

The Originality of William James' Pragmatism

Sangjun Jeong

〈KAIST〉

II

In the domain of thought the United States was largely dependent upon Europe in its earlier years. Political independence in 1776 did not mean cultural independence as well. Puritanism, rationalism, the Unitarian movement, and transcendentalism were the adaptations of the European concepts to the new conditions of American life. In their depth and breadth, they could not compete with the European counterparts. When Alexis de Tocqueville observed that Americans had no philosophical school of their own, his judgment was substantially true. He further suggested that Americans had little interest in the philosophical matters. At the same time, however, he pointed out that Americans had a philosophical method common to the whole people. According to Tocqueville (1948: 3), Americans had a tendency "to accept the tradition as a means of information, and existing facts only as a lesson to be used in doing otherwise and doing better; to seek the reason of things for oneself, and in oneself alone; to tend to results without being bound to means." Although the validity of this claim is debatable, it is interesting that his observation has much in common with what is usually accepted as the basic traits of American pragmatism.

The term pragmatism was first introduced into philosophy by Charles Sanders Peirce. He laid a foundation for the development of pragmatism as a comprehensive philosophical system. It was William James, however, who made it widely known. It was his exposition of pragmatism that was received and read by the world at large. In his development and popularization of pragmatism, James was severely criticized for being subjective. Bertrand Russell (1972: 818) condemned James' philosophy as "a form of the subjectivistic madness." Even pragmatists themselves opposed James' debasement of pragmatism. Peirce, despairing of the development of pragmatism by James, distinguished his pragmatism from James', naming his doctrine "pragmaticism" which is ugly enough to be safe from kidnappers."¹⁾ Sidney Hook (1974, ix) often put his pragmatism in the social and scientific tradi-

tion of Peirce and Dewey. Historians usually sided with Peirce, tending to discredit James' applications of the pragmatic rule to concrete issues of life. It can be contended, however, as Horace S. Thayer (1961: 431) argues, that James was developing a substantially different type of pragmatism which is only superficially related to Peirce's thought. I intend to argue for this view, through expounding and comparing what I take to be the central theses of the two pragmatic philosophers: Peirce's theory of meaning and James' theory of truth and experience. My exposition will also include the point that James' pragmatism is in large part critical of much of American culture. Since James' ideas evolved throughout his life and he can be seen from one's interests as a moralist, psychologist, philosopher of faith, empiricist, metaphysician, and so forth, I will confine my discussion to James as a pragmatic empiricist, concentrating on his later views.

II

Pragmatism was initially a theory of meaning, then a theory of truth, a philosophy of life, and finally a social theory. With Peirce, pragmatism, as a theory of meaning, is a method for making ideas clear. More precisely, pragmatism is "a method of determining the meanings of intellectual concepts, that is, of those upon which reasonings may turn" (CP 5. 8). How can one attain the clear meaning of intellectual concepts? Peirce provides the following pragmatic maxim:

In order to ascertain the meaning of an intellectual conception one should consider what practical consequences might conceivably result by necessity from the truth of that conception; and the sum of these consequences will constitute the entire meaning of the conception (CP 5. 9).

The meaning of "practical consequences" is crucial in understanding Peirce's pragmatism. With Peirce, the term "consequence" does not mean that which follows. When he talks about "consequence," he distinguishes it from an antecedent and a consequent:

The consequence has only one expressed premise, called the *antecedent*; its conclusion is called the *consequent*; and the proposition which asserts that in case the antecedent be true, the consequent is true, is called the consequence (Moore, 1961: 43).

1) Charles S. Peirce, *Collected Papers* vol. 5, eds. Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960), paragraph 5. 414. Subsequent references will be in the abbreviated form CP 5. 414.

Peirce, by "consequence," refers to the process in which the consequent follows from the antecedent.

