

## II. THE PRESUPPOSITIONS OF EVOLUTIONISM

The following first principles or basic assumptions or presuppositions are common to all forms of Evolutionism. Other basic assumptions may be made by particular individuals or schools of thought, but they would be additional to those listed below.

### A. A Naturalistic World-View

All of reality is conceived of in terms of physical entities and their qualities and relationships. Mind is the psychological function of a highly complex physical organism, the brain.

The universe as a whole is ateleological (without purpose or meaning). The term "God" may properly be employed to denote Nature as a whole, but it cannot refer to an infinite, personal, supernatural Being who is Creator, Sustainer, and Ruler of the universe.

### B. The Nonexistence of Absolute Truth (or at least its unattainability)

Since sensory experiences and our impressions of them are our only source of knowledge (thus reason, intuition, and revelation are ruled out as sources of knowledge); and since what we call thinking is really only the brain's manipulation of our sensory impressions; and since our ideas can be tested and verified only experimentally; therefore empiricism as a theory of the source of knowledge and pragmatism as a theory of the test for truth are the only useful epistemological tools.

In addition, since all reasoning is ultimately inductive (since all deductive premises relating to objective reality must arise from induction); and since induction can never lead to anything more than probability (no matter how high the degree); therefore absolute truth must forever remain unattainable. If absolute truth exists, we cannot know it with absolute certainty (i.e., we cannot know absolutely that it exists, and cannot know absolutely what it is if it exists).

It therefore becomes necessary to regard even our most certain knowledge as hypothetical, tentative, uncertain in any absolute sense, and continually subject to modification and open to correction.

### C. The Exclusive Reliability of the Scientific Method

The scientific method is the only reliable tool available by which to discover truth (the scientific method is Pragmatism's test for truth). The major assumption in this presupposition is that the ultimate test for truth is detailed empirical verification.

(the following is quoted from an old exhibit in the American  
Museum of Natural History, in New York City)

#### "The Scientific Method

1. Facts are gathered.
2. Problems are stated. What do the facts mean? How are their peculiarities to be explained?