The Pragmatism Of William James Considered As A Theory Of Knowledge

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THE PRAGMATISM OF WILLIAM JAMES
CONSIDERED AS
A THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE

by
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of the requirements for Academic Honors
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It is with a deep and sincere gratitude that I dedicate this work to my parents. For, without their interest and co-operation what little merit may be attached to this paper would never have come about. Many thanks are to be extended also to Rev. Thomas Flynn for his role as advisor. His direction and numerous suggestions have been the key instrumental cause to a presentable formation of ideas.
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In the nineteenth century metaphysics was feared by most philosophers as an unwarrantable infringement upon the world of phenomena, which they felt was alone capable of being perceived and of being experienced. Phenomenalism was the philosophy of the century. The human intellect was to be restricted to the world of phenomena; metaphysics "qua" metaphysics was only a fabrication. Divergent trends of this phenomenalism naturally developed and eventually found their way into the forms of French positivism, English empiricism, German positivism and neo-criticism, and the pragmatism of the English, Germans, and Americans.¹

There are numerous reasons why pragmatism is considered in this classification; it limits itself to sensory experience, restricts being and man to time, and rejects metaphysics in the notion of a science of "ens qua entis." This form of empiricism stretches a new chord in its attitude toward experience. It is concerned with the purposiveness of human activity. "Man goes in the search of the world of phenomena, but his search, his examination in the more elevated plan of their usefulness for mankind."²

²Ibid.
In America the philosophy of the pragmatism is usually identified with William James, the "uncontested chief of this school of thought. Even if pragmatism has not essentially altered philosophy, it has at least nominally made its presence felt. Pragmatism has been assimilated into common parlance under the guises of "for practical purposes", pragmatically speaking" and even "speaking purely pragmatically." The problem that usually follows with such assimilations is the losing sight of the words true meaning. It seems that this is indeed the case with pragmatism. Few know what the word specifically means; even less know how the whole philosophy of pragmatism interpreted the term. With regards to James most students of philosophy equate him with the saying that "the true is what is useful". One purpose of this work will be to examine this in terms of what James meant by it.

The method of approaching James' pragmatism will be rather unique. The man was first of all a scientist, a physiologist, a psychologist. Thus it would seem natural to examine him first on this level. Leslie J. Walker in

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his book, *Theories of Knowledge* presented such an approach to James:

"Pragmatism claims a psychological foundation, and in essence is little else than the recognition of a particular psychological fact and its application as a general principle to the theory of knowledge. The pragmatist does not go to psychology merely for the data of experience in order to examine their metaphysical conditions. His standpoint is psychological from beginning to end; and his aim so he tells us, is to reassert characteristic features of human knowledge which have been hitherto much neglected, but which nevertheless, are there, and are directly verifiable in human experience."

Chapter I will examine the psychology of James in the light of its psychological basis for a theory of knowledge. It will be noted on Chapter I that his psychology had two themes. Chapter II will develop one of these trends under the name of Radical Empicism. Chapter III will formulate the other trend under the name of pragmatism proper. It is hoped that the relationship will be seen between Radical Empicism and Pragmatism. The point being that although James' empiricism evolved later than his pragmatism, nevertheless as the origins of both occur simultaneously in his psychology it seems logical to look to the metaphysics of the empiricism as a basis for the theory of knowledge of pragmatism.

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Therefore, this paper is intended to give not only an explanation of what James' Pragmatism meant, but to show also that it is a deeper and more complex philosophy than most accord it. It has a psychological basis, a metaphysical determinant, and a final form as a theory of knowledge.

5Native Philosopher," Fortune, XXVII (March, 1943), III.
CHAPTER I
The Psychological Foundations of the Pragmatic Theory of Knowledge

For the pragmatist the story of reality and the story or truth are one and the same. "What we judge to be true, we take to be real, and accept as a fact." All three, arise in like manner from the desire to satisfy the exigencies of our nature. Therefore, the fundamental characteristic of human cognition which the pragmatist holds is that the "function of human purposes, as expressing human needs, characterise and pervade human activity."\(^1\) James used this characteristic as his criterion for establishing the existence of the mind itself. He said, "The pursuance of future ends and the choice of means for their attainment are thus the mark and criterion of the presence of mentality in a phenomenon."\(^2\)

This indeed appears as a vicious circle: the mind is proved as existent by the fact that there are pursuance of ends and the choice of means; the mind is then characterized as essentially possessing this attribute. Yet, there are many instances of just such arguments, which are accepted without consternation. We are told in the gospel that "by their fruits, you shall know them."

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\(^2\)Walker, p. 125.
Although their essence is not defined by their fruits, nevertheless it is said that they are able to be characterized by their fruits as pervading their whole appearance and action. So, it seems that James did not present us with a dilemma.

Although it would be foolish to say that this "proof" for the existence of mind in phenomena was needed as prerequisite for James to undertake psychology, it would be just as foolish to believe that the application of these characteristics to mental life was in no way a part of his psychology. In fact, his great classic, *Principles of Psychology*, (1890) is dominated by two central ideas, one of which is this pursuance of future ends as a characteristic of cognition. This aspect is of a biological nature, and the other is a re-interpretation of introspective psychology, in which James denies that sensations, images and ideas are discrete and in which he replaces them by a continuous stream which he calls "the stream of Consciousness." Therefore, consciousness, or cognition, is not only a selective, and teleological activity, it is a unity.

