THE FOUNDATION AND APPEARANCE OF INFLUENTIAL
MORAL CONCEPTS IN AMERICAN LIFE

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THE FOUNDATION AND APPEARANCE OF INFLUENTIAL
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THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of the North
Texas State Teachers College in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

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Corsicana, Texas

August, 1945

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of Problem

This is a study of moral concepts and how these concepts have appeared in and influenced American life.

Method of Collecting Data

The material was gathered through extensive reading and study of research data in the fields of moral and general philosophy.

Purpose of Study

It is the purpose of this thesis to study the development of some moral concepts in American life.

In order to set forth clearly this problem it will be necessary to begin with the coming of the Puritans to New England and their establishment of moral principles for daily living in the Holy Commonwealth.

The second chapter is on rationalism and what it means. It sets forth the doctrines of the leaders of this movement and the moral implications involved.

Chapter III gives a study of the scientific approach
to philosophy. Also the moral implications are pointed out. The main differences between rationalism and the scientific methods are discussed.

The influence of the scientific point of view upon the development of philosophical thought is indicated in Chapter IV, while the fifth chapter is given over to pragmatism, the distinct contribution of America to philosophy. Its meaning and moral philosophy are defined and discussed.

In the summary and conclusions the moral imports on American life as presented by Puritanism, rationalism, the scientific approach, and pragmatism are summed up and concluded.
CHAPTER II

PURITANISM

Why the Puritans Came to New England

The Puritans objected to the Stuarts of England. -- The Puritan migration to New England began when England was in the darkest hour of her struggle with King Charles I, who was determined to rule without Parliament. They felt the uselessness of trying to continue under a government that no longer allowed them to worship God according to the dictates of their own consciences. They had been forced, by law, to conform to the use of the Book of Common Prayer, to which they objected on the grounds that they were not being permitted to worship freely.¹

The Puritans wanted to set up a Holy Commonwealth. -- Their dream was to come to the new world and set up what they commonly referred to as the Holy Commonwealth. The Puritans thought they saw through it the hand of providence pointing them to a new land beyond the sea as a place where they could realize their dream of a free church in a free state. Here in this land they would be able to worship God

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as they felt in their hearts.

Who came to the new world. -- Not all the Puritans migrated to New England. The great majority of them remained at home to continue the struggle there. This was later to result in the overthrow of the Stuart Kings and their rule of personal government in England. The younger men, as a rule, came to the new world because they were not as well established at home. Those who came to the new world were by no means inferior to those who remained at home. They were radical, but not the most radical. They were still loyal Englishmen, but they were also insistent upon what they believed. They were men of learning, many of them college men, middle class gentry, artisans, and trades people. They were not considered as being extremely wealthy, but on the whole they did not suffer many of the hardships that the Pilgrims experienced. 2

The period of Puritan migration. -- The Puritans had discussed for a long time the feasibility of coming to the new world. An agreement was entered into at Cambridge, in 1629, for the settlement of New England. It was signed by John Winthrop, William Pynchon, Isaac Johnson, Thomas Dudley, and others. The emigration was begun almost immediately and was on a large scale. John Endicott started

out with forty or fifty persons bound for Salem as early as 1628. Francis Higgon brought four hundred in 1629. John Winthrop, later to be governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, sailed for New England in 1630 with eight hundred emigrants. From 1630 to 1640 the average number of arrivals per year was about two thousand people. Altogether, about twenty-one thousand came to the new world. In 1640 the Long Parliament met in England and the Puritans gained a position which assured them success at home. After 1640 few found it necessary to come to New England. However, the success of the colony in the new world was an established fact by this date. 3

The Philosophy of the Puritans in New England

The Holy Commonwealth. -- As has been stated, the Puritans came to the new world to establish a free church in a free state. They were looking for the freedom to worship God as they were able to read and interpret the scriptures. Upon this lies their moral philosophy. In New England they set out to put into practice those things which they felt to be essential to daily living. These men had been trained in the hard school of opposition in England. They were men of great faith and prayer. They had searched all history for examples by which they could pattern their

daily living. Now they found themselves transplanted into a new world. Here for a century and a half they were to be left by themselves to build a church and a state. They felt that the world would take notice of their work and that students of history would give attention to the structure they had built.  

**The Puritan and his God.** -- Because of the opposition they had suffered, the Puritans had been forced to abandon human traditions and appeal to the scriptures for the rules of life. They were men of one book and that book was the Bible. They had a profound sense of the presence of God. They did their work from day to day as though they were standing on the threshold of the world of spiritual beings. They tested all things by the moral rule of right living. Conscience played a very big part in their daily lives. They at all times exhibited a superb courage. They cared little what consequences might arise so long as they had the approval of their own consciences. The Puritan believed in the dignity of man.  

**The Puritan and his church.** -- Under the Holy Commonwealth the church was to be the dominating factor. The government should be subject to the church. The church was built on the congregational order. The clergy were the leaders in the building of this new order. They were the

4*Ibid.*, p. 120.
thinkers and to them was given the responsibility of building the philosophy of human redemption. To the Puritan the history of the universe began in the mind of God. The struggle was one of moral concepts. The final judgment of God's estimation of man's worth was moral perfection. Those who met with the strict rules would be eternally united with God. On the other hand, those who failed to measure up to such standards would be eternally damned. The church was the institution whereby man could reach this moral perfection.\(^5\)

As a result of this philosophy the Puritan prescribed to three covenants. The first was known as the covenant of grace. It was the invisible church of God's elect. These elect were united to Christ by spiritual ties, by faith, and by the free grace of God, whereby they were justified and sanctified. God alone was the judge of who were or were not saints.\(^6\)

The second was known to the church membership as the church covenant or the visible political union of the saints. It was the duty of every saint to join a church. The process of becoming a church member was rather exacting. The prospective member was first examined by the elders, who had to be thoroughly satisfied. Then as a final act a public

\(^5\)Herbert Wallace Schneider, The Puritan Mind, p. 11.

