

**Radical
PRAGMATISM
AN ALTERNATIVE**

ROBERT J. ROTH, S.J.

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An Alternative

by

ROBERT J. ROTH, S.J.



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ABBREVIATIONS

For complete information regarding these abbreviations, see the Bibliography.

Charles Sanders Peirce

CP *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, 8 vols.

William James

ERE *Essays in Radical Empiricism*

MT *The Meaning of Truth*

P *Pragmatism*

PP *The Principles of Psychology*

PU *A Pluralistic Universe*

RE *The Varieties of Religious Experience*

WB *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy*

John Dewey

MW *The Middle Works of John Dewey, 1899–1924*

LW *The Later Works of John Dewey, 1925–1953*

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

DM *The Divine Milieu*

PM *The Phenomenon of Man*

INTRODUCTION

Some fifty years ago, as a young graduate student, I first became interested in American pragmatism. At that time there was very little sympathy for it among Roman Catholics. As I recall, the first book by a Catholic that was sympathetic to pragmatism was the edited volume by John Blewett published in 1960 and entitled *John Dewey: His Thought and Influence*.¹ This inspired me a year later to publish my own study of Dewey, which, though critical, attempted to bring forward the valuable insights of the pragmatic tradition.² This did not sit well with some of my coreligionists who still viewed American philosophy in general and pragmatism in particular as a threat to faith and morals. This attitude persisted for many years, not only among Roman Catholics but among people of other religious and philosophical persuasions as well. And though in recent decades the hard lines of opposition have considerably softened, there is still a reluctance on the part of some to give pragmatism serious consideration and to render it the appreciation that it merits.

The present volume is the attempt of one person to describe the journey by which he came from a tradition quite different from—even alien to—pragmatism, began to understand and appreciate its insights, and sought to graft it upon his own philosophical outlook, at the same time seeing difficulties with some aspects of the pragmatic position. To do this, I shall focus on my own acquaintance with pragmatism. At first glance, this perspective may seem to give a highly subjective cast to my approach. That certainly would be a considerable drawback, for it would inhibit the degree of objectivity with which one must approach any subject, philosophy included. And yet, when one takes up an

¹ John Blewett, S.J., *John Dewey: His Thought and Influence* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1960).

² Robert J. Roth, S.J., *John Dewey and Self-Realization* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1961; repr. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1978).

individual philosopher or a philosophical tradition, it is impossible to be completely objective. Each one of us approaches a great philosopher from a different perspective, and the strength of a serious commentary is that new insights may be opened up which enable others to reread the works of the philosopher from a fresh viewpoint. As we know, this very endeavor gives rise to disagreements, often radical and sometimes heated, among the commentators. In the process I occasionally imagine that, as we struggle to understand the works of the original giants—be they Plato, Aristotle, Aquinas, Descartes, Kant, Heidegger, Lonergan, or whoever—they look down on those of us who are lesser mortals, shake their heads vehemently, and say about our interpretations: “No, no; you’ve got it all wrong!” Nonetheless, through it all there somehow emerges an increased knowledge both of the original philosophers discussed and of ways of drawing closer to a solution to the problems which they raised.

But there is a further purpose that is intended by yet another book on pragmatism. In the past I have, in the main, given a sympathetic rendering of American pragmatism. There were elements in the pragmatists that excited my philosophic interest in that they raised questions that were challenging and could not easily be dismissed or ignored. At the same time, I had questions that, in my own view, the pragmatists had not adequately answered. Heretofore I have been content merely to bring forward these questions, though all the while I have felt the need of attempting to answer them. The present volume, therefore, is the occasion for me to make that attempt.

My introduction to American pragmatism came after studies that were heavily cast in the Greek and medieval tradition, with the philosophy of Thomas Aquinas as the main focus. In graduate work at Fordham University, I had the good fortune of taking courses with the late Professor Robert C. Pollock, whose specialty was medieval and American philosophy and who inspired a whole generation of graduate students. He insisted that medieval philosophy was not synonymous with Aquinas, though he had a great respect for the renowned Dominican scholar. Under his tutelage, Augustine, Anselm, and Bonaventure became familiar and living philosophers, representing a rich heritage. Professor Pollock also introduced us to American pragmatism, whose representatives

were known to me only as opponents of the Scholastic philosophical tradition. As a result, it was the entrance into the Augustinian medieval world and the world of pragmatism that opened up new horizons. Though I continued to be strongly influenced by classical Greek and medieval philosophy, it is with the world of pragmatism that I am here concerned.

