

"PRAGMATISM IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION"

A Thesis

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by

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"Natura enim non nisi parendo vincitur."

At first men try with magic charm
To fertilize the earth,
To keep their flocks and herds from harm
And bring new young to birth.

Then to capricious gods they turn
To save from fire and flood;
Their smoking sacrifices burn
On altars red with blood.

Next bold philosopher and sage
A settled plan decree,
And prove by thought or sacred page
What Nature ought to be.

But Nature smiles - a Sphinx-like smile -
Watching their little day
She waits in patience for a while -
Their plans dissolve away.

Then come those humbler men of heart
With no completed scheme,
Content to play a modest part,
To test, observe, and dream.

Till out of chaos come in sight
Clear fragments of a Whole;
Man, learning Nature's ways aright,
Obeying, can control.

The great Design now glows afar;
But yet its changing scenes
Reveal not what the Pieces are
Nor what the Puzzle means.

And Nature smiles - still unconfessed
The secret thought she thinks -
Inscrutable she guards unguessed
The Riddle of the Sphinx.

Hilfield, Dorset,
September, 1929,

From: "A History of Science,"
by Dampier.

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PREFACE

In this age of turmoil and uncertainty man has to find a faith to live by. Religion has at last been recognized as the universal controversial issue. One of the many results of the action of the questioning mind is Pragmatism. In this thesis I will attempt to show how pragmatism can play a part in the philosophy of religion. The practical side of life is here recognized as important but attention of the reader is drawn to the fact that pragmatism is in itself not enough - it must become intermingled with the ideal and the spiritual. I advocate the middle way - a philosophy of the future must be Idealistic-Pragmatism.

In Chapter I I give an outline of pragmatism and attempt to show that pragmatism is more than merely a method but rather is a philosophy in its own right.

In Chapter II an expository philosophy of religion is given. Here complete credit must be given to E.S. Brightman as the chapter is more or less a summary of his splendid book, A Philosophy of Religion. This procedure was adopted because I felt inadequate to give a proper interpretation in this field. Original comments are inserted to give what

is hoped to be a fully rounded discussion. At times during the writing of the thesis I felt that the reader might consider this chapter irrelevant. I hope that its use is appreciated.

Chapter III is the main body of the thesis. No definite point is reached but the point is emphasized that religion needs pragmatism. The chapter is broken down into two parts, the first dealing with John Dewey and the second with Wm. James.

My conclusion is found in Chapter IV. I here merely reassert my basic position and end by asking that religion become aware of pragmatism's challenge.

The poem quoted at the beginning of the thesis was an inspiration of the moment. When I found it I thought it would be an excellent introductory theme to my humble symphony of words. It draws attention to man's philosophical quest down through the ages. Man will always seek an answer to life - it is the unique aspect of his makeup. Pragmatism is not new, its thoughts were born years ago. Pragmatism is ^{an} old star in the galaxy of the sky of human knowledge that has suddenly become very brilliant.

CHAPTER I

METAPHYSICS OF PRAGMATISM

Of the many philosophies that the keen philosophical student must meet in his reading pursuits one of the most fascinating is undoubtedly that of Pragmatism. Some writers look upon Pragmatism as merely a method, not a systematic philosophy and certainly not as a metaphysics. The more one simmers, however, in the cauldron from which Pragmatism has evaporated, the more one comes to realize that Pragmatism is a philosophical system in its own right and what is more, that it has a metaphysics of its own.

Before advancing any further into the metaphysics of Pragmatism we will throw up a small pragmatic structure which will enable us to look back and see a bit of the historical origin of Pragmatism and at the same time enable us to see the developing stages of this philosophy.

"The Western Goth", says Woodbridge Riley, "so fiercely practical, so keen of eye, has at last gotten himself a philosophy." ¹ With this hint of the practical realm at which Pragmatism points Riley proposes three stages or phases in the growth of Pragmatism. These three phases shall be the constituents of our pragmatic structure.

¹W. Riley, American Thought (New York: Peter Smith, 1941) p279.

The first stage is that of the Primitive Pragmatism of Charles Peirce. In 1878 Peirce presented a logical method which he hoped would enable the clarification of ideas. The term pragmatic applies to the rules of art and technique which are based on experience and applicable to experience. Peirce dealt with the experimental type of mind and developed the theory that

"...the rational purport of a word or other expression, lies exclusively in its conceivable bearing upon the conduct of life; so that, since obviously nothing that might not result from experiment can have any direct bearing upon conduct, if one can define accurately all the conceivable experimental phenomena which the affirmation or denial of a concept could imply, one will have therein a complete definition of the concept."¹

Peirce's pragmatism tends toward solipism because it confines itself to the individual and his doubts. It is the method of science and its aim is the growth of reasonableness. We clear our ideas says Peirce by grasping the idea of effect.

"Consider what effects that might conceivably have practical bearing; we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then, our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object."²

In other words, our idea of anything is our idea of its sensible effects. We must examine the consequences to which an idea leads in action if we are to find the meaning of it. Otherwise, as Durant says, "dispute about it may be without end, and will surely be without fruit."³

¹D.D. Runes, Twentieth Century Philosophy (New York: Philosophical Library, Inc., 1943) p 453.

²W. Riley, American Thought (New York: Peter Smith, 1941) p 286.

³W. Durant, The Story of Philosophy (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1933) p 557.

For Peirce, life's search does not end in action. The end of man, that is, that which he searches for, is what is needed and useful. Success is the test of truth and it is worth the risk that one must face to attain it in this world of chance. The critics of pragmatism have been wrong in saying that the goal of pragmatism is merely crude action.

The second stage in our pragmatic structure is that of the developed pragmatism of John Dewey. Here Pragmatism is concerned with the instrumental - it becomes a useful tool for action. And, differing from Peirce, it tends to be social, to pass over the barriers of the self. In Dewey's hands, Peirce's logical method develops into a law of social success. Dewey tells us to go to experience and see what the thing is experienced as if we want to find out about that thing. When we meet a difficulty in life we measure the success of reflective thought by the degree to which the thinking disposes of the difficulty. This is the instrumental type of thinking.

Dewey believes that the Modern Age prefers the gallantry of adventure and the genuineness of the incomplete rather than the projection of reason to another and supernatural sphere.

"Why should not we have a philosophy of insight and not of tradition? Why should we grope among the dry bones of the past when nature's floods of life stream around and through us."⁵

⁵ W.Riley, American Thought (New York: Peter Smith, 1941) p 300.

What was 'reason to believe' in Dewey becomes the 'will to believe' in the third stage of our structure. This brings us face to face with William James and his radical pragmatism. James is temperamental and his pragmatism centers around the search for personal satisfaction. His pragmatism may even be said to be transcendental in that it is a leap beyond human barriers to a pluralistic universe of higher powers.

In William James we find recognition of the fact that human temperaments clash. Cognition of truth is reduced to the satisfaction of felt needs, to the emotional thrill. James adopts a mediation between tough mindedness and tender mindedness. On the one hand there is empiricism which is materialistic, pessimistic, and irreligious. On the other hand there is rationalism which is idealistic, optimistic, and religious. As Riley says, James adopts a combination of practical pessimism with metaphysical optimism. "James remains religious like the rationalisms, but like the empiricisms, preserves the richest intimacy with facts." ⁶

Thus we have our three-fold structure of the development of Pragmatism. In it we can easily see the growth of pragmatism from a logical solipsistic method to a law of social success and finally into the radical or emotional stage. Throughout each stage we witness the characteristic practicality of pragmatism. The important thing is practical living, it is upon the effects of practical living that choice

Ibid., p. 311.

