

## CHAPTER XI

# CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN PHILOSOPHERS: SANTAYANA, JAMES AND DEWEY

### INTRODUCTION

**T**HERE are, as everybody knows, two Americas, of which one is European. European America is chiefly the eastern states, where the older stocks look up respectfully to foreign aristocracies, and more recent immigrants look back with a certain nostalgia to the culture and traditions of their native lands. In this European America there is an active conflict between the Anglo-Saxon soul, sober and genteel, and the restless and innovating spirit of the newer peoples. The English code of thought and manners must eventually succumb to the continental cultures that encompass and inundate it here; but for the present that British mood dominates the literature, though no longer the morals, of the American East. Our standard of art and taste in the Atlantic states is English; our literary heritage is English; and our philosophy, when we have time for any, is in the line of British thought. It is this new England that produced Washington and Irving and Emerson and even Poe; it is this new England that wrote the books of the first American philosopher, Jonathan Edwards; and it is this new England that captured and remade that strange, exotic figure, America's latest thinker, George Santayana. For Santayana, of course, is an American philosopher only by grace of geography; he is a European who, having been born in Spain, was transported to America in his unknowing childhood, and who now, in his ripe age, returns to Europe as to a paradise for which his

years with us were a probation. Santayana is steeped in the "genteel tradition" of the old America.<sup>1</sup>

The other America is American. It consists of those people, whether Yankees or Hoosiers or cowboys, whose roots are in this soil, and not in Europe; whose manners, ideas and ideals are a native formation; whose souls are touched neither with the gentility of the families that adorn Boston, or New York, or Philadelphia, or Richmond, nor with the volatile passions of the southern or eastern European; men and women moulded into physical ruggedness and mental directness and simplicity by their primitive environment and tasks. This is the America that produced Lincoln and Thoreau and Whitman and Mark Twain; it is the America of "horse sense," of "practical men," of "hard-headed business men; it is the America which so impressed itself upon William James that he became its exponent in philosophy while his brother became more British than an Englishman; and it is the America that made John Dewey.

We shall study Santayana first, despite chronology; because, though he is the youngest of our greater philosophers, he represents an older and a foreign school; and the subtlety of his thought, and the fragrance of his style, are like the perfume that lingers in a room from which the flowers have been taken away. We shall have, very probably, no more Santayanans; for hereafter it is America, and not Europe, that will write America's philosophies.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. his own analysis of the two Americas: "America is not simply a young country with an old mentality; it is a country with two mentalities, one a survival of the beliefs and standards of the fathers, the other an expression of the instincts, practices and discoveries of the younger generations. In all the higher things of the mind—in religion, in literature, in the moral emotions—it is the hereditary spirit that prevails, so much so that Mr. Bernard Shaw finds that America is a hundred years behind the times. The truth is that one-half of the American mind has remained, I will not say high and dry, but slightly becalmed; it has floated gently in the back-water, while alongside, in invention and industry and social organization, the other half of the mind was leaping down a sort of Niagara Rapids. This may be found symbolized in American architecture. . . . The American Will inhabits the skyscraper; the American Intellect inhabits the colonial mansion."—*Winds of Doctrine*, New York, 1913; p. 188.

## I. GEORGE SANTAYANA

1. *Biographical*

Santayana was born at Madrid in 1863. He was brought to America in 1872, and remained here till 1912. He took his degrees at Harvard, and taught there from his twenty-seventh to his fiftieth year. One of his students describes him vividly:

Those who remember him in the class room will remember him as a spirit solemn, sweet, and withdrawn, whose Johanne face by a Renaissance painter held an abstract eye and a hieratic smile, half mischief, half content; whose rich voice flowed evenly, in cadences smooth and balanced as a liturgy; whose periods had the intricate perfection of a poem and the import of a prophecy; who spoke somehow for his hearers and not to them, stirring the depths in their natures and troubling their minds, as an oracle might, to whom pertained mystery and reverence, so compact of remoteness and fascination was he, so moving and so unmoved.<sup>1</sup>

He was not quite content with the country of his choice; his soul, softened with much learning, and sensitive as a poet's soul must be (for he was poet first, and philosopher afterward), suffered from the noisy haste of American city-life; instinctively he shrank back to Boston, as if to be as near to Europe as he could; and from Boston to Cambridge and Harvard, and a privacy that preferred Plato and Aristotle to James and Royce. He smiled with a little bitterness at the popularity of his colleagues, and remained aloof from the crowd and the press; but he knew that he was fortunate to have found a home in the finest School of Philosophy that any American university had ever known. "It was a fresh morning in the life of reason, cloudy but brightening."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Horace Kallen in *The Journal of Philosophy*, Sept. 29, 1921; vol. 18, p. 534.

<sup>2</sup> *Character and Opinion in the United States*, New York, 1921; end of chapter first.

His first essay in philosophy was *The Sense of Beauty* (1896), which even the matter-of-fact Münsterberg rated as the best American contribution to esthetics. Five years later came a more fragmentary, and more readable, volume, *Interpretations of Poetry and Religion*. Then, for seven years, like Jacob serving for his love, he worked silently, publishing only occasional verse; he was preparing his *magnum opus*, *The Life of Reason*. These five volumes (*Reason in Common Sense*, *Reason in Society*, *Reason in Religion*, *Reason in Art*, and *Reason in Science*) at once lifted Santayana to a fame whose quality fully atoned for what it lacked in spread. Here was the soul of a Spanish grandee grafted upon the stock of the gentle Emerson; a refined mixture of Mediterranean aristocracy with New England individualism; and, above all, a thoroughly emancipated soul, almost immune to the spirit of his age, speaking as if with the accent of some pagan scholar come from ancient Alexandria to view our little systems with unwondering and superior eye, and to dash our new-old dreams with the calmest reasoning and the most perfect prose. Hardly since Plato had philosophy phrased itself so beautifully; here were words full of a novel tang, phrases of delicate texture, perfumed with subtlety and barbed with satiric wit; the poet spoke in these luxuriant metaphors, the artist in these chiseled paragraphs. It was good to find a man who could feel at once the lure of beauty and the call of truth.

After this effort Santayana rested on his fame, contenting himself with poems and minor volumes.<sup>1</sup> Then, strange to say, after he had left Harvard and gone to live in England, and the world presumed that he looked upon his work as

<sup>1</sup> These are, chiefly: *Three Philosophical Poets* (1910)—classic lectures on Lucretius, Dante and Goethe; *Winds of Doctrine* (1913); *Egotism in German Philosophy* (1916); *Character and Opinion in the United States* (1921); and *Soliloquies in England* (1922). All of these are worth reading, and rather easier than the *Life of Reason*. Of this the finest volume is *Reason in Religion*. *Little Essays from the Writings of George Santayana*, edited by L. P. Smith, and arranged by Santayana himself, is an admirable selection.

finished, he published, in 1923, a substantial volume on *Scepticism and Animal Faith*, with the blithe announcement that this was merely the introduction to a new system of philosophy, to be called "Realms of Being." It was exhilarating to see a man of sixty sailing forth on distant voyages anew, and producing a book as vigorous in thought, and as polished in style, as any that he had written. We must begin with this latest product, because it is in truth the open door to all of Santayana's thinking.

## 2. *Scepticism and Animal Faith*

"Here," says the preface, "is one more system of philosophy. If the reader is tempted to smile, I can assure him that I smile with him. . . . I am merely attempting to express for the reader the principles to which he appeals when he smiles." Santayana is modest enough (and this is strange in a philosopher) to believe that other systems than his own are possible. "I do not ask anyone to think in my terms if he prefers others. Let him clean better, if he can, the windows of his soul, that the variety and beauty of the prospect may spread more brightly before him."<sup>1</sup>

In this last and introductory volume he proposes to clear away, first of all, the epistemological cobwebs that have enmeshed and arrested the growth of modern philosophy. Before he delineates the Life of Reason he is willing to discuss, with all the technical paraphernalia dear to the professional epistemologist, the origin, validity and limits of human reason. He knows that the great snare of thought is the uncritical acceptance of traditional assumptions: "criticism surprises the soul in the arms of convention," he says, unconventionally. He is willing to doubt almost everything: the world comes to us dripping with the qualities of the senses through which it has flowed, and the past comes down to us

<sup>1</sup> *Scepticism and Animal Faith*, pp. v and vi.

through a memory treacherously colored with desire. Only one thing seems certain to him, and that is the experience of the moment—this color, this form, this taste, this odor, this quality; these are the “real” world, and their perception constitutes “the discovery of essence.”<sup>1</sup>

Idealism is correct, but of no great consequence: it is true that we know the world only through our ideas; but since the world has behaved, for some thousands of years, substantially as if our combined sensations were true, we may accept this pragmatic sanction without worry for the future. “Animal faith” may be faith in a myth, but the myth is a good myth, since life is better than any syllogism. The fallacy of Hume lay in supposing that by discovering the origin of ideas he had destroyed their validity: “A natural child meant for him an illegitimate one; his philosophy had not yet reached the wisdom of the French lady who asked if all children were not natural.”<sup>2</sup> This effort to be sceptically strict in doubting the veracity of experience has been carried by the Germans to the point of a disease, like a madman forever washing his hands to clean away dirt that is not there. But even these philosophers “who look for the foundations of the universe in their own minds” do not live as if they really believed that things cease to exist when not perceived.