There were elements of pragmatism that first attracted me, even before I was able to sort out in more ordered form the more technical philosophical issues of that tradition. From an admittedly narrow theological and religious background, not unlike Dewey’s early personal experience as related late in life, I found an “immense release” in an appreciation of the material universe which was characteristic of the pragmatists. For them, this did not mean sense gratification but growth on the highest levels. Their conviction grew that human development depends very much on active involvement in the world of matter, of people, of events, of cultural and scientific progress. Yet it was not merely human growth that was involved, but religious growth as well. Critics of American materialism, of course, would see the development of American pragmatism as a movement from a deeply religious to a thoroughgoing naturalistic spirit. And yet, the latter is not primarily a negation of religion. It is, rather, an affirmation of matter, along with a conviction that, in affirming it, one cannot at the same time say yes to religion. Attention to certain aspects of our history may serve to suggest some reasons for this.

The origins of America had strong roots in Protestant theology. Though it is easy to exaggerate, one must admit that there were strong religious convictions animating the first Pilgrims who came to America. They were imbued with a biblical sense of the sacredness of history and with a belief in divine intervention in human events. Yet, though the City of God was their absorbing interest, they could not long ignore the City of Man. They had to commit themselves to the world of matter as they struggled to build homes and provide for the necessities of life. As America grew, a tension also grew between the human orientation to God and a commitment to the world. New England Transcendentalism prior to the Civil War has been characterized as a reaction against a rising naturalistic outlook, and especially against what was felt by many to be a growing absorption in material concerns—a by-

product of the industrial and economic growth of the early nineteenth century. Witness the flight from the world of a Henry David Thoreau at Walden Pond and of the small Utopian bands at Brook Farm and Fruitlands. These aspects of Transcendentalism would seem to characterize it as the alienation of humans from the world. But the movement cannot be understood unless it is also seen as a reaction against Calvinist-influenced theologies, with their separation between God, nature, and the human, and as an affirmation that the contact of person with God and nature formed a single experience. A dominant figure in this movement was Emerson, who, in opposition to a crass materialistic view of the universe, proclaimed that religious, ethical, and esthetic experience could be found only by healing the breach between the human spirit and nature. Within this movement, too, one finds a dissatisfaction with existing (i.e., Unitarian) theological formulations, a shedding of theological categories, a tendency to stand off and criticize religious rite and doctrine, and an attempt to explain divine revelation in natural terms. This tendency is found, in one degree or another, in such figures as Emerson and Thoreau. Perhaps here, more than anywhere else, was focused the rising tension between theology and matter.

It is especially in pragmatism, America's "first indigenous philosophy," and in naturalism, sometimes incorrectly called its logical outcome, that we witness both the decline of the traditional religious sense and the thoroughgoing acceptance of matter. Those engaged in these movements resolved the tension between religion and the world of matter by gradually eliminating traditional religion (though not all of them rejected God), since in their view it no longer made the world intelligible. On the other hand, it is now clear that American philosophic thought in this period was primarily a conscious expression of what the American spirit had always exemplified: namely, a conviction that matter is essential for human self-development. Pragmatists have nurtured what John Dewey called a "respect for matter," because they were sure that it was only by dealing with it that humans could release their potential, fulfill their drive for achievement, and further the progress of humanity on its highest level. From this point of view, nothing that humans encounter in the environment is unimportant for human growth. Matter and energy, social, political, and

economic institutions, science and technology—all must engage our attention and interest so as to help us achieve maximum development. To the pragmatist and naturalist, flight from active engagement in the world is a betrayal of one's fundamental responsibility.

At the time that this aspect of pragmatism was making its impact upon my philosophic thinking, the English translation of the works of the French Jesuit priest and anthropologist Pierre Teilhard de Chardin burst upon the American scene.³ Several aspects of his thought called forth a response in the hearts of people in America and throughout the world. Perhaps the most significant was his confidence in the value of human involvement with matter. His position was that of an evolutionist who accepts the origin and development of living things from inorganic elements. Now that evolution has reached its culmination in humans, he held, future progress will be made principally in the direction of the growth of individuals as persons. Such growth will depend on continued interaction with the world, which includes the physical universe, social institutions, cultural development, and, very important in our age, science. It is by active engagement in all these that humans will be able to achieve fulfillment on the natural level. This message gave hope and encouragement to those who had begun to feel overwhelmed by the imperious demands that worldly concerns made upon their time and energy. People suddenly became aware that interest in this world could have meaning for their enrichment as humans. Matter, then, became important—one might even say, sacred. But there was a deeper dimension to the message that Teilhard was bringing to America and to the world. He was saying that involvement in this world's concerns was essential for development, not only on the human level, but on the religious level as well. This made an enormous impression on those who had a commitment to some religious belief. Many religionists felt that Teilhard was stating explicitly