Hinges. Generally speaking, pragmatism seems incarnate in John Dewey and his instrumental pragmatism and for this reason pragmatism may be referred to as only a method. As a method for getting along in life with no set plan or outlook - as long as ideas are useful and contribute to practical success nothing else is needed. This, however, is not a just appraisal. Pragmatism is concerned with the practical and with what is successful or useful, this is granted, but it is more than this. It is a philosophy of life from the very fact that it is interested in life. It has a metaphysics of its own - it is concerned with the understanding of man and

"...with his wants and hopes and limited capacities as a factor in the natural world out of which the human organism has developed and with which, in even its loftiest flights, the human spirit remains essentially continuous." ⁷

Dewey expresses very well the metaphysics to be found in pragmatism when he says, (and may excuse be granted for numerous quotes)

"This is the extent of my metaphysics: The large and constant features of human sufferings, enjoyments, trials, failures and successes together with the institutions of art, science, technology, politics, and religion which mark them, communicate genuine features of the world within which man lives." ⁸

Schiller says that if a method is wholly satisfactory it may be adopted as a metaphysics. Pragmatism may be said to be a satisfactory method and by accepting it as ultimate

⁷P.A.Schilpp, The Philosophy of John Dewey (Evanston and Chicago: Northwestern University, 1939) p. 217.
⁸Ibid., p. 217.

turned into a metaphysics. Here, however, a word of caution must be injected when reference is made to the word 'ultimate'. We are not concerned with a metaphysics that tries to intimidate us by laying down a claim to absolute validity. A pragmatic metaphysics must submit to the pragmatic test - its assumptions will have to be tested by their working. "It need not show itself 'cogent' to all, but it must make itself acceptable to reasonable men, willing to give a trial to its general principles." ⁹

Enough has been said for the time being on the metaphysical strains of pragmatism. Let us now turn to some definite features of the philosophy in question. We may even refer to these definite features as pragmatic definitions which as said before make it a philosophical system in its own right.

For the pragmatist, knowledge is a process and not merely a product. Knowledge is the appropriate outcome of inquiry for as John Dewey says,

"Inquiry is the controlled or directed transformation of an indeterminate situation into one that is so determinate in its constituent distinctions and relations as to convert the elements of the original situation into a unified whole." ¹⁰

The important thing to note about the pragmatic definition of knowledge is the practical inference and this is true of every feature of pragmatism. All thought contains a practical factor, "an activity of doing and making which

⁹ Schiller, Studies in Humanism (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1912) p. 20.

¹⁰ P.A. Schilpp, The Philosophy of John Dewey (Evanston and Chicago: Northwestern University, 1939) p. 202.

reshapes antecedent existential material which sets the problem of inquiry." ¹¹ Inquiry becomes instrumental when new facts are brought to light, thus enabling the investigator to clear up his doubt he previously had about the subject in question. This instrumental task of knowledge can be seen functionable in each stage of our pragmatic structure. Peirce wanted a logical method to make our ideas clear, such a method would be instrumental if it performed its function. Dewey has already referred to as the instrumentalist - further comment at this point would be superfluous. In James the instrumentality is what is responsible for the personal satisfaction around which his transcendental pragmatism is built.

With our field of knowledge established we now come to ideas and their role in knowledge. An idea for the pragmatist is whatever exercises the function of meaning. Perry says that this meaning is essentially prospective, that is, a plan of action terminating in the thing meant. Since only part of the presented field of experience is pertinent in each situation selection must take place if a particular action is to result. Thus the idea becomes an instrument of selectivity and reconstruction. It becomes the curative of doubt. The pragmatist says that to ideate experience is to represent it in some special and suitable light.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 202.

Following the role of the idea we approach the meaning of truth. Truth is the property of an idea in its relation to the object. "An idea is true when it works; that is, when it is successful, when it fulfils its function, or performs what is demanded of it." ¹² In other words, the truth of an idea lies not in the present relation of similarity but in the practical sequel. William James has said that an idea is true so long as it is profitable to our lives; what is better for us to believe is true unless the belief incidentally conflicts with some other greater and more vital belief.

Pratt points out that there are really two pragmatic interpretations of truth. The one is the truth already referred to above. It is the process of verification which goes on within experience. It consists in the successful working of the idea, in the concrete steps within consciousness that lead from the unverified claim to the full and satisfying assurance of its goodness. The other view is that trueness of ideas is a concrete relation - it emphasizes the concrete steps of the idea which lead us to the object and which results in satisfaction. In connection with this second interpretation it is the mediating events that make the idea true. To any pragmatist the word idea means any representative content that leads to action or helps to bring order into a given situation.

W.B. Perry, Present Philosophical Tendencies (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1921) p. 201.

The important thing about an idea is its influence upon conduct, its motive power or guiding force. It is in this that the truth of an idea lies.

For John Dewey knowing is the use of ideas as signs of possible future experiences and means for affecting the transition to such experiences in a satisfying manner. The truth relation is that of an idea to a future experience, when the idea is intended to suggest a way of behaving that will lead the thinker, if he acts upon it, to enjoy that future experience, and the goodness of an idea in that connection is its capacity to serve reliably for the purpose intended.

According to William James, both Schiller and Dewey give the following pragmatic account of truth:-

"Any idea upon which we can ride, so to speak; any idea that will carry us prosperously from one part of our experience to any other part, linking things satisfactorily, working securely, simplifying, saving labor; is true for just so much, true in so far forth, true instrumentally." 12

Such a discussion of truth as this gives us the idea of a plurality consisting of the old facts and the new experience. Pragmatism recognizes the importance of older truths and will let new opinions become true only when they prove their utility and satisfactoriness.

Thus do we witness the pragmatist. The man concerned about practicality, about utility and success. The man who

12 B. Rand, Ed., Modern Classical Philosophers (Cambridge: The Riverside Press, 1936.) p. 840.

tells us so far as possible to think in concrete terms. On the surface pragmatism seems merely to turn to adequacy, facts, action and power and to turn away from the abstract and rigid. Indeed such an inference could be easily assumed if one fails to look deep into pragmatism. At first glance there seems to be little hint of something more than the concrete and the Eternal Now. We are continually warned not to be hoodwinked by big words and verbal abstractions. Words are valuable only for their practical cash-value; each word must be set at work within the stream of experience. "Theories thus become instruments, not answers to enigmas in which we can rest." The pragmatist cannot be satisfied with loose definitions and any vague tendencies and generalities. Everywhere one turns he is hounded by utility. Is this practical? Will this lead to success? There seems to be no rest, no hope for a future, nothing but the oppressiveness of the present. If this were all that Pragmatism is and means this essay would not have been written. Pragmatism is these things and more. Along with the practical, the concrete, and the continuous flux of this life of chance and risk we have a suggestion of advance, of the future. As John Dewey says,

"The rational meaning of every proposition lies in the future....But of the myriads of forms into which a proposition may be translated, what is that one which is to be called its very meaning? It is, according to the pragmatist, that form in which the proposition

becomes applicable to human conduct, not in these or those special circumstances, nor when one entertains this or that special design, but that form which is most directly applicable to self-control under every situation and to every purpose."¹⁴

And again:

"Pragmatism is an experimental use of intelligence to liberate and liberalize action. It looks to a growing rather than a static world; thinking is not the re-duplication of reality already complete, but the actual method of social advance, a method that is to free us alike from the unchanging ideals of obscurantism, and from the spasmodic demand for novelty or freedom working under no principle of control from the past."¹⁵

Pragmatism grew out of empiricism but it differs fundamentally from that school. According to Dewey pragmatism insists not upon the precedents but upon the possibilities of action, and here we must pause and state again the fact that action is not the end of life for the pragmatist. Its role is that of an intermediary. By means of action meaning can be attributed to ideas or concepts for it is only when concepts are applied to existence that they can become meaningful and it is only by means of action that they can be applied to existence. In Pragmatism ideas are the basis for organizing future observations and experiences - here again is a hint of the metaphysical implication. This doctrine of the value of consequences leads us to take the future into consideration and this brings us to the conception of a universe whose evolution is not finished but rather is in the making.

¹⁴ D.D. Runes, Twentieth Century Philosophy (New York: Philosophical Library, Inc., 1943) p. 454.

¹⁵ W.A.K. Rogers, English and American Philosophy Since 1800 (New York: Macmillan Co., 1928) p. 391.

