

CP / 1 / Consequences of Pragmatism

Just one half of my original article on pragmatism was taken up with a selection of typical instances of its applicability; and in order not to waste space here with what was long ago said, I will now write so as to be intelligible to a reader who has not that paper at hand, but so that to one who can refer to that article and then to the other that introduced it may find it to his advantage to consider the present piece as in part a <sup>critical</sup> commentary on those.

(Footnote)  
The two articles appeared in the Popular Science Monthly, XLII, Nov. 1877, and XLII, 286, Jan. 1878; and in the Revue Philosophique, the second article, the exposition of pragmatism will appear to the philosophical student as usual.

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efficient and frivolous. The excuse is that I was invited to write the articles by Mr. W. H. Appleton the publisher of the magazine on. During an Atlantic passage steamer, without an opportunity to consult the editor, who was highly displeased with the metaphysical character of my first article. The second article was entirely written during another Atlantic passage of the Atlantic on a French steamer, and was written <sup>first</sup> originally in French, although only an English publication was ~~to~~ contemplated, with the idea that ~~the~~ the temptations to be too darkly philosophical would ~~not~~ by that means be diminished, and the editor be in some measure appeased. All these circumstances were unfavorable to thorough treatment.

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The first instance of the applicability of the pragmatistic maxim which I shall here consider (it was not adduced in the old article) is the circumstance that the circum-

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unfavorable, to thorough treatment.

C.P. 3) The first instance of the applicability of the pragmatistic maxim which I shall here consider (it was not adduced in the old article) is the circumstance that the pigmentation of the yellow spot on the retina is much deeper in some persons than in others. There is nothing (short of an elaborate course of minute quantitative color comparisons <sup>and the smallest possible gradations with the corresponding eyes,</sup> followed by computations) which can make them aware of it, but nevertheless the ~~sensations~~ prevalent color-tone of the world <sup>must</sup> is certainly less

● more jaundiced for those persons. According to James's version of the maxim of pragmatism, the <sup>meaning of the</sup> world <sup>is</sup> ~~different~~ <sup>different</sup> to those persons is decidedly different to its meaning for Blonds. In so far as <sup>(the maxim is concerned)</sup> ~~it~~ would in any conceivable circumstances affect these persons' conduct and

C.P. 4) <sup>the</sup> course of their lives, I should assent to its <sup>conceivability</sup> <sup>vital</sup> importance, ~~or importance~~, But if (as I suppose fancy is the truth) no such effect could in any conceivable case be otherwise than ~~much~~ excessively slight and quite out of proportion to the decided difference of sensation, <sup>then</sup> I should say that ~~it~~ had no intellectual value or significance worth considering.

My next illustrative application of pragmatism ought I think, to be to the question whether the 'laws of nature,' so <sup>in an</sup> called, are objectively <sup>or</sup> <sup>be these habits</sup> ~~are~~ <sup>habits</sup> ~~of~~ the universe (wholly) ~~acquired~~, original, or maintained by the continual influence of God,) or whether, on the contrary, they are no more than constructions of ~~the~~ our minds. Having discussed this question in the Popular Science Monthly for January 1904,

C.P. 5) (Vol. XVIII, pp. 296-306) a brief consideration will be brought here. That, as general propositions, they are of the nature of concepts or ~~are~~ intellectual meanings, is unquestionable.



influence of (word) or whether, on the contrary, they are no more than constructions of the our minds. Having discussed this question in the Popular Science Monthly for January, 1901,

CP 5 (Vol. XVIII, pp. 296-306) a brief consideration will be brought here. That, as general propositions, they are of the nature of concepts, or ~~are~~ intellectual meanings, is unquestionable. But that cannot <sup>Physically</sup> decide the question for anybody but the solipsist. Pragmatism tells us that if it be objectively true that nature acts according to these formulae, then they have the same sort of being in the universe or its domain as our intellectual habits have in us. For such a habit in us need not be accompanied with consciousness, i.e. feeling of it. Such feeling is in us requisite for deliberate thought, but it does not seem to be logically necessary even for that; and at any rate, that

~~It~~ Making this word indeterminate, with respect to finitude or infinitude, while I restrict the term God (with a capital G) to the Absolute Deity.

