

James and Bowne on the Philosophy of Religious Experience

This study explores some of the common concerns in the philosophies of William James and Borden Parker Bowne. Although there are profound differences in background and thought, there are also significant points of contact. James and Bowne were not only contemporaries, but good friends who maintained an impressive correspondence throughout their lifetimes. The following excerpt from a letter from James to Bowne suggests the intellectual affinity and unity of purpose that James felt with Bowne, and is the most complete and instructive statement of James's attitude towards personalism:

It seems to me that you and I are now aiming at exactly the same end, though, owing to our different past, from which each retains special verbal habits, we often express ourselves so differently. It seemed to me over and over again that you were planting your feet identically in footprints which my feet were accustomed to—quite independently, of course, of my example, which was what made the coincidences so gratifying. The common foe of both of us is the dogmatist-rationalist-abstractor. Our common desire is to redeem the concrete personal life which wells up in us from moment to moment, from fastidious (and really preposterous) dialectic contradictions, impossibilities, and vetoes. But whereas your "transcendental empiricism" assumes that the essential discontinuity of the sensible flux has to be overcome by high intellectual operations on it, quite à la Kant, Green, Caird, etc.; my "radical" empiricism denies the flux's discontinuity, making conjunctive relations essential members of it as given, and charging the conceptual function with being the creator of factitious incoherencies. You don't stop with the abstract syntheses of the intellect,

however; you restore concreteness by the "will," etc.; whereas I *keep* the full personal concreteness which I find in time and the immediate particulars that fill it.New values, indeed, arise by the use of intellectual function, but it gives no insight into forces or activities, which must be lived directly or represented sympathetically, not *conceived*. All this is entirely congruent with your scheme; so I think we fight in exactly the same cause, the reinstatement of the fullness of practical life, after the treatment of it by so much past philosophy as spectral. I personally prefer my own director method; but so far has the thinking (at any rate the "academic") mind been warped away from the directness by school traditions, that I have no doubt your more complex treatment will prove by far the more effective in the philosophy market. By the school traditions I, of course, mean the contempt of sensation, the insistence on an intellectual synthesis, the spewing out of "time," the appeal of infinite regress as fatal, and the like. I prefer simply to short-circuit all this as so much artificiality. But the essential thing is not these differences, it is that our emphatic footsteps fall on the *same spot*. You, starting near the rationalist pole, and boxing the compass, and I traversing the diameter from the empiricist pole, reach practically very similar positions and attitudes. It seems to me that this is full of promise for the future of philosophy. (Bowne 276-278)

This study will focus upon James's desire "to redeem the concrete personal life which wells up in us from moment to moment." My approach will be to consider three major areas of each man's philosophy, and to examine how each of these areas illuminates each man's viewpoint of the validity of personal religious experience. The three areas are: the empirical factor, the function of the will, and as a method of summary, pragmatism as understood by James, and Bowne's reaction to that interpretation.

Borden Parker Bowne was born into a family of pious Methodists and was exposed to and influenced by the Wesleyan understanding of piety and personal religious experience. The Methodist Church was built upon the early conversions which attended the preaching of the Wesleys and other evangelists such as George Whitefield. Methodism taught that people know salvation by a personal, inner experience of God's indwelling Spirit, and spiritual maturity was

marked by subsequent inner experiences. Because of his solid religious upbringing, Bowne always respected the characteristically Methodist emphasis on the inner experience in the life of the Christian, that experience which John Wesley described as the "heart strangely warmed."

Many observers feel that Bowne's great contribution to Methodism was in correcting a tendency toward over-emotionalism in religious experience. What Bowne said about this conversion experience was that the church could destroy the validity of the experience by over-emphasizing emotionalism. Since Bowne personally understood this mystical experience, he was qualified to denounce its excesses. He enthusiastically agreed with Methodism's conviction that God was trying to bring people into communion with himself. Bowne's own commitment to Christianity is revealed in this brief statement at Ohio Wesleyan concerning the question: "What is a Christian?" "To be a Christian is to live in loving submission and active obedience to the will of God, trusting his mercy in Jesus Christ."¹ As long as the individual feels some strange, peculiar, and unusual quality in the Christian life, this experience is worthy of nurturance and guidance.

