

# THE MONIST

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## PRAGMATISM.

PRAGMATISM is a new philosophical movement, but the word "pragmatic"<sup>1</sup> from which the term is derived has been in existence for more than two thousand years. In ancient Greece it meant "businesslike, practical, or ready for action"; it was applied to lawyers, statesmen and soldiers. In Rome the adjective *practicus* became a noun and denoted an attorney or legal adviser, and a man who gave points to orators; we might translate it by "practitioner of law." An imperial edict was called *pragmatica jussio*, and a decree in state affairs that should be regarded as inviolate, *pragmatica sanctio*. The best known pragmatic sanction of history is the pact which Emperor Charles VI made with the European powers to recognize the succession of his daughter Maria Theresa to the throne of all the possessions of the house of Hapsburg, in the absence of male heirs.

In philosophical language Kant used the word "pragmatic" in the sense of "prudent," meaning thereby a mode of action by which a purpose might be attained.

In the middle of the nineteenth century it was customary in Germany to speak of pragmatic historiography<sup>2</sup> by which term was meant a description of historic events in their causal connection, and under Bismarck's regime

<sup>1</sup> πραγματικός.

<sup>2</sup> *Pragmatische Geschichtschreibung*.

"pragmatic politics" denoted a policy which was bent on success without regard to principle.

#### THE PRAGMATIST'S CONCEPTION OF TRUTH.

Pragmatism in philosophy is of recent date and what it means is best stated in the words of Professor William James of Harvard, who says on page 46 of his recent work on *Pragmatism*:<sup>3</sup>

"The term is derived from the same Greek word *πράγμα*, meaning action, from which our words 'practice' and 'practical' come. It was first introduced into philosophy by Mr. Charles Peirce in 1878. In an article entitled 'How to Make Our Ideas Clear,' in the *Popular Science Monthly* for January of that year Mr. Peirce, after pointing out that our beliefs are really rules for action, said that, to develop a thought's meaning, we need only determine what conduct it is fitted to produce: that conduct is for us its sole significance. And the tangible fact at the root of all our thought-distinctions, however subtle, is that there is no one of them so fine as to consist in anything but a possible difference of practice. To attain perfect clearness in our thoughts of an object, then, we need only consider what conceivable effects of a practical kind the object may involve—what sensations we are to expect from it, and what reactions we must prepare. Our conception of these effects, whether immediate or remote, is then for us the whole of our conception of the object, so far as that conception has positive significance at all."

The statement of Mr. Charles S. Peirce, "that our beliefs are really rules for action," is an explanation, not a principle, and the explanation is made so that we may rightly understand the nature of belief. Beliefs are never held at random; they serve a purpose and the purpose of a belief is ultimately to insure a definite line of conduct. It is not probable that any one would take exception to this. Professor James, however, goes beyond the original meaning of the term by changing the statement of fact into a principle, and he applies it to his conception of truth.

<sup>3</sup> New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1907.

Let us see what he makes of it. We read on page 76 an italicized definition of truth:

"The true is the name of whatever proves itself to be good in the way of belief, and good, too, for definite, assignable reasons."

Professor James seems to outdo Bentham's utilitarianism. He continues:

"If there were no good for life in true ideas, or if the knowledge of them were positively disadvantageous and false ideas the only useful ones, then the current notion that truth is divine and precious, and its pursuit a duty, could never have grown up or become a dogma. In a world like that, our duty would be to shun truth, rather. But in this world, just as certain foods are not only agreeable to our taste, but good for our teeth, our stomach, and our tissues; so certain ideas are not only agreeable to think about, or agreeable as supporting other ideas that we are fond of, but they are also helpful in life's practical struggles."

We grant that *in the long run* truth will always be the best, but for that reason we deem it rash to identify "the true" with "whatever proves itself to be good in the way of belief." Certain foods are agreeable to our taste and good for our teeth, but obnoxious to our health; can we then identify what is wholesome with what is palatable? So there may be certain ideas "good for definite, assignable reasons," but they need not on that account be true.

Professor James's definition of truth is reiterated in various ways. On page 77 we are told:

"'What would be better for us to believe'! This sounds very like a definition of truth. It comes very near to saying 'what we ought to believe': and in that definition none of you would find any oddity.

"Ought we ever not to believe what it is better for us to believe? And can we then keep the notion of what is better for us, and what is true for us, permanently apart? Pragmatism says no, and I fully agree with her."

In the chapter entitled "The Action of Truth" we read on p. 201 another italicized definition of the same kind:

"True ideas are those that we can assimilate, validate, corroborate and verify. False ideas are those that we can not. That 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."

#### THE USEFUL LIE.

Science rests upon the supposition that a statement once actually proved to be true remains true, while utility is subject to change. Professor James says of truth (p. 204):

"You can say of it then either that 'it is useful because it is true' or that 'it is true because it is useful.' Both these phrases mean exactly the same thing, namely that here is an idea that gets fulfilled and can be verified."

What of a useful lie? It accomplishes its purpose, for it will bring help in a dilemma. The *Cynic's Calendar* thus substitutes the word "lie" in the familiar proverb, saying, "A lie in time saves nine." Perhaps the liar knows that a lie goes only a little way, but it may go far enough to suit his purpose. And what of that villainous maxim to force a belief upon people who are unwilling to accept it? Has not the Inquisition succeeded in keeping Spain under the influence of Rome until to-day? Was not the night of Bartholomew a success? The Huguenots have been swept out of France and are even to-day but a small minority. Was not the Reformation suppressed by foul means in Bohemia, when at the time of the Hussite movement it seemed to be lost to the Church? Must we be reconciled to a pragmatic policy of this kind because it works within certain limits? It certainly paid those who acted upon this pragmatic conception of truth. Would not Professor James himself demur at this? At least I hope he would be sufficiently inconsistent, not to accept the consequences of his definitions.

Even as matters are, judging from his own statements, he goes very far in his practical admissions, and he claims

that for the very plasticity of its view of truth, pragmatism is at a great advantage in the religious field. If one finds it profitable to believe in God, very well, to him the existence of God is a truth. If another finds a scientific satisfaction in the non-existence of God, to him atheism is true.

#### TRUTH COMPARED TO CASH VALUE.

Professor James speaks of his definitions of truth as "the truth's cash value in experiential terms" (p. 200); and years ago, in 1888, in an article entitled "Cognition, Knowledge and Truth," I used the very same expression:<sup>4</sup> "Abstract thoughts do not on the one hand represent absolute existences, nor on the other are they mere air castles; they are built upon the solid ground of reality. The facts of nature are specie and our abstract thoughts are bills which serve to economize the process of an exchange of thought. We must know the exact value in specie of every bill which is in our possession. And if the values of our abstract ideas are not ultimately founded upon the reality of positive facts, they are like bills or drafts for the payment of which there is no money in the bank."

This looks like an agreement between his views and my own, but there seems to be an important difference, for according to Professor James, ideas are not true or untrue, they become true. He says (p. 201):

"The truth of an idea is not a stagnant property inherent in it. Truth *happens* to an idea. It *becomes* true, is *made* true by events. Its verity is in fact an event, a process: the process namely of its verifying itself, its veri-fication. Its validity is the process of its valid-ation."

This will be a puzzle to the reader until he understands the statement in the light of another passage. Professor James means that an idea must be assimilated in order to

<sup>4</sup>First published in *The Open Court*, Vol. II, p. 1458, and reprinted in *Fundamental Problems*, p. 17-18.

become true to us. As a psychologist he studies the origin of a conviction and identifies conviction with truth. He says:

"A new opinion counts as 'true' just in proportion as it gratifies the individual's desire to assimilate the novel in his experience to his beliefs in stock. It must both lean on old truth and grasp new fact; and its success (as I said a moment ago) in doing this, is a matter for the individual's appreciation. When old truth grows, then, by new truth's addition, it is for subjective reasons. We are in the process and obey the reasons. That new idea is truest which performs most felicitously its function of satisfying our double urgency. It makes itself true, gets itself classed as true, by the way it works; grafting itself then upon the ancient body of truth, which thus grows much as a tree grows by the activity of a new layer of cambium."

