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PRAGMATISM IN AMERICAN CULTURE

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A Thesis  
Presented to the  
Faculty of  
California State  
College, San Bernardino

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts  
in  
Special Major:  
History of Modern American Thought

---

by  
John Lugton Safford

June 1980

PRAGMATISM IN AMERICAN CULTURE

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by  
John Lugton Safford  
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Approved by:



Chairman



6/22/80  
Date

## ABSTRACT

This is a master's thesis concerning the origins, development and influences of pragmatism in American culture. The term "pragmatism" as used here refers to a formal system of philosophy.

It is primarily a work in the history of thought; thus putting a greater stress on the origins and influences of pragmatism than on the questions of truth and meaning.

It begins with C. S. Peirce and William James, followed by a chapter on the reaction of their contemporary American philosophers, Josiah Royce and George Santayana. The third chapter is on pragmatism and the Progressive movement. This is one of the most important chapters because so little has been done in the past to make explicit the connection between these contemporary movements. The fourth chapter shows the mature development of pragmatic theory brought about by G. H. Mead and C. I. Lewis. Chapter five chronicles the political agestation of John Dewey, contemporary with Mead and Lewis, during the interwar years. Chapter six ends the thesis by pointing out some further effects of pragmatism in religion, politics, the social sciences and education. In the future, any of these areas would be fruitful for research.

Overall, it will be clear that the effects of the philosophy of pragmatism are with us today--more so than most people realize.



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## CHAPTER 1

### ORIGINS OF PRAGMATISM: PEIRCE AND JAMES

Commentators often speak of Pragmatism as the only original American philosophy. This is surely debatable, and one would have to qualify such a statement in several respects before it could become credible. However, it is certain that Pragmatism was an original American philosophy and that it was highly influential. As Will Durant, who is perhaps the most popular commentator on the history of thought, has remarked:

The reader needs no guide to the new and the old elements in this philosophy. It is part of the modern war between science and religion; another effort, like Kant's and Bergson's, to rescue faith from the universalized mechanics of materialism. Pragmatism has its roots in Kant's "practical reason"; in Schopenhauer's exaltation of the will; in Darwin's notion that the fittest (and therefore also the fittest and truest idea) is that which survives; in utilitarianism, which measured all goods in terms of use; in the empirical and inductive traditions of English philosophy; and finally in the suggestions of the American scene.

What all forms of Pragmatism have in common is an emphasis on ends or results as opposed to either means or first principles. There is something particularly American about Pragmatism in William James's hands as he continually returns to the "cash value" of an idea. This chapter will attempt to clarify how Pragmatism originated as an obscure methodology of the physical sciences under C. S. Peirce and then changed into a general philosophy under James. This change was both crucial for its acceptance and indicative of popular American

intellectual thought at that time. In the latter respect Josiah Royce has given James the ultimate Hegelian compliment: "...James is an American philosopher of classic rank, because he stands for a stage in our national self-consciousness--for a stage with which historians of our national mind must always reckon."<sup>2</sup>

Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914) is universally recognized as the founder of the pragmatic method. A good deal is known about Peirce but, unfortunately, no one has as yet written his definitive biography. Unlike James, his fame is still in the process of emerging. Rather, it has been the practice of most book-length works on his philosophy to begin with a short essay on Peirce, the man, as an introduction. There are almost no disagreements among them, only various omissions. The following biographical information will follow primarily the essay by Paul Weiss found in Richard Bernstein's Perspectives on Peirce (1965).<sup>3</sup> The Weiss biography is taken as authoritative because he is also the co-editor of Peirce's Collected Papers and has shown decades of interest in the man. All discrepancies or major additions will be footnoted.

Charles Peirce was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts, the second son of Benjamin Peirce, the foremost American mathematician of his time and a professor at Harvard. Many of both Charles' strengths and weaknesses are directly accountable to the fact that his father closely supervised his education, teaching him reading, writing, and (especially) mathematics, at home. According to Weiss, he also encouraged his son's eccentricities and failed to teach him how to get

along in group situations.

Charles was precocious. He began the study of chemistry at the age of eight, had set up his own laboratory before he was a teenager, mastered the latest books on logic on his own, and would invent code languages and mathematical games for his playmates.

Later his father sent him to several private schools as a preparation for Harvard. It may be significant to note that they were all local schools. Unlike James, Peirce did not have the benefit of study abroad in his youth. Judging from Peirce's later involvement in the classics of science, literature and logic, it may be speculated that these schools stressed the "classical tradition," i.e., a proficiency in reading literature in Greek, Latin, French and German. He entered Harvard in 1855 and graduated in 1859--near the bottom of his class. This may be attributed to the fact that he was young and only motivated to work hard where his interest led him. It was as an undergraduate that he read Kant's Critique of Pure Reason, three pages a night, until he had it almost memorized.

In 1861 he joined the U. S. Coast and Geodetic Survey. Among his greatest logistical achievements was to maneuver his work stations so that he could continue studying and lecturing at the same time. He held the job for thirty years. In 1862 he received an M.A. from Harvard and in 1863 he received the first Sc.B. that Harvard awarded. It was in chemistry and he got it summa cum laude. He spent six months studying classification under Louis Agassiz at about the same time that James also was studying under Agassiz. In 1864-1865 he lectured at Harvard

on the philosophy of science. It is important to note that he came to philosophy in a specialized way. He was looking for answers to specific questions of logic and natural science.

He was forced to give up his lectureship at Harvard because of a personal dispute with the president. So, perhaps in order to stay close to the academic life, he became an assistant at the Harvard Observatory. Research work that he did there between 1872 and 1875 led to the only book he published in his lifetime, Photometric Research (1878). He also did pendulum and gravity research, for which he gained international fame at the time he was the first American delegate to the international geodetic conference in France. Partly because of the fame gained when his assertions about the non-uniformity of gravity were proven, he was put in charge of the U. S. weights and measures in 1884 and sat as a member on international commissions for the same purpose. He was the first to propose the wave length of a particular light ray as a standard unit of measure, a procedure accepted today by all countries on the metric system. (Since 1960, seventy years after his proposal, one meter has been defined internationally as a certain multiple of the wavelength of the orange-red line of krypton-86.)

The lack of a professorship was a large factor in keeping his other works from being published. As A. J. Ayer says, "He thought of himself primarily as a logician in a sense in which logic comprehended the analysis of all the processes of thought and inquiry into the conditions of their truth, rather than just the formal theory of valid deductive reasoning."<sup>4</sup> He anticipated "...Wittgenstein in the idea

that the laws of logic had no formal content..."<sup>5</sup> He was the only person until Schröder to advance Boolean Algebra. Although he only lectured a total of eight years at Harvard and Johns Hopkins and had relatively few students one of them was Mrs. Christine Ladd-Franklin. He anticipated the Principia Mathematica (1910-1913) of Bertrand Russell and Alfred North Whitehead (under whom Christine Ladd-Franklin did her doctorate). He also wrote on psychology, criminology, the history of science, early English and classical Greek pronunciation, Egyptology, did translations from Latin and German, prepared a thesaurus and an editor's manual, and much more.

However, he was also handicapped by a number of difficulties which kept him from the fame he deserved. First, he was a poor lecturer. He had trouble making his thoughts and ideas clear to those who were not as well educated as himself. Second, his extensive background and penchant for precision best suited him for a very advanced class, a position to which he was never advanced in spite of his own and James's best efforts. Third, his love life was scandalous; and this was something no university of his time could afford to have its professors known for. Fourth, he did not socialize well with others, especially his superiors. According to W. B. Gallie, "Peirce seems never to have been able to get on with anyone whom he did not greatly admire and who did not reciprocally admire him and treat him as an intellectual equal: in particular he found it hard to get along with university presidents and professors."<sup>6</sup> Fifth, and ironically, he was simply not pragmatic in his dealings outside the laboratory. His finances were as badly

managed as his love life. At one point he was forced to sell his private library, the best one on logic in the United States, to Johns Hopkins University in order to pay his debts. According to Gallie, Peirce in old age was considered a "hopeless eccentric" who would try, "...to escape his creditors by working in a loft the ladder to which he would pull up behind him."<sup>7</sup> William James and his former students contributed to help him in the last years of his life. For this kindness he adopted the middle name "Santiago" which means "St. James" in Spanish. In summing up his idiosyncrasies one must conclude that he did not live "pragmatically" in the sense which the term has today; he either acted without regard to the consequences of his actions, or simply was unable to calculate probable consequences based upon past experience.

Concerning Peirce's pragmatism his commentators unanimously credit the Cambridge "Metaphysical Club" as its origin or, at least, the earliest direct influence on its operation. This may be overrated.

The "Metaphysical Club" was a fortnightly club of the early 1870's which met for the purpose of intellectual discussion. Its usual format called for the reading of a paper by a member, followed by a group discussion. Its most brilliant member was Chauncey Wright, referred to as either a radical positivist or a naturalist, a man who intensely enjoyed debating as a sport. All the other members looked up to him and called him their "boxing master." Among those were Oliver Wendell Holmes, John Fiske, William James, and the Benthamite lawyer Nicholas St. John Creen. Green already had a leaning toward

social jurisprudence and his effect upon the group is still an open question.

According to most commentators, the entire group, with one exception, was "British-oriented."<sup>8</sup> Peirce, of course, was that exception. If they had been educated in the Great Tradition then Peirce felt that they had read it all with an English slant. He, on the other hand, was more at home with classical and Continental philosophers, especially Aristotle, John Duns Scotus, and Immanuel Kant. Before the "Metaphysical Club" first met he already considered himself a "Scotistic realist." He even claimed to be more of a realist than Scotus himself.<sup>9</sup> Hence his unique education not only preceded his later group associations, but also directed his responses. He was an interloper in a group that was foreign to him. While William James was full of praise for contemporary French philosophers, Peirce thought that the last French philosopher had been Descartes. If anything, the effect of the club was not to shape his views but, rather, to help him to articulate them.

When Peirce gave papers for the club they were usually on the topic of logic, a subject of little interest to the other members who were interested in social philosophy, psychology, and jurisprudence. Peirce was unique in the group in that he was extremely well read in Medieval logic.<sup>10</sup> Since his logical background was so esoteric compared to theirs, it is doubtful whether they could have been of much help to him in the discussions following his presentations. In fact, most of the club members including James thought of him as exceptionally odd.



Finally when Peirce got around to framing the pragmatic principle in 1877 (while on his way to a convention in France) it was long after the club was defunct, and it was done for a subject directly related to his work as a physical scientist. The principle was translated from French into English a year later, but William James did not pick up the term for a full twenty years thereafter.

Peirce's statement of the pragmatic principle reads as follows:

Consider the effects, which might have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then, our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object.

Every word and comma of this was thought about and thoroughly intended just as it reads.

J. F. Boler contends that Peirce's pragmatism makes sense best when it is used as a tool in a natural science. Understanding Peirce's pragmatism is a matter of understanding its context. Boler says that, "In general, a scientific hypothesis is not accepted because of where it comes from but because of where it leads."<sup>12</sup> Thus comes about Peirce's emphasis on "ends," "consequences," "effects," and "practical bearings." "Pragmatism, in Peirce's hands was a logical..."<sup>13</sup> as Gallie says, and a tool of the natural sciences. Peirce is a thorough philosophical realist and the objects of scientific knowledge are objective, true, and repeatable. According to Ayer, Peirce, unlike James, did not equate a true proposition with one which is simply useful to believe.<sup>14</sup> Peirce's "...pragmatism," according to Boler, "warns that although we can dictate the questions, we cannot dictate the answers."<sup>15</sup>

In his professional work Peirce was a member of the worldwide community of physical scientists. In his own study he was a member of the Scholastic-Continental-Realist tradition of thought.

Unfortunately for Peirce, his method was not something which would work only for fellow realists. Instead he lived to see it changed to serve ends which he never intended or even thought possible. Chief among those who changed Peirce's intent was William James: in 1905 Peirce began calling his own method "Pragmatism," a term "...ugly enough to be safe from kidnappers." However, since James repeatedly gave Peirce credit for originating "Pragmatism" Peirce's name has stuck to it.

Today the term "pragmatism" is applied to philosophical nominalists, those who are the polar opposite to Peirce. For instance, Paul Boller describes Justice Holmes' position as "legal pragmatism."<sup>16</sup> To understand how this change came about one must look directly to James.

The biography of William James (1842-1910) presents the opposite problem from that of Peirce. First, there is far more material than can be used conveniently in a work of this size and scope. Two such sources are his letters collected and edited by his brother, Henry James,<sup>17</sup> and his authoritative biography by G. W. Allen.<sup>18</sup> There are several others; some such as R. B. Perry's The Thought and Character of William James runs two volumes in length. When James's own works are included the data becomes massive. Only a very small part of this whole is needed for the purposes of this work. The second drawback is that James's principal and best known biographers often appear to be "Jamesians." Either

consciously or unconsciously they appear to present him as a sort of intellectual hero and standard to be admired. On the other hand, his detractors, such as George Santayana and Mortimer Adler, are inclined to take the opposite extreme. When there is still so much passion aroused by a philosophy it may be indicative that the issues James treated are still alive today; that in a sense we are still a part of the same age. In order to emphasize the "kidnapping," only a relatively brief sketch of his biography is needed. The general chronology<sup>19</sup> uses G. W. Allen as the authority because he wrote one of the last biographies on James (1967). Thus, he was able to synthesize the earlier ones and to correct their errors.

As George Santayana puts it, "William James enjoyed in his youth what are called advantages: he lived among civilized people, travelled, had teachers of various nationalities."<sup>20</sup> The senior Henry James, according to Bernard Brennan, was a rich eccentric: "In his utterances he adopted the role of prophet and mystic, denouncing church and state."<sup>21</sup> His Swedenborgian mysticism allowed him to hold views which in other contexts would have been condemned as contradictory. He attended Princeton Theological Seminary for two years after graduating from Union College, but quit because he could not accept the doctrines of orthodox Calvinism. Still he remained concerned with religion throughout his life. This aspect of the father and its effect upon William cannot be over emphasized. As A. J. Ayer sees it, logic stood in the way of traditional religious arguments and it thus had to be shown that logic did not compass the whole of reality. Ayer says:

This is of fundamental importance to the understanding of James's thought, since his desire to make room for religious beliefs, without relaxing his intellectual standards or manipulating the evidence, was also one of the principal motives for his pragmatism. In particular, it strongly colored his interpretation of the pragmatic theory of truth.<sup>22</sup>

The senior Henry James, being independently wealthy, devoted his life to being a professional student and to educating his children. "This education," wrote Brennan, "was designed to minimize the influences of institutions and grim traditions."<sup>23</sup> The James children were continually moved from continent to continent and from school to school in order to broaden their backgrounds.

William James had been interested in art since childhood, and in 1860 he attempted to pursue it as a career. Upon finding that he was not cut out to become a painter he decided to attend Harvard. At that time two of his brothers enlisted on the Union side in the Civil War, but William held back for health reasons. He began, like Peirce, as a chemistry major but changed to physiology. This scientific training was the most rigorous he ever had and later helped hold in check his tendency to make broad generalizations. Also, like Peirce, one of his favorite professors at Harvard was Louis Agassiz, with whom he later went on an expedition to Brazil.

From his background in physiology James turned to medicine and received his M.D. from Harvard in 1869. He was in poor health all his life but managed to be productive in spite of the fact. He never practiced medicine, but instead, took up teaching anatomy and physiology at Harvard in 1873. Two years later he taught his first course in

psychology. His primary interest in the field at that time was in how states of the body determine mental states--a normal reaction for a person with his formal training. By 1876 he was promoted to the secure position of assistant professor of physiology at Harvard. Two years later he married and signed a contract to produce a book on psychology. His marriage was as nearly perfect as one could hope for and the Principles of Psychology (1890), which took him more than ten years to write, is a classic and monumental work in its field. Even his detractors admire it. His brilliant style of writing made even the dullest subjects come alive. He wrote like a public speaker and, in fact, most of his published works were originally delivered as speeches or lectures.

While logic had led Peirce to philosophy, James was finally led to it by physiology and psychology. Both logic and psychology at that time were still properly regarded as divisions of philosophy. It is worth noting that neither Peirce nor James had much early or formal training in philosophy. Rather, both were primarily concerned with solving problems presented to them from their own particular disciplines. The philosophers whom each chose to read were those who offered possible solutions to those problems.

Between the time James received his M. D. and started teaching he suffered a mental breakdown. Perhaps a reason for this can be found in the tension between his upbringing and his education; his emotion and his intellect. He could not bear the thought of a deterministic universe, and yet, that was the only sort of world that his studies

had taught him to believe in. By reading Wordsworth and Charles Renouvier he managed to recover from his mental crisis.<sup>24</sup> Yet intellectually he still remained a determinist. When teaching psychology he reversed what is normally considered the mental cause-and-effect sequence, saying:

...that the bodily changes follow directly the PERCEPTION of the exciting fact, and that our feeling of the same changes as they occur IS the emotion.

...we feel sorry because we cry, angry because we strike, afraid because we tremble, and not that we cry, strike or tremble, because we are sorry, angry or fearful as the case may be.

The neural machinery is but a hyphen between determinate arrangements of matter outside the body and determinate impulses to inhibition or discharge within its organs. When the hen sees a white oval object on the ground she cannot leave it; she must sit upon it and return to it, until at last its transformation into a little mass of moving chirping down elicits from her machinery an entirely new set of performances.<sup>25</sup>

He immediately goes from there to describe and account for human actions in the same biologically compulsive manner. By 1890 he still said:

I now proceed to the most vital point of my whole theory, which is this: If we fancy some strong emotion, and then try to abstract from it all the feelings of its bodily symptoms, we find nothing left behind, no "mind-stuff" out of which the emotion can be constituted, and that a cold neural state of intellectual perception is all that remains. (Italics James')<sup>26</sup>

This is from the Principles of Psychology. In the same work he held that the seat of the human "self" is located in the muscles of the face and throat.<sup>27</sup>

Perhaps the key to understanding James is to know that he held

contradictory beliefs. Again, he was raised one way and then educated another. His Swedenborgian father taught freedom and humanism. Often Ralph Waldo Emerson was a guest in their house. James was basically religious and, yet, he had received the latest scientific education. "Science" reduced literally everything to the laws of material cause and effect, to nothing but matter in motion.

Santayana says that, "There was a deep sense of insecurity about him."<sup>28</sup> He wanted to embrace both the world of "science" (as he knew it) and of traditional human values at the same time. James was extremely sensitive to the predicaments of the philosophy of his age, and had the gift of being able to make them alive to others. James was utterly appalled by the idea of a mechanistic universe and most of all by the automaton theory of mind. He thought that while the deterministic scientific theories were basically true man still must be a free and moral agent. As W. B. Gallie says:

...But though he felt this to be so, he lacked the logical power to see and say clearly why it was so: and the main thread of his philosophical development consists in his persistent efforts to find philosophical justifications for his initial feeling or hunch against current materialistic doctrines. To this end he welcomed aid from the most diverse quarters. (Emphasis Gallie).<sup>29</sup>

A. J. Ayer says William James,

...sought the advantage of being tough-minded with regard to any questions of natural fact; and tender-minded with respect to morals and theology. What attracted him to Pragmatism<sup>30</sup> was that it seemed to him to make both possible.

It permitted him to have the best of both worlds, to hold contradictory beliefs at once, to reconcile what for James was equivalent to the

problem of theodicy. This is a use for the pragmatic method which made Peirce, the logician, unhappy. In truth, when James listened to Peirce lecture he confessed that he did not understand him and later made his famous description of Peirce as, "flashes of brilliant light revealed against Cimmerian darkness!"<sup>31</sup> According to Gallie, James's

...openly anti-intellectualistic teachings stand in definite opposition to the intellectual temper of Peirce.

But, unlike Peirce, James was never greatly influenced by the spirit of the laboratory and never drawn to reflect closely on its methods. ...Moreover, and here again he stands in marked contrast to Peirce, James confessed himself "mathematically imbecile" and "a-logical if not illogical," and in one of his last books he publically and solemnly "renounced logic."<sup>32</sup>

Peirce's great weakness lay in moral and aesthetic philosophy. He was primarily a physical scientist and a logician and probably would never have achieved popular fame. James, on the other hand, had a life-long interest in all types of value theory--especially religion--and it was religion that was in a time of crisis in the United States. Thus he was preoccupied with a field which held the public interest, and did so in the strongest of ways. Any breakthrough in this area which supported tradition, security or "common sense" was bound to gain immediate recognition.