Bowne spent his entire teaching career at Boston University, where his teaching was a critical influence upon a generation of Methodist bishops, educators, and ministers. The Christian philosophy which Bowne systematized became known as personalism, which is a form of idealism that finds in the activity and conscious unity of personality, the understanding of the nature of reality and a basis for solving ultimate questions in philosophy.

Unlike Bowne, James never made a standing commitment to any orthodox religious tradition. Although he firmly believed that genuine religious experience was dramatic and soul-shaking, his personal religion was of the more moralistic, pluralistic type. He writes that "the value of God is a more powerful ally of my own ideals."² The *felt need* of God and religion as reinforcement of the moral will forms the substance of his personal, rather academic beliefs. In 1904 James wrote to the psychologist James Leuba:

Now I am so devoid of *Gottesbewusstsein* in the directer and stronger sense, yet there is *something in me* which *makes response* when I hear utterances from that quarter made by others. I recognize the deeper voice:—"thither lies truth"—and I am sure it is not old theistic prejudices of infancy. These in my case were Christian, but I have grown so out of Christianity that entanglement therewith on the part of mystical utterance has to be abstracted from and overcome, before I can listen. Call this if you like, my mystical *germ*. It is a very common germ. It creates the rank and file of believers. As it withstands my case, so it will withstand in most cases, all purely atheistic criticism.³

Therefore James rejected the specific content of his religious inheritance, and yet remained "religious" in feeling, sensibility, and sympathy. He personally did not accept either popular Christianity or scholastic theism, yet he did accept the intervention of spiritual forces in human life, since he believed that practical religion evaporated without those spiritual forces.

We have then one philosopher with a firm commitment to an evangelical tradition, and another who believed in the validity of personal religious experience, including emotionalism, but was not working from a personal understanding of that experience. The personal faith of the two men does seem to make a difference in the ontological elements in their respective philosophies.

I

The first of the three areas which lead us to an understanding of that "common desire to redeem the concrete personal life which wells up in us from moment to moment" is empiricism. Empiricism is broadly defined here as the search for knowledge by relying on experience without the use of scientific, experiential methods. We rely primarily on the testimony of the experiencer, and the observations by others of that individual.

William James sought vital, experiential meaning for ancient beliefs, and in doing so brought new insights into classical Christian notions. His central thesis is the primacy of immediate experience

over doctrinal elaboration, and his background as a doctor and psychologist naturally led him to search for knowledge by observation and experiment. James was an empiricist in the most general sense, in that he insisted on testing an idea by asking what it *means*.

James writes in *The Meaning of Truth*:

The meaning of any proposition can be brought down to some particular consequence in our future, practical experience, whether passive or active...the point being that experience must be particular rather than in the fact that it must be *active*. (210)

Perry says that James "realized that a practical empiricism bases theory on practice and introduces a norm of usefulness as the higher sanction of such immediate norms of verifiability, simplicity, consistency, or scrupulosity as sufficient within the confines of the laboratory."⁴ Experience for James is "converged, disclosed, given or imposed." He thinks that the whole point of pragmatism is its original and concrete way of "seeing."

In a narrower sense, empiricism becomes the postulate that "the only things that shall be debatable among philosophers shall be things definable in terms drawn from experience" (*Meaning* xii). Experience itself is described as "a process in time, whereby innumerable particular terms lapse and are superseded by others" (*Meaning* iii). Here experience is not limited to sense perception, for James repeatedly refers to "non-perceptual experiences." "For there is no *general* stuff of which experience at large is made. It is made of *that*, of just what appears of space, of intensity, of flatness, brownness, heaviness, or what not..." (*Essays* 26-27). Experience then becomes a collective name for things in their spatial-temporal conjunctions, and things are experiences when these connections are immediately present in the mind. For James, ideas are first of all to be tested by direct knowledge; and secondly, that knowledge is limited to what can be presented.