It is because of this strain of hope running through concrete and practical pragmatism that pragmatism will find its place in the field of religious philosophy. Pragmatists have a faith, let not its critics fool us on that. In the words of John Dewey,

"Faith in the power of intelligence to imagine a future which is the projection of the desirable of the present, and to invent the instrumentalities of its realization, is our salvation. And it is a faith which must be nurtured and made articulate; surely a sufficiently large task for our philosophy."¹⁶

In dealing with Pragmatism and in attempting to relate it to some other field one is beset by many difficulties. These difficulties are the result of the varying stages that one meets in studying Pragmatism. You read in one place that pragmatism means action, utility, practicality and success. Again you read that it opposes absolutism and cannot have any possible relation with religion. You then run into the memorable William James who at one time is the expected practical pragmatist and at another an emotional transcendentalist. John Dewey arrives on the pragmatic stage, praised as the instrumentalist, the frank naturalist. Here we say to ourselves is the true pragmatist; here is the man who will not attempt to know an external world by ultimates but who will study means of controlling it and re-making it. But in a flash we find Dewey considering a faith for the future and pondering the thought of pursuing the

¹⁶John Dewey & Others, Creative Intelligence (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1917) p. 69.

concrete too thoroughly; of going against a probable grain in the universe. There seems to be a dilemma in pragmatism and the student can readily lose himself in the midst of it.

Pragmatism is distinctly a philosophy of real life. We must not become confused by its apparent internal conflicts. John Dewey has criticized James for wandering from the pragmatic path but both are pragmatists in their own right. The practical, efficient, useful, fruitful and satisfying can walk hand in hand with emotional thrill and the will to believe; a mediation can be found between reason and Will. Twentieth century Pragmatism is like a fresh and full blown flower, it is new and vibrant. It need not be a modern war between science and religion as Will Durant has so unjustly phrased pragmatism. It is a philosophy which places a big emphasis upon the venture of faith and the will to believe; it is in all sense of the word a philosophy of hope.

CHAPTER II

ELEMENTS IN A PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

In the previous chapter we tried to show that Pragmatism is a philosophy within its own right in spite of the fact that critics look upon it primarily as a method. In other words, we changed a method into a philosophy. In this chapter the procedure is reversed for here we take a philosophy (the philosophy of religion) and treat it as a method (interpretative of religion).

What follows is no distinct philosophical religious system but merely a method of exposition; exposing the various facts that must be considered in an interpretation of religion. Various ideas will be unfolded but without any bias whatsoever.

It is the duty of a philosophy of religion to interpret religious experience and relate it to other experiences for religion is primarily concerned with the religious experience. We are so concerned about experience because it is in experience that all human knowledge begins, continues and ends. Therefore, experience is the necessary starting point of any philosophy of religion.

Having established experience as our basis we find that we meet two types of experience; scientific and non-scientific. Non-scientific experience is more fundamental and

and more inclusive than scientific experience because it is the precondition of science; non-scientific experience seems to be the goal for which scientific experience aims because it pursues values of facts and not merely facts. It is in the realm of the non-scientific experience that religion lives - "non scientific experience contains the actual life of value and raises questions about the meaning and importance of value which descriptive science does not raise." 17

Brightman says that a philosophy of religion is an attempt to define religion. Such a definition must be neutral, that is, distinguished from all other experience. Such a definition must define religion in a general way, as a total experience. The observation of one person must be supplemented by observations of others if truth is to be found; individual truth seems to lead into a meaningless chaos. For Brightman religion is as follows:

"Religion is concern about experiences which are regarded as of supreme value; devotion toward a power or powers believed to originate, increase, and conserve these values; and some suitable expression of this concern and devotion, whether through symbolic rites or through other individual and social conduct." 18

In treating a philosophy of religion we must recognize the fact that we are dealing in reality with two subjects; philosophy and religion. We can intermingle the two because both deal with ultimates and because both distinguish higher.

17 E.S. Brightman, A Philosophy Of Religion (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1940) p. 13.

18 Ibid., p. 17.

and lower values of life. Both aim at the ultimate unity of reality and source of values in the universe in spite of the fact that their approaches are different. Philosophy uses the rational approach while religion uses the emotional approach of devotion and worship.

In the words of Brightman a philosophy of religion is

"...an attempt to discover by rational interpretation of religion and its relations to other types of experience, the truth of religious beliefs and the value of religious attitudes and practices." 19

Thus a philosophy of religion would intend to interpret not merely the idea of God but also the meaning and value of the whole development of religion and all phases of religious experience.

We have witnessed a definition of religion but not how such a definition originated. To get a definition of religion one must go to the facts of religious experience.

It is the three sciences of religion that furnish a survey of facts by which philosophy is led to trustworthy conclusions about the real world.

The first of these three sciences is the History of Religion. Now to trace the development of the historical side of religion is not relevant to this thesis but it is important to recognize the fact that religion has experienced a growth. From the very beginning religion has been an attempt to persuade the cosmic powers to be friendly

19 Ibid., p. 22.

to man. It was realized that man's desires could not wholly control the course of events. A history of religion tells us that religion is not static but rather is in a constant process of development. There would be no fear of death and no need of hope in life if life held no values worth keeping or striving for.

The second science is that of the Psychology of Religion. Under this topic we will point out several features. First we have conversion which is the transition from a non-religious life to a religious one. Secondly we have mysticism, a direct experience of what is believed to be divine reality as contrasted with an intellectual belief in religion or moral devotion to religious causes. Lastly, we have the psychological phenomena of prayer and worship. These are all definite contributors to the religious experience which is the core of religion.

The third religious science is the Sociology of Religion. This is concerned with the relation of society and religion. John Dewey, of whom more will be said in the next chapter, holds the belief that the social approach is the one and the only key to all problems, the religious one being no exception to the rule.

There are eight chief religious beliefs according to Brightman, that arise from the facts of religion. They are as follows: (1) Belief that religious experience has value;

(2) Belief or opinion about a God; (3) Belief about the nature of good and evil; (4) Belief about the spiritual nature of man; (5) Belief in human purpose; (6) Belief about immortality; (7) Belief in valid religious experience; (8) Belief in religious action. Each of the beliefs will be taken up in turn.

Value: Every religious experience is an experience of value because religion takes sides for value as against disvalue; it is definitely for good as opposed to evil. As Brightman says, no matter how tragic a religious experience may be it is not the tragedy that makes it religious, rather it is the value for the sake of which the tragedy is borne.

Religious experience as an experience of value involves a choice of value and a faith in the friendliness of the universe to value. It is obvious that we must choose between the good and the bad, the wheat and the chaff, if we are to uphold our religious value. When we have made our choice and allied ourselves with the good we believe that we have done well since we live in a universe that favors the good. Our values are good we say and by this we mean that which is liked, desired, prized or approved. Value may be potential or actual, it may be intrinsic or instrumental. Ideals are instrumental values because they are valuable only in so far as they produce an intrinsic

value. In other words, high religious ideals are valueless if merely retained as ideals and not put into practice.

What about the application of truth and error to value? The logical positivists argue that truth doesn't apply to values because no value can be better than another value. Critics of the positivists say that verification of values is possible, it is a process of relating different experiences and building up a coherent, rational system of thought and experience. The pragmatists place the emphasis on the practical consequences and adjustments. The big problem of a philosophy of religion for Brightman arises when an attempt is made to relate ideals of value experience to the facts of existence; is the universe hostile to ideals? If not, why does it appear so?

Religion can be understood only when the problem of the relation of ideals to existence is thought through. Such a process as this involves a critical examination of religion on the part of the individual. Some people refuse to make this critique and hence are content to slumber on in dogmatic chambers. When philosophy enters the picture it brings with it the belief that it is not normal for the intelligent mind to accept religion without thought. We must remember that religion is not concerned primarily about abstract ideals, but rather about the production, preservation and increase of actually existing values.

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experience to sense experience. Such an operation involves the problem of truth and in the modern era we find two chief criteria for truth. The first is that of the pragmatist - the practical results. The second is Coherence - no truth can be completely tested until all truth is known. This implies consistency or a total picture. When all the results of all experience come before the mind we are then, and only then, in a position to judge of truth.

God. The next belief arising out of the fact of religious experience is that belief concerning God. Of the several ideas pertaining to religion that which is most uniquely essential to it is that of the idea of God. For interests sake let us view the various view of God that have developed out of the ages.

