PRAGMATISM

JOHN DEWEY

1859-1952



MEANING

- Derived from Greek word ‘pragma’ which means work, practice, action or activity.
- It is the philosophy of practical experience.
- It is a typical American Philosophy practical in approach.

EXPONENTS

- Protagoras, of ancient Greece.
- Heraclitus
- Gorgias
- Charles S. Piers (1839-1914)
- William James (1842-1910)
- John Dewey (1859-1952)
- W.H.Kilpatrick
- J.L.ChildRatners

BASIC PRINCIPLES

- Gives importance to action.
- Gives importance to experience.
- Believes in change.
- No belief in permanent values.
- Gives emphasis on experimentation.
- A practical philosophy.
- A humanistic philosophy.
- Pragmatists believe on present.
- Believe that growth and development takes place through interaction and environment.
- Deep faith in democracy.
- Emphasis on means not on ‘end’.

METAPHYSICS

- Rejects metaphysics as an area of philosophical enquiry.
- Reality is determined by individual's sense experience – Man can know nothing beyond his experience.
- Any conclusion we make about life after death is merely guess.
- Does not believe in anything spiritual or transcendental values.
- Reality is constantly changing.

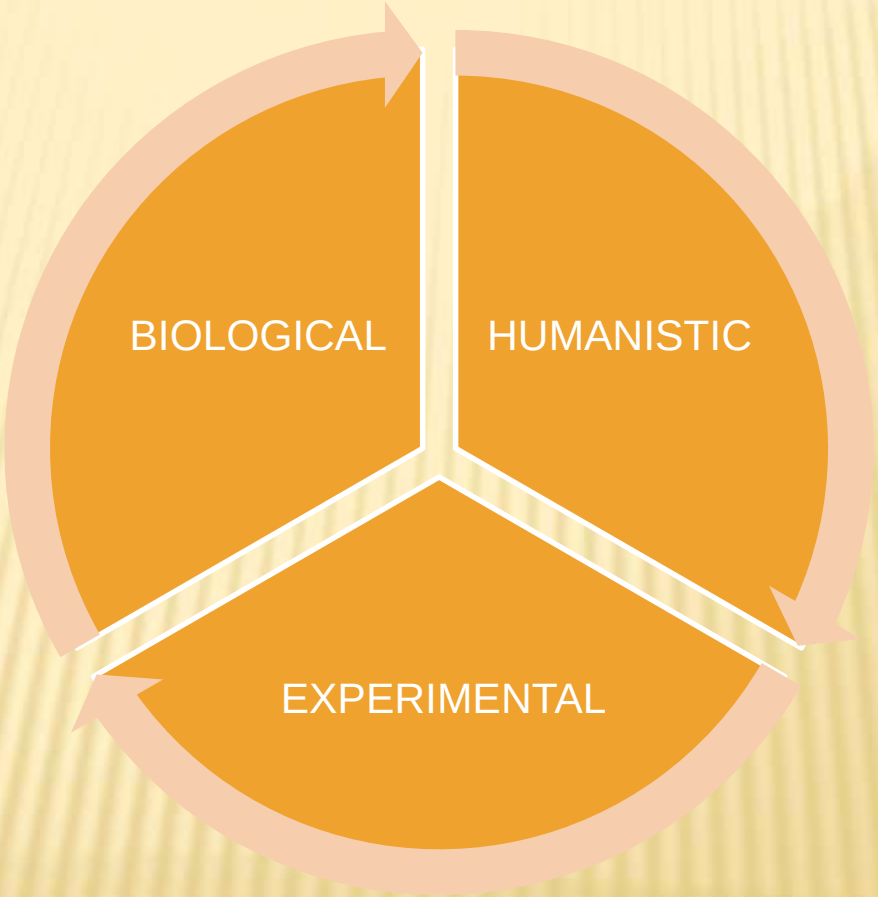
EPISTEMOLOGY

- Knowledge based on experience is true.
- Phenomenon are constantly changing to knowledge about truth must change accordingly.
- They emphasize on functional knowledge and understanding.

AXIOLOGY

- Does not believe on standard permanent and external values.
- Man, being a part of society, the consequences of his actions are either good or bad. If the consequences are worthwhile, then the value of the action is proven to be good.

FORMS OF PRAGMATISM



- **Biological Pragmatism:**

  According to this the capacity of a human being is valuable and important which enables him to adjust with the environment or makes him able to change his environment according to his needs and requirements.

