

## WILLIAM JAMES' THEORY OF TRUTH AND ITS LATER DEVELOPMENT

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William James ( 1842-1910) is one of the most discussed and debated philosophers whose philosophical enterprize has been both stimulating and baffling. The core of his philosophy can be summarized in his three philosophical concepts namely : 'the pragmatic method', 'the theory of truth' and the theory of radical empiricism'. This paper endeavours to substantiate William James' theory of truth which is an application of his pragmatic method, where in order to make philosophy concrete and practical he completely identifies truth with utility or workability.

William James designates his 'pragmatic method' and 'theory of truth' as pragmatism and contends that pragmatism consists of "first, a method ; and second, a genetic theory of what is meant by truth." <sup>1</sup> In his view, "the word pragmatism has come to be used in a ... wider sense, as ... a certain *theory of truth*," <sup>2</sup> Thus James' 'theory of truth' is an application of his pragmatic method where he vindicates truth as mutable and ever changing which grows and changes according to the needs and desires of individual.

James develops his 'theory of truth' from Peircean concept of meaning. Peirce in his article entitled "How to Make Our Ideas Clear (1878) asserts that the aim of pragmatism is to clear our concepts and to determine the meaning of a proposition or statement by its conceivable practical effect. James turns Peirecan theory of meaning as a theory of truth by explicating meaning in terms of cash-value. While Peirce emphasizes on the practical effect of a concept and general

ideas or a habit of action i.e., the idea of the general habit in which the concept could possibly modify by purposive action,<sup>3</sup> James, on the contrary, looks for particular practical effects and locates the meaning of a concept in particular experience<sup>4</sup>. So he formulates truth as practical and relative to individual's satisfaction, that is to say, a belief is true if and only if it yields sensibly satisfactory result in experience.

In James' days there had been prevailing two major theories of truth namely, 'correspondence theory of truth' and 'coherence theory of truth'. Correspondence theory in its traditional form holds that an idea becomes true when it copies or is in correspondence with or agrees with an object. It is an agreement or conformity between ideas and reality. According to this theory, truth is an experience of two factors determinately related to one another. Correspondence, therefore, means being related by a one to one relation, that is, idea of mind corresponds to fact. And coherence theory in its traditional form, upholds that the truth of a proposition is determined by its relation to other propositions i.e., a proposition is true when it coheres with all known propositions and is false when it does not. This theory explicate reality as a system of propositions or judgements when the truth of a proposition is determined by the degree to which it coheres with the absolute system.

James criticizes both theories as "vague and uninformative." Since these "theories are concerned with the formal definition of truth", that is, an abstract analysis of truth, "while James is interested in their pragmatic meaning".<sup>5</sup> So James' theory is not to be seen as competing with traditional account of truth, as the queries of traditional philosophers and James are not identical. James envisages correspondence theory as misleading because its underlying model of mental activity is passive, non-interesting and non-evaluative. According to him, ideas of natural sciences like energy, power, as well as concepts of social sciences, such as, justice, equality etc., cannot be affirmed as true on the basis of correspondance theory. Moreover, it cannot adequately cover all the cases in which we naturally talk of truth. It may function only in a simple object like a clock, but it cannot account for a complex notion of 'agreement', such as the function of clock as a time keeping mechanism. How can an idea be a copy of such complex reality? It cannot be so since there is no image that adequately

conveys this function. <sup>6</sup>

And James criticizes coherence theory for its metaphysical foundation <sup>7</sup> and contends that coherence theory involves idealist conception of truth because in it the truth of a proposition is determined by its relation to the absolute system. James' objection to coherence theory is its acceptance of absolute system as a criterion truth. He alleges that both correspondence and coherence theory conceive truth as 'ante rem' <sup>8</sup> means prior to thing, that is to say, truth is obtained prior to things and consequently it is independent of human enquiry and experience. James cogently argues that truth cannot be prior to human experiences and beliefs, rather it is a satisfactory relation between our ideas and the rest of our experiences. In other words, truth is an experiential property, and that there is nothing about it which is inaccessible to us.