From this idea of the unity of consciousness, the stream of consciousness, James was to later develop his

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Radical Empiricism. From the idea of condition being teleological James was to develop his "Pragmatism", his theory of knowledge and truth. The problem of this chapter is to show if such seeds for these developments were ever sown by James in his Principles of Psychology. The first examination will be in determining the psychological basis for Radical Empiricism.

Consciousness for James consists in its through and through connectedness. "Consciousness from our fatal day, is of a teeming multiplicity of objects and relations, and what we call simple sensations are results of discriminative attention, pushed often to a very high degree". The first fact that James took was that thinking, or consciousness, of some sort goes on. How does it go on though? There are three important points in the process.

First, thought tends to personal forms, that is, every thought is part of a personal consciousness. Each mind keeps its own thoughts to itself. There is no giving or bartering between them. "Absolute insulation, irreducible pluralism, is the law." The universal fact of consciousness is not

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6 Ibid., 221.
feelings and thoughts exist, but I think and I feel.

Second thought is in constant change. This change refers to that which takes place in sensible intervals of time. The result is that "no state once gone can recur and be identical with what it was before." Although it seems fair to say that we seem to get the same auditory sensation every time the same piano-key is struck, yet "there is no proof that the same bodily sensation is ever got by us twice." What we do get is the same OBJECT; the realities that seem to present themselves to us over and over again, and lead us to believe that our 'ideas' of them are the same. The difference in our emotional outlook is able to turn what was before beautiful, bright or melodious, into something ugly, wary or tedious. What James is trying to prove here, as said above, is that no two ideas are ever exactly the same. He thus places himself in diametrical opposition to the Lockian or Herbartian schools, which formulate mental facts in an atomistic sort of way, and put consciousness (cognition) as if it were comprised of unchanging simple ideas. James said of such a view: "A permanently existing 'idea' or Vorstellung which

7Ibid., 231.
makes its appearance before the footlights of consciousness at periodical intervals, is as mythological an entity as the Jack of Spades."

Third, within each personal consciousness, thought is sensibly continuous. Thus when thunder crashes it is not pure thunder which we hear, but "thunder-breaking-upon-silence-and-contrasting-with-it." The feeling of this thunder is therefore also a feeling of the silence that has just passed. James felt fit to call the resting places (in our example the silence before) the "substantive parts," and the places of flight or action (the thunder cracking) he called the "transitive parts," of the stream of thought. The places of action are filled with thoughts of relations, static or dynamic, that for the better part of the time obtain between the object thought of in the periods of comparative rest. We cannot ignore any feeling that is transitive between the silence and the thunder, nor treat their division, their boundary, as a break in the mind. James concludes that if there relations between objects exist in rerum natura, so surely, and more do feelings exist to which these relations are known.

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8Ibid. 236
At some moment, James said, we actually feel the relations between the larger objects of our thought. The stream of consciousness matches each of them by an inward "distortion" of its own. Thus, in the example of the thunder, we think of the quiet and the thunder in a relation. It seems that a "distortion of consciousness" would be somewhat like quiet with the addition of thunder connected by just the words we have mentioned: "with the addition of". Therefore, these words as a formulation of this relation between thunder and quiet, just because they are a relation, must exist too. In other words this relation is felt, not only as words but as having a meaning founded in reality.\textsuperscript{10} The parts of experience will hold together from one to the next by relations that are themselves parts of this experience.\textsuperscript{11}

Although these are only a very minute sampling of a large aggregation of other factual examples given by James on this idea of the unity of consciousness, their pertinence to this theme will appear very significant when they are seen in James' development of his Radical Empiricism. It is, therefore, on this psychological foundation of a unity of

\textsuperscript{10}James, \textit{Principles}, Vol. I, 265.

\textsuperscript{11}James, \textit{Essays in Radical Empiricism}, p xii.
consciousness that the Pragmatic Metaphysics is to be based. The unity of consciousness is therefore a very important theme in the Principles of Psychology, as providing one main line of thought in the formulation of psychology, but more important, as providing the basis for a metaphysical condition of knowledge, to be called Radical Empiricism.

There still remains under the Psychology the other dominate theme. It was stated already as an emphasis on the mind as the teleological, an emphasis on the categories of interest and practice, as affecting cognition. It must be borne in mind that the object of examining this theme of the Principles of Psychology is to prove that there is some basis for saying that James Pragmatism developed also from his psychology. Therefore, the point to be had in this section is on what basis could James in all honesty define truth according to what is useful, his fundamental pragmatic assertion. The basis must be found in his Psychology. There appears to be a sufficient amount of arguments and examples supporting such an epistemological claim on the psychological level.

