
UNIT 4 PRAGMATISM

Contents

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Definition
- 4.3 Meaning and Nature of Truth
- 4.4 Pierce's theory of Pragmatism
- 4.5 William James, Conception of Pragmatism
- 4.6 John Dewey's conception of Pragmatism
- 4.7 Assessment
- 4.8 Let Us Sum Up
- 4.9 Key Words:
- 4.10 Further Readings and References
- 4.11 Answers to check your progress.

4.0 OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this unit is to give a basic understanding of the theory of Pragmatism which is one among the six ways of knowing, namely, Rationalism, Empiricism, Authoritarianism, Scepticism and Intuitionism. In this unit, definition, meaning, nature and the different theories of Pragmatism is dealt with. Finally, attention is given to its importance in human life. By studying this theory, one will be able to:

- have the basic understanding of the word- Pragmatism;
- definition of Pragmatism;
- meaning and nature of truth;
- pierce's conception of Pragmatism;
- william James theory of Pragmatism;
- john Dewey's conception of Instrumentalism;
- its significance in practical life.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Pragmatism emerged at the end of 19th century as the most original contribution of American thought. This theory was first developed by Charles pierce in 1857 in his paper, "How to make our Ideas clear". William James revived and reformulated it in 1898 and developed it not as a method, but primarily as the theory of truth. He says, "it is only an attitude of orientation; the attitude of

looking away from first things, principles, categories and supposed necessities ; of looking towards the last things, fruits, consequences, facts”. John Dewey and F.C.Schiller are the later famous advocates of the theory of Pragmatism. Thinkers like G Simmul, W.Ostward, E.Husserl, Henry Bergson etc. developed and popularized the pragmatic thinking in the continent.

Pragmatism mediates between Empiricism and Rationalism, Combining all its significant aspects. It unifies the realms of fact and value, making it possible to utilize both science and philosophy in a coherent and creative way. It insists not upon antecedent phenomena but upon the consequent phenomena, not upon the precedents, but upon the possibility of action. It can be described as a bio-centric philosophy which accepts the operating life of man as the fundamental basis of philosophy. It stands for the experimental attitude to truth, characterized by an emphasis on activity. In other words the existence of an object is judged by its function. ‘A thing is what it does’. That means the workability of an idea determines its truth. For example, the meaning of electricity consists in what electricity does. In other words, we discover the presence of electricity not by looking at it, but by its effects. Thus any belief or idea is true only when it produces the expected result.

4.2 DEFINITION

The term pragmatism is derived from the Greek word ‘Pragma’ meaning action, from which our words ‘practice’ and ‘practical’ come. C.S.Pierce emphasizes the fact that words derive their meaning from actions of some sort. Our ideas are clear and distinct only when we are able to translate them into some mode of operation. If a word refers to an object or a quality about which no practical effects can be conceived, such a word has no meaning. For him, meanings are derived not by intuition but, by experience or experiment. So meanings are not individual or private but social and public. Again, if there is no way of testing ideas by their effects or public consequences, such ideas are meaningless. That means the meaning of an idea or a proposition lies on its observable practical consequences. For pragmatists, action is the end of life and is subordinating to thought and rational activity. An idea which cannot be tested by action is devoid of all significance and becomes purely an empty verbiage.

According to William James, the meaning of conceptions is to be sought in their practical bearings. That means the function of thought is to guide action, and that truth is to be tested by the practical consequences of belief. Thus practical consequences are the criteria of knowledge, meaning and value. In his opinion Pragmatism is a temper of mind, an attitude, a theory of the nature of ideas and truth and finally, it is a theory about reality. More specifically it may be said that pragmatism offers as a theory of meaning, a theory of truth and a theory of knowledge.

In the opinion of John Dewey, ideas are the instruments which should guide our actions and their value is measured by their success. Thus pragmatism is a philosophical system stressing practical consequences and values as standards by which the validity of the concepts are to be determined. He uses the word ‘idea’ as synonymous with plan of action or intention to act in a certain way. ‘Things are what they are experienced as being or that to give a just account of anything is to tell what that thing is experienced to be, is the essence of pragmatism.