James in order to explicate truth of utility, usefulness or workability in a concrete life situation identifies truth with reality, verification and verifiability. For James truth is a "property of certain of our ideas". <sup>9</sup> What sort of property is it? James adduces: "It means their (ideas) 'agreement', a falsity means their (ideas) 'disagreement' with reality". <sup>10</sup> Therefore, James opines that truth is a property of agreeing i.e., an idea is true if it agrees with some reality. It may be noted that by property James does not mean either a stagnant or inert essence of an idea, or any underlying quality in the object that can be attached to an idea. Rather he seems to mean "a predicate, (that) must apply to the idea and not to the object." <sup>11</sup> Thus 'truth is a property' means that, it is a predicate that must be applied to our ideas. For him our ideas are part of our experiences and the use of our ideas is to help us to get satisfactory relation with other parts of our experiences. Ideas are the subjective part and reality is the objective part of our experiences. Here it seems that James is echoing correspondence or copy theory of truth. What does he mean by copying or agreeing? James claims that his use of the term copying or agreeing is different from as what is admitted by correspondence theory; since correspondance theory regards'reality' as given once for all, whereas James' reality is not absolutely given, rather what he calls constantly becoming. So for him, to 'agree' with reality is not to copy it or otherwise to represent it. By 'agreement' he denotes a relation between the concept and the world, i.e., a relation between one set of item in experience and another. He construes 'agreement' in

terms of dynamic line of working 'agreement' between the various segments of experiences rather than as a static relation between the cognitive item and the world.<sup>12</sup>

To elaborate this point let us first explain Jamesian use of the term 'reality'. By reality he does not mean a close, stagnant and inert 'reality' but a reality having many facets. This imports that his conception of 'universe' is not a block 'universe', it is 'multi-universe', a plastic one which possesses dynamic character and is ever changing. According to him, this sort of universe moves, modifies and advances within the sphere of experiential limit. He spells out that "our fields of experience have no *more* definite boundaries than have our fields of view. Both are fringed forever by a more that continuously developed, and that continuously supersedes them as life proceeds".<sup>13</sup> So, in James' view, the universe is open having an open character which signifies that it is not ruled by some static or fixed laws, rather it is sometimes ruled by concrete, sensible presence, sometimes by objective relation and so on. He further unfolds that there is no objective reality beyond the sphere of the reality of which we talk and opines that "the limit of our thought is the limit of our reality".<sup>14</sup> Similarly, it is observed in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*: "The limit of language means the limit of world."<sup>15</sup> For James the limit of thought and reality is not bound by fixed laws. It may augment its sphere with the amelioration of our thought and experience. Thus, it seems that James does not use the term 'agreement' in the sense of copying or correspondence. He uses it in a very wide sense.

However, for James, 'agreement' is the guiding principle of our beliefs to achieve the goal, that is, agreement is necessary to obtain a relation between idea and reality. We can obtain such a relation only by putting our beliefs into working touch with reality. In the view of James, truth is relation between one part of our experience with another, what he terms, "*terminus a quo*" to "*terminus ad quem*."<sup>16</sup> James envisages the former as the subjective part of our experience and the latter as objective part of it. And the agreement' between these two parts can be maintained by the application of pragmatic interpretation of our ideas. The idea, as James unfolds, is a plan or guide for action. And if the application of this plan leads us to the *terminus ad quem*, that is, objective part of our experience, then the idea is true. He spells out : "Pragmatists are unable to see

what can possibly mean by calling an idea true, unless you mean that between it as a *terminus a quo* in some one's mind and some particular reality as a *terminus ad quem*, such concrete workings do or may intervene." <sup>17</sup> Therefore, our ideas become true through a series of *termini* and truer idea is one that pushes us further, that is to say, truth is not something which is given once for all, but that which becomes true. In other words, truth is relative. James divides experience as subjective and objective, with the implication that when an experience works or helps in attaining a useful goal, it becomes true. In the view of James the successive series of our experiences lead us to anticipate an ideal limit of our searches, which would be an absolutely satisfactory terminus. Agreeing with James, C.H. Seigfried argues that "the ideally perfect truth would thus be an absolute identification of idea and the reality in which it terminates."<sup>18</sup> Hence truth means satisfactory relation between one and the another part of our experiences, that is, any idea on which we can ride, speak or that can carry us prosperously from one part to another part of our experiences and linking things satisfactorily is called a true idea.