\(^6\)Ibid., p. 19.
confession was made in meeting so that all might hear and pass judgment. This ordeal was considered as sufficient barrier to all who were not saints. Those who remained outside the church, although they attended services regularly, were referred to as the unregenerate. By these first two covenants the Puritans banded themselves together in a rigid church fellowship.

In the third covenant, civil government, the church, and the state were in theory distinct but in practice they were not. Theoretically God set up the ministers who declared His will and the magistrates who were to execute His will. The ministers had authority to advise, admonish, and offer counsel. The civil authorities had the responsibility to command, judge, and punish. However, the ministers carried so much more weight in the colonies that they dominated the civil government.7

The Holy Commonwealth was designed actually to set in motion a moral organization which God would look upon with favor and bless. The church was the ruling factor in matters spiritual as well as civil.

The Puritan Schools

The Puritans believed in a well-trained mind. They realized that one of their greatest enemies was ignorance. Their desire was for everyone of their people to be able

7Ibid., p. 23.
at least to read the Bible. It is no small wonder that education held almost as high a place as did their religion. Almost as soon as churches were established, schools began to make their appearance. The Act of 1647 required every town of one hundred families or more to provide free common and grammar school instruction. The cost was to be met by funds raised by taxation or by tuition.\footnote{Miller and Johnson, The Puritans, p. 695.}

In many instances, before the Act of 1647 was passed, the ministers of the town did the teaching. However, the schools were not church-fostered. Schools were left to the civil administration. Only when ministers were acting as teachers did there appear to be any connection whatever between the schools and the churches.

The reading school or the dame school. -- The first school the child attended in New England was the reading school or the dame school. It was usually taught by a woman. The child started when not over five years of age. Reading was emphasized, and reading the \textit{Horn-book}, spelling, and the catechism were the main subjects taught. In addition to these subjects the girls were taught how to do needle work. Usually the education for girls ended with this school unless their studies were continued privately. Many students did not advance beyond this stage in their educational process. It can be said that many learned only to read.
Writing schools. -- These schools were for the more apt students who were being prepared for grammar school. These schools were usually established and "kept" by a man. The things taught in the reading or dame schools were continued in a more advanced form. The famous New England Primer was used, as well as the introduction of writing and ciphering. However, such advancement depended upon the individual's capacity to make satisfactory progress. If he could not do so, then his education of a formal nature came to a halt.

The grammar school. -- One of the oldest and most widely known of this type of school was the "Free Grammar School," better known as the Boston Latin School, opened in 1635. Here many boys were prepared for college, which was its avowed purpose. To enter schools of this type, a boy had to be at least seven years of age and be able to read to the satisfaction of the school master. The student faced a seven-year curriculum which was devoted to the classics. Entering students were taught Latin and grammar. By the fourth year they were beginning their Greek. In the sixth year they would have completed Cicero. In their seventh and last year, with the language difficulties firmly mastered, they could approach classic literature with some ease. They studied the New Testament and read Roman history in this last year. They were also able
to compose Latin verse. Having completed this course, the student was now ready to enter college. Less than half of the students completing grammar school enrolled in college. The religious element as taught in these schools was of minor importance, but the rigid discipline of the mind was of great concern.  

Higher education. — Provision was made for higher education almost as soon as grammar schools were established. Harvard College was founded by the General Court in October, 1636. It was to train students in all manner of good literature as well as in grammar, logic, rhetoric, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, metaphysics, ethics, natural science, Renaissance subjects, history, Greek, and Hebrew. Music was omitted, geometry slighted, and philosophy stressed. Hebrew was considered the foundation for an exact understanding of the Old Testament. A student entered as a freshman and after four years of successful work was granted the Bachelor of Arts degree. In order to enter the ministry the student was required to stay for specialized training for the pulpit and secure the degree of Master of Arts. 

The philosophy of the Puritan schools. — Even though the curriculum and the administration of the schools were

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9 Ibid., pp. 697-698. 10 Ibid., p. 698.
free from church interference, it is clear that religious training had an important place in the educational plan. The men who taught in the reading and grammar schools were not ministers, but they were so trained. Many later did enter the ministry. They believed that all knowledge was from God and all training was so designed that His will could be more clearly understood. Every act of the educational plan was designed to point the individual toward the better life that all Puritans were striving to obtain. The rigid discipline of mind obtained in the school was of great benefit in striving for the better life.\textsuperscript{11}

Contributions of the Puritans

The Puritans as the first American philosophical thinkers had a practical zeal to build a City of God in America. They were more certain of the reality of God’s will than they were of man’s possibilities in understanding it. They believed that “faith precedes and the intellect follows.”\textsuperscript{12} The authority for their faith was the Word of God. God was an absolute personal sovereign, whose will was never thwarted. Man, according to the Puritan philosophy, was doomed to disobey God’s laws and was,

\begin{footnotes}
\item[11] Ibid., p. 698.
\end{footnotes}
therefore, tainted with sin. It was with divine help and by living a strictly moral life that the Puritans believed they would be saved from the wrath of God.
CHAPTER III

RATIONALISM

The Rise of Rationalism

The opposition of the Roman Church. -- Although the Christian church came into power under much opposition by the government at Rome, it failed to be considerate toward those who depended upon individual thinking rather than following after the church leadership. It was as much opposed to those who did not agree with its teachings as the government had been toward the church. As long as it was in power, it did everything to stamp out any person or groups who dared to think for themselves. Saint Augustine was probably the most radical of all church leaders in the persecution of men who held that freedom of thought was one of the dearest principles to which men could adhere. To the end of the twelfth century the church worked hard to suppress heterodoxies.¹

Some methods of suppression. -- Pope Gregory IX, about 1233 A. D., organized a system of searching out heretics

known as the Inquisition. This was a secret court which fully covered western Europe. The Inquisition, in all countries, cooperated to trap and bring to justice all who might be suspected of thinking or acting in opposition to the church and its doctrines. The Edict of Faith enlisted every true churchman and required that he be an informer for this tribunal. The court was held behind closed doors and the fate of the accused was left to mystery. The prisoner was always assumed to be guilty and the burden of proving his innocence rested upon him. It was better that a hundred innocent men suffer than for one guilty person to escape.