We are not asked to abolish our conception of the natural world, nor even, in our daily life, to cease to believe in it; we are to be idealists only north-northwest, or transcendently; when the wind is southerly we are to remain realists. . . . I should be ashamed to countenance opinions which, when not arguing, I did not believe. It would seem to me dishonest and cowardly to militate under other colors than those under which I live. . . . Therefore no modern writer is altogether a philosopher in my eyes,

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 11f.

<sup>2</sup> *Reason in Common Sense*, New York, 1911, p. 98.

except Spinoza. . . . I have frankly taken nature by the hand, accepting as a rule, in my farthest speculation, the animal faith I live by from day to day.<sup>1</sup>

And so Santayana is through with epistemology; and we breathe more easily as we pass on with him to that magnificent reconstruction of Plato and Aristotle which he calls "The Life of Reason." This epistemological introduction was apparently a necessary baptism for the new philosophy. It is a transitional concession; philosophy still makes its bow in epistemological dress, like the labor leaders who for a time wear silk breeches at the king's court. Some day, when the middle ages are really over, philosophy will come down from these clouds, and deal with the affairs of men.

### 3. *Reason in Science*

The Life of Reason is "a name for all practical thought and action justified by its fruits in consciousness." Reason is no foe of the instincts, it is their successful unison; it is nature become conscious in us, illuminating its own path and goal. It "is the happy marriage of two elements—impulse and ideation—which, if wholly divorced, would reduce man to a brute or a maniac. The rational animal is generated by the union of these two monsters. He is constituted by ideas which have ceased to be visionary and actions which have ceased to be vain." Reason is "man's imitation of divinity."<sup>2</sup>

The Life of Reason bases itself frankly on science, because "science contains all trustworthy knowledge." Santayana knows the precariousness of reason, and the fallibility of science; he accepts the modern analysis of scientific method as merely a shorthand description of regularities observed in our experience, rather than "laws" governing the world and guaranteed unchangeable. But even so modified, science must be our only reliance; "faith in the intellect . . . is the only

<sup>1</sup> *Scepticism and Animal Faith*, pp. 192, 298, 305, 308.

<sup>2</sup> *R. in C. S.*, pp. 3, 6 and 17.

faith yet sanctioned by its fruits.”<sup>1</sup> So Santayana is resolved to understand life, feeling like Socrates that life without discourse is unworthy of a man; he will subject all “the phases of human progress,” all the pageant of man’s interests and history, to the scrutiny of reason.

He is modest enough nevertheless; he proposes no new philosophy, but only an application of old philosophies to our present life; he thinks the first philosophers were the best; and of them all he ranks highest Democritus<sup>2</sup> and Aristotle; he likes the plain blunt materialism of the first, and the unruffled sanity of the second. “In Aristotle the conception of human nature is perfectly sound: everything ideal has a natural basis, and everything natural an ideal development. His ethics, when thoroughly digested and weighed, will seem perfectly final. The Life of Reason finds there its classic explication.” And so, armed with the atoms of Democritus and the golden mean of Aristotle, Santayana faces the problems of contemporary life.

In natural philosophy I am a decided materialist—apparently the only one living. . . . But I do not profess to know what matter is in itself. . . . I wait for the men of science to tell me. . . . But whatever matter may be, I call it matter boldly, as I call my acquaintances Smith and Jones without knowing their secrets.<sup>3</sup>

He will not permit himself the luxury of pantheism, which is merely a subterfuge for atheism; we add nothing to nature by calling it God; “the word *nature* is poetical enough; it suggests sufficiently the generative and controlling function, the endless vitality and changeful order of the world in which I live.” To be forever clinging to the old beliefs in these refined and denatured forms is to be like Don Quixote, tinkering with obsolete armor. Yet Santayana is poet enough to know that a world quite divested of deity is a cold and un-

<sup>1</sup> *R. in Science*, New York, 1906, p. 318; *R. in C. S.*, p. 96.

<sup>2</sup> He makes Democritus the hero of his latest volume, *Dialogues in Limbo*.

<sup>3</sup> *S. and A. F.*, pp. viii and vii.



comfortable home. "Why has man's conscience in the end invariably rebelled against naturalism and reverted in some form or other to a cultus of the unseen?" Perhaps "because the soul is akin to the eternal and ideal"; it is not content with that which is, and yearns for a better life; it is saddened by the thought of death, and clings to the hope of some power that may make it permanent amid the surrounding flux. But Santayana concludes, bluntly: "I believe there is nothing immortal. . . . No doubt the spirit and energy of the world is what is acting in us, as the sea is what rises in every little wave; but it passes through us; and, cry out as we may, it will move on. Our privilege is to have perceived it as it moved."<sup>1</sup>

Mechanism is probably universal; and though "physics cannot account for that minute motion and pullulation in the earth's crust of which human affairs are a portion," the best method in psychology is to suppose that mechanism prevails even in the inmost recesses of the soul. Psychology graduates from literature into science only when it seeks the mechanical and material basis of every mental event. Even the splendid work of Spinoza on the passions is merely "literary psychology," a dialectic of deduction, since it does not seek for each impulse and emotion its physiological and mechanical ground. The "behaviorists" of today have found the right road, and should follow it unfrightened.<sup>2</sup>

So thoroughly mechanical and material is life that consciousness, which is not a thing but a condition and a process, has no causal efficacy; the efficacy lies in the heat with which impulse and desire move brain and body, not in the light which flashes up as thought. "The value of thought is ideal, not causal"; that is, it is not the instrument of action but the theatre of pictured experience and the recipient of moral and esthetic delights.

Is it the mind that controls the bewildered body and points out the way to physical habits uncertain of their

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 237 and 271; *R. in C. S.*, p. 189; *Winds of Doctrine*, p. 199.

<sup>2</sup> *R. in S.*, pp. 75, 131, 136.

affinities? Or is it not much rather an automatic inward machinery that executes the marvelous work, while the mind catches here and there some glimpse of the operation, now with delight and adhesion, now with impotent rebellion? . . . Lalande, or whoever it was, who searched the heavens with his telescope and could find no God, would not have found the human mind if he had searched the brain with a microscope. . . . Belief in such a spirit is simply belief in magic. . . . The only facts observed by the psychologist are physical facts. . . . The soul is only a fine quick organization within the material animal; . . . a prodigious network of nerves and tissues, growing in each generation out of a seed.<sup>1</sup>

Must we accept this buoyant materialism? It is astounding that so subtle a thinker and so ethereal a poet as Santayana should tie to his neck the millstone of a philosophy which after centuries of effort is as helpless as ever to explain the growth of a flower or the laughter of a child. It may be true that the conception of the world as "a bisectible hybrid," half material and half mental, is "the clumsy conjunction of an automaton with a ghost";<sup>2</sup> but it is logic and lucidity personified alongside of Santayana's conception of himself as an automaton automatically reflecting on its own automatism. And if consciousness has no efficacy, why was it evolved, so slowly and so painfully, and why does it survive in a world in which useless things so soon succumb? Consciousness is an organ of judgment as well as a vehicle of delight; its vital function is the rehearsal of response and the coördination of reaction. It is because of it that we are men. Perhaps the flower and its seed, and the child and its laughter, contain more of the mystery of the universe than any machine that ever was on land or sea; and perhaps it is wiser to interpret nature in terms of life rather than try to understand her in terms of death.

<sup>1</sup> *R. in C. S.*, pp. 219, 214, 212; *Winds*, p. 150; *S. and A. F.*, pp. 287, 257-218-9.

<sup>2</sup> *R. in C. S.*, p. 211.

But Santayana has read Bergson too, and turns away from him in scorn.

Bergson talks a great deal about life, he feels that he has penetrated deeply into its nature; and yet death, together with birth, is the natural analysis of what life is. What is this creative purpose that must wait for sun and rain to set in motion? What is this life that in any individual can be suddenly extinguished by a bullet? What is this *élan vital* that a little fall in temperature would banish altogether from the universe? <sup>1</sup>

#### 4. *Reason in Religion*

Sainte-Beuve remarked of his countrymen that they would continue to be Catholics long after they had ceased to be Christians. This is the analysis of Renan and Anatole France, and of Santayana too. He loves Catholicism as one may still long for the woman who has deceived him—"I do believe her though I know she lies." He mourns for his lost faith, that "splendid error, which conforms better to the impulses of the soul" than life itself. He describes himself at Oxford, in the midst of some ancient ritual:

Exile that I am,  
Exile not only from the wind-swept moor,  
Where Guadaranna lifts his purple crest,  
But from the spirit's realm, celestial, sure,  
Goal of all hope, and vision of the best.

It is because of this secret love, this believing unbelief, that Santayana achieves his masterpiece in *Reason in Religion*, filling his sceptical pages with a tender sadness, and finding in the beauty of Catholicism plentiful cause for loving it still. He smiles, it is true, at "the traditional orthodoxy, the belief, namely, that the universe exists and is good for the sake of

<sup>1</sup> *Winds*, p. 107.

man or of the human spirit"; but he scorns "the enlightenment common to young wits and worm-eaten old satirists, who plume themselves on detecting the scientific ineptitude of religion—something which the blindest half see—but leave unexplored the habits of thought from which those tenets sprang, their original meaning and their true function." Here, after all, is a remarkable phenomenon—that men everywhere have had religions; how can we understand man if we do not understand religion? "Such studies would bring the sceptic face to face with the mystery and pathos of mortal existence. They would make him understand why religion is so profoundly moving and in a sense so profoundly just."<sup>1</sup>

Santayana thinks, with Lucretius, that it was fear which first made the gods.