Must we use truth to make truth true? "An opinion" that "counts as true" or a belief that is deemed to be true and is practically applied, need not be true. To Professor James truth is not the cash value of ideas, but their actual use when put into circulation. But truth remains truth even if not exploited. The cash value of a bank deposit remains the same even when we do not invest it in profitable enterprises, and it would certainly be a mistake to identify the nature of money with the interest it will bring if invested. What is commonly understood by "truth," Professor James calls "a static relation of 'correspondence'" and denounces it as "inert." In our opinion truth may indeed be inert, just as money may lie unutilized, but pragmatism shuts its eyes to the fact and denounces the old view as an inert conception of truth:

"It converts the absolutely empty notion of a static relation of 'correspondence' between our minds and reality, into that of a rich and active commerce (that any one may follow in detail and understand) between particular thoughts of ours, and the great universe of other experiences in which they play their parts and have their uses."

Our own conception of truth is neither "empty" nor "inert," for we believe that the truth is exceedingly practical, and (like many others before us) we have most vigorously insisted upon the maxim that truth must be sought and found, not to keep it in cold storage but that we may apply it in our own lives. The truth must be lived.

We have gone further; we have emphatically insisted on the principle that science, knowledge, truth, do not exist for their own sake but must prove helpful to us. We would not endorse the maxim "science for science's sake," as we said in *The Soul of Man*, p. 361: "The purpose of thinking is adaptation to surrounding conditions. Thought, you may object, sometimes does not end in action, but in the suppression of action. Inhibition, however, is an action also. Thought should always end in the regulation or adjustment of our behavior toward our surroundings. If it does not, it is not the right kind of thought. Thought for its own sake is a disease. If muscles contract neither for a special purpose nor for the general purpose of exercise, we call the contraction 'a cramp.' Thought for its own sake is a spasm of the brain."

While we regard a scientific inquiry into irrelevant truths as useless, and while we could gauge the importance of a truth by its practical significance, we deem it a very slipshod method of philosophizing to identify the utility of an idea with its truth. Yet this is actually the meaning of pragmatism according to Professor James (p. 75) who says:

"An idea is 'true' so long as to believe it is profitable to our lives."

If pragmatism means that our philosophy must be tested by its practical application, we are all pragmatists, and for myself I would claim to be a better pragmatist than Professor James.

## THE OBJECTIVE SIGNIFICANCE OF TRUTH.

Professor James is right when he means to say that truth is not an object, not a thing outside of us, and that we must distinguish between facts and truths. Facts are real, they are in themselves neither untrue nor true. Truth resides in ideas only, viz., in representations or conceptions of facts. In this sense, therefore, I also say that truth originates in us, exactly because truth is a relation, which, strange to say, is denied by Professor James. Truth originates and exists through an agreement between the idea and the reality represented.

I will quote what I said on the subject years ago in an article on "The Origin of Mind"<sup>5</sup>: "Truth exists in thinking subjects only. Truth affirms that certain subjective representations of the objective world can be relied upon, that they are deduced from facts and agree with facts. Based upon past experience, they can be used as guides for future experience. If there were no subjective beings, no feeling and comprehending minds, there would be no truth. Facts in themselves, whether they are or are not represented in the mind of a feeling and thinking subject, are real, yet representations alone, supposing they agree with facts, are true."

While truth can exist in thinking beings only, while it is subjective in its nature, we must bear in mind that it has an objective significance. The several truths are not arbitrary statements, but their character is predetermined. If we are confronted with a scientific problem, we seek a solution, and if the problem is genuine and legitimate, there will be but one solution of it that is right, all others are either false or perhaps at best approximations. The solution that is predetermined, at which all inquirers that do not go astray must arrive, is the ideal of truth,

<sup>5</sup> *The Monist*, I, 69; reprinted in *The Soul of Man*, p. 42.



and this ideal must be discovered. Nor do we hesitate to say that although truth is an idea and not a concrete thing, not a material existence, not a fact, the ideal of truth, viz., its predetermination of the solution to be obtained, is the most significant presence in the world.

The identification of truth with mere workable belief is positively injurious. In limiting truth to its pragmatic significance, Professor James obliterates the most significant feature of truth. Charles S. Peirce, in the article referred to, describes most clearly the origin of belief and how an idea becomes accepted as true in the proportion in which it gratifies the individual's desire to assimilate it; it is accepted for subjective reasons and it affects our conduct in life. But in the name of logic how can we call an idea true, simply when or because it is held to be true? We grant that it appears true to those who hold it; let us even go so far as to say that it *is* true *to them*; but it need not for that reason be as yet really true. With all due respect for psychology we do not see why logic must needs be sacrificed in order to leave the field solely to psychology. The test of truth is its agreement with experience, not with one isolated fact or set of facts, but with all the facts of experience, and the ultimate agreement of all truths is the ideal of science.<sup>6</sup>

#### TRUTH MADE OR FOUND?

In spite of Professor James we insist that truth is not made by man, but must be discovered, for as we said above, the nature of truth is predetermined. Truth must be found; it is rigid and not plastic, it is independent of our likes and dislikes, and there is a pre-established harmony of all truths. Professor James does not brook truth in the singular. His "account of truth is an account of truths

<sup>6</sup> This idea has been developed in an editorial article entitled "The Criterion of Truth," published in *The Monist*, Vol. I, No. 2, p. 229.

in the plural" (p. 218), and he denounces truth in any other sense except his limited use of it. He says (pp. 64-65):

"The trail of the human serpent is thus over everything. Truth independent; truth that we find merely; truth no longer malleable to human need; truth incorrigible, in a word; such truth exists indeed superabundantly—or is supposed to exist by rationalistically minded thinkers; but then it means only the dead heart of the living tree, and its being there means only that truth also has its paleontology, and its 'prescription,' and may grow stiff with years of veteran service and petrified in men's regard by sheer antiquity."

Do scientists, inventors, and generally all who recognize the objective significance of truth, follow an *ignis fatuus*? Is it true that the laws established by science "are only a man-made language" (p. 57)? Professor James says:

"As the sciences have developed farther, the notion has gained ground that most, perhaps all, of our laws are only approximations. The laws themselves, moreover, have grown so numerous that there is no counting them; and so many rival formulations are proposed in all the branches of science that investigators have become accustomed to the notion that no theory is absolutely a transcript of reality, but that any one of them may from some point of view be useful."

In common parlance the word truth contains not only the idea of the correctness of our subjective notion but also the objective condition itself. We speak for instance of the eternality of truth, meaning thereby not the man-made formulas but the laws of nature, theorems of mathematics etc., and I have on former occasions proposed to call the latter "verities," so as to enable us to distinguish between the subjective and objective elements of truth.

#### ONENESS AND REASON.

In the chapter "The One and the Many" we had hoped to find a refutation of monism, and a justification of plural-

ism, but Professor James remains on the surface in his discussion of this contrast. Nowhere does he discover the ultimate reason of the unity which is such a powerful demand in the human mind. He seems to think that it is a question of number, not (as it actually is) of unity or consistency, and suggests that the oneness of the universe would exclude variety and multiplicity. He says:

"The world is One just so far as its parts hang together by any definite connection. It is many just so far as any definite connection fails to obtain."