Another method used by the church was excommunication. When a person was adjudged by the church as being heretical in his beliefs, he could recant or be turned out of the church and denied all the rights and privileges of that body. That was enough pressure, in most instances, to whip the erring ones back into line because most people had a horror of dying outside the church. With these methods the church truly held reason in prison.

Pioneers in the Field of Reasoning

The intellectual and social movement, which was to break the hold of the church and dispel the darkness of the Middle Ages and prepare the way for those who were to deliver
reason from prison, began in Italy in the thirteenth cen-
tury. It was the beginning, on the part of men, to assert	heir right to think for themselves. It was not met with-
out opposition. Not all men were successful and many suf-
fered dire punishment. The church fought to maintain a
firm hold upon the people. The church was destined to lose
the fight and reason was to become the victor.

Martin Luther. — Luther dared to take the initial
steps in this process of breaking the dictatorial power of
the church. He openly defied the Pope in protesting the
doctrines of the church. He was successful in this and to
him goes the credit for being the first to be successful.
Luther was far from granting the individual the right to
think for himself. He was opposed to liberty of conscience
and worship, which was inconsistent with the scriptures as
he interpreted them. Although he did protest against force
and the burning of heretics, as long as he was in fear of
punishment, he changed that view when he felt safe from the
wrath of the church. He held to the idea that the state
should dictate the religion of the people. However, he
felt that his, not the Roman Church, was the one true re-
ligion. He was as intolerant as the Pope at Rome.²

John Calvin. — Calvin was even more famous for his
practice of intolerance. He disagreed with Luther, who

²Ibid., p. 78.
advocated the absolute power of the state in dictating the
religion of the people. He stood for the control of the
state by the church, which is known as theocracy. He es-
established a theocracy in Geneva. Liberty was not allowed
to live in this form of church organization. False doc-
trines were put down by imprisonment and death.\(^3\)

Wherein did those two reformers help the cause of
liberty of thought? They made to this concept two dis-
tinct contributions. First, they dared to do what no one
else had been able to do and that was to defy the power of
the Roman Church to think and propound a new doctrine. In
so doing they denied this right to others. Second, their
defiance inspired others not only to break with the Roman
Church but also to disagree with Luther and Calvin in their
doctrines. They paved the way for more liberal-minded men
to put forth their thinking and beliefs. The hold the
church had so long held over men's minds was slowly being
broken. Men not only began to exercise the right to reason
for themselves but also to allow that same right to other
men.

The Philosophy of Rationalism

During the past three hundred years reason has been
slowly but surely destroying the mythology and superstitions

\(^3\)Ibid., p. 79.
set up by the Church at Rome and those other churches that have patterned themselves after a like fashion. The process has been slow and halting at best, but it has been an honest effort on the part of men to think and reason for themselves.

Rationalism is a system that sets up human reason as the final criterion and chief source of knowledge. The individual must investigate everything for himself and abandon any position, however valid in appearance, if it cannot be rationally demonstrated.\(^4\)

Rene Descartes. -- About three hundred years ago a Frenchman by the name of Rene Descartes began to do some constructive thinking. He is known as the father of rationalism. He was disgusted with the trend that scholastic philosophy was taking. By adopting a set of simple rules to direct his thoughts he believed he could think out the great problems of existence. Therefore, Descartes formulated four rules. First, never accept anything as true which is not clearly known to be such. By this he meant carefully to avoid precipitancy and prejudice and to compromise nothing in his mind unless perfectly clear so as to exclude all doubt. Second, he believed in dividing each problem under examination into as many parts as possible and as might be necessary for its adequate solution. Third, to conduct thought in such order that by beginning with the

\(^4\)Encyclopedia Britannica, 11th ed., XXII, 916.
simplest and easiest objects, to know and thus by degrees ascend to the more complex. Fourth, in every case make enumerations so complete and reviews so general that there is nothing omitted.\textsuperscript{5}

Although his temper was mild and he was not willing to break entirely with the ecclesiastical thought of the times, his new philosophy was a powerful incentive to rationalistic thought of the day. This is another and more powerful example of men who were seeking a means of allowing themselves the liberty of reasoning.

\textit{Baruch de Spinoza}. -- Whereas Descartes planted the seeds of rationalism, Spinoza nurtured the plant into full flower. He owed a great deal to the philosophy of Descartes as the foundation upon which he built his own philosophy. He believed the ultimate reality, which he called God, was an absolute and impersonal Being. When he speaks of God, in which he considers happiness and serenity to consist, he means knowledge and the contemplation of the order of nature -- he also includes human nature -- are subject to fixed laws.\textsuperscript{6} He does not believe in the free will. He leaves nothing to chance. Thus man must by rational thinking figure out what is best and good for him and live accordingly. By doing this he is living by the best moral

\textsuperscript{5}G. W. T. Patrick, \textit{Introduction to Philosophy}, p. 54.
code devised for his daily living. He believed that scripture should be interpreted like any other book, thereby taking away from the book all the "black magic" that had been inserted into it by the church authorities. He was trying to drive home the philosophy that man is a moral creature and if left alone he will by his own reasoning power figure out what is good for not only himself but also what is good for his fellow man. It is not necessary to use force and "scare" methods in order to make men into good and moral creatures.

American Rationalism

American rationalism had its beginning about the same time as the American colonies were fighting for their independence and forming their government.

