A STUDY OF PRAGMATISM: ITS INFLUENCE ON CERTAIN MODERN TRENDS IN EDUCATION

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A STUDY OF PRAGMATISM: ITS INFLUENCE ON CERTAIN MODERN TRENDS IN EDUCATION

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of Problem

This is a study of pragmatism and its influence on certain modern trends in education.

Method of Collecting Data

The material was gathered through extensive reading and study of research data in the fields of pragmatism and education.

Purpose of Study

It is the purpose of this thesis to show that the pragmatic philosophy is basically responsible for present-day developments in various teaching techniques.

In order to set forth clearly this contention, it will be necessary to define pragmatism.

After setting forth the definition of pragmatism in the second chapter, a digest was made of contemporary criticisms of pragmatism in order to show its influence on various phases of contemporary life.

This digest with the emphasis on critical comment will
serve as a foundation for the chapter on summaries and conclusions -- a chapter in which an attempt is made to show how the pragmatic philosophy, as defined and explained in the second and third chapters, has affected present-day developments in various teaching techniques.
CHAPTER II

FRAGMATISM DEFINED: AN EXAMINATION OF ITS FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES

Pragmatism made its advent into the educational field as a result of William James' speech in 1898. At least, it was from this day that the term "pragmatism" spread until this day it has become an index to progressive education. Today pragmatism seems to be reaching a peak in ultra-modern and streamlined advocacy and application in education. Flourney says: "James's philosophy rests entirely upon his psychology. He did not learn behind a school of psychology as such, although he was undoubtedly one of the greatest."¹ Thus, with his analysis and theories of reality, volition, religion, consciousness, and many others, he transformed psychology. Regarding his philosophy Flourney says: "James's philosophy consists more of an attitude which contact and inspiration pass on rather than doctrine."² His influence had a far-reaching effect not only on pragmatism but on all theory. Pragmatism, which he adopted from the philosopher Peirce, maintains belief to be rule for action, and that its

¹Th. Flourney, The Philosophy of William James, p. 215.
²Ibid.
significance lies in the difference it can make in one's conduct.

Since pragmatism is referred to as "popular philosophy," let a word of explanation be offered in respect to the term. "Popular philosophy" does not mean that it is adapted to the greatest number of people. Instead, it refers to the religious and moral way James has of looking at life and the world. Definitely it does not mean a cheapened philosophy, but one cleared of difficulties and presented in such a manner that every one can live by it. It is utilitarian.

Through pragmatism James threw a challenge to methods of old philosophies. He wanted philosophy to come out of its abstract world and into a living world. This pragmatic effect of challenging old methods and ideas to be in the open and show relationship to life that the child ultimately has to live is what education is insisting on for the classroom. Education would give boys and girls the tools which they may operate themselves and in their own way. In former days the teacher would operate the tool and in many instances not even have a tool to display. The value of theory is only as a tool, but it becomes unreal, unpliable, when it serves to no purpose. It is by tracing the respective practical consequences of theory that value is established. Pragmatism is this method. A. P. Wallace says: "Pragmatism means 'practical.' Since pragmatism means 'practical,' it comes through practice. . . . Pragmatism comes out of human experiences.”

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This is indeed what educators have begun to believe and to demand as the philosophy of education.

Pragmatism is a method of settling metaphysical quarrels that otherwise might defy solution. (Metaphysics has been defined by James as "an unusually obstinate attempt to think clearly and consistently.")\textsuperscript{4} The pragmatist Truett says: "Truth is purely a matter of consequence: that is true which works in any particular circumstance."\textsuperscript{5} Erubacher says that truth "is never complete nor perfect, but always in the making."\textsuperscript{6} Certainly truth does not come to a head all at once, rather with and through experience. The pragmatist thinks truths have evolved, yet he has emphatically maintained that truth itself is static theory. What the Bible held good for the people of that day and time no longer is applicable to the people of today. That is where education has outdistanced pragmatism. Education realizes that what we have taught throughout the years is no longer true; it is no more our concern; education demands that we teach differently and use different material. In progressive education experience leads to truths but only as truth effects a certain range or extent. Theories in education are taboo, and likewise in the study of truth and knowledge they are of little help to distinguish, although we know that the two are

\textsuperscript{5}Isaac Doughton, \textit{Modern Public Education}, p. 19.
\textsuperscript{6}J. S. Brubacher, \textit{Modern Philosophy of Education}, p. 57.
definitely related. An old theory or truth gives its part to new truth, which necessarily involves rearrangement. Truth or theory are then plastic.