"Practical" is a term similar to "consequence." Peirce defines a practical consideration as a consideration that "certain lines of conduct will entail certain kinds of inevitable experiences." In other words, it is the idea that "if one exerts certain kinds of volition, one will undergo in return certain compulsory perceptions" (CP 5. 9). An idea of a practical consideration involves an experience of conduct or volition and an experience of perception, but it is neither of them. It is the relation between the idea of volition and the idea of perception.

It naturally follows that a practical consideration has relation to conduct or action. Peirce, however, does not suggest that one has to actually perform certain actions to explain the meaning of an idea.

No doubt, Pragmaticism ... makes thought ultimately *apply* to action exclusively—to *conceived* action. But between admitting that and either saying that it makes thought, in the sense of the purport of symbols, to consist in acts, or saying that the true ultimate purpose of thinking is action, there is much the same difference as there is between saying that the artist-painter's living art is applied to dabbing paint upon canvas, and saying that art-life consists in dabbing paint, or that its ultimate aim is dabbing paint (CP 5. 402 n3).

With Peirce, the meaning of an idea is explicable in terms of its practically conceived effects. Consequently, his pragmatic maxim takes the conditional form. That is, if under certain conditions, certain conceivable actions are performed, then a set of results (consequents) would be observed. The sum of these practical effects (consequences) is, with Peirce, the whole meaning of a conception. For example, to say a thing is *hard* means that if under certain conditions one attempts to scratch it with other things, then one will observe no scratch. According to the pragmatic maxim, the whole conception of hardness lies in the sum of this kind of conceived effects (CP 5. 403).

In applying the theory of meaning to the idea of reality, Peirce introduces the role of the community of investigators in determining what truth and reality are. According to him, the conception of reality "essentially involves the notion of a COMMUNITY" (CP 5. 311). Why is it so? Peirce here resorts to a theory of probability. What does it mean to say that a man with a disease has a sixty percent chance to survive after an operation? It obviously does not mean that if he has the operation ten times he will survive six times and will die four times. What it means is that if the operation is performed indefinitely in a community, six out of ten will survive. The prediction has meaning only when it is applied

to a whole community (see Moore, 1961: 65-66). Likewise, man has knowledge only when he sees himself as a member of a community of investigators. Peirce concludes: "The opinion which is fated to be ultimately agreed to by all who investigate, is what we mean by the truth, and the object represented in this opinion is the real" (CP 5. 407).

In his definition of reality and his emphasis on the conceivability of concepts rather than on actual performance, it is certain that Peirce is a realist. That is, he believes concepts are general ideas and they have real external counterparts. Accordingly, what is important for him when he applies the pragmatic rule to a concept is the greatest possible application of the concept. Peirce says:

... 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 (CP 5. 427).

Consequently, Peirce writes that "the pragmaticist does not make the *summum bonum* to consist in action, but makes it to consist in that process of evolution whereby the existent comes more and more to embody those generals which were just now said to be *destined*" (CP 5. 433).

In the final analysis, Peirce's theory of meaning is grounded in the notion of community. In his pursuit of knowledge of the true object, Peirce does not stick to absolute certainty. He recognizes fundamental limitations of man in attaining the absolute certainty of his knowledge. Thus, he goes around the unknowable certainty, and instead considers the practical effects of a conception, hoping that human community will, in the end, attain true knowledge. This circumvention makes possible a forward movement which otherwise might be blocked due to theoretical difficulties.

