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| **Pragmatism** |
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| Pragmatism is a method of inquiry that deems an object or belief adequately “true” if it has utility for an individual or a collective. It is an American philosophical tradition that reflects certain values typically identified as American, such as the principles of individual choice, optimistic progress, and practicality. It promotes scientific skepticism, beginning with the notion that there is no solid metaphysical foundation, real object, or system of thought independent of observational influence. For pragmatists, judging whether a theory or concept should be valued was usually determined by the answer to William James’s question, “What difference would it make if one believed it?” In other words, the system of thought was judged according to its consequences, that is, in terms of what it would allow an individual (or humanity) to achieve. In this sense, pursuit of the absolute truth of a concept were folly and interminable. These quests were doomed to failure and should be discarded in favor of the pursuit of what works—or what achieves empirically verifiable ends and goals. |
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| Further reading:  (Jr)  (Flower)  (Kuklick)  (Murphy)  (Rorty)  (Schwartz)  (Smith) |