Polytheism, belief in many gods, has continued for centuries. It is the original search begun by primitive man for that something beyond himself. Next comes Henotheism which is the belief and worship of one god as supreme, accompanied by a recognition that others exist. As man progressed, Henotheism grew into Monotheism. This is the idea of one God and it arose when man, through advance, came to realize the unity of the laws of cosmic nature. Viewing the creation problem and finding it difficult to solve has led some thinkers to Pantheism, a view of God as a whole of which man and nature are parts. For these

men God is immanent in the world about us. The Agnostic Realist says that God may exist but that he is unknowable. This implies, as Brightman says, "a groping in ignorance among unknowables." For the Deistic Supernaturalist, God is not found in human experience at all except in so far as he chooses to reveal himself. Karl Barth says that man must trust in God or be doomed. Such thinkers believe the hollowness of trusting in human values alone has been shown in history where human values have been used to destroy human values. God as a system of ideal values is the belief of the Impersonalist Idealist. Such a belief can easily become defective, however, if these eternal ideals are not related to the world of brute fact because religion is certainly more than abstract idealism. The next conception of God is that of Religious Naturalism in which God is viewed as the tendency of nature to produce values. God is that tendency of nature to produce movement toward perfection. God is the universe always striving for a higher level of being. Theism is a synthesis of pantheism and Deism. The latter has an absentee God, that is, there is one divine spirit but it is external to the world. God may have created the world but now has nothing to do with it. Theism says that God is a spiritual personality. With the pantheists, theists agree that God is immanent in nature but they disagree over the fact that the imperfect can be regarded as

part of the perfect divinity. Theists agree with the deists that God is other than the world of human persons but cannot regard this otherness or transcendence as rigid externality. God is spiritual, that is, in all of existence but He is also a personality above man and yet close to him.

The ways of knowing God are various and each is as equally uncertain as each is different. No knowledge is certain but rather is constantly subject to revision. As Paul says in his first letter to the Corinthians, Chapter 13, "For now we see through a glass darkly; ...now I know in part..." In spite of the fact of uncertainty we do not give up. No scientist would cease to experiment simply because his knowledge is incomplete, rather it is the sense of incompleteness that spurs him on.

Within the religious experience itself there are three ways of experiencing God. These are immediate experience, revelation, and faith. Within the philosophical realm there are likewise three ways. These are 'a priori' principles, action, and coherence.

The mystic believes that he knows God in an immediate and absolutely certain experience. We can say that the mystical experience is immediate but whether or not it is an immediate experience of God is another matter. It may be an immediate experience of the self which may be taken

as a sign of the reality of God. Whatever the interpretation, mysticism is important in the religious experience.

Revelation is a distrust of human reason. God is totally other than man. Man's nature and experience contain no clue of God til He speaks. This is dogmatic and not in accordance with the modern theological view which says that the essence of revelation is not the communication of truth but rather it is the guidance of human life to higher levels by divine power. This hints at divine and human cooperation in which process is needed both reason and revelation. As John Locke said, "He that takes away reason to make way for revelation puts out the light of both."

Concerning Faith there are various views. One is that faith is active acceptance of revelation, that is, revelation with an intellectual assent. Another view thinks of faith as merely the passive acceptance of revelation as a gift of God. This last view is utterly beyond the ken of reason and hence has created a cleft between faith and reason. A cleft which should be removed since both faith and reason need each other. A third view says that faith is trust or obedience for what is believed to be of true value.

Within the philosophical experience there are also three ways of knowing or experiencing God. First we have 'a priori'

principles which hold that there is a native religious capacity of the mind. Reason being no simple entity contains the 'a priori' view. 'A priori' principles are linked to faith because faith has to refer to ideals acknowledged by reason. The native capacity of the mind for the religious experience has been expressed by Browne as follows:

"Whatever the mind demands for the satisfaction of its subjective interests and tendencies may be assumed as real in default of positive disproof." 20

The second philosophical way of knowing God which is given by Brightman is that of Action. This we immediately recognize as pragmatic and since desiring to discuss the place of pragmatism in religion in the next chapter we will be forced to relative silence here. What we can do is quote Brightman; this should suffice for the time being to present the pragmatic stand:

"God does not mean a theorem: he means activities which we call goodness, truth, beauty, and worship. Surely those who are seeking to know all that can be known about God must observe the kind of action that follows from our conception of God. Much argument is empty because it ignores the plain empirical mandate to consult experience." 21

Lastly, we have Coherence. This view has arisen out of pragmatic action and the criticism of it. It is an attempt, so its upholders say, to supplement the practical with the rational. If this can be regarded as the essence of coherence it seems to have developed out of an unjust criticism

20 Ibid., p. 185.

21 Ibid., p. 188.

of pragmatism; one cannot say that pragmatism is void of reason. Coherence, however, is not a repudiation of empiricism. Brightman tells us that it simply asks that empiricism be complete, well ordered, clearly defined, and rationally interpreted. Each immediate religious experience must be set in relation with our total range of thought and experience.

"Action offers data which are mere brute facts or unsolved problems until they are interpreted by coherent rational thought and are related to the whole of our conscious resources. Accordingly, reason - concrete and inclusively empirical, not merely abstract and formal - is the supreme source of religious insight, the supreme way of knowing about God, whether he is, or whether he is not." 22

The problem of belief in God is indeed a big one. In the world about us there seem to be innumerable facts for a God and at the same time there seems to be evidence against God. It would appear that a philosophy of religion should have the task of detecting the true from the false. To set up a goal of absolute certain knowledge is an infinite undertaking. The philosopher seeks not all truth but a unification of such truth as he has. To be irreligious is to give up the search, not to challenge conventional belief.

The approach that we must take in a philosophy of religion must be an opened minded one. We have a right to challenge traditional dogmas. As Brightman says,

22 Ibid., p. 192.

"Our inquiries into belief in God will never penetrate to the end of infinity, but they may serve to direct life from chaos and contradiction toward integration and coherence. One who demands more than this from philosophy of religion is doomed to disillusionment sooner or later; but one who finds this has found a method of personal growth that is superior to any unchangeable dogma." 23

Now various interpretations of God arise. Is he a unity? Is He a personal God? Is God infinite? These and many other questions continually knock at the door of philosophy's house. To resort to scepticism is too easy a way out. Man believes that there is something beyond himself - if any tell us different we know that they are merely running away from the issue:

"There are axiogenetic processes (those producers of value) in nature, and religion is an attitude of respect for and trust in these processes. As far as naturalism goes it is true. But it leaves the axiogenetic processes uninterpreted, unrelated to existence, as flowers blooming mysteriously in a hostile soil. Those who are curious as to how such soil could nourish such flowers remain unenlightened." 24

Good and Evil. The problem of good and evil goes back to the old question of value, that which is the very heart of religion. Religion does not attempt to avoid the issue but rather it is a form of realistic action in face of the intermixture of good and evil in all of our experience.

There are three noteworthy positions arising out of this new concern we have proposed. The first of these is Agnostic Humanism which is a position of nontheism. It is

23 Ibid., p. 202.

24 Ibid., p. 216.

a form of neutralism which still prizes the ethical and the aesthetic ideals. Religion is viewed as loyalty to human values, the origin of which is not explained. For the Agnostic humanist an explanation beyond the human is too great a metaphysical task.

The next position we should note is that of Theistic Absolutism. This belief maintains that there is a personal God eternal and infinite in power and knowledge and goodness. Such a belief is founded in Aristotle who said that God was an absolute self, a sufficient deity. Absolutists hold that ultimately, God wills what we call evil and sees that it is good.

Theistic Absolutism is based on religious experience and can certainly prove to be an emotional thrill for the mind. Man, "In a world of apparent evil finds within himself and ideal of perfect good; in a world apparently accidental he finds within himself an idea of rational purpose"²⁵ Such a view is fine except for the fact that it cannot be demonstrated. An absolute God has not been the natural implication in all religions. Religious faith may be a triumph over evil but a philosophy of religion must be more than this - it must be a triumph but must also have an explanation for that triumph. The inclusion of all the facts of good and evil give great difficulty to absolutism.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 305.

Critics go as far as to say that because evils are credited to the divine, absolutism appeals to ignorance. In the absolutist view, evil and good are made indistinguishable - all evil is said to be merely apparent evil, that in reality it is good. Such a view can easily lead to a scepticism concerning values. The world is regarded as perfect and it is here that absolutism is weak and the pragmatic criticism well grounded. If the world is now perfect why attempt anything different for according to the absolutist the world is incapable of betterment. Absolutism may be said to cut the moral endeavor.