James's unique contribution was to combine epiphenomenalism with religion. In his Pragmatism; A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking (1907) he said: "'The True,' to put it very briefly, is only the expedient in our way of thinking, just as 'the right' is only the expedient in our way of behaving."<sup>33</sup> (Emphasis James). In the



same work he said that, "On pragmatic principles, if the hypothesis of God works satisfactorily enough, it is true."<sup>34</sup> Although he goes on to claim that he believes in higher forms of consciousness,<sup>35</sup> such gods would still have a material basis, standing to us as we do to our cats and dogs.

James, as a psychologist, thought that emotion or "temperament" was primary in directing the human power of reason.<sup>36</sup> If all thought is epiphenomena, then so is reason. Human needs become drives that dictate what is looked for or thought about. He was sensitive to too many varieties of philosophical experience to believe, or put his faith in, any of them as reflections of Truth or Reality. He was fond of the Hegelian, Josiah Royce, as a friend and as a disputant, but he certainly never believed in the Absolute or in any such systematic philosophy. Rather, for James the "true" was equated with the useful, not with a correspondence theory of reality. In a truly pluralistic universe there are infinite possibilities. Ayer claims that he was reacting against the logic of the neo-Hegelians.<sup>37</sup> However, Ayer also recognizes that James's "radical empiricism" stressed the importance of even the subjective sensations and needs, such as religion. Religion is useful. He was a subjectivist and a thoroughgoing nominalist. Needs and sensations are certainly real at one level, even though they are epiphenomenal and not objective. "Thus, for James," says Ayer, "it is an essential characteristic of religion and moral theories that their role is to satisfy our emotional and practical demands."<sup>38</sup>

This is the use to which James put his pragmatism in "The Will to Believe," a use which Peirce called "suicidal." This remark is quoted by Ayer who agrees that it is a completely unwarranted extension of Peirce's pragmatism.<sup>39</sup> He says further that, "Quite apart from the quality of their respective philosophical equipments, Peirce and James were antithetical intellects."<sup>40</sup>

"The Will to Believe"<sup>41</sup> (1896), originally delivered as an address before the Philosophical Clubs of Yale and Brown Universities, probably did more to make James's fame than anything else. This is the most concrete instance of his advocating a position rather than just making an analysis or a description. His main adversary is William Kingdom Clifford who, in "The Ethics of Belief" (1879),<sup>42</sup> had defended the point that men ought only to hold those beliefs which they have examined and of which they are reasonably sure. This was a moral imperative because one's beliefs represent tendencies or predispositions to actions--and actions affect others. Darwin and the whole age of natural science had made the traditional beliefs in God untenable to such a rational person as Clifford. Men such as Thomas Huxley and Herbert Spencer were extending the scope of Darwinian science so as to supersede religion altogether, to unmask it all as mere unscientific superstition.

James fearlessly--and perhaps foolishly--went into battle with both Thomas Huxley and William Clifford. He called the latter an enfant terrible,<sup>43</sup> accused him of not recognizing his own passional nature,<sup>44</sup> and opted for Pascal's phrase, "Le coeur a ses raisons que la raison ne connait pas."<sup>45</sup> True beliefs are those which are useful

or profitable ones, even if contradictory and regardless of ultimate reality. More still, for James, in the case of future events faith can actually create its own desired end or object. This is the pragmatic value of faith. He says:

...The desire for a certain kind of truth here brings about that special truth's existence; and so it is in innumerable cases of other sorts. Who gains promotions, boons, appointments, but the man in whose life they are seen to play the part of live hypotheses, who discounts them, sacrifices other things for their sake before they have come, and takes risks for them in advance: His faith acts on the powers above him as a claim, and he creates its own verification.

...There are, then, cases where a fact cannot come at all unless a preliminary faith exists in its coming. And where faith in a fact can help create the fact, that would be an insane logic which should say that faith running ahead of scientific evidence is the "lowest kind of immorality" into which a thinking being can fall. Yet such is the logic by which our scientific absolutists pretend to regulate our lives! (Emphasis James)<sup>46</sup>

There is something powerful and inspiring about this on a religious level. It should make one think back to James's Swedenborgian father. Yet it is easy to see how Peirce, the logician and philosophical realist, called it "suicidal." Will faith in the existence of God "create the fact"?

No; but allowing people to believe in virtually anything will encourage experimentation and "progress." It may be speculated that what James really wanted to do was to free human action from the bonds of either scientific or religious restraint.

James accepted the inverse of the traditional relationship between logic and reality: for Peirce a true theory would work in practice, its prior truth ensuring its subsequent workability;

whereas for James whatever "worked" was the highest evidence of a true theory. For this James has been criticized by every major logician of our time including Russell, Whitehead and Ayer. However, Royce appears ultimately to be right: James seemed to embody the intellectual spirit of his age and the public loved him for it. He was widely accepted in spite of his faults and in spite of the shouts of those who pointed out his logical absurdities. He appeared as a wise old man who offered salvation from a mechanistic and deterministic science.

On the other hand, contemporary materialists, such as George Santayana were revolted. Santayana said,

...when his book on Pragmatism appeared, about the same time as my Life of Reason, it gave me a rude shock. I could not stomach that way of speaking about truth; and the continual substitution of human psychology--normal madness, in my view--for the universe, in which man is but one distracted and befuddled animal, seemed to me a confused remnant of idealism, not serious.

The William James who had been my master was not William James of the later years, whose pragmatism and pure empiricism and romantic metaphysics have made such a stir in the world.

Later, Herbert Schneider said,

William James, the most religiously empirical of them all, was catholic in his sympathies precisely because he was protestant in his interests. Having achieved for himself an irreligious "healthy-mindedness" after years of struggle, he was free to extend the broadest sympathy to "sick souls." His Varieties of Religious Experience [1902] is therefore not an objective account of religion, but a clinical diagnosis of religious diseases. The sicker the soul the better it suited him, for such cases admirably illustrated his philosophy of consciousness.<sup>48</sup>

Perhaps Schneider understood James better than did Santayana. James appears to agree with Marx. Dogmas are connected with restrictions;

restrictions create an unnatural condition, or sickness, in an acting being; and the conscious manifestation of such a condition is religion.

In his last work, The Meaning of Truth; A Sequel to 'Pragmatism' (1909), James tried to defend himself from the attacks of the professional intellectuals, those who accused him of simply trying to make people feel good. In the preface he said,

I had supposed it to be matter of common observation that, of two competing views of the universe which in all other respects are equal, but of which the first denies some vital human need while the second satisfies it, the second will be favored by sane men for the simple reason that it makes the world seem more rational. To choose the first view under such circumstances would be an ascetic act, an act of philosophic self-denial of which no normal human being would be guilty. Using the pragmatic test of the meaning of concepts, I had shown the concept of the absolute to mean nothing but the holiday giver, the banisher of cosmic fear. One's objective deliverance, when one says 'the absolute exists' amounted, on my showing, just to this, that 'some justification of a feeling of security in the presence of the universe' exists, and that systematically to refuse to cultivate a feeling of security would be to do violence to a tendency in one's emotional life which might well be respected as prophetic. (Emphasis James).<sup>49</sup>

My treatment of 'God,' 'freedom,' and 'design' was similar. Reducing, by the pragmatic test, the meaning of each of these concepts to its positive experientiable operation, I showed them all to be the same thing, vis., the presence of 'promise' in the world. 'God or no God?' means 'promise or no promise?' It seems to me that the alternative is objective enough, being a question of whether the cosmos has one character or another, even though our own personal answer may be made on subjective grounds.<sup>50</sup>

What is significant is that he virtually accepted his critics' charges, but without allowing that they proved him wrong. Unlike his older contemporary, Karl Marx, James was perfectly happy that the people

should have an opiate in religion. Religion provided (or justified) ideals which most men could not arrive at through their intellects. If men were unlimited potentials in a process of evolution, then religious ideals might provide the blueprints for them to evolve into gods.

Henry Steel Commager says of pragmatism, "Because it taught that men hold the future in their own hands, it was drenched with optimism."<sup>51</sup> However, he also says that, "Of all the philosophies to which Americans have subscribed, pragmatism lent itself most unavoidably to vulgarization."<sup>52</sup> Such "...a philosophy sponsored by democracy suffered the consequences of that sponsorship."<sup>53</sup> This will become apparent before the reader has finished.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE REACTION OF JOSIAH ROYCE AND GEORGE SANTAYANA TO WILLIAM JAMES'S THEORY OF SELF AND CONSCIOUSNESS

The purpose of this chapter is to show the relationship of James's pragmatism to the other dominant philosophies of his time, idealism and materialism. Josiah Royce is used as the representative Hegelian Idealist, and George Santayana the spokesman for classical materialism. These philosophers were chosen because they were James's popular contemporaries, knew him personally, and often made reference to him in their writings. James's theory of the self and of consciousness is stressed because it is central to both his pragmatism and that of the next generation.

In 1880 Josiah Royce wrote to James saying:

In each moment we construct such a world because we are interested in doing so. The final basis of our thought is ethical, practical. These things are so because a given moment of activity must have them so. 'Give me a world' is the cry of consciousness; and behold, a world is made even in the act of crying. ...Some of this you will, I think, agree with; some of it at all events I have learned from or through you.

In an essay written two years later Royce says:

Change the book you are reading, and your whole notion of the universe suffers some momentary change also. ...Your change of attention qualitatively alters your apprehension of truth.<sup>2</sup>

At every moment we are not merely receiving, attending, and recognizing, but we are constructing. Out of

what from moment to moment comes to us, we are building up our ideas of past and future, and of the world of reality. Mere dead impressions are given. We turn them by our own act into symbols of a real universe. We thus constantly react upon what is given, and not only modify it, but give it whatever significance it comes to possess.<sup>3</sup>

Definite belief in external reality is possible only through this active addition of something of our own to the impressions that are actually given to us. No external reality is given to us in the mere sense-impressions. What is outside of us cannot be at the same time within us. But out of what is in us, we construct an idea of an external world; and we ourselves give to this idea all the validity that for us it can ever have.<sup>4</sup>

Interestingly, Royce puts even more stress upon the consequential aspect of reality than James. The fact that we actively choose which aspects of given experience to make significant makes us ultimately responsible for our beliefs and, thus, for the world which we create. In this respect Royce sides much more closely with Clifford than with James. Even though Royce, in a letter to C. S. Peirce, described James as "...my most intimate friend outside my own family,"<sup>5</sup> he was quite willing to criticize James for his lack of responsibility. From James's position the will to believe is primary for an acting being; it is an extension of the will to live; but, since it is so primary or biologically based, it precedes consciousness. The activities of a conscious individual are the results of his prior beliefs. In order to create his beliefs, to create himself, an individual would have to exist before he existed, would have to create himself before he was created. Rather, for James, it is the body which creates consciousness.

In 1882, fourteen years before James first delivered "The



"Will to Believe" as a lecture, Royce wrote of him:

A person for whose opinions I have much respect once said to me that he disclaimed all responsibility for the beliefs that he held on certain very important matters.

'I try,' said he, 'to conquer prejudice; but having done this, I can do no more. My belief, whatever it is, forms itself in me. I look on. My will has nothing to do with the matter. I can will to walk or to eat; but I cannot will to believe. I might as well will that my blood should circulate.'

Despite his disclaimer, I thought, and yet think, that he has made his beliefs very much for himself, and that these beliefs do him honor, as the statue does honor to the artist that chisled it.<sup>6</sup>

Royce could not bring himself to believe that James's beliefs had been fashioned from "wholly passive matter." He reflected that the powers of material circumstance were great, but continued:

But my friend was a man of energy, and controlled the current of his thought. He fought hard...and he has so far conquered as to be the master of a very manly and many-sided system of doctrine. I think him responsible for this system... As a man is, so he thinks.

Royce finds his solution to James's problem through a sort of Kantian approach to what is good in itself--a good will. There is an ambiguity in the term "will": at one time it can mean a drive and at another a choice, often both together. James uses it as a drive, a force, or a motive power. Royce uses it as a selective force. He says:

...attention, in its most elementary forms, is the same activity that, in a more developed shape, we call will. We attend to one thing rather than another, because we will to do so, and our will is here the elementary impulse to know. Our attention leads us at times into error. But this error is merely an accompaniment, the result of our will activity. We want to

intensify an impression, to bring it within the sphere of knowledge. But in carrying out our impulse, we do more than we meant. We not only bring something into clearer consciousness that was before out of clear consciousness, but we qualitatively modify this thing by attending to it. ...Attention seems to defeat, in part, its own object. Bringing something into the field of knowledge seems to be a modifying, if not transforming, process.

For Royce the ultimate basis of the self is the will. It exists from birth, is itself a force with choice and, thus, responsible, both morally and causally, for creating or manifesting itself.

Plainly, since active inner processes are forever modifying and building our ideas; since our interest in what we wish to find does so much to determine what we find; since we could not if we would reduce ourselves to mere registering machines, but remain always builders of our own little worlds--it becomes us to consider well, and to choose the spirit in which we shall examine our experience. Every one is certain to be prejudiced, simply because he does not merely receive experience, but himself acts, himself makes experience. The great question for every truthseeker is, in what sense, to what degree, with what motive, for what end, may I and should I be prejudiced?

Royce can avoid the problem that James poses because of the difference between potential and actual existence. The will is an actualizing force, in a sense a potential for actualizing since it does not act with mechanical necessity. It is a potential force for creating itself in actuality, and, as such, is responsible for the attitude that it adopts in the process.

Unlike James's self, which is the epiphenomena of the movements of his mouth and throat, Royce's conscious self might be described as the creation of his will. Even though speech is important for the

development of a distinctively human mind, Royce finds that "Thought has other modes of expression than through the forms of speech."<sup>10</sup> For instance, creative actions.

Royce may be credited with anticipating the pragmatists Thomas Cooley and G. H. Mead with the concept of "the significant other" in the emergence of the self. This is not surprising in view of the fact that significant perceptions and interpretations were the data by which Royce's will created its (actual) existence. It creates itself in its relationship to other selves and, secondly, as over against the brute facts which function as matter. Royce says:

A man is conscious of himself, as a finite being, only in so far as he contrasts himself, in a more or less definite social way, with what he takes to be the life, and, in fact, the conscious life, of some other finite being.... Our conception of physical reality is secondary to our conception of our social fellow-beings, and is actually derived therefrom.

Thus not only does the self learn to define itself in its interaction with other selves, but it is also the case that most of what is taken for physical reality is, in fact, a matter of convention. "Matter" is understood socially or conventionally.

According to J. H. Cotton, "Without our Neighbors we simply would not be aware of ourselves as selves at all. Such is the thesis of Royce."<sup>12</sup> Why, then, did not Royce get the credit for a theory that went to Cooley and Mead? Unknowingly, Cotton provides the answer when he says: "Royce has a way of saying that our estimate of ourselves depends upon what others think of us, or upon what we believe others ought to think. But these are by no means identical. For in

our belief about what our neighbors 'ought' to think of us, we retain our own measure of independent judgment."<sup>13</sup> For Mead, the pragmatist and "social behaviorist," there is no independent existence (socially speaking) and certainly no independent judgment.

Another area in which Royce took James to task was over the knowledge of other selves, the conscious states of others. Royce says, "There can be no direct perception of other minds. For this general reason, 'working hypotheses' about the interior reality which belongs to the mind of my neighbor can never be 'converted into the cash of existence'."<sup>14</sup> James was forced to resort to analogy, and Royce says that this is "...fatal to the whole pragmatic theory of knowledge. Surely an argument from analogy is not its own verification."<sup>15</sup> Royce missed the chance to attack the argument from analogy as wholly improper under these circumstances: it is suitable for judging an unknown individual case by reference to the well known general case; but in the case of the conscious states of others it is applied from the basis of only one known case (the individual who is directly conscious of only himself) to over a billion unknown cases. Still, Royce's point is well taken.

Royce's solution is to use the criterion of coherent new information as the sure sign of another mind.<sup>16</sup> There is a dialogue; new ideas are communicated by means of symbols; and it all depends upon a continuous series of mutual interpretations.<sup>17</sup>

As early as 1881 Royce expressed agreement with James that there was no "mind-stuff." For James there was nothing independent of

matter, and for Royce there was nothing, no "stuff," independent of consciousness. In an interesting way, their radical positions were rather compatible on this issue. It was James's treatment of the objectivity of the given of consciousness which bothered Royce. Royce wrote a letter to him that year saying:

There is just one doubt in much that you say about the general definition of reality: Do you or do you not recognize this reality to which you speak as in its known or unknown forms independent of the knowing consciousness? Sometimes you speak as if "Sentiment" were all, sometimes as if there were something above the "Sentiment" to which the latter conformed.... For me the sentiment of reality, the determination to act thus and so, the expectation of certain results, all these facts of consciousness absolutely no transcendent reality. <sup>18</sup>

For Royce the data of consciousness is objective, upheld by the Absolute.

Whereas James and Royce were best friends and their philosophies were compatible in practice (with Royce from time to time calling himself and Absolute pragmatist), there was little or no good feeling between James and Santayana. In fact, Santayana was one of the only two students in his entire career that James actively disliked. (The other was Theodore Roosevelt.) For his part, Santayana began his professional studies with the rigors of "Catholic philosophy" (presumably Thomism) and detested James's lack of system, precision and certitude.

Santayana had a difficult time saying anything about James that was not in some way demeaning. He says that James had an "...irregular education; he never acquired that reposeful mastery of particular authors and the safe ways of feeling and judging which are fostered in great schools and universities."<sup>19</sup> He could not stand James's apparent

lack of consistency. However, he knew it to be a part of his method. He said that, "In reality, James was consistent enough, as even Emerson (more extreme in this sort of irresponsibility) was too."<sup>20</sup> Continuing, Santayana claims that "His excursions into philosophy were accordingly in the nature of raids."<sup>21</sup> Santayana believed that James's popularity rested upon his poorer works--The Will to Believe, Pragmatism and The Varieties of Religious Experience--rather than on his best work, The Principles of Psychology.

Although James's psychology was his most scholarly and well researched work, Santayana saw that it gave a clue to his later direction. According to Santayana, James did not dare to accept the conclusions of his own research because they would have pointed to a mechanistic universe.

He preferred to believe that mind and matter had independent energies and could lend one another a hand, matter operating by motion and mind by intention. This dramatic, amphibious way of picturing causation is natural to common sense, and might be defended if it were clearly defined; but James was insensibly carried away from it by a subtle implication of his method. This implication was that experience or mental discourse not only constituted a set of substantive facts; all else, even the material world which his psychology had postulated, could be nothing but a verbal or fantastic symbol for sensations in their experienced order. So that while nominally the door was kept open to any hypothesis regarding the conditions of the psychological flux, in truth the question was prejudged. The hypotheses, which were parts of this psychological flux, could have no object save other parts of it. That flux itself, therefore, which he could picture so vividly, was the fundamental existence. The sense of bounding over the waves, the sense of being on an adventurous voyage, was the living fact; the rest was dead reckoning. Where one's gift is, there will one's faith be also; and to this poet appearance was the only reality. (Emphasis Santayana).<sup>22</sup>

Santayana says that, "I think it important to remember, if we are not to misunderstand William James, that his radical empiricism and his pragmatism were in his mind only methods; his doctrine, if he may be said to have had one, was agnosticism."<sup>23</sup> Santayana defines James' agnosticism as "...feeling instinctively that beliefs and opinions, if they had any objective beyond themselves, could never be sure they had attained it."<sup>24</sup> Thus Santayana felt that James was philosophically shallow and a subtle form of religious hypocrite:

All faiths were what they were experienced as being, in their capacity of faiths; these faiths, not their objects, were the hard facts we must respect. We cannot pass, except under the illusion of the moment, to anything firmer or on a deeper level. There was accordingly no sense of security, no joy, in James's apology for personal religion. He did not really believe; he merely believed in the right of believing that you might be right if you believed.

It is this underlying agnosticism that explains an incoherence which we might find in his popular works.... Professedly they are works of psychological observation; but the tendency and suasion in them seems to run to disintegrating the idea of truth, recommending belief without reason, and encouraging superstition.

Santayana finds that James had no ultimate basis--no ground at all--for claiming that his fine psychological observations were not "instances of delusion." Santayana deplored the lack of basis for a "judicial attitude."