4.3 MEANING AND NATURE OF TRUTH

Generally the word truth is used as a synonym for Reality which is infinite, eternal and changeless. This ultimate truth of reality is regarded as objective, systematic, independent of human thinking, considering truth and reality as identical. But for pragmatists, the definition of truth is that, our idea should be in conformity with the fact. Truth of our idea must be verified within our experience and its trueness consists in its verification. Hence verification becomes the process of making it true. Verification process consists of telling the truth of an idea, asserting it and then applying it. So truth of our idea depends on its assertion and application and in giving satisfaction. Hence for Pragmatists, satisfaction is indispensable for truth building. Truth is that which works best and viceversa. Successful working is the tag or earmark of testing a true idea.

Idea becomes true in so far as they help us to get into satisfactory relations with the other parts of our experience. 'An idea is true' so long as to believe 'it is profitable to our lives'. According to pragmatists truth is not a separate category but happens to an idea which is made true by events. Therefore a true idea must agree with reality. So a belief may be considered true if its effects are good. In their opinion, we cannot reject any hypothesis if consequences useful to life flow from it. So if the hypothesis of god works satisfactorily in the widest sense of the word and if it gives a person courage, confidence and happiness, then James says that, he has the right to believe in His existence.

Pragmatism is neither religious nor irreligious, but essentially a doctrine concerning the nature of - meaning, truth and knowledge. It is epistemological and logical, rather than metaphysical, theological and ethical. It does not imply any ontology but, reflects the practical experimental outlook on life. It is an unique doctrine concerning not with any metaphysical aspects and considers them as unreal ones, devoid of meaning.

Check Your Progress I

- Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.
b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. What is Pragmatism? Explain its significance.

.....

.....

.....

.....

2. Explain the meaning and nature of truth.

.....

.....

.....

.....

4.4 PIERCE'S THEORY OF PRAGMATISM

The principle of Pragmatism was first enunciated by C.S.Pierce (1839-1914) who maintained that in order to attain clearness in our thoughts of an object; we need only consider what conceivable efforts of a practical kind the object may involve. Pierce was not a systematic writer and never expounded his ideas in a single system. The article which he wrote in 1878 - "How to make our ideas clear" commanded almost no attention from philosophical circles which were then under the dominating influence of Neo-Kantian Idealism of T.H.Green, Caird etc. But a wide circulation to his idea was given by William James through his lucid essays and it was methodically implemented into the daily affairs by John Dewey. Pierce was essentially interested in logic and science while James was in Psychology and religion and Dewey in ethics and social thought.

James and Dewey being contemporaries were highly skilled academicians having the common conviction that there must be a close connection between thinking and doing. As Socrates said 'the unexamined life is not worth living,' they concluded that the behaviour which does not rest upon thought will be lacking an important ingredient. Between these two, there is a difference of emphasis. Dewey's outlook was scientific as his arguments are derived barely from an examination of scientific method while James is concerned primarily with religion and morals. For all these original Pragmatists, the term 'Practical' meant the way the thought works in action.

4.5 WILLIAM JAMES, CONCEPTION OF PRAGMATISM

William James (1842-1910) took a fresh look at Pragmatism and developed Pierce's thought in a novel way. He enlarged Pierce's expression of particular consequences for the general rule or method applicable to future experience. He was much more of a nominalist than Pierce. He gave his attention to Pragmatic method, Pragmatic theory of truth, role and status of human will and the relevance of the 'will to believe' in his scholarly works - The principles of Psychology, Pragmatism, The will to believe, Essays in Radical Empiricism, The varieties of Religious Experience and others.

James being an educator, wished to force the general public to realize that certain philosophical problems have a real importance to mankind, as the beliefs in it lead a very different mode of conduct. So he accomplished a new advance in pragmatism by the theory of the 'Will to believe' as he himself calls it the right to believe. He says that the greater part of philosophical and religious fields is of such nature that they are not susceptible of decisive evidence. He claims that man has the right to choose his belief either that has proof or that has the absence of evidence. So both acceptance and refusal are equivalent to a choice.

James gave a new colour to pragmatic method while determining the meaning of philosophical, theological and religious problems. He wished to establish a criterion which would enable one to determine whether a given problem had an authentic vital meaning or not. He extended the use of pragmatic method to the problem of the nature of truth. Pragmatic method is an instrument he says, in determining the meaning of words and the vital importance of Philosophical belief. Since truth

is a term and has consequently a meaning, he justifies the affirmation of certain beliefs by means of the nature of their consequences. In pragmatism general ideas have a very different role to play than that of reporting and registering past experiences. They are the basis for organizing future observations and experiences.

