

Pragmatism, school of philosophy, dominant in the United States in the first quarter of the 20th century, based on the principle that the usefulness, workability, and practicality of ideas, policies, and proposals are the criteria of their merit. It stresses the priority of action over doctrine, of experience over fixed principles, and it holds that ideas borrow their meanings from their consequences and their truths from their verification. Thus, ideas are essentially instruments and plans of action.

Pragmatism

Pragmatism is best regarded as a movement and spirit rather than a set of ideas. There is no simple doctrine that unifies it as in the cases of naturalism, realism, or idealism. Unlike these three philosophies, pragmatism is no longer an active movement. Its views and feelings have become common place among common people.

Pragmatism is an American philosophy that began in the 1870s although its leaders speak of it as a new name for old ways of thinking. Two stories are told about its beginnings. The first version relates the founding of pragmatism to the Metaphysical Club founded by Peirce and James at Cambridge in which the ideas were first set forth. The second version relates to Peirce's essay, "How to Make Our Ideas Clear" which was published in 1878 in the Popular Science Monthly. Here the word and idea are expressed. Peirce is certainly credited with coining the word, but it is most assuredly William James who popularized the movement. While the beginning is related to the 1870s, James is credited with inaugurating the real movement in an address "Philosophical Conceptions and Practical Results" in 1898.

Pragmatism in the mind of Peirce was something different than what it became in the thought of James. Peirce's innovation involved a theory of meaning. He was concerned--in making ideas clear--with the meaning of symbols and signs, or words. What do words mean? Peirce wrote this oft-quoted statement: "consider what effects which 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."¹ As an example for his idea he used the idea of transubstantiation in Roman Catholic thought. This is the belief that the wine becomes the literal blood of Christ in the Mass. Even though it is regarded as the real blood, it still looks, smells, and tastes like wine. There is no operational difference in saying that it is blood over against being wine. Thus Peirce concluded that it is nonsense to speak of it being blood. While a Catholic theologian may want to quarrel with his example, it does illustrate what Peirce was seeking to do. Differences in meaning should be seen in differences of operations.

Peirce's views were never set forth systematically and he is not the best example of developed pragmatism. Nevertheless, Peirce seemed to be limiting the nature of knowledge to what may be either experienced by the senses or "proven" by the scientific method. In dealing with various methods to knowledge he singled out and rejected authority, a prioriisms, and Hegelianism for the scientific method. This meant he had severe reservations about metaphysical issues. In application of the scientific method he concluded that

almost every proposition of ontological metaphysics is either meaningless gibberish--one word being defined by other words, and they by still others, without any real conception ever being reached--or else is downright absurd; so that all such rubbish being swept away, what will

remain of philosophy will be a series of problems capable of investigation by the observational methods of the true sciences 2

Peirce denied that pragmatism had any other goal than the clarification of ideas and words. He noted:

Suffice it to say once more that pragmatism is, in itself no doctrine of metaphysics, no attempt to determine any truth of things. It is merely a method of ascertaining the meaning of hard words and of abstract concepts. All pragmatists of whatsoever stripe will cordially assent to that statement.³

While this is a notable aspiration, the disclaimer about metaphysics is disarming because pragmatism under Peirce, James and Dewey had differing metaphysics, either by advocacy or denial. In application of the above sentence, the scientific method as used by Dewey led to a form of naturalism, while the use of the scientific method in the hands of James led to a pluralistic polytheism. Although Peirce may be the originator of the term and idea, he was eclipsed by William James in his influence. He changed the idea and molded pragmatism in his own image. Later he was succeeded in influence by John Dewey. Therefore, we will use James and Dewey as the two samples of pragmatic thought.

I. William James (1842-1909)

Brother of Henry James, the novelist, William James was born in New York and pursued a medical career in his studies but became professor of philosophy at first and then later professor of psychology at Harvard. James developed pragmatism beyond its meaning as set forth by Peirce. Instead of a theory of meaning, he carried pragmatism to a theory of truth. He noted that "pragmatism's primary interest is in its doctrine of truth."⁴ But it is truth in a practical vein. He noted that pragmatism is "the attitude of looking away from first things, principles, 'categories,' supposed necessities; and of looking towards last things, fruits, consequences, facts."⁵ James distinguished himself from both the rationalists (idealists) and empiricists (materialists or naturalists) and disallows either alternative as adequate, but both need to be joined together. James saw pragmatism as a mediating view joining the values of both philosophical camps.⁶ The practicality of pragmatism is seen in an address on the question of whether life is worth living? He concluded that life is worth the effort and if you believe it so, your belief will make it so. The practical effects of your views do affect your life and these consequences can be seen in James' views on the following subjects.

A. Reality.

James quoted with approval a statement of A.E. Taylor that "anything is real of which we find ourselves obliged to take account in any way."⁷ But we are forced to proceed and ask questions about the things of our experience. In terms of our experience as well as reason James concludes for a pluralistic view of the universe as opposed to a monism of mind or a monism of matter.