There are several excellent chapters in his Principles that will clearly show the force of James belief in the teleological function of the mind. In Volume One Attention
and its relation to interest is considered as the force which controls, and its teleological functions of selection and integration.\textsuperscript{12} The chapter begins:

Millions of items of the outward order are present to my senses which never properly enter my experience. Why? Because they have no interest for me. My experience is what I agree to attend to. Only those items which I notice shape my mind - without selective interest, experience is an utter chaos.\textsuperscript{13}

Attention is therefore a taking hold of by the mind, explicitly and vividly, one of the several possible objects of thought. How many of these 'things' can we attend to at once? The number is indefinite. Yet, no matter how numerous the things, "they can only be known in a single pulse of consciousness for which they form one complex 'object' (the stream of consciousness), so that properly speaking there is before the mind at no time a plurality of ideas, properly so called."\textsuperscript{14}

James lists and discusses six different types of attention. The one that is of interest here is what is known as voluntary attention. This is the proper type for this work in that cognition, consciousness, and even the naming of an object as true, will demand that the will, voluntary and free,

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{12} Bogert, p. 466.
  \item \textsuperscript{13} James, \textit{Principles}, Vol. I, 402.
  \item \textsuperscript{14} \textit{Ibid.}, 405.
\end{itemize}
combined with the intellect in "conscious" activity be present. The voluntary attention is said to be always derived. This means that we are seldom able to make an effort to attend to an object except for the sake of some "remote" interest which the effort will serve. Interest here is therefore not due to any previous experience or a present pleasantness, but to some future interest that will result.

In Chapter XIII, still in the first volume, James discusses the way these "remote" interests or ends to be attained control intellectual analysis. The chapter is fittingly entitled "Discrimination and Comparison". For the purpose here of providing a cursory glance at the Psychology of James, it seems sufficient to only discuss one, while affirming that the other corresponds to the main line of thinking under discussion. An act of discrimination is a noticing or giving of attention to any part whatever of our object. An object can be broken into any number of these discriminatory acts; but, the important principle which James brings forth is that "any number of impressions, from any number of sensory sources, falling simultaneously on a mind WHICH HAS NOT EXPERIENCED THEM SEPARATELY, will fuse into a single undivided object for that mind." Why can't it be said that therefore, two different minds, perceiving even the same object at the same time, will discriminate different aspects of this same object, fusing it into a single undivided object for each mind. James in fact does say this.
The fact that discrimination varies with each person is due to the fact that discrimination is an active potency and consequently subject to habit. One of the most important ways of increasing one's ability to perceive these different points is personal or practical interest. Such interests in the results to be obtained make one's wits amazingly sharp to detect differences. A person who is to analyze an object with regard to its parts, is determined in such an analysis by any practical interests. An object may therefore vary widely from one person to another, as what is important to one person is not to the other. Such unimportant factors will be forgotten or overlooked completely by the person with no personal or practical interest in that aspect of the object. It will be seen in the section on the pragmatic concept of truth, that once again James has taken this commonly accepted psychological notion—interest affects observation—and has applied it as a general theory of knowledge: the truth of an object is made according as the postulation of what it is—determined by practical interest—are finally verified in experiment.

\[\text{Ibid, 539.}\]
A very important chapter concerns James ideas on conception of an idea. Conception by his definition is "the function by which we thus identify a numerically distinct and permanent subject of discourse." A conception is of the individual, the particular. An abstraction, a universal (e.g. white) is a particular conception. In applying white to rose, a white rose, white is still a mode of signifying particular things. It is teleological, a teleological instrument. This idea is further developed in the chapter on reasoning. Here essence is said to be teleological too. James says that the "only meaning of essence is teleological", and that classification and conception are purely teleological, "weapons" of the mind. Therefore, James logically arrives at an essence of a thing which is that one of its properties or accidents which is so important for my interests that in comparison with it I may neglect the rest.

"Readers brought up on Popular Science may think that the molecular structure of things is their real essence in an absolute sense, and that water is H-O-H more deeply and truly than it is a solvent of sugar or a slaker of thirst. Not a whit! It is All of these things with equal reality, and only reason why for the chemist it is H-O-H primarily, and only secondarily the other things, it is that for his purpose of deduction and copious definition the H-O-H aspect of it is the

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16 Ibid. 460
17 Ibid. 461
more useful one to bear in mind.\textsuperscript{18}

James inserted this example for what he called "men so ingrainedly partial that, for common-sense and scholasticism (which is only common-sense grown articulate), the notion that there is no one quality genuinely, absolutely, and exclusively essential to anything is almost unthinkable.\textsuperscript{19}

Once again the pattern is obvious. Because it seems that the origin of concept is not as important as its application (how it is practical to us), it can be stated by James that in application of this particular psychological fact to a general theory of knowledge, the application becomes the criterion of not only value, but in fact what its essence is to us.\textsuperscript{20} James finally extended the function of thinking to read as but one step in the production of habits of action. Every idea we frame for ourselves of an object, is really an idea of the possible effects of that object. All beliefs we have or form are only for action. Any conception is only for action. We will act in some particular way as determined by the opinion we hold.\textsuperscript{21}

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{18}Ibid. II, 335.
\textsuperscript{19}Ibid. 334.
\textsuperscript{20}Dorobert, 466.
\textsuperscript{21}Ibid. 454.
\end{footnotesize}
CONCLUSION