The last position is that of Theistic Finitism. Here God is still viewed as personal and eternal and infinitely good but denies him infinite power. The difference between theistic finitism and theistic absolutism is that the former says that God does face a Given in the universe, that is, conditions which he did not create and of which he does not approve. There is, say finitists, an ultimate evil in the universe which God has in no sense willed and against which he always exerts his full energy.

Theistic Finitism makes a definite distinction between good and evil. Hence evil is not ascribed to God. For Brightman this throws out an inspiring challenge to man to cooperate with his God in bettering the world. If God is so LIMITED by the Given, man is offered a solution for his

difficulty which undoubtedly arises when the hostile events of life are witnessed. When life is faced realistically one cannot escape grave perplexity from the standpoint of religious faith. Theistic finitism can either lead to pessimism or optimism. We can become discouraged about God's chances of continual success over the Given or we may become hopeful, assured that together we can win out against evil. Evolution points to a purpose in the world; it shows a marked increase in the powers of life to alter the environment and so indirectly favors Finitism.

Theistic Finitism, however, may be religiously inadequate since religion demands a God perfect in all respects. Some think that it humanizes God too much because it fails to give responsibility of creation completely to God.

We have presented various views on the problem of good and evil but which is true and which is false is not the business of this present chapter. Here we merely wish to present the various fields in which pragmatism must say its word if we are to find its place in a philosophy of religion.

Human Personality. Religion, says Brightman, is man's aspiration toward the source of his highest values and his sense of cooperation with and dependence on that source. In a philosophy of religion, man is a religious being for there must be evidence of religion in human life before

there can be a philosophy of religion. The goal of religion is to develop in man a worthy consciousness, consciousness of value and even a God. Such a spiritual development is possible only when the person has become well integrated and a true identical unity. Spiritual ideals are what make men human as well as akin to the divine. "Pessimism could not even be thought of if it were not seen that the true destiny of man was the achievement of values worthy of him."²⁶

Human personality, therefore, is a most important consideration in any philosophy of religion. It is, naturally, only in the human personality that the religious experience has any value.

Human Purpose. Arising out of a consideration of human personality comes the problem of human purpose. Any philosophical discussion of religion must give an account of purpose. What is this life all about any way? Are we heading toward something or are we merely stumbling about in a giant maze in a giant psychological experiment?

Man, feeling incomplete within himself, aspires to something beyond. William James says that persons are "fighters for ends." Religion is primarily concerned about purpose - it is faith in a divine axiogenetic and axio-
 oteric power. Such a belief has given rise to the conflict between teleology and mechanism. Which is right? Does the world operate under the watchful direction of a cosmic

²⁶ Ibid., p. 362.

purpose or does it merely whirl in rhythm to laws not guided or controlled? Science has shown us that it is absurd to ignore the mechanical processes in nature but it has shown us equally well that it is also absurd to ignore the spiritual.

Immortality. Belief in immortality is an extension of purpose because a belief in a life after death is conceivable only in so far as it is purposeful. Man looks about him and while there is a good chance that events may cause him to become sceptical and pessimistic there is also a good chance of his seeing purpose in life. He may see ideal purposes aflame which deny death the power to extinguish.

The crucial argument for immortality is the goodness of God and so we must first have a belief in God. Faith in immortality becomes reasonable only in proportion as belief in God is reasonable. A finite God need be no barrier to immortality for He is still the creator, still infinite in goodness, and still the fighter against the Given.

There are religious values in believing in immortality. Life is one of goal seeking; one of forward looking purpose. "Immortality symbolizes the faith that good purpose never fails to all eternity." ²⁷ Brightman says, what

²⁷ Ibid., p. 409.

dignity, hope and perspective arise from faith that every life capable of purposive development is eternal.

Religious Experience. We are here back to the theme in which we began our ramble on the philosophy of religion, that is, the problem of religious experience. A religious experience is one of many human experiences. In a philosophical interpretation of religion, experience simply means consciousness of experiencing the experience. Brightman says that the religious experience is "any experience of any person taken in its relation to his God."²⁸

The foundations of religious experience include faith, revelation and conversion. Faith is the belief of man in his God and the conduct of life in the light of that belief. The religious man looks upon faith as divinely caused and as a means of leading him toward God. Once faith is established, that is, man's recognition of a God, the experience of revelation arises. Revelation as we have seen is the belief that God imparts insight and guidance to man. Such a contention could not be held by humanists, at least not the Realistic Humanist who places authority only in human endeavor and not in the divine. Conversion is initiation into a religious life which is that of a movement toward divine values.

We have outlined the foundations of the religious

²⁸ Ibid., p. 415.

experience so let us now turn our attention briefly to the factors of the development of the religious experience.

The first of these is meditation:

"Religion is more than ideas about God and more than ritualistic or moral behavior. It is an organization of the whole of life. Hence meditation on religious values and beliefs is of great importance in the integration of a religious personality."²⁹

Meditation is that personal aspect of religion which tends to prevent religion from becoming external and mechanical.

Then too, we have prayer, mysticism and cooperation.

Prayer is really a more personal and expressive form of meditation. Heiler has called it "a living communion of the religious man with God." Mysticism is the immediate consciousness of God. Cooperation is the more active side of the religious experience. Religion is a devotion to high ideals and as such it presupposes that the world is yet capable of improvement. This improvement should be a cooperative effort between man and God. Insights gained in the passive aspects of the religious experience (meditation, prayer and mysticism) give the incentives for religious action.

Thus do we come to the conclusion of our synopsis of what a philosophy of religion entails. As said at the beginning of the chapter we have not attempted to outline any special belief but rather have exposed the facts that

²⁹ Ibid., p. 424.

seem essential.

A philosophy of religion seeks to discover and to state in rational form the meaning and truth of the experiences found in religion. It has been hoped that the preceding remarks have illustrated this point to a sufficient degree.

Brightman says that "the eye of the religious man is primarily on the eternal Ideal."³⁰ We must emphasize, however, that religious faith in high ideals is not in itself enough. What the religious experience needs is both faith and work.

"Religion is an organization of the whole of life under the principle of supreme value. The material cannot be ignored. There is a proper religious evaluation of matter, both as an expression of the immanent creativity of God and also as a means to spiritual ends. Nevertheless, religious practice, begun on the level of regarding material values as intrinsic, is in danger of remaining permanently on that level."³¹

Religion is the vital issue of to-day. Has man been right in searching for a God? Can we be sure that we are not being disillusioned by the apparent orderliness of this vast universe? In short,

"The issue is whether there are signs in man of a reality far better than he is. Do his slight experiences of beauty, his few glimpses of truth, his feeble character and his tragedies, his hopes and his worship, afford evidence of a superhuman source of value?"³²

Let us see how the pragmatist answers these thoughts.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 450.

³¹ Ibid., p. 448.

³² Ibid., p. 488.

CHAPTER III

PRAGMATISM IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

Man is essentially a religious creature. For whether he affirms a religious faith or denies one he has pondered the religious problem. Otherwise, he would have no position. Modern American Pragmatism, it is true, has its emphasis upon the practical and the concrete, but this in no sense isolates a religious element from its precincts.

It is safe to say, I think, that the seed that has given birth to the pragmatic flower was planted several centuries ago in the sunny fields of the Italian Renaissance. Fields where the soil was rich and well suited for pragmatic embryos. Here bloomed forth the interest in man. This was an exciting age for at last the answer to the 'Riddle of the Sphinx' had found himself. The age of humanism had been initiated on its glorious flight into the eons of history.

In short, and to avoid more of the above artistic filling, pragmatism is not something utterly new and belonging solely to our modern age - its impetus has long since advanced from infancy into maturity. What is new we might add, is merely the term 'Pragmatism'.

But here let us say that the interest in the individual

and in the particular, in the practical and the useful, has become more acutely alive to-day than ever before in history. We live in a day when pragmatism holds the stage on which humanity plays its various roles. At the present moment we seem to be living on the eve of another world war. We live in the midst of hunger, poverty, disease, and other degrees of human suffering. We live in an age of frustration and bewilderment. Is it any wonder that man should question his faith? Is it any wonder that pragmatism, that interest in things here and now, should triumph over idealism and its seemingly abstract essences?