Ethan Allen. -- Ethan Allen was reared on a Connecticut farm. He distinguished himself as a soldier in the French and Indian War and immortalized himself in the American Revolution as the leader of the "hardy mountaineers" of Vermont. Reason, the Only Oracle of Man, appeared in 1784. He gave as his sources for writing the book, the Bible and the dictionary. However, he was influenced by Benjamin Stiles, Thomas Young, reaction to the Calvinist dogma, his personal reaction to Edwards' sermons, contacts with British officers in the French and Indian War, and association with radical French philosophies through the followers of
Lafayette in the Revolutionary War. He held less to the idea of the innate goodness of man. He did not believe so much in the worship of God through service to one's fellow man. He believed that the fruits of religion are embodied in an individual moral life. He held that God does not interfere with the natural processes of the world. He believed that reason is not only superior to revelation but that it is man's only oracle. He was certain that man is the responsible cause of his actions.7

Because he struck at the Calvinistic doctrines of the day, his book was not well received by the cultural leaders of the time. His chief contribution to philosophy was that he inserted into the thinking of men a different idea than the one held by those who had been brought up on Puritan ideology. It came at a time when the American colonies were launching their career as a nation.

Thomas Paine. -- Paine's tract, Common Sense, was widely read during the American Revolution and his name became a household word. In his book, The Age of Reason, Paine brought forth a radical point of view in setting forth his religious creed. It had two fundamental propositions: (1) "I believe in one God and no more; and I hope for happiness beyond this life"; and (2) "I believe in the

equality of man; and I believe that religious duties consist in doing justice, loving mercy, and endeavoring to make our fellow creatures happy." He discounted the Bible as being true and sought to prove that the authors of the various books were unknown. He attacked the characters of the Bible as being brutal and sinful men. He did not believe in the divinity of Jesus Christ. He also sought to prove that the Bible is a broken mass of unrelated events upon which no two writers could agree when they attempted to relate the same story. As a book for moral and spiritual guidance he completely rejected it. His philosophy for man was, therefore, reason.

Thomas Paine was not well received by the people of the new America. The clergy attacked him severely for his radical and non-Christian thoughts. However, his book reflects the broad humanitarian faith expressed by the deist of his day. It was this faith that made the French as well as the American Revolution significant. He was one of the builders of the "American Dream."

Benjamin Franklin. -- Franklin presented a less radical point of view than did Allen or Paine. He was a man of religious principles. He believed in the existence of a deity, that this deity made the world and governed it by His providence, that the most acceptable service to God is

\[8\text{Ibid.}\]
doing good to man, that man's soul is immortal, and that
crime will be punished and virtue rewarded, either in this
life or the life to come.  

Franklin represented the typical school of rational
thinking, freedom from church and political authority, con-
cern for social justice, democracy, and optimism for the suc-
ceeding generations. He was the ideal of countless Amer-
cans of his day and of the century following. His life,
more than what he wrote, was a great contribution to Ameri-
can philosophy.

Thomas Jefferson. -- Like Franklin, Jefferson's great-
est contribution to American thought was his life more than
his writings. He stood for religious toleration, the rights
of the individual, and for higher education. He prepared
the practical background for the "American Dream," which
was liberty, equality, tolerance, education, classless de-
mocracy, peace, and progress. He was a real liberal and
believed in the rights of the common man.  

Influence of Rationalism Upon
American Life

Rationalism came to America when she was forming and
setting up her democracy. Its influence was deeply felt
in this process of forming a new government. It was shown

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9 Ibid., p. 66.  
10 Ibid.
by men's insisting on having the right to freedom of worship, separation of church and state, freedom of speech and of the press, no religious qualifications in order to hold office, a desire for a universal educational system, and the right of every man to pursue his own individual way. The men who were outstanding leaders were the men who recognized the fact that man, in order to be free, must be free to think.
CHAPTER IV

THE INFLUENCE OF THE SCIENTIFIC POINT OF VIEW

Almost at the same time that rationalism was the chief mode of philosophic thought, a new type of thinking was introduced into the field of philosophy. It was known as the scientific point of view.

Contributors to the Scientific Point of View

Francis Bacon. -- The chief method of thinking, until Bacon came into prominence, was the Aristotelian method or the process of deduction -- reasoning based upon general principles which eventually lead to particulars. This was the method used chiefly by the rationalists, who believed that by logical processes they could reason out any problem. Bacon's method was the opposite in that he insisted on the induction method of gaining knowledge. He believed that man's thinking should begin with particulars and move to general principles based upon experimentation. Men of science were already using this method of induction in their scientific discoveries. To Bacon goes the credit of applying this method of thinking to the field of philosophy.¹

Because of this new mode of thought Bacon is regarded as one of the founders of modern philosophy and has been highly praised as the forerunner of positivism.

Francis Bacon was also the forerunner in expressing the practical type of thought for which England has stood for over three centuries. Despite his interest in science, no new discoveries were attributed to him. However, he accomplished more than anyone else in freeing the mind from pre-conceived ideas and directing man's attention to an unbiased study of facts. He believed that before man can investigate the truth he must destroy a number of fallacies, or idols that have hampered his thinking. The first were described by Bacon as the idols of the tribe. These idols represent the fallacy that man is the measure of all things. Man looks upon the universe as if it had been created and ordered for his convenience. Order in the world was taken for granted without any question of why it was so arranged. The second class was known as the idols of the cave. Every person has a mental cave or den which refracts and discolors the light of nature. Some minds are analytical in that they tend to divide the world into its differences. Other minds try to organize the world into a coherent structure. The scientists belong to the former while the artists belong to the latter. Bacon believed that truth lies independently of both of them. The third group was
referred to as idols of the market-place. These exist because mankind associates with other men and they talk of the universe in generalities of which the thinker should be aware. Bacon believed that generalities should be done away with and that man should be merciless in the meaning and definition of words. The final group was known as the idols of the theater. Bacon explains these as the dogmas of the philosophers. These accepted systems of philosophy were as stage plays representing worlds of their own creation after an unreal and scenic fashion. These were the things Bacon proposed to rid man's mind of and place before him a new way of thinking.