Faith in the supernatural is a desperate wager made by man at the lowest ebb of his fortunes; it is as far as possible from being the source of that normal vitality which subsequently, if his fortunes mend, he may gradually recover. . . . If all went well, we should attribute it only to ourselves. . . . The first things which a man learns to distinguish and repeat are things with a will of their own, things which resist his casual demands; and so the first sentiment with which he confronts reality is a certain animosity, which becomes cruelty toward the weak, and fear and fawning before the powerful. . . . It is pathetic to observe how lowly are the motives that religion, even the highest, attributes to the deity, and from what a hard-pressed and bitter existence they have been drawn. To be given the best morsel, to be remembered, to be praised, to be obeyed blindly and punctiliously—these have been thought points of honor with the gods, for which they would dispense favors and punishments on the most exorbitant scale.<sup>2</sup>

Add to fear, imagination: man is an incorrigible animist,

<sup>1</sup> *R. in Religion*, New York, 1913; p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> *R. in S.*, p. 297; *R. in R.*, pp. 28, 84.

and interprets all things anthropomorphically; he personifies and dramatises nature, and fills it with a cloud of deities; "the rainbow is taken . . . for a trace left in the sky by the passage of some beautiful and elusive goddess." Not that people quite literally believe these splendid myths; but the poetry of them helps men to bear the prose of life. This mythopoetic tendency is weak today, and science has led to a violent and suspicious reaction against imagination; but in primitive peoples, and particularly in the near East, it was unchecked. The Old Testament abounds in poetry and metaphor; the Jews who composed it did not take their own figures literally; but when European peoples, more literal and less imaginative, mistook these poems for science, our Occidental theology was born. Christianity was at first a combination of Greek theology with Jewish morality; it was an unstable combination, in which one or the other element would eventually yield; in Catholicism the Greek and pagan element triumphed, in Protestantism, the stern Hebraic moral code. The one had a Renaissance, the other a Reformation.<sup>1</sup>

The Germans—the "northern barbarians," Santayana calls them—had never really accepted Roman Christianity. "A non-Christian ethics of valor and honor, a non-Christian fund of superstition, legend and sentiment, subsisted always among medieval peoples." The Gothic cathedrals were barbaric, not Roman. The warlike temper of the Teutons raised its head above the peacefulness of the Oriental, and changed Christianity from a religion of brotherly love to a stern inculcation of business virtues, from a religion of poverty to a religion of prosperity and power. "It was this youthful religion—profound, barbaric, poetical—that the Teutonic races insinuated into Christianity, and substituted for that last sigh of two expiring worlds."<sup>2</sup>

Nothing would be so beautiful as Christianity, Santayana thinks, if it were not taken literally; but the Germans insisted

<sup>1</sup> *S. and A. F.*, p. 6; *R. in C. S.*, p. 128; *R. in R.*, pp. 27f.

<sup>2</sup> *R. in R.*, pp. 108, 126.

on taking it literally. The dissolution of Christian orthodoxy in Germany was thereafter inevitable. For taken literally, nothing could be so absurd as some of the ancient dogmas, like the damnation of innocents, or the existence of evil in a world created by omnipotent benevolence. The principle of individual interpretation led naturally to a wild growth of sects among the people, and to a mild pantheism among the élite—pantheism being nothing more than “naturalism poetically expressed.” Lessing and Goethe, Carlyle and Emerson, were the landmarks of this change. In brief, the moral system of Jesus had destroyed that militaristic Yahveh who by an impish accident of history had been transmitted to Christianity along with the pacifism of the prophets and of Christ.<sup>1</sup>

Santayana is by constitution and heredity incapable of sympathy with Protestantism; he prefers the color and incense of his youthful faith. He scolds the Protestants for abandoning the pretty legends of mediævaldom, and above all for neglecting the Virgin Mary, whom he considers, as Heine did, the “fairest flower of poesy.” As a wit has put it, Santayana believes that there is no God, and that Mary is his mother. He adorns his room with pictures of the Virgin and the saints.<sup>2</sup> He likes the beauty of Catholicism more than the truth of any other faith, for the same reason that he prefers art to industry.

There are two stages in the criticism of myths. . . . The first treats them angrily as superstitions; the second treats them smilingly as poetry. . . . Religion is human experience interpreted by human imagination. . . . The idea that religion contains a literal, not a symbolic, representation of truth and life is simply an impossible idea. Whoever entertains it has not come within the region of profitable philosophizing on that subject. . . . Matters of religion should never be matters of controversy. . . . We seek rather

<sup>1</sup> *R. in R.*, pp. 137, 130, 172.

<sup>2</sup> Margaret Münsterberg in *The American Mercury*, Jan., 1924, p. 74.

to honor the piety and understand the poetry embodied in these fables.<sup>1</sup>

The man of culture, then, will leave undisturbed the myths that so comfort and inspire the life of the people; and perhaps he will a little envy them their hope. But he will have no faith in another life. "The fact of having been born is a bad augury for immortality."<sup>2</sup> The only immortality that will interest him is that which Spinoza describes.

"He who lives in the ideal," says Santayana, "and leaves it expressed in society or in art enjoys a double immortality. The eternal has absorbed him while he lived, and when he is dead his influence brings others to the same absorption, making them, through that ideal identity with the best in him, reincarnations and perennial seats of all in him which he could rationally hope to rescue from destruction. He can say, without any subterfuge or desire to delude himself, that he shall not wholly die; for he will have a better notion than the vulgar of what constitutes his being. By becoming the spectator and confessor of his own death and of universal mutation, he will have identified himself with what is spiritual in all spirits and masterful in all apprehension; and so conceiving himself, he may truly feel and know that he is eternal."<sup>3</sup>

### 5. Reason in Society

The great problem of philosophy is to devise a means whereby men may be persuaded to virtue without the stimulus of supernatural hopes and fears. Theoretically it solved this problem twice; both in Socrates and in Spinoza it gave the world a sufficiently perfect system of natural or rational ethics. If men could be moulded to either philosophy, all would be well. But "a truly rational morality or social regimen has

<sup>1</sup> *The Sense of Beauty*, New York, 1896, p. 189; *R. and A. F.*, p. 247; *Winds*, p. 46; *R. in R.*, pp. 98, 97.

<sup>2</sup> *R. in R.*, p. 240.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 273.

never existed in the world, and is hardly to be looked for"; it remains the luxury of philosophers. "A philosopher has a haven in himself, of which I suspect the fabled bliss to follow in other lives . . . is only a poetic symbol; he has pleasure in truth, and an equal readiness to enjoy the scene or quit it" (though one may observe a certain obstinate longevity in him). For the rest of us the avenue of moral development must lie, in the future as in the past, in the growth of those social emotions which bloom in the generous atmosphere of love and the home."<sup>1</sup>

It is true, as Schopenhauer argued, that love is a deception practised upon the individual by the race; that "nine-tenths of the cause of love are in the lover, for one-tenth that may be in the object"; and that love "fuses the soul again into the impersonal blind flux." Nevertheless, love has its recompenses; and in his greatest sacrifice man finds his happiest fulfilment. "Laplace is reported to have said on his deathbed that science was mere trifling, and that nothing was real but love." After all, romantic love, despite its poetical delusions, ends normally in a relationship—of parent and child—far more satisfying to the instincts than any celibate security. Children are our immortality; and "we commit the blotted manuscript of our lives more willingly to the flames, when we find the immortal text half engrossed in a fairer copy."<sup>2</sup>

The family is the avenue of human perpetuity, and therefore still the basic institution among men; it could carry on the race even if all other institutions failed. But it can conduct civilization only to a certain simple pitch; further development demands a larger and more complex system in which the family ceases to be the productive unit, loses its control over the economic relations of its members, and finds its authority and its powers more and more appropriated by the

<sup>1</sup> *R. in S.*, p. 239; *S. and A. F.*, p. 54.

<sup>2</sup> *R. in Society*, New York, 1915, pp. 22, 6, 195, 41; *R. in C. S.*, p. 57; *R. in S.*, v. 256.



state. The state may be a monster, as Nietzsche called it; a monster of unnecessary size; but its centralized tyranny has the virtue of abolishing the miscellaneous and innumerable petty tyrannies by which life was of old pestered and confined. One master pirate, accepting tribute quietly, is better than a hundred pirates, taking toll without warning and without stint.<sup>1</sup>

Hence, in part, the patriotism of the people; they know that the price they pay for government is cheaper than the cost of chaos. Santayana wonders whether such patriotism does more harm than good; for it tends to attach the stigma of disloyalty to advocates of change. "To love one's country, unless that love is quite blind and lazy, must involve a distinction between the country's actual condition and its inherent ideal; and this distinction in turn involves a demand for changes and for effort." On the other hand, race patriotism is indispensable. "Some races are obviously superior to others. A more thorough adjustment to the conditions of existence has given their spirit victory, scope, and a relative stability." Hence intermarriage is perilous, except between races of acknowledged equality and stability. "The Jews, the Greeks, the Romans, the English, were never so great as when they confronted other nations, reacting against them and at the same time, perhaps, adopting their culture; but this greatness fails inwardly whenever contact leads to amalgamation."<sup>2</sup>

The great evil of the state is its tendency to become an engine of war, a hostile fist shaken in the face of a supposedly inferior world. Santayana thinks that no people has ever won a war.