The pragmatist, however, is not a sceptical or pessimistic apparition that has arisen out of the dark and turbulent sea. Rather, he is a modern seeker for value and faith. Pragmatism is definitely looking for some ground in which to drive the stakes of faith for life. It is for this reason that we ended Chapter I by calling pragmatism a philosophy of hope and it is for this reason that we will attempt to sketch a pragmatic religion in the present chapter.

It will be advisable to here state that the chapter will be divided roughly into parts. First we will relate John Dewey to the philosophy of religion and secondly William James. This procedure has been adopted because of the divergencies between these two outstanding prag-

matists.

John Dewey has been searching all his life for value and has been, in my opinion, unjustly criticized from theological side benches for going against the orthodox beliefs. John Dewey is a product of this age, an age in which our faith must be questioned and then asserted. We live in an age when the abstract must give way to the concrete, when the ideal must bow to the practical. In his "Quest for Certainty", Dewey thinks that man's quest for certainty has been on the wrong track. We should not turn away from the environment for the sake of the mind where the invention of gods takes place, rather, let us turn to the world in which we live says Dewey. Dewey advocates a quest for control rather than for ultimates. The Theory of Relativity, he says, has taught us that there is no fixed world. Therefore, we should look upon objects not as things final in themselves but as stepping stones to lead us on and on to something better. As Dewey himself says,

"The remarkable difference between the attitude which accepts the objects of ordinary perception, use and enjoyment as final, as culminations of natural processes and that which takes them as starting points for reflection and investigation, is one which reaches far beyond the technicalities of science. It marks a revolution in the whole spirit of life, in the entire attitude taken toward whatever is found in existence. When the things which exist around us, which we touch, see, hear and taste, are regarded as interrogations

for which an answer must be sought (and must be sought by means of deliberate introduction of changes till they are reshaped into something different), nature as it already exists ceases to be something which must be accepted and submitted to, endured or enjoyed, as it is. It is now something to be modified, to be intentionally controlled. It is material to act upon so as to transform it into new objects which better answer our needs. Nature as it exists at any particular time is a challenge, rather than a completion; it provides possible starting points and opportunities rather than final ends."³³

And again:

"Knowledge which is merely a reduplication in ideas of what exists already in the world may afford us the satisfaction of a photograph, but that is all. To form ideas whose worth is to be judged by what exists independently of them is not a function that goes on within nature or makes any difference there. Ideas that are plans of operations to be performed are integral factors in actions which change the face of the world. Idealistic philosophies have not been wrong in attaching vast importance and power to ideas. But in isolating their function and their test from action, they have failed to grasp the point and place where ideas have a constructive office. A genuine idealism and one compatible with science will emerge as soon as philosophy accepts the teaching of science that ideas are statements not of what is or has been but of acts to be performed. For then mankind will learn that, intellectually (that is, save for the aesthetic enjoyment they afford, which is of course a true value), ideas are worthless except as they pass into actions which rearrange and reconstruct in some way, be it little or large, the world in which we live."³⁴

Thus experimental action is the thing. Action that is a means of modifying the events in our life, that which points to the future, that which hints at a betterment of this practical life which is the only one we know. For too long, says Dewey, has the quest been in the philosophical tradit-

³³Joseph Ratner, Ed., Intelligence In The Modern World (New York: Random House, Inc., 1939.) p. 327.

³⁴Ibid., p. 342.

ion - that quest for absolute and transcendent knowledge.

When studying John Dewey's pragmatism one is struck by a rather remarkable comparison; remarkable, that is, in as far as it goes. On the one hand we have Aristotle and Plato; on the other we have John Dewey and the Established Church. The comparison lies between Aristotle's criticism of Plato and Dewey's criticism of the Church. Plato stood for his Ideas and regarded them as true reality. When Aristotle came along he thought that Plato's ideas were fine as far as they went but by themselves they were of no value. Perfect Ideas are worthwhile only when applied to the world about us so as to give us a better conception of it. Similarly Dewey looks at the Church. The Church possesses a supernaturalistic faith - a belief in the Abstract. Because of this Dewey offers his criticism. He believes that dogmatic creeds stand in the way of the true religious experience. He pleads for a practical and open minded religion; a religion with its eyes open to the practical. Perhaps if Aristotle were alive to-day, he would in this respect be a pragmatist. We must be careful, however, not to let the analogy run away with us. In the realm of logic Aristotle and Dewey are widely divergent and because of this, it is impossible for Aristotle to really be a pragmatist. Aristotle remained content to live in the realm of classification. It was Dewey who turned to the method of earnest inquiry.

We have, in the above comparison, asserted Dewey's condemnation of tradition and supernaturalism. It is this that brings us to his evaluation of the religious experience and his idea of God. Dewey's aim is to separate religious experience from religion. Religion is infected with a false and morally dangerous supernaturalism he says. For Dewey, 'religious' denotes attitudes that may be taken towards every object and every proposed end or ideal. Religious experience may belong to all experiences - it is that which brings about a better, deeper, and enduring adjustment in life. The religious quality appears when there are "changes in ourselves in relation to the world in which we live."³⁴ This for Dewey is the unification of the self and it depends upon the world about us, upon the people with whom we live and associate.

"Our successes are dependent upon the cooperation of nature....the essentially unreligious attitude is that which attributes human achievement and purpose to man in isolation from the world of physical nature and his fellows."³⁵

Since Dewey criticizes supernaturalism he must necessarily criticize the identification of the Ideal with a particular Being. For Dewey, ideals have their roots in natural conditions. Ideals do not depend upon some prior complete embodiment for their authority and value but rather they are found to exist in mind, character, action,

³⁴P.A.Schilpp, The Philosophy of John Dewey (Evanston and Chicago:Northwestern University, 1939) p. 411.

³⁵Ibid., p. 415.

and personality. Ideals, he says, are made by man "out of the hard stuff of the world of physical and social experience."³⁶ What is 'God' is the active relation between ideal and actual. We must realize that religious experience is an experience of practical living. Unless we adopt a union of ideal and actual, unless we put our ideals into working practice, we will still have the old fundamental Dualism. That Dualism which consists of a superior absolute Being up there and the little finite, frustrated man down here. Dewey thinks that supernaturalism is distracting. The great issue of to-day for John Dewey is concentration upon the nurturing and extending of the values of natural human intercourse. We must, in other words, dissolve the connection between the religious and the creeds of the past.

Dewey thinks that a recovery of philosophy is needed. Philosophy must get down to the problems of life as they affect mankind. The chief characteristic trait of the pragmatic notion of reality is precisely that no theory of Reality in general, is possible or needed. It takes its stand with daily life, which finds that things really have to be reckoned with as "they occur interwoven in the texture of events."³⁷

Dewey is content to take a world already in existence

³⁶Ratner, op. cit., p. 1023.

³⁷John Dewey & Others, Creative Intelligence (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1917) p. 55.

and to seek only to bring to fruition its finest possibilities. Thus is Dewey an upholder of value. His rejection of an absolute transcendent Being does not necessarily reject value from life. Dewey cannot picture a perfect God. To him, such a God would be cold and sterile. If there is a God he must be imperfect, for to be imperfect is to live. Life is one of growth and change and a striving for something better. God would have to be a believer in growth and experimentation and as such would not have possession of the qualities of omnipotence, perfection, or infallibility. Dewey does not want a God that is too remote to condescend to mingle in mundane human affairs.

Dewey considers the world not as one of absolute order nor as one of absolute chaos. Rather, it is a world in which there is adventure, freedom, a mixture of stability and precariousness, mechanism and values, in varied interaction with one another. The principle is growth and the method is experimentation.

The definition of religion offered by Dewey is that religion is "whatever induces genuine perspective is religious."³⁸ Hence, as we have stated before, Dewey wants to make a distinction between what is religious and what is religion. Dewey is interested in the processes, not in the finished product.

³⁸J. Dewey, A Common Faith (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1934.) p. 24.

Dewey thinks that religious institutions stand in the way of the fuller development of the religious life because they seem to have religion allsewed up in neat little bundles reverently watched over by a little band of priests and preserved from all vitalizing contact with the broader activities of society.³⁹ As R.E.Fitch says, Dewey wants religion to be an "active adjective, not a frozen noun."⁴⁰

John Dewey's philosophy is obviously a social program.