Having cleared the way, Bacon was now ready to build a new highway to knowledge. It was to be the method of experimentation. By experiment and research, data were to be collected and from these data facts were to be deduced. This was not an easy process but one which Bacon thought would reduce error in knowledge and would result in the desired outcomes.²

Rene Descartes. -- Although he is considered more of a rationalist, Descartes did make a definite contribution to the scientific method of philosophy. He had a vigorously active and independent mind. With a mathematical background, it is natural that he should part company with those

²Henry Thomas and Dana Lee Thomas, Living Biographies of Great Philosophers, pp. 93-94.
who held to preconceived ideas. The then known sciences, law, medicine, and philosophy were disappointing to him for that reason. Scholars of the day were at variance and his own mind was beset with doubts and difficulties. He set about to sweep away all doctrines then in existence and by pushing doubt to the limit seek the clearest and most certain knowledge for himself and begin anew with principles that he defended mathematically. He believed in living according to practical rules. He did not believe in breaking away from the existing rules of a world order. He did believe in self-reformation, the exercise of his own judgment, and the quest for a firm ground of assurance. By evidence, analysis, and induction he hoped to develop clear and distinctly conceived ideas. Reason was established, according to Descartes, as the judge of what is true or false. 3 Although he did not go as far as Bacon, Descartes did help to pave the way for a scientific approach to philosophy by using the process of induction in his thinking.

John Locke. -- Knowledge as Locke sees it is based upon clear and distinct ideas which are founded on investigation, certainty, and by questioning the validity of these ideas if they are said to be native to mind. Locke terms idea as the object of understanding when man thinks. This is known as

the doctrine of ideas.

Locke classes ideas as follows: Simple ideas are those that come into the mind by one sense only, such as colors, odors, hearing, and taste, which are usually received by the mind in a passive manner. Other ideas come from more than one sense, such as sight, touch, figure, or motion. Still other ideas come from the mind's operation through reflection. Finally, from both external and internal perception such as pleasure, pain, existence, power, and unity, other ideas are derived. It is upon these ideas that man's action is motivated.\(^4\)

Moral ideas were based upon Locke's doctrine of ideas. He goes a step farther than Bacon and Descartes in this contention. Locke believed that common sense motivated by our ideas would fit the individual for natural improvement and moral knowledge. Thus by nature the individual is seeking the good because it produces pleasure and he avoids evil because it produces pain. Therefore, his ideas are formed accordingly.\(^5\) By experience man is able to determine the good from the bad. Every man's experience will not be the same, hence society must not impose standards upon the private conscience of the individual. That which contributes to the pleasure of the greatest number must of necessity be

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\(^4\)Thomas and Thomas, Living Biographies of Great Philosophers, p. 145.

the greatest good. Preconceived ideas did not have a place in the philosophy of John Locke. Only ideas that came as a result of the individual experience were of benefit in motivating the action of man.

Locke defines knowledge as the agreement or disagreement of ideas. Agreement involves the following principles: identity (green is not red); relation (when equals are added); necessary connection (iron can be magnetized); real existence (God is). There are three types of knowledge. First, intuitive knowledge, which is self-evident, the agreement being directly perceived. This type of knowledge is not extensive. Second, demonstrative knowledge is more complex than intuitive knowledge. God's existence is demonstrative knowledge. Third, sensitive knowledge is of a particular existence, sense perception, and sense certainty. Sensitive knowledge is narrow and is limited only to things present in the individual sensation. Knowledge is in the most part based on ideas of secondary qualities and it reaches little farther than experiences.

Locke believed that man, when his ideas are right, will add to his knowledge in such a way as to formulate the right principles in his daily living. He believed that he was a moral creature who was endeavoring to make not only

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6 Thomas and Thomas, Living Biographies of Great Philosophers, p. 146.

7 Dresser, A History of Modern Philosophy, pp. 69-70.
his own life better but was also trying to make the world a better place.

David Hume. -- John Locke had declared that all knowledge comes to the individual through the experience of his senses. David Hume went a step farther in that he believed that the knowledge of ourselves comes through the experience of our senses. The individual's mind is a bundle of moods, feelings, and emotions which are grouped around a persistent identity. Moods are followed by new moods and each sensation is perpetually followed by a newer sensation. He believed that an experience, feeling, or emotion is more pronounced than the idea of it. Knowledge is gained by the resemblance of ideas and the association between what is taken to be the effect and what is termed the cause. Thus knowledge develops upon this basis. To know is to experience the good and bad effects. The individual is impelled toward reason as a result of his experiences.

Moral values are derived by the connection between the facts of experience. Good and bad qualities are not ascribed to moral experiences but because of the results wrought in the individual's feelings. Therefore, if the individual experiences a feeling of pleasure, he ascribes that to good; while on the other hand if the experience is

painful, then it is bad.

Hume comes to the conclusion that the individual's experience is what rules the conduct of man and his thinking. Man cannot be ruled by preconceived ideas if he is to be his individual self. Man's experience will dictate his actions.

Some Differences between the Rationalistic and the Scientific Points of View

Rationalism. -- The main idea involved in rationalistic thinking was the systematically developed view of the universe on purely intellectual principles discovered through analysis based upon mathematical concepts, upon necessity, and upon logical bearings. Reason was the prime source of cognition. Necessary truths having been established, the proof of God's existence followed, then the system in general. Experience was second from this point of view, external observation was of little value, and sensation was also regarded as being only secondary. The validity of perception was assumed and knowledge was a kind of unfolding process from within one's own mind.

The scientific point of view. -- Bacon pioneered in the field by applying experimentation or inductive reasoning in philosophy as well as in science. Locke went even farther by raising the question, "What is the nature and origin of knowledge so far as our own minds permit us to
answer?" Experimentation was to be the answer in the seeking of certain knowledge. Preconceived ideas about God, the soul, and nature were of no account in the seeking of truth. The starting point had to be the agreement or disagreement of ideas in one's own mind. Experience and experimentation were the prime factors in the scientific point of view.