CP 6 is a different question from the one which we are considering. Now in my article of Jan. 1901, I <sup>enumerated</sup> ~~gave~~ as the three logically sound criteria of objectivity; first, that that which one can destroy at will <sup>with scarce an effort,</sup> ~~is~~ like a daydream or a house of cards, cannot have any very independent being; secondly, that matters <sup>to</sup> which everybody will assent, when the question is fairly brought before him, cannot be mere madness; and thirdly, that <sup>if there be a</sup> ~~there is a~~ <sup>notion upon which</sup> ~~notion~~ <sup>which one can be based</sup> ~~upon which~~ <sup>verifiable</sup> ~~predictions~~ <sup>cannot</sup> ~~go on~~ <sup>in</sup> ~~endless~~ <sup>endless</sup> ~~protraction~~ <sup>protraction</sup> ~~unless~~ <sup>unless</sup> ~~there~~ <sup>there</sup> ~~be~~ <sup>be</sup> ~~some~~ <sup>some ~~objective~~ <sup>objective</sup> ~~truth~~ <sup>truth</sup> ~~in~~ <sup>in</sup> ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> ~~notion~~ <sup>notion</sup> ~~to~~ <sup>to</sup> ~~explain~~ <sup>explain</sup> ~~for~~ <sup>for</sup> ~~this~~ <sup>this</sup> ~~success~~ <sup>success</sup>. All these three criteria emphatically declare for the objectivity</sup>

CP 7 of nature's approximate conformity to law; and approximate conformity <sup>is</sup> ~~is~~ <sup>imply</sup> ~~is~~ <sup>enough</sup> ~~is~~ <sup>to</sup> ~~prove~~ <sup>to</sup> ~~the~~ <sup>the</sup> ~~objectivity~~ <sup>objectivity</sup> of C

you are getting turning out successfully without any failure  
unless in all its endless protraction unless there be some  
objective truth in the notion to explain for this success.  
All these three criteria emphatically declare for the objectivity

C.P. 7 } of nature's approximate conformity to law; and approxi-  
mate conformity is <sup>amply</sup> enough to prove the objectivity of  
some habits <sup>inherent in</sup> the physical universe. <sup>that</sup>  
I am somewhat tempted to <sup>philosophical</sup> <sup>position of</sup>  
touch here upon the <sup>question of</sup>  
God's ~~being~~ objectivity. In any event, we obviously can have  
but the vaguest conception of such a Being. So far Mr.  
S. D. Weston (Lionist, XIV. pp. 597-603) <sup>July 1914</sup> is quite right,  
though he pushes agnosticism too far. I have made  
● a careful and minute logical analysis of vagueness  
and of its relation to the validity of inferences. But there  
is no room for <sup>this analysis, and it is</sup> <sup>more scraps of</sup> <sup>discussion</sup> <sup>I could be of</sup>  
<sup>much</sup> <sup>any great</sup> value for philosophy, and still less for religion.  
The finest effects of confounding philosophical opinions, moral convictions,  
and religious faith together is as well known

C.P. 8 } I come, then, to the first application of pragmatism  
of my original paper which was to defining hardness.  
That a knife-edge should be <sup>pretty</sup> ~~passed~~ heavily drawn over  
the surface of a mineral and should scratch it, and  
that it should be so drawn and not scratch it may  
both or either singly be possible. The variability, however,  
seldom occurs, for the reason that if it did, the experiment  
would have little value. It would be like trying whether the  
● mineral could be scratched under this or that aspect of  
the planets. So a mineral which will always be scratched  
by a knife-edge pretty heavily drawn over it, will be called  
soft; while a mineral which will never be so scratched  
will be called hard. God p 11.