³ The first English translation of Teilhard's works was *The Phenomenon of Man*, trans. Bernard Wall (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1959). A revised translation was published in 1965. The original French edition was *Le phénomène humaine* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1955). It caused an enormous amount of discussion, both positive and negative. By 1985, Teilhard's complete religious-philosophical works were published in thirteen volumes.

what many had felt intuitively for a long time. His appeal consisted in the feeling that he had gone a long way toward providing answers in terms of their own religious experience.

The above reflections should indicate the similarities between the thought of the pragmatists and that of a religious scientist. These similarities reinforced my own attraction to the pragmatists, because I felt that they had raised the right questions, even though I had difficulty with some of their answers. But the comparison was impressive. While conducting a graduate seminar on American Pragmatism, I once made the remark that someone ought to write a dissertation on the similarity between John Dewey and Teilhard. One student took up the suggestion and wrote a dissertation on the subject which was later published as a book.⁴

So far, emphasis has been given to the impact that pragmatism made on my religious thinking. This is natural, given the religious commitment and education that were mine. But other aspects, too, were striking. One has already been mentioned, namely, the need of involvement in the affairs of this world for the enrichment of the individual as a person. Important also was the attack that pragmatism made against classical empiricism and idealism. Regarding the former, pragmatism rejected the atomistic rendition of experience characteristic of classical empiricism as seen principally in Locke and Hume. Like the spokes of a wheel, the new approach to experience radiated out to a revision of the philosophy of knowledge, the person, community, and of moral, social, and political theory. It also was at the center of pragmatism's critique of classical idealism, for emphasis was given to the fact that experience need not, must not, in all cases conform to some preconceived notion of reality; that conceptual formulations should be brought back continually to concrete situations to see if they need to be changed or even rejected in the light of further experience. Finally, pragmatism's epistemology seemed in many respects eminently persuasive not only in itself, but in its conformity with scientific methodology as well.

This personal account of one individual's philosophical journey is an attempt to indicate the aspects of pragmatism which

⁴ Joseph T. Culliton, C.S.B., *A Processive World View for Pragmatic Christians* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1975).

were found to be attractive and worthy of further study. But there were difficulties as well. The first had to do with the meaning of scientific method, which has been an important component of pragmatism. How is this method to be understood? Certainly it includes observation, hypothesis, and test. The later pragmatists focused primarily on the test of consequences to validate a proposed solution to a problem. Of the three classical pragmatists—Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, and John Dewey—the last-mentioned stressed this the most, and it has become a key element in the pragmatic method. But prior to that is the development of hypotheses as solutions to new problems. How precisely do they arise, such that they do not slip into some form of intuition which has been severely criticized and rejected? And what effect does one's position on this question have on the theory of the person? Moreover, can the pragmatic method develop a viable moral theory? This involves proposing goals and ideals which are the guides of human thought and action, and the criteria for good and right conduct.

The above questions have been cited in almost random fashion and reflect the type of questions that occurred to me in the course of my study of pragmatism. In the following chapters I shall try to put them down in a more ordered manner and address them more pointedly. An attempt will be made to answer these questions within a position that is sympathetic to pragmatism. In the process, a move will be made to show how someone from a completely different philosophical and theological tradition can draw upon the insights of pragmatism and incorporate them into that framework. The result will be a worldview enriched by the stimulus given by pragmatism to reexamine one's own stance. This procedure is not new to philosophy. The pragmatists themselves, notably Dewey, absorbed much of previous philosophy, even of Hegelianism, though a good deal was rejected.

So, too, all of us who "do" philosophy find ourselves attracted to one or another philosopher or philosophical tradition. We may consider ourselves to be Platonists or Aristotelians, Augustinians or Thomists, empiricists or idealists, language analysts or logicians, or, to use current terms, foundationalists or antifoundationalists. Sometimes those who follow a given philosopher do so literally and slavishly, and from a mistaken loyalty they so harden

thought as to stultify it and render it outmoded or irrelevant. At other times one may become familiar with a different set of philosophical ideas, try to understand them, and then assimilate them into one's original philosophic standpoint. In this case, it may be said that one is inspired by a new tradition so that a definite orientation permeates the original position which endures, though in modified form.