Apart from this, James claims that "the truth of an idea is not a stagnant property inherent in it. Truth *happens* to an idea. It *becomes* true, is *made* true by events." <sup>19</sup> This imports that an idea makes itself true by the way it works, that is, by acting upon it and putting it to the test of future experience. He spells out, "*True ideas are those that we can assimilate, validate, and corroborate and verify. False ideas are those we cannot.*" <sup>20</sup> James, thus, opines that to be true an idea must assimilate, validate through previously acquired truth. The function of new idea is to mediate between novelty and previously acquired knowledge. And if an idea performs this function, the idea would be true. James states: "The reason why we call things true is the reason way they are true, for 'to be' true means only to perform this marriage function." <sup>21</sup> Therefore, the idea which enables us to deal effectively with the rest of our experiences, assimilating the past, and on the basis of it anticipating the future, can be said to be working agreement with reality, hence true.

James further identifies truth with verification to signify the relation and espouses that truth emerges when a belief is verified. He states, "Its (truth) variety is... a process : the process namely of its verifying itself, its verification.

Its validity is the process of its validation." <sup>22</sup> In the view of James, truth of a belief is made by verification and validation. He depicts verification of a belief in the experimental sense, that is to say, the verification of belief is performed when other ideas associated with it, follow a particular pattern of succession within individual's experience. So the pragmatic understanding of truth leads us to a sensible experience and establishes the connection from point to point within a series of experience in order to make a belief true. Hence, for James, truth is a collective name for verification process, just as health, wealth and strength are collective names for other processes in life. To quote James: Truth for us is simply a collective name for verification processes.....Truth is made just as health, wealth and strength are made, in course of experience." <sup>23</sup>

It may be noted here that Jamesian understanding of verification is different from that of positivists' understanding of verification principle. For the positivists the unit of verification and falsification is given in individual experience. For them, verification is the name of a single process and it is concerned only with the autonomy of a proposition. But James does not consider verification as fixed process. For him, it always leaves the door open and it is not concerned only with a single proposition but with a series of propositions. Hillary Putnam points out that "the pragmatists applied their pragmatic maxim to whole metaphysical systems and to religious and ethical beliefs as well as to scientific utterances and theories." <sup>24</sup> The positivists uphold that knowledge must be reduced to the knowledge of sense data. To be meaningful an idea must be capable of conclusive verification which must exclude metaphysics. But Putnam argues that "for the pragmatists the idea (verification) was that it should *apply* to metaphysics, so that metaphysics might become a responsible and significant enterprise." <sup>25</sup>

Since the positivists are concerned with the meaning of a single proposition, the pragmatists reject their verification, that is, their claim of autonomy of proposition.

James sometimes uses the term 'verifiability' to expatiate truth. But his use of the term is different from its normal sense. Generally speaking, verifiability of a proposition refers to its ability in principle, to prove or disprove the same by experience. But James refers verifiability only in a positive sense, where

individual's beliefs are verifiable means to bring them increasingly confirmed in the course of our experiences over a period of time. In other words, verifiability depends on the concrete situation of a particular believer, and that it may change from person to person or from time to time. This imports that beliefs which are verifiable in one person's experience in a particular span of time may not be verified in another person's experience in another span of time, or even to the same person it can differ. James cites an example, "If I am lost in the woods and starved, and find what looks like a cow-path, it is of the utmost importance that I should think of a human habitation at the end of it."<sup>26</sup> My vital interest here is to get myself out of the wood and possibly a cow-path may lead me to an inhabited area, where I may get probable help. Here my idea is a plan of action, that is, my action verifies or validates the idea. Thus for James, the process of verification constitutes the truth of an idea. But he further unfolds; in another situation or another span of time I may not consider it as true, because in that context it may not be my purpose to look at a cow-path and so on, hence not useful for me.

Thus James' functional standpoint leads him to analyse truth as verifiability then actual verification. His use of the term verifiability refers to truth as analysable in terms of actual and possible experience. While explicating Jamesian notion of verifiability E. K. Suckiel spells out: "verifiability is analysed exclusively according to the way in which individual's belief is or could be *experienced* as verifiable,.... for a belief to remain verifiable it must be increasingly confirmed in the individual's experience."<sup>27</sup> This corroborates the fact that verifiability continuously satisfies individual's demand and interest, that is to say, it is only the verifiable beliefs that can satisfy the believer. Satisfaction therefore, is not extrinsic to a belief's verifiability, rather is a part and parcel of it. In other words, true belief is generated by us in the process of verification of our beliefs to fulfil our demands and desires.