Idea is true in so far as they help us to get into satisfactory relations with other parts of our experience. 'An idea is true' so long as to believe' it is profitable to our lives, According to pragmatists, 'truth' is not a separate category but happens to an idea which is made true by events. Therefore a true idea must agree with reality. In their opinion, we can not reject any hypothesis if consequences useful to life flow from it. According to James, truth must be the cash value of an idea. In his opinion, ideas are made true by events. That means, truth happens to ideas. Ideas become true in so far as they help us to make successful connection between various parts of our experience. Therefore, truth is a part of the process of experience, of living. For James, as truth is bound up with personal interests, it must lead to successful action and it must work. In the long run, a true belief must work beneficially, just as untrue one will work destructively. Thus his pragmatism recognized a close relation between thinking and doing, between belief and action. Hence he considers 'the will to believe' as a relevant one in relation to truth. He says, truth is nothing already there in the outer world for us to find. But on the contrary, it is something effected by man - a successful adjustment between his purpose and the world. Truth is merely the normal functioning of ideas in our life as a whole, as health that designates the normal functioning of the various bodily organs.

In his opinion truth frequently changes. He tries to explain it with an example. When the assumption of earth moving round the sun is proved, the Ptolemaic system of astronomy became false. That means, the Copernican theory of truth was considered true, making the earlier one false. In the same way, in future, some altogether different but most useful theory may replace the Copernican theory. Hence scientific truths keep on changing from time to time. So James believes that truth changes as if it is merely a relation between our human ideas and the rest of our experience. Truth always refers to action that takes place in future. As truth is subject to constant modification, absolute truth is not at all possible. In his book 'will to believe' he believes that in morality, metaphysics, religion and even in science, we are justified in testing the truth of a belief by its usefulness.

James considers that this world is neither absolutely good nor absolutely bad and the course of events in the world order is not completely determined. It is capable of improvement. By exercising our choices, we can help to make the world better. Novelties occur when we make choices. Through our free choices we can help in our own humble way to make the world better.

James's contributions to the field of philosophy of course, not to metaphysics, entitle him to be one among the great philosophers of modern times. He has introduced a new spirit into modern philosophy which is invaluable. His proposals for the reform of education, his illuminating analysis of the process of logic and reflective thinking, his courageous facing of the difficulties of the present era are his main contributions.

As James, Dewey believed that novelties keep arising within experience and that

truth must be constantly revised and reconstructed. If James was concerned mainly in religious aspects, Dewey was interested primarily with social reforms and improvements in education. James being a pluralist thinks that the world consists of many disconnected elements while Dewey retains enough Hegelianism to unify things and see them as mutually interested in organic wholes that are socially significant. Both being influenced by the advances in natural science, believe that philosophies must be tested in practice and truth is revealed in action.

4.6 JOHN DEWEY'S CONCEPTION OF PRAGMATISM

John Dewey (1859-1952) was the most influential philosopher whose expression of Pragmatism were in the social realm rather than in the individual realm. As he was influenced very much by Darwin's theory, looked upon man as a biological organism. As such, man can be understood in his relation to environment. As any other biological organism, man also struggles for his survival through his thinking and doing which are intimately related. A perplexed, troubled, confused situation at the beginning gives raise to a clear, unified resolved situation at the end through his thinking mode. So he emphasizes that thinking is always instrumental, in solving problems. Hence he names his theory as 'Instrumentalism' or 'Experimentalism'.

Instrumentalism means that, thought is to be considered simply as an instrument for promoting life and not as an organ for reaching a knowledge of things as they are in themselves. Thus instrumentalism holds that reflective thought is always involved in transforming a practical situation. Thinking is the act of trying to achieve an adjustment between man and his environment. In his opinion thinking is not an individual act carried on in private isolation from practical problems but as, a reaction against the idealistic interpretation of Bradley and Bosanquet. He considers that thought is an instrument by which man adopts himself to his environment. When an idea is verified practically and if it produces the expected results, then it is true, otherwise it is false. In the words of Dewey, 'Ideas are tools' and as in the case of all tools, their value resides not in themselves but in their capacity to work. Thus idea is an instrument to a practical act. Truth happens to an idea. It becomes true and is made true by events.

