

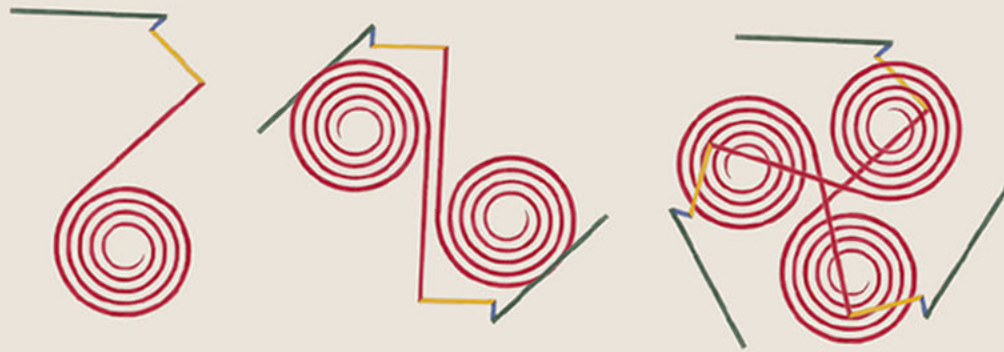


EXPERIMENTAL ETHICS

PRAGMATISM, EVOLUTION, and SOCIAL REFORM

a philosophy talk by
TREVOR PEARCE

(UNC Charlotte)



For Herbert Spencer, ethics was evolutionary; for William James, it was experimental. In this talk I will argue that for the second cohort of pragmatists it was both: in the years around 1900, John Dewey, G. H. Mead, Jane Addams, and W. E. B. Du Bois developed a view of moral and social progress as experimental evolution. Although they rejected the teleological approach of Spencer, who saw ethics as proceeding to a specified evolutionary end point, they still employed a modified version of his organism-environment framework. Their application of this framework to ethics led them to a distinctive picture in which moral philosophy was inextricable from social science and social reform.

FRIDAY, OCT. 15TH 3:30PM
CLOSE-HIPP BUILDING / ROOM 335

University of South Carolina