These are the two trends in James' Psychology. It should be obvious that they are indeed distinct. The one, in the unity of consciousness, will be seen in Chapter II in its full development in the Metaphysics of Radical Empiricism. Chapter III will trace the final, the other trend, the teleological aspect of the mind to its culmination in Pragmatism. The seeds for both of these are planted intrinsically in James' psychology; the final flower of each will be taken up now.
CHAPTER II

Metaphysical Basis for the
Pragmatic Theory of Knowledge

During the time William James was working away at his natural science of psychology, he was consciously dismissing metaphysical problems - dismissing them, not from his own mind, where they were indeed prominent, but from his science of mind. His first intention was to be empirical and he therefore postponed certain problems which could not be settled by empirical evidence. In the final chapter of his Principles of Psychology, the most he was able to state was the form into which the problems he had deferred had to be cast in order to make them problems concerning natural facts. In a way this was his "philosophical" problem. He formulated it as follows:

We distinguish...between the empirical order of things, and their rational order of comparison; and so far as possible, we seek to translate the former into the latter, as being the more congenial of the two to our intellect...

Any assimilation for things to terms between which such classificatory relations, with their remote and mediate transactions, obtain, is a way of bringing the things into a more rational scheme.

There is thus a large body of apriori or intuitevely necessary truths. As a rule, these are truths of comparison only, and in the first instance they express relations between merely mental terms. Nature, however, acts as if some of her realities were identical with these mental terms. So far as she does this, we can make apriori propositions concerning natural fact.
The aim of both science and philosophy is to make the identifiable terms more numerous. So far it has proved easier to identify nature's things with mental terms of the mechanical than with mental terms of the sentimental order.

The widest postulate of rationality is that the world is rationally intelligible throughout, after the pattern of some ideal system. The whole war of philosophies is over that point of faith.¹

James now seems ready to enter that "war of philosophies" with his attempt to construct an "ideal system" that would be a mitigation of the extremes of the purely mechanistic system versus the absolute theism. His system he would call Radical Empiricism, or even Pluralism. It would be an attempt of the first rank, though, to interpret nature as "identifiable with mental terms."²

One of the purposes of this chapter has been outlined as being an illustration of the connection between the Psychology of James and this, his metaphysical doctrine; This connection should be easily made. All that James did, in effect, was to expand his psychological doctrine of continuity in being between "thing and thoughts." In chapter I the examination of James' ideas concerning his "stream of consciousness" may now be used to affirm whether there was a doubt in James' mind even at this early stage as to whether consciousness was

¹James, Principles, II, 676-677.
²Schneider, 540.
a distinct order of existence. He indeed did have his doubts about this orthodox assumption—the fundamental assumption of every philosophic school at this time. But it was not until 1904, with the publication of his article "Does Consciousness Exist", that he made a final decision. This lecture is the opening one in his Essays in Radical Empiricism; it tells, frankly James' choice:

For twenty years past I have mistrusted "consciousness" as an entity; for seven or eight years I have suggested its non-existence to my students, and tried to give them its Pragmatic equivalent in realities of experience. It seems to me that the hour is ripe for it to be openly and universally discarded.

To deny plumply that "consciousness" exists, seems to absurd on the face of it—for undeniably "thoughts" do exist—that I fear some readers will follow me no farther. Let me then immediately explain that I mean only to deny that the work stands for an ENTITY, but to insist emphatically that it does stand for a FUNCTION.

His choice was made. The logical question that follows is what did he do, when consciousness had been "reduced" from the role of an entity to that of a function? He first of all qualifies his statement in order to illustrate the point. When he says that consciousness is an activity he means there is "no aboriginal stuff or quality of being, contrasted with that of which material objects are made, out of which our thoughts of them are made."

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3 Ibid. 543.
4 The full impact in this word "pragmatic" is basically what this paper intends to present. But for want of a substitute, I have left this passage in the original.
5 James, Essays in Radical Empiricism, 3.
The function in experiences which our thoughts perform, and for which performance this quality of being is invoked is called Knowing. Through our consciousness we are able to explain the fact that things not only are, but get reported. What is this primal stuff: 'pure experience' is the material in the world of which everything is composed. 6

Therefore, to be a radical empiricist, it is necessary that a person neither admit into his constructions any element that is not experienced directly, nor exclude from such constructions any element directly experienced. It can be seen that knowing itself in this context is a particular sort of relation of one experience to another in which these individual portions of experience may enter. For such a philosophy, "that connect experiences must themselves be experienced relations, and any of relation experienced must be accounted as real as anything else in the system." 7

A whole context of "experience" is therefore formed by one experience being added onto a former one and another onto this last one. The universe is given to us as a plurality of heterogeneous elements; the consciousness of them blends these elements into a flowing unity of one experience added

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6 Ibid. 3-4.
7 Ibid. 42.
onto the previous and open itself to one following. "What I do feel simply when a later moment of my experience succeeds an earlier one is that though they are two moments, the transition from the one to the other is continuous."

In short, there are no objects apart from experience, for objective reference is but an accident "incidental to the transitional and truncated nature of many of our experiences." Substances, accidents, absolutes are in no way required. This world of pure experience needs no groundwork. It is merely an aggregate of experiences which 'hang together by their edges,' and which 'proliferate into one another by transitions;' and these transitions,...continue the experimental tissue and so form part and parcel with experience.