It is in this context that my interest in pragmatism began and has brought me to the present project. I have called my reexamination of pragmatism "radical." The term, of course, is taken from William James's "radical empiricism." By it he indicated that classical empiricism had not been radical enough, had not gone deeply enough into an examination of experience, and, hence, had missed some of its important aspects. The elements that he brought to the surface became significant in his own development and extension of empiricism. So, too, I propose to begin within the pragmatic tradition and to highlight what I consider to be some of its main contributions to philosophy. But in Jamesian fashion I then try to show that the pragmatists themselves had not been radical enough in mining the full implications of their own tradition. The end product will be a pragmatism that, while not negating the valuable contributions that it has made to philosophical inquiry, should extend these contributions and make them available to those of other philosophical and religious backgrounds.

RADICAL PRAGMATISM

Pragmatism: General Traits

IF ONE CLAIMS TO INITIATE a reconsideration of pragmatism, it seems to be incumbent upon that person first to indicate the areas that are thought to be in need of reconsideration. This has been done in a general way in the Introduction. But in order to begin focusing more narrowly on these areas, it would be helpful if at the outset I would express my own understanding of some of the general traits of pragmatism. I say "some of the traits" because my treatment will be selective. The principle of selection will be the aspects of pragmatism which I feel need to be reconsidered. And the discussion of them can be, at the outset, brief, since they are familiar enough and since they will be discussed more in detail in the following chapters.

The attempt to delineate the characteristics of pragmatism is no small task. It met with difficulties right from the beginning, the most notable being Peirce's discarding of the term 'pragmatism' and the adoption of 'pragmaticism.' Familiar enough is Arthur Lovejoy's somewhat caustic enumeration in 1908 of no fewer than thirteen pragmatisms.¹ Dewey himself claimed that in *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry* (1938) the term 'pragmatism' does not appear (LW 12:4).² His reason was: "Perhaps the word lends itself to misconception. At all events, so much misunderstanding and relatively futile controversy have gathered about the word that it seemed advisable to avoid its use." He added, however, that the text is "thoroughly pragmatic," provided that pragmatic is properly interpreted as including "the function of consequences as necessary tests of the validity of propositions" and the conse-

¹ Arthur O. Lovejoy, "The Thirteen Pragmatisms," *The Journal of Philosophy*, 5 (1908), 5-15. According to Lovejoy, 1908 marked the tenth anniversary of the term "pragmatism," if not the doctrine. The article was reprinted in Lovejoy's *The Thirteen Pragmatisms and Other Essays* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1963), pp. 1-20.

² All references to Dewey's works are included in the text as MW (Middle Works) and LW (Later Works), with volume and page number.

quences themselves as operations bearing on a specific problem. A few pages later, he called logic "a naturalistic theory." He admitted that the term "naturalistic" has many meanings, but for him it indicated that "there is no breach of continuity between operations of inquiry and biological operations and physical operations" (LW 12:26). Nonetheless, Dewey never seemed completely satisfied that any one term adequately identified his position. In *Individualism Old and New*, too, he had used the term "naturalism," but he admitted that it had all kinds of meanings. But, most important, it meant that human beings with all their aspirations are an integral part of nature and that the philosophical foundation and effort to realize these aspirations in nature are more effective than any kind of dualism (LW 5:114). For Dewey there were definite links among such terms as "pragmatism," "naturalism," "humanism," and "scientific humanism." His naturalism became a humanism when it considered human beings as a part of nature but as nonetheless unique. Thus in *Democracy and Education*, he could say that "man's life is bound up in the processes of nature; his career, for success or defeat, depends upon the way in which nature enters it" (MW 9:236). In *Reconstruction in Philosophy*, he insisted that the "pragmatic rule" of consequences and the method used in the sciences of nature should be applied to human moral reconstruction. If this is done, "the vexatious and wasteful conflict between naturalism and humanism is terminated" (MW 12:179).

In view of these variations in terminology, it should not be surprising that recent commentators have struggled with the task of identifying precisely what pragmatism professes to be. S. Morris Eames adopted the term "pragmatic naturalism."³ He stated that some of its characteristics are as follows: It is an "American movement," though it had philosophical and scientific roots in the past. It designates the philosophy of Peirce, James, Mead, and Dewey. Other terms have been used, such as instrumentalism and experimentalism, but, he claims, these have led to ambiguous, not to say erroneous, meanings. It is a movement rather than a systematic philosophy. In a later chapter, Eames emphasized the methodology that looks to consequences as a test of hypotheses.