"Faith in the continued disclosing of truth through directed cooperative human endeavor is more religious in quality than is any faith in a completed revelation."⁴¹

No matter how we may approach Dewey's philosophy we cannot credit him with a belief in a traditional God. He continually emphasizes the fact that the universe may be called God only so far as it is relevant to the realization of human ideals. For Dewey, the word 'God' signifies only whatsoever in the universe is amenable to human purposes. What is above nature, "full of flaws as she is", are the unrealized but realizable possibilities of nature.

Before attempting to assess Dewey's interpretation of religion it will be advisable to now give William James's side of the picture. In this way we will avoid any repetitive approval or disapproval of the pragmatic position in the philosophy of religion.

³⁹R.E.Fitch, "John Dewey and Jahweh", (The Journal of Religion, vol. 23, p. 16, January, 1943.)

⁴⁰Fitch, loc. cit.

⁴¹Ratner, op. cit., p. 1021.

Possibly the best way that we can begin our account of James is to state his own definition of religion. It puts the issue clearly and shows the break between him and Dewey. For James then,

"Religion (means) ...the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine."⁴²

Thus it is James's recognition of a divinity that sets him apart as a distinguished pragmatist.

As typical of a pragmatist, William James loved the concrete, the particular, and the useful. "His world seemed to him to be made up of individuals - men, events, experiences, and deeds."⁴³ James lived during a time of religious unrest in America; a time when there was a seeking for creeds that would not be in conflict with the modern man's view of life. For the most authoritative evidence for religion James made a vigorous appeal to the religious experience of the individual.

Royce puts James's attitude in glowing terms when he writes as follows:

"James's own robust faith was that the very caprices of the spirit are the opportunity for the building up of the highest forms of the spiritual life; that the unconventional and the individual in religious experience are the means whereby the truth of a superhuman world may become most manifest...it is the spirit of the frontiersman, of the gold seeker, or the home builder, transferred to the metaphysical

⁴²Wm. James, The Varieties of Religious Experience, (New York: The Modern Library, Copyright 1902 James) p. 31.

⁴³J. Royce, Wm. James & Other Essays, (New York: Macmillan Co., 1911) p. 19.

and to the religious realm. There is our far-off home, our long-lost spiritual fortune. Experience alone can guide us towards the place where these things are; hence you indeed need experience....Be, therefore, concrete, fearless, be experimental. But above all, let not your abstract conceptions.....pretend to set any limits to the richness of spiritual grace.....your personal experience may reveal to you.⁷⁴⁴

In spite of James's determination to abstain from speculation and to concern himself with the concrete he came to the conclusion that there is still a larger realm of universal life; there is a MORE which is operative outside of man. Thus we are introduced into James's conception of God. James goes so far as to say that he believes pragmatism widens the search for God. Pragmatism is willing to take anything and test it. It will even credit mystical experiences if they have a practical consequence. The test of truth is what fits every part of life best. If the notion of God should do this, then pragmatism will not deny God's existence.

Up to this point James's view of God sounds very utilitarian. It merely appears that if a belief in God suits you that is fine, if it does not that is fine too. In my opinion, God meant more that this for our pragmatist. James really became convinced of a spiritual realm beyond this easily observed physical one. In his 'Pragmatism' James offers the following:

⁷⁴⁴Ibid., pp. 22-3.

"I firmly disbelieve, myself, 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. They inhabit our drawing rooms and libraries. They take part in scenes of whose significance they have no inkling. They are merely tangent to curves of history, the beginnings and ends and forms of which pass wholly beyond their ken. So we are tangent to the wider life of things."⁴⁵

James' defence of God, however, is not the traditional belief of an absolute God. James was one of the first to set forth and defend the idea of a finite God:

"God, in the religious life of ordinary men, is the name not of the whole of things, heaven forbid, but only of the ideal tendency in things, believed in as a supervening human person who calls us to cooperate in his purposes, and who furthers ours if they are worthy. He works in an external environment, has limits, and has enemies. When John Mill said that the notion of God's omnipotence must be given up, if God is to be kept as a religious object, he was surely accurately right.....I believe that the only God worthy of the name must be finite."⁴⁶

This we will remember is Theistic Finitism as found in Chapter II. For the pragmatist it is the only sensible God in this world of apparent hostility and in this world of growth and change. A monistic world is static and offers no hope for betterment in the future. James wants a God who will go to work with man and cooperately help to effect a finer life in the Here and Now. James says that "Whatever the God of earth and Heaven is, he can surely be no Gentleman. His menial services are needed in the dust of our human trials."⁴⁷

⁴⁵Wm. James, Pragmatism, p. 299, cited in W. Durant, The Story of Philosophy, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1933) p. 562.

⁴⁶Wm. James, A Pluralistic Universe, (New York, 1900, pp. 124 ff), cited in The Journal of Religion, Chicago, vol. 21, p. 374, October, 1941.

⁴⁷B. Rand, Ed., Modern Classical Philosophers, (Cambridge: The Riverside Press, 1936) p. 847.

The essential fact to note in James is his 'will to believe.' We may hope for immortality, he says, because we are justified by its practical value. Belief in God and immortality satisfies our moral and esthetic and emotional demands, but because we are bound to be assailed by doubts we have to will to believe. This is the vital factor in our ability to help God win the game of life. This involves faith which for James is,

"...belief in something concerning which doubt is still theoretically possible; and as the test of belief is willingness to act, one may say that faith is readiness to act in a cause, the prosperous issue of which is not certified to us in advance."⁴⁸

James's exposition here is very similar to that of Kant's doctrine of the primacy of the practical reason. Kant said that we could not prove the reality of God, freedom, immortality, or the moral law but we have the right and duty to assert the reality of these things. He goes on to say that we are bound to act free since freedom is essential to morality.

As regards religious experience we have evidence in James's writings to show that he regarded it with a reverent attitude. Perry says that James suffered a real spiritual crisis in his life and that as a result never looked upon philosophy as a matter of abstract speculation but rather as essentially related to the deeper issues of life.

⁴⁸Wm. James, The Meaning of Truth, p. 256, cited in R.B. Perry, Present Philosophical Tendencies, (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1921) p. 370.

James was a moralist in all sense of the word. He regarded the fight with evil as a real fight. As sense of moral impotence caused James in 1870 to record in his diary a resolve to acknowledge the supremacy of morality:

"Today I about touched bottom, and perceive plainly that I must face the choice with open eyes: shall I frankly throw the moral business overboard, as one unsuited to my innate aptitudes, or shall I follow it, and it alone, making everything else merely stuff for it? I will give the latter a fair trial."⁴⁹

James has been referred to as a philosopher of faith by E. M. Lyman and indeed this assertion is agreeable with this thesis. Through his synthesis of empiricism, voluntarism and mysticism, James has developed a philosophy of faith. Emphasis is laid upon the facts of experience as over against theories but the belief is held that the two must go together. Without the originative power of the mind many facts would go undiscovered. Voluntarism makes faith an important factor in practical living since faith is a fact helps to create fact. James's faith is a belief that the world is congenial to our cognitive and active powers. Out of voluntarism and empiricism comes pragmatism. The world is one of chance and hence we have a chance of helping to mold it. Our moral attitudes and faith are indispensable because it is on these that we act and it is on our actions which the world in part depends.

⁴⁹R. B. Perry, The Thought and Character of William James, (Boston: Little, Brown, & Co., 1935, pp. 322-3, cited in The Journal of Religion, Chicago, vol. 22, p. 240, July, 1942.

