

American philosophy (pragmatism) argumentative essay sample

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Pragmatism is a renowned concept of great relevance and application in the modern society. Sentiments presents by other American philosophers incline towards a reformist approach in addressing sociopolitical issues. Pragmatists are constantly motivated by a desire to find solutions through practical application. The idea of pragmatism can successfully be utilized in explaining and understanding socio-political issues and in building knowledge of about effective governance. Understanding the idea of pragmatism especially in America is essential in building knowledge of the current and history issues of social inequality. The paper focuses on establishing whether classic pragmatic have geared adequate effort to address the challenge of racial and gender inequality in America. The paper further attempts to review whether the current pragmatics are doing enough to contain this issue and if there has been any progress.

The American Philosophy has presented varying sentiments towards the idea of progress. Initially, philosophers have utilized the notion of progress to justify the human condition. However, some scholars have constantly identified varied goods in relation to the source of progress. The most direct perspective promoted by the American philosophy can be viewed as monistic following it inclination towards a unique aspect of progress which is knowledge, control over the universe, power and affluence. Another perspective acknowledges a notion of a plan type, where the philosophers assume that god had a well-defined plan for the world. The American philosophy also indicates that the notion of progress explains the relationship between people's culture and nature. Some philosophers are convinced that there exists a progress of human culture, which presents a

tendency within the living beings to progress. In this context, an aspect such as the evolution of species is a practical example of the progress of the natural world. This school of thought argues that although single organisms may suffer, the entire scheme of evolution still affirms that progress is inevitable within nature (Sanders 149).

Reviewing various arguments presented by some great American philosophers can be essential in explaining the American's philosophy understanding towards the idea of progression and pragmatism. The differences presented by the American philosophers arise early on due to their individual temperaments and backgrounds. Charles Peirce is most widely known for his works as a logician and mathematician, therefore, the original conception of pragmatism leaned towards those ideas. For Peirce, pragmatism was geared toward his scientific and logical inclinations. The main purpose of pragmatism was to make meaning of concepts. Peirce also sought to achieve the highest grade of clarity of our understanding through this method. He felt that this was done through reasonable skepticism and inquiry. All that was to be understood must have some practical bearing. This is evident in Peirce's "How to make our ideas clear" essay in which he states, "I only desire to point out how impossible it is that we should have an idea in our minds which relates to anything but conceivable sensible effects of things. Our idea of anything is our idea of its sensible effect (Peirce 1878, EP1: 132)." For example, if an individual was to begin to search for the highest grade of clarity for water, he would first look at it, and use it correctly in its everyday sense. From this, he would have the ability to define water as H₂O and say that it lacks taste. Therefore, according to Peirce, to

reach the highest level of clarity one would come to understand water from its practical effects, which is that it rehydrates the individual.

William James approach to pragmatism was more of a philosophical outlook.

For Williams, pragmatism leaned more toward a theory of truth as opposed to a way to make meaning. The difference in the idea might have come

about due to a broader idea of what pragmatism could be. William felt that pragmatism could be seen as a method, truth, philosophical temperament,

holistic account of knowledge, and method for solving disputes (William, On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings). The broader idea as to what

philosophy is in general could have been influenced by his encounters with Ralph Waldo Emerson, who was a major proponent in transcendentalism.

William also had different intentions behind his development of pragmatism.

For example, he hoped to argue for the existence of God and felt that

pragmatism could help harmonize the empirical and religious arguments. He

felt that pragmatism could answer the problems that a scientific view as the one proposed earlier by Peirce could not answer. William's philosophical view

is affirmed by his argument that humanity value things depending on their feelings or based on their perceptions towards the things in their

surroundings. He states, " we judge a thing to be precious in consequence of the idea we frame of it" (William, the Will to Believe). In this sense, William

acknowledges the effect of abstract elements such as feelings, idea, and one's attitude that can often fail to be accounted for in a scientific model.

Dewey agreed with the broadened scope of pragmatism. He added to this, introducing pragmatism in naturalistic approach to gain knowledge. Dewey

desired to replace the knowledge with experience. He argued that

knowledge came from the interaction of a human organism and his environment. He also desired for problems to start through practical experiences and hoped that philosophical questions would arise from them to find a solution to the problem. He viewed pragmatism as an instrument to solve this problem and was transformative. He said, “ Philosophy recovers itself when it ceases to be a device for dealing with the problems of philosophers and becomes a method, cultivated by philosophers for dealing with the problems of men. (John Dewey, The need for a recovery in Philosophy)”

American philosophers have also presented divergent notions towards the idea of truth. For Charles Peirce, truth is independent of what we believe. It possesses a point of clarity that cannot be reflected up on any further due to it being analyzed perfectly by the pragmatic method. The pragmatic method served as a way to reach a unifying truth that all can agree with and establishes an objective real. Dewey is broader in his idea of truth than Peirce, suggesting that through communal inquiry one can reach truth. For William, pragmatism was a theory of truth. In his own words he suggests what is true as: “ The truth, is only the expedient in the way of our thinking, just as ‘ the right’ is only the expedient in the way of our behaving (William James. Pragmatism's conception of truth 1907: 106).” This means that truth is practical and agrees with reality. Peirce also argues that truth happens to an idea in a process that coheres with reality as an experience. Truth is can capture reality and becomes falsifiable only when it is not beneficial. Furthermore, the truth must able to be used, mediate between previous truths established, and be verifiable. He proposes that the true has “ cash