Pluralism is the idea that there is no single connecting entity or substance that runs through all the universe. In many ways the universe is chaotic. There is connection between some things, but experience is limited and contradictory when it comes to concluding that the world is all mind or all matter.⁸ The question of the nature of things can be decided on empirical grounds alone and so far one can conclude that "the world is One just so far as its parts hang together by any definite connexion. It is many just so far as any definite connexion fails to obtain."⁹ There is little possibility of seeing a connection between a bank account, quasars, the King of England, and the book that is being read. Pluralism means that one must take a census of the different forms of reality.

There are practical results of the differing views about reality. "The essential contrast is that for rationalism reality is ready made and complete from all eternity, while for pragmatism it is still in the making, and awaits part of its complexion from the future. On the one side, the universe is absolutely secure, on the other it is still pursuing its adventures."¹⁰ On James' view the world is "unfinished, growing in all sorts of places" especially in those areas where human beings are at work. The other option, materialism, is ruled out because there is the need of mind as an important ingredient in life. We can see more of this in the second heading on the subject of man.

Another practical implication of James' view of reality is seen in the differing views concerning how we got here. At best we can say only that the universe is, said James, and we cannot with certainty say how it got here. This question is one of the darkest of all philosophy. "All of us are beggars here, and no school can speak disdainfully of another or give itself superior airs."¹¹ As long as we look to the past there is no difference between spiritualism and materialism. We are here, life is here, and how it got here is difficult to answer. Accept either option and there is no difference in end results to the moment. But focusing on the future brings immediate significant differences. Given the simple facts of the world as the empiricists or scientists, or naturalists see them and you have a bleak picture of the universe running down, our sun becoming cold, and man and life disappearing. But in the pragmatic hypothesis of James, there is hope. God has the last word, and it is not a frozen universe but a warm abode of life eternal with Him.

It is to be noted at this point, to avoid confusion, that James sides with the rationalists in accepting God and mind, but rejects their monism of the Spirit. He accepts some of the empiricists stress on science but believes in pluralism, rather than a monism of matter, and unlike the naturalist, believes in God. James believed that materialism denied the moral order in the universe as being eternal and giving up ultimate hope. The idealists affirmed an eternal moral order, but because of its monism of the Spirit it let loose of hope.¹²

James rejected the idealists monism for several reasons: (1) He believed that monism could not account for finite consciousness. If nothing existed but the Absolute Mind, there is no meaning of finite mind. Finite mind is swallowed up in the Absolute. (2) Monism has a serious problem with evil if only the Absolute exists. Evil cannot be taken seriously in a monistic world. For pluralism, the only problem is how to get rid of it and this was an accepted possibility. (3) Our perception sees the world as changing, and this change must be regarded as an illusion or

mirage. Monism thus contradicts our senses. (4) Monism is fatalistic because everything is conceived to be necessary. This makes our sense of freedom illusory.

Monism appears to be hopeful, but its logical position leads to pessimism. James accepted meliorism rather than optimism or pessimism. Meliorism is the idea that the world is capable of being improved. Meliorism relates to novelty in the world. Meliorism is related to free-will of the human. If the world is necessary in its present form, there can be no change and no free-will to achieve change. If there is genuine free-will, there can be real progress and change to a better world. If we are inclined to reject these possibilities we must do so in contradiction to our sense.

Pluralism, defined positively, affirms meliorism, freedom, and novelty in opposition to a static, fatalistic world implied in both naturalism and idealism.

B. Man.

James rejected certain views of his time associated with Herbert Spencer which regarded man as the product of environment, circumstances, physical geography and ancestral conditions. In contrast, James argued the differences of man are due "to the accumulated influences of individuals, of their examples, their initiative and their decisions."¹³ Similarly, James rejected any version of evolutionary history which ignored the "vital importance of individual initiative" and which reduced man to a product of the most "ancient oriental fatalism."¹⁴

The power of conceptual thought is one of the distinguishing marks of man over the brutes.¹⁵ Man transcends the merely perceptual world about him. "The intellectual life of man consists almost wholly in his substitution of a conceptual order for the perceptual order in which his experience originally comes."¹⁶ Man's mind is not just a blank sheet of paper as the empiricists were inclined to hold. The very nature of mind is such that it cannot be "a reactionless sheet at all."¹⁷ In the same line of thinking James denies that consciousness is a "thing," but instead speaks of it as a "function."¹⁸ Man is conscious, but not a conscious.

James described mind as part of man's total makeup in a positive and negative fashion. Negatively, man is more than psychological reflexes. In an essay on reflex action and theism, James said that reflect psychology does not disprove rationality or God. The mind is "an essentially teleological mechanism. I mean by this that the conceiving or theorizing faculty--the mind's middle department--functions exclusively for the sake of ends that do not exist at all in the world of impressions we receive by way of our sense, but are set by our emotional and practical subjectivity altogether."¹⁹ In another context James argued that the brain does more than merely produce thought as the materialists contended. The materialists argued that when the brain dies, the total "person" is dead. James rejected this and argued that the brain has other functions which he called releasing or permissive function and transmissive functions. But even if one granted the materialist contention that the brain produces consciousness, this is still the "absolute world-enigma."²⁰

Positively, James argued from the analogy of his own consciousness to the mind of another body. The existence of another mind is postulated "because I see your body acting in a certain

way, its gestures, facial movements, words and conduct generally are 'expressive,' so I deem it actuated as my own is, by an inner life like mine."²¹

Man's belief about himself is important. He alluded to Chesterton who said that it is more important to know what a person believes about himself than knowing his financial condition.