In The Varieties of Religious Experience we find the same apologetic intention running through a vivid account of what seems for the most part (as James acknowledged) religious disease. Normal religious experience is hardly described in it. Religious experience, for the great mass of mankind, consists in simple faith in the truth and benefit of their religious traditions. But to James something so conventional and rationalistic seemed hardly religious; he was thinking only of irruptive

visions and feelings as interpreted by the mystics who had them.<sup>26</sup>

Santayana compared James's study of religion in The Varieties to a surgeon who could guarantee the success of his operation, but not the life of the patient. He compared James's Will to Believe to Pascal's Wager, and shows it to be fallacious for the same reasons: first, there are a multitude of choices, not just two alternatives; second, the motive is base:

...such a wager--betting on the improbable because you are offered big odds--is an unworthy parody of the real choice between wisdom and folly. There is no heaven to be won in such a spirit,<sup>27</sup> and if there was, a philosopher would despise it.

To be boosted by an illusion is not to live better than to live in harmony with the truth; it is not nearly so safe, not nearly so sweet, and not nearly so fruitful. These refusals to part with a decayed illusion are really an infection of the mind. Believe certainly;<sup>28</sup> we cannot help believing; but believe rationally....

Note, however, the phrase, "we cannot help believing." In this much Santayana agrees with James. The difference is that Santayana is a type of philosophical realist: there is but one objective reality, and only it is worthy of human belief--the universe is not plural. Santayana does not believe that James could live with truth or certitude if he found it.

Philosophy for him had a Polish constitution; so long as a single vote was cast against the majority, nothing could pass. The suspense of judgment which he had imposed upon himself as a duty, became almost a necessity. I think it would have depressed him if he had had to confess that any important question was finally settled.... Experience seems to most of us to lead to conclusions, but empiricism has sworn never to draw them.<sup>29</sup>



Rather, Santayana thinks that James drew his false conclusions from a true psychological fact; the fact that will and belief do influence one's actions.

We do not need a will to believe; we need only a will to study the objects in which we are inevitably believing. But James was thinking less of belief in what we find than of belief in what we hope for: a belief which is not at all clear and not at all necessary in the life of mortals.<sup>30</sup>

Santayana not only agrees that beliefs, will, and desire do influence actions; he takes Clifford's position in the extreme, saying: "...indeed, I think we can go farther and say that in its essence belief is an expression of impulse, of readiness to act."<sup>31</sup> Like the pragmatists, he finds that human beliefs and impulses become adjusted to the facts of reality through actions. Again the difference between James and Santayana lies in Santayana's commitment to the brute knowable objectivity of the physical world. For this reason, Santayana claims that James is at his worst when he claims that faith in success can be what is needed to bring about a successful conclusion.

Here again psychological observation is used with the best intentions to hearten oneself and other people; but the fact observed is not at all understood, and a moral twist is given to it which (besides being morally questionable) almost amounts to falsifying the fact itself. Why does belief that you can jump a ditch help you to jump it? Because it is a symptom of the fact that you could jump it.... Assurance is contemptible and fatal unless it is self-knowledge. (Emphasis Santayana).<sup>32</sup>

He invoked Socrates to say that courage without wisdom is folly. Yet he is closer to James's position than Clifford's in holding that "Scepticism is...a form of belief. Dogma cannot be abandoned...."<sup>33</sup>

However, he qualifies this by saying, "The brute necessity of believing something so long as life lasts does not justify any belief in particular...."<sup>34</sup>

When writing about Bertrand Russell in Winds of Doctrine, Santayana devotes twelve pages to Russell's criticism of pragmatism. Santayana both paraphrases Russell and quotes him at length on this subject, with little regard for Russell's own philosophy. Perhaps he chose to use Russell as a vehicle of criticism so as not to cast doubt on his own motives. Russell is excellent for this purpose because he took the same sort of delight as Santayana did in attempting to make pragmatism look absurd. Sometimes Santayana would step in to help him; for instance when Russell was explaining how the pragmatists paid inadequate attention to the facts, Santayana added:

For we should presently learn that those facts can be made by thinking, that our faith in them may contribute to their reality, and may modify their nature; in other words, these facts are our immediate apprehensions of facts.... Thus the pragmatist's reliance on facts does not carry him beyond the psychic sphere; his facts are only his personal experiences. Personal experiences may well be the basis for no less personal myths; but the effort of intelligence and of science is to find the basis of the personal experiences themselves; and this non-psychic basis of experience is what common sense calls the facts, and what practice is concerned with...the bed-rock of facts that the pragmatist builds upon is avowedly drifting sand.<sup>35</sup>

Through the selective use of Russell's criticisms and his own remarks Santayana paves the way to suggest that the "psychological point of view" of pragmatism, "might be the equivalent to the idealistic doctrine."<sup>36</sup> Thus accusing James of being a secret idealist was the ultimate that Santayana could do in discrediting him. He also used an

historical approach to achieve the same result as he achieved through quoting Russell's analysis:

Such economical faith, enabling one to dissolve the hard materialistic world into a work of mind, which mind might outflank, was traditional in the radical Emersonian circles in which pragmatism sprang up.<sup>37</sup>

...they have declared that consciousness does not exist, and that objects of sensation (which at first were called feelings, experiences, or 'truths') know or mean one another when they lead to one another, when they are poles, so to speak, in the same vital circuit. The spiritual act which was supposed to take things for its object is to be turned into 'objective spirit,' that is, into dynamic relations between things.<sup>38</sup>

It certainly was not James's early materialism that bothered Santayana but, rather, his pervasive nominalism.

In William James...psychology was the high court of appeal. Ultimately he wrote his Varieties of Religious Experience--by far his most influential book--in which he showed his strong inclination to credit supernormal influences and the immortality of the soul.

All this, however, was a somewhat troubled hope which he tested by all available evidence; and his most trusted authorities were often French, Renouvier and later Bergson.... It was only later that he produced the sensational theories by which he is known, at least by hearsay, all the world over: his Pragmatism, in which the reality of truth seemed to be denied, and his article entitled 'Does Consciousness Exist?' where he answered this question in the negative.<sup>39</sup>

He considered James to be a philosophical coward, one who could not bear the consequences of his underlying materialism. Santayana says, "I cannot understand what satisfaction a philosopher can find in artifices, or in deceiving himself and others. I therefore like to call myself a materialist...."<sup>40</sup>

Indeed, Santayana claimed to be a thorough-going materialist. Matter is primary, the only "stuff" which is real in the nature of

being. He says:

I am not tempted seriously to regard consciousness as the very essence of life or even of being. On the contrary, ...consciousness is the most highly conditioned of existences, ...nor does its origin seem more mysterious to me than that of everything else.<sup>41</sup>

Santayana, at the opposite extreme from idealism, very clearly reduces mind to an epiphenomenon of matter.

...while the designation of substance as mind-stuff is correct, it is by no means exclusively or even pre-eminently proper. ...In so far as mind has stuff at all under it and is not purely spiritual, the stuff of it is purely matter.

...Moreover, organization requires a medium as well as a stuff; and that medium in which the mind-stuff moves is avowedly space and time. But what can exist in space except matter...? Mind-stuff is therefore simply an indirect name for matter...and nothing but a confusing attachment to a psychological vocabulary could conspire for its frequent use.

I find, then, that in the psychological sphere, apart from pure feeling or intuition, everything is physical. There is no such thing as mental substance, mental force, mental machinery, or mental causation.<sup>42</sup>

Santayana considered James to be at his best in the passage in his Psychology where he declares that one is sorry because he cries, angry because he strikes and afraid because he trembles. After giving a vivid account of the human passions run wild in love and anxiety, he explains it in a manner reminiscent of the way James explained the same phenomena by reference to the "machinery" of a chicken:

All this is the psyche's work; ...and our superficial mind is carried by it like a child, cooing and fretting, in his mother's arms. Much of it we feel going on unmistakably within our bodies, and the whole of it in fact goes on there. ...The psyche is an object of experience to herself, since what she does at one moment

or in one organ she can observe, perhaps a moment later, or with another organ; yet of her life as a whole she is aware only as we are aware of the engines and the furnaces in a ship in which we are traveling, half-asleep, or chattering on deck; or as we are aware of a foreign language for the first time...without distinguishing the words, or the reasons for these precise passionate outbursts. In this way we all endure, without understanding, the existence and the movement of our own psyche: for<sup>43</sup> it is the body that speaks, and the spirit that listens.

Unlike James, Santayana saw the necessity of positing an unconscious psyche, a natural program for maintaining the life of the body. Of the psyche he says, "...to keep us alive is her first and essential function. It follows naturally from this biological office that in each of us she [the psyche] is one, vigilant, and predetermined...."<sup>44</sup>

It has that same essential function in both plants and animals.

He says:

The whole life of the psyche, even if hidden by chance from human observation, is essentially observable: it is the object of biology. Such is the only scientific psychology, as conceived by the ancients, including Aristotle,<sup>45</sup> and now renewed in behaviorism and psycho-analysis.

One might speculate that if James had been a philosophical realist like Peirce, then Santayana might have called himself a pragmatist--albeit grudgingly and with many qualifications. This is because of Santayana's insistence upon the practical knowability of an objective world, and of the efficacy of reason which, as a tool, allows men to live in harmony with nature.

Reminiscent of pragmatic learning theory, Santayana says that, "The guide in early sensuous education is the same that conducts the whole Life of Reason, namely, impulse checked by experiment, and experiment judged again by impulse."<sup>46</sup> He says that,

...perception and knowledge are...normally and virtually true: not true literally, as the fond spirit imagines when it takes some given picture...for the essence of the world; but pragmatically, and for the range of human experience....<sup>47</sup>

Thus also, there is nothing to prevent consciousness--spirit--from having knowledge of its source. Santayana says,

In other words, consciousness is naturally cognitive. Its spiritual essence renders it an imponderable sublimation of organic life, and invisible there; yet it is attached historically, morally, and indirectly to its source, by being knowledge of it.<sup>48</sup>

It may be said that James's two major contemporary American critics held complementary notions of the nature of consciousness. For Royce, the act of defining one's separate conscious self as over against the rest of consciousness creates something which functions as "matter." Santayana, on the other hand, is acutely aware of the fact that "all matter is alive,"<sup>49</sup> ready to actualize its potentials under the right conditions of motion and complexity.

Royce and Santayana both agree that the self can know itself and, thus, live in an objective harmony with its surroundings; whereas for James there is no such universal objectivity, and it might profit the organism simply to experiment with its life-style. It is this lack of knowledge and commitment which made pragmatism radically different from other world views.

## CHAPTER 3

### PRAGMATISM AND THE PROGRESSIVE MOVEMENT

Many researchers of the Progressive Movement in the United States assume that there is a connection between pragmatism and progressivism. Yet few are willing to make the connection explicit, other than acknowledging that they were contemporaneous. For instance, A. S. Link and W. M. Leary have compiled an extensive bibliography, The Progressive Era and the Great War, 1896-1920,<sup>1</sup> without a single mention of either pragmatism or William James. Their only mention of John Dewey is Sidney Hook's 1935 biography. In The Pragmatic Revolt in American History, Cushing Strout said such things as pragmatism "stimulated"<sup>2</sup> both Charles Beard and Carl Becker; that Beard defended his undertakings in "characteristically pragmatic tones,"<sup>3</sup> and that Beard and Becker would have agreed with Dewey's factual-contextual relativism if they had read such works as his new logic. Strout uses the term "pragmatic" in his title in a technical way, one which he explicitly defines as a form of relativism.<sup>4</sup> Then, of course, he equivocates it with the common usage of the term in his work. Although Strout's Pragmatic Revolt is otherwise a good work, his treatment of the connection between pragmatism and the historians of the Progressive movement may be taken as typical: the family resemblance is taken for granted, influences are hinted at, but little is made explicit and no causal relationships are established.

Both the pragmatists and the progressive historians shared an explanation of history. However, the best attempts to show the connection between the pragmatists and the progressives has come from those who do not share their view of history. George Novack and David Noble are among the best examples of this group.

George Novack is a Marxist philosopher and historian who, when discussed among other Marxists, is labeled a "Trotskyite." In 1937 he joined with Dewey in forming and carrying out The International Commission of Inquiry into the Moscow Trials for the purpose of clearing Trotsky's name. It was Leon Trotsky himself who suggested that Novack research and write a Marxist critique of Dewey's philosophy. In 1975 he published Pragmatism Versus Marxism: An Appraisal of John Dewey's Philosophy, the second chapter of which is titled, "Dewey and the Progressive Movement."

Novack sees the Populist-Progressive movement as one fifty year phenomenon; the reaction of a squeezed middle class which was seeking to maintain its position, a "loyal opposition" life wing of the capitalist regime. Novack says:

The fundamental reason for the failure of Progressivism lay in the fact that it was truly progressive only in its incidental features. At bottom it was a retrograde movement which aspired to turn back the wheel of history and reverse the development of modern society.

Dewey belongs wholly to this movement. He was a foremost participant in many of its most important enterprises. In time he became the supreme and unchallenged theoretical head of the movement. Dewey was not a leader of its plebian legions like Weaver or La Follette. He was rather the leader of the advanced intellectuals, those who worked out the theoretical premises and formulated the views and



values corresponding to the mass movement in their various spheres of professional activity.<sup>6</sup>

In Novack's work Dewey and his pragmatism assume the position of highest intellectual importance. Novack tacitly accepts the position that the "defection of the intellectuals" (not his term) precedes a revolution and holds the Marxist position that it will be led by those who have been squeezed down from high positions in the capitalist power struggle. Thus pragmatism, the American philosophy, was (and still is for Novack) a conservative force, bent upon upholding the crumbling system through reforms. A nation's philosophy is its ultimate, distilled consciousness; hence, Novack alternately sees pragmatism as the tragedy of the middle class or as the instrument of class repression wielded by the upper class.

Novack fails to take account of Dewey's own periods as a socialist, his spirited defense of Trotsky and his view of the class nature of society. On this Dewey says, "The direct impact of liberty always has to do with some class or group that is suffering in a social way from some form of constraint exercised by the distribution of powers that exist in contemporary society."

Dewey was also noted for such statements as:

The liberals of more than a century ago were denounced in their time as subversive radicals, and only when the new economic order was established did they become apologists for the status quo or else content with social patchwork. If radicalism is defined as perception of need for radical change, then any liberalism<sup>8</sup> which is not also radicalism is irrelevant and doomed.

Throughout the Thirties Dewey repeatedly called for the abolition of monopoly capitalism and the substitution of a planned economy in its

place. Perhaps what Novack cannot forgive is that pragmatism, as personified in Dewey, does not hold Marxism as the ultimate philosophical truth, but as an option to be considered and evaluated in practice.

During the Populist and Progressive eras there was an influential trend in utopian literature, such as Edward Bellamy's Looking Backward (1888). These works preceded the popularity of Marxism, and conveyed the same message in simpler language. The message was that society is perfectable if only it were governed rationally. It was antithetical to both the profit motive in business and Spencerian social Darwinism as a general philosophy of progress. Significantly, one of the major elements stressed by the Progressive statesmen was economic reform through government action. Like Bellamy, they believed that the government could be a powerful force for human progress, and that "progress" was virtually equated with material well being.

The Supreme Court was the greatest obstacle to these Progressive statesmen and they were more successful at local levels. Charles Evans Hughes, a New York lawyer, gained fame for exposing corruption and inefficiency in the insurance companies. In 1906 Hughes was elected governor of New York and continued his reforms through the creation of a state public utilities commission. However, the preemptive effect of the federal commerce power stunted the working of the commission.

Robert M. LaFollette became governor of Wisconsin in 1900 and became one of the greatest and best known Progressive reformers. As governor he sponsored many measures designed to promote economic equality: maximum hour laws, workman's compensation, inheritance tax,

and a graduated income tax. One way or another all of LaFollette's economic reforms ran into trouble with the Supreme Court and suffered compromise, or outright nullification as in the case of the maximum hours measure. In 1906 "Battling Bob" LaFollette was elected to the U. S. Senate where much of his effort was directed against the Supreme Court. One of the major complaints of the Progressives (as well as the Populists before them) was that judicial review was basically undemocratic. It forced the entire nation to abide by the views of a few old men; men who were never elected in the first place, who could not be removed, and who themselves might be in fundamental disagreement over any basic question (as in the case of narrow split decisions). Ultimately, they felt that the check and balance system had not provided a check upon the judiciary.

Holmes's Lochner dissent fit perfectly into the Progressive scheme. In Lochner vs. New York (1905--198 U.S. 45) a five to four decision of the U. S. Supreme Court held unconstitutional a New York law limiting bake shop hours to a maximum of ten hours a day. Holmes said:

This case is decided upon an economic theory which a large part of the country does not entertain. If it were a question whether I agreed with that theory, I should desire to study it further and long before making up my mind. But I do not conceive that to be my duty, because I strongly believe that my agreement or disagreement has nothing to do with the right of a majority to embody their opinions in law. It is settled by various opinions of this court that state constitutions and state laws may regulate life in many ways which we as legislators might think as injudicious, or if you like, as tyrannical, as this, and which equally with this, interfere with the liberty to contract. ...The 14th Amendment does not enact Mr. Herbert Spencer's Social Statics...a Constitution

is not intended to embody a particular theory, whether of paternalism and the organic relation of the citizen to the state or of laissez-faire. It is made for people of fundamentally differing views, and the accident of our finding certain opinions natural and familiar, or novel and even shocking, ought not to conclude our judgment upon the question whether statutes embodying them conflict with the Constitution of the United States.

Three years later, in Muller vs. Oregon (1908: 208 U.S. 412), Louis D. Brandeis defended a similar statute before the U. S. Supreme Court. This time the dispute was over the constitutionality of an Oregon law prohibiting women in certain industries from working more than ten hours a day. In an abrupt turnabout the Court unanimously upheld the Oregon statute. Brandeis' approach was designed to minimize legal precedents and to stress the results of ruling one way or the other. He had no other choice, since the major precedent, the Lochner case, was against him. So, in reality, his brief consisted of a sociological tract, and the "Brandeis brief" was to set a precedent for future appeals. In 1917 in Bunting vs. Oregon (1917: 243 U.S. 426) the Court in effect overturned the Lochner opinion by allowing the state of Oregon to apply the ten hour law to men.

Eight years before his Lochner dissent Holmes revealed his basis for it in his "bad man" or predictive theory of law. He said, "If you want to know the law and nothing else, you must look at it as a bad man, who cares only for the material consequences which such knowledge enables him to predict...."<sup>10</sup> "The prophecies of what the court will do in fact, and nothing more pretentious, are what I mean by the law."<sup>11</sup>

Morality (and natural rights) are not to be confused with law for Holmes, as evidenced by the fact that there are bad laws. "Manifestly, therefore, nothing but confusion of thought can result from assuming that the rights of man in a moral sense are equally rights in the sense of the Constitution and the law. ...No one will deny that wrong statutes can be and are enforced, and we should not all agree as to which were the wrong ones."<sup>12</sup> It is also worth noting that in some cases the statutes are, or will be, disregarded. Here cites an example given by Louis Agassiz where the force of custom was so strong that no enforceable law could be made against it.<sup>13</sup>

Holmes believed that moral intent, or the state of mind of a defendant, is not actually a part of a legal decision.<sup>14</sup> Rather, it is the objective consequences of the defendant's actions that are in question.

Holmes says:

The primary rights and duties with which jurisprudence busies itself again are nothing but prophecies. One of the moral ideas...is that theory is apt to get the cart before the horse, and to consider the right or the duty as something existing apart from and independent of the consequences of its breach, to which certain sanctions are added afterward. But, as I will try to show, a legal duty so called is nothing but a prediction that if a man does or omits certain things he will be made to suffer in this or that way by judgment of the court; and so of a legal right.<sup>15</sup>

The pragmatic emphasis upon action and results is obvious.

In 1933 Morris R. Cohen wrote,

It is a curious fact that while critics and reformers of the law formerly used to take their stand on self-evident truths and eternal principles of justice

and reason, their appeal now is predominantly to vital needs, social welfare, the real or practical need of the times, etc.

The seed of the protest against the overemphasis of the logical element in the law was planted by Jhering and Justice Holmes over a generation ago.<sup>16</sup>

Cohen calls Holmes's view of the law as "an anthropological document"<sup>17</sup> and says that it could be attached to any modern "ism" such as functionalism or behaviorism. He says, "Holmes's position is, I judge, in perfect agreement with that of a logical pragmatist like Peirce: Legal principles have no meaning apart from the judicial decisions in concrete cases that can be deduced from them, and principles alone (i.e., without knowledge or assumption as to the facts) cannot logically decide cases."<sup>18</sup> He could have made a better comparison of Holmes's theory to James's epiphenomenalism or spectator theory of motivation.

