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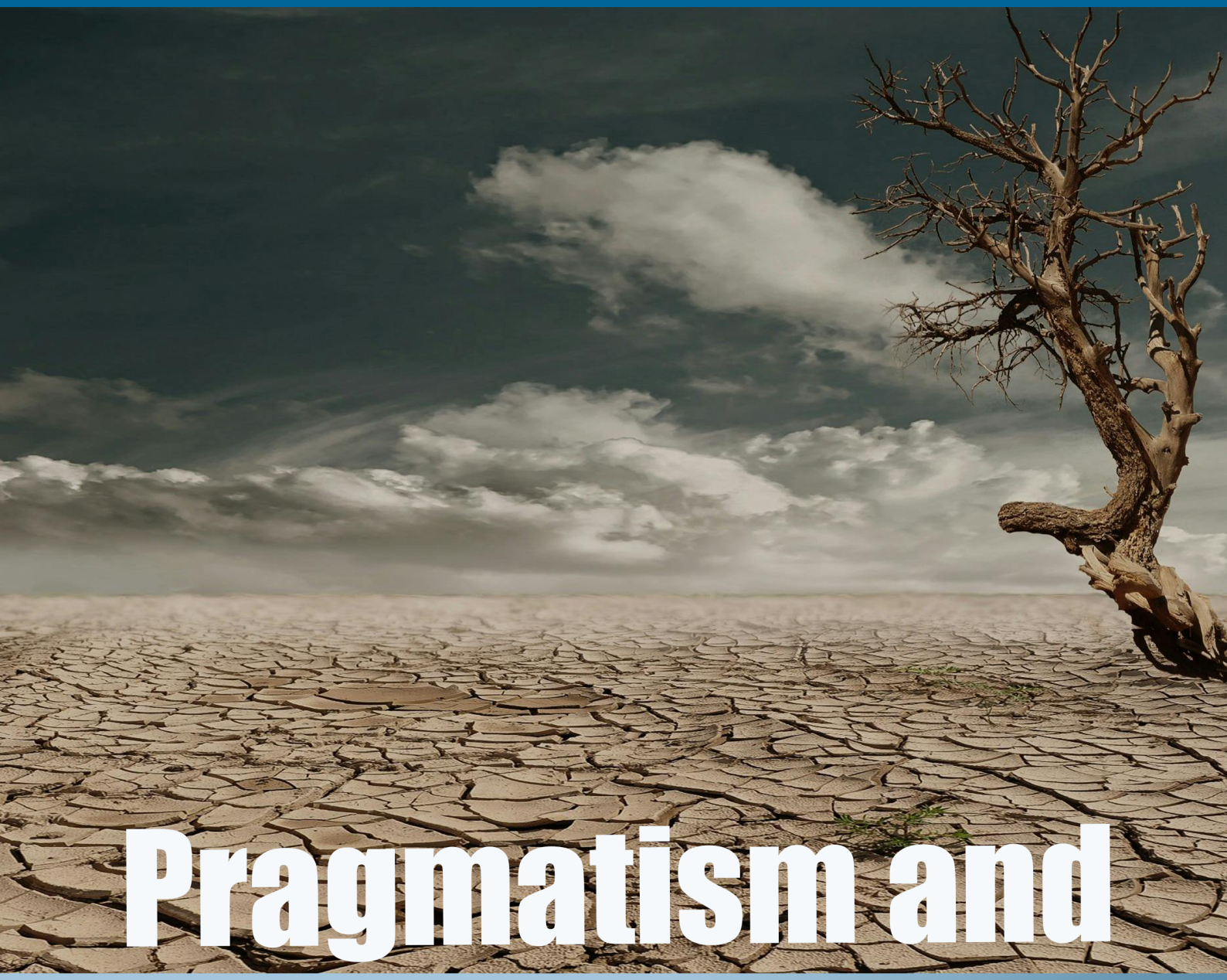

Pragmatism and the Climate Crisis

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The current environmental crisis, and particularly, the climate crisis, represents a major challenge to societies around the globe. Citizens are not only facing challenges regarding food supply, decrease of biodiversity, or the rise of sea levels. Moreover, climate change puts our very habitual ways of organizing human life – social, political, cultural, intellectual, aesthetic, or educational – under radical scrutiny. Hence, it can be seen, as Daniel Kersting puts it in his contribution to the issue, as a blockade in political problem-solving, i.e., as a crisis of the capacity of current societies to deal with first order problems, one that demands reflexivity, criticism, and collective engagement. In this context, a set of questions arises: What (radical) transformations should democratic societies undergo to respond to current environmental developments? What potential role can science, technology, art, design, and education play? And what is the role of philosophy in this context?

The aim of this issue is to show that the tradition of American Pragmatism can provide fruitful contributions to respond to these questions. Pragmatism can help us to rethink the way we define the environmental crisis and to find new, creative ways of addressing the problems derived from it. Emphasizing ethical pluralism, environmental pragmatism has also put emphasis on cooperative planning as a way of rethinking environmental ethics. It can also contribute to developing our ecological imagination in new and disruptive ways as well as to address the authoritarian dangers of some form of environmentalism by promoting an ecological democracy. More fundamentally, pragmatist philosophy can help us rethink of the relation between theory and practice, between human and non-human nature, as well as between politics and economics in ways that disclose the potential of democratic ways of life to address the current crisis.