The human mind which naturally and necessarily views the world as one is viewed by him psychologically in its complex elements as a plurality. He says:

"Our minds thus grow in spots; and like grease-spots, the spots spread."

Apparently he has never become acquainted with a justification of the monistic tendency that pervades science. He overlooks the fact that reason is a unity, and that in its gradual evolution it has developed under the influence of the principle of oneness. An explanation of the nature of reason is no easy task and would take more space than we can give it in this article, but we will try to state it in as few words as possible.

The problem of reason is the problem of formal thought. We distinguish between the sense element in our experience and the relational or formal. The pure form of actual succession in motion is time. The pure form of thought is logic. The general rules which we derive from pure forms can be formulated in general statements which we find to be reliable norms not only for the subjective sphere of reasoning, but also in the objective domain of existence. The norms of the purely formal are the same throughout, which appears first of all in the fact that for all of us there is but one space, one time, one reason. Though meta-

geometricians have tampered with the conception of space, the philosophers have not dared as yet to touch time or to doubt the sameness, oneness and harmonious unity and the uniqueness of reason. We have been hoping from year to year that some one would invent a two-dimensional time, or some supra-, infra- or extra-temporal chronometry, or that a metalogician would publish a book on curved reason, or propound a pluralistic logic that would stand in contradiction to the Aristotelian logic in which the categories would not hold good, and where the law of contradiction would have no application.

Here is a task worthy the efforts of the pragmatist. Perhaps Mr. Charles S. Peirce can offer additional suggestions. What glorious vistas for the philosopher of the future! In the meantime we venture to think that so long as the unity of reason stands unchallenged, the pragmatist has no right to doubt the ultimate unity of the world.

#### THE MIND AND THE UNIVERSE.

The best justification of monism is the constitution of the human mind. Professor James himself recognizes our craving for consistency, for unity, for a harmony of all truths; and is not the human mind a product of the universe? Is not its unity as well as its need of tracing the unity of things, an echo of the unity (i. e., the harmoniousness, or consistency) in the constitution of the world?

Lotze said somewhere about the mind and its relation to reality, "May not previous reality itself be there (viz., in the mind)?" and the passage is quoted by Professor James with approval. I would indeed say that some feature of reality exists in the mind, and it is exactly that principle of oneness which appears in reason. It is founded upon our conception of form, and the conception of form arises from our becoming conscious of the uniformities which are inseparably connected with all reality, objective

as well as subjective. We reproduce the oneness, or let us rather say the universal sameness, of all form in our formulations of the norms of form and of the natural laws, and this is the condition of the oneness of reason, and of the principle of consistency so important in science and philosophy. This principle of oneness otherwise called "reason" is a feature of reality which has been developed in the mind and is a reflection only of the oneness of the universe. Of it every being is a part and into the image of it the intellect of rational beings has been molded.

Near the conclusion of his chapter on "Humanism," Professor James sums up the case as follows:

"The import of the difference between pragmatism and rationalism is now in sight throughout its whole extent. 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."

We do not mean to defend what Professor James attacks as rationalism, but will say that in our opinion reality is a constant flux and accordingly is never ready made or complete. It is always changing in a kaleidoscopic manner. What is really complete from all eternity is the constitution of the world, and it is this constitution which is reflected in man's reason. The constitution of the world is not an unintelligible enigma, but it is the systematic unit of norms of its formal relations, and human reason is the totality of the formal relations of thought reduced to logical rules.

Professor James uses the term "reality" first in the sense of the world-constitution, and then in the sense of the unstable condition of nature. If rationalism means that reality is ready made, it can only mean that the constitution of the world, the sum total of natural laws, is im-

mutable. If pragmatism means that reality is still in the making, he can reasonably refer only to nature with all its bodily existences the very condition of which is always instability; but in thus using his words with no definite meaning Professor James succeeds in pointing out the advantages of his philosophy and representing the views of the rationalists, the intellectualists, and the monists as utterly untenable.

Professor James recognizes uniformity of nature, but it is only a general and vague idea. He says:

"The general 'uniformity of nature' is presupposed by every lesser law. But nature may be only approximately uniform."

#### TIME AND SPACE.

We ought to let pragmatism swallow its own medicine and request it to become pragmatic, which means to measure values according to the practical use of things. Would it then not learn to appreciate theory, abstraction, the principle of consistency, logic and in general intellectualism and rationalism even in preference to mood, temperament, sentiment and the gratification of other purely subjective dispositions?

Has not the logical faculty developed solely for the pragmatic reason that the simian brute was thereby changed into rational man? Does not the whole apparatus of abstract thought serve very practical purposes, and is it really so desirable to live in facts only and ignore all these useful implements of theory, abstraction, and generalization? Does not even monism, or rather the systematic method of reducing the plurality of our sensations to unity, serve a very practical purpose? If we had to surrender all these methods simply because they are mental constructions and artifices invented for the simplification of knowledge, because they do not possess the same reality

as do our sensations, our sense experience, and our sentiments, would we not sink back to the level of childhood?

To characterize the situation we will quote the passage on time and space on pp. 177-178:

"That one Time which we all believe in and in which each event has its definite date, that one Space in which each thing has its position, these abstract notions unify the world incomparably; but in their finished shape as concepts how different they are from the loose unordered time-and-space experiences of natural men! Everything that happens to us brings its own duration and extension, and both are vaguely surrounded by a marginal 'more' that runs into the duration and extension of the next thing that comes. But we soon lose all our definite bearings; and not only do our children make no distinction between yesterday and the day before yesterday, the whole past being churned up together, but we adults still do so whenever the times are large. It is the same with spaces. On a map I distinctly see the relation of London, Constantinople, and Pekin to the place where I am; in reality I utterly fail to feel the facts which the map symbolizes. The directions and distances are vague, confused and mixed. Cosmic space and cosmic time, so far from being the intuitions that Kant said they were, are constructions as patently artificial as any that science can show. The great majority of the human race never use these notions, but live in plural times and spaces, interpenetrant and *durcheinander*."

This passage is characteristic.

Time is one and space is one; no one doubts it. Yet "our time and space experiences" are "vague, confused and mixed."

When using the map Professor James "can distinctly see the relation of London, Constantinople and Pekin to the place where he is"; but he "utterly fails to see the facts which the map symbolizes." Should we not conclude then that these artificial constructions are of paramount pragmatic importance? And that the intellectualists and rationalists have not labored in vain? My conclusion points that way, and I am convinced that Professor James has misinterpreted their philosophies as much as he fails

to understand Kant. Kant says that time and space are *Anschauungen*, which means that they are data of immediate experience as much as are the objects of sight. The translation "intuition" carries with it a mysterious and mystical meaning which is utterly absent in the German text and was absolutely foreign to Kant.<sup>7</sup>

Considering the fact that the illiterate and the uncultured can still be found in all the continents of the earth, we will not dispute the statement, that "the great majority of the human race. . . live in plural times and spaces, interpenetrant and *durcheinander*." Still we do not see what renders the notion of the oneness of time and space objectionable, and fail to appreciate the advantage of pluralism.

#### LOVE OF FACTS AND MYSTICISM.

In his dread of abstractions Professor James forgets or loses sight of the fact that man has acquired his humanity through his reason and that reason is the faculty of thinking in abstractions. We grant that abstractions that have no reference to facts are either empty and useless or even positively erroneous, but because there are wrong abstractions we can not overlook the paramount importance of abstract thought. Professor James says:

"Pragmatism is uncomfortable away from facts. Rationalism is comfortable only in the presence of abstractions. This pragmatist talk about truths in the plural, about their utility and satisfactoriness, about the success with which they 'work,' etc., suggests to the typical intellectualist mind a sort of coarse lame second-rate makeshift article of truth."

