Writing and Language Drill 3

Time: 7–8 minutes. Check your answers in Part IV.

A Pragmatic Approach

William James's *Pragmatism* (1907) has been called the [1] greatest and best book of American philosophy. The array of lectures that would become *Pragmatism* [2] encompass James's adaptation of the great Pragmatists—such as Charles Peirce—and adds a uniquely human element to the philosophical movement. [3] His work in psychology and religion laid the foundation for how theoretical work intersects with the concrete work of living.

In a way, pragmatism turns the philosophical endeavor on its head and [4] attacked the importance of its big questions. Philosophy is traditionally concerned with the big questions: What is the meaning of life? Are there many worlds like this one or only this one? What if none of us exist? Pragmatism is concerned with these questions as well, but it is equally concerned with another question: So what? Pragmatism is concerned, with what difference a particular truth means in the world [5] with *practice*.

1

A) NO CHANGE

B) best and truly greatest

C) greatly best

D) greatest

2

A) NO CHANGE

B) encompasses

C) do encompass

D) are encompassing

3

A) NO CHANGE

B) James's

C) Their

D) Some

4

A) NO CHANGE

B) has been attacking

C) attacks

D) could be said to attack

5

If the punctuation were adjusted accordingly, the best placement for the underlined portion would be

A) where it is now.

B) after the word *Pragmatism*.

C) after the word *concerned*.

D) after the word *truth*.

Let's consider a basic example. Say you are stressed about an upcoming math test. You're afraid you might not get the grade you want, and the fear of it **6** keeps you up at night. Rather than asking, "Will you do well on this test?", the Pragmatists will want to know instead "What difference does it make whether you do well or poorly on the test?" If your answer is, "Well, no difference, I guess," then you've got **7** one. If your answer is, "I won't be able to get an A in the class!" then you've got another and a whole other series of questions. By constantly asking "So what?", the pragmatic approach helps to situate problems in their practice and their consequences rather than **8** abstracting.

6
A) NO CHANGE
B) keeping you up
C) awakens
D) kept you up

7
A) NO CHANGE
B) something.
C) one approach.
D) approaching.

8
A) NO CHANGE
B) abstractly.
C) in their abstraction.
D) by a process of abstraction.

The approach is especially interesting for life's big questions. One of James's particular favorites was, "Is life fated or free?" In other words, do we make our own choices, or are our lives completely predetermined? Well, for James, the question is an interesting but fundamentally irrelevant one. **9** Whether there is a cosmic order to our lives or not, we still have to live them responsibly, so it doesn't **10** <u>differ</u> whether our lives are "fated or free," because the distinction won't create practical differences.

These are two relatively simple examples of the pragmatic method in action, but give it a try yourself. Next time something is really stressing you out, ask the simple question: What difference does it make if that does happen? You may find that the real consequences are what help you to see through the problem, establish a plan, or **11** <u>forgot about the issue</u> entirely.

9

The writer is considering deleting the phrase *but fundamentally irrelevant*. Should the phrase be kept or deleted?

A) Kept, because it shows James's sense of humor as displayed in his writings.

B) Kept, because it sets up the subject of the remainder of the paragraph.

C) Deleted, because it dismisses the importance of Pragmatism as a movement.

D) Deleted, because the paragraph as a whole is focused on relevant subjects.

10

A) NO CHANGE

B) concern us or anyone else

C) count

D) make a significant difference

11

A) NO CHANGE

B) forget about them

C) forget about the issue

D) forget about the issues