What is being emphasized is the fact that there is no need of any transcendental leap from the knower to the known. "In the very bosom of finite experience every conjunction required to make the (cognitive) relation intelligible is given in full." In other words, everything able to be experienced is intelligible because such experience is a relation and equal to the knowledge of it. The mind or 'personal

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8Ibid., 49.
9Walker, 296.
10James, Essays in Radical Empiricism, 37.
consciousness is knit by different transitions. Each of these, objective reality and personal consciousness, is similar in the one important aspect of being experience. The real external world, (that which is symbolized in knowing) is a complex of conscious elements; and consciousness, the symbol of the real external world, is an aggregation of sensational elements. The self, accordingly, is not a substantial substratum of conscious states, but a content of conscious experience.

What James is doing in his Radical Empiricism is exactly that which was anticipated in the first chapter. This is nothing more than a continuation, an elongation of James' biological approach to consciousness. James was seen to have emphasized the biological approach with his "stream of consciousness." Images and ideas are not discrete, and he replaces them by a continuous stream. In this chapter he has extended this to include a notion of what the universe is essentially. As has just been seen, the primal stuff of which the world and everything in it is composed is "pure experience." The further extension is that now the "world" is experience and only experience makes it real. That James did have the

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12 James, Essays in Radical Empiricism, 30.
embryo of his radical empiricism in his psychology would be a difficult point to disprove from such similarity as just shown. Therefore, the first stage of the thesis has been completed. The Radical Empiricism of James did begin in his *Principles of Psychology*.

Chapter III will show that there is little difficulty in affirming that James Pragmatism also developed from his *Principles*. The second point of the thesis is to try and show a connection between his Radical Empiricism and his Pragmatism. It can now be seen that at least historically, at least in embryo, the two "systems" could have influenced each other. It is well to remember that James himself stated flatly that "there is no logical connection between pragmatism, and a doctrine which I have recently set forth as 'Radical Empiricism.' The latter stands on its own feet." True, there may be no dependency at all of empiricism on pragmatism. James felt that there was no need for this dependency, and that empiricism could "stand alone." But, does this assertion hold true with regards to Empiricism influencing the pragmatic theory of knowledge? Pragmatism, better yet William James, must have had some basis somewhere for stating that the "truth is what is useful." Few statements in all history have undergone such a fierce and piercing attack of criticism as this one. It is only logical that James did have a soundly reasoned foundation for it. It is hoped that Radical Empiricism can be shown to have been this basis.
Because of the intricate influence of each chapter on the others, another repetition is necessary. The first part of this chapter showed how Radical Empiricism developed from the *Principles of Psychology*. The conclusion from this was that Pragmatism could have depended upon Radical Empiricism at least in that they were both being formed primitively in the *Psychology*. The next part of this chapter will present a further look at Radical Empiricism; emphasis will be placed only on those elements that would possibly have influenced Pragmatism. Whether or not there is a connection between these elements now to be presented and Pragmatism, will be shown in Chapter III. Only the elements seemingly to be pertinent will now be examined.

A cognitive action is an experience. Previously, the notion of "pure experience" was discussed. A "pure experience", the primal stuff of which the world is made, excluded the human element. But it was also said that the human experience is part of reality. Not being reality, but only opinion or belief about reality, though in an intimate relationship, the cognitive experience will contain elements; but, these will know the non-human element, in the only sense in which there can be knowledge of anything.
Does the river make its banks, or do the banks make the river? Just as impossible may it be to separate the real from the human factors in the growth of our cognitive experience. There are these human elements in every experience. Each human experience is a relation, a real relation. As a relation it connects terms. As a human quality or function, the human element will influence the convergence or divergence of the terms. The relation is an integral and determining force. James in his book *Pragmatism*, gives an excellent example of what convergence and divergence means:

> What shall we call a thing anyhow? It seems quite arbitrary, for we carve out everything just as we carve out constellations (from the whole heavens of stars) to suit our human purposes....

> We break the flux of sensible reality into things, then, at our will. We create the subjects of our true as well as of our false propositions.14

In addition, we create also the predicates. Many of these predicates of things express only the relations of the things to us and to our feelings. But, relations are just as real as their terms in a radical empiricism. What happens in effect is an addition of one experience onto another one to form what could be called for convenience a proposition. Kennedy was a president of the United States. Kennedy was the

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victim of an assassin’s bullet. The second proposition is a postulate, expressing the real world. Yet, from the Radical Empiricist’s standpoint, it has been created by an addition of one experience onto the former. Metaphysically, this has the important aspect of distinguishing radical empiricism from rationalism, the system most feared by James and the other pragmatists. The essential contrast is that for rationalism the real world is a ready-made entity, while for pragmatism it is still in the making, and awaits part of its complexion from the future.