III

With James, as with Peirce, pragmatism is a theory of meaning. It is "primarily a method of settling metaphysical disputes that otherwise might be interminable" (James, 1975a: 28). That is to say, the pragmatist examines the practical consequences of concepts to ascertain their meanings. If two apparently different theories show no difference in their practical effects, their difference is verbal and they are really the same theory. In

this regard James follows the pragmatic method as conceived by Peirce. However, pragmatism is for James more than achieving clarity of meaning. It is also a theory of truth (James, 1975a). This theory is the central doctrine of his pragmatism.²⁾

The main difference between James' pragmatism and Peirce's lies in the interpretation of the terms "pragmatic" and "practical." While Peirce (CP 5. 412) uses "pragmatic" in Kantian fashion as *pragmatisch*, referring to an experimental and purposive type of mind, James (1975a: 28) derives the term from the Greek *pragma* meaning action. By the term "practical," which Peirce uses as a relational concept, James (1975b: 113) means "the distinctively concrete, the individual, particular, and effective, as opposed to the abstract, general, and inert." Hence, whereas Peirce seeks the meaning of ideas in a general formula of conceivable effects, James (1975b: 118) focuses upon the "functional possibilities" of ideas in specific human action. As Dewey (1973: 45) points out, James is more of a nominalist, while Peirce is a realist. "The whole function of philosophy," James (1975: 30) says, "ought to be to find out what definite difference it will make to you and me, at definite instants of our life, if this world-formula or that world-formula be the true one." James' pragmatism is a device enabling an individual in specific instances of life to discover and attain true beliefs.

James' theory of truth does not presuppose the complete denial of the traditional copy theory of truth. With him truth is a property of certain of our ideas, not of realities. In other words, realities are not true or false, but simply are. They are independent of us. Truth of ideas means their agreement with realities while falsity means their disagreement with realities (James, 1975a: 96, 108).

However, in determining the meaning of "agreement with reality," James' theory stands in sharp contrast with the correspondence view.

To 'agree' in the widest sense with a reality, *can only mean to be guided either straight up to it or into its surroundings, or to be put into such working touch with it as to handle either it or something connected with it better than if we disagreed.* Better either intellectually or practically! (James, 1975a: 102)

2) James' theory of truth constitutes the most controversial part of his philosophy. As a master of style, James gives various formulations of the theory. To his sympathizers the theory is rich, original and infinitely suggestive. To unsympathetic critics, however, it is full of inconsistencies and contradictions. In order to understand James' conception of truth, it is important to remember that temperamentally he is a man who takes larger views. He is not much interested in arriving at a formal definition of truth. Thus, it is essential to see the spirit of his writings instead of technical details. James once complained that his critics "have boggled at every word they could boggle at, and refused to take the spirit rather than the letter" (James, 1975b: 99).

More specifically, James (1975b: 117) defines agreement to mean “certain ways of ‘working,’ be they actual or potential.” If one takes “working” in the ordinary sense as the criterion of truth, one will criticise James’ view for being subjective and irrational. If that is not the case with James, what does he mean by “working”? For James (1975a: 34-35), “working” means the mediation between a stock of old opinions that an individual has and a new experience that he meets. James says:

[New truth] marries old opinion to new fact so as ever to show a minimum of jolt, a maximum of continuity. We hold a theory true *just in proportion* to its success in solving this ‘problem of maxima and minima.’ But success in solving this problem is eminently a matter of approximation. We say this theory solves it on the whole *more satisfactorily than* that theory ... That new idea is *truest* which performs most felicitously its function of satisfying our double urgency. It makes itself true, gets itself classed as true, by the way it works (1975a: 35-36. Italics mine).

With James, truth is a comparative notion. When he says an idea is true, it means that that idea is truer than another in a specific instance (Browning, 1984: 1). In other words, that idea works better than another. Truth means a process of the growth, a growth which entails that an idea becomes truer.

The truth of an idea is verified in a process of inquiry within which both ideas are examined in regard to their fitness for working in a concrete situation.

True ideas are those that we can assimilate, validate, corroborate and verify. False ideas are those that we can not. That is the practical difference it makes to us to have true ideas; that, therefore, is the meaning of truth, for it is all that truth is known-as (James, 1975a: 97).

Thus, truth of an idea is not a stagnant property inherent in it as the copy view claims. James says:

Truth *happens* to an idea. It *becomes* true, is *made* true by events. Its verity is in fact an event, a process: the process namely of its verifying itself, its *veri-fication*. Its validity is the process of its *valid-ation* (1975a: 97).