There are other historians, such as Richard Hofstadter, who agree that the progressives were orderly reformers, not revolutionaries. Reformers work within the given system. Hofstadter says:

The Progressive movement, then, may be looked upon as an attempt to develop the moral will, the intellectual insight, and the political and administrative agencies to remedy the accumulated evils and negligences of a period of industrial growth. Since the Progressives were not revolutionaries, it was also an attempt to work out a strategy for orderly change.<sup>19</sup>

Hofstadter's appraisal of the origin of the Progressive movement is similar to Novack's, but that in no way leads him to the same conclusions. One must believe that the basic system itself must be changed drastically if he is not to agree with reform.

George Mowry confronts the Marxist historians directly, saying, "The bald confident assertion of the New Left historians

that big business shaped the Progressive program to its own interests seems highly erroneous...."<sup>20</sup> He goes on to catalogue the struggles that took place between the progressives and big business. Regarding the possibility of the overthrow of the whole system, he says:

One other question raised by the New Left historians remains--that revolving around their wistful, might-have-been statement that Progressive reforms drew off the necessary popular support for and therefore obstructed the growth of a viable democratic socialist party. To me, at least, that seems to be one of the more impossible fantasies of American history.<sup>21</sup>

The institutions of private property are too strong and ingrained, and the Great Depression and two world wars have not been cataclysmic to do what the progressives were supposed to have only set back. It is apparent that the doctrinaire Marxists are wrong.

Another contemporary historian who sees a strong tie between the Progressive movement and pragmatism is David Noble. He says, "It is my thesis that the point of view of the modern American historian is directly related to the world view of the English Puritans who came to Massachusetts."<sup>22</sup> This is the notion that the people made a pact with God to remain simple and, thus, virtuous. This is a sort of natural harmony which, as long as it is preserved from artificial "alien complexities," will keep America safe from the sort of strife experienced by the rest of the world, especially Europe. The major historians of each generation are, thus, philosopher-prophets, "Jeremiahs," crying out warnings. Since all history was that of artificial institutions, not of humanity itself which changes not at all, these historians could be termed as being "against history."

Noble says that in a 1913 essay of Carl Becker's, "Some Aspects of the Influence of Social Problems and Ideas upon the Study and Writing of History," Becker mentions Dewey and pragmatism by name as a justification for the historian to select what he considers to be the important facts from the almost limitless chaos of facts.<sup>23</sup> Unlike Novack, Noble views the progressives as using the pragmatists, rather than being led by them. This is very similar to Strout's "skeptical relativism" (another technical term) which he uses to describe Becker. Strout says:

Becker's answer to the problem of synthesis led him to the skeptical relativism that has made him such a controversial figure. He urged the historian to accept for his own field the implications of pragmatism, which made truth and reality subject to change. Did not pragmatism, he asked, undercut the Olympian ideal of objectivity...? It was necessary, he felt, to analyze the process of historical reconstruction in the light of this new outlook.<sup>24</sup>

Strout goes as far as saying that Becker substituted will for objectivity. He says, "If thought and will are identified, the pursuit of truth is debased by practical aims, and action deprived of the necessary guidance of knowledge. In giving such dangerous primacy to the practical will, Becker was even more pragmatic than pragmatism itself...."<sup>25</sup>

At this point it is worth reviewing what Dewey had to say regarding this twenty-five years later in 1938.

The formation of historical judgments lags behind that of physical judgments not only because of greater complexity and scantiness of the data, but also because to a large extent historians have not developed the habit of stating to themselves and to the public the



systematic conceptual structures which they employ in organizing their data to anything like the extent in which physical inquirers expose their conceptual framework....

The slightest reflection shows that the conceptual material employed in writing history is that of the period in which a history is written. There is no material available for leading principles and hypotheses save the historic present. As culture changes, the conceptions that are dominant in a culture change. Of necessity new standpoints for viewing, appraising and ordering data arise. History is then rewritten.<sup>26</sup>

Recognition of change in social states and institutions is a precondition of the existence of historical judgment....Annals are material for history but are hardly history itself. Since the idea of history involves cumulative continuity of movement in a given direction toward stated outcomes, the fundamental conception that controls determination of subject-matter as historical is that of a direction of movement. History cannot be written en mass.<sup>27</sup>

All historical construction is necessarily selective. ...Furthermore, if the fact of selection is acknowledged to be primary and basic, we are committed to the conclusion that all history is necessarily written from the standpoint of the present, and is, in an inescapable sense, the history not only of the present but of that which is contemporaneously judged to be important in it. (Emphasis Dewey).<sup>28</sup>

He goes on to give as an example how Herodotus wrote selectively what the Athenians wanted to hear. Dewey claims that historiographers must posit a principle and, in so doing, "The selection is truly a logical postulate as those recognized as such in mathematical propositions."<sup>29</sup>

He says:

The notion that historical inquiry simply reinstates the events that once happened "as they actually happened" is incredibly naive. ...For historical inquiry is an affair (1) of selection and arrangement, and (2) is controlled by the dominant problems and conceptions of the culture of the period in which it is written.<sup>30</sup>

It would seem that during the quarter century since Becker cited pramatism Dewey found time to learn from Becker. The instrumental use of

history was just what Dewey, Becker and Beard had in mind. Dewey said: "A further important principle is that the writing of history is itself an historical event. ...The acute nationalism of the present era, for example, cannot be accounted for without historical writing."<sup>31</sup> He continues to say that Marxist history has significantly influenced history in the present also. Dewey said that, "Intelligent understanding of past history is to some extent a lever for moving the present into a certain kind of future."<sup>32</sup> He said:

History cannot escape its own process. It will, therefore, always be rewritten. As the new present arises, the past is the past of a different present. Judgment in which emphasis falls upon the historic or temporal phase of redetermination of unsettled situations is thus a culminating evidence that judgment is not a bare enunciation of what already exists but is itself an existential requalification.

Thus, for Dewey, Becker was not substituting will for either logic or objectivity. For Dewey, the will is always an essential principle of any logical situation. Without going into a discussion of their truth or falsity, it can be seen that the relationship between the pragmatists and the progressives was a two-way affair. In this case William James had proposed a theory of perception and action, John Dewey had expanded it, Carl Becker had acted upon it and Dewey had come back to his rescue.

The "family resemblance," the contemporaneousness and the sharing of methods leads one to suspect that there was something basic shared by both pragmatism and the Progressive movement.

One of the most obvious characteristics shared by both pragmatism and progressivism is the notion of evolutionary progress. James

Harvey Robinson (1863-1936) had done advanced work in biology at Harvard and had studied under William James. He approached psychology from the standpoint of evolutionary biology as James did. Dorothy Ross said, "Among all the social sciences, it was psychology that suggested to Robinson the central question the historian should ask: 'the great and fundamental question of how mankind learns and disseminates his discoveries and misapprehensions...'.<sup>34</sup> Robinson accepted the idea that the brain--and thought--was an instrument of adaptation.

However, evolution was more than just adaptive, it was progressive. Robinson added "faith" to evolution:

...I, for one, have faith that if we gave it a show, mere human intelligence, based upon our ever increasing knowledge, would tend to remedy or greatly alleviate many forms of human discontent and misery. This is a matter of faith, I admit. But holding this faith, the chief end of education seems to me to be the encouragement of a scientific attitude of mind....<sup>35</sup>

His age had witnessed such amazing breakthroughs in technology as to make his generation noticeably different from the preceding one. Perhaps this can throw light on his extravagant appraisal of science:

"Science, in short, includes all the careful and critical knowledge we have about anything of which we can come to know something about."<sup>36</sup>

(Emphasis Robinson). Robinson sought to make history into a science, thus actually helping in the progress of history. He accepted the later pragmatists' instrumental explanation of mind. The task was now to find out what laws governed between man and nature that ensured causal patterns of adaptation. Then man might control his history as he did his physical environment. He said:

Hitherto writers have been prone to deal with events for their own sake; a deeper insight will surely lead us...to reject the anomalous and seemingly accidental occurrences and dwell rather on those which illustrate some profound historical truth. And there is a very simple principle by which the relevant and useful may be determined and the irrelevant rejected. Is the fact or occurrence one which will aid the reader to grasp the meaning of any great period of human development or the true nature of any momentous institution?<sup>37</sup>

Robinson says that there have been many sorts of histories, "But the one thing that it ought to do, and has not effectively done, is to help us understand ourselves and our fellows and the problems and prospects of mankind."<sup>38</sup> He calls this the most significant form of history. More important, the present human condition is a result of past history, and does not change as rapidly as it could if it were adequately understood. The understanding is an instrument for desired change or action. Robinson used the example of an individual's history, which is, responsible for what he is doing at the present, to suggest that the collective consciousness of societies function in the same manner. This constituted a perfect instance of applying the pragmatic view of mind--the very heart of pragmatism--to history. Reform can only take place when the process that produced the present is understood. He says:

We must develop historical-mindedness upon a far more generous scale than hitherto, for this will add a still deficient element in our intellectual equipment and will promote rational progress as nothing else can do. The present has hitherto been the willing victim of the past; the time has now come when it should turn on the past and exploit it in the interests of advance.

The 'New History' is escaping from the limitations formerly imposed upon the study of the past. It will come in time consciously to meet our daily needs;

it will come in time to avail itself of all those discoveries that are being made about mankind by anthropologists, economists, psychologists and sociologists--discoveries which during the past fifty years have served to revolutionize our idea of the origin, progress and prospects of our race.<sup>39</sup>

Robinson cites Karl Marx as being among the earliest who "...denounced those who discover the birthplace of history in the shifting clouds of heaven instead of in the hard, daily work on earth."<sup>40</sup> Although Robinson denied that Marx's economic theory accounted for everything, he was greatly impressed by the fruits of his new method as well as its origin, and considered it a great advance over all past methods. Like Marx, Robinson saw that the historian should be the one who studies all knowledge as a whole, he advocates becoming the historian-philosopher: "...specialization would lead to the most absurd results if there were not some one to study the process as a whole; and that some one is the historian."<sup>41</sup> In effect, such an historian becomes the only legitimate philosopher, taking a God's-eye-view of the results of all knowledge. The fact is that the specialist, by his nature as a specialist, is unable to trace all the effects and interrelations of his particular discipline.

This faith in progress becomes even stronger in Charles Beard. Beard defines progress:

Briefly defined, it implies that mankind, by making use of science and investigation, can progressively emancipate itself from plagues, famines, and social disasters, and subjugate the materials and forces of the earth to the purpose of the good life--here and now.<sup>42</sup>

In substance, it is a theory that the lot of mankind on this earth can be continually improved by the

attainment of exact knowledge and the subjugation of the material world to the requirements of human welfare. Associated with it are many subsidiary concepts. Its controlling interest is in this earth, in our own time, not in a remote heaven to be attained after death. It assumes an indefinite future and plans for greater security, health, comfort, and beauty in the coming years. While a philosophy of history, it is also a gospel of futurism.<sup>43</sup>

He goes on to make the Hegelian move of identifying progress with rationality itself.<sup>44</sup> This Hegelian strain becomes even more evident as he uses art and architecture to illustrate the Zeitgeist from culture to culture, saying, "All branches of civilization mirror the dominant idea."<sup>45</sup>

"Hegelianism" was alive and well then as it is today. David Noble makes the remark that, "Our final vision of the frontier is that which came from the Europe of Rousseau and Hegel."<sup>46</sup> From Rousseau came the connection of virtue with naturalism and simplicity, and from Hegel came the notion of an unfolding national destiny. If Noble had followed up this last notion he might have gained a great deal.

Dewey was a philosophical idealist for a good part of his life before he converted, through James, to pragmatism. His idealism may be termed "Hegelian" in that it was progressive, and it was not held in order to contemplate a realm of perfect eternal forms. In the 1890's he was busy defining such things as the will as "the self realizing itself."<sup>47</sup> When he converted to pragmatism he took much of his former psychology with him. Today's "progressive" education's pre-occupation with "growth" and "self-realization" is in large part traceable to Dewey's years as a "Hegelian."

Probably the most famous "Hegelian" in the history of thought is Karl Marx. When Marx stood Hegel on his head he merely substituted History or Matter in motion for God. The dialectical interpenetration of opposites, by itself, is no less mysterious without God, Spirit or Reason. After making consciousness an effect of matter in motion, Marx began to search for historical laws, or regularities to explain the progressive movement of history. Of course, the best known of these is his dialectual materialism. The key to Marxist psychology is Marx's statement that, "it is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness."<sup>48</sup> Man is matter become conscious and, up until Marx, that consciousness was merely an epiphenomenal reflection of that matter. Now that Marx had discovered man's true history he could become "self-knowing" for the first time. For the Marxists only the economist-philosopher and the historian-philosopher can adequately perceive the human estate.

For the pragmatist the true human state is perceived by the psychologist-philosopher and the historian-philosopher. The conception of mind is basically the same for both the pragmatist and the Marxist. The basic difference is that whereas Marxism tends to be a form of Continental rationalism in practice, pragmatism takes its lead from British empiricism: for the Marxist reality must conform to his iron laws; whereas for the pragmatist his laws must conform to reality, they must "work" in practice. The Hegelian factor in both systems is that they are "progressive." Evolution is not just change and adaptation,



it is progress. It goes from the lower to the higher, to the more conscious and rational. This Hegelian faith in progress was common to the vast majority of the reformers of the Progressive Era.

What evidence there is shows that socio-economic determinism in America developed independently of Marx. Stow Persons says:

The materialist interpretation of history, a preoccupation with the economic basis of the class struggle, and the sense that society formed an interacting organic whole were naturalistic ideas independent of<sup>49</sup> the particular formulation that Marx gave to them.

The evolutionary anthropologists, who were historians in the broadest sense, were among the first to indicate the possibilities of a comprehensive interpretation of history.<sup>50</sup>

Lewis Henry Morgan is the perfect example here. His independent "discovery" of natural, progressive stages of economic evolution was often cited by Marx and Engels. The fact of his independent discovery gave Marx proof that the data was scientific and objective. Beard is another good example. Persons says,

As early as 1916, Charles Beard had listed the names of those whom he regarded as mentors in the tradition of economic interpretation of politics: Aristotle, Machiavelli, Harrington, Locke, Madison, Webster and Calhoun. Marx's name was conspicuous by its absence, and many years later, when someone questioned him on the point, Beard readily conceded that Marx was, like himself, a collateral descendant of these same teachers. The omission of Marx had not been an oversight. The bond that united Simons and the Beards was not a common dependence on Marxism; it was a common<sup>51</sup> participation in the basic presuppositions of naturalism.

W. A. Williams makes the point that, "Beard never attacked private property as such, not even in the heyday of the Progressive movement or the New Deal."<sup>52</sup> Williams continues:



Those who call Beard a Marxian would seem to make the fundamental error of equating economic determinism with Marxism. Economic determinism is an open-ended system of causal analysis. Marxism, as generally understood and as used by the critics of Beard, is a closed system of utopian prophecy. Beard tried to clarify the difference between these two systems by pointing out that the ancients, from Aristotle to James Harrington, had emphasized economic differences as a source of dynamic conflict and change.<sup>53</sup>

In conclusion, Williams quotes Lenin's statement that, "A Marxist is one who extends the acceptance of class struggle to the dictatorship of the proletariat,"<sup>54</sup> (Emphasis Williams), and then reminds the reader that Beard never did so. This is why it was natural for Beard to look to Madison rather than Marx.

What produced the family resemblance among historians, sociologists, economists, anthropologists, educators and philosophers of the Progressive Era--the New Academia--now can be made explicit. It was the materialist-functionalist view of the human mind based on the theory of evolution, combined with a disguised Hegelian theory of progress. The philosophy of man--what it is to be human--is primarily a theory of mind. Virtually all the new social sciences and philosophy had converted from the view of mind as a changeless spirit which was capable of intuiting eternal truths, to one of mind as a tool of adaptation, itself still changing and in the making. The Hegelian idea of inevitable progress had lost its zig-zag dialectical quality in favor of lineal "stages" of development. Terms such as "manifest destiny" and "stages of self-actualization" are testimony to the American materialist adaptation of Hegelianism. The Chicago pragmatists, Dewey, C. I. Lewis and

George H. Mead, are distinguished by the fact that they worked longest and hardest on completing the theoretical aspects, the philosophy, of this view of man and nature. As Darnell Rucker puts it, "If psychology was initially subordinated to philosophy departmentally at Chicago, the tail may have been said to have wagged the dog."<sup>55</sup> T. A. Goudge agrees and adds, "The pragmatists were the first group of philosophers to work out in detail a philosophy of mind based on evolutionary principles. Moreover, since they were familiar with classical ideas in the field, they were able to access the kinds of changes in those ideas which evolutionary principles required."<sup>56</sup>

## CHAPTER 4

### THE CHICAGO PRAGMATISTS: GEORGE HERBERT AND CLARENCE IRVING LEWIS

For all intents and purposes, World War I brought an end to the Progressive movement in the United States. For a short time almost the whole world was in philosophic retreat. Paul Weiss credits the war for leading to the final disillusionment with high-minded speculation and ultimate truths, and for the subsequent popularity of Logical Positivism. Of the latter he says:

This doctrine alone seemed to answer adequately to that far-flung post-war spirit of disillusionment which so readily gave up the belief in fixed ideals and standards and the possibility of knowledge reaching beyond the here and now. 'The Lost Generation' thought it better to strain for present clarity than for ultimate truth.

The pragmatists had moved their center to the University of Chicago in the decade before the war. For the next generation of English speaking professional philosophers everything was dominated by linguistic analysis. Earlier, James had proven that pragmatism lent itself to linguistic analysis by stressing what he had shown terms like the "Absolute" to mean in practice. What was left for the academic pragmatists was to justify the connection between their evolutionary psychology and a "scientific" way of talking about the world.

In one respect pragmatism had an advantage. Since it is a philosophy of and for action, it could lay claim to being both scientific and optimistic. In spite of the fact that both G. H. Mead and

C. I. Lewis considered Josiah Royce to be their best professor at Harvard they both rejected him in favor of a "scientific" philosophy of action. Now their task was to upgrade and defend this philosophy against Royce, Santayana, Russell and others. Mead and Lewis may be thought of as those who were doing the precision work for John Dewey, leaving him free to do popular works in politics and education.

Action is the center around which the entire philosophies of Mead and Lewis revolve. For George Herbert Mead (1863-1931), intelligence is not properly designated as a characteristic of mind because it is merely the adaptation of the organism to its environment.<sup>2</sup> It is found in vegetables and unicellular forms. Rather, mind is an extension of intelligence, the basic ability of an organism to act or adapt for its own good. Mead makes a better example of the inversion of idealism than Charles Beard does. In a preface to one of Mead's works, Dewey says that not only was idealism the dominant philosophy when Mead began his career, but that he considered Mead's entire philosophical development to be an outgrowth of his problem with the nature of individual consciousness.<sup>3</sup> Again, he had to square it with the fact that reality consisted ultimately of physical matter in motion.