The pragmatist seems to adopt the principle of positivism in that he clings to facts. Sometimes it will be difficult to distinguish between facts and our interpretation of facts, but pragmatism offers no objective criterion for a distinction between the two. We read on p. 68:

<sup>7</sup> Compare the author's article "What Does *Anschauung* Mean?" in *The Monist*, II, 527, and in *Kant and Spencer*, p. 33 ff.



"The pragmatist clings to facts and concreteness, observes truth at its work in particular cases, and generalizes. Truth, for him, becomes a class-name for all sorts of definite working-values in experience."

This might be construed as discarding everything that is not particular and concrete sense-experience; but it would be wrong to think that Professor James does not cherish a belief in some reality above the facts of sense. Indeed, his great interest in mystical phenomena proves it, and he uses a very pretty allegory to justify his belief in some superreal world which interacts with the world of sense in which we live, and yet constitutes a sphere of its own and is the product of theory. The recognition of the reality of this abstract realm is so ingenuous and it stands in such a contrast, I might almost say in contradiction, to so many of Professor James's utterances that we will quote the passage in full in order to show how Professor James justifies his eccentric excursions into the realm of the abstruse. He says (pp. 127-128):

"I have sometimes thought of the phenomenon called 'total reflection' in Optics as a good symbol of the relation between abstract ideas and concrete realities, as pragmatism conceives it. Hold a tumbler of water a little above your eyes and look up through the water at its surface—or better still look similarly through the flat wall of an aquarium. You will then see an extraordinarily brilliant reflected image say of a candle-flame, or any other clear object, situated on the opposite side of the vessel. No ray, under these circumstances gets beyond the water's surface: every ray is totally reflected back into the depths again. Now let the water represent the world of sensible facts, and let the air above it represent the world of abstract ideas. Both worlds are real, of course, and interact; but they interact only at their boundary, and the *locus* of everything that lives, and happens to us, so far as full experience goes, is the water. We are like fishes swimming in the sea of sense, bounded above by the superior element, but unable to breathe it pure or penetrate it. We get our oxygen from it, however, we touch it incessantly, now in this part, now in that, and every time we touch

it, we turn back into the water with our course re-determined and re-energized. The abstract ideas of which the air consists are indispensable for life, but irrespirable by themselves, as it were, and only active in their re-directing function. All similes are halting, but this one rather takes my fancy. It shows how something, not sufficient for life in itself, may nevertheless be an effective determinant of life elsewhere."

Dreams are realities to the visionary, and the mystic does not hesitate to look upon the most abstruse theories of his imagination as facts. If we want to know the truth, we must learn to distinguish between the objective fact and our interpretation of it.

#### MISUNDERSTOOD.

Professor James emphasizes one aspect of the truth only and loses sight of another that is of greater importance. He himself feels that he speaks in paradoxes, and so he says of his definition of truth:

"But is it not a strange misuse of the word 'truth,' you will say, to call ideas also 'true' for this reason?"

When Professor James identifies that which is profitable, satisfactory, better to believe, etc., with truth, he says to his reader in anticipation of his misgivings:

"Probably you also agree, so far as the abstract statement goes, but with a suspicion that if we practically did believe everything that made for good in our own personal lives, we should be found indulging all kinds of fancies about this world's affairs, and all kinds of sentimental superstitions about a world hereafter. Your suspicion here is undoubtedly well founded."

Professor James grants that our suspicion is "well-founded, but he does not trouble to remove the suspicion. He simply adds:

"It is evident that something happens when you pass from the abstract to the concrete that complicates the situation."

Man possesses a very inconvenient hankering for consistency, and when he adopts an idea as true because he finds that it is expedient to believe it, it sometimes happens that it clashes with other beliefs of vital benefit. Professor James refers to this problem, and if he had solved it he would have discovered that the old-fashioned ideal of the oneness of truth contains a lesson, but he fears to lose himself in the absolute, and he loves pluralism too much to make the attempt. On page 77 Professor James says:

"I said just now that what is better for us to believe is true unless the belief incidentally clashes with some other vital benefit. Now in real life what vital benefits is any particular belief of ours most liable to clash with? What indeed except the vital benefits yielded by other beliefs when these prove incompatible with the first ones? In other words, the greatest enemy of any one of our truths may be the rest of our truths. Truths have once for all this desperate instinct of self-preservation and of desire to extinguish whatever contradicts them. My belief in the Absolute, based on the good it does me, must run the gauntlet of all my other beliefs."

And how does Professor James escape the difficulty? His answer is made in a whisper:

"Let me speak now confidentially, as it were, and merely in my own private person,—it clashes with other truths of mine whose benefits I hate to give up on its account. It happens to be associated with a kind of logic of which I am the enemy, I find that it entangles me in metaphysical paradoxes that are unacceptable, etc., etc. But as I have enough trouble in life already without adding the trouble of carrying these intellectual inconsistencies, I personally just give up the Absolute. I just take my moral holidays; or else as a professional philosopher, I try to justify them by some other principle."

This looks very much like a surrender of truth in order to let a belief that at the time is profitable, count as a truth. And yet woe to any one who would point this out to Professor James! He says on page 233:

"These pragmatists destroy all objective standards, critics say,

and put foolishness and wisdom on one level. A favorite formula for describing Mr. Schiller's doctrines and mine is that we are persons who think that by saying whatever you find it pleasant to say and calling it truth you fulfil every pragmatistic requirement. I leave it to you to judge whether this be not an impudent slander."

Professor James is very good-natured and can smile at criticism, but here he loses his temper. He adds:

"The unwillingness of some of our critics to read any but the silliest of possible meanings into our statements is as discreditable to their imaginations as anything I know in recent philosophic history."

Is it sheer modesty when Professor James speaks of his discourse as so far having been "crude in an unpardonable, nay, in an almost incredible degree"? (p. 33).

He seems to be in the habit of sometimes saying what he does not mean and then blames the world for misunderstanding him. Here is his own statement:

"I once wrote an essay on our right to believe, which I unluckily called the Will to Believe. All the critics, neglecting the essay, pounced upon the title. Psychologically it was impossible, morally it was iniquitous."

Now it seems to me that the most important sentence written in an essay is its title. It is in the light of the title that the reader reads the whole essay, and if the title reads "The Will to Believe" it is likely that the author really means that which he puts in the most conspicuous place. Moreover I would add that although the essay may be wrongly entitled "The Will to Believe," it actually reflects the author's meaning. He has certainly no right to blame the readers for misunderstanding him. Nevertheless Professor James loses his temper and blames his critics as "iniquitous."

Some of his critics, however, may not have missed his meaning when they attributed to him the proposition that it is the right of everybody to believe as he wills, and that the will (i. e., the idiosyncrasies) of every man is the main

factor in the makeup of his belief and that arguments are of no avail. In the present volume, on page 296, Professor James says:

"In the end it is our faith and not our logic that decides such questions, and I deny the right of any pretended logic to veto my own faith."

Professor James is possessed of an exuberance of temperament, and in his philosophy temperament rules supreme. He claims for his faith the right to be impervious to logic; and he denies the right of any pretended logic to veto his own faith. Of course that closes the case and all argument must cease.

In the meantime I must confess that my temperament differs, for my convictions have been profoundly influenced by logical argument, and there are many other people in the same plight as I am. In fact I know that whole nations have changed their faith under the influence of purely intellectual considerations; yea, I have some slight suspicion that Professor James himself can not entirely withdraw himself from the influence of logic, and it may be a mistake to take his utterances too seriously.

It may be that even the present book on pragmatism contains statements which, by some ill luck, Professor James did not mean, and that when we criticize him we stand in the same condemnation as the critics of his essay on "The Right to Believe."