Definite Conflict between Rationalism and the Scientific Point of View

The conflict between these two philosophies comes in the original point of view. The rationalistic group depended upon reason based upon the deductive process of thinking. By assuming a certain thing were true they would reason on this basis and prove the point. This was the method used in ecclesiastical circles. Reason and logic were their chief weapons. By this method they believed they could reach any truth.

On the other hand, the scientific group based their beliefs on the inductive process. By experience and experimentation they believed they could reach truth. They used certain particulars to motivate their thinking toward general principles based upon experience and experimentation. Experience and experimentation were the motivating factors in minds of the scientific group.

This conflict colored the philosophies not only of that day but down to the present time. It had its effect
upon philosophy in America, beginning with Benjamin Frank-
lin and on down to recent times. These effects will be
studied in the succeeding chapter when the American point
of view is discussed under the heading of Pragmatism.
CHAPTER V

PRAGMATISM

Pragmatism was conceived by Charles Peirce in 1878 in an article on "How to Make Our Ideas Clear" in the Popular Science Monthly for January of that year. At the time it was published it was not very well received. Twenty years later William James in an address before the Philosophic Union at the University of California brought forth the idea of pragmatism again by making a special application of it to religion. By this date, 1898, the times were right for its reception. Pragmatism spread rapidly and became very popular in the beginning of the twentieth century.¹ Pragmatism comes from the Greek word having almost the same meaning as our word "active" or "efficient."

What Pragmatism Means

A philosophy of real life. -- Pragmatism is a new philosophy having its beginning within the twentieth century. "It is distinctly a philosophy of life. Life is real and the real is life."² It is a very human philosophy,

¹William James, Pragmatism, p. 47.
²Patrick, Introduction to Philosophy, p. 362.
so much so that it has been called humanism. It is very modern in its outlook. "The pragmatist does not think of the world as ready-made, perfect, beautiful, something to be enjoyed, or worshiped; he thinks of it to be made, or made over ... remodeled to his desires and wishes."^3

A method. -- Pragmatism is a movement and a tendency. Everything is to be judged by its fruits; any idea, theory, or dispute which does not make a difference in practice fails, in the mind of the pragmatist, to have any significance.

A pragmatist turns his back resolutely and once for all upon a lot of inveterate habits dear to the professional philosophers. He turns away from abstractions and insufficiency, from verbal solutions, from bad a priori reasons, from fixed principles, closed systems, and pretended absolutes and origins. He turns toward concreteness and adequacy, toward facts, toward action and power. That means the empiricist temper regnant and the rationalist temper sincerely given up. It means the open air and possibilities of nature, as against dogma, artificiality, and a pretense of finality in truth.^4

From the above statement we get a clear and concise picture as to the method of pragmatism as given by the man who so successfully introduced it to philosophy.

It has no doctrines or dogmas save its method. It has been referred to as being in the midst of philosophic theories like a corridor in a hotel; numbers of chambers open out of it. No matter who or what occupies the rooms and what their beliefs, they all own the corridor and must

^3Ibid.  
^4James, Pragmatism, p. 51.
use it if they want a practical way of getting in and out of their rooms.

_Ideas as instruments._ -- The pragmatist has a new notion of the mind, of ideas, and of intelligence. "He thinks of them as certain instruments for attaining certain ends, or removing difficulties and perplexities."5 "Any idea upon which we can ride so to speak; . . . working securely, simplifying, saving labor, is true for just so much, true in so far forth, true instrumentally."6

_As a mediator._ -- Pragmatism brings new and old ideas together in harmony.

It converts the absolute empty notion of a static relation of "correspondence" . . . between our minds and reality, into that of a rich and active commerce (that any one may follow in detail and understand) between particular thoughts of ours and the great universe of other experiences in which they play their parts and have their uses.7

Pragmatism is a restorer to harmony and a relaxer of theories. It plays no favorites nor has it any dogma. It is open-minded to any evidence. Its test of truth is what works best in leading the individual to make clear conclusions to problems. As James so ably puts it, pragmatism "unstiffens our theories."

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5Patrick, _Introduction to Philosophy_, p. 363.

6James, _Pragmatism_, p. 58.

7Ibid., p. 69.
Some Pragmatic Doctrines

Pragmatism made new approaches to certain fundamental doctrines long held valid by philosophers. In doing so it caused a definite effect to be had upon these old and what were thought to be established ideas.

Truth. -- The world we live in is not a theory but a fact. It is made up of many facts and there is no such thing as truth as the rationalist sees it. James says, "What we call truth is a working hypothesis, a temporary tool that enables us to transform a bit of chaos into a bit of order." 8 What was true or helpful yesterday may not be true today. Old truths like unused tools become rusty and useless. "Truth is revealed by its usefulness, by its fruits, by its practical consequences. Value becomes the measure of truth." 9 The rationalist objects to this idea of truth on the grounds that "truth is not made, ... it absolutely obtains, being a unique relation that does not wait upon process, but shoots straight over the head of experience and hits its reality every time." 10 James is using truth for its value today to get done what it will do now and not what it did yesterday or will do tomorrow.

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8 Thomas and Thomas, Living Biographies of Great Philosophers, p. 302.
9 Patrick, Introduction to Philosophy, p. 376.
10 James, Pragmatism, p. 218.
"The true, to put it briefly, is only the expedient in the way of our thinking, just as the right is only the expedient in the way of our behaving.\textsuperscript{11} It then is an instrument in the hands of the pragmatist. Truth does not just exist -- it happens! Truth is never complete nor is it perfect, but it is always in the making.

\textit{Common sense.} -- The pragmatist puts forth the idea that our knowledge grows in spots. These spots may be large or they may be small, but knowledge never grows all over at any one time and some old knowledge remains what it was. As knowledge grows in spots it spreads as does a grease spot. These spots of growing knowledge link up in the mind and develop into what is known as common sense. \textquote{A man's common sense means his good judgment, his freedom from eccentricity, his gumption, to use the vernacular word.}\textsuperscript{12} James means by this that in philosophy it is the use of certain intellectual forms or categories of thought. This is in direct conflict with the old common-sense way of rationalizing by a set of concepts. Common sense consolidates the thinking of the individual. James would have us remember that the use of common sense is just another instrument in the hands of the pragmatic philosopher. It is just another way of adapting the mind to reality.

