

THE PIONEERS OF PRAGMATISM

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ملخص:

تهدف هذه الدراسة المتواضعة إلى تعريف جنود البراغماتية في الفلسفة الأمريكية، ورواد أو ممهّدوا الطريق للفكر المعاصر الذي مازال محل انتقادات والذي كاد أن يصبح كذلك كأيدولوجيا في الحياة الأمريكية، قد اتفقوا بأن البراغماتية هي كيف نجعل أفكارنا واضحة وأيضا كيف نبحث أو نسعى وراء الحقيقة والمعاني والإعتقادات.

وفعلا أن هذا المقال يقتصر على نقطتين أساسيتين المتمثلتين أولا في تعريفنا المبسط للنزعة البراغماتية وتطورها في الفلسفة الأمريكية.

وثانيا في المنهج أو الطريقة التي تطور بها المذهب البراغماتي في المجتمع الأمريكي على يد شارل بيرس (Charles Pierce) وويليام جيمس (William James) وجون دوي (John Dewey) الذين أصبحوا نوابغ الفكر البراغماتي.

ومن خلال هذه التعاريف تبين بأن تطور البراغماتية في الفلسفة الأمريكية أصبحت لها نزعة مادية ديناميكية متجددة يؤمن بها المجتمع الأمريكي في علاقتها الاجتماعية والتربوية عامة والسياسية بخاصة.

INTRODUCTION:

The most important factors in philosophy are the developments of the different doctrines which evolved from the realms of philosophy in the 20th century, such as: experimentalism which studies the experience of sciences, cybernetics which studies the development of technology, empiricism which works by empirical method, Existentialism which studies the existence of the individual liberty, and pragmatism which studies the existence of the individual interest. Thus, every society has its own characteristic philosophy like American pragmatism, British empirism, German idealism, the social philosophy of France, and the rest of philosophy is about religions and superstitions. The doctrines of contemporary philosophy are interested in pragmatism. Indeed pragmatism has been the subject of many critical discussions. However, the pioneers defined pragmatism in different ways. First what does pramatism mean?

1) Meanings of pragmatism:

Pragmatism is an independent school of philosophy. It was founded in the last century under the able pioneering leadership of Charles Peirce (1839 - 1914) William James (1842 - 1910) and John Dewey (1859 - 1952). Further, **pragmatism is a philosophical movement of the late 19th and 20th centuries whose "emphasis**

lay in interpreting ideas through their consequences".¹

The characteristics of pragmatism in American philosophy are how to make our ideas clear and also to seek truth, meaning and belief. In consequence pragmatism is the Americans indeology of their own life. The meaning of pragmatism comes from the Greek "pragma" which means action and matter, but Charles Peirce preferred to use the Greek " Praktikos" or " Pragmatikos"² However, the ohter philosophers like William James, John Dewey suggest terms more indicative of what the pragmatist has in mind pragmatism or practicalism.

2) Origin of pragmatism :

The origin of pragmatism is clear in outline and background even if not in detail. The familiar capsule description is as follows: pragmatism is a method of philosophizing often said to be a theory of meaning. At first it was developed by Charles Pierce in the 1870'S, revived and reformulated in 1898 by william James primarily as a theory of truth, and furher developed, expanded, and disseminated by John Dewey.

A - *Pierce's Pragmatism:*

Thus, the meaning of pragmatism to Charles Pierce consists of two points of considerable importance in the pragmatic

1) Reese, William L. *Dictionary of Philosophy and religion.*
(New Jersey : Humanities Press, 1980) p.453.

2) Ibid, pp. 419 - 20 .

procedure for determining where one cannot provide any conditional translation for a sign, its (pragmatism) meaning is empty. Pierce's pragmatism thus is offered as a scheme for getting the meaning in the sense of some general definition of meaning. It is a theoretical derive for getting at the empirically significant content of concepts by determining the roles they in classes of empirically verifiable statements. The pragmatic method for Pierce is a method of clarifying and determining the meaning of signs. Therefor, Piece gives a reason for the aim of the method which is to facilitate communication. He said that "pragmatism" is the name of a theory of meaning whose criterion was the pragmatic maxim. Further he emphasized that:

" In order to ascertain the meaning of an intellectual conception one should consider what practical consequences might conceivably result by necessity from the truth of that conception; and the sum of these consequences will constitute the entire meaning of the conception".³

B - Jame's pragmatism:

William James the leader of pragmatism and psychology of education, became a famous man because he reformulated and explained what pragmatism means in our lives and also he tried to

3) Ibid, pp. 236 - 4 .

make a path for this contemporary doctrine in the future. Consequently, James tried to explain the pragmatic theory of truth. He asked himself a question:

Pragmatism, on other hand, asks its usual question; " Grant an idea or belief to be true", it says, what concrete difference will its being true make in anyone's actual life? How will the truth be realized? what experiences will be different from those which would obtain if the belief were false? what, in short, is the truth's cash-value in experimental terms? Truth is more than a passive state of existence, it is an active, participating function.'⁴

In addition to the theory of pragmatism James was strongly affected by the doctrine of materialistic determinism, which, in the light of scientific knowledge, seemed logically inescapable. Jamesian pragmatism and radical empiricism attempts to Charles Pierce the thicket of human experience in its natural and social environment . It seems that James' philosophy seeks to bring these two necessities into a co-operative programme of enlightened living. One of his outstanding discussions, "the moral

4) Sahakian, W. S and Sahakian , M.L *Realms of Philosophy* (Cambridge University Press, 1965) p.393.

philosophy and the moral life"⁵ Shows his catholicity of spirit and, at the same time, the blind spot, if it may so be called, in his moral vision.

Moreover, James was important in philosophy on two counts: he invented the doctrine which he called "**Radical empiricism**" and he was one of the three protagonists of the theory of "**pragmatism**" which called later on, "**instrumentalism**". Thus, there were two sides to James: philosophical interests, one scientific, the other religious. on other hand he explained, the empirical practice, like pragmatism and religion, adds up in its usage to "**uses to the individual**"⁶ and he said that:

We have found our way back, after our excursion... to where we were before: the uses of religion its uses to the individual who has it, and the uses of the individual himself to the world, are the best arguments that truth is in it. We return to the empirical philosophy: the true is what worked well, even though the qualification "on the whole" may have to be added. ⁷

5) Wright, C. Mills. **Sociology and Pragmatism.** (Oxford University Press, 1966) p.29.

6) Ibid. p.252.

7) Ibid p.257.

C - Dewey's pragmatism:

The last leader of American pragmatic development was John Dewey, a philosopher and educator, who described Pierce's views, and James thought. However, Dewey noted this difference: Pierce wrote as a logician and James as a humanist. Thus, the recognition of his high standing as a great thinker led to his being invited on philosophical and educational missions to China, Japan, and Russia . Indeed he has had a profound influence not only among philosophers, but on the students of education, aesthetics, and political theory. At the same time he was a man of the highest character, liberal in outlook, generous and kind in personal relationships, indefatigable in work.

Dewey has explained pragmatism in his own way which consists of giving considerable importance to the welfare state. Also, he said that instrumentalism is the doctrine that ideas or theories function as instruments of action, and the utility of an idea serves to determine its truth. And also, he claimed that:

"The essence of pragmatic instrumentalism is to conceive of both knowledge and practice as means of making goods - excellencies of all kinds - secure in experienced existence".⁸

8) Sahakian ... Realms of Philosophy , p.408.

Moreover, in his instrumental theory, he said that knowing beings with specific observation that can test a hypothesis for its solution. Further Dewey thought that truth was utility which provides serve in making just that contribution to the reorganization in experiences that the idea or theory claims to be able to make. However, he characterized his "philosophy as naturalisms, quite as often as he calls his view instrumentalism".⁹

The difference in defining pragmatism between Charles Pierce, William James and John Dewey is how to make our idea clear, mainly the meaning, truth, belief, instrumentalism, humanistic pragmatism, and the method of pragmatism. Therefore, each one gives his ideas and tries to explain them very clearly for people, so that they can understand what pragmatism mean in life. I think that L.S. Klepp is right when he said in his article "Richard Rorty philosopher of Paradox" (DIALOGUE) (1991):

"... pragmatism, the only original American movement in philosophy, and forging a new path between the mutually hostile camps of analytic Anglo-American and speculative continental European philosophy..."¹⁰

9) Ayer A.J. *The Origins of Pragmatism*,
(London: Mac Millan, 1958) p.63 .

10) L.S. Klepp. " Richard Rorty: Philosopher of Paradox", DIALOGUE, N°94,
1991, p.47 .

Thus, the characteristics pragmatism is interested in are:

- a) The study of personal and social interest.
- b) Truth and belief.
- c) The study of humain actions.
- d) Making everyone seek and look forward for his intrerests.

In conclusion, pragmatism has developed and became as a doctrine in contemporary philosophy even though the researchers of pragmatism are few throughout the world. Nevertheless, American people has chosen pragmatism as a philosophy and as a way of life. Indeed pragmatism has progressed in America leaving than, philosophies such as marxism, and existentialism behind. The evaluation of pragmatism is increasing in modern philosophy because there were many doctrines which have evolved from pragmatism and it is still effective in American society.