The texts brought together in the present issue all make original and compelling contributions to this broader discussion. In her contribution, Ana Honnacker proposes to "reconstruct environmental pragmatism in the light of the Anthropocene" by drawing on a comprehensive idea of meliorism. This allows, according to her, to connect environmental pragmatism to a critical social philosophy that is aware of the need of social and cultural criticism. In his contribution, Daniel Kersting undertakes some important conceptual work that aims at clarifying what sort of crisis we talk about when we talk about the environmental crisis. He connects this task with a particularly compelling attempt at connecting the environmental crisis to the crisis of liberal democracy, and the need to deepen our democratic way of life. For his part, Bob Hanson's paper provides an agent-focused account of environmental pragmatism, one that is able to address the challenge according to which, pragmatism's defense of open-minded inquiry is incompatible with attachment to particular environmental values. As a response to this concern, Hanson shows that environmental pragmatism can provide a framework for making case-specific, holistic, and practical decisions in environmental questions, "grounded in philosophically tenable foundations." Finally, Giovanni Mariotti argues for a pragmatic reading of eco-emotions which is able to promote "the potential for pro-environmental transformation inherent in eco-emotions."

The issue also includes contributions from young scholars at early phases of their research career. In her contribution, Weronika Mazurek makes a pragmatist argument for non-design, as a way of reducing the kind of material interventions that come with architecture. Her aim is to show how pragmatism provides resources to think of more sustainable forms of "organizing our living spaces." While Mazurek focuses on the environmental consequences of architecture, Anna Kwapitsz turns to

design and argues for the need to develop a critical approach that develops responsibility for the environment. Finally, Abdi Kitesa Keno provides a defense of environmental pragmatism in discussion with Lars Samuelson's ideas. The miscellany includes a contribution by Yikuno-amlak Mesfin's on the moral agency of technology.

One of the main conclusions one can draw from reading the papers is that pragmatism is particularly well suited to counter authoritarian responses to the current environmental crisis: directly, by showing how democratic cooperation and deeper democratic forms of life are possible and necessary, and, indirectly, by showing how practices of social critique, the use of imagination, collective and individual responsibility, as well as eco-emotional responses are deeply intertwined as central parts of a philosophical project that aims at responding to one of the greatest challenges of our time.

Climate Crisis

RECONSTRUCTING ENVIRONMENTAL PRAGMATISM: MELIORIST PERSPECTIVES FOR A DAMAGED WORLD

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ABSTRACT*:* The paper advocates a reconstruction of environmental pragmatism in the light of the Anthropocene. Understood as a crisis of a way of life, it demands to be addressed at a deep, systemic level. Whereas environmental pragmatism so far has focused mainly on effective problem-solving that feeds into problematic ideas of progress and human mastery over nature, I suggest to draw on a more comprehensive idea of meliorism. A critical alignment to meliorist thinking leads to two major conceptual shifts which emancipate environmental pragmatism from its rather narrow focus and provide the means to re-fashion it into a more adequate approach of dealing with the Anthropocene. Furthermore, I propose to understand this alternative version of environmental pragmatism as a transformative project and a practice of cultural criticism which aims at disrupting common sense beliefs as well as harmful everyday practices.

Keywords*:* environmental crisis, Anthropocene, environmental pragmatism, meliorism, critique

1. Is There a Need for a New Environmental Pragmatism?

The pragmatist project is committed to addressing real-world problems. Against the idea of dealing with philosophical "paper doubts", as Charles S. Peirce called it, pragmatism engages with problematic situations rooted in concrete experiences. Its objectives, thus, result from careful diagnostics of the present. Pragmatist inquiry could be said to start with one simple question: What is wrong? The answer to this question, however, is far from simple. In addition, it is probably not even equivocally. Following the fundamental pluralism essential for pragmatism, one may expect diverse, perhaps even contradictory descriptions of a situation as well as a wide range of possible ways of handling it. Both ideas, the task of dealing with actual problems and the acknowledgement of a plurality of solutions, are central to the self-understanding of environmental pragmatism.

Emerging in the 1990ies, environmental pragmatism faced an increasingly aggravating ecological situation on the one hand. It became more and more manifest that there is something terribly wrong with the way humans interact with nature. On the other hand, there seemed to be also something wrong with a discipline dedicated to providing insights into human-nature-interaction and suggesting better alternatives: environmental philosophy. Even though the debates in this field may be "interesting, provocative and complex, [they] seem to have no real impact on the deliberations of environmental scientists, activists and policy-makers" (Light / Katz 1996, 1), as Andrew Light and Eric Katz write in their introduction to the first edited volume on environmental pragmatism. In a nutshell, their criticism echoes the traditional pragmatist objection against an all too theoretical, dogmatic, detached "armchair philosophy" that inevitably remains ineffective with regard to practical affairs. What William James famously called "vicious intellectualism" and presented as the cause for the practical irrelevance of large parts of philosophy and theology for daily life around the turn to the twentieth century, still haunts, according to the pragmatist critique, environmental philosophy and results in its ideas being "inert" and falling "dead-born from the press" (ibid.). Consequently, the familiar pragmatist demand for a reconstruction of a discipline is raised – environmental ethics needs to be refashioned in a manner that makes it practically fruitful.