Pragmatism, it must be remembered, is at ease only when surrounded by facts; other philosophies, to the contrary, are at ease when surrounded by abstractions. Pragmatism asks, What does it mean? and, What does it do? It would suggest that one not try to solve a question unless he knows what it means. And this is the attitude that education has assumed. Let no one be hoodwinked by words any more, but find out all relevant implications. Pragmatism is a way to make one's ideas clear, and if so, then let one not be content with any vague tendencies and generalities, but take pragmatism seriously and find out what it means. Pratt defines pragmatism as seeking to give a definite, exact, and technical doctrine of the nature of meaning to show what meaning consists in, and therefore when it is present and when it is absent. Furthermore, pragmatism attempts to formulate for one a method of choosing one's problems, thereby eliminating a number of meaningless questions and helping to recognize what is worth discussing, and what is not. James himself has definitely stated that pragmatism is the doctrine that the full meaning of a conception expresses itself in useful results. These results should be in the shape

7Pratt, p. 20.
of conduct to be recommended, or in that of experience to be anticipated. Again, pragmatism may be seen permeating the philosophy of modern education. In other words, give the child what will bring out the conduct or value desired and desirable. Pratt says: "All realities influence our practice, and that influence is their meaning for us." In order to give a fuller meaning to education, educators took this cue from pragmatism which concerns the influence of reality and the practical for the child to gain a better, clearer, and more worthwhile concept which might help him to adjust himself more perfectly into his environment. Then, as a broad interpretation, pragmatism should hold that the meaning of any conception expresses itself in past, present, or future conduct or experiences of actual or possible sentient creatures. —

Papini has said that pragmatism is really less a philosophy than a method of doing with philosophy. This thought is reflected in the interpretation that education puts on theory. All theory has its value in what the teacher does with it. To the pragmatist even questions of taboo are worth his time, provided they are of interest. Whatever his interests, the child is worth his time and the educator's time. Formerly the educators wasted time on the uninteresting things, too, but the pragmatist never considered it


worthwhile. This is why it is so important, as the educator now sees it, that the student be guided into the proper activity. — Is pragmatism then of help unless one can accept the doctrine that only topics to their taste are worth discussing? In order to keep pragmatism out of dogmatism, where education has lain through the years, it comes to mean that no question should be discussed without interest or meaning to some one. But in educational psychology even this has a value. At parties women may discuss endlessly topics neither of meaning nor interest, but discussion has its social value. Yet pragmatism's insistence on the concrete, and its view of meaning as dependent on one's experiences, are worthy theories.

One finds in pragmatism a method of research closely bound with a special doctrine concerning the human intellect. It looks continually for the true significance of doctrine, ideas, or beliefs, in the form of facts or results that it may bring out in one's experiences. Pragmatism introduces the scientific method or experimental method into philosophy. Could any less be said for progressive education? Thus, pragmatism and education insist on producing the facts of all theory and so avoid falling into verbiage of other philosophy and former education by evaluating the abstract by the results the theory may suggest. Neither decides between theories, but clarifies, and reduces them to their practical and concrete significance. Choice remains a personal
matter in the pragmatic influence on education, choice to remain with the child's inclinations and disposition.

The intellectualists maintain that men live to think. Under this prevalent theory, man must ignore his inclinations, forget what he knows, and remain uninfluenced if he wishes to attain truth. To this, pragmatism replies that man's nature is one of activity; that he acquires his abstractionism and rationalism in his fight for existence whereby he is able to solve his problems. The intellectualistic view, once that of the educators but now obviously abandoned by the latter, is contrary to that of pragmatism.

Pragmatism may here be summed up as being of the belief that man thinks in order to live, which point of view is harmonious to modern educational attitude. Furthermore, pragmatism concludes that erstwhile hypothesis has become established reality because of its success and usefulness. It is in like manner that science and common sense have always proceeded. This procedure emanating from pragmatism has found a following in educators of today.

Finally, pragmatism is an arbitrator, a restorer to harmony, a pacifier, a relaxer of theories. She has no favorites, no dogmas; she is open-minded to any evidence. In religion she widens the field of search for God. The humblest of experiences she will consider; even the mystic receives consideration if practical. Her test of truth is what works
best in leading us, regardless. What better interpretation could one make of modern educational philosophy than these pragmatic determinants?
CHAPTER III

CONTEMPORARY CRITICISMS OF PRAGMATISM

It is the purpose of this chapter to make a digest of critical comment on the pragmatic philosophy, comment both favorable and unfavorable, and criticisms both early and contemporary. In addition to weighing the advantages and disadvantages of the system by giving contrasting comments, part of the chapter has been devoted to general comment of interpretative nature.¹

Piatt mentions the fact that pragmatism has been given the new name of functional realism and regrets that under this new name pragmatism may be able to convert conventional realists to realism. He says that the basic fallacy in direct and dualistic realism is "the disjunction of given things from the dynamic context in which and by which they are given and given as things."¹ He further mentions the fact that certain believers in pragmatism have tried to save it from collapse during the last few years by a nostrum which he calls "the innocence or the inscrutability of the given."²

¹Donald A. Piatt, "That Will-o'-the-Wisp, the Innocent Inscrutable Given," The Journal of Philosophy, XXXII (1935), 337.
²Ibid., p. 338.
In other words, their contentions are obviously false because the immediate experience of an external world asserted by pragmatists and commonly by direct realists lacks the "knowledge certificate" that what is thus experienced is the external world. The basic paradox consists in the fact that we are not shown how or where the inscrutable becomes scrutable or the thing-in-itself gets known. In conclusion, Piatt says that the main difference with pragmatism is that the meanings of such words as "given," "innocence," and "knowledge" are not made clear. Perhaps these difficulties arise from the fact that philosophers experience trouble in trying to get out of their own circle of thought into another's circle of thought. He thinks, however, that the situation is not so hopeless, after all, because of the pragmatists' statement that "in point of empirical fact, knowledge is not infallible."

