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Pragmatism and Convergence of Belief, Pluralism and Betrayal of Values

Just as James explained in The Types of Philosophic Thinking that most persons want a philosophy that is both tough-minded and tender-minded, it might be thought that most pragmatists want a pragmatism that prizes both convergence and pluralism. In this essay, I strive to do that by articulating an account of pragmatism as a revolution in epistemology—as, more specifically, relativity theory in epistemology (such that Einstein is the William James of physics). In doing this, I focus especially on the relation of facts and values, and am concerned especially to explain the ways in which pragmatism is not a more adequate or fuller solution to problems raised in non-pragmatic epistemology but, instead, the rejection of the philosophical presuppositions on which those problems have depended. In this light, both matters of convergence and pluralism are experiential hypotheses rather than first principles supposedly demonstrated in, and established by, theory (including pragmatic theory).