

Works

- "What Pragmatism Means"
- "The Will to Believe"

"What Pragmatism Means"

- Pragmatism
 - Method for settling metaphysical disputes
 - Theory of truth
- Method for settling metaphysical disputes
 - Clarifying the meaning of concepts by making distinctions
 - We ought to be able to show some practical difference that follows from one side or the other's being right
 - Rival views can mean practically the same thing
- Pragmatism is a form of empiricism
 - Turns away from: Abstraction and insufficiency, verbal solutions, bad *a priori* reasons, fixed principles, closed system, and pretended absolutes and origins
 - Turns towards concreteness and adequacy, towards facts, towards action and power
- Does not stand for any result - It is a method only
 - Metaphysics – followed a primitive kind of quest – compared to "knowing names – binding spells"
 - Pragmatic method – must bring out of each word its practical cash-value and set it at work within the stream of your experience
- *Theories thus become instruments, not answers to enigmas, in which we can rest*
- Pragmatism harmonizes with many ancient philosophic tendencies
 - Nominalism – in always appealing to particulars
 - Utilitarianism – emphasizing practical aspects
 - Positivism – in its disdain for verbal solutions
- *The attitude of looking away from first things, principles, 'categories,' supposed necessities; and of looking toward last things, fruits, consequences, facts."*
- Theory of Truth
 - Attempt to clarify what is involved in the claim that truth is agreement with reality
 - There are many relations of agreement
 - Belief leads to expectations of future experiences, and when these are not disappointed or as long as they are not disappointed, we regard the belief as true
 - True beliefs are of the utmost importance; they are good to believe
 - We are not free to believe what we want – our beliefs must harmonize with past experience
 - The individual has a stock of old opinions already, but he meets anew experience that puts them to a strain
- New Truths
 - Something or someone contradicts our truths = inward trouble to which the minds seeks to escape by modifying his previous mass of opinions
 - Grafts the new opinion on the old
 - New truth is always a go between – it marries old opinion to new fact
 - Older truths are controlling

- Scope of Pragmatism
 - Scope of pragmatism – first, a method; and second, a genetic theory of what is meant by truth
 - Pragmatism is uncomfortable away from facts
 - Pragmatists cling to facts and concreteness, observes truth at it work in particular cases, and generalizes. Truth as a class-name for all sorts of definite values in experience
- Pragmatism
 - Follows the example of the sister-sciences, interpreting the unobserved by the observed
 - Brings old and new opinions together
 - Converts the absolutely empty notion of a static relation of ‘correspondence’ between our minds and reality
 - Harmonizer of empiricist ways of thinking, with the more religious demands of human beings.
- Argument for Belief in God
 - A belief in a God who, with our help, strives to make this a better world – would help us lead a better life, and therefore it would be better for us to have that belief unless it clashes with other vital beliefs
 - “The Will to Believe”
- Technical Distinctions
 - Hypothesis – anything that may be proposed to our belief
 - Option – the decision between two hypotheses
 - Living or dead
 - Forced or avoidable
 - Momentous or trivial
 - Genuine option is when it is of the forced, living and momentous kind
- Psychology of Human Opinion
 - When we look at certain facts, it seems as if our passionate and volitional nature lay at the root of all our convictions
 - “Will” and the perception of truth – There must be a pre-existing tendency to believe – must be a living option
- Empiricist and Absolutist and Truth
 - Absolutists say that we can attain to knowing the truth and we can *know* when we have attained knowing it
 - Empiricists think that although we may attain it, we cannot infallibly know when. to *know* is one thing, and to know for certain *that* we know is another
 - No concrete test of what is really true has ever been agreed upon
- Our Duty in the matter of opinion
 - We must know the truth
 - We must avoid error
- Question of Believing in god
- Science says things are; morality says some things are better than other things; and religion says essentially two things:
 - The best things are the more eternal things, the overlapping things, the things in the universe to that say the final word. “Perfection is eternal”
 - The affirmation of religion is that we are better off even now if we believe her first affirmation to be true.
- Logical elements of this situation are *in case the religious hypothesis in both its branches being really true*. It must involve a living option – won’t sway the atheist