Thus, the starting point for environmental pragmatism is a twofold problem diagnosis, first with regard to the environment and second with regard to environmental ethics:

> We are deeply concerned about the precarious state of the natural world, the environmental hazards that threaten humans, and the long-term sustainable life on this planet. The environmental crisis that surrounds us is a fact of experience. It is thus imperative that environmental philosophy, as a discipline, address this crisis – its meaning, its causes and its possible solutions (Light / Katz 1996, 1).

The strong critical thrust against the field of environmental ethics may be kind of surprising, since the relatively

young discipline, emerged only about three decades earlier, apparently shares exactly these goals: addressing the environmental crisis by exploring "its meaning, its causes and its possible solutions". From its very beginning, environmental philosophers sought to identify the roots of the damaging and exploitive human practices with regard to nature, clarify the reasons for their permanence and made suggestions how to overcome them. This enterprise led not only to a shift of attention to environment-related topics, but to doubts about the frame of ethical theorizing itself. When Richard Routley asked "Are we in need for a new, an environmental ethic?" (Routley 1973) and pointed to "human chauvinism" as a major problem of morally acceptable dealings with non-human-nature, he advocated a fundamental shift of perspective which challenged the human-centered way of thinking about moral values. The issue of anthropocentrism is heavily debated until today and became a major objective of environmental philosophy, with large parts of the discussion centering around the question if it must be overcome, how this could happen or if a non-anthropocentric ethics is possible at all. Different models of enlarging the moral community beyond human beings are argued for and against, and bold alternative ways of conceptualizing the (moral) world are elaborated on. In a way, the revolution Routley asked for took place. Yet it remained philosophical, which is way Katz and Light consider it a failure, purely "intramural debates" (Light / Katz 1996, 1) that didn't make any difference in the real world. From a pragmatist standpoint, there couldn't be a harsher evaluation.

In consequence, environmental pragmatism was suggested as "a new *strategy* for approaching environmental philosophy and environmental issues" (Light / Katz 1996, 5). That is, its main intention is meta-philosophical as well as decidedly practical. In contrast to the idea of contributing to the ongoing discussions and developing just another position, for example by re-reading of the works of classical pragmatism in the light of contemporary environmental concerns and debates, it demands a substantial shift with regard to how (and to which ends) environmental philosophy is done. This doesn't preclude to elaborate on John Dewey's concept of nature or discuss F.C.S. Schiller's hylozoism as a basis for moral holism. However, from a pragmatist perspective, this kind of considerations shouldn't take place on behalf of solving theoretical problems, but always with the practical intention of effective action. The search for adequate environmental policies and their implementation substitutes the quest for a single, unified position. The pragmatist turn, thus, involves a strong plea for a theoretical pluralism. Against this background, policy consensus is facilitated despite diverging ethical theories.

Ironically, another 30 years later, the same charge of ineffectiveness could be raised against environmental pragmatism. Notwithstanding the now six reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), annual United Nations Climate Change Conferences since 1995 that resulted in international treaties like the Kyoto-Protocol or the Paris Agreement, new environmental movements like *Fridays for Future* and a growing public awareness of environmental problems, the general trend towards deteriorating environmental conditions has not been changed. On the contrary, a lot of the factors that drive the ecological crisis (emissions, waste, industrial agriculture, mobility) even accelerated, leading to a worse situation with regard to global warming, biodiversity loss or freshwater availability. Measured by its own standards, environmental pragmatism is as much a failure as other accounts of environmental philosophy before: It didn't change the world for the better. Thus, we may ask if we are in need for a new environmental pragmatism.

In what follows, my aim is to suggest an answer to that question, which will, roughly, consist in the call for a reconstruction of environmental pragmatism. That is, I will adopt its general framework and thrust, the commitment to pluralism and practical melioration, and elaborate on it in the light of the current ecological situation. My main

thesis is that the Anthropocene, as a collective concept of the multiple and complex ecological crises, is best understood as a cultural problem, or problem of form of life, and that environmental pragmatism provides the means to cope with it, if we understand pragmatism, as Colin Koopman suggested, as theory and practice of hopeful cultural criticism (Koopman 2009). In order to advocate this alternative understanding of environmental pragmatism, I will start with an outline of the concept of the Anthropocene and why it alters the mode of thinking about addressing ecological problems. Then, I will argue for reconstructing environmental pragmatism by a critical alignment to the idea of meliorism. While meliorism as a general striving to the better is a pervasive undercurrent of pragmatist thinking, I propose to handle it as an ambiguous concept. After pointing out potentially problematic tendencies which can be shown to be effective in environmental pragmatism so far, I suggest two major conceptual shifts which emancipate environmental pragmatism from an all too narrow understanding of progress as well as of a promethean anthropology. Furthermore, I explore the practice of environmental pragmatism in a meliorist spirit. Following this outlook on its possible methods and strategies as well as some consequences for practicing philosophy, I briefly point to the existential dimension of meliorism and the essential role of hope for transformative action.