J.B.Pratt in his article entitled "Truth and Its Verification" criticizes James' identification of truth with verification and verifiability. He cogently argues that the conception of truth as verifiability is essentially non-pragmatic and inconsistent with ordinarily accepted pragmatic view of truth since "verifiability is not a process, it is not included within any one's experience, but is a general condition or set of conditions which transcends every single finite experience"<sup>28</sup>

So verifiability and verification are not the same thing. Verifiability is a totality of relation which is not concerned with finite experience, rather it excels finite experience whereas verification is within the realm of finite experience. Hence, in Pratt's view, it is impossible to identify truth with verification and verifiability. We cannot capture truth altogether and that it excels experience.

Apart from this James' use of the expression 'truth is a process of verification' is also confusing. If truth is nothing but the process of verification, or the process by which it is pursued and attained, then what is it that is verified, what is it that is pursued and attained? The answer that naturally emerges is that we are verifying verification and pursuing pursuit. J.B. Pratt is of the opinion that truth cannot consist in the process of its own verification, consequently it is hard to see the consistent use of the term verification.<sup>29</sup>

According to James, truth is not an attribute of reality, rather it is our ideas or belief about reality. Our beliefs become true and provide satisfactory result by their functional use. He writes, "It is useful because it is true or that it is true because it is useful."<sup>30</sup> Here both phrases mean the same thing: that our ideas get fulfilled by their functional use, hence become true. But the question is what concrete difference a true belief can bring to our lives or what is its cash-value in experience? James argues that truth lives on system, and our thoughts and beliefs are good currency to lead us to a successful conclusion. He ferrets out: "*The true...is only expedient in the way of our thinking, just as 'the right' is only expedient in the way of our believing.*"<sup>31</sup>

James' use of the term satisfaction cannot be envisaged as a sufficient condition for truth. According to James, the successful working of an hypothesis depends on the satisfaction of interest. Frederick Copleston is of the view that since for James, a belief is true if it causes a subjective feeling of satisfaction it opens the door to every kind of wishful thinking, that is to say, an idea is true simply because one wishes it to be true.<sup>32</sup>

James does not accept truth as ideal or final. He opines that no theory can be a complete transcript of there reality and that there need not be any ultimate or final truth. In this context he spells out,

....truth is made largely out of previous truths. Men's beliefs at any time



ar so much experience *funded*. But the beliefs are themselves parts of the sum total of the world's experience, ... reality means experienceable reality, both it and the truths men gain about it are everlastingly, in process of mutation. <sup>33</sup>

Since verification refers to particular fact of experience, there can be no universal or absolute truth: it has to be particular, relative and subjective i.e., truth is mutable, everchanging, temporal. This implies that our beliefs or ideas that which we profess to live by, are effective for a limited span. It is based on previous truth, for example, once Ptolemaic system of astronomy was true now it is replaced by Copernican system. Hence, truths are modified by new discoveries in accordance to our needs and desires and new truths are capable of providing more satisfaction for the individual. And we retain them so long as they lead us to fruitfully fulfil our desires and interests. James, thus, endeavours to depict that all our ideas or beliefs are human construct and are designated to serve human needs and satisfy his demands.

G. E. Moore raises question against Jamesian notion of mutability. For James, truth is mutable i.e., one and the same idea may be true at one time and false at another time. Moore opines that truth cannot be mutable since it is a permanent property of our ideas. He contends: "Many true ideas seem to occur but once, and, if so, they, at least, will not actually be true at one time and false at another time." <sup>34</sup> So for Moore, there are certain classes of ideas which are not mutable. Hence according to him, we cannot hold that "all true ideas are mutable". <sup>35</sup>

From the above exposition of James' theory of truth it seems that he exclusively characterizes truth as personal, subjective and it functions only with the domain of individual's experience. But there are passages in both *Pragmatism* and *The Meaning of Truth* where he claims to show the possibility of objective truth. The argument which James provide to elucidate the objectivity of truth is more or less similar to what J. S. Mill adopts in his *Utilitarianism* to illustrate the objectivity of hedonistic principles. Both of them endeavour to vindicate the objectivity in their theory through subjective criterion. For Mill, an individual's subjective pleasure is the criterion of goodness, just as, for James, individual subjective usefulness is the criterion of truth. Now the question is how to obtain

objectivity in truth or goodness? Mill cogently argues that objectivity consists in the greatest happiness of the greatest number which he considers as moral standard. In *Utilitarianism* he contends: "By happiness is intended pleasure and absence of pain, by unhappiness, pain and privation of pleasure".<sup>36</sup> Therefore, for Mill, rightness or wrongness comprise in conduciveness to pleasure or pain. This is pure subjectivism.