In another article there is an interesting account of the conversation of some college professors, one a synthetic philosopher, one a pragmatist, one an idealist, and one a realist. The pragmatist mentions that many papers on comparative philosophy seem to think that we may be realists in dealing with one thing, idealists in trying to get a large view of the future, and pragmatists in "dodging traffic or teaching skills to youngsters."

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3 Ibid., p. 350.

The speaker showed his dislike for such a theory in making the statement that too often the logician is of no practical benefit to the common people because they cannot reduce their experiences to the necessary "formal statements" required by all good philosophers. People, in general, care nothing for such statements but are concerned only with solving their life problems. A system of completely abstract forms would be absolutely empty and meaningless, just as an experience utterly devoid of patterns would be chaotic and blind. The patterns and forms which are useful are only those which are embodied in concrete experience, and these are never separate. Pragmatism, according to the "pragmatic" professor, could not be neutralized; that is, the neutral synthesis is an idea that looks "like a mule," useful for hard, rough tasks but completely sterile and without hope of having offspring. This conversation is interesting because it reveals the practicality of pragmatism as compared with other philosophies more of the "will-o'-the-wisp type."\(^5\)

Albert Schinz, of Bryn Mawr College, opposes pragmatism and calls it unworthy of the name of philosophy; in fact, he asserts that it is "inimical to the very idea of philosophy itself."\(^6\) Since a good philosopher is one who attempts to unify our experiences and to discover in the midst of this changing world something in life that is stable, pragmatism

\(^5\)Ibid., p. 440.

is unworthy because it considers experience solely in the light of variable factors. It would have us believe that there are no constants, that the world is ever changing and has nothing determinate. "What is true today may be false tomorrow," says the pragmatist. From such a point of view, Schinz points out, the sole test of truth and the sole guide to action is experience; therefore, success is the supreme sanction of conduct and everything must be measured in terms of utility. Pragmatism is unworthy because it gives a scholarly sanction to an easy-going code of morality and a comfortable philosophy of life. One can easily see, according to Schinz, that pragmatism is really less of a philosophy than it is a method of doing without a philosophy at all. He thinks, also, that pragmatism arose out of the conditions which exist in our economic life in America. Everything is grounded upon utility, and practical success is everywhere the supreme test. If such is the spirit of the times, pragmatism arose merely as a formulation of the demands of the age. Such gospel of convenience will always be welcomed with acclaim even though it is false. He hastens to add, however, that the truth is not always convenient, nor is it always popular. Pragmatism appeals to the needs of the lower levels of human nature rather than to the needs of the higher levels; hence, it is a "prostitution of the offices of philosophy to attempt merely to render people happy and comfortable in

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7Ibid.
mind." Success attained by wrong methods fails to be true success ultimately when the truth has been ignored in the process of achievement. Sane judgment and common sense are bound to assert themselves sooner or later, and there is sure to come a day of reckoning when it is discovered that in the zest of pursuit, the fundamental principles of honesty and the laws both of God and man have been ignored. Schinz's denunciation of pragmatism, made more than thirty years ago, is one of the most scathing and one of the most logically presented arguments against the idea that the test of the value of an idea is its practicality.

A continuation of the moral element appears in an article on pragmatism by Salter, who gives the following uncomplimentary descriptions of this particular philosophy: "subversive of morality," sure to harm those "inoculated with this virus," a harmful "microbe," "a delicate attempt of the spirit of license to get himself a respectable foothold." Salter presents both good and bad points of pragmatism and says that he personally regards it as a half-truth, this doctrine of "utilitarian metaphysics." He tells the people who want to understand the "new" doctrine and get interested in it, that they should read James, and if they want to see how subtle and closely knit the argument is, that they should read Dewey. This particular statement

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8 Ibid., p. 536.

of his is referred to because very much the same is true of those particular authors. Salter seems to be more than "half" pragmatist because he concludes that scientific truths, religious truths, and even moral rules (aside from one or two great principles) are all provisional: that they are working truths rather than finalities. Furthermore, he would have us believe that the best to date is surely to be superseded by something that will work better. Also, he states that no man can know what true morality is, when everybody agrees that science, philosophy, and even religion are more or less uncertain. In these preceding statements, Salter shows himself to be a true pragmatist at heart. However, he also sees weakness and even an element of danger in pragmatism. He says that pragmatism is deplorably weak in that it is not constructive enough in quality. It allows us to hold any theory or view which works, and pragmatism does not really "work"; it merely helps us and sustains us in the battle of life. We need some kind of constructive thinking that will enable us to see and feel the Divine in the world once more, "that shall again put us in the attitude of worship and again lift us and make us strong in a strength not our own."\(^{10}\) Pragmatism has an element of danger in it because it is not a clear message for mankind. Comfort is made a test of truth, and pragmatical sanction is claimed for almost all of the illusions that have bound mankind in