Where parties and governments are bad, as they are in most ages and countries, it makes practically no difference to a community, apart from local ravages, whether its own army or the enemy's is victorious in war. . . . The private

<sup>1</sup> *R. in Society*, pp. 45, 77, 79.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 164-167.

citizen in any event continues in such countries to pay a maximum of taxes and to suffer, in all his private interests, a maximum of vexation and neglect. Nevertheless . . . the oppressed subject will glow like the rest with patriotic ardor, and will decry as dead to duty and honor anyone who points out how perverse is this helpless allegiance to a government representing no public interest.<sup>1</sup>

This is strong language for a philosopher; but let us have our Santayana unexpurgated. Often enough, he thinks, conquest and absorption by a larger state is a step forward toward the organization and pacification of mankind; it would be a boon to all the world if all the world were ruled by some great power or group of powers, as all the world was once ruled by Rome, first with the sword and then with the word.

The universal order once dreamt of and nominally almost established, the empire of universal peace, all-permeating rational art, and philosophical worship, is mentioned no more. . . . Those dark ages, from which our political practice is derived, had a political theory we should do well to study; for their theory about a universal empire and a catholic church was in turn the echo of a former age of reason when a few men conscious of ruling the world had for a moment sought to survey it as a whole and to rule it justly.<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps the development of international sports may give some outlet to the spirit of group rivalry, and serve in some measure as "a moral equivalent for war"; and perhaps the cross-investments of finance may overcome the tendency of trade to come to blows for the markets of the world. Santayana is not so enamored of industry as Spencer was; he knows its militant as well as its pacific side: and all in all, he feels more at ease in the atmosphere of an ancient aristocracy

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 171.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 81; *R. in S.*, p. 255, referring, no doubt, to the age of the Antonines, and implicitly accepting the judgment of Gibbon and Renan that this was the finest period in the history of government.

than in the hum of a modern metropolis. We produce too much, and are swamped with the things we make; "things are in the saddle and ride mankind," as Emerson put it. "In a world composed entirely of philosophers an hour or two a day of manual labor—a very welcome quality—would provide for material wants." England is wiser than the United States; for though she too is obsessed with the mania for production, she has in at least a portion of her people realized the value and the arts of leisure.<sup>1</sup>

He thinks that such culture as the world has known has always been the fruit of aristocracies.

Civilization has hitherto consisted in the diffusion and dilution of habits arising in privileged centres. It has not sprung from the people; it has arisen in their midst by a variation from them, and it has afterward imposed itself on them from above. . . . A state composed exclusively of such workers and peasants as make up the bulk of modern nations would be an utterly barbarous state. Every liberal tradition would perish in it; and the rational and historic essence of patriotism itself would be lost. The emotion of it, no doubt, would endure, for it is not generosity that the people lack. They possess every impulse; it is experience that they cannot gather, for in gathering it they would be constituting those higher organs that make up an aristocratic society.<sup>2</sup>

He dislikes the ideal of equality, and argues with Plato that the equality of unequals is inequality. Nevertheless he does not quite sell himself to aristocracy; he knows that history has tried it and found its virtues very well balanced by its defects; that it closes career to unpedigreed talent, that it chokes the growth, in all but a narrow line, of just those superiorities and values that aristocracy would, in theory, develop and use. It makes for culture, but also it makes for

<sup>1</sup> *R. in Society*, pp. 87, 66, 69.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 125, 124; *R. in Science*, p. 255.

tyranny; the slavery of millions pays for the liberty of a few. The first principle of politics should be that a society is to be judged by the measure in which it enhances the life and capacities of its constituent individuals;—"but for the excellence of the typical single life no nation deserves to be remembered more than the sands of the sea."<sup>1</sup> From this point of view, democracy is a great improvement on aristocracy. But it too has its evils; not merely its corruption and its incompetence, but worse, its own peculiar tyranny, the fetich of uniformity. "There is no tyranny so hateful as a vulgar, anonymous tyranny. It is all-permeating, all-thwarting; it blasts every budding novelty and sprig of genius with its omnipresent and fierce stupidity."<sup>2</sup>

What Santayana despises above all is the chaos and indecent haste of modern life. He wonders was there not more happiness for men in the old aristocratic doctrine that the good is not liberty, but wisdom, and contentment with one's natural restrictions; the classical tradition knew that only a few can win. But now that democracy has opened the great free-for-all, catch-as-catch-can wrestling match of *laissez-faire* industrialism, every soul is torn with climbing, and no one knows content. Classes war against one another without restraint; and "whoever is victorious in this struggle (for which liberalism cleared the field) will make an end of liberalism."<sup>3</sup> This is the nemesis of revolutions, too: that in order to survive they must restore the tyranny which they destroyed.

Revolutions are ambiguous things. Their success is generally proportionate to their power of adaptation and to the reabsorption within them of what they rebelled against. A thousand reforms have left the world as corrupt as ever, for each successful reform has founded a new institution, and this institution has bred its new and congenial abuses.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *R. in Society*, p. 52.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 217; *Sense of Beauty*, p. 110.

<sup>3</sup> Herbert W. Smith in *American Review*, March, 1928; p. 195.

<sup>4</sup> *R. in R.*, p. 83; but cf. *R. in Science*, p. 238.

What form of society, then, shall we strive for? Perhaps for none; there is not much difference among them. But if for any one in particular, for "timocracy." This would be government by men of merit and honor; it would be an aristocracy, but not hereditary; every man and woman would have an open road according to ability, to the highest offices in the state; but the road would be closed to incompetence, no matter how richly furnished it might be with plebiscites. "The only equality subsisting would be equality of opportunity."<sup>1</sup> Under such a government corruption would be at a minimum, and science and the arts would flourish through discriminating encouragement. It would be just that synthesis of democracy and aristocracy which the world pines for in the midst of its political chaos today: only the best would rule; but every man would have an equal chance to make himself worthy to be numbered among the best.—It is, of course, Plato over again, the philosopher-kings of the *Republic* appearing inevitably on the horizon of every far-seeing political philosophy. The longer we think about these matters the more surely we return to Plato. We need no new philosophy; we need only the courage to live up to the oldest and the best.

### 6. Comment

There is in all these pages something of the melancholy of a man separated from all that he loves and was accustomed to a man *déraciné*, a Spanish aristocrat exiled to middle-class America. A secret sadness sometimes breaks forth: "That life is worth living," he says, "is the most necessary of assumptions, and, were it not assumed, the most impossible of conclusions."<sup>2</sup> In the first volume of "The Life of Reason" he talks of the plot and meaning of human life and history as the subject of philosophy; in the last volume he wonders is there a meaning, or a plot?<sup>3</sup> He has unconsciously described

<sup>1</sup> *R. in Society*, p. 123f.

<sup>2</sup> *R. in C. S.*, p. 252.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

his own tragedy: "There is tragedy in perfection, because the universe in which perfection arises is itself imperfect."<sup>1</sup> Like Shelley, Santayana has never felt at home on this middling planet; his keen esthetic sense seems to have brought to him more suffering from the ugliness of things than delight in the scattered loveliness of the world. He becomes at times bitter and sarcastic; he has never caught the hearty cleansing laughter of paganism, nor the genial and forgiving humanity of Renan or Anatole France. He stands aloof and superior, and therefore alone. "What is the part of wisdom?" he asks; and answers—"To dream with one eye open; to be detached from the world without being hostile to it; to welcome fugitive beauties and pity fugitive sufferings, without forgetting for a moment how fugitive they are."<sup>2</sup>

But perhaps this constant *memento mori* is a knell to joy; to live, one must remember life more than death; one must embrace the immediate and actual thing as well as the distant and perfect hope. "The goal of speculative thinking is none other than to live as much as may be in the eternal, and to absorb and be absorbed in the truth."<sup>3</sup> But this is to take philosophy more seriously than even philosophy deserves to be taken; and a philosophy which withdraws one from life is as much awry as any celestial superstition in which the eye, rapt in some vision of another world, loses the meat and wine of this one. "Wisdom comes by disillusionment," says Santayana;<sup>4</sup> but again that is only the beginning of wisdom, as doubt is the beginning of philosophy; it is not also the end and fulfilment. [The end is happiness, and philosophy is only a means; if we take it as an end we become like the Hindu mystic whose life-purpose is to concentrate upon his navel.

Perhaps Santayana's conception of the universe as merely a material mechanism has something to do with this sombre withdrawal into himself; having taken life out of the world,

<sup>1</sup> *R. in Science*, p. 237.

<sup>2</sup> Herbert W. Smith in *American Review*, March, 1923; p. 191.

