

Pragmaticism

1905 | What Pragmatism Is | CP 5.414

After awaiting in vain, for a good many years, some particularly opportune conjuncture of circumstances that might serve to recommend his notions of the ethics of terminology, the writer has now, at last, dragged them in over head and shoulders, on an occasion when he has no specific proposal to offer nor any feeling but satisfaction at the course usage has run without any canons or resolutions of a congress. His word "pragmatism" has gained general recognition in a generalized sense that seems to argue power of growth and vitality. The famed psychologist, James, first took it up, seeing that his "radical empiricism" substantially answered to the writer's definition of pragmatism, albeit with a certain difference in the point of view. Next, the admirably clear and brilliant thinker, Mr. Ferdinand C.S. Schiller, casting about for a more attractive name for the "anthropomorphism" of his *Riddle of the Sphinx*, lit, in that most remarkable paper of his on *Axioms as Postulates*, upon the same designation "pragmatism," which in its original sense was in generic agreement with his own doctrine, for which he has since found the more appropriate specification "humanism," while he still retains "pragmatism" in a somewhat wider sense. So far all went happily. But at present, the word begins to be met with occasionally in the literary journals, where it gets abused in the merciless way that words have to expect when they fall into literary clutches. Sometimes the manners of the British have effloresced in scolding at the word as ill-chosen - ill-chosen, that is, to express some meaning that it was rather designed to exclude. So then, the writer, finding his bantling "pragmatism" so promoted, feels that it is time to kiss his child good-by and relinquish it to its higher destiny; while to serve the precise purpose of expressing the original definition, he begs to announce the birth of the word "pragmaticism," which is ugly enough to be safe from kidnappers.

1905 | Issues of Pragmaticism | CP 5.438

Pragmaticism was originally enounced in the form of a maxim, as follows: Consider what effects that might *conceivably* have practical bearings you *conceive* the objects of your *conception* to have. Then, your *conception* of those effects is the whole of your *conception* of the object.

I will restate this in other words, since ofttimes one can thus eliminate some unsuspected source of perplexity to the reader. This time it shall be in the indicative mood, as follows: The entire intellectual purport of any symbol consists in the total of all general modes of rational conduct which, conditionally upon all the possible different circumstances and desires, would ensue upon the acceptance of the symbol.

1905 | Issues of Pragmaticism | CP 5.442

... it is to conceptions of deliberate conduct that Pragmaticism would trace the intellectual purport of symbols; and deliberate conduct is self-controlled conduct.

1905 | Issues of Pragmaticism | CP 5.453

Pragmaticism makes the ultimate intellectual purport of what you please to consist in conceived conditional resolutions, or their substance; and therefore, the conditional propositions, with their hypothetical antecedents, in which such resolutions consist, being of the ultimate nature of meaning, must be capable of being true, that is, of expressing whatever there be which is such as the proposition expresses, independently of being thought to be so in any judgment, or being represented to be so in any other symbol of any man or men. But that amounts to saying that possibility is sometimes of a real kind.

1905 | Issues of Pragmaticism | CP 5.460

Pragmaticism consists in holding that the purport of any concept is its conceived bearing upon our conduct.

1905 [c.] | The Basis of Pragmaticism | MS [R] 908:3-4; EP 2:361-362

The contents of most logic books is a syncretistic hodgepodge, and it is difficult to detect any differences but those of detail between one book and another. It is certain, however, that there have been, and still are, many logicians who in regard to our more primary and simple thoughts would protest against the theory that they have any exterior meaning. "The meaning!" these logicians would exclaim, "That *is* precisely the concept!" The refutation of this opinion will make us pragmatists, according to my analysis. In order to establish *pragmaticism*, it will be necessary further to show that if the ultimate interpretation of a thought relates to anything but a determination of conditional conduct, it cannot be of an intellectual quality and so is not in the strictest sense a *concept*.

1905 [c.] | Letters to Mario Calderoni | CP 8.205-6

In the April number of the *Monist* ['What Pragmatism Is', 1905] I proposed that the word 'pragmatism' should hereafter be used somewhat loosely to signify affiliation with Schiller, James, Dewey, Royce, and the rest of us, while the particular doctrine which I invented the word to denote, which is your first kind of pragmatism, should be called 'pragmaticism.' The extra syllable will indicate the narrower meaning.

Pragmaticism is not a system of philosophy. It is only a method of thinking...

1905 [c.] | Letters to Mario Calderoni | CP 8.209

... pragmaticism is simply the doctrine that the inductive method is the only essential to the ascertainment of the intellectual purport of any symbol.

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 that art-life consists in dabbing paint, or that its ultimate aim is dabbing paint. Pragmaticism makes thinking to consist in the living inferential metaboly of symbols whose purport lies in conditional general resolutions to act.

Since I have employed the word Pragmaticism, and shall have occasion to use it once more, it may perhaps be well to explain it. About forty years ago, my studies of Berkeley, Kant, and others led me, after convincing myself that all thinking is performed in Signs, and that meditation takes the form of a dialogue, so that it is proper to speak of the 'meaning' of a concept, to conclude that to acquire full mastery of that meaning it is requisite, in the first place, to learn to recognize the concept under every disguise, through extensive familiarity with instances of it. But this, after all, does not imply any true understanding of it; so that it is further requisite that we should make an abstract logical analysis of it into its ultimate elements, or as complete an analysis as we can compass. But, even so, we may still be without any living comprehension of it; and the only way to complete our knowledge of its nature is to discover and recognize just what general habits of conduct a belief in the truth of the concept (of any conceivable subject, and under any conceivable circumstances) would reasonably develop; that is to say, what habits would ultimately result from a sufficient consideration of such truth. It is necessary to understand the word 'conduct,' here, in the broadest sense. If, for example, the predication of a given concept were to lead to our admitting that a given form of reasoning concerning the subject of which it was affirmed was valid, when it would not otherwise be valid, the recognition of that effect in our reasoning would decidedly be a habit of conduct.

A special and limited form of pragmatism, in which the pragmatism is restricted to the determining of the meaning of concepts (particularly of philosophic concepts) by consideration of the experimental differences in the conduct of life which would conceivably result from the affirmation or denial of the meaning in question.

According to that logical doctrine which the present writer first formulated in 1873 and named Pragmatism, the true meaning of any product of the intellect lies in whatever unitary determination it would impart to practical conduct under any and every conceivable circumstance, supposing such conduct to be guided by reflexion carried to an ultimate limit. It appears to have been virtually the philosophy of Socrates. But although it is "an old way of thinking," in the sense that it was practiced by

Spinoza, Berkeley, and Kant, I am not aware of its having been definitely formulated, whether as a maxim of logical analysis or otherwise, by anybody before my publication of it in 1878. [—] It did not, however, shine with its present effulgence until Professor Papini made the discovery that it cannot be defined - a circumstance which, I believe, distinguishes it from all other doctrines, of whatsoever natures they may be, that were ever promulgated. Thereupon I thought it high time to give my method a less distinguished designation; and I rechristened it *pragmaticism*. Pragmaticism, then, is a theory of logical analysis, or true definition; and its merits are greatest in its application to the highest metaphysical conceptions.

1910-07-19 | Letters to Paul Carus | MS [L] 77

Pragmatism (pragmaticism) might be defined as that mode of thinking that never results in a concept that is equivalent to a noun substantive, since all that it thinks is an assertion, or a qualified assertion such as “suppose that (so and so),” or else it is equivalent to an expression of the speaker’s will not *asserting* it so much as *exhibiting* it.