2. When Crisis Becomes Permanent: Entering the Anthropocene

Since its introduction a quarter-century ago, the concept of the Anthropocene, the "human age", quickly made a career in the social sciences and the humanities, and has been under critical surveillance. Its function as an academic and cultural buzzword even adds a slightly suspect ring to its tone. However, besides the legitimate discussion about its conceptual limitation and biases, the Anthropocene offers a uniquely productive diagnostic tool for analyzing the current ecological situation that does not only grasp the planetary scale of the changes, but also inherently points to the role of human beings in that change. Originating in the geological sciences, the term was first used to describe a remarkable geo-physical record:

> The term Anthropocene suggests that the Earth has now left its natural geological epoch, the present interglacial state called the Holocene. Human activities have become so pervasive and so profound that they rival the great forces of Nature and are pushing the Earth into planetary *terra incognita* (Steffen / Crutzen / McNeill 2007, 614).

The empirical finding that the range and scope of human intervention into the earth system makes humanity a dominant factor, alike to natural forces, engenders the idea of the dawn of a new age in which the human-nature-relation has to be fundamentally revised. From its very beginnings, human beings intervened in their environments in order to adapt them to their needs. Since as early as the neolithic revolution, humans began to shape crops, soil and animals to a larger extent, and the colonization of the Americas as well as the industrial revolution surely are historic landmarks of this process of fashioning, moulding and trimming. Yet the so-called "Great Acceleration", the period stretching from the end of World War II into the present, dwarfs those earlier developments. With its unprecedented increase of economic growth, resource depletion and waste production, it is widely accepted as a historic sea change and often presented as the starting point of the Anthropocene (Steffen et al. 2015; Hamilton 2017, 2-21).

Currently, the most prominent aspect of the Anthropocene is anthropogenic climate change: The concentration of CO_2 and other greenhouse gases in the atmosphere has escalated since the industrial revolution and the heavy use of fossil energies. As a result, the global average temperature has risen, leading to an increase of extreme weather events as well as the melting of ice shields, glaciers and permafrost. Among the expected consequences, there are large-scale effects as changes in

the oceanic circulation system (with hitherto unforeseeable aftermath), the rise of sea levels, and even the deferral of the next ice age for a few hundred thousand years, a cyclical event that is usually driven by the orbital path of the earth around the sun. In addition to these massive effects on the level of the earth system, global warming results in a higher species extinction rate, more soil erosion and less availability of freshwater, crop failures, the propagation of tropical diseases and a general decline of physical and mental health. Last, but not least, even the sober language of the scientific scenarios of a warmer world give a glimpse of the dire effects on a social level, such as huge migration movements, harsh conflicts over resources and political destabilization (IPCC 2023).

Yet humanity's impact on the earth system goes beyond climate change. It becomes manifest in the pollution of air, soil and water. Micro- and nanoplastics can be found at any place in the world, including organisms and thereby food chains, the composition of the soil changes and biogeochemical cycles are altered. Human intervention shapes the face of the earth by managing the course of rivers and coastlines as well as moving large amounts of sand and stone and creating impervious surfaces. Moreover, human activity affects the evolutionary processes by transporting plants, animals and pathogens around the world, by the destruction of habitats or by using pesticides, antibiotics and genetically changed organisms.

All in all, we are facing environmental changes unprecedented in earth's history. Entering the Anthropocene marks a profound disruption: it is not only single landscapes or ecosystems, but earth as a complex and dynamic system, that is perturbed. What is at stake, are the reliable ecological conditions of the Holocene, the time period after the last ice age about 12.000 years ago, which fostered everything we deem human civilization: sedentism, agriculture, scripture, civil structures (Horn / Bergthaller 2019, 10-11). The parameter of the Holocene are the terms on which human life as we know it could sprout and is sustained: the way we are organized is adapted to them and relies on them. If they become destabilized, we risk losing what Johan Rockström and his team call "a safe operating space for humanity" (Rockström et al. 2009). Their concept of the "planetary boundaries" illustrates the limits of human intervention, or rather: the danger connected to moving beyond them. There is a safe zone set by natural conditions that cannot be shifted at discretion. In consequence, the empirical findings bear a normative dimension, an urgent call to action. In order to avoid an unstable, unsafe future that would force humanity into a harsh battle of survival (and the suffering connected to it, including that of non-humans), a radical transformation of the way we interact with the environment had to take place, meaning a fundamental change of everyday life: the way we travel, reside, eat, use energy, produce and consume.

