



PRAGMATISM

WILLIAM JAMES

JVA EDITORA

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PRAGMATISM

A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking

By William James

To the Memory of John Stuart Mill

**from whom I first learned the pragmatic
openness of mind
and whom my fancy likes to picture as our
leader were he alive to-day.**



Preface

The lectures that follow were delivered at the Lowell Institute in Boston in November and December, 1906, and in January, 1907, at Columbia University, in New York. They are printed as delivered, without developments or notes. The pragmatic movement, so-called—I do not like the name, but apparently it is too late to change it—seems to have rather suddenly precipitated itself out of the air. A number of tendencies that have always existed in philosophy have all at once become conscious of themselves collectively, and of their combined mission; and this has occurred in so many countries, and from so many different points of view, that much unconcerted statement has resulted. I have sought to unify the picture as it presents itself to my own eyes, dealing in broad strokes, and avoiding minute controversy. Much futile controversy might have been avoided, I believe, if our critics had been willing to wait until we got our message fairly out.

If my lectures interest any reader in the general subject, he will doubtless wish to read farther. I therefore give him a few references.

In America, John Dewey's 'Studies in Logical Theory' are the foundation. Read also by Dewey the articles in the *Philosophical Review*, vol. xv, pp. 113 and 465, in *Mind*, vol. xv, p. 293, and in the *Journal of Philosophy*, vol. iv, p. 197.

Probably the best statements to begin with however, are F. C. S. Schiller's in his 'Studies in Humanism,' especially the essays numbered i, v, vi, vii, xviii and xix. His previous essays and in general

the polemic literature of the subject are fully referred to in his footnotes.

Furthermore, see G. Milhaud: *le Rationnel*, 1898, and the fine articles by Le Roy in the *Revue de Metaphysique*, vols. 7, 8 and 9. Also articles by Blondel and de Saily in the *Annales de Philosophie Chretienne*, 4me Serie, vols. 2 and 3. Papini announces a book on Pragmatism, in the French language, to be published very soon.

To avoid one misunderstanding at least, let me say that there is no logical connexion between pragmatism, as I understand it, and a doctrine which I have recently set forth as 'radical empiricism.' The latter stands on its own feet. One may entirely reject it and still be a pragmatist.

Harvard University, April, 1907.

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Lecture I

The Present Dilemma in Philosophy

Chesterton quoted. Everyone has a philosophy. Temperament is a factor in all philosophizing. Rationalists and empiricists. The tender-minded and the tough-minded. Most men wish both facts and religion. Empiricism gives facts without religion. Rationalism gives religion without facts.

The layman's dilemma. The unreality in

rationalistic systems. Leibnitz
on the damned, as an example. M. I.
Swift on the optimism of idealists.
Pragmatism as a mediating system. An
objection. Reply: philosophies have
characters like men, and are liable to as
summary judgments. Spencer as
an example.

Lecture II

What Pragmatism Means

The squirrel. Pragmatism as a method.
History of the method. Its
character and affinities. How it
contrasts with rationalism and
intellectualism. A 'corridor theory.'
Pragmatism as a theory of truth,
equivalent to 'humanism.' Earlier views
of mathematical, logical, and
natural truth. More recent views.
Schiller's and Dewey's 'instrumental'
view. The formation of new beliefs.
Older truth always has to be kept
account of. Older truth arose similarly.
The 'humanistic' doctrine.
Rationalistic criticisms of it. Pragmatism
as mediator between
empiricism and religion. Barrenness of
transcendental idealism. How far
the concept of the Absolute must be
called true. The true is the good

in the way of belief. The clash of truths.
Pragmatism unstiffens
discussion.

Lecture III

Some Metaphysical Problems
Pragmatically Considered

The problem of substance. The
Eucharist. Berkeley's pragmatic
treatment

of material substance. Locke's of
personal identity. The problem of
materialism. Rationalistic treatment of
it. Pragmatic treatment. 'God'
is no better than 'Matter' as a principle,
unless he promise more.

Pragmatic comparison of the two
principles. The problem of design.

'Design' per se is barren. The question is
WHAT design. The problem of

'free-will.' Its relations to 'accountability.'

Free-will a cosmological

theory. The pragmatic issue at stake in
all these problems is what do

the alternatives PROMISE.

Lecture IV

The One and the Many

Total reflection. Philosophy seeks not
only unity, but totality.

Rationalistic feeling about unity.

Pragmatically considered, the world

is one in many ways. One time and space. One subject of discourse. Its parts interact. Its oneness and manyness are co-ordinate. Question of one origin. Generic oneness. One purpose. One story. One knower. Value of pragmatic method. Absolute monism. Vivekananda. Various types of union discussed. Conclusion: We must oppose monistic dogmatism and follow empirical findings.

Lecture V

Pragmatism and Common Sense

Noetic pluralism. How our knowledge grows. Earlier ways of thinking remain. Prehistoric ancestors DISCOVERED the common sense concepts. List of them. They came gradually into use. Space and time. 'Things.' Kinds. 'Cause' and 'law.' Common sense one stage in mental evolution, due to geniuses. The 'critical' stages: 1) scientific and 2) philosophic, compared with common sense. Impossible to say which is the more 'true.'

Lecture VI

Pragmatism's Conception of Truth

The polemic situation. What does