James sees the problem of empiricism as the problem of determining truth, because for him there is no such thing as truth independent of concrete, individual experience. James believes that true ideas

“are those we can assimilate, corroborate, and verify. False ideas are those we cannot.”⁵ Therefore truth must therefore be verifiable, and James declared that “verify-ability” would do as well as “verification.” By “verify-able” James means that there is a “common to all” understanding which makes it possible for an experiencer to compare his judgment with the common judgment of others.

Therefore truth must somehow be determined from individual experiences, but individual experiences, even for James, can never really add up to truth. So there are some very difficult problems to overcome in this system. What about the isolated inhabitant of the jungle who hears for the first time that the world is round? This man would be totally incapable of assimilating, validating, corroborating, or verifying this new idea. And yet such a truth may go beyond the experience of all people, as was supposedly the situation in fifteenth century Europe. Would not the earth still be round even in the absence of human life and intelligence? What about a unique religious revelation in such an environment? Can we deny the jungle dweller’s revelation simply because he cannot verify it?

Bowne solved this problem by positing Personality as a World Ground, and by admitting that there are eternal and universal truths which transcend our human understanding. However, James could never fully put his confidence in this higher and uniting Intelligence. Although his pragmatism avoids the abstractions of absolute idealism, he risks falling into individualistic solipsism because there is no such uniting ground. The error is almost impossible to avoid whenever one moves, as James does, from the particular to the whole without first positing an ontological whole.

James does manage to get around the problem by adding one more consideration to the empirical tests of knowledge. James names this “radical empiricism,” which is the discovery that “the connections between things, conjunctive as well as disjunctive, are just as much a matter of direct particular experience, neither more nor less so, than the things themselves” (*Meaning* xii). James concludes that experience includes not only events and things, but the *connections*

between those events and things. As he says in his letter to Bowne, he simply denies the flux's discontinuity and makes conjunctive relations essential members of it as *given*.

Radical Empiricism attempts to begin with the parts and return to the source by way of the relations. James believes that "conjunctive relations are true in some supernatural way, as if the unity of things and their variety belonged to different orders of truth and vitality" (*Essays* 44). This empiricism questions what we live through and why we do the things we do in life. In doing so, radical empiricism searches for the elemental human experiences which form a whole only when added together.

James believes that his empiricism is the opposite of rationalism, and here is one of the major issues on which James parts from Bowne:

Rationalism tends to emphasize universals and to make wholes prior to parts in order of logic as well as in that of being. Empiricism, on the contrary, lays the explanatory stress on the part, the element, the individual, and treats the whole as a collection and the universal as an abstraction. My description of things, accordingly, starts with the parts and makes of the whole a being of the second order. It is essentially a mosaic philosophy....(*Essays* 41)

Bowne, as we will see later, presupposes the Absolute, and therefore moves form a rationalist pole.

Critics say that classical empiricism failed because it limited knowledge to sense experience. However, James was shrewd enough to recognize this limitation, and his radical empiricism makes a place in our life experience for the mystical states. They are therefore considered a cognitive function. James knew that these mystical states are where vital religious faith finds its roots, and he had to make room for them. He writes that there are "windows through which the mind looks upon a more extensive and inclusive world," and these windows vary greatly in vividness and intensity even with the same people. Nevertheless, it is in these states that vital religious faith is rooted. James adds that for empiricism to be radical, it must not admit any non-experienced elements, or exclude any directly

experienced elements. Therefore our jungle dweller can have his religious revelation. The problem here is that James is undercutting his argument for the verifiability of religious experience.

