

**CONTINUITIES OF PRAGMATISM, SETTLING
METAPHYSICAL DISPUTES
AND THE ANALYTIC-CONTINENTAL DIVIDE
Part I**

**ПРЕЕМСТВЕННОСТЬ ПРАГМАТИЗМА,
РАЗРЕШЕНИЕ МЕТАФИЗИЧЕСКИХ СПОРОВ
И АНАЛИТИЧЕСКО-КОНТИНЕНТАЛЬНЫЙ РАСКОЛ
Часть I**

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Аннотация

Статья посвящена истории прагматизма. В ней утверждается, что классический прагматизм, неопрагматизм и современный прагматизм имеют тематическую преемственность. Эта преемственность может быть в целом охарактеризована как интеграция теории и практики: опыт определяет содержание теории, и деятельность направляет формирование знания. Тезис о преемственности имеет четыре следствия. Прагматисты изучают отношения людей в связи с процессуально-ориентированной и эволюционирующей концепцией природы. Прагматисты отказываются рассматривать убеждения как пропозиции, отображающие независимую от нас и фиксированную реальность; их истинность вытекает из привычек, порождаемых убеждениями. Прагматизм исходит из открытости к возможностям, поскольку наша связь с миром опыта опосредована множеством отдельных интересов, интеллектуальных историй, различных лингвистических и дискурсивных практик. Прагматисты сосредоточены на социальных и политических проблемах, с которыми ежедневно сталкиваются люди. В статье также рассматривается, как Джеймс понимает термин «метафизика» в связи с его утверждением, что прагматизм является методом разрешения «метафизических споров». Экзистенциальный плюрализм Джеймса подразумевает максимизацию возможностей, удовлетворяющих всех в наибольшей степени, не препятствуя и не нанося ущерба чужой способности приобщиться к богатому и новому миру. Автор анализирует подход Тодда Мэя к аналитическо-континентальным противоречиям и заключает, что если эти противоречия разрешать на основе концепции опыта Джеймса, то онтологический плюрализм является наилучшим решением, и эта приверженность к плюрализму подразумевает преодоление тех исключая-

щих практик, которые философски «легитимируются» существующим аналитическо-континентальным противостоянием.

Ключевые слова: прагматизм, Уильям Джеймс, аналитико-континентальное расхождение, метафизика, радикальный эмпиризм, антифундаментализм, опыт, плюрализм, мелиоризм.

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Summary

The article is devoted to the history of pragmatism. It maintains that a thematic continuity runs through the classical pragmatists, neopragmatists, and contemporary pragmatists. This continuity can be vaguely characterized as an integration of theory and practice, but experience gives theory its content such that action is always guiding the formation of knowledge. There are four implications of this continuity. Pragmatists are centrally concerned with the human relationship to a process-oriented and evolving conception of nature. For pragmatists, our beliefs are regarded not as propositions that map onto a separate and fixed reality, but instead their truth emerges out of the habits beliefs generate. Pragmatism emphasizes an openness to possibility since our access to the world of experience is mediated by a variety of selective interests, intellectual histories, varying linguistic and discursive practices. Pragmatists are deeply concerned with the social and political problems that confront us on a daily basis. The author also examines the manner in which James understands the term “metaphysics” given that pragmatism is a method for settling “metaphysical disputes.” Jamesian existential pluralism implies to maximize all possibilities that can satisfy everyone as much as possible without impeding and harming an-

other's capacity to experience a rich and novel world. The author analyzes Todd May's approach to the analytic-continental divide and concludes that if settlement embraces James's thick conception of experience, then the resulting ontological pluralism is the best settlement possible, and this commitment to pluralism requires dissolving the exclusionary practices the analytic-continental divide suggests philosophically.

Keywords: pragmatism, William James, analytic-continental divide, metaphysics, radical empiricism, anti-foundationalism, experience, pluralism, meliorism.

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Introduction

In the following essay, I was asked two questions posed to me by the Organizing Committee of the “150 Years of Pragmatism” Conference held by the Institute of Philosophy, Russian Academy of Sciences. Given my answers, I decided to unite them thematically.

First question: Much of contemporary pragmatism looks very different from the original version. Is there any continuity in American pragmatism's progress from its early days to the present time? What does the history of pragmatism teach us?

Second question: William James understood pragmatism as “primarily a method of settling metaphysical disputes”. What positive role, if any, could pragmatists play in “settling” current analytical-continental controversy?

First, I answer – yes, however, narrow – there is some unifying thread in both classical, neopragmatists, and contemporary pragmatists (1). I propose that below. Next, I answer exactly how I understand pragmatism as a method for settling the analytic and Continental Divide by first highlighting how James understood metaphysics and how this understanding fueled his development of pragmatism as a method for settling disputes. Finally, through Jamesian pragmatism, I argue against the existence of the Analytic-Continental Divide, and show how a Jamesian would agree with Todd May on this issue.

experience is present in nascent forms alongside the development of James's radical empiricism in 1895-1896 [Lamberth 1999, 66, n 13].

(4) Someone might object that vicious intellectualism is the critique of idealistic monism from Hegel, but an important parallel can be made with any absolute dogmatism that thinks metaphysics capable of discerning timeless truth. The absolute dogmatist would hold the same about truth of its propositions as would the Hegelian caricature given here. Thomists and Hegelians all sound the same when it concerns the confidence of their speculation. In fact, for them, speculation ceases to be speculative and is almost always definitive if the effort of the imagination is logically consistent with core animating first principles of their metaphysical commitments.

(5) James will refer to his own radical empiricism in *The Will to Believe Preface*. For this reason, it's more sensible to conclude that James is developing his radical empiricism in the mid-1890s than thinking radical empiricism is the result of his turn to metaphysics in the 1900s.

(6) In my latest book, *Persons and Values in Pragmatic Phenomenology* (Vernon Press, 2018), I read James and Scheler together, and suggest that synthesizing these systems together generates a conception of a pragmatic phenomenology as laying the groundwork for an ethical ontology. I am tempted to take radical empiricism as the way of restoring phenomenology on the proper path to its potential against all transcendental varieties. I am unsure as to whether I accomplished that in my synthesis of James and Scheler together, and am rethinking that radical empiricism is the form phenomenology should take. In this way, it matters little if various scholars disagree about whether or not James should be understood as a phenomenologist, but rather that phenomenology should be understood through his radical empiricism in order to be viable at all.

(7) This latter view I call – following Russell – neutral monism.

(8) In John McDermott's *Introduction* to Harvard Series of the *Works of William James* version of the *Essays in Radical Empiricism* McDermott highlights felt relations as the great unifying force of James's metaphysics. Drawing attention to James's essay "On Some Omissions of Introspective Psychology" [January 1884], McDermott states, "James puts his finger on the contention that was to occupy him in a central way for the rest of his life: the fact of felt relations" [McDermott 1976, p. xviii]. In this essay and in my own work, I adopt this same interpretive hypothesis. I am simply pointing it out as an assumption that is shaping my historical treatment of James in this essay.

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To be continued