It is on this conclusion that Radical Empiricism can be seen under its cognomen of Pluralism. The world is always becoming; never a static organ, but one continually waiting its additions. As mentioned above James doctrine of Radical Empiricism has been deliberately deleted. Only the most essential facts have been presented. The important conclusion are the following:

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\[\text{Ibid. 254-5.}\]

\[\text{Ibid. 259.}\]
1. All reality has at its primal matter experience.
2. It is experience that gives life or a "real" to the pure data that do have a real existence.
3. Knowing is an experience.
4. Technically, knowing is a relation between the knower and the object by which they are made an experience.
5. From psychology it is known that one experience leans on a previous and succeeding one by being related to each.
6. There are necessarily relations between any terms that "lean" on each other.
7. As experience is the "prime matter" of reality, these relations must be experienced too; they are thus real.
8. Knowledge, as just stated above, is a relation. As such it must be real.
9. The reality of knowledge consists in being a function, which is a part of reality therefore.
10. As a part of reality, each new act of knowing is an addition to the already existent world.

Thus, the empiricist will conclude quite logically that the world is in a continual process of development in a direct relation to new experiences.

The fact that such a conclusion seems to be a firm and justifiable basis for James' Pragmatic Theory of Truth will only be seen in the next chapter.
The philosophical situation in the 19th century needs to be restated once more to give the necessary context. James was living in an age divided between the purely religious or rationalistic philosophies and the purely empirical ones. As James himself remarked on the situation, "You find an empirical philosophy that is not religious enough, and a religious philosophy that is not empirical enough for your purpose. We wanted a system that would combine both things, the scientific loyalty to facts and willingness to take account of them, but also the old confidence in human values. James proudly boasts: "I offer the oddly-named pragmatism as a philosophy that can satisfy both kinds of demands." There is another approach to seeing how James developed this pragmatism.

When James became dissettled with the rationality of some of his contemporaries, he took this "sentiment of rationality" into his psychological laboratory for clinical investigation.

1James, Pragmatism, 15.
2Ibid., 33.
"He had a disconcerting and impudent habit of asking why there are so many articles of faith, tenaciously held, for which there can be little evidence or objective validity."³ It was this impudence that became his philosophy of pragmatism, when he began to ask how we are satisfied that a proposition is verified. It is under this aspect that Pragmatism will be studied first as method for examining propositions. After many years of continual criticism against his pragmatism, James was finally forced to cry out in despair "pragmatism never meant for me more than a method of conduction discussions (a sovereign method, it is true). ⁴ Indeed it was a method; but it also had another aspect when it was used; a method for examining truth as truth. This facet will be taken up later in the chapter. The methodological characteristic of pragmatism is of immediate concern now though.

Pragmatism was primarily a method of clarifying ideas. It was a method of clarifying ideas by extending the techniques of experimental inquiry from the physical and biological sciences into the field of logical analysis.

³Schneider, 515.
⁴Ibid. 533: Schneider quotes Ralph Barton Perry, The Thought and Character of William James II, 530-I.
Donald Mackay Ph. D. professor of Philosophy at the University of California commented in an article on Pragmatism that "in view of later developments this remains its major contribution to contemporary philosophy, more important than any of its highly debatable formulas for "the meaning for truth" or "the meaning of meaning." The worth of this statement is usually affirmed; Because this paper is not concerned with the value of pragmatism as a theory of knowledge, but with an explanation of its meaning, Professor Mackay's statement will not influence the work to a concentration on Methodological Character only.

An addition will now be made to the above definition, which stated pragmatism as a method for clarifying ideas. It is a method of interpreting or clarifying notions by tracing its respective practical consequences. "What difference would it practically make if this notion rather than another one were true?" Thus, if the metaphysical dispute of whether the world is material or spiritual is raised, the pragmatic method is employed. If no practical difference whatever can be traced, then the alternatives mean practically the same thing, and all dispute is idle. What is done to attain perfect

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5 Schneider, 400.
6 James, Pragmatism, 45.
clearness in our thoughts of an object (or a proposition) then, we need only consider what conceivable effects of a practical kind the object involve—what sensations we are to expect from it, and what reactions we must prepare.

Instead of assuming that ideas are distinct by being subjectively different from one another, that is, having nothing "unclear" in them, pragmatism holds that ideas are different in meaning only when they make an objective difference in conduct (practical consequences). To develop a thought's meaning, we need only determine what conduct it is fitted to produce. In Chapter I the process of knowing was said to consist in problem solving. Under James Pragmatic method, the formulation of a thought's meaning is nothing more than a determination of what objective difference it will make in conduct.7 Once again, James has extended the psychological fact, to encompass a whole new order this time an epistemological order.