James believed that we do not first start with the question of God's existence, as Bowne and all other *a priori* thinkers do, but rather we measure the fruits of religion in terms of human values. James can never fully accept *a priori* arguments. However, radical empiricism doesn't really solve James's rejection of the *a priori*, since it does not do justice to the dynamic God that James saw revealed in the lives of people he observed. In radical empiricism, the pieces of one's life are held together loosely at the edges by their relations, and James does manage to hold on to a concept of the whole. The weakness lies in the fact that James is only leaving room for God, and is therefore running the risk of relegating the mystical states to a separate category of existence. He is almost saying that if one does not have a mystical experience, then God does not exist. James's emphasis on the practicality, meaningfulness, and validity of religious experience loses points because he cannot posit an ontological source for those mystical states which provide concrete religious experience. Perhaps James is unable to do this because of the uncertainty of his own religious faith.

Prior to any discussion of empiricism in Bowne's thought, it is necessary to make a preliminary statement about the *a priori* factor in personalism, since it is on this issue that personalism parts from James's pragmatism. Bowne assumed that the universal, vital interests of people are more controlling than theoretical reason or logic. Bowne believed that individuals in their essential nature are independent of this reason. Therefore religion does not derive its purpose for existence from the intellect. Religion can stand on its own feet, and is not some perversion of nature, for humanity's desire for religion is built into the structure of the human soul, and is not a product of human development. Religious experience is an ultimate endeavor and cannot be destroyed by man-made reason and logic. James of course would agree with this deemphasis on logic, but he

would not agree that there is an *a priori* presupposition in favor of the argument's validity.

Bowne says, with James, that he does not take the high *a priori* road, since his aim is only to "rationalize and comprehend experience." However, God for Bowne is not an inference that we gain from human experience, but rather an object of perception. "He himself," as Bowne says, "is the great source of the belief in God" (*Studies* 81). The restriction of valid religious experience to the physical senses would violate the integrity of the empirical principle itself. Many individuals throughout history have been convinced that they have experienced a supersensible reality, and they have given us their reports. Bowne agrees with the validity of this evidence, and he feels that such experience only strengthens the presupposition of the *a priori* thinker.

Bowne's empiricism makes experience "first and basal" in all thinking, and is not disturbed by phenomenalist teaching. Bowne made the "field of life and action" his supreme court of appeal against "the arid wastes of formal logic."

One of the superstitions of a superficial intellectualism has been the fancy that belief should always be the product of formal logical processes. But, in fact, the great body of our fundamental beliefs are not deductions but rather formulations of life. Our practical life has been the great source of belief and the constant test of its practical validity, that is, of its truth. Such beliefs are less a set of reasoned principles than a body of practical postulates and customs which were born in life, which express life, and in which the fundamental interests and tendencies of the mind find expression and recognition. (*Personalism* 310)

We can see why Bowne would vigorously defend the Methodist experience of the "heart strangely warmed."

However, Bowne believes that both the traditional arguments in empiricism and *a priorism* miss the fundamental question in human experience: "can the order of life be practically depended upon?" Bowne recognized that even both the empirical and the *a priori* arguments do not in themselves provide adequate answers to philo-

sophical questions. "The empiricist seeks to explain the subjective form of knowledge by the association of sensations, and here the failure is complete" (*Personalism* 304). The field simply becomes too limited. Bowne realized that truth must be determined from individual experiences, but he also knew that merely human and relative judgments do not add up to truth. Extreme empiricism says that we can see a body, but not a person.

The problem with traditional *a priori* arguments is that they have been "used for limiting knowledge to appearances only....The *a priorist* can never do more than outline the general forms of experience, without giving any security for its concrete contents and relations" (*Personalism* 304). In other words, previous *a priori* arguments fail to leave room for subjective knowledge and tend to forget personal human experience.

The question then becomes: how do we make these connections into a whole? Bowne's answer appears to be much more viable than the radical empiricism of James, at least with regard to religious experience. Bowne's theory is called "transcendental empiricism." He begins with the idea of "categories," which he defines as "certain general conceptions which make up at once the framework of knowledge and the framework of existence" (*Metaphysics* 81). Instead of testing our fundamental experience by categories, we must find the *meaning* of the categories in our experience. This experience is not only the passive experience of sense, but the active experience of intelligence, and our active intelligence leads us to posit a unitary principle, or Being, that connects selves and things. This principle or Being must be more than a concept, for such a harmonious system requires a personal God, a God who can be known to individual and collective human personalities. The idea of a "World Ground" illustrates the unique relation of the Absolute to the world.