Dewey does not consider any judgment as absolutely true or condemn any judgment as absolutely false. In his opinion, there is a process called 'inquiry', which is one form of mutual adjustment between an organism and its environment. For him, 'truth' is to be defined in terms of 'inquiry' and not vice-versa. He considers truth as the opinion which is considered to be ultimately agreed to by all who investigate.

He divides belief into two classes - 'good' and 'bad' and not as 'true' and 'false'. Whether a belief is good or bad, depends upon the consequences that are satisfactory and unsatisfactory. So a belief may be classified as good and bad depending upon its future effects. That means, he judges a belief by its effects and holds that, it has 'Warranted assert ability' which he substitutes for truth, if it has certain kinds of effect. So truth depends upon the future consequences, which is in our power to alter what is required. Thus it enlarges the human power and freedom.

Dewey gives up the classic theory of truth which claims that truth is the ultimate

end of man's life and also the theory of utilitarianism which gives importance to desires and pleasures and adds a rigorous element to his procedure of evaluation. For him, desire is only a starting point. It is necessary to engage in critical inquiry before one makes choice. A moral choice will admittedly begin with a person's or society's desire, which must be submitted to the critical power of intelligence. What intelligence does under these circumstances is to consider the consequences of any given form of satisfaction of desire. Therefore value is not simply satisfaction of desire, rather the satisfactory solution of the problem reflected by desire.

In other words, values for Dewey are not wholly relative and subjective, but is something that must be worked out in concrete experience. That means, it must be subject to critical scrutiny in the end. Dewey's theory appears to rest on the assumption that experience gives a person or society, the end towards which life and behaviour should move. In his experimentalism, he believes that apart from pooled and cooperative experience, there is no reliable source of knowledge, wisdom or guides for collective action. So he says, each generation should formulate its own ends in the context of democracy.

Thus Dewey rigorously objects to conceiving any value in an absolute way. In his opinion, values ought to undergo perpetual modification and re-construction in the course of reflective thinking with reference to changing social conditions and increasing scientific knowledge. Motives, character and self are integral in conduct and cannot be ignored. They are subject to growth and modification in the course of reflective experience. Even the ethical values should be proved satisfying in the light of all foreseeable consequences to all persons affected. All ethical values and standards which emerge in a moral situation are organically related and they are subject to gradual growth. From one age to another, it keeps on undergoing constant reconstruction and therefore they can not be definitely stated.

To sum up, pragmatism has got three fundamental characteristics viz., Practicalism, Futurism and Relationism. Practicalism means every idea should be tested only in practice in the actual life. Every idea can be tested to be true or false only with reference to future consequences - is the implication of Futurism. Truth according to pragmatists is not absolute, universal, eternal and unchanging but dynamic, relative and purely temporal. So truth of every idea is relative to certain condition is the concept of Relationism.

Check Your Progress II

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of the unit.

1. Give an account of William James's theory of Pragmatism.

.....

.....

.....

.....

2. Elucidate John's theory of instrumentalism.

.....

.....
.....
.....

4.7 ASSESSMENT

It is often said that pragmatism makes action the end of life, subordinating thought and rational activity to particular ends of interest and profit. But thought can not always be regarded as a practical drive to action. Because thought has yet another aspect i.e. speculation. Therefore one must realize that an important function of thought is to - speculate about the nature of the Universe and to build a system of metaphysics.

As pragmatists say, it is not always possible for us to verify an idea with reference to future consequences. For example many historical ideas have no future consequences and therefore they can not be verified pragmatically.

In Pragmatism there seems to be a serious logical error and that is called 'Illicit conversion'. Because, it tries to convert the proposition 'What is true is useful' (SAP) into 'What is useful is true'. In other words a doctor may tell, a lie to a patient regarding his health. But however useful that lie may proved to be, yet it is only a lie and not the truth. Therefore it is necessary for us to make a clear distinction between truth and utility. Our motto must be to 'achieve truth' and not to sacrifice it for the sake of utility. We must remember here Gandhiji's statement that 'not only the end must be good but, the means should also be good'. Thus pragmatism is far from being glorification of 'action for its own sake'.