- **Humanistic Pragmatism:**

  According to this ‘whatever fulfils one’s purpose, satisfies one’s desire, develops one’s life, and is true’. It maintains what satisfies the human nature is only true and real.

- **Experimental Pragmatism:**

  According to this can be experimentally verified is true. The principle is true which can be verified as true by experiment.

PRAGMATISM AND EDUCATIVE PROCESS

"Education is living through a continuous reconstruction of experiences. It is the development of all those capacities in the individual which will enable him to control his emotion and fulfil his possibilities."

- John Dewey

PRAGMATISM IS A PRACTICAL PHILOSOPHY

- It aims at developing efficiency of the pupil through activities and experience.
- Education should enable the child to solve his daily problems and lead a better life.
- It is a work philosophy.
- Activities lie at the centre of all educative process.

- John Dewey came to Chicago in 1894 with his wife Alice Dewey, to start a school in order to test his theories of learning.
- He believed that learning was active and children came to school to do things.
- That learning arithmetic would come from learning proportions in cooking or figuring out how long it would take to get from one place to another by rule.

AIMS OF EDUCATION

- Does not believe in setting predetermined fixed, ultimate and general aims of education.
- The only aim is more and more growth and creation of new values. One can create values through activities and experience.
- Aims of education given by John Dewey in his ‘Democracy and education’ :

--Natural development.

--Development of social efficiency.

PRAGMATISM AND CURRICULUM

- Pragmatic curriculum is framed according to the following principles:
- Principles of dynamism and flexibility.
- Principle of utility – subjects like language, literature, physical education, hygiene, history, geography, civics, sociology, psychology etc. Priority is given to social sciences to make the students good, cooperative and useful citizens. Natural sciences come next.
- Principle of activity and experience, agriculture, wood craft and industrial sciences.
- Principles of integration.

METHODS OF TEACHING

- Against out dated, lifeless and rigidly traditional methods of teaching.
- Methods to be formulated on the basis of following principles :

-Principles of purposive process of learning.

-Principle of learning by doing.

-Principle of integration.

- Project method by kilpatric.
- Experimental method.
- It also encourages:

  Discussion as a method-laboratory work.

  Personal reference in the library.

  Educational tows and excursions.

TEACHER

- As a friend, philosopher and guide.
- Not a dictator but only a leader of a group.
- Should have knowledge of student's interest and provide them social environment.
- Should believe in democratic values.
- Should have knowledge of social conditioning.
- Should not overshadow the personality of the pupil.

DISCIPLINE

- Freedom as an important element.
- Promotes self discipline.
- Condemn enforced discipline and advocate social discipline based on child's interest, activities and a sense of social responsibility.
- According to pragmatists,

  "Discipline is primarily social and it emerges through active participation in group and purposeful activity."

SCHOOL

- Any social environment which inspires children for experimentation constitutes a school for them.
- A social institution which develops in child a social sense and sense of duty towards society and nation.
- According to **John Dewey** :

  "School is the embryo of community."

  "School is a miniature society."

  "An instrument of transmission and transformation of the culture."

LIMITATIONS

- Little attention to spiritual values.
- Too much emphasis on material things.
- Insignificant place to cultural values.
- Ignores the knowledge accumulated through the ages.
- Project method alone can’t be used.
- Heavy demands on the teachers.
- Does not indicate fixed educational goals.

CONTRIBUTION OF PRAGMATISM TO EDUCATION

- Contributes to the development of a system which is vocation centred.
- Recognizes that an individual should be socially efficient and productive, the curriculum duly takes note of it.
- Another important principal given by pragmatism is the principle of integration.
- Project method.
- Helps to realise the value of today's life.
- Saves child from the burden of education which is too much centred on books.

CONCLUSION

Pragmatism is characteristic of current educational thought and it is representative of progressive trends in education. Progressive education lays emphasis on learning by doing, and involving the child actively in the learning process. Too much restrain will retard the natural growth of children. The child must be given educative freedom to express and develop himself. In the knowledge gaining process, observation and experimentation are the basic tools and knowledge is of the nature of a hypothesis.

The truth of something is, knowing whether a given generalization is obtained as a result of scientific experimentation or an observation, whether it has served purpose or not. If it works then it is true, otherwise it is not. Secondly because of the principle of change, which is one of the important tenets of pragmatism, truth is relative to space and time. That is if something is relevant today, it is possible that the same thing may become irrelevant in future.


Thank you