Bowne's transcendental empiricism seems to provide a more viable understanding of personal religious experience, since it successfully unites both personal experience with an *a priori* ground.

The Methodist with his heart strangely warmed, and the ontological idealist who searches for experience tested by reason can both find answers in Bowne's transcendental empiricism.

II

The second area under consideration is the role that the human will plays in vital religious experience. James's theory of the will is based solidly upon his pragmatism, for James felt that religious beliefs function in a practical manner and are tested by their results only in a sense in which all intellectual activity is ultimately practical. James insists that we are always justified in following the dictates of our subjective mind. "Whatever value, interest, or meaning our respective worlds may appear with are gifts of our subjective mind" (*Varieties* 150).

Since James's training was in medicine and psychology, it is appropriate to begin with James's psychological understanding of the will. According to James, a living organism is a selective agency, and the welcoming of certain objects, together with a rejection of others, is an essential part of the stream of consciousness. Of the innumerable stimuli in the universe, our sense organs select relatively few for response. Of these simpler habits, certain ones are then selected for higher habits of a more complex order, and so on. James often uses the term *choice* as a synonym for this selective activity, and argues that a living organism's very existence is a selective choice among many alternatives. He rejects the idea of voluntary choice as the activity of a special faculty set aside from other parts of the human mind. The will is rather the highest form of a vital autonomy deeply rooted in the structure of the human mind, and in life itself.

Yet this does not lead James to deny human freedom, for James is first of all an individualist. He believes, much like Bowne, that values, religious and otherwise, are linked with personality as it

expresses itself in individualistic and distinctive desires and purposes. James believes that our values are subjective and personal, individual rather than social. Each person, by a process of willful selection, in a sense creates his own interests. Personal desires often determine values, since desires are the surest things we know.

James believes that it is natural for humans to postulate a religious reality at the heart of life. There is an overall, inner need for people to believe in something beyond themselves, since we do have an inborn sense for the "fitness of things," and this sense is also true for intellectual, aesthetic, and ethical ideals. However, insight and logic are not the only things that really produce our religious beliefs. James argues that emotions heavily influence our decisions, and they may be the only decisive factor. Therefore for James, the intellectual part of the human mind is subordinated to a privileged will, a will already legitimated by other factors such as passion. Religious beliefs are selected by the will, are based upon practical evidence (what they have actually done for the believer), and function in a practical manner.

"The Will to Believe" is James's treatise on the selectivity involved in shaping religious belief. James's system does not call for simply believing anything you want to believe and making it truth, since there are conditions. He starts with the following presupposition: beliefs are planted in minds that find them agreeable—and people tend to believe what they want to believe. One can "will to believe," or in other words, allow one's emotional and practical bias to control one's creed. As Bixler says, for James, believing is an active assertion as to what is real to us—it is a part of a selective process that creates and holds as it selects (95).

James's process of selecting, of willing what we are to believe, is well known. We come upon certain situations in life where it is necessary to make a decision without knowing all the data. James feels that in these situations, not to decide, or to hesitate, is really to decide. When confronted with this decision, there are then three steps in the process of decision which are outlined in the "Will to

Believe." First of all, the object of belief must be a *live hypothesis*, a genuine option that confronts the individual. For James himself, Buddhism would not have represented a viable option, since Buddhism was not really a religious choice that confronted Americans at the turn of the century. Secondly, there must be no way of escaping the choice: the option must be real, and it must be of enough significance to make a difference in the believer's mind. Thirdly, the opportunity must be unique and the decision irreversible. The options must be "live, forced, and momentous," and there must be an acknowledgement that reason alone cannot be the final answer.

James believes that the practice of "willing to believe" is the means by which we find workable systems by which we live our lives, and the individual makes truths for himself with the decisions made in everyday life. Therefore truth becomes a process which is continually formed by our actions, since truth is the successful systemization of our various decisions and activities. James adds that it takes a great deal of courage to make the right decisions in life, and to recognize which values to build our lives around.