The problem here is that the verification of both ideas is not experienced in actual fact. What we can experience is *one* of our contradicting ideas in the process of being verified up to now. We can never be absolutely certain that one idea is truer than another in fact (Browning, 1984).

In James’ framework, therefore, the truth of an idea is limited to time and situation.

When James says one knows a belief is true, he means that one experiences the verifying of the belief in a specific instance relative to one's other contrary beliefs, and in a given moment it is truer than the other. Truth is no longer something permanent or static. It is relative and dynamic. James says:

How plastic even the oldest truths ... really are has been vividly shown in our day by the transformation of logical and mathematical ideas, a transformation which seems even to be invading physics. The ancient formulas are reinterpreted as special expressions of much wider principles, principles that our ancestors never got a glimpse of in their present shape and formulation (1975a: 37).

Truth turns its face towards the future, hoping "a potential better truth to be established later ... absolutely" (James, 1975a: 107).

With James, the agreement of an idea with reality means the process of its verification. When an idea is verified, it agrees with reality. When it agrees, it works and is true. The assumption here, with James, as with Peirce, is that we cannot have certainty as to our true beliefs. The only possible way is to put an idea or belief in the realm of experience and observe the results which it produces. In this process, James' primary emphasis is upon the action and the result. This does not mean that he ignores the relation between an idea and the result. James formulates his version of the pragmatic maxim as follows:

To attain perfect clearness in our thoughts of an object, then, we need only consider what conceivable effects of a practical kind the object may involve—what *sensations* we are to expect from it, and what *reactions* we must prepare. Our conception of these effects, whether immediate or remote, is then for us the whole of our conception of the object, so far as that conception has positive significance at all (1975a: 29. Italics mine).

It is certain that he includes the relation between an idea and the result in his rule. However, his main concern is with the sensations and reactions. Following Peirce's terms, James is primarily concerned with the antecedent and the consequent, and secondly with the consequence, while Peirce is concerned mainly with the consequence (Moore, 1961). This change in emphasis is mainly because James is primarily concerned with the definite difference a true belief can make to an individual at a definite instance of life. As Dewey (1973: 46) points out, James is a humanist, whereas Peirce is above all a logician.

However, at the same time that he stresses the particular difference a true belief effects, as Thayer (1981: 152-53) points out, James does not disregard objective and socially shared controls over truth and falsity. James says:

We must find a theory that will *work*, and that means something extremely difficult; for our theory must mediate between all previous truths and certain new experiences. It must derange common sense and previous belief as little as possible, and it must lead to some sensible terminus or other that can be verified exactly. To 'work' means both these things (1975a: 104).

Working truth is subject to the objective procedure of verification, and should be acceptable whether socially or otherwise. With this constraint, James (1975a: 98) remarks of a working idea that " 'it is useful because it is true' or that 'it is true because it is useful.' Both these phrases mean exactly the same thing."³⁾

In his theory of truth, James makes pragmatism develop from a theory of analyzing the uses of language to a method for solving problems of life. In so doing, he shifts the emphasis of pragmatism from universality to particularity. He is concerned with the particular difference a true belief can make to a particular individual at a particular instant of life. However, James does not ignore the existence of society as a controller of truth and falsity.

IV

James describes his philosophical attitude as that of radical empiricism. According to him (1975b: 6), "the establishment of the pragmatist theory of truth is a step of first-rate importance in making radical empiricism prevail." James is an empiricist. He admits nothing into his philosophy that is not directly experienced and excludes nothing from it that is directly experienced. However, James' empiricism is distinguished from traditional empiricism. His is radical. It is radical in the sense that the relations between things are held to be as real and as much a part of experience as are the things themselves (James 1975b; 1975c). British empiricism, specially that of David Hume, was atomistic. According to Hume (Perry, 1975: 173-76), everything is a bundle of distinct impressions and ideas. That is, all of our perceptions are distinct and separate. The mind never perceives any real connection among distinct existences. Everything is disassociated from everything else.