<sup>3</sup> *R. in C. S.*, p. 28.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 202.

he seeks for it in his own bosom. He protests that it is not so; and though we may not believe him, his too-much-protesting disarms us with its beauty:

A theory is not an unemotional thing. If music can be full of passion, merely by giving form to a single sense, how much more beauty or terror may not a vision be pregnant with which brings order and method into everything that we know. . . . If you are in the habit of believing in special providences, or of expecting to continue your romantic adventures in a second life, materialism will dash your hopes most unpleasantly, and you may think for a year or two that you have nothing left to live for. But a thorough materialist, one born to the faith and not half plunged into it by an unexpected christening in cold water, will be like the superb Democritus, a laughing philosopher. His delight in a mechanism that can fall into so many marvellous and beautiful shapes, and can generate so many exciting passions, should be of the same intellectual quality as that which the visitor feels in a museum of natural history, where he views the myriad butterflies in their cases, the flamingoes and shell-fish, the mammoths and gorillas. Doubtless there were pangs in that incalculable life; but they were soon over; and how splendid meantime was the pageant, how infinitely interesting the universal interplay, and how foolish and inevitable those absolute little passions.<sup>1</sup>

But perhaps the butterflies, if they could speak, would remind us that a museum (like a materialist philosophy) is only a show-case of lifeless things; that the reality of the world eludes these tragic preservations, and resides again in the pangs of passion, in the ever-changing and never-ending flow of life.

“Santayana,” says an observant friend,

had a natural preference for solitude. . . . I remember leaning over the railing of an ocean liner anchored at Southampton and watching passengers from the English tender crowd up the gang-plank to the steamer; one only stood apart at

<sup>1</sup> *R. in Science*, pp. 89-90.

the edge of the tender, with calm and amused detachment observed the haste and struggle of his fellow-passengers, and not till the deck had been cleared, followed himself. 'Who could it be but Santayana?' a voice said beside me; and we all felt the satisfaction of finding a character true to himself.<sup>1</sup>

After all, we must say just that, too, of his philosophy: it is a veracious and fearless self-expression; here a mature and subtle, though too sombre, soul has written itself down quietly, in statuesque and classic prose. And though we may not like its minor key, its undertone of sweet regret for a vanished world, we see in it the finished expression of this dying and nascent age, in which men cannot be altogether wise and free, because they have abandoned their old ideas and have not yet found the new ones that shall lure them nearer to perfection.

## II. WILLIAM JAMES

### 1. *Personal*

The reader will not need to be reminded that the philosophy which we have just summarized is a European philosophy in everything but the place of its composition. It has the nuances and polish and mellow resignation characteristic of an old culture; one could tell from any paragraph in the *Life of Reason* that this is no native American voice.

In William James the voice and the speech and the very turn of phrase are American. He pounced eagerly upon such characteristic expressions as "cash-value," and "results," and "profits," in order to bring his thought within the ken of the "man in the street"; he spoke not with the aristocratic reserve of a Santayana or a Henry James, but in a racy vernacular and with a force and directness, which made his philosophy of "pragmatism" and "reserve energy" the mental correlate of the "practical" and "strenuous" Roosevelt. And at the same

<sup>1</sup> Margaret Münsterberg in *The American Mercury*, Jan., 1924, p. 69.



time he phrased for the common man that "tender-minded" trust in the essentials of the old theology which lives side by side, in the American soul, with the realistic spirit of commerce and finance, and with the tough persistent courage that turned a wilderness into the promised land.

William James was born in New York City in 1842. His father was a Swedenborgian mystic, whose mysticism did no damage to his wit and humor; and the son was not lacking in any of the three. After some seasons in American private schools, William was sent with his brother Henry (one year his junior) to private schools in France. There they fell in with the work of Charcot and other psychopathologists, and took, both of them, a turn to psychology; one of them, to repeat an old phrase, proceeded to write fiction like psychology, while the other wrote psychology like fiction. Henry spent most of his life abroad, and finally became a British citizen. Through his more continuous contact with European culture he acquired a maturity of thought which his brother missed; but William, returning to live in America, felt the stimulation of a nation young in heart and rich in opportunity and hope, and caught so well the spirit of his age and place that he was lifted on the wings of the *Zeitgeist* to a lonely pinnacle of popularity such as no other American philosopher had ever known.

He took his M. D. at Harvard in 1870, and taught there from 1872 to his death in 1910, at first anatomy and physiology, and then psychology, and at last philosophy. His greatest achievement was almost his first—*The Principles of Psychology* (1890); a fascinating mixture of anatomy, philosophy and analysis; for in James psychology still drips from the foetal membranes of its mother, metaphysics. Yet the book remains the most instructive, and easily the most absorbing, summary of its subject; something of the subtlety which Henry put into his clauses helped William James to the keenest introspection which psychology had witnessed since the uncanny clarity of David Hume.

This passion for illuminating analysis was bound to lead James from psychology to philosophy, and at last back to metaphysics itself; he argued (against his own positivist inclinations) that metaphysics is merely an effort to think things out clearly; and he defined philosophy, in his simple and pellucid manner, as "only thinking about things in the most comprehensive possible way."<sup>1</sup> So, after 1900, his publications were almost all in the field of philosophy. He began with *The Will to Believe* (1897); then, after a masterpiece of psychological interpretation—*Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902)—he passed on to his famous books on *Pragmatism* (1907), *A Pluralistic Universe* (1909), and *The Meaning of Truth* (1909). A year after his death came *Some Problems of Philosophy* (1911); and later, an important volume of *Essays in Radical Empiricism* (1912). We must begin our study with this last book, because it was in these essays that James formulated most clearly the bases of his philosophy.<sup>2</sup>

## 2. Pragmatism

The direction of his thought is always to things; and if he begins with psychology it is not as a metaphysician who loves to lose himself in ethereal obscurities, but as a realist to whom thought, however distinct it may be from matter, is essentially a mirror of external and physical reality. And it is a better mirror than some have believed; it perceives and reflects not merely separate things, as Hume supposed, but their relations too; it sees everything in a context; and the context is as immediately given in perception as the shape and

<sup>1</sup> *Some Problems of Philosophy*, p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> The reader who has leisure for but one book of James's should go directly to *Pragmatism*, which he will find a fountain of clarity as compared with most philosophy. If he has more time, he will derive abundant profit from the brilliant pages of the (unabbreviated) *Psychology*. Henry James has written two volumes of autobiography, in which there is much delightful gossip about William. Flournoy has a good volume of exposition, and Schinz's *Anti-Pragmatism* is a vigorous criticism.

touch and odor of the thing. Hence the meaninglessness of Kant's "problem of knowledge" (how do we put sense and order into our sensations?)—the sense and the order, in outline at least, are already there. The old atomistic psychology of the English school, which conceived thought as a series of separate ideas mechanically associated, is a misleading copy of physics and chemistry; thought is not a series, it is a stream, a continuity of perception and feeling, in which ideas are passing nodules like corpuscles in the blood. We have mental "states" (though this is again a misleadingly static term) that correspond to prepositions, verbs, adverbs and conjunctions, as well as "states" that reflect the nouns and pronouns of our speech; we have feelings of *for* and *to* and *against* and *because* and *behind* and *after* as well as of matter and men. It is these "transitive" elements in the *flow* of thought that constitute the thread of our mental life, and give us some measure of the continuity of things.

Consciousness is not an entity, not a thing, but a flux and system of relations; it is a point at which the sequence and relationship of thoughts coincide illuminatingly with the sequence of events and the relationship of things. In such moments it is reality itself, and no mere "phenomenon," that flashes into thought; for beyond phenomena and "appearances" there is nothing. Nor is there any need of going beyond the experience-process to a soul; the soul is merely the sum of our mental life, as the "Noumenon" is simply the total of all phenomena, and the "Absolute" the web of the relationships of the world.

It is this same passion for the immediate and actual and real that led James to pragmatism. Brought up in the school of French clarity, he abominated the obscurities and pedantic terminology of German metaphysics; and when Harris and others began to import a moribund Hegelianism into America, James reacted like a quarantine officer who has detected an immigrant infection. He was convinced that both the terms

and the problems of German metaphysics were unreal; and he cast about him for some test of meaning which would show, to every candid mind, the emptiness of these abstractions.

He found the weapon which he sought when, in 1878, he came upon an essay by Charles Peirce, in the *Popular Science Monthly*, on "How to Make Our Ideas Clear." To find the meaning of an idea, said Peirce, we must examine the consequences to which it leads in action; otherwise dispute about it may be without end, and will surely be without fruit. This was a lead which James was glad to follow; he tried the problems and ideas of the old metaphysics by this test, and they fell to pieces at its touch like chemical compounds suddenly shot through with a current of electricity. And such problems as had meaning took on a clearness and a reality as if, in Plato's famous figure, they had passed out of the shadows of a cave into the brilliance of a sun-lit noon.

This simple and old-fashioned test led James on to a new definition of truth. Truth had been conceived as an objective relation, as once good and beauty had been; now what if truth, like these, were also relative to human judgment and human needs? "Natural laws" had been taken as "objective" truths, eternal and unchangeable; Spinoza had made them the very substance of his philosophy; and yet what were these truths but formulations of experience, convenient and successful in practice; not copies of an object, but correct calculations of specific consequences? Truth is the "cash-value" of an idea.