In reaction to Bergson, Mead said that, "The unit of existence is the act, not the moment. And the act stretches from stimulus to response."<sup>4</sup> Any act is an adaptation of the organism to its environment. For Mead, "Thinking is a certain way of solving problems."<sup>5</sup> It arises only when the action is complex enough that direct or habitual

action is blocked. Like John Watson, Mead implies that the organism is passive in its act of adjustment to the environment:

A living organism has only such an environment as it can respond to in so far as it receives stimulations from it. Its environment, therefore, is bounded by the capacity of the organism to be affected by it through its various sense processes. Furthermore, the objects that exist in that environment are determined by the form of the responses of the organism.<sup>6</sup>

He says that, "Consciousness is involved where there is a problem, where one is deliberately adjusting one's self to the world, trying to get out of difficulty or pain."<sup>7</sup> Without the possibility of action, thought and sensation are worthless. Mead's solution to the problem of mind-body dualism is to say that, "...pragmatism regards cognition as simply a phase of conduct, denying any awareness to immediate experience."<sup>8</sup>

John B. Watson (1878-1958) studied under both Dewey and Mead at Chicago. In his autobiography he states that he learned nothing from either one of them in class, but that he and Mead had a very good relationship when the latter would visit him in his animal laboratory. Mead and Dewey rejected Watson's classical behaviorism of the reflex arc because it did not account for conscious intelligence or planning. Also, it was too individualistic. However, both had the highest regard for its "scientific" character of sticking with objective data. Mead said that, "Social differentiation is the function of what we call mental life...; and behavioristic psychology is bringing this highest phase of organization among the members of the species within the pale of scientific contemplation and control."<sup>9</sup> He says that, "The opposition of the behaviorist to introspection is justified. It is not a fruitful under-

taking from the point of view of psychological study. ...What the behaviorist is occupied with, what we have to come back to, is the actual reaction itself."<sup>10</sup> Mead explicitly and simply identifies meaning with response.<sup>11</sup>

Mead saw that Watson's animal behaviorism was capable of great extension. He said, "A behavioristic psychology represents a definite tendency rather than a system, a tendency to state as far as possible the conditions under which the experience of the individual arises."<sup>12</sup> Of his own psychology Mead said, "It is behavioristic, but unlike Watsonian behaviorism it recognizes the parts of the act which do not come to external observation, and it emphasizes the act of the human individual in its natural situation."<sup>13</sup> In discussing Watson, Mead said that it is impossible to reduce consciousness to behavior, but it is possible to explain it behavioristically. This is Mead's functional approach. He says that, "Mental behavior is not reducible to non-mental behavior. But mental behavior or phenomena can be explained in terms of non-mental behavior or phenomena as arising out of, and as resulting from complications in the latter."<sup>14</sup> He wrote:

We want to approach language not from the standpoint of inner meanings to be expressed, but in its larger context of cooperation in the group taking place by means of signals and gestures. Meaning appears within that process. Our behaviorism is a social behaviorism.<sup>15</sup>

If Mead had stopped at that point he might have been known as the father of modern operant conditioning, and the connection between pragmatism and behaviorism would be explicit. As things are, B. F. Skinner has never mentioned his indebtedness to Mead. Perhaps this is

because of Mead's "Freudian" behaviorism.

Mead was critical of Freud for the latter's excessive emphasis on sex, and found little that was good to say about him. However, he accepted the notion that there were general biological reasons behind or governing most specific human actions. Mead says, "The good reasons for which we act and by which we account for our actions are not the real reasons."<sup>16</sup> David L. Miller suggests that Mead's "I" and "Me" are best explained in terms of Freud's Id and Superego.<sup>17</sup> Where Mead differs from Freud is that the "I" could never exist without the "Me," the generalized "other" adapted from Thomas Cooley's looking-glass self. Man is strictly a social animal at the psychic level, and language is merely a form of learned behavior. The psyche is not a product of biology.

Also unlike Freud, internal conflicts between the "I" and the "Me" occur only when the structure of society is inadequate to meet the individual's problems. He does not accept Freud's idea that "free" man is necessarily in conflict with a society which is by nature restrictive. What Mead rejected in Cooley was the idea of starting with selves which, later, took the attitude of others. Independent conscious entities were abhorrent to him.

Mead's conception of the human psyche pivots upon language as the means for cooperation in action. He picked up the idea of the gesture from the physician-psychologist Wilhelm Wundt (1832-1920) while studying in Germany and modified it to suit his system. For Mead, "The language symbol is simply a significant or conscious gesture."<sup>18</sup> The

fundamental characteristic of a significant or conscious gesture is that it affects the speaker in the same way as it affects the one spoken to--i.e., they both respond the same way and, hence, they share a common meaning. Thus he achieves his purpose and can say that, "The locus of mind is not in the individual."<sup>19</sup> "Psychologically, the perspective of the individual exists in nature, not in the individual. Physical science has recently discovered this and enunciated it in the doctrine of relativity."<sup>20</sup> He finds that relationships and responses are beginning to take the place of consciousness in both science and philosophy.

Language is the means of building the self or generalized other. According to Mead:

We are, especially through the use of vocal gestures, continually arousing in ourselves those responses which we call out in other persons, so that we are taking the attitude of the other person into our own conduct. The critical importance of language in the development of human experience lies in the fact that the stimulus is one that can react upon the speaking individual as it reacts upon the other.

A behaviorist, such as Watson, holds that all our thinking is vocalization. In thinking we are simply starting to use certain words. That is in a sense true.<sup>21</sup>

His criticism of Watson is that Watson does not take into account the full social complexities of language. In short, Watson was a psycho-biologist rather than a socio-psycho-biologist. Vocal stimulation is also self-stimulation: "That is fundamental for any language; if it is going to be language one has to understand what he is saying, has to affect himself as he affects others."<sup>22</sup>



Only in terms of gestures as significant symbols is the existence of mind or intelligence possible; for only in terms of gestures which are significant symbols can thinking--which is simply an internalized or implicit conversation of the individual with himself by means of such gestures--take place.<sup>23</sup>

Thinking is a matter of talking to one's self, only it is a social product in that it is the individual's "I" which carries on a dialogue with his "Me" or social "self", and even the "I" is a social product since it cannot exist without a "Me."

Mead writes, "It is necessary to presuppose a system in order to define the objects that make up that system."<sup>24</sup> Society provides that system through its language. Mead accepts the consequence that this makes reality and rationality a relative matter. He remarks: "Now relativity...has not only vastly complicated the spatio-temporal theory of measurement, but it has also reversed what I may call the reality reference."<sup>25</sup> Mead used Einstein's theory of relativity in physics to argue to a theory of social relativity in consciousness.<sup>26</sup> He notes:

Reason is the reference to the relations of things by means of symbols.

No individual or form which has not come into the use of such symbols is rational. A system of these symbols is what is called language,.... It always involves, even when language makes thought possible, a cooperative social process. It is society that through the mechanism of cooperative activity has endowed man with reason. It is only through communication that meanings have arisen.<sup>27</sup>

Language is ultimately a form of behavior and calls for the rationally organized society within which it can function. It implies common ends, and common ends are ipso facto rational ends.<sup>28</sup>

Striving for common ends--doing and saying what those around one are doing and saying--is being rational for Mead. There is nothing more objective than society to appeal to.

At this point it is worth noting that the philologist, Edward Sapir (1884-1939), and his famous student, the linguistic anthropologist, Benjamin Lee Whorf (1897-1941), were contemporaries of Mead at Chicago. Whorf remarked:

We cut nature up, organize it into concepts and ascribe significances as we do, largely because we are parties to an agreement to organize it in this way--an agreement that holds throughout our speech community and is codified in the patterns of our language. The agreement is, of course, an implicit and unstated one, BUT ITS TERMS ARE ABSOLUTELY OBLIGATORY:.... (Emphasis Whorf).

We are thus introduced to a new principle of relativity, which holds that all observers are not led by the same physical evidence to the same picture of the universe, unless their linguistic backgrounds are similar, or can in some way be calibrated.

This rather startling conclusion is not so apparent if we compare only our modern European languages.... But this unanimity exists only because these tongues are all Indo-European dialects cut to the same plan....<sup>29</sup>

The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis may be taken as the extreme position of linguistic relativity (at least as derived by social scientists). If they consciously owed anything to Mead they did not admit it. However, the important point is that once consciousness is no longer seen as an independent entity, it must become relative to something. If one chose the behavioristic position--either classical or operant--that thought is accounted for by speech, and that speech is learned behavior, then it follows that thought and consciousness is a learned process, relative to the society and language group that teaches it.

B. F. Skinner wrote, "Without the help of a verbal community all behavior would be unconscious. Consciousness is a social product."<sup>30</sup> Michael Polanyi remarked:

All human thought comes into existence by grasping the meaning and mastering the use of language. Little of our mind lives in our natural body; a truly human intellect dwells in us<sup>31</sup> only when our lips shape words and our eyes read print.

Our native gift of speech enables us to enter on the mental life of man by assimilating our cultural heritage. We come into existence mentally, by adding to our bodily equipment in articulate framework and using it for understanding experience. Human thought grows only within language and since language can exist only in society,<sup>32</sup> all thought is rooted in society.

David Miller says that Mead,

...would agree with Wittgenstein that there can be no private language, that...the life of a word is in its use, that language is a social affair involving communication, that language is the vehicle of thought, that thoughts and ideas are not subjective....

Parts of The Blue Book, The Brown Book, and the Investigations read as if Wittgenstein had been communicating with the deceased Mr. Mead but had received only Mead's conclusions<sup>33</sup> and not the experimental basis for arriving at them.

Whether or not Whorf, Skinner, Polanyi, or Wittgenstein owe anything directly to Mead, it is obvious that they all arrived at similar conclusions concerning language. They all hold that thought is acquired via speech, that it determines the nature of one's thought and that ultimately it is a learned behavior similar to any other. Mind ultimately is located outside the organism.

C. I. Lewis (1883-1964) also stressed action as the basis for knowing. As Lewis states, "The ruling interest in knowledge is

the practical interest of action."<sup>34</sup> He continues by noting that

The significance of conception is for knowledge. The significance of all knowledge is for possible action. And the significance of common conception is for community of action. Congruity of behavior is the ultimate practical test of common understanding. Speech is only that part of behavior which is most significant of meanings and most useful for securing human cooperation.<sup>35</sup>

Like Mead, Lewis finds that the key to the evolution of the human mind is the hand. Man's dexterous hands, his opposable thumbs, were better adapted for rearranging the world than anything any of the other animals possessed. All the senses are an extension of the sense of touch. This is what makes Lewis a pragmatist since touching is used to manipulate the environment. Humans had the fortune of having an adaptive nervous system commensurate with their physical possibilities. Lewis finds the hand-brain situation to be of almost equal importance; he has a preference for viewing evolution as being organic rather than lineal. However, he concludes that the hand must have preceded brain development, since men have yet to catch up with their potential for physical manipulation.<sup>36</sup> Thus the unique potential for human action is the genesis of the uniquely complicated human brain.

Also like Mead, Lewis sees that the common world, or common reality, is a social product created by the needs of cooperative action. He writes:

Our common understanding and our common world may be, in part, created in response to our need to act together and to comprehend one another....

Indeed, our categories are almost as much a social product as is language, and in much the same sense. It

is only the possibility of agreement that must be antecedently presumed. The 'human mind' is a coincidence of individual minds which partly, no doubt, must be native, but partly is itself created by the social process. (Emphasis Lewis).<sup>37</sup>

He further stated, "Our common world is very largely a social achievement--an achievement in which we triumph over a good deal of diversity in sense experience."<sup>38</sup> One understands or anticipates what others are going to do, what are their wants and habits; and then must coordinate his actions with theirs, especially with regards to ends. He continues, "The sharing of a common 'reality' is, in some part, the aim and the result of social cooperation, not an initial social datum prerequisite to common knowledge."<sup>39</sup> Thus, to a large extent social action precedes and creates social awareness, as with Marx or Beard. After Lewis concedes that there must be some sort of preexisting common reality in order to entertain common action and common concepts, he continues:

But both our common concepts and our common reality are in part a social achievement, directed by the community of needs and interests and fostered in the interest of cooperation. Even our categories may be, to a degree, such social products; and so far as the dichotomy of subjective and objective is governed by consideration of community, reality itself reflects criteria which are social in their nature.<sup>40</sup>

So far, Lewis sounds in agreement with Mead, Whorf, Skinner and Polanyi. However, this is deceptive because Lewis has a different causal sequence. For Lewis social reality is a matter of cooperative action, and the stress is on physical action, not verbal.

For this reason, meaning precedes language. The farthest

that Lewis ever went in equating thought with language was an aside in which he added, "Also, we largely think in words...."<sup>41</sup> His usual position is closer to (early) James': Lewis says, "Action precedes reflection and even precision of behavior commonly outruns precision of thought--fortunately for us."<sup>42</sup> For Lewis it is the relationship of actions that are meaningful, rather than responses as with Mead. As if in response to Mead, Lewis had written:

Meanings are conveyed by language.... But it would be doubtful that meaning arises through communication or that verbal formulation is essential. Presumably the meanings to be expressed must come before the linguistic expression of them. ...Also other things than language have meaning....<sup>43</sup>

He goes on to stress that certain fixed meanings are necessary to creatures which survive through their own behavior--regardless of language. As if referring to Sapir and Whorf:

The linguistic use of symbols is indeed determined by convention and alterable at will. Also what classifications are to be made, and by what criteria, and how these classifications shall be represented, are matters of decision. ...Nevertheless such conventionalism would put emphasis in the wrong place. Decision as to what meanings shall be established, or how those attended shall be represented, can in no wise affect the relations which these meanings themselves have or fail to have.<sup>44</sup>

Even though it is true that one's culture determines what aspects of reality its members will stress and be aware of, the relationships of these parts are objective and independent of human will. The whole system always conforms to rules and, unlike Whorf's formulation, those rules are objective. Action and, therefore, meaning takes place in the objective world of relations. According to Lewis:

The original determinations of analytic truth, and the final court of appeal with respect to it, cannot lie in linguistic usage, because meanings are not the creations of language but are antecedent, and the relations of meanings are not determined by our syntactic conventions but are determinative of the significance which our syntactic usages may have. Once we have penetrated the circle of independent meanings and made genuine contact with them by our modes of expression, the appeal to linguistic relationships can enormously facilitate and extend our grasp of analytic truth. But the first such determinations and the final test must lie with meanings in that sense in which there would be meanings even if there were no linguistic expression of them, and in which the progress of successful thinking must conform to actual connections of such meanings even if this process of thought should be unformulated.<sup>45</sup>

Lewis' conception of mind and consciousness is based in the action and survival of the individual organism, not necessarily society. Society-- a system of cooperation--is a particular way of surviving, a later modification of the thought process; but the human psyche itself is not a social product. Even though matter at the thing-in-itself stage can be interpreted in many different ways, all of them functional, it is still the first thing to condition consciousness via the body that must survive in it. He noted, "We must express meanings by the use of words; but if meanings altogether should end in words, then words altogether would express nothing."<sup>46</sup>

Lewis is careful enough to differentiate between the way something is expressed and what is expressed. He was also influenced enough by the Logical Positivists to believe that the verifiability principle was not incompatible with a pragmatic philosophy of action. If action and survival were objective, then so is what can be said about action and possible action. According to Lewis:

The mode of expression of any analytic truths is thus dependent upon linguistic conventions; as is also the manner in which any empirical fact is to be formulated and conveyed. But the meanings which are conveyed by symbols, on account of a stipulated or customary usage of them, and the relation of meanings conveyed by an order of symbols, on account of syntactic stipulations or customary syntactic usage, are matters antecedent to and independent of conventions affecting the linguistic manner in which they are conveyed. The manner in which any truth is to be told by means of language, depends on conventional linguistic usage. But the truth or falsity of what is expressed, is independent of any particular linguistic conventions affecting the expression of it. If the conventions were otherwise, the manner of telling it would be different, but what is to be told, and the truth or falsity of it, would remain the same. That is something which no linguistic convention can touch. (Emphasis Lewis).<sup>47</sup>

He could be so opposed to Sapir and Whorf because meaning (action) gives rise to objectivity rather than society. Lewis could even use this as a key to look for objective value, whereas Mead says, "There is no science in a statement of value."<sup>48</sup>

In the case of his famous "private language" problem Wittgenstein might have done better to read Lewis rather than Mead-- and perhaps he did, but no one knows. Simply stated, there is no common object or verifiability when one talks about a "private" sensation or the sensation in itself. A favorite passage of Wittgenstein's, often quoted by modern behaviorists is:

The essential thing about private experience is really not that each person possesses his own exemplar, but that nobody knows whether other people have this or something else. The assumption would then be possible-- though unverifyable--that one section of mankind had one sensation of red and another section had another. (Emphasis Wittgenstein).<sup>49</sup>



Wittgenstein infers that there can be no use in referring to a sensation at the level of sensation itself; for another example he uses the sensation of greenness.<sup>50</sup>

Wittgenstein compares private sensations to a beetle in a box, a box which everyone has, and where no one can see into anyone else's box. Whatever is inside of it, if anything, does not really matter to anyone else. He says that, "...one can 'divide through' by the thing in the box, it cancels out whatever it is."<sup>51</sup> It is "irrelevant."<sup>52</sup> He appears to suggest that the sensation itself is not something which one informs others about. No one can give another any information about the qualitative aspects of his mental phenomena, in themselves. Any such description must rest upon what is objective, such as the agreement to call certain kinds of surfaces shades of the color blue; or else rest upon some connection with its natural expression, such as pain-behavior. What Wittgenstein has, here, for the information actually communicated is tendentiousness (similar to H. H. Price) in the case of the emotions). Also here he has linguistic agreement, or similarity of usage, in the case of objective qualities, such as the color red. Wittgenstein says that, "You learned the concept 'pain' when you learned the language."<sup>53</sup> (Emphasis Wittgenstein). It is "new pain-behavior."<sup>54</sup>

Mead, the social behaviorist, was willing to say, "I see no reason to assume that, if a similar neural access to cerebral tracts were possible, we might not share with others identical memory-imagery."<sup>55</sup> Miller's interpretation that Mead would agree with Wittgenstein on the

impossibility of private language is inaccurate since they were talking about essentially different things. For Mead there could be no private language simply because language requires another person to communicate with and to create language or consciousness. For Wittgenstein the notion of "private language" refers to the object of communication. When Mead does refer to direct experience he either takes it mechanistically, as above, or openly states that he knows them to be different from individual to individual.<sup>56</sup> Thus he lacks the subtlety of Lewis and Wittgenstein.

Lewis wrote:

It is one essential feature of what the word 'mind' means that minds are private; that one's own mind is something with which one is directly acquainted--nothing more so--but that the mind of another is something which one is unable directly to inspect.<sup>57</sup>

We can have no language for discussing what no language or behavior could discriminate. And a difference which no language or behavior could convey is,<sup>58</sup> for purposes of communication, as good as non-existent.

Lewis explains what he meant by a concept which is "common to two minds":

The concept is a definitive structure of meanings, which is what would verify completely the coincidence of two minds when they understood each other by the use of the same language. Such ideal community requires coincidence of a pattern of interrelated connotations, projected by and necessary to cooperative, purposeful behavior. It does not require coincidence of imagery or sensory apprehension. (Emphasis Lewis).<sup>59</sup>

Like Wittgenstein, Lewis stresses the concept and the practical significance of the thing or state known:

We are concerned with two things in our practical understanding of each other--with communication and with behavior. My concepts are, from the outside view of me

which you have, <sup>60</sup> revealed as modes of my behavior, including my speech.

He continues the paragraph by remarking, "But it is not necessary that when we act alike we should feel alike...." (Emphasis Lewis). For Lewis what is important to the psychology of purpose is the "relation between anticipation and realization," and it is only known through behavior. He emphasized:

The eventual aim of communication is the coordination of behavior; it is essential that we should have purposes in common. But I can understand the purposes of another without presuming that he feels just as I do when he has them.

I do not need to suppose that either purposes in general or the content of this act in particular are, in terms of immediate experience, identical in his case and in mine, in order to 'understand his purposes.'<sup>61</sup>

For Lewis, "All meaning is relational,"<sup>62</sup> (emphasis his), and "Meanings are identified by the relational patterns which speech and behavior in general are capable of conveying."<sup>63</sup> Thus, even though the sensuous content itself of one mind cannot be conveyed to another, the concept or significance of it is objectified by its relationship to the individual and society. This can be conveyed in speech. Not only were Lewis and Wittgenstein dealing with the same problem, but they reached very nearly the same solution; i.e., that the concept or significance of the phenomena could be objectified and transmitted through language.

That was Lewis' position in 1929, twenty-four years ahead of the publication of Wittgenstein's Investigations. By 1941 he adopted a new outlook; one disavowing the verifiability principle and echoing James's The Will to Believe. He noted, "All of us who earlier were

inclined to say that unverifiable statements are meaningless--and I include myself--have since learned to be more careful."<sup>64</sup> Rather, he found that the belief in other consciousnesses has "empirical sense" even if it is not verifiable, saying: "We significantly believe in minds other than our own, but we cannot know that such exist. This belief is a postulate."<sup>65</sup> He found the belief in other minds to be similar to the belief in electrons and ultra-violet rays.

Lewis put his final stress on language as the vehicle of education. Because of language humans do not have to learn everything by trial and error or repeat the mistakes of the past. It makes past action a species property:

Language is...essential to that preservation of accumulated learning which is the root factor in the difference between human life and that of other species. It is an indispensable instrument of that continued and progressive human betterment which history reveals. Granted real communication, we are warranted in some confidence that there is nothing which is desirable to men at large, and is attainable by any, which will not be eventually shared by all; nor any common trouble which can be obviated by any from which all may not eventually be freed.<sup>66</sup>

He continues almost to the point of being utopian. Progress is continually accelerating because language has made social learning a cumulative product.