The diagnosis of the Anthropocene, thus, is a diagnosis of a severe crisis: its symptoms are serious with regard to (human) life on earth. Yet it would be misleading to think of the Anthropocene as just another, only more extensive, environmental crisis. Since the earth system as a whole is affected and the parameter of its functioning are irreversibly altered, it rather stands for a real sea change. Entering the Anthropocene means crossing a threshold (Horn / Bergthaller 2019, 9-10). There is no going back to the friendly conditions of the Holocene, the familiar framework is lost. That is, we are confronted with a new, unstable environmental normality, a permanent crisis. Given this non-transient character, there are good reasons for asking if the term crisis is apt at all for what we (and, still long after we will be gone, the earth system) are going through (Kersting 2024).

Employing the idea of the Anthropocene as a threshold also entails a change of perspective with regard to our temporal understanding of what happens, namely the insight that we are already in the middle of things. The environmental crisis is nothing yet to come and, though there is still much to fight for, cannot be prevented anymore. In a certain respect, it is too late. Furthermore, it is

important to understand that what happens is essentially different from natural catastrophes, though a lot of the events we take to identify the new epoch are certainly catastrophic. Instead, as Christian Schwägerl suggested, the storms, heatwaves and floods occurring in the Anthropocene are better framed as cultural catastrophes, since they result from the cumulated effects of human activity (Schwägerl 2012, 80). So if the Anthropocene points to a crisis, it is a crisis, or rather: meta-crisis, of certain practices and forms of life. It is, as Daniel Kersting has pointed out, a problem-solving problem that undermines self-maintenance and points to systemic conditions (Kersting 2024). This is why focusing on effective environmental policies is not enough. As a cultural problem, the Anthropocene has to be addressed on a deeper level, starting with overcoming what I would like to call eco-denialism, the socially structured blindness towards the ecological situation.

In large parts of the debate on what blocks the way to transforming into a more sustainable society, two main explanatory models shape the quest for solutions, as sociologist Kari Norgaard has pointed out: that either a lack of information or a lack of (moral) concern is responsible for the inadequate social and political reaction (Norgaard 2011, 1-12). Following these approaches, people just need to be better informed respectively need to become more morally sensitive. Though knowledge as well as moral sensitivity certainly play an important role with regard to adequate responses to environmental issues, neither more information nor more moral education alone will overcome the general inertia. Through a pragmatist lens, the virtual non-response on behalf of a majority of people can be analyzed as a problem of belief. We do not act because we do not believe there really is something to act upon. On a first level, phenomena like climate change or biodiversity loss are simply too big, too complex, too terrifying. The willed ignorance against them, at the moment most prominently against global warming, is thus a coping mechanism: not believing is crucial to our emotion management (Norgaard 2011, 63-95). As Bruno Latour points out, this delusional negationism is prevalent (Latour 2017, 27-32). We all, to some degree, refuse to accept the reality of the Anthropocene.

However, I suggest to understand eco-denialism as rooted even deeper. In the Anthropocene, we are confronted not only with immense insecurities, fears and losses, we also have to deal with the fact that we became a dominant planetary power and that this comes with great responsibility. On the one hand, human activity is the cause of the present situation, it is man-made. Given the ecological disastrous outcome, at least some forms of human civilization, those that lead to the emergence of the new age, appear to be highly dubitable, if not outright wrong. What we have taken to be normal turns out to be toxic, damaging, perhaps evil. On the other hand, the diagnosis of the Anthropocene from its very beginnings highlighted human responsibility for its further development (Steffen/Crutzen/McNeill 2007, 618-620). The future depends on us, on our activities and interventions. That is, on a second level, eco-denialism protects ourselves in an even more essential sense, since our sense of normality, our way of life and our self-images (as morally good) are threatened. Norgaard convincingly explores in her exemplary study of a Norwegian small town, how the inability, or rather: refusal, to accept reality warrants the legitimacy of a form of life (Norgaard 2011, 13-31, 137-175). The socially organized denial stabilizes the (group) identity, what we do and who we are, and allows for business-as-usual.

Eco-denialism thus corresponds with the paradoxical epistemological state of “knowing and not knowing” (Norgaard 2011, 52-62), or what Jonathan Safran Foer calls, after Felix Frankfurter, “knowledge-without-belief” (Safran Foer 2019, 66-70): We do have all the relevant information and still don’t act. And, against Foer’s analysis, we also care. And that we care, even a lot, is exactly the reason why we cannot and do not want to believe in what we know (Leertzman 2008). Whereas both the

information deficit model and the lack of moral concern model focuses on the individual level (and see individual failure), my suggestion is to focus on the cultural preconditions, the practices and theoretical frameworks that feed eco-denialism.

Environmental pragmatism, in order to meet its aspirations and address the crisis adequately, thus is in need for a reconstruction. In the light of the Anthropocene, it must accommodate the cultural nature of the problem and provide means to cope with it. In what follows, I argue that both ends are met by a critical alignment to the idea of meliorism.