There are two kinds of people, as James described them. First, the tender-minded are rationalistic, intellectualistic, idealistic, optimistic, religious, free-willist, monistic and dogmatical. The tough-minded are empiricists, sensationistic, materialistic, pessimistic, irreligious, fatalistic, pluralistic, and sceptical."²² In James, pragmatism gives the best of both views.

Two examples may help to make James' position clear. The tender-minded position accepted the fact of God's existence, but the tough-minded argued that God is not seen with the eyes. The pragmatism of James is not limited to the matter of sensation-perception. James argued for radical empiricism which he defined as follows:

To be radical, an empiricism must neither admit into its construction any element that is not directly experienced nor exclude from them any element that is directly experienced."²³

Empiricism is restricted to one or more sense perceptions. Radical empiricism defines experience as something that may transcend mere sense perception. Hence a man can experience God that he cannot see.

Another example is free-will. Man's freedom has been questioned by a variety of people but especially the materialists of his day. James quoted Huxley who said, "Let me be wound up every day like a watch, to go right fatally, and I ask no better freedom."²⁴ But this, for James, is not really freedom. Without the implication of becoming worse by choice, freedom means nothing in Huxley's use. A pragmatic view of free-will means "novelties in the world, the right to expect that in its deepest element as well as in its surface phenomena, the future may not identically repeat and imitate the past."²⁵ Free-will means along with novelty the possibility of making the world a better place. Freedom is a theory of promise, like belief in God, and the theory of hope makes a practical difference in man's outlook about himself and the world about himself.

C. God.

James made a distinction between knowing about God and enjoying Him. Knowing is achieved by studying his Creation and requires a considerable labor, but enjoying God does not depend upon the considerable intellectual endeavors required to know about his creation.

On the matter of belief in God, James gave an address to the Philosophical Clubs of Yale and Brown Universities on the topic of The Will to Believe. The essence of the address hinges on several points. First, scientists and others who claim to be empiricists--I don't believe-it-unless-I-can-see-it-people--are not that consistent. He noted, "The greatest empiricists

among us are only empiricists on reflection; when left to their instincts, they dogmatize like infallible popes."²⁶ Second, we must believe truth and shun error as ideals but the chance of error must not keep one from choosing. James believed that choosing not to choose is a negative choice. Third, some issues do not have proofs connected with them. Moral questions fit this category as well as theological ones. Science cannot decide these issues, but decisions must be made and they are usually decided on the basis of the heart. Fourth, there are certain issues that are living, momentous, forced options. One cannot avoid them. The question of God is one of these options. Following Pascal's famous wager,²⁷ James sets forth the matter of possible gain of eternal life later, the good life now. Since the question cannot be decided scientifically, the answer must come in a pragmatic way out of the heart. Given the possibility of the truth of God as composed in the momentous, living, forced option, James concludes that "some participation of our sympathetic nature would be logically required."²⁸ Given these options, the will to believe is the natural outgrowth of the facts one faces in life.

There may be some confusion about the appeal or non-appeal to science in discussing God and religion. On the one hand, James said that science cannot decide the issue of God's existence, but on the other hand, he talks about scientific justification for religion. The difference can be explained in this way. God cannot be seen or examined by scientific methods, but there is scientific verification seen in the end result of religious practice. In his epic work, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, he cited examples of people who were sick in mind and body and through the medium of commitment and new thinking they became well. The curing is the verification of the new religious commitment. This can be repeated by example after example. In this sense there is scientific verification. The practical truth of the matter is that "God is real since he produces real effects."²⁹

What kind of God does James accept? The answer is easier to give on what he doesn't accept than what he does. The negative side is important for he carried a running battle with the idealists about their conception of the Absolute. James rejected the Absolute as an idea of God because it was connected with monism. The implications of the Absolute means that freedom of man is denied, finite consciousness is in jeopardy, the problem of evil is insoluble, and a spiritual fatalism takes over. In a word, pantheistic forms of theology had no appeal to him.

On the other hand, he rejected materialism and agnosticism because they gave an answer to the world's questions that are "irrational to the practical third of our nature, and in which we can never volitionally feel at home."³⁰ Presumably the third part of our nature refers to the heart.

Positively, James is more difficult to fit into a theological mold. To begin, James

firmly disbelieved . . . that our human experience is the highest form of experience extant in the universe. I believe rather that we stand in much the same relation to the whole of the universe as our canine and feline pets do to the whole of human life.³¹

Alongside of this is his affirmation that "it is essential that God be conceived as the deepest power in the universe; and second, he must be conceived under the form of a mental

personality."³² This power is "not ourselves" but which "makes for righteousness" and which "recognizes us." He further noted that "in whatever other respects the divine personality may differ from ours or may resemble it, the two are consanguineous at least in this--that both have purposes for which they care and each can hear the other's call."³³

In his *Varieties of Religious Experience*, James concluded that one

becomes conscious that this higher part is conterminous and continuous with a MORE of the same quality, which is operative in the universe outside of him, and which he can keep in working touch with, and in a fashion, get on board of and save himself when all his lower being has gone to pieces in the wreck.³⁴

The More is encountered in our subconscious selves which removes the More beyond the simple sensory perception.