An important point should not be overlooked here. In view of this preceding discussion of the pragmatic method, pragmatism is usually reduced to the truism of one idea making a difference in my conduct; the obvious fact that ideas have

7Ferm, 391.
practical results. James gives the example of having "the idea that a pencil for which I am looking is in the top drawer, then I shall probably open the top drawer instead of the bottom." Ideas are said to make a difference:

"... not in the trivial sense that different results follow when we act upon them, but in the important sense that there is no discernible difference between one idea and another excepting in the different effects that might 'conceivably' have practical bearings on our conduct. Pragmatism is a method of clarifying the significant differences among ideas through the anticipation of their future consequences in practice.8

Mr. Charles Peirce, famous for his inductive logic, was the first to introduce the pragmatic method in America. In 1879 he postulated the following maxim:

"Consider what effects that might conceivably 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.9

Therefore, in regards to philosophy and philosophic disputes, if both sides are examined in light of what possible consequences of practical importance will accrue, and it is found that the same consequences will accrue, then by definition the sides of the dispute are meaningless. In fact by strict definition the concept of each side will be identical with the other, as the conception is determined by the effects. James was preoccupied with applying the method to determine

8Ibid. 392.

whether a given philosophical question had an authentic and vital meaning or whether, on the contrary, it was trivial and purely verbal; and in the former case, what interests were at stake, when one accepts and affirms one or the other of the two thesis in dispute. James felt that the "whole function of philosophy ought to be to find out what definite difference it will make to you and me, at definite instants of our life, if this world-formula or that world-formula be the true one."

Classical metaphysics has usually followed a very "primitive kind of quest" for answers to a world formula. The universe appears to such a metaphysician as kind of enigma, of which "the key must be sought in the shape of some illuminating or power-bringing word or name"—the universe's principle, like God, for example. Here such a metaphysician rests contented. James, following the pragmatic method would be far from content. He would bring out of each word "its practical cash-value." The pragmatic method was essentially an instrument in determining the meaning of words and the vital importance of philosophic beliefs. It appears less as a solution, then, than as a program for more work.

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10 Daggbert, 456-7.

11 James, *Pragmatism*, 50.
This is precisely what it is. "Theories thus become instruments, not answers to enigmas, in which we can rest." No particular results then so far, but only an attitude of orientation, is what the pragmatic method means. "The attitude of looking away from first things, like principles, and of looking towards last things, fruits, consequences, facts." This would be what James called his Pragmatic method; and has been pointed out, what he later termed even his whole notion of Pragmatism.

We must not forget here that James was an empiricist before he was a pragmatist, and would thereby affirm that pragmatism is merely empiricism pushed to its legitimate conclusions. It is a small step to apply the pragmatic method to the problem of truth. Just as in the natural sciences there is the tendency to identify truth in any particular case with verification, so too, a pragmatic meaning of truth starts with facts, generalizes, and submits the conceptions to the control of experience. It is in the process of verification that one finds examples of what is called truth. All our ideas, theories, are determined by the effects which will have practical bearings. All that the pragmatic method

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I2Ibid., 55.
I3Dagobert, 460-I.
on truth implies, then, is that truths should have practical consequences. James gives a famous example of what he means. He has presented the problem of how to know that there are Tigers in India.

"The pointing of our thought to the tigers is known simply and solely as a procession of mental associates and motor consequences that follow on the thought, and that would lead harmoniously, if followed out, into some ideal or real context, or even into the immediate presence, of the tigers."

Thus, to know an object according to James is to be lead to it through a context which the word supplies. The object is led through experiences, to a verification. Therefore, ideas (parts of our experience called knowing according to Radical experience) become true so far as they help us to get into satisfactory relation with other parts of our experience.

From this standpoint of pragmatism, experience is "primarily what is undergone in connection with activities whose import lies in objective consequences - their bearing upon future experiences." On this point it is easy to see that the pragmatic idea of truth is again a continuation of a psychological fact. Here the "teleological function" of the mind, problem solving, has evolved into James' statement here that

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I4 James, Meaning of Truth, 52.
I5 Ibid. 46.
I6 Ibid. 53.
I7 Ferri, 395-6.
"experience is primarily what is undergone in connection
whose import lies in objective consequences - their bearing
upon future experience.

An important point that was discussed in Chapter II was
James' idea of an expanding world - expanding by the addition
of each new experience. James applies the same reasoning
to truth. Old opinions are constantly being adopted to fit
into a new fact of discovery. "We hold a theory true just in
proportion to its success in solving this 'problem of maxima
and minima.' ... We say this theory solves it on the whole,
more satisfactorily than the former theory." New truth as
growing would be in the case of the mere numerical addition
of new facts to our experience. The new contents themselves
are not true, they simply come and are. Truth comes in what
we say about them - when we say they have come. \(^{18}\) It is a
leaning on old truth and a grasping of new fact. Truth is
always a go-between, a smoother-over of transitions - the
transitions from old opinion to new fact. Truth is a growing
process. It is this "growing process" that has merited for
pragmatism the cognomen of a "genetic theory of truth."

\(^{18}\) James, *Pragmatism*, 61-2
The "genetic theory" of pragmatic truth is now ready for a detailed study in view of two postulates:

1. Thoughts become true in proportion as they successfully exert their go-between-functions.
2. It is hard to discriminate subjective from objective factors in truth's development.

A watchful eye would detect here the epistemological statement of the two themes in James Principles - the object of study in Chapter I. One theme dwelt on the "stream" or unity of consciousness; the others, the teleological function of cognition. Seeing a clearer connection between the two, is the object of this next section.