Mill supports altruistic hedonism and considers that egocentric pleasure cannot be moral standard, the collective happiness is the moral standard. But if every body seeks his own happiness, then how shall we generate collective happiness? According to Mill, everybody desires his own happiness, implies that everybody desires collective happiness and since individual's own happiness is good to him, general happiness is good to everybody. Hence Mill begins with individual pleasure and transform it as a general criterion to achieve the objectivity of pleasure. Mill's account of greatest happiness of the greatest number invites severe criticism. In the first place why shall everybody desire other's happiness? Mill does not have satisfactory answer to this question. William Lilly adduces that Mill's argument is tantamount to the statement: "each man in a city has the right to open the door of his own house; it follows that all in the city have the right of opening the door of any house as they fancy."<sup>37</sup> Thus, Lilly repudiates Mill's claim of objectivity of goodness or pleasure.

William James launches the same kind of arguments to generate objectivity of truth. In *Pragmatism* he spells out, "You accept my *verification* of one thing, I yours of another. We trade on each other truth."<sup>38</sup> In a similar strain in *The Meaning of Truth* he writes,

....truth, concretely considered, is an attribute of our beliefs, and that these are attitudes that follow satisfactions ... men seek to spread their beliefs, to awaken imitation, to infect others. Why should not you also find the same belief satisfactory? Thinks the pragmatist, and forthwith endeavors to convert you. You and he will then believe similarly; you will hold up your subject-end of a truth, which will be a truth objective and irreversible if the reality holds up the object-end by being itself present simultaneously. What there is of self-contradiction in all this I confess I cannot discover.

The above two quotations seem to corroborate James' claim that truth is not only relative and personal but objective as well. For him a belief is true if it is set to the appropriate test within the context of personal desires and interest, that is to say, '*true belief is that which the individual takes to be true*'. This appears to substantiate Mill's view that good is that which individual takes to be good.

James claims to extend his theory of truth from the individual to a group by balancing and harmonizing, as fully as possible, the conflicting demands among the individuals on the basis of what the individual takes to be true i.e., by sharing and comparing each others' true belief. He adduces that in a society knowledge of self is impossible apart from other selves with whom we can compare and contrast our beliefs, ideas, etc., and share common interests. In his context he states, "We exchange ideas; we lend and borrow verifications, get them from one another by means of social intercourse. All truths thus gets verbally built out, stored up and made available for every one."<sup>40</sup>

So for James truth develops in a community through social intercourse ; we share our beliefs with each other and develop sets of beliefs having greater degrees of truth. This implies that the member of a community accounts for and anticipates a greater number and variety of experience that transcends the personal or relative truth. James, thus, claims that we begin from personal truth and through the intermediary stages we establish an ideally perfect objective truth. In other words, objective truth is attainable through the acceptance of our belief by the community, that is to say, if everybody in a community accepts a particular belief as true, then there would be none to count it as false, and since there would be none to reject it, such a *belief would be pragmatically true one*.<sup>41</sup>

James' claim of objective truth, like Mills utilitarianism, raises its own sets of questions. For example, why every body in a community shall share their beliefs or ideas with other ? James could not adequately explain this issue. That apart, James' theory of truth faces severe criticism from different angles by a number of Philsophers. Most of the critics raise objection to James' use of the expression that an idea is true if it agrees with reality. The critics are of the view that this echoes correspondence theory which James has criticized for its

vagueness. Moreover, it has been pointed out, hereinbefore, that James discards correspondence theory since it regards reality as given once for all, whereas James portrays reality as everchanging. C. H. Seigfried agrees with James and repudiates the claim of the critics. He upholds that James does not employ the expression 'our ideas agree with reality' in the sense of correspondence theory rather, he uses it in the sense that by acting upon ideas we are led to satisfactory consequences. He states that "the correspondence theory has actually been reduced to a pragmatic one. 'Working' replaced by agreeing." <sup>42</sup> Again, Graham Bird criticizes James' employment of the term 'satisfactoriness' or workability as a criterion of truth, that is, truest idea is that which performs satisfying conditions. Bird maintains that James' use of the term 'satisfaction' "is ambiguous" <sup>43</sup> and it is not sufficient condition for truth. It has been used narrowly to signify our emotional satisfaction. Besides, what gives satisfaction felicitously to one person may not give the same satisfaction to another person or even to the same person at another point of time. James, thus, wipes out the objective standard of truth and his workability criterion cannot be considered as viable because 'an idea or a belief that works is true' leads us to the conclusion that even a false belief is true if it works.