James' argument for God must not be seen as too restrictive. He does not fit the pattern found among Christians who argue only for God Incarnate in Christ as the true religion, although he speaks of himself as Christian. He confessed his inability to accept "either popular Christianity or scholastic theism" but still spoke of himself as a supernaturalist of the "piecemeal or crasser type."³⁵

This fairly liberal stance can be seen in his regard for feeling over doctrine. Religious response to God is seen in the area of feeling: theological formulas are secondary. By reducing religion to feeling James is able to declare that there is an unanimity in religion whether it be Stoic, Christian, or Buddhist. He maintained that there is no difference between these types on the issue of feeling or conduct. Consequently, he is not disposed to argue for a single religion as being the only true one.

When one recalls that he believed any religious hypothesis must not be rejected "if consequences useful to life flow from it," then James' pragmatism may be used to imply polytheism, idolatry, or a relativistic approach to religion.

D. Values.

James maintained that there is no ethical dogmatism that can be defended. Just as there is no final truth in physics there is no final truth in ethics. Ethical discourse begins with man and may or may not proceed to God. Without a human there is no good or evil to seek. If there is ethical truth it is supposed that there is a standard outside of the thinker to which he must conform. A single person in the world would not find anything above and beyond himself to seek conformity. This is as far as the materialist would go. James admits that the religions of humanity offer a basis for ethics as well as philosophy. But in addition to this admission he asks whether ethics without God will satisfy the questions answered in ethics with God.³⁶

Ethics with God will give a basis of obligation that an ethic without God does not have. But there is an additional factor. James sees this difference in "the easy-going and the strenuous

mood."³⁷ The strenuous mood is seen in the "call" to overcome passion, fears, indignation and injustices. The easy-going mood is akin to moral slumbering. The relation between God and morality is described by James in the following sentence:

The capacity of the strenuous mood lies so deep down among our natural human possibilities that even if there were no metaphysical or traditional grounds for believing in a God, men would postulate one simply as a pretext for living hard, and getting out of the game of existence its keenest possibilities of zest.³⁸

James concluded that the idea of moral discourse is achieved more fully in a view in which a "divine thinker" exists.

On the matter of determinism and free-will, James casts his lot toward the free-will position. A world without chance would be an irresponsible world. But James appears to hedge his case a bit when he says that providence and free-will are not incompatible. He used an analogy of a chess master playing against a novice in which there are different un-determined moves, but in the end it is a foregone conclusion that the master achieves his goal.³⁹ Hence the world view incorporating a deity who has goals but within these goals are free choices that man has.

Related to the free-will emphasis is the idea of the meliorism of the world. Improvement is possible in the conditions of the world, and this raises hope within the human breast. Meliorism has a religious overtone as well as ethical. The possibilities of improving the world really do exist. The people who reject this are pessimists, while the optimistic feel the world's salvation is inevitable. Meliorism is based on the solid implication of responsibility in the world and concedes that improvement is possible, but not necessary, nor impossible.⁴⁰

E. Criticisms and Comments.

Some criticisms would be more striking if we had considered James' idea of truth. James advocates a form of relativism that appears shocking and misleading. James' view of truth has been viewed in Chapter IV and we will not repeat those comments. The great strength of James' views relate to his view of reality and the practicality of his philosophy. James' rejection of monism is a plus in his favor. Whether one is required to opt for pluralism rather than dualism is questionable. The only reason for a dualism is to give credence to the integrity of both mind and matter. James doesn't do more than this.

His view on God has both strengths and weaknesses. To speak of God and religious experience from an empirical framework is desirable, but James' reasoning may be used to give credibility to any religious system. Gods of all kinds are related to religious experience. James' argument may be used to "prove" the value of polytheism as well as monism in religious experience, even though James rejects monism on other grounds. While he was influenced by Pascal, James does not follow Pascal in arguing for one true religion.

James' emphasis on freedom and values is important both in his argument against the naturalists as well as having practical psychological value in common life. But he may be too rash in concluding that there is no final ethical system as there is no final truth in physics. Values are different than truths of physics. Values appear to be older and more stable than the truths of physics are unchanging. The ebb and flow of societies and their emphases on values point up the forsaking and returning to certain common values. Discarding values sounds like progress, but discarded values are frequently reclaimed because life needs certain kinds of values. The world and life seems to require some commitment to values for survival sake.

We now turn to our second example of pragmatism. He too was a popularizer and promoter of pragmatism.