3. Environmental Pragmatism in a Meliorist Spirit

The Ambiguity of Meliorist Thinking

Meliorism, in a broad sense, means to strive for the better. The concept emerged around the same time – but independently – from pragmatism, and it was William James who adopted it only a short time later (Bergman 2015, 4-6). Meliorism, as presented by one of its early promoters, James Sully, is "a practical conception which lies midway between the extremes of optimism and pessimism" (Bergman 2015, 4-5). In contrast to both optimism and pessimism, meliorism is an active or activating attitude that relies on a voluntarist conception of human action and the idea of a principled malleability of the world. This understanding resonates with James' introduction, who links optimism and pessimism with the belief that salvation is inevitable respectively impossible and presents meliorism as a midway position between those certainties: "Meliorism treats salvation as neither necessary nor impossible. It treats it as a possibility, which becomes more and more a probability the more numerous the actual conditions of salvation become" (James 1981, 128).

James suggests meliorism as the worldview most adequate to pragmatism, an attitude which highlights the possibility of a better world through human engagement as well as the precarious state of the world. The idea of meliorism thus has two dimensions: First, the existential attitude, which focuses on the individual and its search for a meaningful life, and second, the socially engaged, transformative practice, which highlights the amelioration of society. Both dimensions manifest differently throughout pragmatist thinking. Whereas James is typically presented as champion of individualism with only marginal interest in social issues, Dewey stands for a downright social progressivism. However, I suggest to understand both dimensions as not only inherently intertwined but also as necessary mutual correctives. Without its counterpart, each dimension turns into a mere caricature of pragmatist meliorism, either as philosophy of personal well-being or as utilitarian social engineering. One striking example of the latter is F.C.S. Schiller's advocacy of eugenics and fascism as instruments for social progress, which illuminates an extreme, but possible embodiment of pragmatist meliorism (Honnacker 2020b, 79-81, Bergman 2015, 12-14). Apart from the obvious political dubiousness, this line of meliorism relies on a rather promethean understanding of the human capacity to control and design the world. Furthermore, it is oriented towards an ideal outcome and employs a technical top-down approach to realize it. In the end, the fundamental pragmatist insight and recognition of thoroughgoing pluralism is betrayed.

Both tendencies are also prominent in environmental pragmatism in its current form. It is characterized by a strong emphasis on efficacy and expediency, which, at first sight, just seems to be a consequent elaboration of the pragmatist demand to make a real difference in the world and change it to the better. So one shouldn't be surprised that, as Christopher Maboloc notes, "[p]ragmatists are always in search of workable solutions" (Maboloc 2016, 109). Yet a too narrow focus on feasibility threatens to collapse environmental pragmatism into mere outcome-oriented problem-solving. If environmental pragmatism is foremost about providing "ready, viable

immediate policy solutions which are compatible with current political or economic systems" (Light 2010, 324 – cited after Maboloc 2016), it turns blind to the conditions and possible implications of its success. Maboloc pointed to the problematic consequences of this all too practical version of environmental pragmatism, especially with regard to societies with weak or corrupt (political) institutions, in which vested interests shape policy-processes. Factoring out value debates and relying on cost-benefit analysis as the method of choice result in severe deficits with regard to democracy (Maboloc 2016). Moreover, framing ecological problems mainly in economic terms bears not only the problem of correct calculation, for example with regard to discounting future damages, it is also questionable as a comprehensive matrix of ascribing values (Jamieson 2017, 105-146).

The ideal of maximizing efficiency and expediency thus leads environmental pragmatism to be an instance of what critics always saw in the pragmatist tradition, notwithstanding the protestation of its proponents: a rather technocratic and – in the worst sense – utilitarian approach to design the world at human will. The general demand of immediate action, for example with regard to global warming, feeds into this truncated meliorist perspective. Against the background of the unfolding ecological emergency, politics are under severe pressure of time. The more urgent transformation is needed, the more legitimate appears a focus on mere outcome, which undermines deliberative and participatory processes. Democracy and "green" politics seem to become increasingly conflicting (Honnacker 2020a, 1-8).

Apart from this problematic political tendency, the meliorist undercurrent of environmental pragmatism fosters a rather instrumentalist relation to nature, since it premises, at least to a certain extent, the idea of human control over environmental conditions. This promethean anthropology pervades parts of the debate on the Anthropocene and seems even grounded in the very concept of the human age (Hamilton 2013, 1-19, 107-137, 199-205). A most striking manifestation can be found in ecomodernist approaches which advocate technological fixes (such as geo-engineering or nuclear energy) in order to arrive at a "good", even "great Anthropocene" (Asafu-Adjade et al. 2015) and aim to drive the "humanization" of planet earth as far as possible (Schwägerl 2012). It is not surprising that some ecomodernists adopted the label "climate pragmatism" (Nordhaus et al. 2017). These approaches do not only utterly overestimate the capacities of human intervention and invention, they also reinforce human-nature-relations which contributed to harmful ecological practices in the past, leading to the Anthropocene in the first place.

Focussing on making a real difference for the better thus threatens to result in a rather shallow version of environmental pragmatism which is inadequate for dealing with the ecological crisis and its preconditions on a deeper, systemic level. Nevertheless, I suggest to acknowledge and endorse meliorism as a central feature of a more sound version of environmental pragmatism, since it bears the potential to accommodate pragmatist environmental thinking to the conditions of the Anthropocene and to address it as a problem-solving problem. This accommodation leads to a fundamental reconstruction of how environmental pragmatism works in two major aspects.