\(^{10}\textit{Ibid.},\ p.\ 662.$
ignorance all down the ages. It is dangerous because it is better, Salter would have us believe, to face reality and dwell on it long enough to detect some traces of heaven in it; not traces that man puts there but traces that God has put there.\(^{11}\)

The following criticisms will be directed against America's pragmatic fallaciousness. George Nathan writes interestingly in this article of the American people's "complete subservience to the doctrine of does-it-work? and is-therereal-use-to-it?"\(^{12}\) This subservience has made us, he says, financially successful, but it has also made us prosaic and lacking in "glamour and romance." He deplores the fact that pragmatism has led to distrust, contempt, and even hatred of the arts. It has made our American youth too prone to put their tongues in their cheeks and say "applesauce" to all the finer things in civilization. This is an interesting comment from such an eminent critic. It is doubly interesting because it comes from one not primarily interested in the field of philosophy. Another charge of "inadequacy" against pragmatism is made by Sellars, whose main criticism of "the whole history of empiricism" is that it has displayed blindness to what he calls categorical meanings. He believes that what we need is an adequate

\(^{11}\)Ibid., p. 663.

\(^{12}\)George Jean Nathan, "Pragmatism of the Useless," American Mercury, XIV (1928), 243-244.
empiricism, an empiricism aware of categorical meanings and not primed to treat them as illusions.\textsuperscript{13} He believes that critical realism is more inclusive on many questions than is pragmatism.\textsuperscript{14} The main thesis of his article is that in all intellectual matters sincerity and integrity are the essentials and that one can only try to keep "one's balance and see things as a whole."\textsuperscript{15} Because of these beliefs, Sellars states that the critical realist has stood out against pragmatism because of what he felt to be "inadequate analysis."

In an analysis by Lee of the will-to-believe philosophy of William James and F. C. S. Schiller, she believes that their philosophies are a false extension of an earlier pragmatism of Charles Sanders Peirce. Lee reaches the rather discouraging conclusion that no sooner do we come face to face with reality than we know the true details of things and their actual workings to be grounded in "perfunctoriness, fraud, and corruption."\textsuperscript{16} If pragmatism is accepted on the basis of "things being true if they work," then America is definitely pragmatic-minded. America, the New Deal, Congress, the President, are indeed trying "what works." Has not everything been construed by Americans as a "noble effort"? And whatever has been tried has been termed American. Pragmatic America does not seem to be interested so much in

\textsuperscript{14}Ibid., p. 549.
\textsuperscript{15}Ibid., p. 542.
whether her business philosophy remains individualistic or goes collectivistic.

Certain governmental powers are not concerned whether state socialism, state capitalism, or a species of democratic syndicalism rules. To them it is merely taking another step and keeping most people alive for the longest time.¹⁷

With them the question is not a matter of an American system or a collective state, but to be pragmatic.

No one can doubt that socialism is growing, and it is the purpose of this article to determine whether or not it can legitimately claim the support of pragmatic philosophy. William English Walling's book, *The Larger Aspects of Socialism*, is quoted to show how Walling tries to identify socialism with pragmatism. Berry's conception of pragmatism was that it emphasizes society rather than the individual and "proposes to possess the future instead of the present and the past."¹⁸ Walling would have us believe that the conception of pragmatism is a fundamental conception of socialism. He tries to show that Marx and Engels, the founders of "Scientific Socialism," were pragmatists. His identification of pragmatism with socialism found support with some critics, but most of his Socialist critics took an opposite view. Marcus Hitch, a Socialist lawyer of Chicago, said that although there was no doubt that some of the pragmatists¹


¹⁸"Can Socialism Be Identified with Pragmatism?," *Current Opinion*, IV (1914), 45.
sayings could be interpreted favorably to Socialism, still
the pragmatists had not distinguished themselves in any way,
"not even by showing the usefulness of their philosophy to
the working class." 19 Max Baginski, another Socialist writ-
ing in the monthly publication, Mother Earth, criticizes
pragmatism as being ineffective and as lacking the most im-
portant element of a really revolutionary philosophy -- a
revolutionary social vision. He prophesies that pragmatism
will remain "the pale child of professorship" 20 instead of
being a real help to man in his social struggles. W. Y. El-
liott shows that Mussolini's movement in Italy is linked
with pragmatism by pointing out that James' pragmatism was
"bracing and rather revolutionary refusal to take logic and
the monistic Absolute too seriously." 21 He states further
that it lent itself to all apostles of political revolt,
since the pragmatic desire for progress is impatient with
representative government in any form. The practice of
politics has never been other than pragmatic, and in the
years immediately following World War I, the political
prophets began to preach reasoned distrust of rationalized
solutions." 22 Italy accepted the philosophy of liberal
pragmatism with all the enthusiasm of a new convert. Mussolini's