\textit{Moral aspects.} -- James refers to ideas as good if they

\textsuperscript{11}Ibid., p. 222. \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{12}Ibid., p. 171.
have "cash value." He did not intend for the statement to have a materialistic ring. It was in no sense financial but moral ideas to which he was referring. He looked down upon those who were scrambling for the accumulation of mere wealth. "He scolded his fellow Americans for their worship of that bitch goddess, success."13 He urged a practical and ethical cooperation among the free members of a democracy. Life was not an isolated struggle as between man and man, but it was a united struggle of mankind against the forces of evil.

The pragmatist did not believe in fixed and eternal moral laws. "They grow and become perfected."14 The road to the future was an open road and it was not obstructed by an over-ruling providence or limiting fates. Reality was to be found in experience and not hindered by a set of outmoded or fixed moral laws. Life was a series of problems to be solved, a succession of real difficulties and real struggles. James contended it would take thinking to deal efficiently with these problems, and ideas were the tools to be used in their solution. Dewey says, "Moral principles that exalt themselves by degrading human nature are in effect committing suicide."15 Moral principles must work if they are to serve mankind. They are of no account.

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14 Patrick, Introduction to Philosophy, p. 367.

15 Wiedler and Sears, Development of American Philosophy, p. 380.
otherwise. Man must see that moral principles are workable and result in his being a better man or he will not subscribe to those moral theories or rules. Pragmatism offers to man a plan of positive action whereby he can actually in practice make the world a better place in which to live. As John Dewey would have us believe, morals, if they are to be good, must denote a positive action on the part of the individual. Morality cannot be something out of this world but rather it must be something for which there is a practical use. It cannot be a "thou shalt not" proposition. It is simply a process of trusting that man's nature is inherently good rather than bad. Dewey also recognizes the fact that there are forces within man as well as those without, and when they are combined for good, then the desired moral ends will be obtained. 16

Pragmatism and religion. -- "God, in the religious life of ordinary men," says James, "is the name of whole things, heaven forbid, but only the ideal tendency in things, believed in as a superhuman person who calls us to cooperate in his purposes, and who furthers ours if they are worthy." 17 He does not proceed by the old method of displaying grounds for one's beliefs but rather James reminds us of our experience of God. By the pragmatic method he

16 Ibid., p. 393.

17 William James, A Pluralistic Universe, p. 124.
shows us that God is what we live by. This world we live in, James thinks, can be pragmatically verified by its results.

The notion that a physical world of wind and water, where the sun rises and the moon sets, is absolutely and ultimately the divinely aimed-at and established thing, is one in which we find belief in very early religions, such as that of the most primitive Jews. It is this natural religion (primitive still, in spite of the fact that poets and men of science whose good-will exceeds their perspicacity, keep publishing it in new editions tuned to our contemporary ears) that, as I said a while ago, has suffered demitive bankruptcy in the opinion of a circle of persons, among whom I must count myself, and who are growing more numerous every day. For such persons the physical order of nature, taken simply as science knows it, cannot be held to reveal any one harmonious spiritual interest. It is mere weather, as Chauncey Wright called it, doing and undoing without end.18

To carry this idea a bit farther, James says:

Whatever else be certain, this at least is certain . . . that the world of our present natural knowledge is enveloped in a larger world of some sort of whose residual properties we at least can form no positive idea.19

This sets forth the idea James has of the stream of ideal tendency in which he accounts for the sources of all those ideals which make life worth living. He believes we live by these ideals. In these experiences we are able to distinguish a lower and a higher part of ourselves and we feel that this higher part is in some way continuous with the divine MORE, as James calls God. Although this

18 William James, "Is Life Worth Living?" The Will to Believe, p. 52.
19 Ibid., p. 54.
MORE is exterior to us, we are in some way connected by some kind of harmony and it is upon this harmony that our peace and security rest. This world in which we live, James believes, is only part of a more spiritual universe from which it draws its chief significance, and to that spiritual world the name of God is given.

Again James makes his philosophy positive in that he believes that we must live and experience if we are to live life to the fullest. He believes in a life of action filled with real experiences. In so living we will vividly feel the existence of the divine MORE.

Some permanent contributions of pragmatism. -- Possibly the first and greatest thing pragmatism did was to call philosophy down from the heavens and establish it in the hearts and homes of men for practical use. It had been the opinion of the masses, until pragmatism came on the scene, that philosophy had been reserved for the select few. People in general looked upon philosophy as something to be shunned, though pragmatism gave these old ideas a jolt that brought them down to earth.

The theory of knowledge has been looked upon in the past as a field to be explored only by the elect. Only the very great minds had the power to delve into its explored and unexplored regions. It was thought to be out of reach of amateurs. James, and later Dewey, showed that things
like concepts, ideas, thought, and imagination are only practical instruments for solving the problems of life. This brought philosophy within the comprehension of practical-minded men. Pragmatism removed the mysteries from a long list of psychological terms and made philosophy a live and vibrant thing. It stressed the creative power of the human mind. It strongly believed in new ethical and social ideals as well as moral and social progress. It taught that the world was in the making and that the individual had a place in the making. Everything was in a state of change, even the moral laws, and there was always room for improvement. To the pragmatic way of thinking there was no such thing as the final and the perfect. Those who subscribed to this philosophy were truly optimistic, but they were not that optimistic.

John Dewey believes that the world is not just an "idea" but is a vital something that influences the conduct of man and must be mastered or lost. He recognizes the character and significance of change and the causal relationships that are possible between things.²⁰

James sums up the philosophy of pragmatism in his essay, "Is Life Worth Living?" possibly better than any one else:

If this life be not a real fight, in which something is eternally gained for the universe by success, it is not any better than a game of private theatricals from which one may withdraw at will. But it feels like a real fight . . . as if there were something really wild in the universe which we, with all our idealities and faithfulness, are needed to redeem; . . .