Two Emancipatory Shifts

In a nutshell, the meliorist drive of environmental pragmatism must be emancipated from a narrow, technical understanding of progress as well as from the idea of malleability in the sense of human mastery of the world. First, this means to let go of efficacy and expediency as leading principles. Without denying the urgency of the crises or the need for a quick response, meliorism is able to provide a richer, more comprehensive idea of what it means to strive to the better. Following the general pragmatist abstinence from substantial definitions of the

good, meliorism adopts a normatively modest negativist approach which marks it as an inherently critical project. In contrast to approaches that are oriented towards certain, prefixed ideals, its methodological starting point are concrete problems, faults and failures that perturb a particular social formation. Solving these problems rests on a careful identification and description of the problem and encompasses deliberative and experimental elements. Including different perspectives, especially of those affected by the problem, becomes an essential part of the problem-solving process, since it warrants the best possible outcome, not only in the sense of drawing on the largest possible resource of knowledge, but also in a constitutive sense: Instead of appealing to prefigured ideal solutions, meliorism relies on cooperative and creative processes. How a problem might be addressed (and what counts as a problem in the first place) must be collectively elaborated. The debate on values, on shared interests and desirable futures thus cannot be suspended in favor of predetermined outcomes, even if they claim to be well-intentioned or their implementation seems necessary. Abstaining from a potentially paternalist a priori determination of certain policies underlines the need for well-designed procedures of deliberation and participation. Meliorism thus is inconsistent with prescriptive politics, no matter its goals. Consequently, environmental pragmatism in a meliorist spirit comes with a strong plea for democracy, or rather: for a democratization of (green) politics (Honnacker 2020a, 10-14). Even though democratic procedures might be slower and are perceived as less effective in contrast to authoritarian approaches, striving for the better includes much more than a certain outcome, for example improving social justice, maintaining liberal rights or adopting an alternative vision of the common good, which in turn promotes social and political conditions that foster better problem-solving. The proposed understanding of meliorism thus calls to action, yet also demands to slow down the process of problem-solving in order to improve the situation (Maboloc (2016, 112). As Whitney Bauman and Kevin O'Brian suggest, this decelaration is essential in a situation that is marked by profound uncertainties as well as by theoretical and normative pluralism: „No single moral principle, sacred cow, or ideal of progress can match either the problems of climate change or the diverse human communities involved in them. […] We need an ethics of uncertainty, moving at the pace of ambiguity" (Bauman / O'Brian 2020, 3).

Second, reconstructing environmental pragmatism in the light of the Anthropocene necessitates a more humble view of humankind, both with regard to the understanding of the role of human beings in the course of history and to their relation to nature. Even though humankind must be recognized as a major geological force that shapes the future of the earth system, by now it becomes more and more apparent that the human age fails to be the next chapter in the story of human progress, which is intimately connected to the conquest and domination of nature. Yet this story has been ignorant of the fact that flourishing human life depends on certain material conditions. The problem here is not so much that this view is anthropocentric, but that it rests on a rather arrogant humanism which lacks an adequate sensitivity for the limits of human action as well as the vulnerability of human life. As such, it is part of the cultural conditions of eco-denialism, since it fosters a sense of human invincibility and an ever ongoing idea of progress that turns out to be suicidal, since it is unable to envision catastrophe. This is what Günther Anders, in the context of nuclear annihilation, called "apocalyptic blindness" *(Apokalypseblindheit)*: our imagination is constricted by the idea of perpetual progress, we are unable to think of a future that is not "like the present, only better". As a consequence, we cannot acknowledge the danger of our current situation nor feel the adequate fear. Instead, we stay indolent (Anders 1956). Moreover, the shared narrative of progressivism, a world that gets only better and better, provides the interpretational scheme

for any experience. That is, extreme weather events or decline in insect populations are not seen as part of a catastrophic development (or of the new normality of the Anthropocene), but as freak events, singular, isolated extreme phenomena. The meta-story is not questioned, ecocide is just no option.

Meliorism, in contrast, operates with a conception of history that abstains from any teleological principles. If there is to be any progress, it is because of learning-processes which could have failed. Consequently, the future is viewed as indeterminate, open to changes in any direction, for better or for worse. That is, meliorism comes with a high awareness of failure, regress and even total shipwreck – an option that becomes increasingly probable with crossing more and more planetary boundaries. History works neither for or against humanity. Rather, it is understood as the result of an interplay of material necessities and human action. This openness of the future course is the very condition for the possibility of making a difference in the world. It not only allows for human engagement, but also calls for it, at least if a moral standpoint is taken that links that possibility, or rather: ability, with responsibility. In this respect, adopting meliorism connects environmental pragmatism to other approaches that highlight human responsibility, such as Clive Hamilton's "new anthropocentrism" (Hamilton 2017), yet employs a modest humanism that tempers promethean aspirations. Though epistemic anthropocentrism seems unavoidable in a pragmatist framework, drawing on meliorist thinking facilitates to elaborate an adequate anthropology in terms of human self-understanding and moral orientation in the Anthropocene. Whereas environmental pragmatism surely is compatible with a wide range of ethical positions between the poles of moral anthropocentrism and moral holism, it should never fail to acknowledge the interdependence of human life, non-human life and the earth system, and meliorism provides the minimal background assumptions for relating human beings to the world in such a way. It de-centers human beings, while at the same time it holds to human exceptionalism with regard to the obligation to act (Honnacker 2020b, 81-85).