19 Ibid.

20 Ibid.

21 W. Y. Elliott, "Mussolini, Prophet of Pragmatic Era
in Politics," Political Science Monthly, XLI (1926), 171.

22 Ibid., p. 167.
program of politics has been one of action, not talk, not theory. Although one cannot admire the nature of the "action" initiated in Italy by Mussolini, still one can see that he has turned the imagination of politics in his country away from dreamers and critics. This fairly recent comment is one of the most radical on the subject and smacks of sensationalism in that it seeks to link some notorious figure with a "scholastic" philosophy like pragmatism. It is given merely as an interesting example of contemporary comment and not because it is really worthy of consideration. While the pragmatic approach to politics is valuable in that it forces us to get down to actualities, Sabine states, however, that as a philosophical position, pragmatism is unsound. He does not believe that pragmatism will ever yield any considerable control over social forces, even though pragmatism may offer a large degree of freedom from tradition, "a deliverance from useless abstractions, and the possibility of harnessing logical operations to problems that will not let political theory get too far away from real situations."\(^\text{23}\)

An attempt is made to evaluate the effect that pragmatism has had on education. This expose will involve both pro and con of pragmatism and education.

Education has contended that it is reconstructive, creative, and transformative; that it is reconstructive of experience; that this reconstruction develops under

intelligent guidance; that intellectual activity is the function of life and experience; that schools exist for the training of these functions; and that purposeful activities should enhance training for occupations.24

This is certainly pragmatic; and with true realism, it holds that whatever happens to things is experience; yet it does not constitute their existence, which makes existence independent of the relation of knowledge. Thus knowledge begins with something given in experience. Lafferty points out that in the nineteenth century the idealist-philosopher and the scientist were in two different fields. There could be no actual conflict between them because of this fact. In our century, however, the philosopher has come to a better grasp of the significance of the scientific method; consequently, today we in America are following the pragmatic doctrine of attempting to put reality into the perspectives of the perceptual world. Or, better still, we are trying to put the perspectives of the perceptual world into reality. "We want to know what will be the consequence of our activities, and thus we learn from our experiences."25 Intelligence should be the consequence of activities, and Breed says that "intelligence is the activity that makes experience meaningful."26 Since experience, then, formulates ideas; ideas, then,

24Frederick S. Breed, "Progressive Education," School and Society, XXXVII (1933), 544.


26Breed, p. 545.
are true or false according to whether the intent reaches fulfillment. With the formulation of ideas, problems arise, and their solution is then found in intellectual activity. If the mind is to be prepared for transformation of experience, what is to become of the great amount of information and knowledge that the ages have accumulated? This question receives further emphasis when Breed adds: "... gaining knowledge through mastery of social arts by rapid, accurate, and effective ways is bad." Thus pragmatism pictures the world as a bad place to live in, perilous and precarious, uncertain, every act an experiment. But certainly the world is not a series of perplexities; but, at least, partially suited to already-prepared conditions and solutions. Perry says: "Through excessive emphasis on the practical aspect of truth it has seemed to make truth after all subjective." The radical and conservative view on any point should only tend toward correction of narrow-mindedness as these views should tend to developing intelligence and gaining of knowledge.

Before continuing to criticize adversely pragmatism in education any further, let us first restore some of the wind to its sails. While the philosophies, pragmatism and idealism, define truth as agreement with reality, they do not agree as to meaning of agreement. As Emma L. Antz says: "Pragmatism

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27 Ibid., p. 548.

28 Ralph Barton Perry, Present Philosophical Tendencies, p. 326.
is a blessing come to education; it advocates learning by doing." 29 It recognizes the problem of the absolute, immortality, and free will as vital. Idealism holds these things to be important, and would not take away any democratic principles from pragmatism. John Dewey believes the aim of education to be more education, and simultaneously defines democracy as its end. About everything else he is agnostic. He believes the task of philosophy to be that she show what values are sentimental since there are no means for their realization, that idealism takes exception, for one can know something about reality that one does not know. That is, an acquaintance may be had, although it may be very difficult to describe, as with God. Refusal to study God on this ground would be absurd. James' pragmatism claims that labeling the Absolute results in attempt to discover it. A point of saturation will hardly be reached, and effort to discover should not be abandoned for this reason. Emma L. Antz believes that the main difference of educational programs of pragmatism and idealism is "that the former founds schools on needs of man in his tangible environment, while the latter founds schools on needs of man in his environment, and his requirements for development of present world." 30 Idealism recognizes personality, contrary to pragmatism, as the supreme value, for whatever stunts is hardly worthwhile.