value” to it. This leads to the assertions that truth is mutable and contains conceptual relativity, both to which Peirce and Dewey could agree upon. Furthermore, James differs from Peirce and Dewey in the way that he views pragmatism from a more individual sensation. He begins describing this individual sensation early on in his philosophical works when he suggests that we have a stream like continuity of thought, and suggests that our philosophical temperaments play a large role in how we see the world. James also tends to focus on topics such as the will to believe and emotion. All these ideas in the fashion that James presented them are subjective as opposed to objective. Each of these philosophers are connected in the way that they appeal to experience. They all place an importance on experience and how it leads to the formation of habits. In turn, these habits lead to our actions. Another thing they agree upon is on the importance of inquiry. They all agree that inquiry and the pragmatic method is a way in which they can obtain truth. They also agree that you should not question anything without practical bearing. This moves away from the Cartesian claims that you should be skeptical of everything. Lastly, all these philosophers would agree that pragmatism should be fallible. This would promote the ongoing process to obtain truth and self-correction.

Having explored the notions promoted by the American philosophy in the realm of the society, there is the need of examining how democratic are these views and whether they are democratic enough to combat social inequality. Dewey argues that democracy is a community and suggests that in order for a great society to transform into a great community it is to make it more personable as opposed to dealing with abstract goals and to improve

communication amongst its people. This relates to pragmatism as well because pragmatism desires to produce practical results and avoid metaphysical problems. It is worth acknowledging that various concepts developed by American philosophy attempt to explain humanity's sociopolitical order. However, these views are not adequate to foster a situation of total democracy in the society. The philosophical view is challengeable especially one tries to visualize the change that idea brings in the society to ensure that democracy necessary or something impossible to attain (Cornel 230). The challenging aspect if this situation is linked with the philosophical view of the idea of truth. This is because, if a situation such as one of political truth exists, then such truth becomes an obligation for any rational mind, which means that freedom is completely linked. From another perspective, if such as limit does not exist, then it becomes apparent that there is no a situation of political truth. This would mean that philosophical views cannot be linked with socio-political events. In this context, the ideas of democracy, politics and philosophy are interlinked by the concept of truth. The only concern then remains a perspective that question the actual implication of the idea of democratic concept of the truth.

It becomes arguable that American philosophy is not democratic enough to address issues such as social inequality. The assertion is supported by the fact that democracy can be viewed as a state for the existence of philosophy. Furthermore, philosophy is mainly inaccurate or inadequate in creating a democratic vision of a social-political order. The American philosophy presents two major traits. From on perspective, philosophy is never a discourse of a supernatural master such as God. This means that

there exists no guarantee for the philosophical argument on the side of power, sacred function or the transcendence. Philosophy acknowledges that the search for truth is not restricted which means that any person can be regarded as a philosopher (Shannon). This would mean that the views of such a person who becomes a philosophy can be validated without questioning his or her background or motivation. In other words, philosophical validation is concerned about the objective wording and insensitive to subjective annunciation. This marks philosophy as a communication that lacks any other legitimacy. The pronounced effect of bias in philosophical views caused by personal interests and philosopher's background is evident in positions assumed by some American philosophers. For example, as earlier indicated Pierce focused on the scientific view of things following his background and experience in logistics and mathematics. If philosophers' views can be substantially biased, then it becomes apparent that the American philosophy is not adequate to combat socio-political issues. However, it is worth acknowledging that philosophical discourse welcomes judgments and criticisms from others (Glaude 129). Accordingly, philosophical assumptions are created from eagerness of objectives and recognition of discussions, which substantiates philosophical view as a relevant strategy for addressing social issues.

The American philosophy assumes a reformist perspective. It presents as the philosophy of live experience and practical naturalism. The American philosophy is seen to promote ideas of radical, decentralized democracy and industrial liberty. However, various philosophers presented their worry towards the idea of revolution, preferring reformative approaches as the idea

strategy for addressing social anarchy. Evidently, Dewey, the philosopher coined to the American philosophy was strongly opposed to the notion of violent revolution. In contrast, he constantly promoted the idea of seeking social reforms through democratic means. This is evident in his argument that revolution by the mainstream society against a minor that has been exploited and discriminated by them can never be regarded as a democratic move. Dewey portrayed his reformatory approach in various arguments. For instance, in reference to the ideas of Liberalism and social action he stated that liberalism needed to assume a “ radical” course; however, he explains that with radical he meant the necessity of adopting thorough changes in the organization of institutions and corresponding undertakings to bring constructive changes. He further explained that such changes needed to include “ a socialized economy,” however, the related activities to foster changes were not supposed to include the working class revolution (Sanders, Cooperation Intelligence).

The American philosophy is critical yet optimistic as it explores various ideas that and provides important guidelines that are of great relevant in the societal realm. The American philosopher is keen to review and develop knowledge regard important ideas such as democracy, truth and justice among others. Furthermore, it provides relevant guidelines regarding how to establish democratic and fair political systems while building knowledge on the effective strategies for addressing socio-political issues. It is also clear that the America philosophy, particularly the pragmatic idea assumes an optimistic perspective by believing on the practicability of its ideas within the

social realm. However, it is worth acknowledging that the ideas presented by the American philosophy are often conflicting.

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