We do not wish to misrepresent Professor James and have therefore characterized his pragmatism in his own words. We grant that he believes in truth, but his several definitions and expositions of his conception of truth are either wrong or misleading, and though he may not actually deny the objective standard of truth, he elevates mere subjective belief to the dignity of the name truth which, if this were justifiable, would practically render the latter irrelevant. Indeed he glories in this looseness of

truth which ignores the ideal of both the objectivity and the oneness of truth for the sake of its subjective conceptions, resulting in Protean truths in the plural.

#### THE PERSONAL EQUATION.

It is very difficult to obtain objective statements of fact because a subjective element enters into every observation and consequently also into every presentation of a fact. It is the ambition of the scientist to reduce the personal element and, whenever possible, to eliminate it.

Professor James says:

"Of whatever temperament a professional philosopher is, he tries, when philosophizing, to sink the fact of his temperament. Temperament is no conventionally recognized reason, so he urges impersonal reasons only for his conclusions. Yet his temperament really gives him a stronger bias than any of his more strictly objective premises. It loads the evidence for him one way or the other, making for a more sentimental or a more hard-hearted view of the universe, just as this fact or that principle would. He trusts his temperament. Wanting a universe that suits it, he believes in any representation of the universe that does suit it."

This passage contains the key to the philosophical doctrine of Professor James. He possesses a very temperamental personality, and he judges others from himself. Scientific inquiry indeed demands that the scientist should sink his own personality before the cause of truth. His temperament has nothing to do with the facts he investigates; if permitted to interfere with his investigation it can only vitiate his arguments and lack of self-control is pathological. In Professor James, thought and sentiment are so intricately interwoven that his preferences enter into his conclusions; his temperament is always one of his premises, and to pass it by in silence seems to him hypocritical. He says:

"There arises thus a certain insincerity in our philosophic discussions: the potentest of all our premises is never mentioned."

We do not deny that one's personal attitude is an important factor in life, nor would we object to an author who with ability and grace descants on any subject in his peculiar characteristic mood, but he must not claim that his effusions are philosophy. Let him announce his lectures as rhapsodies and publish his books under the name of poetry; we will gladly welcome him as the creator of a new department in literature. But it is not philosophy, and least of all, what is so strongly needed in our day, a philosophy of science, a philosophy that is worth while studying and which is a desideratum of scientists.

Professor James is an empiricist. He "turns his back resolutely and once for all upon a lot of inveterate habits dear to professional philosophers. He turns away from abstractions. . . . from fixed principles, closed systems. . . . He turns towards concreteness and adequacy, towards facts, towards action and towards power." He adds p. 51:

"That means the empiricist temper regnant and the rationalist temper sincerely given up."

But the facts of Professor James are not facts in the usual sense of the word. They are psychical states, attitudes, and interpretations of facts. An hallucination is most assuredly a fact too. The sensation experienced by a man who sees a ghost is a fact; but his experience may be the expression of a wrong interpretation. Another man under the same conditions may see a shirt on a clothes line; that too is a fact and an interpretation. Both facts of interpretation appear contradictory, and men of a rationalist temper will not rest satisfied until the contradiction is removed. The pragmatism of Professor James is pluralistic, and different interpretations remain peacefully side by side. If we can not eliminate the personal equation and must accept moods as facts, all interpretations are equally true. This renders the conception of truth elusive, or as Professor James calls it, "plastic."

## THE PLASTICITY OF TRUTH.

The plasticity of truth makes pragmatism elastic and this playing fast and loose with truth is deemed a great advantage. It makes "pragmatism a mediator and reconciler," for "she 'unstiffens' our theories" (p. 79). Thus it is possible that pragmatism may be acceptable to all,—the materialist and the spiritualist, the infidel and the unbeliever, the skeptic, the mystic, the visionary, and what not. We are told:

"It has no dogmas, and no doctrines save its methods. As the young Italian pragmatist Papini has well said, it lies in the midst of our theories, like a corridor in a hotel. Innumerable chambers open out of it. In one you may find a man writing an atheistic volume; in the next some one on his knees praying for faith and strength; in a third a chemist investigating a body's properties. In a fourth a system of idealistic metaphysics is being excogitated; in a fifth the impossibility of metaphysics is being shown. But they all own the corridor, and all must pass through it if they want a practicable way of getting into or out of their respective rooms."

The excuse for ignoring the ideal of truth, so important in our conception of the world, is stated by Professor James as follows:

"The 'absolutely' true, meaning what no farther experience will ever alter, is that ideal vanishing-point towards which we imagine that all our temporary truths will some day converge. It runs on all fours with the perfectly wise man, and with the absolutely complete experience; and, if these ideals are ever realized, they will all be realized together. Meanwhile we have to live to-day by what truth we can get to-day, and be ready to-morrow to call it falsehood."

I would not characterize the ideal of truth by which I understand that solution of a problem which is predetermined, as "the 'absolutely' true." There is nothing "absolute" in it, and by using the word "absolute" (albeit not in its proper meaning, but in a loose way in the sense of



"positive"), we introduce an idea which spreads vagueness. It makes a final truth appear as an "ideal vanishing point," i. e., an unrealizable quantity at an infinite distance. I grant Professor James that "we must live to-day by what truth we can get to-day," but I deny that we must "be ready to call it falsehood to-morrow." This view is based upon an utter misapprehension of the nature of truth.

I beg leave to belong to the old-fashioned people who still believe that all truths must agree and that the truth of yesterday will be the truth of to-morrow. Here lies the rock of ages which is the basis of science. If this rock should prove an illusion, then indeed pluralism would be established for good, and pluralism would look very much like nihilism. But let us hear what Professor James has to say on the variability of truth:

"Ptolemaic astronomy, Euclidean space, Aristotelian logic, scholastic metaphysics, were expedient for centuries, but human experience has boiled over those limits, and we now call these things only relatively true, or true within those borders of experience. 'Absolutely' they are false; for we know that those limits were casual, and might have been transcended by past theorists just as they are by present thinkers."

We will take up each single statement by itself.

#### PTOLEMY AND COPERNICUS.

Ptolemaic astronomy was not true at the time of Ptolemy; it never was true, nor ever will be true. What from our standpoint Professor James can reasonably mean is this, that Ptolemaic astronomy satisfied certain demands of scientific inquiry in the time when Alexandria was flourishing. It summarizes certain facts in a better way than was done in the views that were held by Ptolemy's predecessors except Endoxus who seems to have been nearer the truth than Ptolemy. Only in so far as it systematized some observations, can we say that the Ptolemaic system was

correctly formulated; but it was not true even at the time, because it did not satisfy all observations, and the astronomy of that age had to slur over those observations which clashed with the theory. But Ptolemy and his followers "had enough trouble in life already without adding the trouble of carrying these intellectual inconsistencies." Their calculations were sufficiently complicated and so they took a holiday and thought that their system worked well enough for their own needs. In other words they turned pragmatists and ceased to trouble about consistency.

We might enter here upon a discussion of the right to choose a point of reference. We have a right to use the earth as a point of reference as did the Ptolemaic astronomers; and we have a right to use the sun as our point of reference as did Copernicus. The former is as much justified as the latter, and the advantage of the latter consists solely in rendering the calculation more simple. That is true enough according to assumption, but to use this as an argument for the purpose of making Ptolemaic astronomy appear to be as true as the Copernican system would be mere quibbling. This inability to take the right point of reference which would render the calculation of the planetary movements simple, is exactly what constituted the fault of Ptolemaic astronomers, and veiled from them the fact that the earth is a planet among the other planets.