3) Thayer lists three qualifications for James' will to believe, which is an earlier version of James' pragmatic theory of truth: 1) the choice of a belief rather than another is "live," "forced," and "momentous"; 2) the evidence for or against the chosen belief is equal, or admits of no rational adjudication of one over the other; 3) the effect of the chosen belief is a "vital benefit" (Thayer, 1967: 433-34). Thus, it is evident that with James true belief does not mean a matter of private desires or willing.

One way to solve the problem of relating disjunctive things is to introduce a transcendent principle of explanation, for example, Absolute mind as in absolute idealism or *a priori* as in Kant.

James rejects this type of non-empiricist solution and contends that the cause for Hume's failure was that Hume was not radical enough in his empiricism. James says:

Radical empiricism takes conjunctive relations at their face value, holding them to be as real as the terms united by them. The world it represents as a collection, some parts of which are conjunctively and others disjunctively related (1975c: 52).

James' contention is that man actually does experience relations. For example, when man hears two bell strokes consecutively, he experiences the second stroke as related to the first. If this is not the case, he would not experience the second stroke. Likewise, when man sees two things, for example, a desk and a chair, at a given moment, he sees them as related to each other in space (see Moore, 1966: 136). Thus, James' argument for the reality of relations eliminates the necessity for a trans-empirical explanation and provides continuity within the flow of experience. James stresses that his view enables us to explain our experience on its own term. James summarizes his view as follows:

Radical empiricism consists first of a postulate, next of a statement of fact, and finally of a generalized conclusion.

The postulate is that the only things that shall be debatable among philosophers shall be things definable in terms drawn from experience....

The statement of fact is that the relations between things, conjunctive as well as disjunctive, are just as much matters of direct particular experience, neither more or nor less so, than the things themselves.

The generalized conclusion is that therefore the parts of experience hold together from next to next by relations that are themselves parts of experience. The directly apprehended universe needs, in short, no extraneous trans-empirical connective support, but possesses in its own right a concatenated or continuous structure (1975c: 6-7).

James' empiricism, combined with the pragmatic maxim, gives rise to a cognitive theory fundamentally different from the previous view. Traditionally, both empiricists and rationalists have assumed two separate entities, the knowing subject on the one hand, the known object on the other. According to their view, the process of knowing the object takes place wholly within the knowing mind, whereas the object is entirely unaffected by the knowing process. This framework generates the problem of bridging the "epistemological

chasm" (James, 1975b: 81) between the knower's mind and the known object. As James sees it, the question here is whether knowing is a saltatory relation or an ambulatory one. Traditional theory, according to James (1975b: 79-80), considers knowing a saltatory relation. That is, the mind leaps upon the object, or the object leaps into the mind. There are no intermediaries in the process of knowing.

For James knowing is an ambulatory process. Knowing is a process between one part of our experience and another through intervening experiences:

Cognition, whenever we take it concretely, means determinate "ambulation," through intermediaries, from a *terminus a quo* to, or towards, a *terminus ad quem* (1975b: 81).

In the process of knowing, there is a knowing mind at one end, and the object to be known at the other. Between the two is a flux of experience. To know an object is to follow an idea which leads one through a stream of experience up to an object to be known. Thus, knowing is to complete the actual process and knowledge is the result of the operation of the process.

Knowledge of sensible realities thus comes to life inside the tissue of experience. It is *made*; and made by relations that unroll themselves in time. Whenever certain intermediaries are given, such that, as they develop towards their terminus, there is experience from point to point of one direction followed, and finally of one process fulfilled, the result is that *their starting-point thereby becomes a knower and their terminus an object meant or known* (James, 1975b: 63).