C.P. } To follow this part of 7 } of habit ~~being~~ which is objective



will be called hard. (p. 11)

C.P. 8) To follow this line of p. 7. } A habit ~~being~~ <sup>which is of just</sup> continued as long as <sup>the future conditional proposition</sup> ~~it is~~ <sup>is</sup> such conditions are fulfilled, such and such will <sup>the behaviour</sup> of the subject be. It would be absurd to say that the habit only <sup>exists</sup> at the moment that it operates, or that it only subsists if the <sup>conditions are</sup> ~~experiment is~~ <sup>is</sup> about to be fulfilled. For a habit is general; and as such cannot be constituted by any multitude of individual occurrences, not even by an infinite multitude, not even by an ~~innumerable~~ <sup>innumerable</sup> multitude of whatever order you please. It is only constituted by the truth of the general future conditional proposition; that is to say, the <sup>nonoccurrence</sup> of a kind of event, not by <sup>any</sup> ~~any~~ <sup>occurrences</sup> ~~occurrences~~ if the conditions <sup>never</sup> ~~are~~ <sup>are</sup> to arise, still <sup>the</sup> ~~the~~ <sup>may</sup> ~~be~~ <sup>to</sup> determine what could not occur even if they should arise. Instances of

C.P. 10) This accords with in the doctrine of chances. Putting them <sup>aside for</sup> ~~aside for~~ <sup>irrelevant</sup> ~~irrelevant~~ present purposes, we may say, that if a <sup>kind</sup> ~~kind~~ event, A, can never occur, then the law that if A occurs B can not occur and the law that if A occurs B must occur may <sup>both</sup> ~~both~~ <sup>subsist</sup> ~~subsist~~ in an indefinite way though <sup>swallowed up</sup> ~~swallowed up~~ in the <sup>law</sup> ~~law~~ that A cannot occur at all.

C.P. 11) But at this point there is an error <sup>which</sup> ~~which~~ <sup>emerged</sup> ~~emerged~~ in my original paper <sup>which</sup> ~~which~~ <sup>is</sup> ~~is~~ <sup>repeated</sup> ~~repeated~~ in later passages; and in view of the enormities into which some of the neo-pragmatists have been drawn whether by <sup>incautiously</sup> ~~incautiously~~ <sup>assenting</sup> ~~assenting~~ to what

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But at this point ~~there~~ an error emerges in my original paper <sup>which might</sup> which is repeated in later passages; and in view of the enormities into which some of the neo-pragmatists have been drawn, whether by <sup>incautiously</sup> assenting to what I said, or, as is <sup>more</sup> likely, by similar independent crookedness in their independent thought, I am bound to call it a damnable error. Namely, I imagine a diamond to be formed in a bed of cotton wool and there to be burned up before any hard object ever touched it; whereupon I say that it is a mere question of the usage of speech whether that diamond be called hard or soft. But to say this is to represent <sup>some habit or of the reverse habit</sup> this being <sup>actual or</sup> a mere habit as constituted by individual convictions. In other words, it is to say represent a general as

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constituted by the existence of individuals of a given kind instead of by the <sup>variable</sup> ~~fixed~~ existence of individuals of the opposite kind. The true account of such a case is precisely the account that commonsense would give of it.

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The next application I shall make of pragmatism is to support a principle which might very well be regarded as



CP  
13 } The next application I shall make of pragmatism is  
to support a principle which might very well be regarded as  
the contrary, as a support of pragmatism and was in fact  
~~introduced~~ originally so treated by me, being proved independent  
in my article of Nov. 1877. At any rate it is most intimately  
bound up with pragmatism and if this latter is ever to find a  
good reputation it is as likely to come from the ~~examination~~<sup>criticism</sup>  
of the principle which I offer as evidence. The principle  
is that whatever is true would be logically inferred from suffi-  
cient experience ~~by sufficient thought~~. In other words  
there are no such absolute or essential limits to human  
knowledge as the Kantians are still perpetually talking about  
without asking themselves what they can possibly mean by  
such talk. Nor are there any such transcendent truths that  
Kant talks of as transcendents which one can formulate and  
even believe in but can never justify logically. Perhaps  
superficial readers of Kant do not always perceive that  
he ~~overlooks~~ suppresses these two distinct kinds of knowables