Both Mead and Lewis developed theories of mind as arising out of the action of an organism in its environment. For Mead language is the instrument which creates mind and consciousness, the internal dialogue. In Paul Weiss' words, "The late Professor Mead, though a professed pragmatist, was at heart a metaphysician."<sup>67</sup> Similar to

the systems of Freud and Marx, to what could one appeal that possibly might prove Mead's theory wrong? For Lewis language is a tool of cooperation and social memory, but not something essential to the nature or existence of the human mind. Rather, he showed what were the limits of using language to talk about consciousness, but did not discuss what he assumes consciousness in itself to be. As Weiss said of Lewis' pragmatism, it is good work but it lacks an explicit formulation and criticism of the metaphysics which it assumes.<sup>68</sup> Nevertheless, the formal philosophy of pragmatism was kept alive. Thus men such as John Dewey and Signey Hook had a respectable justification to call for radical change in society.

## CHAPTER 5

### JOHN DEWEY and THE GREAT DEPRESSION

What distinguishes most American socio-economic determinists from the Marxists is a rejection of dialectical materialism and a rejection of the dictatorship of the proletariat. "Hegelianism" is still present in the notion of conflict and progress. What distinguishes pragmatism among the naturalistic philosophies is its emphasis upon action together with its rejection of "metaphysics." All ideas are but probabilities to be tested in action.

When Dewey accepted the idea that the underlying cause of social change was neither human nor divine will, it made a profound change in his politics. As far as is known, Dewey's voting record up until the Great Depression was the following: 1896 for Bryan; 1912 for Theodore Roosevelt's Bull Moose ticket; 1916 for Wilson; 1924 for LaFollette; and in 1928 for Al Smith.<sup>1</sup> Dewey made his break with idealism in graduate school in the early eighties. Merle Curti finds evidence of Dewey's social radicalism in his writings as early as 1888.<sup>2</sup>

Dewey always advocated "social change," a term which may be translated as using government action to improve the conditions of those less fortunate. In terms of the Depression it is significant that he advocated organic change (change from within and by the existing system) up until the stock market crisis. He voted progressive, but not

for radical restructuring.

In lectures given in 1926 (reprinted as The Public and Its Problems, 1929) Dewey's tone was pedantic and uninspiring. He never spoke any better than he wrote, and at that time he did not convey any urgency for his social position. Rather, the lectures consisted of a dry analysis with an occasional tone of "wouldn't it be nice if ...." Judging by his later writings the following remarks from those lectures may have been directed at the Republican administration:

No government by experts in which the masses do not have the chance to inform the experts as to their needs can be anything but an oligarchy managed in the interests of the few. And the enlightenment must proceed in ways which force the administrative specialists to take account of the needs.<sup>3</sup>

The point is that it is impossible to tell if he meant the Republican administration. Now contrast this with his position five years later:

I speak as one who as far back as 1912 hoped for the resurrection of the Republican party, as one who has at times in national elections hoped for a revival within the Democratic party. But at last I am disillusioned; I am humiliated at the length of time it has taken me to pass something like political maturity. For, I submit, it is an infantile cherishing of illusions, a withdrawal from the realities of economic and political facts, to pin one's hopes and put one's trust on the possibilities of organic change in either of the major parties.<sup>4</sup>

Dewey's reaction to the Depression was most noticeable in his work for The League for Independent Political Action and in his articles in The New Republic. George Dykhuizen has given a good account of his personal letters at this time:<sup>5</sup> he condemned Hoover's lack of action, advocated a planned economy, and saw no real promise in the election of Roosevelt.

The 1928 election of Herbert Hoover distressed Dewey because he saw it as anathema to progress. He considered the old liberalism which Hoover represented to be based upon a fallacy, the notion that freedom is something expressed negatively (freedom from) and its consequent embodiment in laissez-faire capitalism:

But the course of historic events has proved that they emancipated the classes whose special interests they represented rather than human beings impartially. In fact, as the newly emancipated forces gained momentum, they actually imposed new burdens and subjected to new modes of oppression the mass of individuals who did not have a privileged economic status. (Emphasis Dewey).<sup>6</sup>

Rather, Dewey saw liberty as something both positive and concrete:

Well, in the first place, liberty is not just an idea, an abstract principle. It is power, effective power to do specific things. There is no such thing as liberty in general; liberty, so to speak, at large. If one wants to know what the condition of liberty is at a given time, one has to examine what persons can do and what they cannot do. The moment one examines the question from the standpoint of effective action, it becomes evident that the demand for liberty is a demand for power. (Emphasis Dewey).

Eventually he came to state his conclusion that politics is basically a struggle for power. He defined politics as, "...the struggle for possession and use of power to settle specific issues that grow out of the country's needs and problems. ...politics is the struggle for power to achieve results...."<sup>8</sup> Thus he holds the Marxist position in so far as dividing freedom into two categories, formal and factual,<sup>9</sup> puts by far the most emphasis on the factual, sometimes exclusively as above, and draws the conclusion that this requires social(ist) economic planning. He writes:



If we employ the conception of historic relativity, nothing is clearer than that the conception of liberty is always relative to forces that at a given time and place are increasingly felt to be oppressive. Today, it signifies liberation from material insecurity and from the coercions and repressions that prevent multitudes from participation in the vast cultural resources that are at hand. The direct impact of liberty always has to do with some class or group that is suffering in a special way from some form of constraint exercised by the distribution of powers that exists in contemporary society. Should a classless society ever come into being the formal concept of liberty would lose its significance.... (Emphasis Dewey).<sup>10</sup>

Dewey's other reason for attributing success to the Republicans was the fear on the part of the public that another party might upset things. The Republicans, the party of business, supposedly knew how to manage and run affairs in a businesslike way: Hoover, after all, was an engineer. For Dewey this had the ironic effect of proving that the public wanted federal economic management. It was proven again when the public held Hoover accountable for the Depression.

Dewey's reaction to the Depression went through a cycle starting with "Fabian" socialism (he never used the term) prior to the stock market crash. Then, after the crash, he opted for a radical socialism calling for a constitutional convention and ignoring the gains of the New Deal. Finally, as the effects of drastic social engineering in Europe became apparent, he drifted back to a low keyed evolutionary socialism.

The first period is best represented by the founding of the League for Independent Political Action (L.I.P.A.) and from

Dewey's Individualism Old and New (1930), a collection of essays drawn from his contributions to The New Republic the preceding year. The L. I. P. A. was founded in 1928 as a reaction to Hoover's election. The League's basic contention was that politics and economics had to be squared, and its beacon light was the British Labor Party. The vice president of the League at its inception was Thomas Maurer, Norman Thomas' running mate. Dewey showed up occasionally as a "sympathetic onlooker" but he was not a founding member. With the stock market crash in October of 1929, Dewey thought the time was right for change, and became a member; his reputation immediately propelled him to its presidency. With Dewey as president the major task of L. I. P. A. became the education of the American people concerning economics. They hoped to elect someone with their views to the White House by 1940.

To do this they advocated the formulation of a third party, and Dewey asked Senator George W. Norris of Nebraska, a liberal Republican, to head the new party. Norris politely refused. His refusal had two consequences: first, it deepened Dewey's suspicions of the collaboration between the old parties and; second, it gained Dewey the animosity of Norman Thomas and the avowed socialists. The press was also harsh on Dewey, both giving the League bad notices and never allowing Dewey column space for interviews. Both the press and the other minor parties considered the League a group of intellectuals, whereas both the major parties considered it a threat to be defused. Dewey himself may have been partly to blame: he was seventy

years old the year of the crash, had lived through previous depressions, and at the start did not express the sense of urgency which is needed in politics.

However, it was soon apparent that the Depression was worse than anything in memory--so bad, in fact, that it threatened to be the beginning of the total economic collapse expected by the most radical socialists. By the time of the 1932 elections the League had drawn up a specific platform of eighty-four recommendations, including: a quarter-billion dollars in federal funds for jobs; three to five billion for public works; and end to prohibition at the federal level; an immediate twenty-five percent reduction in the tariff; a complete free trade within twenty years; U. S. membership in the League of Nations; recognition of Soviet Russia; an immediate fifty percent cut in the military budget and a constitutional convention. It was as thorough a socialist program as could be submitted at that time, hedged with words like "eventual" public ownership and recommending an income tax up to seventy-five percent on the highest earning individuals. Dewey warned that the progressive radicals should do as he did and hedge their socialism in evolutionary terms; i.e., not advocating it as a forthright political policy. This was because it might play into the hands of the Facists, whom he was afraid might be in position to compete for power if the whole system collapsed.<sup>11</sup>

Unfortunately, Dewey was a bad political tactician. The

Socialists had held their convention four months ahead of his and had stolen much of his thunder. Norman Thomas was calling for most of the same things as Dewey and even admitted the same gradualism in practice. Thomas had the advantage of being an experienced candidate with a pre-existing party, one with its ideology and platform already worked out. Also, the pressure was on for a united front.

Dewey had two objections to Thomas. First, Thomas was an acknowledged socialist; he was identified with socialism. In 1931 Dewey wrote:

I think a new party will have to adopt many measures which are now labeled socialistic--measures which are discounted and condemned because of that tag. But while support for such measures in the concrete. . . will win support from American people, I cannot imagine the American people supporting them on the ground of Socialism, or any other sweeping ism, laid down in advance. The greatest handicap from which special measures favored by the Socialists suffer is that they are advocated by the Socialist party as Socialism. The prejudice against the name may be a regrettable prejudice....<sup>12</sup>

Rather, he imagined that the majority of reformers, "...all but the most dogmatic Socialists..." would enlist in the new party. As Harold Laski said of Sidney and Beatrice Webb, the left wing founders of the British Labor Party, they were "pragmatists at bottom," and that "Their word did more than that of anyone else to give the doctrine of socialism its necessary pragmatic roots in the English scene."<sup>13</sup> Dewey felt that it was only by being such Fabian socialists that people had a practical chance at achieving reform. Through education the solutions would suggest themselves to the voting public. Ironically, there is an

element of Platonism in Dewey's brand of pragmatism: to know the good is to do the good, and Dewey depended upon education to make it known.

Dewey's second objection was that Thomas was an ideological socialist rather than a practical one. Dewey believed that men would cooperate for the common good--once they were properly educated to know what that common good was. Thomas, on the other hand, looked at society in terms of the Marxist class struggle. In responding to Thomas' charge of being a group of do-nothings, late-comers, and utopian intellectuals, Dewey said:

It has been a constant aim of the L.I.P.A. to find labor groups which believe in independent political action, to bring them together, and to carry on education among these labor groups which have not yet seen the light. We are opposed to the defeatist policy which assumes that there can be no effective radical political action in the country until the majority of the population have sunk into the "proletariat." We are not yet convinced that the Socialist Party has taken the latter position....  
(Emphasis Dewey).<sup>14</sup>

Whereas Thomas had charged that Dewey's League holds "an intellectualized version of a watered-down socialism," Dewey responded that he was making decisions without regard for dogma. Dewey turned the tables and showed that Thomas' brand of socialism was as watered-down as his own by pointing out that Thomas was only calling for nationalization of the principal means of production and distribution. In practice, the Socialist Party admitted to the same gradualism that Dewey had recommended in theory. Moreover, Dewey charged the other radicals with alienating the middle class and thus creating an unnecessary handicap. This was, perhaps, his best point.

As can be expected, virtually all the doctrinaire radicals disagreed with Dewey's cooperativism. Even Sidney Hook, his most distinguished convert to pragmatism and admirer:

Dewey's idea is a socialized America. In terms of his own position, the only quarrel one can have with him is his failure to appreciate the instrumental value of class struggle rather than class collaboration in effecting the transition from Corporate America to Collective America. (Emphasis Hook).<sup>15</sup>

Hook saw nothing wrong with being a pragmatic Marxist, but neither could he give up the notion of class struggle completely. Actually Dewey would agree since he was trying to unify the lower and middle classes for an attack (at the polls) on the upper. That was one instance where Dewey was a better tactician than the professionals. He said, "In spite of the disparaging tone in which 'bourgeois' is spoken, this is a bourgeois country; and an American appeal couched in the language which the American people understand must start from this fact."<sup>16</sup>

With other socialists Dewey was a sort of friendly enemy. He voted for Norman Thomas in 1932. With the Marxists, however, he had more fundamental differences. He had been to Russia and was among the first to advocate diplomatic recognition. He had personally inspected their school system and was impressed with their dedication and their goals of doing so much with so little. Again and again he held up the Russian five year plan as examples of "scientific social planning" which should be instituted in the United States.<sup>17</sup> However, he also considered it a fact that orthodox communists took their orders



from Moscow rather than operating directly for the good of human kind. This conclusion was reinforced in 1935 when New York Local No. 5 of the American Federation of Teachers, the teachers' union which he had helped to organize and of which he was a charter member, was brought to a standstill by the Communist Party. Their immediate aim was destructive. Dewey fought back as chairman of the grievance committee and this took much of his time away from the League. (By the time the Communist Party sided with Russia in its attack on Poland and Finland it was too late to affect further Dewey's position on either the Depression or the New Deal.)

Second; Dewey held an opposing metaphysics or explanation of change. Even though he had an inclination for explaining change dialectically he did not consider it absolutely necessary, nor even desirable in some cases. The preordained acceptance of violence was especially repugnant to him. He noted:

Insistence that the use of violent force is in-  
evitable limits the use of available intelligence, for  
wherever the inevitable reigns intelligence cannot be  
used. Commitment to inevitability is always the fruit  
of dogma....<sup>18</sup>

Rather, like the consensus historians, he held that more change and progress comes about through cooperation than through conflict and violent revolution.<sup>19</sup> Although both Marxists and (Catholic) Thomists consider pragmatism a philosophy of expediency, Dewey believed that the ends are always inherent in the means, and that violent means would always corrupt the ends. The only passage in which Dewey ever advocated force in order to gain his ends was written in 1935:

...when society through an authorized majority has entered upon the path of social experimentation leading to great social change, and a minority refuses by force to permit the method of intelligent action to go into effect. Then force may be intelligently employed to subdue and disarm the recalcitrant minority.<sup>20</sup>

Even then he qualified it to the point of meaninglessness.

Lastly, Dewey considered Marxism to be a religion. He once confided to Bertrand Russell (another friendly enemy) that since he had gotten over one religion (Hegelianism) he had no intention of accepting another. On this point they both agreed.

Dewey prided himself on being undogmatic. Even so, many Marxists considered that he and they had much in common. They saw Dewey as representing a progressive evolutionary step in American thought. For instance, Jim Cork was able to cite nine similarities between Marx and Dewey:

- 1) Both find a common heritage in Hegel...Each in his own way emancipated himself from the idealistic insights of Hegel without sacrificing the great insights of the German philosopher.
- 2) Both consider philosophy as not 'outside' this world and above common human practices, but a very important part of the general culture of any epoch, reflecting its common experiences, problems and needs.
- 3) The strong secular, naturalistic note in both philosophers.
- 4) Both are in the materialistic tradition of philosophic thought.
- 5) Both are opposed to atomism, a-priorism, sensationalism, Platonic essences, and the extremes of both organism and formalism in understanding culture.
- 6) Both are opposed to the traditional philosophies of dualism (Descartes, Kant, etc.).



7) Both are opposed to absolute truths in favor of relative and provisional truths dependent for verification (and possible further extension) upon future inquire.

8) Both have a deep appreciation of the facts of biology and accept the philosophical implications of Darwinism.

9) Both epistemological theories are practically identical. Both stress the unity of theory and practice.<sup>21</sup>

What bothered the Marxists principally was that Dewey did not adhere to their plan for revolution, calling instead for mass education rather than class conflict.

Yet Dewey still can be charged with dogmatism. By the election of 1932 there was no package of mere reform that he was willing to accept--not even if it worked. Beginning in 1929 his political statements kept getting stronger, until they reached their most radical and uncompromising form in 1935. It may be speculated that the "success" of the German National Socialists had as much to do with his return to caution as his fear of aiding domestic reactionaries--he considered the Union Party (the Coughlin-Lemke-Smith-Towsend coalition) to be a group of fascists.

In 1930 he blamed the private profit system for the country's ills: "There lies the serious and fundamental defect of our civilization, the source of the secondary and induced evils to which so much attention is given."<sup>22</sup> He declared that economic causes are "fundamental." The traditional kind of rugged and competitive individual had his place in the pre-machine age. The old individualist had created the industrial state. However, its time is past and we live in a "collective

age."<sup>23</sup> As a former Hegelian himself he found it easy to accept the Marxist substructure-superstructure explanation. Again, he accepted it without the encumbrance of a formal theory of dialectics:

Our material culture. . . is verging on the collective and corporate. Our moral culture, along with our ideology, is, on the other hand, still structured with ideals and values of an individualism derived from the prescientific, pretechnological age.<sup>24</sup>

A new individualism can be achieved only through the controlled use of all the resources of science and technology that have mastered the physical forces of nature.

They are not now controlled<sup>25</sup> in any fundamental sense. Rather they control us.

He accepted both the Marxist theory of alienation and the basic tenant of Marxist psychology, that consciousness itself is a social product:

...the relationship of the economic structure to the political operations is one that actively persists.

Indeed, it forms the only basis of present political questions. Wealth, property and the process of manufacturing and distribution--down to retail trade through the chain system--can hardly be socialized in outward effect without political repercussion. It constitutes the ultimate issue which must be faced by new or existing political parties.<sup>27</sup>

He went on to say that "Socialism" is thought of as a bad work by the old individualists, thus seriously handicapping any party by that name: "But in the long run, the realities of the situation will exercise control over the connotations which, for historical reasons, cling to the word."<sup>28</sup> The inference is that socialism conforms with reality.

In terms of his own theory of pragmatism this may be criticized as "faith." His own theory, if consistently applied, would not

allow him to know any aspect of reality until after it was tested in practice. As a pragmatist all he had a right to say was that laissez-faire capitalism had been tried and failed. Politically speaking, Dewey was more than just a pragmatist by 1930: he was committed to a truth which had not yet withstood the test of action, one which was not pragmatically verified. There were other alternatives which might have proved workable, such as the measures of controlled and regulated capitalism offered by the New Deal. However, Dewey maintained that, "We are in for some kind of socialism.... Economic determinism is now a fact, not a theory."<sup>29</sup>

By 1931 his tone had become more vicious. The "economically privileged" had become his target rather than the private profit system, and he had begun to call them the enemy instead of the problem: "The enemy is one, for its elements are combined to maintain economic privilege in control of government."<sup>30</sup> He called Hoover's "engineering mind," "...the servant of capital employed for private profit."<sup>31</sup> He charged that, "The deadlocks and impotence of Congress are definitely the mirror of the demonstrated incapacity of the captains of industry and finance to conduct the affairs of the country prosperously as an incident to the process of feathering their own nests."<sup>32</sup> His criticism had become more specific, directed at particular classes and individuals rather than at the more abstract level. He charged also that the Democrats had accepted all the same basic assumptions as the Republicans and had "committed themselves to the policy of alliance with big business." Thus there was no hope for basic change to come out of either party;

their self-interest made them intransigent. Property interests always came before human interests. His economic determinism also grew stronger that year. He said, "For it is the pressure of necessity which creates and directs all political change."<sup>33</sup> Logically speaking, he should not have blamed both the individual culprits and the system that determined their behavior.

This trend continued until 1935 when it climaxed in his advocating what amounted to censorship<sup>34</sup> and the limited sanction of violence (see above). His emotion and his authoritarianism grew together. Dewey's "Hegelianism" showed up again that year in his statement that an individual's freedom is realized through acquiescence to collective regimentation: "Regimentation of material and mechanical forces is the only way by which the mass of individuals can be released from regimentation and consequent suppression of their cultural possibilities."<sup>35</sup>

All the evidence points to the fact that Dewey was fully aware of emotionalizing the issues. Consistent with pragmatism, he remarked:

Here we come to the nub of the matter. Intelligence has no power per se. In so far as the older rationalists assumed that it had, they were wrong. Hume was nearer the truth. . .when he said 'reason is and always must be the slave of passion' of interest.<sup>36</sup>

Pragmatism itself hinges upon a modification of the behaviorist theory of mind; thinking occurs only when unthinking or habitual behavior is blocked. It is a form of problem solving behavior. In 1931 Dewey stated:

Again, no movement gets far on a purely intellectual basis. It has to be emotionalized; it must appeal to social imagination....