It is often said that pragmatism makes action the end of life, subordinating thought and rational activity to particular ends of interest and profit. This theory may be true and satisfactory to the pragmatists. But with equal certainty, it may not be true to the non-pragmatist. For, to him, it is not satisfactory and has not been verified. So in their opinion, pragmatism cannot be recognised as a serious philosophical doctrine at all.

Pragmatism has no dogmas and no doctrines. It is just a method, not committed to any particular system of philosophy. As it orients thinking around results, fruits and consequences, we can say that pragmatism is close to life. Though it stands for no particular results as a method in practice, its essence is precisely to assure results. Thus pragmatism is not a 'ism' or a 'system', but a logical method of ascertaining the meanings of intellectual concepts by reference to practical consequences. In Pierce's opinion, "it is not a solution or answer to anything; it is not a philosophy but a technique which helps us in finding out solutions to scientific and philosophical problems".

4.8 LET US SUM UP

Pragmatism being the 'Child of America' has C.S.Perce, William James and John Dewey as its important advocates. Main motto of this theory is 'A thing is what it does' and practical consequences are considered to be the criteria of - knowledge, meaning and value. Pragmatic ideas hinted by Pierce in his article, 'How to make our ideas clear' was implemented very much by William James

and John Dewey. James gave a new colour to the pragmatic method while determining the meaning of philosophical, theological and religious problems. John Dewey through his 'Instrumentalism' explains that 'Ideas are tools' used to achieve the practical result. His doubt - inquiry investigation aspects are of much importance in solving the philosophical problems. To sum up, practicalism, futurism and Relationism are the most fundamental characteristics of pragmatism.

4.9 KEY WORDS

Action	: means practice or practical aspects
Truth of an Idea	: implies profitability of the Idea to our life
Instrumentalism	: means that Ideas are tools in solving our problems

4.10 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

James, William. *Pragmatism*. London: Longmans, Green and Company, 1914.

Moore, G.E. *Philosophical Studies*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1958.

Pratt, J.B. *What is Pragmatism*. New York: McMillan company, 1915.

Russell B. *History of Western Philosophy*. London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1957.

Stumpf, S.E. *Socrates to Sartre*. New York: McHill Book Company, 1966.

Wright, W.K. *History of Modern Philosophy*. New York: McMillan Company, 1966.

4.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS.

Answers to Check your Progress I

1. Pragmatism aims to formulate for us a method of choosing our problems which shall eliminate a number of meaningless questions and helps us to see what is worth discussing and what is not. It is a way of approach to a number of diverse but related philosophic doctrines rather than itself a new philosophy. Pragmatism which is considered 'as the child of America' has its most original thoughts from the American philosophers like Charles Pierce, William James, F.C.Shiller, John Dewey and many others. The doctrines of Pragmatism are so healthy, delightful, clear-cut, simple and helpful that it has the salt air of the sea and the Ozone of the mountains.

The term 'Pragmatism' is derived from the Greek word 'Pragma' meaning 'action'. Pierce emphasizes the fact that words derive their meaning from actions of some sort. In his opinion, if a word of an object has no practical effects in it, then it has no meaning at all. For pragmatists the main question of a word is 'Does it work?'. The meaning of electricity consists in 'what it does'. That means its presence is felt not at looking at it, but by its effects. So an 'idea' is true only when it produces the expected result and the meaning of it lies in its observable practical consequences.

2. For pragmatists, its working is practically more important than its theoretical results and the test of it lies in its successful working. Unless it works, it can not be true. So, truth and usefulness are both forms of value for them. According to pragmatists, by their utility we can know that the truth is that which works best and that which works is the truth. Hence truth and best, trueness is in conformity to fact and further they identity the truth with its successful working.

Pierce laid down the thesis that the whole meaning of any object consists in the habit of reactions it establishes or induces (directly or indirectly) in us. He uses the word 'Practical' in its strict etymological sense as referring to 'acts' on par with the word 'Practical'.

According to Schiller, "what are commonly called theoretical consequences are practical in the broader use of the word and that in fact, all consequences are practical sooner or later".