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14 } Since he himself mixed them together in his thought. As to  
the first kind, the things ~~being~~ being ~~an~~ an ~~such~~ kind of fact to which  
the being an such belongs, it is evident enough that pragmatism  
must deny it; since ~~on~~ on pragmatistic principles ~~it~~ there can  
be no meaning in saying that anything ~~exists~~ exists which has  
absolutely no sensible effects. As to the transcendent truths  
embracing particularly God, freedom, and immortality, as  
well as sundry other things apparently, never mind whether  
this list of them be correct or not, they are matters concerning  
which we have natural passionate tendencies of belief which  
are met by apparent inadequacies in the evidences.  
Now supposing we could look without limit into the  
conditional future, and could foresee what would be the

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15 } So indefinite researches to which all ~~of~~ <sup>of</sup> instances  
should have been removed the ~~sitting~~

Now supposing we could look without limit into the conditional future, and could foresee what would be the

CP 15 } of indefinite researches to which all the hindrances should have been removed, then either this research would bring some decisive answer to the problems, — we are not talking of absolute proof, which is a phantom, or it would leave us after all utterly undecided. In the former case, we may as well now subscribe in advance to whatever the conclusion may be, as the absolute truth. For it will be, or would under the most favorable circumstances, be what we should undoubtedly believe. In the latter case, the conclusion would be that no action could reasonably be based on the <sup>affirmative</sup> proposition or its negative, and that, according to the principle of pragmatism, would be as much as to say that the question was non-sensical, and that

CP 16 } consequently there was no truth in either side, the two sides being ~~only~~ both equally unmeaning. If this appears true where there is any truth, inquiry would, under favorable circumstances, ultimately reach it.

But I desire to express with emphatic grief that in these original papers I ~~was trying~~ <sup>was</sup> engaged in the  ~~futile and~~ <sup>vain</sup> attempt to show that the truth, which must be general, should consist in something ~~that was to take place.~~

● I fell into a grievous error. Looking into the future, I was thinking of what would take place, I overlooked the great truth that the future, as living, always is more or less general, and I thought that what would be could be resolved into what will be, this will be not being to my mind very <sup>intrinsic</sup> different from what

CP 17 } was. But in truth, it is what will be that is resolvable without difficulty into what may be, might be, or would be and belongs to quite a different character from what



and I thought that what would be could be resolved into what would be, this will be not being to my mind very <sup>improbable</sup> different from what

CP 17 } was. But in truth, it is what would be that is resolvable without difficulty into what may be, or ought to be, or would be and belongs to quite a different character from what has hitherto been.

Another argument is this. After inquiry (i. e. experience and reflection) has accomplished all it ever could, one of three states of things must result: either one must be disposed to act according to the one formula or according to its denial, or one must be unable to see any advantage of the one over the other. But according to pragmatism, the first two convictions are <sup>necessarily</sup> equivalent, & convictions of the truth and of the false two of the formula <sup>while</sup> and the third amounts to finding it to be meaningless. Thus, again, where there is truth, it is truth that would be attainable to

CP 18 } unhindered inquiry.

The next examples in the original paper were designed, not to contribute anything to the philosophical understanding of the pragmatic principle, but merely to practise the reader in making use of it. They <sup>explicitly</sup> relate to the idea of physical force & might for the ~~had~~ space ~~not~~ been unlimited I might have added an explanation of the intellectual force of probability, as I did on p. 607 of the same volume of the *Sci. Monthly*. But it seemed <sup>markedly omitted for the reason that</sup> ~~unnecessary~~ because in the *North American Review* of ~~the previous July~~ <sup>even years before, July 1867</sup> (Vol. CV. p. 317) I had said all that <sup>deemed</sup> ~~was~~ necessary in a notice of Venn's *Logic of Chance*.