We do not deny that the progress of science is by approximation, and the Ptolemaic system is indeed an approximation of the attempt to calculate and predict certain events in the starry heavens; but one of its premises was wrong, and it prevented its supporters from solving the astronomical problem satisfactorily. This wrong premise which was their idea of the fixed position of the earth in the center of the solar system, was eliminated by Copernicus who recognized that the earth had to be classed together with the planets, and the problem was finally solved

by Kepler through the formulation of the laws which bear his name.

Kepler has definitely solved the problem. He has not solved all the problems of astronomy, but I would like to see the astronomer who would be ready to call the three laws of Kepler falsehoods to-morrow.

The same may be said of the problem of the acceleration of gravity. Gravity itself taken as a fact, the Newtonian formula is final. It satisfies all instances of gravitating bodies. The question of fact "why does gravity act at all?" remains, but that being granted as a matter of fact, the formula is valid.

#### EUCLID AND ARISTOTLE.

The last century has witnessed a remarkable progress in mathematics and logic in the invention of non-Euclidean geometries and the suggestion of new truths in logic, and this is used to advantage by Professor James to prove the plasticity of truth. He says:

"How plastic even the oldest truths nevertheless really are has been vividly shown in our day by the transformation of logical and mathematical ideas, a transformation which seems even to be invading physics."

Does Professor James mean to say that Euclidean geometry and Aristotelian logic have ceased to be true? Scarcely. Euclid's geometry holds good to-day as well as in Euclid's time, and the same is true of Aristotle's logic. Professor James himself knows it, for he adds:

"The ancient formulas are reinterpreted as special expressions of much wider principles, principles that our ancestors never got a glimpse of in their present shape and formulation."

A wider interpretation of an old truth does not make the old truth false, but widens and deepens our comprehension of it. That is a big difference, and the same is

true of all truths. A truth once positively proved to be a truth is and will remain a truth forever.

But what of the discovery of new facts such as the Röntgen rays, and radium? Do they not upset science and render the most basic truth antiquated? We can hear this statement often enough, but we have not yet seen the day on which it was verified. The discovery of new facts may upset pet theories of ours, but it will never upset old truths, not even those which have become paleontological with age. If formulas describe certain features of facts without any admixture of theory, they will remain true forever. In case we should learn something about the ultimate constitution of matter which would reveal to us the secret of gravity, we would not have to discard the Newtonian formula of the mutual attraction of masses as a falsehood, but we would see its truth in a clearer light. In other words, we would not replace one truth that has become antiquated by another truth that is more up to date and happens to agree with the present fashion of our intellectual atmosphere, but we would add to the old truth a new truth, and the unity of all the truths we know would thereby only become the more apparent.

#### MATERIALISM AND SPIRITUALISM.

Professor James knows how to put his paints on thick, and so his pictures exhibit strong contrasts. He generally omits the softer tones between the opposites and so fails to find that the truth lies in the middle. Take for instance his ingenious description of materialism (on pp. 92-93) which is contrasted to theism and spiritualism.

“Philosophical materialism is not necessarily knit up with belief in ‘matter,’ as a metaphysical principle. One may deny matter in that sense, as strongly as Berkeley did, one may be phenomenalist like Huxley, and yet one may still be a materialist in the wider sense, of explaining higher phenomena by lower ones, and leaving

the destinies of the world at the mercy of its blinder parts and forces. It is in this wider sense of the word that materialism is opposed to spiritualism or theism. The laws of physical nature are what run things, materialism says.

"The highest productions of human genius might be ciphered by one who had complete acquaintance with the facts, out of their physiological conditions, regardless whether nature be there only for our minds, as idealists contend, or not. Our minds in any case would have to record the kind of nature it is, and write it down as operating through blind laws of physics. This is the complexion of present-day materialism, which may better be called naturalism. Over against it stands 'theism,' or what in a wide sense may be termed 'spiritualism.' Spiritualism says that mind not only witnesses and records things, but also runs and operates them: the world being thus guided, not by its lower, but by its higher element."

According to Professor James every naturalist would have to be classed with the materialists, and according to his division, which with all its faults and in spite of its being based upon a wrong generalization has the advantage of a drastic vividness, I would myself count as a materialist. And yet I protest against calling the laws of nature blind, and while I would attempt to explain higher phenomena from lower ones I would not have the higher degraded into the lower. Man does not become a brute if his pedigree can be traced back to brute animals and still further back to moners or amœbas. For all that, man's soul has been molded not by matter but by the formative factors of the world in which all things exist and move and have their being.

The romantic temperament of Professor James appears not only in his spiritualism but also in his theology, for even here pluralism enters. He says:

"Monotheism itself, so far as it was religious and not a scheme of classroom instruction for the metaphysicians, has always viewed God as but one helper, *primus inter pares*, in the midst of all the shapers of the great world's fate."

## RELIGIOUS PROBLEMS.

Pragmatism applied to religion has great advantages. Says Professor James:

"It follows that in the religious field she [pragmatism] is at a great advantage both over positivistic empiricism, with its anti-theological bias, and over religious rationalism, with its exclusive interest in the remote, the noble, the simple, and the abstract in the way of conception.

"In short, she widens the field of search for God. Rationalism sticks to logic and the empyrean. Empiricism sticks to the external senses. Pragmatism is willing to take anything, to follow either logic or the senses and to count the humblest and most personal experiences. She will count mystical experiences if they have practical consequences. She will take a God who lives in the very dirt of private fact—if that should seem a likely place to find him.

"Her only test of probable truth is what works best in the way of leading us, what fits every part of life best and combines with the collectivity of experience's demands, nothing being omitted. If theological ideas should do this, if the notion of God, in particular, should prove to do it, how could pragmatism possibly deny God's existence? She could see no meaning in treating as 'not true' a notion that was pragmatically so successful. What other kind of truth could there be, for her, than all this agreement with concrete reality?"

The issue between atheism and theism, and materialism and spiritualism, before the tribunal of pragmatism becomes "little more than a conflict between esthetic preferences" (page 94). Professor James says:

"What practical difference can it make now that the world should be run by matter or by spirit?... .

"The pragmatist must consequently say that the two theories, in spite of their different-sounding names, mean exactly the same thing.... .

"And how, experience being what is once for all, would God's presence in it make it any more living or richer? Candidly, it is impossible to give any answer to this question.... .

"Thus if no future detail of experience or conduct is to be de-

duced from our hypothesis, the debate between materialism and theism becomes quite idle and insignificant. Matter and God in that event mean exactly the same thing—the power, namely, neither more nor less, that could make just this completed world—and the wise man is he who in such a case would turn his back on such a supererogatory discussion.”

It would seem quite indifferent then whether God or law, or matter, or energy, or whatever other principle ruled the world. Professor James says in this connection:

“Doing practically all that a God can do, it is equivalent to God, its function is a God’s function, and in a world in which a God would be superfluous; from such a world a God could never lawfully be missed.”

Pragmatism recognizing the plurality of truths need not be consistent, and so Professor James sees nevertheless a difference between materialism and spiritualism, and he gives his preference to the latter, not because he can prove that it is truer but because spiritualism is a doctrine of promise, of hope, of consolation, and the same is true of some other metaphysical problems, such as free will, design in nature etc.

Professor James says:

“Materialism means simply the denial that the moral order is eternal, and the cutting off of ultimate hopes; spiritualism means the affirmation of an eternal moral order and the letting loose of hope. . . .

“Spiritualistic faith in all its forms deals with a world of promise, while materialism’s sun sets in a sea of disappointment. . . .

“Free-will thus has no meaning unless it be a doctrine of relief. . . .

“Other than this practical significance, the words God, free-will, design, etc., have none.”

Professor James appears to have an aversion to arguments. They smack of intellectualism which is an abomination in his eyes. His preference is based upon sentimental grounds.