II. John Dewey (1859-1952)

A native of Burlington, Vermont, Dewey began his philosophical career as an idealist but changed his views toward the end of the last century to that of naturalistic pragmatism. Dewey preferred to use the term "instrumentalism" to describe his brand of pragmatism.⁴¹

Dewey seems to have been read more by teachers than by serious professional philosophers. He is often obscure, contradictory, and lacking in historical accuracy. The brief story of Frederick Woodbridge illustrates this. Woodbridge asked Dewey, his life-time friend, a simple question like: "Is there not something about the past that never again changes? Surely the state before change begins cannot itself also change." Woodbridge described Dewey's answer: "Dewey defined and distinguished and qualified, in such a maze of dialectic, that not only I did not get any answer, I didn't even know where my question went to. And do you know, when he gets that way, he thinks he is being empirical."⁴²

In calling Dewey a naturalistic pragmatist above, careful attention should be given to the meaning of this term. Dewey was not a materialistic naturalist as described in Chapter IX. He shared much in common with James except for the ideas on religion. Dewey was an ardent foe of materialism as well as idealism. But he is not a realist in trying to make a dualism of the world. The world is not divided into two entities, mind and matter, or a monism of either mind or matter. This will be elaborated in our treatment of the various topics to which we now turn.

A. Reality.

Dewey's view of reality can be seen better, perhaps, if one contrasts his former beliefs as an idealist. He once believed in a universal consciousness or universal self. This placed him in the camp of the absolute idealists. He dropped this and instead of calling everything the universal consciousness, he took up the term nature and regarded nature as the sum total of everything. Nature is whatever is, including those refined activities of man we call mind or thought. The absolute of mind is traded for the absolute of nature.

Another contrast with his previous thinking concerns Being. Being was believed unchanging, above change. Dewey blamed Aristotle for starting the tradition that real Being is unchanging while inferior Being is changing. Dewey rejected this tradition and enshrined change as the nature of life and the universe. The real important people are not those who contemplate Being, but those who, like scientists and carpenters, change Being. "Change becomes significant of new possibilities and ends to be attained; it becomes a prophetic of a better future. Change is associated with progress rather than with lapse and fall."⁴³ Rather than being bad as tradition states, Dewey affirms change to be good. Change makes it possible to say that evil does not endure forever. In a practical way, the changes in memory dulls the loss of friends and loved ones.⁴⁴ Change also led Dewey to say that present life is to be enjoyed rather than serving as a passage way to a more stable form of experience. If changing events are not enjoyed, there is nothing else to enjoy. This makes change have some practical relation to life as Dewey views it. The change or process of change must be studied so it can be directed to fulfill man's desires.

Changes become a basic means of interpreting the world, and implies that the world is "uncertain, unpredictable, uncontrollable, and hazardous."⁴⁵ Moreover, "the world is precarious and perilous."⁴⁶ And "while unknown consequences flowing from the past dog the present, the future is even more unknown and perilous; the present by that fact is ominous."⁴⁷ Dewey goes out of his way to reject necessity or fixity in the world. "A world that has all necessity would not be a world of necessity; it would just be," said Dewey.⁴⁸

What is the nature of the changing world? The answer is that nature is all there is, but there are different functional characteristics about nature. Nature functions in some cases as matter and nature functions in other cases as mind. But neither matter nor mind are static entities opposite one another.⁴⁹ If Dewey could have had his way he would have placed a prohibition upon the use of terms like matter and mind. He believed that many problems of philosophy, particularly those related to dualism, would be solved, and would never have arisen if these dichotomies had not been used.

The different functions of nature can be seen in comparing man and the inanimate. The inanimate may be termed only physical. When the physical has other abilities and activities as "need-demand-satisfaction" then a compound word is made up--psycho-physical--to denote the additional properties that the physical has acquired. Thus conceived, nature functions one way and it is termed inanimate, and nature functions another way and it is termed human. In Dewey's mind this erased all problems of dualism in man's nature. Man is not half-mind-half-body as in a centaur, but a single product of nature.⁵⁰ This view enables him to say that "the distinction between physical, psycho-physical and mental is thus one of levels of increasing complexity and intimacy of interaction among natural elements."⁵¹

Dewey's view of reality draws conclusions about traditional views on metaphysics, and Dewey is not hesitant in making this remark. He wrote, "A story composed in the interest of a refined type of enjoyment, ordered by the needs of consistency in discourse, or dialectic, became cosmology and metaphysics."⁵² It is no wonder that Dewey had little respect for the metaphysics of the past or present.

Dewey never really cast off the influence of his early philosophy of idealism. Nature seems to have a certain intelligence and rationality to give birth to the functions of mind. Pan-nature is used instead of pan-mind. This affinity to idealism can be seen in the view of man and experience to which we now turn.