30 Ibid., p. 610.
To continue with pragmatism in the field of education, let us grant that pragmatic instrumentalism, being the contemporary educational philosophy, has had world-wide influence. Its weaknesses are hard to point out when it has such prominent and so many advocates. Gustav Francis Beck says: "The effort of pragmatism to make education a coordination of activities has taken education out of specialized technique."31 The whole man should be educated, as well as provide him with knowledge that gives power in a coordinated democracy. The method is adaptable and one of trial and error. According to instrumentalism, a school should be a small democracy. It makes the brain a behavioristic organ instead of one of knowing the world. The educational philosophy has been transferred from scientific method to the educational. Knowledge of the external world factors allows man progressive learning for world remaking, or supplies citizens capable of solving sociological and political problems in a practical and scientific spirit. The old method has turned out an "educated man who was helpless in a world of hard facts,"32 believes Beck. It is also his statement that "pragmatic and instrumental ways of thinking have restored the connection between education and present social problems of reorganization." If this statement is to be applicable to all innovations of contemporary education, then


32 Ibid., p. 139.
this damaging charge against pragmatism should not be too readily accepted, for there have been some in recent years that one hesitates to attribute to anything. Education is not a means toward an end -- a robot man is not needed, and technological efficiency does not justify man's existence. "Education must be an end in itself," says Beck. "However, man's activities must be directed toward practical ends and this remains pragmatism's great discovery."\(^{33}\) The fact is that science has not saved the world from letting a few get possession of everything. "When a scientifically perfected nation," says Beck, "becomes so unethical and unesthetic as to disregard humane relations, a change must be made."\(^{34}\) "Pragmatism, as an approach to life, must be judged by its own criterion," is a comment made by Lewis Mumford. "As a complete orientation, it has come to seem, not false, but insufficient."\(^{35}\) It is his belief that knowledge of science and technology as instruments cannot improve the possibility of fulfilling the ends of life itself. Lack of creative imagination has left the world powerless because of narrow instrumentalism. It is blind optimism to say that ends or ideals will come into existence of themselves if attention is paid to the means. Mumford credits the architect with having a professional distinction of thinking both scientifically and imaginatively. The architect thinks scientifically.

\(^{33}\)Ibid., p. 142.  
\(^{34}\)Ibid., pp. 140-142.  
in terms of means, and imaginatively in terms of the humanly
desirable ends for which these means exist.\textsuperscript{36} What a fortu-
nate combination!

The concluding remarks are favorable to America's prag-
matism. Let us consider the extent of her ever-increasing
attachment to this philosophy. C. I. Lewis points out that
the notion of the a priori, which is the cornerstone of her
system, is somehow unsatisfactory. She is in doubt whether
the philosophy of pragmatism can be analyzed completely and
leave the structure intact, but thinks that perhaps it has
the making of a good philosophical structure, although it is
unfinished. It is Ambrose's confession that "pragmatism
does stimulate thinking."\textsuperscript{37} And, if this could be verified,
pragmatism at the least would be worthwhile. In the papers
of Peirce, H. G. Townsend has found indispensable material
for the study of origins and early development of American
pragmatism. The thesis of Townsend's paper is that the con-
tent of Peirce's early essays is plain testimony that his
pragmatism was rooted in "the phenomenology of conscious
mind." Peirce tried to show logic as "continuous with the
phenomena of the psyche" and to treat it "as the structural
principle of an objective, natural process which the psyche
directly faces."\textsuperscript{38} Townsend also states that Peirce has

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{36}Ibid., pp. 250-251.
\textsuperscript{37}C. I. Lewis, "A Critical Discussion of Mind and the
\textsuperscript{38}H. G. Townsend, "Charles Sanders Peirce," \textit{Journal
of Philosophy}, XXXII (1935), 186.
\end{flushright}
partly spanned the breach which Kant had left between mind and the rest of reality. Perhaps the most salient comment on Peirce's essays is that the creation of the universe is going on today and never will be done. Thus we see the cardinal principle of pragmatism and its emphasis on change and practicality.

How often America and Americans have been accused of being mercenary is known to every one. The statement that pragmatism is the philosophical expression of commercialism and that in America commercialism obscures love of truth, seems to sum up the criticism of many opponents of pragmatism. Dewey, however, would not have us take too seriously this charge of commercialism against pragmatism. He tells us that the men who have expounded this philosophy -- James, Peirce, Bacon, Hobbes, Locke, and Hume -- did not do it for commercial purposes, nor were they the type of men to emphasize commercial standards over devotion to truth and justice. He points out several of the good points of pragmatism; he shows how it makes for fusion between love of truth and love of neighbor, how it militates against two sweeping and easy generalizations, how it fosters a sense of the worth of communication of what is actually known, and how it would have us believe that nothing is actually good until it operates in common life. Dewey finds "a genuine idealism of faith in the future in experiment directed by intelligence, in the communication of knowledge, in the
rights of the common man to a common share in the fruits of the spirit."

Its spirit of discrimination is laudable, too, because until we learn to discriminate, "we shall oscillate between wholesale revulsion and the sloppy idealism of popular emotion." It is good to find this masterly defense of pragmatism by one of its chief exponents.