In general, truth is a property of certain of our judgments. It is their 'agreement,' as falsity means their disagreement, with 'reality.' Such a definition is accepted by intellectualists and pragmatists alike. A differentiation occurs between the two when the question is raised as to the meaning of 'agreement and reality.' Agreement for the intellectualists (the Hegelian intellectualists were his enemy) means a copy of reality. When you have your true idea of anything, that's the end of the matter. You know. But, a pragmatist, first asking according to the pragmatic method what difference an idea will make in one's actual life if true,

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19 James, Meaning of Truth, 261.
sees the answer: "True ideas are those that we can assimilate, validate, corroborate and verify. False ideas are those we can not." This is the practical difference it makes to us to have true ideas; that, therefore, is the meaning of truth, for it is all that truth is known as.\textsuperscript{20} Truth, therefore 'happens' to an idea. It becomes true, is made true by events. In fact, its quality of being true, is an event, a process; the process of verification. The fact remains still that the possession of true thoughts means everywhere the possession of invaluable instruments of action. That is, an idea 'opinionated' to be true is finally made true when the practical effects predicted by the opinion are verified in actual experience.

This whole notion of verification of a 'true idea' is a leading of the person up to the experience that the idea is in fact true. James would phrase this as "the true is the name for whatever idea starts the verification process, useful is the name for its completed function in experience."\textsuperscript{21} The general notion of truth is something essentially bound up with the way in which one moment in our experience may lead us towards other moments. In Chapter II Radical Empiricism presented a world of experience.

\textsuperscript{20} James, \textit{Pragmatism}, 201.

\textsuperscript{21}Ibid., 204.
Knowing was a relation of one part of experience to another by means of this act of knowing. Now, the knowing of an idea as true, determined by its conceivable practical results, will lead us to its verification. The verification 'dips' us into the particulars of experience again, and an advantageous connection is made with them; such advantages as predicted by the 'true idea'. To agree with a reality in a side sense,

"can only mean to be guided either straight up to it or into its surroundings, or to be put into such working touch with it as to handle either it or something connected with it better than if we disagreed. 22

 Truths emerge from facts; but they fall forwards into facts again and add to them; which facts again create or reveal new truth and so on indefinitely. This is the meaning then of the original statement that thoughts become true in proportion as they successfully exert their go-between of fact, regarded as true, determined by the effects to follow, and the final verified truth.

The second statement regarding the genetic theory of truth was "it is hard to discriminate subjective from objective factors in truth's development." Human motives sharpen all our questions, and human satisfactions lurk in all
our answers. What such statements mean, in view of James' Radical Empiricism, is easily seen. As was said, 'Reality is, in general, what truths have to take account of; the first part of reality is the sensation. It is neither true nor false, it only is. The second part of reality is something that our beliefs need to take account of: the relations that obtain between our sensations or between their copies in our minds. The third part of reality, in addition to these sensations and their relations, is the previous truths of which every new inquiry takes account. This last aspect has been discussed in the present chapter. Now, the point is that no matter how fixed these elements are of reality, we still have a certain freedom in our dealings with them. For example, our sensations; that they are is undeniable and above our control, but, which ones we attend to, and make emphatic in our conclusions depends on our own interests. And as we lay emphasis here or there, "quite different formulations of truth result." This process James feels applies to 'eternal' parts of reality as well. In all instances we "receive the block of marble, but we carve the statue ourselves."23

23 Ibid., 245-7.
It was this very aspect of personal interest that James dealt with in his Psychology too. Chapter I discussed it in detail: Personal interest as regards practical effects is what determines attention to a great extent. Similarly, James treats of knowing a thing as true is in regard to the practical effects - such practical being that by which we first conceive the whole object, and the final appraisal of the truth of the idea, through verification in experience.
CONCLUSION

The final chapter has attempted to complete two main tasks; first, it was to be a presentation of the Pragmatism of William James under the two aspects of the Pragmatic Method, and also the Pragmatic genetic theory of truth. Second, the chapter has tried to present the above aspects in relation to James work in Psychology and his philosophy of Radical Empiricism. Chapter I examined the classic work of James, *The Principles of Psychology*, and brought to light the two predominate themes: a biological examination of the "psych" with the theory of a teleological function of concepts, conception and even essences; an introspective descriptive psychology of the "psych" revealing a continuous "stream of consciousness" of related sensations, images and ideas. Chapter II was an inspection of Radical Empiricism, again for two reasons: first, to show that James' philosophy of Pluralism or Radical Empiricism did find its "semen" in his psychological "stream of consciousness" and truly was a logical development in metaphysical lines. Secondly, Radical Empiricism was only described in a limited number of its aspects in order to view it as an important cog in a true understanding of Pragmatism itself. It seemed foolish when trying to present an explanation of James pragmatic method, and theory of truth, to do so without recourse to some"more
ultimate* basis than his own "pragmatic" words on the subject. Prefacing the inspection of Pragmatism with the first two chapters in this work, appeared as a defensible plan of inquiry. With these remarks as a background for context, the third Chapter was able to appear as an ossification of further Jamesonian thinking.

This whole question of whether it is right to put Psychology and Radical Empiricism as a means for understanding Pragmatism can be easily reduced by the employment of the pragmatic method. What practical consequences would result from using these two or not? The practical result is none other than that it has seemed to the writer to be clearer and more easily understandable. Numerous connections between the two were available, providing conclusive evidence that, pragmatically, the reasoning behind this thesis was valid.
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