Everything points to a simple conclusion. The only way to achieve any lasting reform is to find the one great issue on which all others converge.<sup>37</sup>

Dewey's one great unifying factor was: "Recovery of the agencies of the government by the national community for the service of the nation...."<sup>38</sup> He stated that this was not rigid or dogmatic, but that it would provide an identifiable enemy. It even provided the sense of conflict needed for a movement. Furthermore, he could satisfy his own pragmatic theory at the same time by saying, "No commitment to dogma or fixed doctrine is necessary. The program can be defined in terms of direct social needs and can develop as these change."<sup>39</sup> In the next breath he advocated nationalization of the power companies and regulation of the stock market.

Of course there is a contradiction between the dogma of socialism itself and the pragmatic dogma of having no dogma, but former Hegelians have only rarely been stopped by contradictions. The actual tool of transfer that Dewey did propose was taxation:

Since private control of national resources of the land with its mines, mineral deposits, water power, oil, [and] natural gas, is the stronghold of monopolistic privilege, it must be attacked at its fortress. ...taxation of land values, which are due to the requirements of society, is the only adequate method. They must. . .pass into the hands of the public.<sup>40</sup>

In 1931 when this was written he still could be called a "Fabian" or evolutionary socialist, even though a hurried one. Within another two years he was calling for a constitutional amendment that would outlaw all absentee ownership.

Dewey was not embittered because Roosevelt won in 1932. He

expected it. However, he was discouraged by the fact that not even The New Republic took his third party movement seriously. A few years later the League died of neglect.

Dewey was committed to socialism, and nothing that Roosevelt could have done short of nationalizing the economy would have pleased him. Unlike a good pragmatist, his mind was already made up ahead of time. He had predicted that anything good which either of the old parties did while in office would be undone if the emergency ended. So, ironically, his estimation of Roosevelt agreed with that of the conservative, Peter Viereck: both considered Roosevelt to be a crypto-conservative, a harmonizer of the old system while talking as if he represented the new. Whereas Viereck approved, Dewey wrote:

The gigantic Roosevelt experiment of 'relief, reform and recovery' showed a definitely new bias, to a controlled and humanized capitalism as contrasted to the brutality of laissez-faire. But the necessary conclusion seems to be that no<sup>41</sup> such compromise with a decaying system is possible.

He said, "And now in its second summer, the Roosevelt experiment is being generally admitted a failure."<sup>42</sup> As totalitarian elements gained both at home and abroad many liberals began to swing back to Roosevelt, yet Dewey never found much that was good in the New Deal. He wanted strong government and "social control" but could say almost nothing positive about how it should work, except to the point to the Russian five year plans.

After 1935 he began to mellow. When asked a month before the 1936 election how he intended to vote he replied:

I intend to vote for Norman Thomas as President. It was a disappointment that no genuine mass third party was organized, especially in view of the fact that the so-called Union Party is a union of inflationists and semi-fascist elements. I realize that fear of reactionary Republicanism will lead many to vote for Roosevelt who have no faith in the Democratic Party; but I do not believe that the actual difference between the policies of the old parties will be great, whoever is elected. I think the Republican Party is conducting a campaign under false pretenses.

After that time the rise of totalitarianism abroad reached alarming proportions. Dewey always referred to himself as a "social democrat" and believed wholeheartedly in democracy. However, he never did manage to answer the question of what there is in pragmatic social control that ensures that it will be used for good purposes. As we will see in the next chapter, Benito Mussolini and Georges Sorel both cited James's pragmatism as their basic inspiration. How, for instance, is a dialectic of ideas possible when the government owns the press?

It may be speculated that Dewey's total commitment to socialism reflected his Hegelian background and his deep seated optimism. For Hegel, Marx and Dewey, man's freedom was to be in harmony with his role in a strong state; a state which was responsive to the reasonable general will of its people. However, it can be shown that Dewey's actions were in perfect harmony with James's pragmatism. The pragmatist is free to hold any belief or myth that gives him comfort. As mentioned below, there was no national experience to demonstrate that socialism "worked," only evidence that no system in the world at that time was living up to its expectations. Yet, believing that socialism would improve things might make a difference.

After the 1936 election Dewey went back to writing on logic and education. Then he went off to Mexico to defend Leon Trotsky. When asked in 1940 how he would vote he responded: "Shall vote for Norman Thomas. See no permanent hope from either of the old parties."<sup>44</sup> At that time he was eighty-one. In 1944 he voted for Roosevelt and in 1948 cast his last ballot for Truman.



## CHAPTER 6

### FURTHER INFLUENCES OF PRAGMATISM

The continuing influences of pragmatism may be subdivided into four areas: first, James's Varieties of Religious Experience is often cited as the first work in the phenomenology of religion. It may have presaged a trend in nominalistic phenomenology.

Second; the effects of James's Will to Believe is still strong in religion, where it was first used. Moreover, it has had a stronger effect on politics outside the United States than on religion.

Third; the psychology upon which pragmatism is based holds sway throughout the social sciences. It may be understood as the application of Darwinism to the study of the human species.

Fourth; a whole generation of Americans have had their educations shaped by the philosophy ascribed to by John Dewey. Indeed, Dewey's fame rests upon his reputation as the foremost American educator, rather than as a statesman or a logician.

No work of this length can fully explore any of these four areas. However, the following may help make some of the issues clear and suggest further areas of research. I will begin with the emerging movement of a nominalistic phenomenology.

James M. Edie sees William James's phenomenological, or descriptive, study of religion as not only preceding the continental phenomenologists, but as still having something to teach them about "the phenomenology of religious experience:

James's methodological contributions to the study of religious experience are not only more sound phenomenologically than some of the studies which have, under the influence of Husserl, up to now explicitly invoked a phenomenological method, but they are also the first to establish any solid basis for a true phenomenology of religious experience.

Edie even goes to the extent of asserting that, "...the founders and 'fathers' of the phenomenological movement in Europe have given us nothing in the way of a phenomenology of religious experience."<sup>2</sup> As Edie sees it, these founders are Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Gabriel Marcel and even Sartre. He argues that a truly phenomenological study of religion would eschew the current study of the history and sociology of religion. The history, sociology and anthropology of religion are studies of its manifestations, not the essential thing in itself. He states that an examination of the phenomena of human consciousness will lead back to the actual foundations of religion. "This is the orientation of William James in his Varieties of Religious Experience, and this is what distinguishes him from other phenomenologists and philosophers of religion."<sup>3</sup> He even claims that James was more Husserlian than the school which bears the name and says, "I am . . . claiming that William James was the first to attempt a phenomenology of religious experience in an experimental sense, and I would point out that he has had almost no successor. . . up to the present time."<sup>4</sup>

What Edie fails to notice is the one thing that makes James's "phenomenology" unique: the fact that it stresses variety and subjectivity; in short, its pluralism. This is an essential aspect of James's pragmatism and may be the explanation as to why he has not influenced

continental phenomenology. The continental phenomenologists are committed to a search for objective essential structures which are the same for all persons. They are Realists. Hence, this serves to explain why James did not have a major effect in this area. What effect there has been is evidenced by the fact that people such as Edie are still calling for a nominalistic phenomenology.

On the other hand, the effects of James's Will to Believe are numerous and far reaching. The most obvious of these effects is in religion. Some philosophers, but especially theologians, are still willing to say that the "leap of faith" is both necessary and justified. Paul Van Buren, for example, begins with a purely nominalistic approach:

I point out that as a theologian, not a philosopher, I see the problem of contemporary philosophy from a certain angle and in connection with particular problems. Whatever limitations this particular approach may have, it is part of what I wish to argue on James's behalf that its particularity is not only no disqualification, but simply the only way to proceed, frankly accepting one position in the context of many.<sup>5</sup>

He agrees that there are places where people are simply forced to hold a belief one way or another without adequate evidence--such as whether or not life is worth living. Such beliefs as these do make a difference and actually tend to bring about their own truth; for instance, life really becomes worth living. Then Van Buren points out that, "...James focused on two sorts of questions, the moral and the religious..." and the important fact of the matter is that, "Neither logical demonstration nor empirical verification will be able to settle these questions."<sup>6</sup> The frame of reference for the existence of a proof is

missing. "In an important and unavoidable way, facts are man-made."<sup>7</sup> As will be seen later, this religious nominalism will lead Van Buren to advocate an affiliation between James and Wittgenstein.

Predictably, The Will to Believe had as much effect, if not more, on European political theory than it did in religion. H. S. Thayer credits the French philosopher, Georges Sorel, with being a variety of pragmatist.<sup>8</sup> (This is quite a concession on Thayer's part, since he is a consistent defender of pragmatism and is especially fond of James.) Sorel reflects the Bergsonian anti-intellectual sort of pragmatism that stems directly from The Will to Believe. Believing in certain myths--particularly the myth of the general strike--will not only justify violent actions, but even bring them about. For Sorel, like James, there is a sense in which believing makes it so.

Thayer says, "There are clearly certain broad similarities between Sorel's view of the function of the myth for social groups and James' argument in The Will to Believe concerning the benefits of belief to certain individuals."<sup>9</sup> The difference in application was that whereas James saw that belief might comfort and motivate individuals, Sorel saw that they might solidify and motivate whole masses. Since his time it has been recognized that almost all mass movements require an ideology, no matter how strange or absurd it might be. It is "pragmatic" when one makes use of the principle that the Chicago sociologist, W. I. Thomas, discovered while researching The Polish Peasant in Europe and America: "That which is believed to be real is real in its consequences." What James had not done, and what he was

criticized bitterly for, was to overlook the important distinction between ontologic reality and consequential reality.

According to Thayer, "It was in 1921, in De l'utilité du Pragmatisme, that Sorel stated his partial acceptance of James's pragmatism and argued for its 'usefulness' as a means of settling controversies."<sup>10</sup> James had written *The Will* in the context of the battle between established religion and evolutionary naturalism. What Sorel did not like about James was his Protestantism, but, like others, it was something that he could dispense with without changing the methodology that was the core of pragmatism.

Both James and Sorel had a great influence in Italy. Thayer quotes a revealing passage from an interview with Mussolini in the London Sunday Times of April 11, 1926:

The pragmatism of William James was of great use to me in my political career. James taught me that action should be judged rather by its results than by its doctrinary basis. I learnt of James that faith in action, that ardent will to live and fight, to which Fascism owes a great part of its success.

Benito Mussolini had even been a member of a group that called itself "The Pragmatic Club."<sup>12</sup>

Pragmatismo can be traced directly to James. Its foremost native spokesman was Angelo Papini (1881-1956), who met James in Rome in 1905. He already had a very high regard for James and after the meeting came almost to idolize him. They continued to exchange letters, with James forming a very high opinion of Papini, almost to the point of seeing his own reflection in him. According to Thayer, "James had. . .

begun to think of pragmatism as a philosophy, a program, a world-wide intellectual movement of which he was the founder; and after meeting the Italians, he was suddenly conscious of being the leader."<sup>13</sup> He even wrote articles on Papini and Pragmatismo.

It was not long until the Italian pragmatists came under attack from two directions. The first was the Catholic Church which saw pragmatismo as a form of Modernism--a way of thinking which it pronounced heretical. The second came from the Italian academic philosophers, such as Benedetto Croce. After James died, the two major Italian pragmatists, Vailati and Calderoni, died in 1907 and 1914, respectively, and Papini converted to Christian mysticism. Italian pragmatism flourished for only ten years and died in the disillusionment of the Great War. However, that high point coincided with the formative years of Il Duce. Papini said, "From induction by Will to Believe, there is given a single aim: aspiration to be able to act (Wille zur Macht)."<sup>14</sup> With the help of other European influences the "will to believe" became the transition to the "will to power."

The most pronounced and continuing effect of pragmatism outside the United States was in England. James's pragmatism reached England first and, according to Thayer,

The most famous pragmatist outside the United States was Ferdinand Canning Scott Schiller (1864-1937). At the height of his influence early in the present century, Schiller was regarded the equal of James as leading spokesman for pragmatism. On the continent, far more attention was directed to the works of James and Schiller than to any of the other pragmatists.<sup>15</sup>

However, unlike James, by mid-century his name had vanished so completely

that people mistook his name for that of the German poet.

Schiller was quite influenced by James and, according to Thayer, "He attempted to persuade James to drop the name pragmatism in favor of humanism. For humanism, Schiller contended, represented the broader movement into which pragmatism fitted as a part."<sup>16</sup> That may have been the best insight of his career, except that he failed to notice that Fascism was also a part of that movement. Still, one might argue that the popularity of Fascism was, in part, due to the fact that it posed as a brand of humanism.

Like his friend James, Schiller was a good writer and the creation that he most admired was The Will to Believe. James tried to direct his attention to Dewey and the Chicago School, but Schiller was not interested in their social philosophy. Like James, he was a romantic individualist.

Schiller was a Fellow of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, where he did most of his writing; the Idealist, F. H. Bradley being for him what Royce was for James. He came to America in 1893 in order to get a Ph.D. at Cornell, but failed in the attempt and went back to Oxford. Then in the last ten years of his life he taught at the University of Southern California. Thayer speculates that it was Schiller's intense antagonism to Bradley that resulted in his being forced to leave Oxford. G. E. Moore and Bertrand Russell first rose to fame in England for attacking the Hegelians. The difference was that their attack was more analytic than rhetorical. Starting in 1908 they began to turn that attack on the pragmatists.

Two British philosophers of more contemporary significance are F. P. Ramsey and Ludwig Wittgenstein. It is a fact that the works of both James and Dewey were known in England well before World War I. Many philosophical books and journals were published in the U.S. and Britain simultaneously and people such as Schiller had openly acknowledged their indebtedness to pragmatism. The mathematical and logical work of Peirce was acknowledged by Russell, Schröder, and Keynes.<sup>17</sup> Peirce carried on correspondence with other British philosophers who were interested in the problem of meaning. According to Thayer, "Russell's frequent references to Peirce and his recognition of Peirce's important contribution to the algebra of logic are evident in the Principles."<sup>18</sup>

F. P. Ramsey (1903-1930) was a Cambridge philosopher and mathematician. He was a friend of Wittgenstein and his first published work was an outstanding review of Wittgenstein's first work, the Tractatus. Ramsey's review and the Tractatus both came out in 1922, and Ramsey made explicit use of Peirce's logical distinctions in his criticism. In the last three years of his short life Ramsey was to cite Peirce again and again. Peirce, but not James, could be cited to criticize the nominalists.

For instance, one of the greatest problems in the philosophy of mathematics and epistemology is the justification of the method of induction. Ramsey found Peirce's ideas to be the best solution here: true theories work because of their inherent truth. Thus it is "reasonable." It should be noted, however, that the more rigorous



Bertrand Russell continued to refer to this as one of the skeletons in the closet of philosophy. Thayer says, "The pragmatism of Ramsey is clear. It is derived mostly from Peirce, but perhaps also from James's discussion of the connection between belief and ways of acting. It was Wittgenstein, however, who took considerable interest in James."<sup>19</sup>

Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889-1951), a Fellow of Trinity College, is certainly among the most famous philosophers of the century. Thayer holds that the influence of Ramsey, shown by Wittgenstein's repudiation of the Tractatus and his last work, The Philosophical Investigations, "...brings the philosophy of Wittgenstein into very basic harmony with pragmatism."<sup>20</sup> He finds three reasons for this in the Investigations. First, he changed from the notion of formal objective language structure to the notion that the usage and context determine what is correct. Second, instead of an attempt to "picture" or correspond to the objective world, the meaning and usage of language is a behavioral phenomenon, subject to cultural relativity. Third, his theory of language as regards private states of mind (e.g., "love," "fear," "pain," "pleasure") may be described as a sort of verbal behaviorism. (Thayer never actually uses the term "behaviorism," but, for reasons which shall follow, he could just as well have.)

Thayer noted, "The resulting inquiries in the Investigations, in both their critical and positive conclusions, are very much in accord (sometimes coinciding remarkably) with the outlook of Dewey and Mead."<sup>21</sup> Wittgenstein had come all the way from an affinity with Peirce to a radical linguistic nominalism. Thayer notes that,

"...Wittgenstein often referred to James in his lectures, and for a time James's Psychology was the one book that he kept in his sparsely furnished room."<sup>22</sup>

As noted earlier, Van Buren sees a connection between James and Wittgenstein. He speculates that there is a similarity of basic "style" between James and contemporary ordinary language philosophizing.<sup>23</sup> Speaking directly of James he wrote, "His pragmatism was a rough anticipation of the use theory of words: find the cash value of a word, see how the word is used, its 'particular go,' and a problem can be dissolved, James argued."<sup>24</sup> Although Van Buren does not make this explicit, his use of the word "dissolve" here is to remind the reader of Wittgenstein's constant use of the term "evaporate." These are, in fact, used to express the same theme: clear up the semantic problems, and the philosophical ones will disappear.

It is interesting to note the radical Wittgensteinian extent to which Van Buren, the theologian, can take linguistic philosophy. "The question about the world is always the question of what we say about the world, but how we are to speak, and it is solely of our speaking that the question of truth is in order."<sup>25</sup> "Life and language are one, for James as for Wittgenstein, and to speak of life is to take a step into life's future, following the leading of our language."<sup>26</sup> ("Consciousness" would have been a better word for Van Buren to use than "life.") He suggests that theology could profit by seeing its problems as just so many sides of the same coin--one created by language and, at the same time, overcome by a pragmatic conception of language.

It is often speculated that pragmatism never died; it just changed names variously in order to avoid being associated with all the criticism directed at William James. James's pragmatism, especially his "cash value" notion of truth and "believing makes it so" view of reality, became a focal point for critics. Philosophers who are sympathetic to James, such as H. S. Thayer, refer to this misfortune as "the inheritance of uncompleted theory."<sup>27</sup> The implication is that James bore the brunt of the assault, while it was for others, such as Dewey, Mead, and Lewis to firm up the theories which he had only put forth in rough form.

Dewey saw the pre-Darwinian view of life as teleological: unlike the random changes of the elements, living things went through distinct cycles which culminated in an example of a particular kind, and which gave birth to a new orderly cycle of life. There were distinct natures and proper ends for all life, with individuals more or less fulfilling those natures and ends. The important thing was that these goals are independent of the individuals, functioning as something constant and objective by which they can be judged. What Dewey spoke against is a classical realist view.

The design argument thus operated in two directions. Purposefulness accounted for the intelligibility of nature and the possibility of science, while the absolute or cosmic character of this purposefulness gave sanction and worth to the moral and religious endeavors of man. Science was underpinned, and morals authorized by one in the same principle....<sup>28</sup>

But, "The Darwinian principle of natural selection cut straight under this philosophy."<sup>29</sup> After Darwin the philosopher has a different task:

"Philosophy forswears inquiry after absolute origins and absolute finalities in order to explore specific values and specific conditions that generate them."<sup>30</sup>

Interest shifts from the wholesale essence back of special changes to the question of how special changes serve and defeat concrete purposes; ...shifts from the ultimate goal of good to the direct increments of justice and happiness that intelligent administration of existent conditions may beget....<sup>31</sup>

For Dewey, "The influence of Darwin upon philosophy resides in his having conquered the phenomena of life for the principle of transition, and thereby freed the new logic for application to mind and morals and life."<sup>32</sup> Speaking of the old philosophical problems, he sees that something unexpected happens when they are approached from the standpoint of an altogether new method. "We do not solve them: we get over them. Old questions are solved by disappearing, evaporating, while new questions take their place."<sup>33</sup> (One could make a lengthy comparison at this point with Wittgenstein, who "solved" all the problems of philosophy by "dissolving" them with his method.)

The preceding direct quotes have all come from Dewey's essay The Influence of Darwinism on Philosophy. This influence has been apparent to virtually everyone who has made a study of full-fledged pragmatism. Merle Curti found that Dewey's switch from a divine to an evolutionary theory of mind actually increased his optimism. For the vast majority of pragmatists (excluding Thorstein Veblen) the notion of evolution implied that things were always getting better--it almost sounds like a contradiction to say that

anything might evolve or progress for the worse. According to Merl Curti, "...Dewey has laid stress on the potentiality of remaking for the better both man and society through the planned application of the experimental method...."<sup>34</sup> The old problems had been persistent, "But once the full implications of evolution were grasped, all ideas and values were to be thought of in terms of origin and process; then it became natural to view life itself as an experiment...."<sup>35</sup>

In some respects Dewey stems from the eighteenth century philosophers of the Enlightenment; like some of them he conceives of human nature as plastic in character and capable of improvement through improved social environment. What distinguishes him is his emphasis upon education, the community (as opposed to the individual) and the new nineteenth century sciences.<sup>36</sup>

The progressive education movement reflected more, indeed, than the application of pragmatism and instrumentalism to education. It reflected the impact of the doctrine of evolution itself.<sup>37</sup>

The implications for today's philosophies of mind, language and logic are equally revolutionary, and serve to make the transition to the instrumentalist program of education more comprehensible.