It stands to reason that those who have worked out doctrines and theories and dogmas, who have endeavored to have them promulgated, adopted and believed in, have done so because they were conscious of the practical significance of their propositions, but Professor James imputes to them the idea that they have lost sight of facts, and that their ultimate questions are "something august and exalted above facts." His pragmatism only gives meaning to theories which otherwise would have been senseless. He says:

"See then how all these ultimate questions turn, as it were, upon their hinges; and from looking backwards upon principles, upon an *erkenntnisstheoretisches Ich*, a God, a *Kausalitätsprinzip*, a Design, a Free-will, taken in themselves, as something august and exalted above facts,—see, I say, how pragmatism shifts the emphasis and looks forward into facts themselves."

We cherish the opinion that every belief has been framed with a practical intent (or in adaptation to Professor James we may say, for a "pragmatic" purpose) and in order to find out the significance of a theory we ought to see how it works. The intellectual struggle concerning God, the soul, and immortality have not been mere quibbles in our opinion, and we trust that the problems of philosophy can be correctly formulated and solved.

I believe that we can define God in terms of experience and say with exactness what is true of the idea of God and what is not true. I believe myself that the theist and the atheist may come to terms, but two contradictory ideas can not for that reason both be true. An idea (such as the God idea) may be approximately true. It may contain an important truth dressed up in an allegorical garb. The atheist is right when he negates the allegorical formulation of it, he is wrong when he negates the spirit of the dogma; and *vice versa*, the theist is wrong when he insists on the allegory as being literally true, but he is right when he



recognizes the essential part of it that is backed up by facts, and insists upon it.<sup>8</sup>

MR. CHARLES S. PEIRCE'S TYCHISM.

Our readers may have noticed that since "pragmatism" has become the watchword of a new and popular movement with which Mr. Peirce, the inventor of the term, does not appear to be in full accord, he has introduced the word "pragmaticism" as if to point out the difference between his own philosophy and that of Professor James.

I regret that I shall not be able to enter here into a discussion of the views of Mr. Charles S. Peirce whose conception of the instability of natural laws is one of the most original and most ingenious theories ever brought forth. I will only briefly refer our readers to the vigorous controversy with him which has appeared in *The Monist*,<sup>9</sup> where he defends the doctrine of tychism versus necessitarianism, while I take the opposite position. Mr. Peirce believes that natural laws are the product of evolution. In the beginning there was Chance (*Tyche*). Chance is not subject to law, it is free as we know spirit to be. Chance acts arbitrarily but gradually it took on habits and habits became more and more solidified and hardened into laws. Hence the order of the universe is not the cause of evolution but its product.

It is not impossible that Professor James follows Mr. Peirce, for there is a passage which seems to justify this assumption. Professor James says on p. 249:

"Between categories fulminated before nature began, and categories gradually forming themselves in nature's presence, the whole chasm between rationalism and empiricism yawns."

In another passage (p. 158-9) we read:

<sup>8</sup> For details see my discussions on the God problem, especially in *The Monist*, Vol. IX, p. 106. A book on the subject is in preparation.

<sup>9</sup> Compare *The Monist*, Vol. II, pp. 321 ff., 442 ff.; and III, pp. 526 ff. and 571 ff.

"With the whole of past eternity open for our conjectures to range in, it may be lawful to wonder whether the various kinds of union now realized in the universe that we inhabit may not possibly have been successively evolved after the fashion in which we now see human systems evolving in consequence of human needs. If such an hypothesis were legitimate, total oneness would appear at the end of things rather than at their origin. In other words the notion of the 'Absolute' would have to be replaced by that of the 'Ultimate.'"

The language of Professor James is poetic, not exact. What he means is not that the rationalist (i. e., a man like Kant) believed that the categories fulminated before nature began, but that the categories, or better the entire cosmic order, is an eternal condition uncreated and indestructible, while the empiricist (or the pragmatist) believes that the categories are a product of evolution.

We may incidentally call our readers' attentions to the first chapter in Prof. Benjamin Peirce's *Analytic Mechanism*, where the father of the founder of pragmatism utters a few brief suggestions which seem to have taken deep root in the soul of his son. Benjamin Peirce regarded "matter as inert" and thought that "force may be regarded as having a spiritual origin."

#### THE ENEMIES OF PRAGMATISM.

Pragmatism is a philosophy manufactured to suit all; it is pluralistic and tolerates any amount of diversity of opinion; it ought to have no enemies, for every one can be, and according to Professor James ought to be, a pragmatist; but his book on pragmatism is in parts extremely pugnacious, his enemies being the monist, the rationalist, the intellectualist, and their ilk. For reasons unknown to me Professor James complains most of the monists. He says:

"The temper of monists has been so vehement, as almost at times to be convulsive."

I am sure I am innocent. The present article is my first attack on pragmatism.

It is strange that the pragmatist welcomes every one except men of theory, and to them he imputes all kinds of erroneous notions.

The reader will ask why the pragmatist who welcomes every vagary of the human mind and whose tolerance is unbounded, should decry in pretty harsh terms monism, intellectualism and rationalism. Pragmatism, according to Professor James, is the philosophy of temperament, of mood, of personal attitude, and so he naturally resents whatever would put a check upon the liberty of his preferences. He imputes to the intellectualist the slogan:

"Down with psychology, up with logic, in all this question!"

Professor James himself wants the vagueness of psychological moods recognized as philosophy, and he scorns logic. He has no patience with a thinker who demands consistency or endeavors to systematize the plurality of facts. Scientific exactness appears to the pragmatist as mere pedantry. Professor James says:

"The actual universe is a thing wide open, but rationalism makes systems, and systems must be closed."

Professor James's philosophy can dispense with system. He says:

"We measure the total character of the universe as we feel it, against the flavor of the philosophy proffered us, and one word is enough.

"*'Statt der lebendigen Natur.'* we say, *'da Gott die Menschen schuf hinein,'*—that nebulous concoction, that wooden, that straight-laced thing, that crabbed artificiality, that musty schoolroom product, that sick man's dream! Away with it. Away with all of them! Impossible! Impossible!"

The pragmatist says, "*Gefühl ist Alles*—we need neither intellect, nor reason, nor a systematization of facts, nor theories, nor abstractions. We live in facts."

Professor James censures some views with regard to the importance of the intellect and the indispensableness of reason, which are commonly held by believers in monism, but these propositions are so strangely adulterated with notions which are scarcely held by any one, that we wonder who these sorry enemies of Professor James may be, and we are inclined to regard them as men of straw who do not possess a concrete existence.

We are told that according to the intellectualist "truth means essentially an inert static relation" (p. 200), and in another passage that, "for the rationalist it remains a pure abstraction to the bare name of which we must defer" (p. 68).

It is difficult to find out who is meant by intellectualists and rationalists, for we have yet to meet the man to whom truth remains "a pure abstraction" or who would insist that truth should be "inert." Clifford has already pointed out with great clearness that every scientific truth is a norm of conduct and can be expressed as such. Further it is a truism that scientists formulate truths in abstract terms, but they always bear in mind that their formulas are generalizations from actual facts, and that they describe certain features of reality. The truth or untruth of these formulas depends upon the correspondence of the ideas with the facts in question. Truth accordingly does not reside in the abstraction alone, but depends upon the relation of the abstraction to facts. Cancel the facts, and where is truth?

Theories are attempts at explaining facts by the assumption of other facts. If these other facts are verified, the theory is regarded true and may then be justly called a law of nature. A law of nature is always (or at least should be) a systematic description of a certain group of facts.

We often hear abstractions and generalizations denounced as empty, but that is merely the prattle of those

who do not know that all abstractions signify definite features of facts.