Further support of pragmatism is received from Dewey in an article, "How Pragmatism Looks Today." He finds that the chief value of pragmatism lies in the fact that it pleads for the emancipation of philosophy from too intimate and exclusive attachment to traditional forms and refuses to be satisfied with systems of thought which do not in some way help us to a knowledge that will give us control over the world. He goes on to say that since pragmatism is based on actual experience, it has a definite connection with an attempt to control the future. This has likely been the cause for Americans' desire to own and control the world which has gained them the title of being a commercialistic people. Philosophy has lost its meaning in a maze of unreality, and it recovers only when it ceases to be purely theoretical and begins to deal with actual problems of mankind. The whole role of thought is to achieve control of all situations that may arise in human life. This is the ground which has manifested itself so strongly in education.


40Ibid., p. 187.
world is not just an "idea" but is a vital something that influences the conduct of man and must be mastered or lost. Another merit of pragmatism is that it recognizes the character and significance of change and the causal relationships that are possible between things. It is an actual working method that describes the processes of achievement of which civilization is composed in a way that makes it a program for further conquest of nature and the liberation of human nature. In other words, we live on the interest of our accumulated past. The heart of its doctrine is the emphasis of the importance of change, of the interaction between thoughts and things, of the significance of active thinking in the life of man; hence, it is "a demonstration of the creative power of intelligence." All this is good American philosophy, as we have never been mere speculators but have made it a habit to apply practical tests to thought to prove "how it works." America values, above all things, practicality; and finds in pragmatism, therefore, the authentic expression of modern educational trends toward activity.

Thus the consensus of critical opinion is that pragmatism is the national philosophy of America, which is emulated in progressive education. It began slowly during the second industrial revolution, the era of institutionalized


42 Ibid., p. 270.
and impersonal big business, and developed into a regular way of life under James, "who," Baum says, "was a pragmatist before he wrote his psychology." His use of technical philosophy as a reform instrument in social phenomena made pragmatism uniquely American. Benjamin Stolberg says:

The early Jamesian pragmatism of a homely metaphysics and shrewd personal psychology becomes a logic of action, an ethics of optimism, and above all a social psychology of public adjustment. This is typically American, and since American temper makes things work, they turn ideas to vocational usage, and make the philosophical pragmatism ever more behavioristic. This peculiar psychology is what creates unification of American life. "James's pragmatism enables mankind to combine his ideal interests with those of his environment. Perhaps this quality is one of the chief merits of the philosophy," says Stolberg. Dewey, after having established rational pragmatism, inducted it into American culture, which resulted in present social reform and scientific philanthropy and social work. With Dewey's increasing interest in education came measurement, mental testing, and new-type examinations; these have "gradually reached a degree of psychological senselessness" in the form of control groups, re-evaluation of public schools, and twelve-grade agitation, regretfully.


45Baum, p. 51.
amounting to no more than animal abilities of coordination. All this was a natural drift of impersonal institutionalized business control, and a drift of pragmatism, beginning with World War I, into behaviorism. Thus pragmatism is experimental, full of service, prosperity, and liberalism.46

This is the psychological change that has become ingrained in the education of pragmatic America.

CHAPTER IV

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

We have seen how pragmatism is the natural philosophy of the American people because it licenses certain social, economic, and political practices, or rather it reconciles our materialistic way of living with certain moral truths and religious principles that we have come to regard as fundamental and basic. In other words, certain moral and religious concepts must be constantly changing in order to fit our rapidly changing world. Pragmatism, with its emphasis on the value of experience in determining the true worth of ideas, gives us a flexible philosophy that fits comfortably any scheme of living and working that seems compatible with the best interests of the American people. How, then, has this philosophy influenced certain trends in the development of educational concepts in our present academic world? First of all, let us see what some of these more recent trends are.

Recent educational philosophy has taught us to place less emphasis on the value of factual information and more emphasis on the formation of good habits and proper attitudes.
Again, recent educational philosophy has taught us to regard supremely important the development of well-rounded personalities instead of intellectual giants. We have heard statements to the effect that we should teach not the textbooks but the children, and that the children should have a large share in determining their educational policies so that such policies may be compatible with their interests. We have been taught to have new ideas of discipline. No longer are children made to sit unnaturally still in the schoolrooms, but they are permitted to be active and are taught to discipline themselves in order not to impede the progress of the group as a whole. We stress relating all educational activities to actual living and studying processes in their natural relationship groups or units. Whether we burn all the bridges with the progressives or cautiously experiment with the conservatives, the fact remains that we no longer hold to time-worn formulas for learning but seek never-ending experimentation in order to determine better ways of teaching the youth of the land. Let us see how pragmatism is responsible for these new educational concepts of the American people.