The true . . . is only the expedient in the way of our thinking, just as "the right" is only the expedient in the way of our behaving. Expedient is almost any fashion; and expedient in the long run and on the whole, of course; for what meets expediently all the experiences in sight won't necessarily meet all further experiences equally satisfactorily. . . . Truth is *one species* of good, and not, as is usually

supposed, a category distinct from good, and coördinate with it. The true is the name of whatever proves itself to be good in the way of belief.<sup>1</sup>

Truth is a process, and "happens to an idea"; verity is verification. Instead of asking whence an idea is derived, or what are its premises, pragmatism examines its results; it "shifts the emphasis and looks forward"; it is "the attitude of looking away from first things, principles, 'categories,' supposed necessities, and of looking towards last things, fruits, consequences, facts."<sup>2</sup> Scholasticism asked, What *is* the thing,—and lost itself in "quiddities"; Darwinism asked, What is its origin?—and lost itself in nebulas; pragmatism asks, What are its consequences?—and turns the face of thought to action and the future.

### 3. *Pluralism*

Let us apply this method to the oldest problem in philosophy—the existence and nature of God. The Scholastic philosophers described the deity as "*Ens a se extra et supra omne genus, necessarium, unum, infinite, perfectum, simplex, immutabile, immensum, eternum, intelligens.*"<sup>3</sup> This is magnificent; what deity would not be proud of such a definition? But what does it mean?—what are its consequences for mankind? If God is omniscient and omnipotent, we are puppets; there is nothing that we can do to change the course of destiny which His will has from the beginning delineated and decreed; Calvinism and fatalism are the logical corollaries of such a definition. The same test applied to mechanistic determinism issues in the same results: if we really believed in determinism we would become Hindu mystics and abandon ourselves at once to the immense fatality which uses us as marionettes. Of course we do not accept these sombre philosophies; the human

<sup>1</sup> *Pragmatism*, pp. 222, 75, 53, 45.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54.

<sup>3</sup> P. 121.

intellect repeatedly proposes them because of their logical simplicity and symmetry, but life ignores and overflows them, and passes on.

A philosophy may be unimpeachable in other respects, but either of two defects will be fatal to its universal adoption. First, its ultimate principle must not be one that essentially baffles and disappoints our dearest desires and most cherished hopes. . . . But a second and worse defect in a philosophy than contradicting our active propensities is to give them no object whatever to press against. A philosophy whose principle is so incommensurate with our most intimate powers as to deny them all relevancy in universal affairs, as to annihilate their motives at one blow, will be even more unpopular than pessimism. . . . That is why materialism will always fail of universal adoption.<sup>1</sup>

Men accept or reject philosophies, then, according to their needs and their temperaments, not according to "objective truth"; they do not ask, Is this logical?—they ask, What will the actual practice of this philosophy mean for our lives and our interests? Arguments for and against may serve to illuminate, but they never prove.

Logic and sermons never convince;

The damp of the night drives deeper into my soul. . . .

Now I re-examine philosophies and religions.

They may prove well in lecture rooms, yet not prove at all under the spacious clouds, and along the landscape and flowing currents.<sup>2</sup>

We know that arguments are dictated by our needs, and that our needs cannot be dictated to by arguments.

The history of philosophy is to a great extent that of a certain clash of human temperaments. . . . Of whatever temperament a professional philosopher is, he tries, when philosophizing, to sink the fact of his temperament. Tem-

<sup>1</sup> *Principles of Psychology*, New York, 1890, vol. ii, p. 312.

<sup>2</sup> Whitman, *Leaves of Grass*, Philadelphia, 1900, pp. 61, 172.

perament is no conventionally recognized reason, so he urges impersonal reasons only for his conclusions. Yet his temperament really gives him a stronger bias than any of his more strictly objective premises.<sup>1</sup>

These temperaments which select and dictate philosophies may be divided into the tender-minded and the tough-minded. The tender-minded temperament is religious, it likes to have definite and unchanging dogmas and *à priori* truths; it takes naturally to free will, idealism, monism, and optimism. The tough-minded temperament is materialistic, irreligious, empiricist (going only on "facts"), sensationalistic (tracing all knowledge to sensation), fatalistic, pluralistic, pessimistic, sceptical. In each group there are gaping contradictions; and no doubt there are temperaments that select their theories partly from one group and partly from the other. There are people (William James, for example) who are "tough-minded" in their addiction to facts and in their reliance on the senses, and yet "tender-minded" in their horror of determinism and their need for religious belief. Can a philosophy be found that will harmonize these apparently contradictory demands?

James believes that pluralistic theism affords us such a synthesis. He offers a finite God, not an Olympian thunderer sitting aloof on a cloud, "but one helper, *primus inter pares*, in the midst of all the shapers of the great world's fate."<sup>2</sup> The cosmos is not a closed and harmonious system; it is a battle-ground of cross-currents and conflicting purposes; it shows itself, with pathetic obviousness, as not a uni- but a multi-verse. It is useless to say that this chaos in which we live and move is the result of one consistent will; it gives every sign of contradiction and division within itself. Perhaps the ancients were wiser than we, and polytheism may be truer than monotheism to the astonishing diversity of the world. Such

<sup>1</sup> *Pragmatism*, p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 298.

polytheism "has always been the real religion of common people, and is so still today."<sup>1</sup> The people are right, and the philosophers are wrong. Monism is the natural disease of philosophers, who hunger and thirst not (as they think) for truth, but for unity. "The world is One!"—the formula may become a sort of number-worship. 'Three' and 'seven' have, it is true, been reckoned as sacred numbers; but abstractly taken, why is 'one' more excellent than 'forty-three,' or than 'two million and ten'?"<sup>2</sup>

The value of a multiverse, as compared with a universe, lies in this, that where there are cross-currents and warring forces our own strength and will may count and help decide the issue; it is a world where nothing is irrevocably settled, and all action matters. A monistic world is for us a dead world; in such a universe we carry out, willy-nilly, the parts assigned to us by an omnipotent deity or a primeval nebula; and not all our tears can wipe out one word of the eternal script. In a finished universe individuality is a delusion; "in reality," the monist assures us, we are all bits of one mosaic substance. But in an unfinished world we can write some lines of the parts we play, and our choices mould in some measure the future in which we have to live. In such a world we can be free; it is a world of chance, and not of fate; everything is "not quite"; and what we are or do may alter everything. If Cleopatra's nose, said Pascal, had been an inch longer or shorter, all history would have been changed.

The theoretical evidence for such free will, or such a multiverse, or such a finite God, is as lacking as for the opposite philosophies. Even the practical evidence may vary from person to person; it is conceivable that some may find better results, for their lives, from a deterministic than from a libertarian philosophy. But where the evidence is indecisive, our vital and moral interests should make the choice.

<sup>1</sup> *Varieties of Religious Experience*, New York, 1902, p. 526.

<sup>2</sup> *Pragmatism*, p. 312. The answer, of course, is that unity, or one system of laws holding throughout the universe, facilitates explanation, prediction, and control.



If there be any life that it is really better that we should lead, and if there be any idea which, if believed in, would help us to lead that life, then it would be really *better for us* to believe in that idea, *unless, indeed, belief in it incidentally clashed with other greater vital benefits.*<sup>1</sup>

Now the persistence of the belief in God is the best proof of its almost universal vital and moral value. James was amazed and attracted by the endless varieties of religious experience and belief; he described them with an artist's sympathy, even where he most disagreed from them. He saw some truth in every one of them, and demanded an open mind toward every new hope. He did not hesitate to affiliate himself with the Society for Psychical Research; why should not such phenomena, as well as others, be the object of patient examination? In the end, James was convinced of the reality of another—a spiritual—world.

I firmly disbelieve, myself, that our human experience is the highest form of experience extant in the universe. I believe rather that we stand in much the same relation to the whole of the universe as our canine and feline pets do to the whole of human life. They inhabit our drawing rooms and libraries. They take part in scenes of whose significance they have no inkling. They are merely tangent to curves of history, the beginnings and ends and forms of which pass wholly beyond their ken. So we are tangent to the wider life of things.<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless he did not think of philosophy as a meditation on death; no problems had value for him unless they could guide and stimulate our terrestrial career. "It was with the excellencies, not the duration, of our natures, that he occupied himself."<sup>3</sup> He did not live in his study so much as in the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 78.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 299.

<sup>3</sup> Kallen, *William James and Henri Bergson*, p. 240.

current of life; he was an active worker in a hundred efforts for human betterment; he was always helping somebody, lifting men up with the contagion of his courage. He believed that in every individual there were "reserve energies" which the occasional midwifery of circumstance would bring forth; and his constant sermon, to the individual and to society, was a plea that these resources should be entirely used. He was horrified at the waste of human energy in war; and he suggested that these mighty impulses of combat and mastery could find a better outlet in a "war against nature." Why should not every man, rich or poor, give two years of his life to the state, not for the purpose of killing other people, but to conquer the plagues, and drain the marshes, and irrigate the deserts, and dig the canals, and democratically do the physical and social engineering which builds up so slowly and painfully what war so quickly destroys?

He sympathized with socialism, but he disliked its depreciation of the individual and the genius. Taine's formula, which reduced all cultural manifestations to "race, environment, and time," was inadequate precisely because it left out the individual. But only the individual has value; everything else is a means—even philosophy. And so we need on the one hand a state which shall understand that it is the trustee and servant of the interests of individual men and women; and on the other a philosophy and a faith which shall "offer the universe as an adventure rather than a scheme,"<sup>1</sup> and shall stimulate every energy by holding up the world as a place where, though there are many defeats, there are also victories waiting to be won.