These, then, are my last words to you; Be not afraid of life. Believe that life is worth living, and your life will help you create the fact. The "scientific proof" that you are right may not be clear before the day of judgment . . . is reached. But the faithful fighters of this hour, or the beings that then and there will represent them, may turn to the faint-hearted, who here declined to go on, with words like those with which Henry IV greeted the tardy Crillon after a great victory had been gained: "Hang yourself, brave Crillon! We fought at Arques and you were not there!"\(^{21}\)

This is the essence of the philosophy known as pragmatism.

\(^{21}\)James, "Is Life Worth Living?" The Will to Believe, p. 61.
CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

In the preceding four chapters the moral implications of Puritanism, rationalism, the scientific approach, and pragmatism have been discussed. A brief summary of the four philosophies and conclusions follow.

It is estimated that almost one-fourth of our population can count themselves as descendants of the hardy stock of pioneers consisting of approximately twenty-one thousand Puritans who came to this new world. Their philosophy of the reality of God and of moral living so necessary to attain God's will has been generously sprinkled through the succeeding generations. They came to New England at a time when they were free to build a church and a state without interference either at home or abroad. As a result they had a century and a half to build their philosophy of morals as they felt directed by the Holy Scriptures. It is to these early New England colonists that credit must be given for the building of the foundation for a strong moral society. Changes have come about due to circumstances and time, but the foundation they laid has stood the test well.

The rationalist philosophy was one of deductive reasoning.
Rene Descartes is given credit not only for being the father of rational thinking, but he is regarded also as the first modern philosopher. He believed that man could begin with generalities and by reason reach a satisfactory and a successful conclusion to his problems. The rationalists believed that the power lies within the individual mind and if it is put to use it can solve the most perplexing and difficult problems. They also believed that man is a moral creature and if given the free opportunity to think, he will reason and act in accordance with moral principles. If allowed to investigate for himself, man will elect to do that which is right.

The rationalistic philosophy had its effect in America in two eras. Calvinism, one of the earlier phases of rationalism, was distinctly felt in the philosophy of the Puritans. They fashioned their religious beliefs to a large extent upon Calvinism. As has been previously stated, the Puritans established the foundations for morals in this country. The other era so affected was the period in which American democracy came into power. The influence of rationalism was deeply felt by men like Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson, both of whom believed that man has the right to make decisions for himself. The moral qualities were manifest in men insisting upon having the right of freedom of worship, separation of church from the state,
freedom of speech and of the press, and no religious qualifications for office holders. All these the rationalists had insisted upon indirectly when they contended that man has the right to think and reason out his own problems without interference from man-made customs and laws.

Ethan Allen and Thomas Paine were examples of the more radical rationalists in America. They were not generally accepted by the leading minds of their day. However, their being allowed to express their philosophy is evidence of the fact that in America there was a freedom of thought that allowed the radicals an opportunity to express themselves. Free expression was one of the cardinal virtues of rationalism in the modern era.

The scientific approach to philosophy was a distinct advance beyond rationalism in that it chose to solve the problems of life by the process of induction. The rationalists' theme was experience and experimentation. They believed that by these two methods man can work out his own problems if his mind is clear of preconceived ideas. They also believed that by this process man will do the right thing or what is moral because it brings to him the sense of satisfaction and pleasure. For the same reason he will reject the bad or the evil because of the dissatisfaction and pain it brings.

In America we find the scientific approach being rejected by Ralph Waldo Emerson on the grounds that he
distrusted the facts and the inferences. He was afraid to follow the scientific method in that eventually all moral ideas would give over to sensualism. Although his philosophy was not systematic, his influence was felt.

The chief concern was that men were afraid that the moral aspects of philosophy might be undermined by the scientific approach. Professor Noah Porter of Yale was a great believer in the phases of moral philosophy. The scientific approach to philosophy was met in America with numerous opinions in regard to its acceptance or rejection. This was another proof that men in America were free to accept or reject any doctrine as they saw fit in their own mind. The mere fact that it was never fully accepted or flatly rejected is proof that its better principles were acceptable while those which hinted at the destruction of moral aspects of philosophy were rejected.

When pragmatism finally came on the scene in the realm of philosophy, it was truly American in its origin. William James, who is looked upon as the father of pragmatism, was an American citizen and a professor at Harvard. This was a philosophy of real life. Life to the pragmatist was a fight to make the world a better place in which to live. It was essentially moral in its nature. It did not look upon reality as ready-made but rather it was a philosophy of making the world realistic. Pragmatism was the corridor
in the hotel to be used by all. It judged works by their 
fruits. It was a philosophy that was strong on methods. 
Ideas were instruments in the hands of the philosophers. 
It brought new and old ideas together. It was a restorer 
to harmony and a relaxer of theories. Truth was an instru-
ment to be used today for what it was worth. The pragmatists
did not believe in fixed and eternal moral laws. They be-
lieved that moral laws should be flexible in order to meet 
the daily needs of men. Moral principles must work if they 
are to meet the needs and serve mankind. Pragmatism was a
positive plan of action. It was designed to give man the 
courage to meet the problems of daily living. It taught 
that there was never a state of perfection, but there was 
always room for making life better.

With the backlog of a moral philosophy given to Ameri-
ca by the Puritans and the subsequent changes brought about 
by the needs of the times, moral philosophy has been able 
to fit itself to the day and age. It is reasonable to con-
clude that America is imbued with morals in her philosophy. 
It is true that rationalism and the scientific approach to 
morals changed the original philosophy of the Puritans, but 
these philosophies were needed in order to fit the ideas 
held by each to the times. Finally it culminated in the 
dynamic philosophy of pragmatism, which was dedicated to
making the world better. Its entire philosophy was, "Life is real and the real is life."\(^1\)

\(^1\)Patrick, Introduction to Philosophy, p. 362.
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