Bowne agrees with James on the role that choice plays in our lives, that choice which becomes a process for determining the course and direction of human existence:

Our fundamental practical beliefs are not speculative deductions from formal premises, but *formulations of life itself*, and they depend for evidence mainly upon the energy of life they formulate.... In this realm, belief, or assent, involves an element of volition. Therefore there is an element of faith or volition in all our theorizing. Where we cannot prove, we believe. Where we cannot demonstrate, we choose sides. (*Studies* 315)

Like James, Bowne lays more stress on will than on the intellect, and always maintains that life is deeper and richer than logic. Also similar to James, Bowne cannot accept the relegation of the will to a separate part of the human mind. Bowne feels that we cannot reach the pure will stripped of all thought, since it is impossible to take thought, feeling, or will by themselves. These elements are all

integrated into one unique *person*, a person with his own interests who creates his own environment.

The will for Bowne is simply part of an active intelligence with which we can choose, and that active intelligence is one of the primary presuppositions of personalism. Much like James's concept of selectivity, our free intelligence chooses the things we wish to be and works for their realization. Like James, Bowne's ideal for us is more abundant living. Therefore values are to be linked with personality as it funds itself in individualistic and distinctive desires and purposes.

Human freedom is the key to the operation of the will, and indeed Bowne talks a great deal more about freedom than he does about the will:

...freedom simply means the power of self-direction within certain limits set by their own nature and nature of things. Such freedom is presupposed in every department of life. (*Metaphysics* 406)

This freedom gives humans the power to form plans, purposes, ideals, and to work for their realization. Bowne does not mean an abstract freedom existing by itself, but just this power of self-direction in living human beings. "Abstract freedom exists as little as abstract necessity. Actual freedom is realized as only one aspect of actual life; and it must always be discussed in its concrete significance" (*Metaphysics* 405).

Bowne protests the abstraction of freedom as a function of the will without any light from intelligence, or impulse from desire. Our intelligence and desires set natural limits on our freedom, thus making it more effective. This is implicit in the assumption of responsibility on which society is built. The intelligent and responsible use of freedom allows our moral nature, in both its mandatory and retributive aspect, to work for the good of all. Bowne says that the mistaken notion of freedom is lawlessness, an idea which is not derived from any observation of life or experience. Bowne seems to be stepping beyond James here with his emphasis on the responsible nature of freedom. This idea probably guided Bowne in his denun-

ciation of irresponsible over-emotionalism in the Methodist conversion experience.

Bowne's ideas on the power of self-direction, the power to form purposes, ideals, plans, and to work for their practical realization, seem to connect with elements of James's theory of the will to believe. However, Bowne is able to go one step further, and this step gives his viewpoint more substance than James's, at least with regard to the validity of religious experience.

Bowne undergirds his theories of human will and freedom with his conception of the World Ground or World Will. Bowne believes that there is a will which transcends the natural inclinations of individuals, and which imposes upon us an almost Roycean principle of loyalty to the whole. On both an individual and communal level, people must find a sense of unity, a sense of wholeness in their human experience. "Here in the unity of the free Creator, in the unity of his plan, and in his ever-working will is the only place where the world has unity, completeness, and systematic connection" (*Metaphysics* 418). This concept of wholeness gives the believer a confidence and a sense of purpose that is missing from the pragmatist system, where things are only loosely held together at the edges.