A shipwrecked sailor, buried on this coast,  
 Bids you set sail.  
 Full many a gallant bark, when we were lost,  
 Weathered the gale.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Chesterton.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by James (*Pragmatism*, p. 297) from the Greek Anthology.

*4. Comment*

The reader needs no guide to the new and the old elements in this philosophy. It is part of the modern war between science and religion; another effort, like Kant's and Bergson's, to rescue faith from the universalized mechanics of materialism. Pragmatism has its roots in Kant's "practical reason"; in Schopenhauer's exaltation of the will; in Darwin's notion that the fittest (and therefore also the fittest and truest idea) is that which survives; in utilitarianism, which measured all goods in terms of use; in the empirical and inductive traditions of English philosophy; and finally in the suggestions of the American scene.

Certainly, as everyone has pointed out, the manner, if not the substance, of James's thinking was specifically and uniquely American. The American lust for movement and acquisition fills the sails of his style and thought, and gives them a buoyant and almost aerial motility. Huneker calls it "a philosophy for philistines," and indeed there is something that smacks of salesmanship in it: James talks of God as of an article to be sold to a materialistically-minded consumer by every device of optimistic advertising; and he counsels us to believe as if he were recommending long-term investments, with high dividends, in which there was nothing to lose, and all the (other) world to win. It was young America's defense-reaction against European metaphysics and European science.

The new test of truth was of course an ancient one; and the honest philosopher described pragmatism modestly as "a new name for old ways of thinking." If the new test means that truth is that which has been tried, by experience and experiment, the answer is, Of course. If it means that personal utility is a test of truth, the answer is, Of course not; personal utility is merely personal utility; only universal permanent utility would constitute truth. When some pragmatists speak of a belief having been true once because then

useful (though now disproved), they utter nonsense learnedly; it was a useful error, not a truth. Pragmatism is correct only if it is a platitude.

What James meant to do, however, was to dispel the cobwebs that had entangled philosophy; he wished to reiterate in a new and startling way the old English attitude towards theory and ideology. He was but carrying on the work of Bacon in turning the face of philosophy once more towards the inescapable world of things. He will be remembered for this empirical emphasis, this new realism, rather than for his theory of truth; and he will be honored perhaps more as a psychologist than as a philosopher. He knew that he had found no solution for the old questions; he frankly admitted that he had expressed only another guess, another faith. On his desk, when he died, there lay a paper on which he had written his last, and perhaps his most characteristic, sentences: "There is no conclusion. What has concluded that we might conclude in regard to it? There are no fortunes to be told and there is no advice to be given. Farewell."

### III. JOHN DEWEY

#### 1. *Education*

After all, pragmatism was "not quite" an American philosophy; it did not catch the spirit of the greater America that lay south and west of the New England states. It was a highly moralistic philosophy, and betrayed the Puritanic origins of its author. It talked in one breath of practical results and matters of fact, and in the next it leaped, with the speed of hope, from earth to heaven. It began with a healthy reaction against metaphysics and epistemology, and one expected from it a philosophy of nature and of society; but it ended as an almost apologetic plea for the intellectual respectability of every dear belief. When would philosophy learn to leave to religion these perplexing problems of another

life, and to psychology these subtle difficulties of the knowledge-process, and give itself with all its strength to the illumination of human purposes and the coördination and elevation of human life?

Circumstances left nothing undone to prepare John Dewey to satisfy this need, and to outline a philosophy that should express the spirit of an informed and conscious America. He was born in the "effete East" (in Burlington, Vermont, 1859), and had his schooling there, as if to absorb the old culture before adventuring into the new. But soon he took Greeley's counsel and went west, teaching philosophy at the universities of Minnesota (1888-9), Michigan (1889-94), and Chicago (1894-1904). Only then did he return east, to join—and later to head—the department of philosophy at Columbia University. In his first twenty years the Vermont environment gave him that almost rustic simplicity which characterizes him even now that all the world acclaims him. And then, in his twenty years in the Middle West, he saw that vast America of which the Eastern mind is so proudly ignorant; he learned its limitations and its powers; and when he came to write his own philosophy he gave to his students and his readers an interpretation of the sound and simple naturalism which underlies the superficial superstitions of the "provinces" of America. He wrote the philosophy, as Whitman wrote the poetry, not of one New-English state, but of the continent.<sup>1</sup>

Dewey first caught the eyes of the world by his work in the School of Education at Chicago. It was in those years that he revealed the resolute experimental bent of his thought; and now, thirty years later, his mind is still open to every new move in education, and his interest in the "schools of tomor-

<sup>1</sup>The most important of Dewey's books are: *The School and Society* (1900); *Studies in Logical Theory* (1903); *Ethics* (with Tufts, 1908); *How We Think* (1909); *The Influence of Darwin on Philosophy* (1910); *Democracy and Education* (1913); *Schools of Tomorrow* (with his daughter Evelyn, 1915); *Essays in Experimental Logic* (1916); *Creative Intelligence* (1917); *Reconstruction in Philosophy* (1920); *Human Nature and Conduct* (1922). The last two are the easiest approaches to his thought.

row" never flags. Perhaps his greatest book is *Democracy and Education*; here he draws the varied lines of his philosophy to a point, and centres them all on the task of developing a better generation. All progressive teachers acknowledge his leadership; and there is hardly a school in America that has not felt his influence. We find him active everywhere in the task of remaking the schools of the world; he spent two years in China lecturing to teachers on the reform of education, and made a report to the Turkish Government on the reorganization of their national schools.

Following up Spencer's demand for more science, and less literature, in education, Dewey adds that even the science should not be book-learning, but should come to the pupil from the actual practice of useful occupations. He has no great regard for a "liberal" education; the term was used, originally, to denote the culture of a "free man,"—i. e., a man who never worked; and it was natural that such an education should be fitted rather to a leisure class in an aristocracy than to an industrial and democratic life. Now that we are nearly all of us caught up in the industrialization of Europe and America, the lessons we must learn are those that come through occupation rather than through books. Scholastic culture makes for snobbishness, but fellowship in occupations makes for democracy. In an industrial society the school should be a miniature workshop and a miniature community; it should teach through practice, and through trial and error, the arts and discipline necessary for economic and social order. And finally, education must be re-conceived, not as merely a preparation for maturity (whence our absurd idea that it should stop after adolescence), but as a continuous growth of the mind and a continuous illumination of life. In a sense, the schools can give us only the instrumentalities of mental growth; the rest depends upon our absorption and interpretation of experience. Real education comes after we leave school; and there is no reason why it should stop before our death.

## 2. Instrumentalism

What distinguishes Dewey is the undisguised completeness with which he accepts the evolution theory. Mind as well as body is to him an organ evolved, in the struggle for existence, from lower forms. His starting-point in every field is Darwinian.

When Descartes said, "The nature of physical things is much more easily conceived when they are beheld coming gradually into existence, than when they are only considered as produced at once in a finished and perfect state," the modern world became self-conscious of the logic that was henceforth to control it, the logic of which Darwin's *Origin of Species* is the latest scientific achievement. . . . When Darwin said of species what Galileo had said of the earth, *e pur si muove*, he emancipated, once for all, genetic and experimental ideas as an organon of asking questions and looking for explanations.<sup>1</sup>

Things are to be explained, then, not by supernatural causation, but by their place and function in the environment. Dewey is frankly naturalistic; he protests that "to idealize and rationalize the universe at large is a confession of inability to master the courses of things that specifically concern us."<sup>2</sup> He distrusts, too, the Schopenhauerian Will and the Bergsonian *élan*; these may exist, but there is no need to worship them; for these world-forces are as often as not destructive of everything that man creates and reverences.<sup>3</sup> Divinity is within us, not in these neutral cosmic powers. "Intelligence has descended from its lonely isolation at the remote edge of things, whence it operated as unmoved mover and ultimate good, to take its seat in the moving affairs of men."<sup>4</sup> We must be faithful to the earth.

<sup>1</sup> *The Influence of Darwin on Philosophy*, New York, 1910, p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>3</sup> *Human Nature and Conduct*, New York, 1922, p. 74.

<sup>4</sup> *I. of D. on P.*, p. 55.

Like a good positivist, scion of the stock of Bacon and Hobbes and Spencer and Mill, Dewey rejects metaphysics as the echo and disguise of theology. The trouble with philosophy has always been that its problems were confused with those of religion. "As I read Plato, philosophy began with some sense of its essentially political basis and mission—a recognition that its problems were those of the organization of a just social order. But it soon got lost in dreams of another world."<sup>1</sup> In German philosophy the interest in religious problems deflected the course of philosophic development; in English philosophy the social interest outweighed the supernatural. For two centuries the war raged between an idealism that reflected authoritarian religion and feudal aristocracy, and a sensationalism that reflected the liberal faith of a progressive democracy.