#### THE PHILOSOPHY OF TOLERANCE.

In the April *Monist* Professor John E. Boodin, of the department of philosophy at the University of Kansas, contributed an article on "Philosophic Tolerance" which is very well written and shows the inclination of the writer to the pragmatic movement. The title is significant, and the essay might be called a pragmatic rhapsody. It is pleasant reading, and I am sure that no one can read it without enjoying both the style and the thoughts of the essay. Nevertheless it is not philosophy, and pretty though it is as a literary composition, it becomes warped by its philosophical claim, which is exactly the same fault which we find with Professor Boodin's master, Professor James.

In this pragmatic interpretation philosophy has given up its ambition to become a science. It has no dogmas, no doctrines, no position either to defend or to attack, and so it is tolerant. Professor Boodin claims that "philosophy like poetry and art, when it is genuine, is only the expression of the mood of a soul." Mr. Boodin wants to procure for philosophy the same variety that is possessed by art.

With reference to art and poetry Professor Boodin says, "We do not demand rigid consistency here," and he longs for plasticity in philosophy too, saying, "Why should not every sincere man express his philosophy that seems reasonable to him at the time?" We answer that he most assuredly may, but the expression of moods will be a poor contribution to philosophy as a science, in fact it would be no philosophy whatever. It would be a *soi disant* philosophy, a poetic expression of a transient *Stimmung*, a sentiment.

Far be it from me to denounce or object to poetical expressions of our moods; they are quite legitimate in the

domain of *belles lettres*. I would not even find fault with any one for calling them philosophy or philosophical effusions, but I do object to regarding them as *the* philosophy that has come to supersede all other philosophies, denying that there is a true philosophy, a philosophy as a science, or as we call it, the philosophy of science.

Pragmatism claims to be tolerant. It is tolerant of all philosophies that are merely subjective expressions of personal idiosyncrasies. Mr. Boodin asks, "Why are they not all true, in so far as they are really genuine and really express human nature, then and there?" This tolerance means that whether true or untrue in a scientific sense, they are all on one level, and according to our old-fashioned conception of truth, this is practically a declaration that all philosophies are subjective, all are castles in the air.

This attitude of pragmatism is about the same as if somebody were to declare that in the realm of science astronomy and all different astrological systems are of equal value. There are no real laws of nature; all laws of nature are mere approximations. From this standpoint the astrologer might have something to say about "the materialism" of the astronomer who assumes that the stars run their courses according to "the blind laws of nature," but one ought to be as tolerant with the astronomer as with the different astrological interpretations of the planetary movements, viz., the Babylonian system which looks upon the stars as gods, the medieval method which believed in some mysterious influence of the several planets upon the lives of men, and the modern astrologer who tries to adapt the medieval traditions to the modern conception.

If it were true, as Mr. Boodin says, that "Truth is at best experimental," there would indeed be no reason to turn our backs upon the old superstitions. It would be an indication of our intolerance. The magus of ancient

Babylon, and the astrologer of the Middle Ages, and finally the occultist of to-day, each in his way proclaims that there is some pragmatic meaning in the positions of the planets, and we ought not to say that their efforts are futile, for, says Mr. Boodin, "nothing can be more fatal than stopping the experiment."

#### CONCLUSION.

There is no need of prolonging the discussion. With all my admiration for Professor James I can not take kindly to his pragmatism, and must openly confess that his loose way of philosophizing does not exercise a wholesome influence on the young generation. If Professor James were right philosophy as a science would not and should not exist, for all that were left of philosophy would be subjectivism, which means an expression of our attitude towards the world. There would be as many philosophies as there are personal idiosyncrasies, and even every individual would not always remain the same but have different moods. We would all be pragmatists, and we would all exercise the utmost mutual tolerance, for we would grant the privilege to every one to regard his thoughts as true,—true to him and true at least at the time. We would draw the line only when we meet with people who have the impudence to believe in the objectivity, the permanence, the reliability of the truth, and demand consistency in all statements of truth. In other words, the sentimental and the subjective would be supreme, while an objective knowledge of truth would become a matter of indifference.

Professor James is a fascinating personality, original and interesting in his very vagaries, genial and ingenious, versatile and learned. He is not scientific in his habits of thought, he is not critical, and I have the impression that he cherishes a dislike for science. Exactness of

method seems to hamper his mind and would naturally appear to him as pedantry. He loves to indulge in the *chiaroscuro* of vague possibilities, and so he shows a hankering for the mysteries of psychic phenomena, whether due to telepathy or spirit communication, as evidenced in the case of Mrs. Piper. He would resent to have his thoughts restrained by the balance wheel of critique. He seems to enjoy being freely moved by the spirit. In a word, his temper is not scientific but that of a poet or prophet. He loves to be guided by inspiration. Being inspired, he is himself inspiring. Hence his unusual magnetism, and hence also the success of a philosophy which he has made his own.

In the philosophy of a man like William James the personal equation is the most important item, and he judges science and the scientific labors of others after his own mode of thought. He does not try to eliminate the factor of his idiosyncrasies, and so he assumes that that is the normal condition of all thinkers. This is evidenced in his book entitled *The Will to Believe*. This attitude is desirable in a poet, but not in a philosopher; it is good in *belles lettres* but not in science; and no harm would be done if his pragmatism were received simply as an artistic movement that has a purely esthetical significance but should not be taken seriously. Pragmatism comes with the pretense of being taken seriously, and it sweeps over the country with the power of a fashionable fad. It claims that now at last we have a philosophy that reconciles all the contradictory religions and philosophies, that redeems the world from the tyranny of definite doctrines, and proclaims a new view of truth, which is no longer final, rigid and stable but plastic and may suit anybody in any emergency.

Pragmatism insists upon an important truth—a truth which is so obvious that it is almost a matter of course;



but it emphasizes it so onesidedly that it overlooks a more important truth and thereby its very conception of truth becomes warped. However, in this way pragmatism acquires the semblance of originality, of something new and unheard of, while in fact it is only a modernized redaction of the ancient philosophy of the sophists and of their principle,

*πάντων μέτρον ἄνθρωπος,*

which also is true in a certain sense but becomes a fallacy if the onesidedness of the principle is lost sight of.

Pragmatism has appeared cometlike on our intellectual horizon. It flashed up with a sudden fluorescence like a luminous fog which through the extent of its broad sweep threatens to outshine the old stars of a steadier light. The nucleus of the comet is Professor James, brilliant but erratic; and he is attended by the tail of his many admirers and imitators, all aglow with the stir of their masterly enthusiasm, and the world stands open-eyed at the unprecedented phenomenon.

Professor James prophesies:

"The center of gravity of philosophy must therefore alter its place. . . .

"It will be an alteration in 'the seat of authority' that reminds one almost of the Protestant Reformation. And as, to Papal minds, Protestantism has often seemed a mere mess of anarchy and confusion, such, no doubt, will pragmatism often seem to ultra-rationalist minds in philosophy. It will seem so much sheer trash, philosophically."

We answer with Professor James who continues,

"But life wags on."

Cometlike pragmatism has appeared, and we venture to predict that cometlike it will fade again after a while.

Personally I have a decided liking for Professor James, and I am sure that in expressing it I voice the opinion of

many. I have met him repeatedly and have felt the sympathetic charm of his personality. I wish him all possible success and the honor of merited renown. I hope that for the rest of his life he will remain as buoyant and spirited as he has ever been, and will meet with unlimited recognition. But for all that I can not agree with or accept the philosophy of the great Harvard Professor, and I go so far as to look upon its wide acceptance as a symptom of the immaturity and naiveté that obtains sometimes even in the professional circles of our universities.

With all due respect for Professor James, for whose extraordinary and fine personality I cherish an unbounded admiration, I must confess that I would deem it a misfortune if his philosophy would ever exercise a determining and permanent influence upon the national life of our country.

EDITOR.