III

A discussion of James's philosophical system of pragmatism with regard to religious experience, and Bowne's reaction to that system, will perhaps help summarize and clarify the issues previously discussed. Pragmatism is characterized by a subordination of logic and the claim that living human experience cannot be contained in any form of universal reason. James always defended the uniqueness and primacy of the self. John Smith writes that the "hallmark of James's pragmatism is its uncompromising belief in each person's right, and even duty, to take his own experience seriously and to use it as a touchstone for thought and action" (41). Pragmatism asks the

question: what does religion do for a person, a self, and what religion works best in bringing an individual into communion with God. James gives us Charles Peirce's definition of pragmatism with regard to religious belief, and James, for the most part, adopts it as his own:

Beliefs, in short, are rules for action; and the whole function of thinking is but one step in the production of active habits. If there were any part of a thought that made no difference in the thought's practical consequences, then that part would be no proper element of the thought's significance. To develop a thought's meaning we need therefore only determine what conduct it is fitted to produce; that conduct is for us its whole significance....(*Varities* 339)

These "practical consequences" of religious ideas can be tested by careful psychological observation. This is necessary, since some of life's questions, such as those about God, cannot be answered by direct evidence. James's method is to document carefully the difference that religious experience makes in the life history of the believer.

The fundamental thesis of James's pragmatism is this primacy of immediate experience over doctrinal elaboration. He believed that genuine religion is found only in the stirring of the spirit in the religious person. The validity of religious ideas such as conversion, salvation, and guilt all have their "cash value" in experience. Indeed, the great contribution of pragmatism to philosophy of religion is that it widens the field for God, for pragmatism allows God to come down from the Absolutist's throne and become involved in the lives of human beings:

Rationalism sticks to logic and the empyrean. Empiricism sticks to the external senses. Pragmatism is willing to take anything, to follow either logic or the senses and to count the humblest and most personal consequences. She will take a God who lives in the very dirt of private fact—if that should seem a likely place to find him. Her only test of probable truth is what works best in the way of leading us, what fits every part of life best and combines with the collectivity of experience's demands, nothing being omitted. If theological ideas should do this, if the notion of God, in particular, should prove to do it, how could

pragmatism possibly deny God's existence? What other kind of truth could there be, for her, than all this agreement with concrete reality? (Pragmatism 38)

Personalism finds a natural alignment with pragmatism since it is the experience of the person, or the self, in both cases which is primary in determining what is real. However, personalism does have serious differences with pragmatism, since the former implies both a *a priorism* and a definite metaphysical theory. Pragmatism's positivistic and empirical character, plus its apparent affinity for "loose ends," poses serious problems for the personalist. Furthermore, pragmatism tends to deny the reality of the self by looking upon categories of thought as "deposits" of experience. This is contrary to personalism's affirmation of the special nature of thought as something that can arise only within the thinking agent itself. The personalist takes the *a priori* position that God is the structure of how we think.

Bowne cannot be considered a strict pragmatist since he recognized that the mind has purposes that go beyond the pragmatist's understanding of "usefulness." Despite his objections to a pantheistic God posited by the absolutist's closed system, Bowne never surrendered his belief that truth shall be valid for all. His doctrine of Supreme Intelligence as World Ground disqualifies him as a traditional pragmatist.

However, if we speak of a refined pragmatism, then perhaps Bowne could be labeled a pragmatist. In his introduction to *Studies in Theism* he argues that the "justification of life must come from life itself, but the formulation of life is a matter for logic" (32). Bowne believed that "the self has rights and needs of its own; that by the exercise of those rights it makes adjustments to the universe for the sake of its own best and fullest life, it assumes that it is at least on the path to reality, and then takes further steps." The test of the truth in our perceptions of the world is the degree and quality of life which results for the individual and society.

Pragmatism of this nature is at least compatible with personalism,

for if persons are the ultimate expressions of the real, then we must follow the needs of persons in our search for truth. The self takes from the universe what it needs, and the value of its takings is determined by how well they meet those needs. Therefore for Bowne, as well as for James, the test of truth is life, and all experience is valid if it is a sincere and genuine expression of self.

Notes

¹Bowne quoted by McConnell in *Bowne*, 209.

²James quoted by Perry in *Thought*, 266.

³James quoted by Perry in *Thought*, 266.

⁴James in Perry, *Thought*, 72.

⁵James quoted by Fwelling in *Personalism*, 117-119.

⁶Bowne quoted by McConnell in *Bowne*, 151.

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