If knowledge is made through the operation of the knowing process, knowledge of an object changes as new experiences are added to it. This means that absolute knowledge is only theoretically possible. Man would have absolute knowledge when he reaches a point where all possible experiences have been had. Actually, however, man cannot know whether no further new experiences are possible or not. All knowledge is provisional. If there exists an external reality, man's knowledge of it is only an approximation of it. Man can only approach the "brink" and "fringes" of reality.

Our whole notion of a standing reality grows up in the form of an ideal limit to the series of successive termini to which our thoughts have led us and still are leading us. Each terminus proves provisional by leaving us unsatisfied. The truer idea is the one that pushes farther; so we are ever beckoned on by the ideal notion of an ultimate completely satisfactory terminus (James, 1975b: 88-89).

Ether-waves and your anger, for example, are things in which my thoughts will never perceptually terminate, but my concepts of them lead me to their very brink, to the chromatic fringes and to the hurtful words and deeds which are their really next effects (James, 1975b: 69).

Through the process of knowing, things are known. Man attains the knowledge of the objects. At the same time, it becomes the point of departure of attaining new knowledge in the new knowing process. This means that with James, as with Peirce, the search for attaining knowledge is a never-ending process. Thus, knowledge is not retrospective, but prospective. It is oriented toward the future. It looks away from "first things, principles, 'categories,' supposed necessities," but looks towards "last things, fruits, consequences, facts" (James, 1975a: 32). According to Dewey (1942: 54), James, through his combination of the pragmatic method and empiricism, "opened up paths of access to nothing less than a revolutionary change in traditional empiricism."

This notion of knowing as the endless process rejects the presupposition that the world is already determined and constructed. The evolution of the universe has not completed. The universe is "unfinished, growing in all sorts of places, especially in the places where thinking beings are at work" (James, 1975a: 124). If what the universe is to become has not been determined, then man has room for making it decide its conclusion. This view is sharply contrasted with the doctrine of pessimism which assumes that the fate of man and the universe is determined and thus the salvation⁴⁾ of the universe is impossible. James labels this attitude as "tough-minded." At the other extreme is the doctrine of optimism to which in turn the salvation of the world is inevitable. James names this view "tender-minded" (James, 1975a: 137). James' attitude is in-between, which he calls the doctrine of meliorism. "Meliorism," James (1975a: 137) says, "treats salvation as neither inevitable nor impossible. It treats it as a possibility, which becomes more and more of a probability the more numerous the actual conditions of salvation become." In James' vision, the outcome of the evolution of the universe will be decided, at least in part, by human elements. It is possible to make a world in which man is saved and human values are preserved. However, there is no guarantee for that. It is only possible if human beings work together. James says:

Suppose that the world's author put the case to you before creation, saying: "I am going to make a world not certain to be saved, a world the perfection of which shall be conditional merely, the condition being that each several agent does its own 'level best.' I offer you the chance of taking part in such a world. Its safety, you see, is unwarranted. It is a real adventure, with real danger, yet it may

4) Here, James does not use the word 'salvation' in a religious sense. He tells his audience to interpret it in any way they like (*Pragmatism*, p. 137).

win through. It is a social scheme of co-operative work genuinely to be done. Will you join the procession? Will you trust yourself and trust the other agents enough to face the risk?" (James, 1975a: 139)

With James such a world is the world man actually lives in. He believes a healthy-minded man would accept the offer to participate in making such a world good. His philosophy is thus an attempt to "make some positive connexion with this actual world of finite lives" (James, 1975a: 17).

James' pragmatism is a philosophy whose footing is firmly on the ground. In his pursuit of true knowledge, James, like Peirce, does not seek to discover the absolute point of departure outside the sphere of experience. He starts from where he is. He believes that there is no other place to start. Thus, James rejects an absolutist view. He does not believe he can know he knows absolute truth in any given moment. This does not mean that James denies the existence of truth. If he denies it, he blocks the way to inquiry, and thus will not try to find any truth that might exist. According to James, truth exists only in the future. Man cannot know he knows it at any given moment. Instead, man makes truth become truer in the process of verification, hoping in the end he can attain the truest. In James' framework the future is open-ended.