B. Man.

Dewey's view of man is consistent with his view of nature. One sees a continuum of being in Dewey's thought. Man is different from other creatures only by degree, not by kind. In fact Dewey believed that "there is nothing which marks off the plant from the physico-chemical activity of inanimate bodies."⁵³ This closeness to nature is consistent with his total view. In a letter in 1946 Dewey wrote: "It is correct that I regard man as within nature, not set over against it. And I hold that no adequate philosophy can be formed without taking into account man's participation in nature."⁵⁴

How can one start making distinctions for man against other creatures? Dewey begins in noting the basic difference on man's part in preserving his past experiences in memory. These memories become stratified, expanded, transformed into customary thinking and ultimately become philosophy.⁵⁵ This difference in degree is seen in Dewey's discussion of the three plateaus of nature. The first plateau is matter which can be studied by physics. This is the inanimate level. The second plateau is life. Dewey groups plant and animal life together in spite of their qualities which are quite different. They have qualities in common, which is more important than differences. The third plateau "is that of association, communication, participation."⁵⁶ This level is capable of great distinction within it to account for the diversity of individuals. Although there are diversities of individual existences there are yet more "common properties, which define mind as intellect; possession of and response to meaning."⁵⁷

The natural question, then comes, what is mind? Answering in a negative way, Dewey rejects the traditional idea that mind is a thing, a noun, a substance.⁵⁸ Giving a positive answer, Dewey wrote:

we may say that the 'seat' or locus of mind--its static phase--is the qualities of organic action, as far as these qualities have been conditioned by language and its consequences.⁵⁹

The mind is the activities, the behavior of non-material processes.⁶⁰ The mind is not equated with the brain or the nervous system as in materialism, but the mind is activity. The mind can also be described as a characteristic way of interactivity which is not simultaneous but serial.⁶¹ The mind as activity cannot be possible without physical structures, but it is not the physical structures of the body anymore than walking is the same as legs. Mind and body are natural to one another as soil and seeds.⁶²

It is only a short step from mind as activity to the idea of experience which is important for Dewey's view of man. Dewey's view of experience involves man in reaction to his environment. In this regard, thought is problem solving often an outgrowth of trial and error.

Dewey sought to resolve the age old philosophical dualism between reason and perception. Reason could not account for the particular objects since it was locked up in the brain; perception could not account for the general (abstractions) since it worked only with particular things. Dewey sought to overcome this dichotomy in using the term experience to indicate the close connection "between doing and suffering, or undergoing what we call experience."⁶³ Experience is a bigger event than mere sight, or knowing. It included joy, sorrow, and suffering as well as sight and hearing. Since individual things as well as reason are part of nature, the controversy between rationalism and empiricism was regarded by Dewey as obsolete.

If activity and experience are basic, then the control of activity and experience would seem to produce a certain kind of person. Dewey affirmed this task when he discussed the role of social customs and laws. These are important for

creating individuals Individuality in a social and moral sense is something to be wrought out. It means initiative, inventiveness, varied resourcefulness, assumption of responsibility in choice of belief and conduct.⁶⁴

Such a view requires that social modifications be dealt with since self-hood is seen as a process. If one is to change persons, one must change the institutions that make them. Institutions can remain static and produce poor quality persons, or they can be changed to shape new and better individual types. Persons do not arise in isolation, and when people do isolate themselves, they are yet in company with "gods and spirits."⁶⁵ When institutions change for the better they produce better persons who in turn can change the institutions for better. The goal is "full education" in which each person shapes the "aims and policies" of his social ground according to his capacity.⁶⁶

By way of concluding this section, it can be noted that man is part of nature. Nature is in process. Man is in process. This reduces everything to a process "with no subject or object, not external, or internal."⁶⁷ If this be an adequate interpretation of Dewey, then what appears very person-centered initially, ends in a non-personal view of nature and man.

At the same time, Dewey's emphasis on experience has substantiated seemingly the idealist' contention that something must be in a mind to be known.

C. God.

Dewey has a most unusual approach to the issue of God and religion. He wrote a small work entitled *A Common Faith*, which would be better regarded as a common psychology or a common experience. He discarded most of what is regarded as religious for a new definition of the religious. He wrote:

Any activity pursued in behalf of an ideal and against obstacles and in spite of threats of personal loss because of conviction of its general and enduring value is religious in quality.⁶⁸

He described the experience of people who have achieved "unification of themselves and of their relations to the conditions of existence."⁶⁹ Moreover, the definition comes after attention is given to the "religious quality of experience."

Dewey rejected any form of supernatural structure or belief in religion. These are historical trappings that can be dispensed. He lists the conflicts between various religious ideologies and concluded that since all cannot be correct, none are. Nevertheless, there is something of value remaining in religion. One can get it if the doctrinal, moral, and ritual structures are overturned.⁷⁰ Theology arose from the simple faith that something "should be in existence" and this is changed "into the intellectual belief that it is already in existence." He noted:

When physical existence does not bear out the assertion, the physical is subtly changed into the metaphysical. In this way, moral faith has been inextricably tied up with intellectual beliefs about the supernatural.⁷¹

The mental game that man has played with his mind produces a religion that is nothing more than auto-suggestion or self-projection. Dewey admits this idea to be his use of the old theme that religion is born of fear.⁷²

One of the reasons for Dewey's reaction to religion is a wholesome one. He rejected the use of God to explain things that science has or may explain. This later became known as the God of the gaps. Dewey noted that since we do not know the relation between the brain, nervous system, and thought, then the appeal is made to the supernatural. He rightly protested the misuse of