Pragmatism is eager to experiment and to evaluate the result of all experiences. Naturally it is not conservative in nature, then, and is ready to do something to meet any educational need, whether real or imagined. Children get tired poring over books to learn facts and more facts; they
would like more attractive ways of learning; they have an intense desire to develop their physical and social beings as well as their intellects: they dislike sitting abnormally quiet while they are drinking in learning. What is the pragmatist's answer to these children? It is simply that we shall experiment with all these things that the children may desire and that the educators had better desire if they wish to hold their positions, and if these new ways of learning prove practicable and valuable, more valuable than the old ways, then we shall adopt them. In other words, the new methods are good if they work.

Before we look into the practicality of these new concepts of education, let us look briefly into the dangers that they may involve. There is always the danger that pragmatism may be a device used to lull guilty consciences into a sense of false self-respect. In other words, it may be a means of helping us to persuade ourselves to believe something that we know we should not believe. Human beings can justify anything that they do if they are given time, and pragmatism must be employed carefully, or it will loosen the moral fiber of our people.

Another danger of pragmatic philosophy as applied to educational principles is that we lack criteria for judging the practicality of certain methods and techniques. Too often
we take the easiest way out and justify our actions by deliberately ignoring the weaknesses of our results and magnifying the somewhat ephemeral merits of our achievements. That is to say, there is danger that we say not that "a thing is good if it works," but that a thing is good if it sounds impressive and sufficiently vague.

Pragmatism may also be falsely applied through the bewilderment that results from the clouds of theory emanating from the various schools of education in our colleges and universities. Embryo teachers are usually confused by a lack of common-sense scientific means of evaluation and an over-abundance of idealistic theories which may furnish pleasant hours of idle speculation but have little value in actual teaching situations. Let it not be implied that this paper seeks to speak disparagingly of the important place that a sound philosophy must be given in determining the various phases of curriculum building. A clear-cut philosophy is a necessity to an efficient school system; yet there must be something more than a philosophy. There must be a means of putting that philosophy into effect by using effective techniques.

2) There is still another danger in applying the pragmatic philosophy to educational facilities. In an over-emphasis on experimentation to see whether a thing "will work" or not, there is a likelihood that we shall cast aside all time-tested
fundamental concepts of what is good in education and cut
ourselves adrift from all cardinal principles entirely. If
we do that, there is nothing left for us but experimentation
and more experimentation; naturally, nothing can come from a
situation like that but confusion and bewilderment on the
part of both pupils and teacher.

In summing up these brief discussions of the dangers of
pragmatism in the educational world, let us remind our-
selves that we must be careful to prove the practicality of
new ideas instead of merely accepting them because a majority
of others, apparently at least, do lip service to them. All
educators fall into error when they place too much emphasis
on finding something new and too little emphasis on dwelling
with the old until they have time to assimilate it properly.
The whole world needs stability and slackening of tension
caused by unrest, but an unwise application of the pragmatic
philosophy in the educational world can cause only chaos
and uncertainty from the resulting excess of experimentation.

So much for the dangers that may result from the appli-
cation of the pragmatic philosophy to educational techniques.
Let us now examine some of the benefits or particular values
that the pragmatic influence on education proposes to bring
about.

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After having long remained static, pragmatism gave edu-
cation an impetus of re-evaluation, a dynamic spirit, one of
democratic implication. Education, like pragmatism, cannot
be imposed from without, or consist of gaining subject matter or information, but must spring from within. The trend is toward personal freedom of action, for paths less straight and narrow, and for less discipline.

This should tend to make people more independent, give them a better philosophy, more initiative, and build toward a stronger democracy.

It should give us knowledge which John Dewey says "is so organized into our disposition as to enable us to adapt the environment to our needs and to adapt our aims and desires to the situation in which we live." ¹

It adapts education to the scheme of democratic people and especially into the philosophy of schools and the doings of children. We readily admit that ideas and activities must have a purpose behind them; there must be an interest; this pragmatic principles propose in education. Theories of education have given way to practice in the educational way of thought and ways of doing things. Technical, trade, and vocational schools -- schools of activities -- are the types that are occupying the minds of educators; this is the pragmatic influence.

Education proposes facts; no longer theory and abstraction. Do not blame the stork for Johnny's little baby sister when he wants to know how they came in possession of her.

¹John Dewey, Democracy and Education, p. 400.
It proposes to eliminate classroom formality; put the child at ease; put him into his environment of experience.

2. It proposes to give the child the tool to do with and to let him do it. He learns by doing himself and handling the thing himself. No one ever learned to ride a bicycle by having it shown to him and then watching the teacher ride it.

3. It proposes to create an interest for the thing that the child will need and that which will be an aid to him in doing what he wants to do.

4. It proposes to create within him a desire that will result in his devising his own means and make him independent and self-reliant.

5. It proposes to establish in him habits of self-discipline which citizens of a functional democracy must have for them to survive.

6. It proposes to lead to the individual's adjustment to life situations.

To accomplish these aims through pragmatic education, we might sum it up with Hopkins' criteria for methods which are pragmatic:

1. Keep all aims and objectives clearly and definitely before the child at all times.

2. Avail yourself of pupil activity.

3. Use pupil motivation or drive at every opportunity.

4. Consider the pupil's beginning level of education.

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