Thus, James' pragmatism has a metaphysical implication. The notion of truth as the process of becoming takes the future as being in the process of formation, or being "plastic." The making of the universe has not been finished yet. Here, the role of an individual as a constructing entity assumes an important meaning. Through his thought, with the intermediary role of action, he can make the future. In James' universe, an individual becomes a creative agent.

The notion of the future in the making has, however, an additional level of meaning. At the same time that the unfinished world provides man with possibilities of action, it becomes the source of the precarious and hazardous nature of our existence. For, it is arbitrary which direction of change the unfinished world will take. The world is a scene of danger, risk and adventure. In order to control and predict an unstable human existence, ideas are adopted and actions are taken according to the ideas. Despite all of these attempts, however, James says, "ineluctable woes and losses form part of [life] ... there are genuine sacrifices, and something permanently drastic and bitter always remains at the bottom of [life]" Here, James' pragmatism assumes what Hook calls "the tragic sense of life" (Hook, 1974: 5).⁵ It is the outcome of the acknowledgment of inescapable limita-

tions of human intelligence and actions. In this light, James' hope to approximate reality and never-ending pursuit to attain true knowledge take on a different meaning. His attempts are imbued with an existential strain. Pragmatic action becomes something like an existential struggle. Underneath the optimistic and active surface of James' pragmatism lies a deep recognition of a precarious and haphazard human condition and the fundamental limitations of man to deal with it. In brief, James' pragmatism is rooted in the awareness of a tragic sense of life.

V

In considering James' pragmatism in its relation to American society and culture, it has been often suggested that his theory was the characteristic expression of American mind. That is, James' conception of the universe in the process of formation and his emphasis on the importance of the individual and human action were the reflection of the prevailing temper of his time in America. His theory emerged out of a need to record a unique experience of America. According to Ralph H. Gabriel,

it was inevitable that the majority of Americans in the post-Appomattox generation of William James should believe in the efficacy of individual effort to bring about material and social change. The tide of industrialism was sweeping over America as the bore roars up the Bay of Fundy. As new cities rose and new industrial empires came into being, it was difficult not to believe with Henry Demarest Lloyd that man is the creator of society. All current popular American faiths, the gospel of wealth, the religion of humanity, emphasized the creative role of the active individual. James went with his age (1956: 338).

From this perspective, James' theory emerged out of a need to record a unique experience of America, and the emergence and wide acceptance of James' philosophy were not a historical accident (Gabriel, 1956; Novack, 1975). It was a philosophy suitable for a country in the becoming and growing. For sympathizers with American culture, such an emergence

5) Hook first used this phrase when he interpreted Karl Marx in pragmatic terms in the 1930s. According to Hook, Marx never thought that a socialist society could realize a perfect society. Marx recognized inherent limitations and failure of human experience. Nevertheless, with Marx, the unattainability of a perfect society does not justify the existence of any kind of man or society. Thus, as Hook sees it, Marx' theory is an attempt to approximate perfection. According to Hook, under Marxism, man ceases to suffer as an animal and suffer as man. In brief, Marxism is grounded in the recognition of the tragic sense of life. Hook finds this strain in James' pragmatism, too.

meant the attainment of originality in American thought and the eventual independence of America from the European cultural colonialism. At the same time, for critics, it meant the embodiment of American materialism and justification of big business (Suckiel, 1982).