³ S. Morris Eames, *Pragmatic Naturalism: An Introduction* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1977).

In the selection of the title of this volume and of this chapter, I have resisted using the term "pragmatic naturalism." It has as many differences, not to say ambiguities, as any other term. By pragmatism I mean the philosophy of Peirce, James, and Dewey, since they are included in any discussion of pragmatism and are in fact the central figures to be treated in this study. Moreover, I think it is possible to describe several aspects upon which the pragmatists themselves would be in broad agreement, even though they would differ as to how these aspects would be further developed.

Any discussion of pragmatism would have to include, if not begin with, the meaning of experience. Those familiar with pragmatism will groan upon being told that the pragmatic notion of experience will be recounted again, for this has been done many times. But it is important here for two reasons: (a) it is essential for anyone writing on the subject to reveal what he or she understands the pragmatists to mean by experience; and (b) it will provide the occasion to focus on the particular aspects that are to be discussed in the following chapters.

Before proceeding, however, it would be helpful first to say something about the meaning of "empiricism" and its relation to experience. It would seem that the latter term is used more extensively than the former. For example, in ordinary discourse one can speak about the experience of touching a table or a rose, of feeling pleasure or pain, of eating a meal, of reading a book, of seeing a play, of relating to a deity. In its narrower and more original meaning, experience is derived from the Greek work *em-peiria*, which, as used by Aristotle, meant sense perception and imagination. The term empiricism has, of course, gone through many variations in the history of philosophy. But its ordinary accepted meaning in classical modern philosophy begins with Locke and Hume and continues throughout the British empiricist tradition. In this sense, empiricism is a theory of experience consisting of simple sensations. It is atomistic, composed of discrete sense contents as the ultimate givens which are further combined into more complex ones. The pragmatists vehemently opposed this view of experience and stressed its unity, continuity, and wholeness. In a less classical sense, an empiricist position would maintain that experience is related to sensation in that it

begins with sense objects perceived by some form of sense perception. Normally, it would also hold that experience must be brought back to sense objects to be tested for its validity. In this respect, then, experience begins and ends with sense objects and with some form of sensation.

To return to the pragmatic meaning of experience: a telling reason for its importance was the vehemence with which the pragmatists opposed separations on all levels: the Cartesian radical duality of soul and body, spirit and matter; the idealists' disdain for contact with reality for the derivation of principles or for their verification; the classical empiricists' emphasis on sense data or ideas in the mind apart from objects. In a theory of knowledge, the pragmatists rejected the "spectator theory," according to which the knower stood apart from the known, passively noting and recording what is found outside. Instead, the knower is already in contact with the known. Better still, and as a general indication of what they were about, experience was defined as an interaction between the self and reality. The known does not act on the knower, or vice versa; rather, they *interact*. The knowing process is an active engagement between the mind and reality.

An object is said to be known when the individual is able to deal with it by anticipating what effects will arise from it. One understands what it means to be hard when one states that an object resists the touch, what a chair is when one uses it for sitting down, what a book is when one opens and reads it to advance in knowledge. Viewed in this fashion, experience is close to the meaning expressed "in ordinary discourse" as mentioned above—that is, it is indeed touching an object, eating a meal, reading a book, seeing a play. These precisely involve the interaction between a subject and an object, and the interaction itself is an experience.

In terms of knowledge, belief consists in the expectation that anticipated effects will follow, and the belief is said to be true when the effects do in fact eventuate. Belief is also a habit of action since one becomes accustomed to certain ways of dealing with a given object; for example, one will duck if a stone is hurled in one's direction. For the pragmatist, a belief—that is, the assurance that objects will act in regular ways—is an hypothesis that is always subject to further test. One continues to hold the belief as

long as there is no good reason for doubting it. It is always possible, however, that such a reason will arise; then the belief must be brought back to the concrete situation in order to be tested in the light of changing circumstances. Depending on the outcome of the test, the belief may be confirmed, modified, or discarded for a new one.

Though experience begins with singular instances, the mind forms hypotheses which are held to be true regarding all similar objects in similar situations. These hypotheses are formulated in symbolic representations such as conceptions. These are generals expressed in a proposition, such as, a diamond will scratch glass, or water will boil at 100 degrees centigrade. They are said to hold good for all similar objects and they can be brought back to concrete situations and tested. This is the great power of the human mind, that it can generalize by bringing together an entire class of objects under a singular formula, and that it can take the formula out of "cold storage," to use James's phrase, to be applied and tested.