God, but nevertheless, he went to the end and rejected God.⁷³

Dewey's goal in getting rid of religion is to focus on the religious. This is almost like getting the kernel out of the husk. The religious experience that Dewey opted for is related to the ideas of "accommodation, adaptation and adjustments."⁷⁴ Since there is no God who works for man, man must work for himself either in getting what he wants or stopping the wanting of it. The idea of accommodation is related to the imagination. If we imagine that we are in harmony with the Universe, we will be. The Universe is the product of generalizing our imagination. We experience only parts of the universe we imagine, or generalize our partial harmony into a complete harmony. Dewey noted that "the idea of a thoroughgoing and deep seated harmonizing of the self with the Universe (as a name for the totality of conditions with which the self is connected) operates only through imagination"⁷⁵ It seems that greater understanding and consistency would prevail if "nature" were substituted for "Universe." Man is religious in nature, and there is nothing outside of nature toward which he can direct himself.

Religion is now changed from a unique kind of experience to experiences of all kinds. In a similar way Dewey noted that "whatever introduces genuine perspective is religious, not that religion is something that introduces it."⁷⁶ The implication could be that the Marxists are just as

religious as the Christians if there is a genuine insight introduced into thought, or if goals are met. Any humble person pursuing a vocation against many odds is doing a religious activity. Religion is not restricted to the church at all.

Dewey does admit the use of the word "God" but not in a personal sense of the term. God "denotes the unity of all ideal ends arousing us to desire and action."⁷⁷ Further he wrote that "this unity signifies not a single Being, but the unity of loyalty and effort evoked by the fact that many ends are one in the power of their ideal or imaginative, quality to stir and hold us."⁷⁸ The relevance of this definition of God is that the goals of all humanity become unified. Dewey regarded his age as "distracted" and in need of such unifying ideas. This, it might be noted here, is another form of the God of the gaps which Dewey had renounced as a misuse of the idea of God. Another cash value use of the term of God or the divine was in protecting "man from a sense of isolation and from consequent despair or defiance."⁷⁹

In consistency with his views on God and the religious, Dewey dropped the old distinctions between sacred and secular. Everything becomes religious. This makes apologetics unnecessary since everyone is doing religious activity in worth-while things they do. The result is that:

the validity of justice, affection, and that intellectual correspondence of our ideas with realities that we call truth, is so assured in its hold upon humanity that it is unnecessary for the religious attitude to encumber itself with the apparatus of dogma and doctrine.⁸⁰

Another implication in this dropping of distinctions between the sacred and the secular, is that science emerges as more religious than religion. Dropping the doctrines of religion, religious activity is related to method not doctrine. Science is activity that is for the most part religious. But science is "not constituted by any particular body of subject matter. It is constituted by a method, a method of changing beliefs by means of tested inquiry as well as of arriving at them."⁸¹

Dewey believed that religion had created a crisis in values and scholarship. The crisis for these areas arose out of their relationship to the supernatural. The presumption is that if they are disconnected with the supernatural, the crisis will subside; values will be strong and scholarship in all areas will be integral.⁸²

In general, Dewey knocks the religions that claim the truth exclusively. The only real way for the churches to regain credibility is to give up their exclusive and authoritative position.⁸³ But he proposes another new exclusive that has finality. "There is but one sure road of access to truth--the road of patient, cooperative inquiry operating by means of observation, experiment, record and controlled reflection."⁸⁴

D. Values.

We can begin with Dewey's negative responses to previous ethical theory and practice. His rejection of past philosophy was strong enough that his critics spoke of his "sour attitude."⁸⁵

Past morality had attempted to find a solid, unchanging base for morality. Dewey regarded this as wrong for morality is related to the changing.⁸⁶ Past moral views tended to make the good a "single, fixed and final good."⁸⁷ Dewey rejected this and believed that the good is related to goals of the future as well as the individual's ability to analyze required decisions between alternative issues. Past individual's ability to analyze required decisions between alternative issues. Past morality involved a cataloging of rights and wrongs which could be detected and decided; Dewey saw morality in need of a method of inquiry so that action may take place following analysis.⁸⁸ Past morality was contemplative and Dewey argued that morality involved action. The general theme of problem solving may be seen to underlie his approach to values.

Further, Dewey argued, past morality made distinctions between means and ends in values, often called extrinsic and intrinsic values. The intrinsic values, or "ends" were things to be valued in themselves. Friendship is an intrinsic value. Extrinsic or means related to the use of objects or things to achieve the end. A typewriter is an extrinsic value for it is the means of achieving communication, a job, good grades, or other values. As a result of this distinction extrinsic or means were depreciated, or regarded as second-rate. This creates artificial divisions in the area of evaluation. The higher values become snob values while the lower values--while perhaps more common--become somewhat undesired. An example is the contrast between the value placed on "mental-vocations" as opposed to "menial-vocations." Dewey regarded this distinction as mistaken. In actuality, a garbage collector may contribute more "value" to a community than the county assessor, or college professor.