That apart, G. E. Moore in his article entitled "Professor James' Pragmatism" is of the view that James' identification of truth with verification and utility may have some truth since some of our true ideas are verified or can be verified and many of them are useful. But this does not lend support to James' claim that all our true ideas are useful or can be verified. Moore's objection is that by identifying truth with verification or utility or usefulness James over simplified the age old problem of truth. Moore cogently argues that there are some ideas which cannot verify but are true and it is impossible to verify all our ideas. <sup>44</sup> For example, on a certain issue or even if a polemic arises and if we do not have documents on that event or if all documents have been destroyed, then how to verify our ideas about that event. Moore illustrates with a number of examples on this issue in his article and concludes that we cannot always verify our true ideas.

In a similar vein Moore criticizes James' notion of usefulness. He opines that all our true ideas need not be useful. There are times in which a particular

idea is useful and certainly there are times it would not be so. Moore does agree with James in saying that true ideas are useful, but not always, sometimes. He spells out that, "true ideas which are sometimes useful, nevertheless sometimes occur at times when they are not." <sup>45</sup> Hence James' identification of truth with utility is not tenable, for utility is not a permanent property of our ideas, while truth is always truth.

The above accounted criticisms of Moore have brought to fore the basic differences between the two philosophers. In case of Moore, truth is an objective property of ideas, that exists independently of human desires, needs and interests whereas, for James, it is a subjective property dependent upon men's conscious purpose, needs interests etc.

Apart from Moore, Bertrand Russell in his article entitled "William James's Conception of Truth" criticizes pragmatism as "absolutely dogmatic."<sup>46</sup> The reason he put forth is that it does not allow erroneous hypotheses to enter into pragmatic competition. For pragmatists a hypothesis works means: the effect of believing in the same is good, and provides satisfaction for individuals; consequently true and valid. Russell repudiates this position and argues that "we cannot agree that when we say a belief is true we mean that it is a hypothesis which 'works'." <sup>47</sup> For Russell working hypotheses are only a small part of our beliefs, not whole as pragmatism seems to consider. It may be pointed out that although Russell criticizes Jamesian notion of truth in the above article, in *History of Western Philosophy* he remarks it as "a new definition of truth." <sup>48</sup>

Besides these philosophers, in the recent time Richard Rorty who claims to be a new pragmatist also criticizes James' theory of truth. Rorty considers pragmatism as vague and ambiguous albeit he gives credit to the tradition while he says, "it names the chief glory of our country's intellectual tradition." <sup>49</sup> He is influenced by philosophers like James, Dewey, Quine, Davidson etc. and envisages his own work as a continuation and elaboration of pragmatic tradition. James departs from Humean atomistic philosophy and ardently advocates holism while Rorty departs from analytic philosophy. The point of departure is precisely in his critique of analytic Philosophy For Rorty pragmatism is not mere "holistic corrections of the atomistic doctrines of the early logical empiricists." <sup>50</sup> He enfolded logical empiricism as merely "one variety of standard, academic, neo-

Kantian, epistemologically-centered Philosophy<sup>51</sup> Rorty questions the value of epistemologically centered traditional philosophy and says: "The great pragmatists should not be taken as suggesting an holistic variation of this variant, but rather as breaking with the Kantian epistemological tradition altogether."<sup>52</sup> Therefore, Rorty's new pragmatism on the one hand embraces the American theme of breaking with an European tradition and on the other hand he shatters the epistemology centered philosophy. Rorty, thus, becomes a staunch anti-epistemologist while James is an anti-intellectualist.