But experience is not only "reportive," that is, it does not merely reflect what is already in existence. It is also creative. When a new situation arises, the mind identifies the problem, projects imaginative solutions or hypotheses, and tests them. In the process, the knower acts upon the environment, changes it, and arrives at a satisfactory solution to the initial problem. This is the procedure by which science has advanced; it deals with objects under laboratory conditions and abides by established procedures. But it may happen that new phenomena are noticed that do not fit precisely under the laws already in place. The scientist then projects possible explanations that may account for the novel event. These are tested until a solution is reached. But the creative process is not confined to the scientific laboratory. Civilization, too, advances by facing new conditions, whether they be social, political, financial, cultural, educational. It may be found that old ways of thinking and acting no longer suffice, and so different methods are sought and tested. In all these cases, new beliefs and new "truths" are brought into existence; truth is not only found, it is also created. There takes place, then, a fruitful interchange between the individual and the surrounding conditions; the environment is changed and in turn it influences and

changes the agent since it is a new set of circumstances. This mutual relationship constitutes a spiraling effect that goes on indefinitely.

Pragmatism gave extended attention to epistemology. But it applied the notion of experience as interaction to other areas as well. It was most important in defining what it means to be a person. The human being is not "full blown" at birth, with its potentialities and capacities completely developed. This is attained by interaction with other beings, first of all with physical objects. Again this is seen in the sciences, where human ingenuity and inventiveness are brought to higher levels, though as noted above it happens in affairs of everyday life. But it is especially in communication with other human beings that an individual attains maturity as a person. It is more than just dealing with others in some routine or mechanical way. Persons reach the fullness of development as humans when they cooperate with others in attaining for all the deepest and richest enhancement possible. This is why interpersonal relationships in community were important for the pragmatists since they enable all individuals to attain their goal in mutual effort, even in self-sacrifice, for the good of all. Sometimes I hear people say that they have given up on God and religion because they demand too much. My response is that, if such is the case, they should not buy into pragmatism since it places demands on individuals to be outgoing and generous if they wish to be truly human persons.

The delineation of what it means to be a person also describes morality. Those who engage in a life of community, who care for and labor for the welfare of all, are by that very fact good moral people. Morality consists in intelligent action and in the acceptance of responsibility for others. Concern, compassion, self-sacrifice—these are the virtues that characterize good moral persons. The opposite—indifference, callousness, selfishness—are signs of moral bankruptcy because they place individuals outside the pale of community.

The pragmatists' notion of experience also affects their outlook on God and religion. Since experience is at its core interaction, then the God whom the pragmatists will recognize and accept must somehow be in touch with humans, must be one to whom and with whom human beings can relate in an intimate way. A

God who is apart from the human person and the human condition ceases to be meaningful. And here it is not apt to say that, according to the pragmatists, "God must be relevant." That is too ambiguous a phrase since it is easily trivialized to mean that God must be involved in and approve of every passing interest of contemporary life, no matter how common and sordid it may be. Consistent with their high ideal of what it means to be a person, the pragmatists' expectations of God and religion are lofty and ennobling. This should inspire individuals to enlarge their horizons, to go beyond the petty concerns of ordinary life, to arouse their emotions and effort, to extend their hopes and ideals as far as possible. But if God and traditional religion are seen to be unhelpful or even hostile to human fulfillment, they must either be rejected or reinterpreted. Succeeding chapters will show what modifications the pragmatists made regarding belief in God and religion.

These are some of the traits which are relevant to the main lines of the present volume. It should be noted that they are discussed because they are seen to be fruitful aspects of pragmatism which can be assimilated by one from a different philosophical and religious background. In lectures and writings I have made this point many times. Pragmatism has made valuable suggestions and corrections in many areas. It has renewed a theory of knowledge by its rejection of classical empiricism and idealism, and by its recovery of the importance of contact with reality, of creativity, and of scientific method. It has enriched a theory of person and moral theory by its emphasis on the relationships that should obtain among persons, and on an unselfish commitment to community and the welfare of others. It has stimulated a reconsideration of the theory of God and traditional religion by insisting that the growth of the person as person ought not to be slighted and that a viable religious theory ought to be not only compatible with the full development of the person but also conducive to it. All these are positive contributions which have always characterized authentic pragmatism. Unfortunately, in its early stages they were badly misunderstood, though more lately they have come to be recognized.

However (always a however), it is possible to consider pragmatism from another angle, not so much to correct what may seem