In 1973 T. A. Goudge wrote an article titled, Pragmatism's Contribution to an Evolutionary View of Mind.

The pragmatists were the first group of philosophers to work out in detail a philosophy of mind based on evolutionary principles. Moreover, since they were familiar with classical ideas in the field, they were able to assess the kinds of changes in these ideas which evolutionary principles required.<sup>38</sup>

He agrees that the adaptive use of language is especially important to the formation of the human mind. From this it is clear that mind is a social product. Dewey asked the rhetorical question, "Would we have

any intellectual operations without the language which is a social product?"<sup>39</sup> In 1931 he stated:

The psychological tendencies which have exerted an influence on instrumentalism are of a biological rather than a psychological nature. They are, more or less, closely related to the important movement whose promoter in psychology has been Doctor John Watson and to which he has given the name Behaviorism.<sup>40</sup>

Although Dewey and Mead were personal friends of Watson at Chicago, Dewey could never wholly accept the classical conditioning of Pavlov and Watson. In 1896 in a paper titled The Reflex Arc Concept of Psychology he showed that the atomistic approach to stimulus and response did not allow for lapses of time between the two, nor did it leave much room for the individual to work actively to transform his society. The Pavlovian-Watsonian organism is a passive creature, merely reacting upon its environment. Thayer says that this paper

...was an important event in the history of American psychology.... This was a biological and evolutionary psychology.... Functional psychology took as its basic data not alleged psychic events, but behavioral processes in biological and social contexts. The Chicago group gave birth to what was to be known as "social behaviorism."<sup>41</sup>

Dewey was significant in that he changed the behavioristic model from an atomistic one to one of a much more organic nature. The contextual nature meant that the organism itself was a part of the environment that it was responding to. It is a very clever device for saying that human beings can manipulate their environment, even though they are not really free.

The most mature and refined philosophy of mind stemming directly from the above is the operant conditioning of B. F. Skinner.

Skinner says that, "Without the help of a verbal community all behavior would be unconscious. Consciousness is a social product."<sup>42</sup> "We learn to see that we are seeing only because a verbal community arranges for us to do so."<sup>43</sup> "The heart of the behaviorist position on conscious experience may be summed up in this way: seeing does not imply something seen."<sup>44</sup>

What this social concept of language, thought and consciousness does to formal logic hardly needs explaining. Morton White notes that "Dewey, Holmes, and Veblen were the leaders of the campaign to mop up the remnants of formal logic, classical economics, and jurisprudence in America."<sup>45</sup>

By 1897 the outline of what I have called 'the liberal ideology' had been drawn. It was antiformalist, evolutionary, historically oriented; it was deeply concerned with the economic aspects of society. ...Pragmatism was already a national password.<sup>46</sup>

White combined Dewey, Veblen, Holmes, Robinson and Beard as one group. In spite of all his classical training and scholarship, Holmes was identified as a pragmatist because of his statement in the Lochner dissent that the life of the law was not one of logic. The outgrowth of this social philosophy of mind was the modern notion that one's environment--not the person himself--is responsible for his actions; and the way to make better persons is to make better, healthier, environments. Darnell Rucker wrote:

The Chicago group represented an important shift in thinking away from belief in a world as a given external reality and mind as a different, internal reality.

Mind, thought, and consciousness are explained as products of active processes involving a number of agents.

There is no isolated individual who must be somehow externally connected with other individuals to form a society. The very process which gives rise to human beings is a social one: hence agents are essentially social beings.

The Chicago Philosophy derived largely from developments in psychology, just at the time that psychology was beginning in earnest to separate itself in the academic world from philosophy. If psychology was initially subordinated to philosophy departmentally at Chicago, the tail may have been said to have wagged the dog.<sup>47</sup>

He goes on to point directly "the dependence of philosophy upon psychology." It bears repeating that the pragmatism of James began as an outgrowth of his psychology.

The most important consequences of the evolutionary, nominalistic, pragmatic philosophy may be in education. Thayer clarifies Dewey's puzzling statement that the educational process "has no end beyond itself." This becomes clear in the light of his assumption that "growth itself is the only moral 'end'."<sup>48</sup> "He also meant that the educational process is not subordinate to any other, nor a means to anything else, to any process or social institution; just as life has no end but itself."<sup>49</sup> The underlying theory of evolution is evident.

According to John Childs,

It is doubtful...whether any thinker has contributed as much as Dewey to the development of a theory of human behavior and mind which is consonant with the principle that man is an emergent within a natural evolutionary process, and which undertakes to account for his rational powers without any resort to any kind of transcendental forces.<sup>50</sup>

The philosopher-educator most in line with Dewey is Sidney Hook. He sees Dewey's criterion of growth as the aim of education as essential to democracy. "Education for growth, then, goes hand in hand



with education for democracy and a justification of one is tantamount to a justification of the other."<sup>51</sup> Ultimately he sees the consequences of democracy--and, thus, education for democracy--as being better than all the other alternatives. His justification is "pragmatic" in the sense that it is based on consequences, rather than principles. When comparing democracy to other forms of social organization, he says:

...we can point to consequences of the following type: it makes for greater tranquility, justice, freedom security, creative diversity, reasonableness, and less cruelty, insensitiveness and intellectual intolerance than any other social system than has so far been devised or proposed.<sup>52</sup>

Apparently he has too much optimism to consider the possibility of a "tyranny of the majority," or not enough idealism to reflect that there may be some principles which should not be subjected to the vote.

However, Hook brings his own ideals to bear very effectively on the Thomists, Adler and Hutchins.<sup>53</sup> He does so by showing that their position denies the possibility of change or evolution in human nature. Education can be uniform only if human nature is something real and uniform--something objective and unchanging. This boils down to either an abstract rationality or a spirit as what is meant by "human nature." So, he throws the burden of proof back to the Thomists to convince him and everyone else that this is the case. Using them as a model or paradigm case, he also brushes aside all other "meta-physical" views of human nature and their claims upon education. Yet, he does recognize the objectivity of the "science" which he accepts: "A teacher is not disloyal who teaches the theory of evolution in a

fundamentalist community."<sup>54</sup> He never squares this with his definition of a good education: "We may define a good education as one that plays a certain integrative role within its culture...."<sup>55</sup> The fact is that he never examines his own metaphysical assumptions: change means evolution, evolution means progress, and progress is good.

J. L. Childs examines three representative, but divergent, avowed pragmatists in education: Kilpatrick, Counts, and Bode. William H. Kilpatrick stresses the role of education in building character. Childs cites his group as the most influential group in the new education movement,<sup>56</sup> and goes on to cite Dewey's admiration of him. The one thing that he detested most about his own formal education was that it was book-centered.<sup>57</sup> This tends to cut students off from the totality of life and turns many of them away from school.

For Kilpatrick, education is conceived not primarily as preparation for a remote and vague future, but rather as vital and meaningful response to the demands of the present. Education, as he interprets it, is not a process of memorization. . .from the standpoint of the development of the child, the fatal weakness of book-centered education is that 'the essential character building is absent, namely, behaving in a life situation.' The crucial test of learning is not the ability of the child to recite what he has studied, it is rather the ability of the child to respond to actual life circumstances with enriched meaning and added power of control. (Emphasis Childs).<sup>58</sup>

"Thus in the educational theory of Kilpatrick the evolutionary theory of human behavior, the method of experimental science, and the ethic of democracy have been combined to emphasize the wholehearted purposeful act in the education of the young."<sup>59</sup> Kilpatrick's "law" of learning is reminiscent of Watson and Skinner: "We learn what we live.... We learn our responses, only our responses, and all our responses...."<sup>60</sup>

George S. Counts viewed the educational process as an induction into society. Like Kilpatrick, he "adopted the orientation of evolutionary naturalism," and took "a functionalist view of man and culture...."<sup>61</sup> Unlike Dewey and Kilpatrick, Counts was concerned with the need of pupils to acquire basic skills.<sup>62</sup> This is a critical part of their introduction, one which underlies the ability to do "meaningful" things well. He saw that without rigor and mastery of specific basic skills little can be accomplished.

His goals were the same as Dewey's, so he was also against the traditional method of rote learning. He saw Dewey's new education as having carried a healthy reaction to an extreme and consequently argued for the need for both meaning and ability. Yet, he found the new education preferable to the old system.

Counts found three major faults in the new education:<sup>63</sup> first, it overemphasized the idea of the child's freedom at the expense of what is "imposed" on them by adults. Second, he disagreed with the notion that modern science and technology has speeded up social evolution to the point where there is no dependable means of knowing what particular things children should learn for tomorrow's world. The third factor is the new education's failure to confront and clarify the conflicting social theories of the society of which it is a part. Its own ends were too vague to ensure that they did not become corrupt or perverted.

As a result of his firsthand study of European and Asian educational systems, Counts found American faith in the necessary

connection between education and enlightenment to be naive. He observed that some of the most authoritarian states spend vast sums on education, and concluded that the purpose of education will eventually be decided by external forces, not educators.<sup>64</sup>

Because of his work in history, sociology, anthropology and education, Counts ultimately stressed the close connection of education to society. "In his opinion, the distinctive role of the school is to give the young the vision, the knowledge, and the methods and techniques of thought that will enable them to carry the responsibilities that Americans must carry in this period."<sup>65</sup> In this, he was certainly a pragmatist. His respect for foundations, wide background and a healthy dose of cynicism place him among the most promising of the philosophers of the new education.

Another pragmatic educator, Boyd H. Bode, was chairman of the Department of Principles of Education at Ohio State University. He saw the process of education as a reconstruction of experience. He is a pragmatist in that his major concern was with what he saw as a traditional dichotomy between theory and practice.<sup>66</sup> Also, he did not reject the stimulus-response notion of behaviorism altogether, just the early atomistic version that the pragmatists had already rejected. Rather, he sought an explanation of mind and learning which would leave a place for meaning and purpose. Thus, he gave much time to refuting the strictly "behavioral" methods of learning. "We do not educate for a majority and freedom when we turn our pupils into docile subjects and subject them to an authoritarian program whose

life significance they do not grasp."<sup>67</sup>

Bode had three criticisms of the new pragmatic education:<sup>68</sup> first, there was an over-emphasis on the child's "felt needs." This stresses the subjectivity of the child at the expense of the objective needs and requirements of his culture. Second, he saw that "incidental learning" will never cover all aspects of life, and held that learning itself can be meaningful. This is a position half way between Kilpatrick and Counts on the subject of rigor and discipline. Third, he believed that the new education's emphasis on growth had over-extended the notions of freedom and democracy at the expense of "social orientation."

Our task as educators is not to spoil children by indulging them, but to evoke their deeper interests by showing them the way in which the various activities of the school are significantly related to preparing them for effectual sharing in the common way of life.<sup>69</sup>

Like Counts, he feels that specific subject matter has an important place. However, like all pragmatists, he also feels that whatever objectivity it may have is merely a social matter.

Childs notes:

A. . .factor which led the pragmatists to stress the role of the child in the life of the school is their evolutionary view of behavior as a process of never-ending adjustment to surroundings. They stress that it is through these adjustive acts that habits are developed and attitudes are formed. Since we learn as we do and undergo and consciously relate what is done with what is undergone, habits and attitudes cannot be bestowed upon a child no matter how resourceful the teacher. They must rather be learned and earned through his own purposeful activity.<sup>70</sup>

The picture Childs has just given is one of a pupil in an enormous Skinner-box, in the "process of never-ending adjustment to surroundings." When he is "hungry" for some education he will do just enough "adjusting" to slake his hunger. This, in fact, is all that can be meant by "purposeful activity."

Actually, the assumption of neurological homostasis which underlies the pragmatic (problem solving) theory of thinking and learning has long since been discredited. (This assumption prevented Dewey from accepting an intrinsic theory of aesthetics.) However, there are more general criticisms of Dewey's pragmatism, and they take both analytic and personal tones.

As a former pragmatist herself, Asher Moore criticizes the pragmatic movement in such a personal manner as to be poetic. She finds two major objections: first, it failed to be objective and; second, it over-emphasized the future to the point where it could not cope with either the past or the present--and the future never arrived.

The youthful boisterousness which made pragmatism unable to learn from history made it also impatient of the slowness, the technicality, the abstractness, and the chilly dryness which are the scientific reality. It tried to be tough-minded, but for lack of being single-minded, it lacked self-definition.

In one more attempt to get students of the humanities to swallow at least a token bit of scientific medicine, an American university recently offered a course called "Physics for Poets." I fear that pragmatism was Scientific Philosophy for Poets.<sup>71</sup>

This criticism is that pragmatism did not fall into either of what she sees as the two major modern philosophical paths: the

"scientific" (analytic and positivistic) and "humanistic" (which is more honorific in the sense of the word "philosopher", such as Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Santayana and Buber). One could take this scheme of hers and do something which she only hinted at: it is possible to say that there were simply no great "humanists" after James and Dewey who were willing to call themselves pragmatists. However, Moore just can not bring herself to put either of them on a level with a Santayana or a Buber.

Perhaps this is because they were not "wise" enough to live in the present: her second objection. Even in fragments this comes across best in her own words.

...Pragmatism was not monstrous, and it did not deny intrinsic value. But what it emphasized was the good which is to be found not in the whole, but in the future, and not through philosophy, which teaches us to love what is, but through science and action, which change it. As Nietzsche said, the present is a tightrope to the future, but whereas Nietzsche saw that the present is always present, so that whatever truth and happiness there is must be found on the rope, pragmatism looked forward to the actual coming of a better future. The other pasture, it thought, actually could be made greener. Its Good News was not of a Savior but of the Promised Land.

The Promised Land was a mirage which vanished in the concentration camps and undergrounds of Hitler's Europe.<sup>72</sup>

It had failed her as a science and it had failed her as a vehicle of wisdom to live by. She attributed it to youth--both hers and that of the new sciences.

There was another way that Dewey lost popularity with the intellectuals: this was when he showed that his pragmatism could be

used to justify U. S. entry into World War I. One vocal critic of the war, R. Bourne, "...thought of pragmatism as a philosophy of technique, a philosophy which tells you how to accomplish your ends once your ends have been established."<sup>73</sup> Bourne was a liberal, and the first on the left to openly attack pragmatism. Whate says:

Bourne's outlook and attitude toward Dewey's pragmatism impressed itself on the literary left in the twenties, when Dewey was viewed as safe and professional.

Bourne's attack on Dewey in 1917 was based upon disappointment. Dewey had served as a symbol of intelligent humanitarianism, of a desire to mold society in the interests of peace, economic security, and freedom. His support of the war, therefore, came as a shock to those who saw it as a direct contradiction of all these values. Dewey ceased to be the gentle, sage spokesman of creative liberalism in certain quarters. Like the German Social Democrats, he was described as the philosophical representative of a selling-out movement, a failure to face the crisis which the war presented to liberals.<sup>74</sup>

From that time on, pragmatism was open to the charge of being a philosophy of technique by both liberals and conservatives. Marxists were justified in making the same basic criticisms as the Thomists: change alone does not equate with evolution, progress or goodness. This was not helped any by the fact in his early writings Thorstein Veblen always associated being "pragmatic" with "business" and expediency (as opposed to "industry"). World War II helped to confirm Bourne's criticisms.

A third major difficulty with Dewey's pragmatism stemmed from its foundation in the theory of evolution. The lack of concrete subject matter in education was but a small scale reflection of the fact that it was incapable of concrete programs anywhere.



Liberalism faced the danger of trying to be coherent without forming a set of doctrines which would someday become reactionary. According to Morton White, "Liberalism as Dewey defines it, in an effort to escape this dilemma, is hardly more than a proposal that we apply the so-called scientific method of intelligence to social problems."<sup>75</sup> For White, "This lack of clarity obscured a good deal of Dewey's political thinking in the twenties."<sup>76</sup> Dewey was bound in a contradiction. He was afraid of setting up concrete theories or ends which might end up as unalterable dogma. Yet he wanted to be a social engineer. Thus he was bound--by his dual convictions--to be ineffective at either: As White says, "...we cannot be engineers without knowing what to build."<sup>77</sup> "The ambiguity of Dewey about the possibility of setting up a social program without lapsing into dogmatism was one of the chief reasons for the defections from liberalism in the thirties."<sup>78</sup>

Finally, there was the criticism of the analytic philosophers led, of course, by Bertrand Russell. Dewey preferred to use words such as "judgment" or "warranted assertion," instead of "truth," as the end of inquiry. Thayer speculates that this was a direct result of Russell's criticisms of James's conflicting notions of truth.<sup>79</sup> Dewey, Lewis and Mead had refined their inheritance of uncompleted theory for twenty years and come up with a theory of inquiry, rather than a theory of truth.

Russell's analytical refutation of pragmatism's "theory of truth," such as it is, has become the paradigm ever since: (A) It can never be known if a theory is true or false, because all of its

consequences can never be known. (B) The same idea can be both true or false under different circumstances. (C) For reasons A and B, the very pragmatic definition of truth can never be verified or known true: thus, an infinite regress.

Yet, this did not prove satisfactory; the pragmatists did not claim any static "truths." Russell said, "I now come to what is most distinctive in Dr. Dewey's logic, namely the emphasis upon inquiry as opposed to truth or knowledge. Inquiry is not for him, as for most philosophers, a search for truth; it is an independent activity...."<sup>80</sup> Russell simply could not abide the notion of inquiry apart from truth. He ridiculed in every way he could the notion that, "Truth is not an important concept in Dr. Dewey's logic."<sup>81</sup>

Where Russell struck the mark with most of his readers was in bringing up the relation between knowledge and concrete ends: "Knowledge, if Dr. Dewey is right, cannot be any part of the ends of life; it is merely a means to other satisfactions. ...For my part, I believe that too great an emphasis upon the practical robs practice of its raison d'être."<sup>82</sup>

Russell even compares the similarities of Dewey's objectives with those of Karl Marx. After quoting the essential passage from his eleventh Thesis on Feuerbach--"philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways, but the real task is to alter it"--he says: "Allowing for a certain difference in phraseology, this doctrine is essentially indistinguishable from instrumentalism."<sup>83</sup>

Thayer criticizes Russell's comparison of Dewey and Marx,

For Dewey, philosophic interpretations have altered the world.... And for Dewey, as for any sane thinker, the real problem is how to alter the world for the better. But the method Dewey proposes for this purpose is to be found in the writings of Dewey, not in those of Marx. (Emphasis Thayer).<sup>84</sup>

Notice that Thayer is not denying Russell's basic assertion. Rather, Dewey's Fabian method for bringing about change is different from Marx's. Dewey had improved on James's Will to Believe and, with the help of Mead and Lewis, kept the method of pragmatic belief before the public. Yet, it was not good enough on a practical level to remain popular, and no analytic philosopher wants to be associated with it. Asher Moore's criticism (noted above) best describes the feelings of those who once sympathized with pragmatism.

Its legacies are the term "pragmatic;" the usage theory of meaning that led to the third edition of Webster's Dictionary; the operant conditioning theory of behaviorism, with all its implications in social theory; a literal faith in "progress," almost to the point of equating change with improvement; and, of course, the continuing commitment to the new education. It is true that pragmatism cannot take all the credit for these manifestations. The social sciences had a hand in their formation as well. However, the philosophy of pragmatism was the primary attempt to unite them through a common method and purpose. As such, it deserves the greatest share of the credit. In perspective it can be seen as an early attempt to deal with the advance of the social sciences, especially the assimilation of Darwinism. It did attempt to provide a directive influence, and

that may explain why its legacies are still so apparent: no other prescriptive or normative philosophy has been accepted to take its place.

## FOOTNOTES

## FOOTNOTES

### CHAPTER 1

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<sup>4</sup>A. J. Ayer, The Origins of Pragmatism: Studies in the Philosophy of Charles Sanders Peirce and William James. San Francisco: Freeman, Cooper and Co., 1968. pp. 4-5.

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 299

<sup>36</sup>William James, "What Pragmatism Means." Kennedy. op. cit., p. 2.

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