Past morality was commonly related to religious authority such as Moses or Paul, or church authority, or intuition, or imitation. But present morality, for Dewey, must be related to science. He believed his philosophy was one way of salvaging what was good in values from the past. Many of the past values are inappropriate for being accepted in a scientific age.⁸⁹

This leads to the natural question, what is morality? A moral good, answered Dewey, is accorded anything when it has the ability to "contribute to amelioration of existing evils."⁹⁰ This introduces a peculiar thought into Dewey's moral theory: the end does justify the means. While many moralists of the past denounced this principle as a Machiavellian term, Dewey defended it as a consequence of science. Science operates on the assumption that the end justifies the means. To put it in pragmatic terms, if it works, it is verified. This must also be accepted for moral theory.⁹¹

Morality also involves decision making. But morality is not one in its answer, but many: answers differing according to the "changing, moving, individualized goods and ends."⁹² Decision making should be related to intelligence and this is where the burden of morality has been placed. Responsibility in morality is now placed firmly within the area of human intelligence rather than in other sources like the church, or intuition, or others.⁹³

Morality, for Dewey, became consequence oriented. Past moral theory cannot decide the future ethical consequences. Place decision-making and consequence orientation together in ethics

and it seems natural to view ethics, not as something final, but an ever-enduring process. Growth of all values seems a part of Dewey's ethical outlook. The old virtues of honesty, justice, and temperance are not final ends to be sought but directions along the path to moral growth.

Like James, Dewey also opted for meliorism as the alternative position to pessimism and optimism. "Meliorism is the belief that specific conditions which exist at one moment, be they comparatively bad or comparatively good, in any event may be bettered."⁹⁴ Dewey rejected optimism because its attempt to explain the problem of evil was naive. Evil was often regarded as unreal, or an illusion, or some such rationalization. Pessimism was psychologically paralyzing and all future hopes of solving the world's ills were futile. Meliorism, on the other hand, affirmed that the world's evils could be identified and regarded as real. Moreover, they could also be eradicated by intelligent means.

Dewey's rejection of past standards of value raises questions about what should be in the future. Science is not equipped as a method to determine what should be. Dewey admitted this and wrote: "modern science made it clear that nature has no preference for good things over bad things; its mills turn out any kind of grist indifferently."⁹⁵ Science provides the means; values determine the ends. But even pre-determined goals have ambiguous consequences because many variables are not known in many analyses of decision making. For example, government urban housing projects had the desirable goal of adequate housing. Money, construction, planning and other factors went into these projects to provide housing, new environments, but the projects have often failed for

many known reasons and probably for unknown reasons also.

Dewey's view of values has a peculiar built-in feature. Even if man projected goals born of his imagination, one cannot regard these any more than the matrix of nature. Man's imagination is still only part of the total reality--nature. By definition, this leaves one with nothing other than a naturalistic value until the definition of nature is challenged and changed. His ethic is akin to the utilitarian ethic of Bentham and Mill. When one compares goods or values it is with a view of their efficiency, or one could say their utility to produce happiness. Dewey claimed: "The better is that which will do more in the way of security, liberation, and fecundity for other likings and values."⁹⁶

E. Criticisms and Comments

With reference to Dewey's view of reality the following can be asked: Is nature ever knowable as Dewey speaks of it? What is this nature that is changing, is precarious, and is everything? Grant that change is an important ingredient in nature, must one conclude that change describes everything? Could there not be a combination of the changing and the unchangeable? Some things do not seem to change--the past, mathematics, and ideals. Moreover, Dewey's rejection of metaphysics has led him to misuse and distort the positions of his opponents on the issues of metaphysics.

With reference to Dewey's view of man's nature, he seeks to advance beyond the materialists in his description of man's makeup, but he is not convincing in his explanation of man's constitutional makeup. The claim that mind is behavior wipes out the mind-body problem of metaphysics, but it also wipes out satisfactory explanations of what mind is and how it functions. The mind is more profound than mere activity and behavior. His emphasis on experience has practically the same application as the old idealist's emphasis of not being able to transcend mind.

Dewey's views on God and religion are defined so vaguely that everyone is religious. When everyone is religious, no one is religious. Not only has Dewey emptied the word God of all meaning and content, but he has reduced religion to a meaningless word.

Ironically, Dewey was a great advocate of freedoms of all kinds, but one could pursue his pragmatic value--the end justifies the means--to all kinds of evil deeds.

The following chart may help for review and comparisons.

Pragmatism

James Dewey

Reality 1. Pluralism, many things 1. Nature is all
2. Chaotic 2. Change is key to
3. Nature is in the understanding nature
making 3. Nature is in the making

Man 1. Man is a thinker, 1. Man is a continuum in
different from other nature
creatures 2. Association, Communi- 2. Tender-minded vs. cation, Participation
tough-minded men mark off man from
creatures
3. Mind is activity
4. Man shapes and is shaped by environment

God 1. God is important; 1. God is rejected.
radical empiricism 2. Religion can be of experience makes anything good one does
God justified 3. No sacred-secular
2. The idea of God distinction
works
3. Believing gives

optimism

Values 1. Man has a choice 1. Values related to
2. Freedom is important scientific method
3. Meliorism--the world 2. The end justifies the
can be made better means--verification
3. Meliorism--accepted