James's philosophy of faith gains a wider and deeper application through his belief in the value of mysticism. In his *Varieties of Religious Experience* we see that James had become convinced that our lives are surrounded by a wider spiritual reality with which it is possible to enter into a fruitful and saving relation. The following selection written to his wife in 1898 will be a fitting conclusion to this discussion of William James:

"It turned out one of the most memorable of all my memorable experiences....a regular Wälpurgis Nacht. I spent a good deal of it in the woods, where the moonlight lit up things in a magical checkered play, and it seemed as if the Gods of all the nature-mythologies were holding an indescribable meeting in my breast with the moral Gods of the inner life. The two kinds of Gods have nothing in common....The intense significance of some sort, of the whole scene, if one could only tell the significance; the intense inhuman remoteness of its inner life, and yet the intense appeal of it; its everlasting freshness and its immemorial antiquity and decay; its utter Americanism, and every sort of patriotic suggestiveness, and you, and my relation to you part and parcel of it all, and beaten up with it, so that memory and sensation all whirled inexplicably together....It was one of the happiest lonesome nights of my existence, and I understand now what a poet is."⁵⁰

The conclusion that we may draw is that in pragmatism there are definitely elements that will and must fit into a philosophy of religion. First, let us consider John Dewey's place here. Dewey is the product of a bewildered age. It is little wonder that he rejects absolutes for particulars. The past record of philosophy and religion has been a series of

⁵⁰Letters of Wm. James, II, pp. 76-7, cited in The Journal of Religion, Chicago, vol. 22, pp. 246-7, July, 1942.

arguments over final and certain knowledge. This Dewey thinks is worthless and has been responsible for the present state of world affairs; responsible because the practical has been forgotten. Dewey's philosophy is distinctly social and as such has high regard for value. The human individual is regarded as the source of what is good-nothing beyond man is needed. The neglect of a God by Dewey makes it indeed hard to find him a place in religion but a place we have asserted and a place we will find. The position lies, I think, in the challenge offered to religion proper, Dewey is so right in stressing the importance of life here and now. Religion is not void of this emphasis but at times, because of its theological disputes, it comes dangerously near it.

Dewey is certainly religious in his own right. He looks at the world as a pluralistic realm in which betterment is possible. Humans must live up to human values to create a better society - herein lies the hope of pragmatism and herein lies its contribution to religion. Not a new contribution but at least a shiny new impetus and one most characteristic of our age.

William James on the other hand goes farther than does Dewey. We have already discussed his faith, his God and his religious experience. As a result we can now say that the pragmatic philosophy of this exponent is nearer what this thesis advocates - a mediation between the spiritual and

the practical. In my opinion Dewey did not go far enough. For the time being his philosophy will suit this practical age but I doubt if it will be lasting. Man is hardly strong enough to live for long without a God, without that something beyond himself, that something which has some concern for him and that gives this whole business of living a sensible meaning. James offers us a God, finite though He be, together with a concrete life. Action is the pragmatic watchword but it is not a narrow interpretation of action. It is an action that acts in accordance with belief and faith. It is action that gives us hope for the future. In this last regard let us point out that this makes pragmatism most religious; that supreme faith which gives man the strength and courage to live and to live is indeed a tremendous undertaking requiring strength and courage.

Pragmatism has been unjustly criticized. It is hoped that the preceding remarks have shown to some degree that pragmatism has a vital part to play in philosophy to-day. I have pointed out that pragmatism in itself is not enough for it seems certain that of the many things man needs he needs a God - a loving God and a God above man. Pragmatism, however, offers a challenge to religion. It shows that what religion needs is to find a new middle way between the divine and the concrete. Our religion must meet the needs of the man on the street. High ideals become valuable only

if related to the world into which we have been initiated. If religion can learn again this lesson of practicality pragmatism will prove to be one of the luckiest events of mankind's history.

It is hoped that at this point the reader will not consider Chapter III to have been written in vain. The factors of religion discussed there, God, immortality, religious action and experience have been pragmatically interpreted. We have seen the pragmatic idea of God; we have seen that we must will to believe in our faith and immortality; we have seen that because of pluralism there is an important place for human personality in the world; we have seen that religious experience is a necessary experience of frail humanity; lastly, we have witnessed the importance of action in accordance with our faith.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

One of the signs of a mature personality is, according to Gordon Allport, an acquisition of a unifying philosophy of life. Under this title we find religion. Man really escapes the bonds of infancy only when he tries to find his place in the scheme of things. His philosophy need not be learned and wordy but it must be an embracing philosophy and developed to his own satisfaction. Thus it is that the maturing person cannot avoid the religious crossroads. Decisions must be made.

In his book, Personality, Allport has this to say of religion:

"Religion is the search for a value underlying all things, and as such is the most comprehensive of all the possible philosophies of life. A deeply moving religious experience is not readily forgotten, but is likely to remain as a focus of thought and desire. Many lives have no such focus: for them religion is an indifferent matter, or else a purely formal and compartmental interest. But the authentically religious personality unites the tangible present with some comprehensive view of the world that makes this tangible present intelligible and acceptable to him. Psychotherapy recognizes this integrative function of religion in personality, soundness of mind being aided by the possession of a completely embracing theory of life."⁵¹

Such a religion is in its essence a search for God. A

⁵¹G.W.Allport, Personality, (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1937) p. 226.

search for something that will make living sensible and that will also give the necessary courage and strength needed for living. We have said that the Italian Renaissance gave birth to a turning of man's attention away from God to man and this was a pity. Once man puts God aside he becomes "as mysterious as a child would be without any parents, or a fact-event without any cause. Man to be man must be man plus MORE."⁵²

In this modern age we are forced to decide what is vital about a religion. The Atomic Bomb that was loosed over Hiroshima has at last opened the windows in the minds of men. We have been given a human key to a human door which having been opened has shown what goal man will eventually reach if he continues to live by Man made values alone. The time has come when man must be cognizant of a Being greater than himself. It is in this that John Dewey's philosophy is lacking. He has merely emphasized one half of the story of religion. Dewey has found nothing new, the religion of Jesus Christ is certainly a practical religion. Did not that servant of long ago say "I come that man might have life more abundantly." Did he not say that "By their fruits ye shall know them?"

Dewey fails to look beyond the horizon of the human landscape. Fitch says that Dewey is

⁵²R.M. Jones, "What The Modern Man Can Believe," The Atlantic Monthly, (Boston: Little, Brown, & Co.,) vpl. 180, Nov., 1947.

"...like a Moses who has led his people out of bondage to the borders of the promised land, and who, being vouchsafed a glimpse of it from afar, sees it for its fruitfulness in the milk and the honey of a richer human fellowship."⁵³

Dewey's program of social betterment is certainly a vital part of religion, certainly of Christianity. In such an age Dewey's reminder is a much needed tonic. Perhaps we have allowed our religion to forget man. Dewey's presence may at last bring religion back from ethereal spheres to man.

To the question, what is more vital about a religion? we must answer that both the religious practice and the religious beliefs are equally important - the two phases are closely intermingled. The religious problem of to-day is to make the religious program of live and permanent meaning for the modern world. What is vital is neither the mere practice as external nor the mere opinion as an internal formulation. We need a complete spiritual reaction of the entire man - a union of practice and belief.

"Christianity is, first of all, an interpretation of life, - an interpretation that is nothing if not practical, and also nothing is not guided from within by a deep spiritual interest and a genuine religious experience."⁵⁴

Perhaps it is true that pragmatism holds the stage in our age but if we abide by it alone we are doomed. Unless Pragmatism is tempered by Idealism I cannot any longer

⁵³R.E.Fitch, "John Dewey and Jahweh," The Journal of Religion, Chicago, vol.23, p. 22, January, 1943.

⁵⁴Royce, op. cit., pp. 130-1.

call the former a philosophy of hope. A faith in God and trust in the concrete is what we need and it is in such a way that pragmatism finds its way into the philosophy of religion. In this essay it is not for me to say what type of God we should believe in, whether absolute or finite, but whatever he is this God must be greater than man and he must be a God of love.

The religion of today must be willing to face new inventions of modern science. If it is a right religion new scientific theories will fit into the scheme. If it is a right religion it will not become dismayed by discoveries as was that religion of the past when the Copernican Revolution startled the world. Unless our religion is willing to march hand in hand with science it will prove worthless.

Pragmatism can make religion melioristic. Pragmatism becomes the philosophy of life and of hope because it speaks for the spirit of making better. It looks at a world of change and so must our religion. According to Perry Pragmatism can lead to a new conception of God - the importance of human efforts is recognized along with the idea of God as leader of a common cause.

Whatever we say about pragmatism let us not be too hasty to condemn it harshly. It is the voice of our age

and as such must be listened to. It is a sign that man is not becoming irreligious but rather is reassessing his religious spirit, searching for some value, some rock on which to pin his faith for security.

"Pragmatism is the philosophy of impetuous youth, of protestantism, of democracy, of secular progress - that blend of naivete, vigor, and adventurous courage which proposes to possess the future, despite the present and the past."55

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