I now took up the great <sup>metaphysical</sup> philosophical application of the doctrine

CP 19 } while endeavoring, as far as possible, to conceal its metaphysical character from the triple breiter who edited the magazine. The question, of course, can be no other than what

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or Science's  
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CP 19 } while endeavoring, as far as possible, to conceal its metaphysical character from the triple brother who edited the magazine. The question, of course, can be no other than, What constitutes reality? The abstract definition is that the real is that ~~whereas~~ which is such as it is, whatever you or I or any man or man may <sup>or</sup> think that it is. Every proposition purports to be true, that is, to declare something concerning a real. Now a proposition <sup>conceives itself in the communication with another</sup> ~~supposes~~ an utterer and an interpreter. These two must have some degree of common understanding before any communication ~~can~~ take place. The first European that penetrated into Australia encountered Pinagoo, an aborigine in the mid desert. They two stood there speechless. But after all,

CP 20 } they understood one another sufficiently. Each could see that the other was a man and knew very well all that that meant, and beside there were the heavens and the earths surrounding them and each knew how important that fact was to the other. What <sup>precisely</sup> passed between them I do not know. But for the sake of the illustration, I will suppose that one pointed to a hole at the foot of a tree & <sup>described</sup> made a wavy line in the air with his finger and puffed. The other would naturally understand that in that hole ~~was~~ <sup>was</sup> some interesting, - not had been there four or five centuries before, but was there in such sense and to make the matter relevant to future conduct, especially to <sup>near future</sup> ~~conduct~~ conduct. The wavy line and hiss would awaken familiar ideas. The hole, one remarks, was not familiar, the idea conveyed was that

CP 21 } There was a snake in the hole; and no doubt a <sup>dangerous</sup> poisonous one. Since it was worth making the fact topic of conversation,



The hole, one remarks, was not familial. The idea conveyed was that

CP 21 | There was a snake in the hole; and no doubt a <sup>dangerous</sup> generalization, since it was worth making the first topic of so memorable a conversation. In like manner every proposition conveys associated signs of some object, one of them <sup>in prominent, understood way</sup> invariably associated with the object intended. <sup>also</sup> <sup>the other</sup> <sup>the sign</sup> <sup>associated with a familiar</sup> <sup>sensation or a</sup> <sup>call to</sup> <sup>action</sup> <sup>of</sup> <sup>comparison</sup> of familiar sensations. Hence, I am in the habit of giving as the type of a direct sign, the kind of sign that conveys the proposition, a portrait with the name of the subject, partly person, <sup>the subject's eyes</sup> <sup>is</sup> <sup>perceived</sup> <sup>that</sup> <sup>a</sup> <sup>proposition</sup> <sup>describes</sup> <sup>an</sup> <sup>experiment</sup>. The subject (antecedent) prescribes what is to be done, <sup>and</sup> <sup>the</sup> <sup>predicate</sup> <sup>of</sup> <sup>the</sup> <sup>consequent</sup> tells what to expect will happen, and every proposition

CP 22 | really relates to the future. For a record of the past can have no application except as an indicator of what is to be expected in the future. I am not thinking of what are called the lessons of history or anything so fanciful, but simply and <sup>solely</sup> <sup>literally</sup> for example that when you read of Miriam's finding Moses in the bullrushes, all this tells you simply and solely that when you shall hear again of Moses, - a this bringing seven plagues upon Egypt, for example, you will remember that he is the Jew whose life the princes of Egypt so injudiciously saved, and so the bull will go gathering matter as it rolls, until it comes to something affecting your action

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CP (Vol. XVIII, pp. 296-306)

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