For traditional philosophers the object of philosophical theorizing is truth, knowledge, morality etc. But Rorty considers the search of truth as futile and would like philosophers to abandon the pursuit of truth, because in his view those theorizings do not have any essence. He expatiates this point with reference to James' definition of truth: 'what is good in the way of belief. Rorty conceives this definition as deflationary which, he believes, is not really meant to be a definition at all, rather it serves as a warning against all definitions of truth.<sup>53</sup> For him, it is of no use to hold that "truth corresponds to reality"<sup>54</sup> because we have no access to reality which is independent of those beliefs and theories. In other words, there is no possibility of competing our beliefs with reality. One should concern oneself only with how things are, instead of proliferation of truths.<sup>55</sup> In the view of Rorty Jamesian definition of truth suggests that "there is nothing deeper to be said: truth is not the sort of thing which *has* an essence."<sup>56</sup> This implies, Rorty claims, the pursuit of truth is absurd since "truth is not the sort of thing one should expect to have a philosophically interesting theory about."<sup>57</sup> He opines that it is James and Dewey who recognize the impossibility of acquiring objectively true knowledge. It is pointless, Rorty holds, to try to establish a theory of knowledge or of truth. Hence, no definition of truth would be possible. Furthermore, for Rorty, "there is no... epistemological way to direct or criticize, or underwrite" our experiences, "... it is the vocabulary of practise rather than of theory, of action rather than contemplation, in which one can say something useful about truth."<sup>58</sup> So, only through the practise of vocabulary or action one sees the usefulness of truth. Rorty states: "When we turn from individual sentences to vocabularies and theories critical terminology naturally shifts from metaphors of isomorphism, symbolism, and mapping to talk of utility, convenience; and likelihood of getting what we want".<sup>59</sup> This quotation affirms

that the vocabulary of practise is uneliminable, that is, truth lives through the vocabulary of practise. Here it may be asked to Rorty that if the pursuit of truth is absurd why does he not adopt any theory of truth ? Why is he working on the line of pragmatist theory of truth ? Rorty does not have adequate answer to these questions. Richard Manning agrees with Rorty that the pragmatist theory is a deflationary one but he contends that it still can be a theory.<sup>60</sup> It is difficult to agree with Rorty, Manning and James as well since these philosophers deny the possibility of objective knowledge and truth, which results in individualism, and subjectivism. Moreover, Rorty's denial of epistemology shatters the cognitive activity of human being through which he moulds the universe and forms world-view.

James' theory of truth seems to characterize human being as goal positing, interest seeking being, and thus pictures his rational and cognitive aspects to be subservient to the emotional and passionate aspect of his nature. Therefore, in his view, individual's interests, desires, preferences mould his cognitive activities, such as, concept formation, belief acquisition, theory construction etc. According to him, human beings are impelled towards the fulfilment of their practical end and analyse everything in terms of cash-value. James' individual is one who does not seek any social whole but his own self-desired goal. He depicts his philosophy as narrowly utilitarian and reductionistic, and ignores the universal characteristic of human being, that he is a creative and rational being, who by his reason and conscience looks for others' interests as well, that is, he also works for humanity, altruism and compassions, in spite of his self interest. James' pragmatic attitude, thus, denies the universal characterization of human being and designates good actions in terms of the fulfilment of egocentric mentalistic end. The basic thesis of Jamesian pragmatism is that "knowing is a way of being in the world"<sup>61</sup> and James endeavours to give specification of the way in which true beliefs function in human life, that is, "an idea is true so long as to believe in it is profitable to our lives."<sup>62</sup>

It is true that James' theory of truth has been severely criticized for its emphasis on the subjective interests of individuals and his view of the objectivity of truth also fails to convince its critics, nonetheless James can be credited for taking into his account the practical import of our experiences. James departs

from the traditional view (true propositions accurately represent reality independently of human experiences) for its accentuation on the transempirical concept of truth by asserting the experiential property of truth, that is, truth cannot be obtained prior to our experiences and beliefs. It is a satisfactory relation between our ideas and the rest of our experiences. The significance of James' theory lies in the fact that if truth is separable from our experiences, there would be no reliable basis upon which truth could be ascribed. He, thus, diverts the attention of philosophers to the consideration of action or ideas practically. James' rejection of absolute truth and his concern for subject's experience depicts truth as temporarily expedient. This fundamental relativity is the core of James' theory of truth which is essential to form our thinking and action to change this unfinished world into a better shape. James believes that man is free to decide which of various conflicting interpretations, ways of interpretations and hypotheses to accept; if the choice is of vital concern to him and if he cannot rationally decide or settle a question then it is right and necessary to follow his inclination. He pleaded with great skill and logical earnestness for the fulfilment of human aspiration and exhibited those things that are useful for life, individual and social.

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