According to James, the function of thought is to guide action and its truth is to be tested by its practical consequences. For him, practical consequences are the criteria of knowledge, meaning and value. In his opinion an idea is true so long as it is profitable to us. Ideas are made true by events and truth is bound up with personal interests which must lead to successful action. In the long run, a true belief must work beneficially just as, untrue one will work destructively. Hence he considers the will to believe, as a relevant one in relation to truth.

Answers to Check your progress II

1. It was William James who practically revived and reformulated the moral doctrine of Kant and gave a specific attention to the Pragmatic method, theory of truth, role and status of human will and the relevance of the will to believe. He believed that no other Philosophical problem has so great and a permanent hold upon the interest of mankind as that of religion. If theological ideas prove to have a value for concrete life, they will be true in the sense of being good for so much. He believes that in morality, metaphysics, religion and science we are justified in testing the truth of a belief by its usefulness. In his opinion, the effective measuring of any philosophical problem can always be brought down to some particular consequences in our future practical experience whether active or passive. The point lying rather in the part that experience must be particular, than in the part that it must be active. James interprets the term 'practical' as measuring concrete and particular rather than as, referring to action.

James defines Pragmatism as the doctrine that, the whole meaning of a conception expresses itself in practical consequences. If the hypothesis of god works satisfactorily in the widest sense of the word, it is true. The message of William James' theory of Pragmatism is that - you may believe that there is a god because all you mean by a god is certain adjustments of our attitudes, of hopes and expectations.

According to James, the meaning of conception is to be sought in their practical bearings. That means, the function of thought is to guide action and that truth is to be tested by the consequences of a belief. Thus for him, practical consequences are the criteria of knowledge, meaning and value. In

his opinion, Ideas are true in so far as they help us to get into satisfactory relations with the other parts of our experience. An idea is true as long as it is profitable to us. He says Ideas are made true by events and truth happens to idea. Thus as truth is bound up with personal interests, it must lead to successful action and it must work. In the long run, a true belief must work beneficially, just as untrue one will work destructively. Hence he considers, 'the will to believe' as a relevant one in relation to truth.

In James' opinion, truth frequently changes from person to person and from time to time. As truth is subject to constant modification, absolute truth is not at all possible. To banish the abstract from Philosophy as far as possible and to substitute for it the individual concrete in the interests clear thinking has been one of the great and excellent aim of pragmatism.

2. In contrast to William James, Dewey was primarily interested with social reforms and tries to see things as mutually interested in organic wholes that are socially significant. In other words, his expression of Pragmatism was in social realm rather than in the individual realm. He emphasises that thinking is instrumental in solving both the individual and social problems. Hence he names his theory as Instrumentalism or Experimentalism.

Instrumentalism means that, thought is to be considered simply as an instrument for promoting life not as an organ for reaching a knowledge of things as they are in themselves. This theory holds that reflective thought is always involved in transforming a practical situation. He uses the word idea 'as synonymous with' plan of action 'or' intention to act in a certain way. Our beliefs are intellectual tools which serve us in more or less useful ways. In the words of Dewey, Ideas are tools and their value resides not in themselves but in their capacity to work. Thus idea is instrumental to a practical act.

In his opinion, no judgment is neither absolutely true nor absolutely false. By the process of 'inquiry', truth is to be defined and it must be considered agreeable by all who investigate. He considers that the goodness or badness of a belief depends upon the consequences that are satisfactory and unsatisfactory. Thus a belief may be classified as good and bad depending upon its future effects and truth depends upon the future consequences.

In his opinion, desire being the starting point, engages itself in critical inquiry before one makes choice. The values are formed because of this critical inquiry. So they are formed not just because of the satisfaction of the desire, rather the satisfactory solution to the problem reflected by desire. That means values are something that must be worked out in concrete experience. That is why he calls his theory 'Experimentalism'.

According to this theory, he believes that, each generation should formulate its own ends in their contexts, situations and circumstances. So values in his opinion are not absolute ones but they have to undergo perpetual modification and reconstruction in the course of reflective thinking with reference to changing social conditions. Even the ethical values should be proved satisfying in the light of all foreseeable consequences to all persons affected. Thus in his instrumentalism, Dewey tries to say that all values, beliefs and ideas must keep on undergoing constant reconstruction with reference to the needs of the society.