Without doubt, certain relations exist between a culture and a philosophy that is born therein. However, the relations are not causal connections. In general, the generalizations of the relations between the two are something less than meaningful. In addition, it is a characteristic of philosophy to live on its past. Each philosopher makes use of the materials, methods, and insights that his predecessors have developed. Even when he rejects the heritage, his rebellion is possible only assuming the existence of the past. A philosophy cannot be typical of a time or a nation in the ultimate sense. Pragmatism is not an exception to this. In its case, the past was the European philosophy. In its employment of basic concepts, technical doctrine and systematic organization, pragmatism is not typically American at all. For instance, as mentioned, the term "pragmatic" itself was adopted by Peirce through his study of Kant. James dedicated his book *Pragmatism* to John S. Mill from whom he first learned pragmatic openness of mind. If pragmatism, being rooted in European thought, should be understood in the context of the European philosophical history, it does not sound convincing to contend that his pragmatism is the first indigenous American philosophy since it reflected American life or mind.

If pragmatism should be understood in the history of Western philosophy, it could be argued against James that his idea is the sum of the diverse influences of other philosophers. For example, subtract from James' pragmatism Peirce's pragmatic maxim and what Max Fisch (1954: 413-44; 1964: 465) suggests as the influencing forces in the genesis of pragmatism, such as Bain's theory of belief, Darwinian evolutionary theories, British empiricism, German psychologists, and so on. If the results of these receptions were eliminated, almost nothing would be left of James' pragmatism. Then, what does it mean when it is said that James' pragmatism is original? Here, again, Dewey provides an illuminating insight.

[James'] pragmatism ... presents itself as an extension of historical empiricism, but with this fundamental difference, that it does not insist upon antecedent phenomena but upon consequent phenomena; not upon the precedents but upon the possibilities of action. And this change in point of view is almost revolutionary in its consequences (Dewey, 1973: 50).

By relating the pragmatic maxim with traditional empiricism using his theory of radical empiricism, the notion that the relations between the things are as real as the things

themselves, James suggested a genuinely new view of the traditional theory of truth and knowledge. In this sense, James was original.

The argument that James' originality lies in his contribution to the whole of Western philosophy requires that one must not see his philosophy simply as a philosophical version of the popular American mind, nor a justification of American culture. Of course, the American environment did have an influence upon the formulation of his pragmatism. If the positions of his pragmatism had entirely disregarded the needs and attitudes of Americans, it would not have been so widespread in American culture. James' pragmatism, however, was not a unilateral reflection of tendencies that prevailed in American life. It was in large part a criticism of certain of its aspects.

James was a spokesman for small countries, the underdog, the minority point of view. He was against growing tendencies in American life, such as the fighting instinct, mob hysteria and bigness. He saw the dangers of these tendencies in the Venezuela incident, the Spanish-American War and American policy in the Philippines. Accordingly, James participated in the Anti-Imperialist League. As he conceived it, imperialism was the embodiment of the fighting instinct and the passion of mastery disguised by the profession of benevolence (Perry, 1936: 304-18). James' abhorrence of bigness is most clearly expressed in the following:

I am against bigness and greatness in all their forms, and with the invisible molecular moral forces that work from individual to individual, stealing in through the crannies of the world like so many soft rootlets, or monuments of man's pride, if you give them time. The bigger the unit you deal with, the hollower, the more brutal, the more mendacious is the life displayed. So I am against all big organizations as such, national ones first and foremost; against all big successes and big results; and in favor of the eternal forces of truth which always work in the individual and immediately unsuccessful way, under-dogs always, till history comes, after they are long dead, and puts them on the top (Perry, 1936: 317).

Considering his animosity against bigness along with his conception of the workability of truth as a mediation between a new truth and the existing stock of old truths, it is difficult to see James' pragmatism as a philosophy advocating American materialism and the growth of big business in America. He was critical of those tendencies. James, however, did not develop a theory to confront the facts of industrial organization and conflicting economic forces in American society, and to illuminate a way to deal with these matters. Even though he did not disregard the existence of society, his primary concern was with the par-

ticular individual. The full development of pragmatism in the direction of a social theory had to be made by Dewey who examined ways of controlling and directing social conditions through education or through revision of the institutions of society.

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