This war is not yet ended; and therefore we have not quite emerged from the Middle Ages. The modern era will begin only when the naturalist point of view shall be adopted in every field. This does not mean that mind is reduced to matter, but only that mind and life are to be understood not in theological but in biological terms, as an organ or an organism in an environment, acted upon and reacting, moulded and moulding. We must study not "states of consciousness" but modes of response. "The brain is primarily an organ of a certain kind of behavior, not of knowing the world."<sup>2</sup> Thought is an instrument of re-adaptation; it is an organ as much as limbs and teeth. Ideas are imagined contacts, experiments in adjustment. But this is no passive adjustment, no merely Spencerian adaptation. "Complete adaptation to environment means death. The essential point in all response is the desire to control the environment."<sup>3</sup> The problem of philosophy is not how we can come to know an external world, but how we can learn to control it and remake it, and for

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>2</sup> *Creative Intelligence*, New York, 1917, p. 86.

<sup>3</sup> Class lectures on "Psychological Ethics," Sept. 29, 1924.



what goals. Philosophy is not the analysis of sensation and knowledge (for that is psychology), but the synthesis and co-ordination of knowledge and desire.

To understand thought we must watch it arise in specific situations. Reasoning, we perceive, begins not with premises, but with difficulties; then it conceives an hypothesis which becomes the conclusion for which it seeks the premises; finally it puts the hypothesis to the test of observation or experiment. "The first distinguishing characteristic of thinking is facing the facts—inquiry, minute and extensive scrutinizing, observation."<sup>1</sup> There is small comfort for mysticism here.

And then again, thinking is social; it occurs not only in specific situations, but in a given cultural *milieu*. The individual is as much a product of society as society is a product of the individual; a vast network of customs, manners, conventions, language, and traditional ideas lies ready to pounce upon every new-born child, to mould it into the image of the people among whom it has appeared. So rapid and thorough is the operation of this social heredity that it is often mistaken for physical or biological heredity. Even Spencer believed that the Kantian categories, or habits and forms of thought, were native to the individual, whereas in all probability they are merely the product of the social transmission of mental habits from adults to children.<sup>2</sup> In general the rôle of instinct has been exaggerated, and that of early training under-rated; the most powerful instincts, such as sex and pugnacity, have been considerably modified and controlled by social training; and there is no reason why other instincts, like those of acquisition and mastery, should not be similarly modified by social influence and education. We must unlearn our ideas about an unchangeable human nature and an omnipotent environment. There is no knowable limit to change or growth; and perhaps there is nothing impossible but thinking makes it so.

<sup>1</sup> *Reconstruction in Philosophy*, New York, 1920, p. 140.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 92.

### 3. *Science and Politics*

What Dewey sees and reverences as the finest of all things, is growth; so much so, that he makes this relative but specific notion, and no absolute "good," his ethical criterion.

Not perfection as a final goal, but the ever-enduring process of perfecting, maturing, refining, is the aim in living . . . The bad man is the man who, no matter how good he has been, is beginning to deteriorate, to grow less good. The good man is the man who, no matter how morally unworthy he *has* been, is moving to become better. Such a conception makes one severe in judging himself and humane in judging others.<sup>1</sup>

And to be good does not merely mean to be obedient and harmless; goodness without ability is lame; and all the virtue in the world will not save us if we lack intelligence. Ignorance is not bliss, it is unconsciousness and slavery; only intelligence can make us sharers in the shaping of our fates. Freedom of the will is no violation of causal sequences, it is the illumination of conduct by knowledge. "A physician or engineer is free in his thoughts or his actions in the degree in which he knows what he deals with. Perhaps we find here the key to any freedom."<sup>2</sup> Our trust must after all be in thought, and not in instinct;—how could instinct adjust us to the increasingly artificial environment which industry has built around us, and the maze of intricate problems in which we are enmeshed?

Physical science has for the time being far outrun psychical. We have mastered the physical mechanism sufficiently to turn out possible goods; we have not gained a knowledge of the conditions through which possible values become actual in life, and so are still at the mercy of habit, of haphazard, and hence of force. . . . With tremendous increase in our control of nature, in our ability

<sup>1</sup> *Reconstruction in Philosophy*, pp. 177, 176.

<sup>2</sup> *Human Nature and Conduct*, p. 308.

to utilize nature for human use and satisfaction, we find the actual realization of ends, the enjoyment of values, growing unassured and precarious. At times it seems as though we were caught in a contradiction; the more we multiply means the less certain and general is the use we are able to make of them. No wonder a Carlyle or a Ruskin puts our whole industrial civilization under a ban, while a Tolstoi proclaims a return to the desert. But the only way to see the situation steadily and see it whole is to keep in mind that the entire problem is one of the development of science and its application to life. . . . Morals, philosophy, returns to its first love; love of the wisdom that is nurse of good. But it returns to the Socratic principle equipped with a multitude of special methods of inquiry and tests; with an organized mass of knowledge, and with control of the arrangements by which industry, law and education may concentrate upon the problem of the participation by all men and women, up to the capacity of absorption, in all attained values.<sup>1</sup>

Unlike most philosophers, Dewey accepts democracy, though he knows its faults. The aim of political order is to help the individual to develop himself completely; and this can come only when each shares, up to his capacity, in determining the policy and destiny of his group. Fixed classes belong with fixed species; the fluidity of classes came at the same time as the theory of the transformation of species.<sup>2</sup> Aristocracy and monarchy are more efficient than democracy, but they are also more dangerous. Dewey distrusts the state, and wishes a pluralistic order, in which as much as possible of the work of society would be done by voluntary associations. He sees in the multiplicity of organizations, parties, corporations, trade unions, etc., a reconciliation of individualism with common action. As these

develop in importance, the state tends to become more and more a regulator and adjustor among them; defining the

<sup>1</sup> "Psychology and Social Science"; *I. of D. on P.*, p. 73

<sup>2</sup> *Reconstruction*, p. 75.

limits of their actions, preventing and settling conflicts. . . . Moreover, the voluntary associations . . . do not coincide with political boundaries. Associations of mathematicians, chemists, astronomers, business corporations, labor organizations, churches, are trans-national because the interests they represent are world-wide. In such ways as these, internationalism is not an aspiration but a fact, not a sentimental ideal but a force. Yet these interests are cut across and thrown out of gear by the traditional doctrine of exclusive national sovereignty. It is the vogue of this doctrine or dogma that presents the strongest barrier to the effective formation of an international mind which alone agrees with the moving forces of present-day labor, commerce, science, art, and religion.<sup>1</sup>

But political reconstruction will come only when we apply to our social problems the experimental methods and attitudes which have succeeded so well in the natural sciences. We are still in the metaphysical stage of political philosophy; we fling abstractions at one another's heads, and when the battle is over nothing is won. We cannot cure our social ills with wholesale ideas, magnificent generalizations like individualism or order, democracy or monarchy or aristocracy, or what not. We must meet each problem with a specific hypothesis, and no universal theory; theories are tentacles, and fruitful progressive living must rely on trial and error.

The experimental attitude . . . substitutes detailed analysis for wholesale assertions, specific inquiries for temperamental convictions, small facts for opinions whose size is in precise ratio to their vagueness. It is within the social sciences, in morals, politics and education, that thinking still goes on by large antitheses, by theoretical oppositions of order and freedom, individualism and socialism, culture and utility, spontaneity and discipline, actuality and tradition. The field of the physical sciences was once occupied by similar "total" views, whose emotional appeal was in-

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 703, 205.

versely as their intellectual clarity. But with the advance of the experimental method, the question has ceased to be which one of two rival claimants has a right to the field. It has become a question of clearing up a confused subject-matter by attacking it bit by bit. I do not know a case where the final result was anything like victory for one or another among the pre-experimental notions. All of them disappeared because they became increasingly irrelevant to the situation discovered, and with their detected irrelevance they became unmeaning and uninteresting.<sup>1</sup>

It is in this field, in this application of human knowledge to our social antagonisms, that the work of philosophy should lie. Philosophy clings like a timid spinster to the old-fashioned problems and ideas; "direct pre-occupation with contemporary difficulties is left to literature and politics."<sup>2</sup> Philosophy is in flight today before the sciences, one after another of which have run away from her into the productive world, until she is left chill and alone, like a forsaken mother with the vitals gone from her and almost all her cupboards empty. Philosophy has withdrawn herself timidly from her real concerns—men and their life in the world—into a crumbling corner called epistemology, and is in danger every moment of being ousted by the laws that prohibit habitation in flimsy and rickety structures. But these old problems have lost their meaning for us: "we do not solve them, we get over them";<sup>3</sup> they evaporate in the heat of social friction and living change. Philosophy, like everything else, must secularize itself; it must stay on the earth and earn its keep by illuminating life.

What serious-minded men not engaged in the professional business of philosophy most want to know is what modifications and abandonments of intellectual inheritance are required by the newer industrial, political, and scientific

<sup>1</sup> *New Republic*, Feb. 3, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> *Creative Intelligence*, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> *I. of D. on P.*, p. 19.

movements. . . . The task of future philosophy is to clarify men's ideas as to the social and moral strifes of their own day. Its aim is to become, so far as is humanly possible, an organ for dealing with these conflicts. . . . A catholic and far-sighted theory of the adjustment of the conflicting factors of life is philosophy.<sup>1</sup>

A philosophy so understood might at last produce philosophers worthy to be kings.

<sup>1</sup> *Creative Intelligence*, p. 5; *Reconstruction*, p. 26; *I. of D. on P.*, p. 45.