consequences] not only prove the idea true, but make it true and constitute its truth.... Professor Dewey says, "The effective working of the idea and its truth are one and the same thing--this

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<sup>25</sup>Pratt, op. cit., p. 64.

<sup>26</sup>Schiller, Studies in Humanism, p. 160.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 194.

<sup>28</sup>Pratt, op. cit., p. 89.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 85.

working being neither the cause nor the evidence of truth but its nature.<sup>30</sup>

It now remains to show that the verification of a concept cannot be identical with the nature of truth. Pratt's remarks are so aptly stated that a quotation is in order at this point.

One here feels tempted to ask: If truth be really identical with its proof, if it be nothing but the process of its verification, or the process by which it is pursued and attained, what is it that is proved and verified, what is it that is pursued and attained? Are we verifying verification and pursuing pursuit? This indeed sounds like logomacy, but it really is not. For surely verification is verification of something. If you say it is the verification of the idea, just what do you mean: Certainly not the verification of the idea as a mere psychical existent. It must be, if it is anything at all, the verification of the idea's trueness, the demonstration that its claim is a rightful claim--is a rightful claim, mind you, not will be rightful. Here, let us say, is an assertion. As yet it is a mere claim. But it claims to be true--i.e. it claims that it is true. Now you verify it. It thereby becomes 'a truth,' but what you have verified is that it was true already. The very fact, therefore, that you verify presupposes that the trueness of the assertion or claim is something prior to and independent of its verification. The very use of the words verification and proof presupposes that truth is something distinct from any process of proof. Thus, though pragmatism may properly speak of successful and satisfactory experiences, it is hard to see how it can consistently use the term verification at all.<sup>31</sup>

James makes satisfactory working the norm of truth,<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 109.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., pp. 116-117.

<sup>32</sup> James, The Meaning of Truth, p. 243.

and at the same time allows verifiability to constitute the norm of truth. But because the concepts of verification and verifiability are so widely removed from each other in meaning, how may both serve as the criteria of truth? While it is true that one is the actual working out of the process and the other the possibility of this working, the fact still remains that the two concepts are different. This difference is as real as the difference between Columbus' verifiable idea that he could cross the Atlantic, and this same idea as verified in the actual process of getting ships, manning them, hoisting anchor, raising sail, and actually reaching America.<sup>33</sup> Verification is the felt leading and satisfactory working of the experience process; verifiability is the possibility of these, but it is not these.<sup>34</sup>

The pragmatic theory of truth is internally inconsistent. It is a theory of relative truth, yet James speaks of "The 'absolutely' true, meaning what no farther experience will ever alter, which is that ideal vanishing-point towards which we may imagine that all our temporary truths will some day converge."<sup>35</sup> Schiller's analysis of the pragmatic ideal<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup>Pratt, op. cit., p. 101.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 102.

<sup>35</sup>James, Pragmatism, pp. 222-223.

<sup>36</sup>Schiller, Studies in Humanism, pp. 163-164.

is suggestive of idealism. The elaboration out of experience of a subjective or social standard or ideal, is a truncated idealism.

James' concept of experience is ambiguous. He first defines experience in terms of the individual's subjective content. Therefore, the norm of truth is individualistic. He then makes experience a total and independent something by lifting it out of the context of subjectivity and placing it as a present "absolute" which impinges itself upon the individual. This larger concept of experience is emphatically stated by James.

Moreover the 'experience' which the pragmatic definition postulates is the independent something which the anti-pragmatist accuses him of ignoring. Already men have grown unanimous in the opinion that such experience is 'of' an independent reality the existence of which all opinions must acknowledge, in order to be true.<sup>37</sup>

It is by this confusion of the concept "experience" that James is able to save pragmatic truth from solipsism. However, the analysis of experience as independent, makes that experience a present absolute, which is logically inconsistent with James' theory of truth as subjective and relative.

The internal inconsistency of pragmatic truth is also evident in another regard. The notion that all truth is relative is held to be true absolutely. Pragmatism asserts

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<sup>37</sup>James, The Meaning of Truth, p. 269.



the absolute truth of its relative concept of truth. Hence, absolute truth is presupposed in pragmatic truth.<sup>38</sup>

Patrick calls attention to the fact that while pragmatism has served to humanize philosophy, nevertheless, something is lacking. The emphasis placed on striving is out of proportion to the emphasis placed on goal. Intelligence is always the guide but never the goal. But what it is that intelligence guides to, the pragmatists do not seem to know. Intelligence is held as the means of salvation, but what man is saved from, or what he is saved for, is not made clear. A process is on the way, but where it is leading to, no one knows. Endless experiment to see what will satisfactorily happen is valuable in its place, but it is inadequate at the point of providing ideals and actuating purposes by and for which to live. Something eternal must draw man on.<sup>39</sup>

Pragmatism has served to bring out the difficulties of absolutism. But pragmatism, though it has posited the proof of truth, faces its difficulties in the attempt to give truth its definitive content. This thesis, then, has not clarified the fundamental question, What is truth?

Pragmatic truth, it would seem, is indeed the body of knowledge being built up by man. What knowledge proves

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<sup>38</sup>Mary W. Galkins, The Persistence Problems of Philosophy, p. 405.

<sup>39</sup>Patrick, op. cit., pp. 395-397.



consequential, lives on; what knowledge does not so prove, dies by the wayside. What proves consequential today may not be consequential tomorrow. This all may be granted, but it is difficult to see how this process may assign the essential truth or error to an idea. Why not call this knowledge or belief and be done with it? Perhaps the pragmatist gets out of his realm when he attaches the distinctions of truth and error, right and wrong to a body of knowledge thus built up.

And so, the ancient battle still goes on. The armies of the pragmatic philosophy have launched their offensive by asserting that truth is found in and made out of the stream of experience, like peas are shelled out of a pod.

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