Meliorist Strategies

So far, I have outlined two major theoretical shifts implied by adopting a meliorist perspective. In what follows, I provide an outlook on how these shifts turn out on a more practical level, that is, with regard to methodology and strategy. Very basically, and very much in accordance with the initial self-understanding of environmental pragmatists, meliorism strongly advocates what Dale Jamieson called a competitive methodological pluralism:

> There is no single category of response to climate change that has precedence over all others nor any privileged policies that must be enacted no matter the alternatives. There are only better and worse responses at different temporal and spatial scales, each of which must stand on its own feet in a way that complements other efforts that are underway (Jamieson 2017, 235).

Instead of arguing about the one best solution to a given problem, meliorism acknowledges that there is no flawless way of addressing complex situations: „It is time to stop letting the perfect (as if we knew what that is anyway) be the enemy of the good. People should work to implement as many good responses as possible" (Jamieson 2017, 236). However, turning away from the quest for ideal solutions does not lead to a less engaged attitude. On the contrary, meliorism in the suggested sense has a strong affinity to ethical perfectionism (Koopman 2009, 133-156), so that environmental pragmatism turns into a project of doing ones best, even against all odds. That is, environmental pragmatism in the meliorist spirit calls for commitment even if it is unclear if our actions have decisive impact (or any impact at all). This adaptation is relevant with regard to the ongoing debate about individual and collective responsibility in environmental ethics that takes place mainly in a utilitarian framework. And it is decisive in the face of problems like global warming or mass

extinction, which seem unsolvable just by scale and complexity and thus invite indifference: it may appear futile to change any behavior if the only criterion of a reasonable action is its outcome. A perfectionist approach, in contrast, with its focus on the question of personal integrity, is more suitable in the light of decreasing possibilities of effective environmental intervention, since it highlights the role of moral struggle. Perfectionist meliorism, thus, adequately addresses the conditions of moral action in the Anthropocene. In addition, as Jamieson notes, the effect of personal commitment for a better world may not be underestimated: It affects others and promotes the feeling of self-efficacy. That is, it promotes a sense of a life worth living even if our actions fail to succeed (Jamieson 2017, 182-184), something desperately needed in the unreliable world to come. One worthwhile manifestation of that striving is to engage in the practice of cultural criticism, one dimension of addressing the crisis neglected so far by environmental pragmatism.

If the Anthropocene, as suggested above, is understood as a crisis of a certain form of life, it needs to be dealt with on a deep level. Following Colin Koopman's suggestion of pragmatism as an "engaged form of philosophical practice in which philosophy is best understood as meliorist cultural criticism" (Koopman 2009, 5), environmental pragmatism could contribute to reveal and reconstruct ecologically harmful and unjust practices. Koopman presents meliorist cultural criticism as a mainly genealogical project, that is, he suggests to find the material for critical inquiry foremost in history, and especially in moments of failures (Koopman 2009, 195-196). Studying historical material can tell us something about social and political constellations which promote unsustainable ways of life and even ecocide, as for example Jared Diamond has compellingly demonstrated in his study on collapsed societies (Diamond 2005). Moreover, history offers examples of re-evaluation and change of once established practices which became doubtful at some point. They ceased to be "normal" (or "natural"), thereby lost their immunity to criticism and eventually were modified or even disposed. Exposing the contingency of practices is essential to transformation, since it shows that it "could have been otherwise" and can be different in the future.

Although the genealogical approach is undoubtedly relevant and enables to take a critical distance to current practices, I propose to complement it by drawing on critical social philosophy. Like genealogical criticism, it aims at revealing the contingency of established cultural norms. However, it allows to take a less backward-looking and more active stance, since it focuses on the status quo and offers the theoretical means of identifying and addressing current unjust or harmful practices and their ideological roots and systemic preconditions. Considering the hitherto tenacious nonresponse to the ecological situation and the self-defensive character of eco-denialism, problematization will not take place without a proactive questioning the interpretational frames or schemes that sustain our way of life.

If one aim of environmental pragmatism is to address the "crisis of belief" (Foer 2019, 16) and thereby to overcome the dangerous indolence, it needs to engage in criticism of ideology. Following Sally Haslanger, ideology is "a set of widely shared beliefs that aim to justify the status quo" (Haslanger 2023a, 166). Meliorist (environmental) pragmatism then could be understood as critical theory in the widest sense, a project of exposing and problematizing ideology. This project goes beyond pointing out "wrong" beliefs, moral or otherwise, or advert damaging effects of practices. It aims at illuminating the systemic and structural configurations of our beliefs and practices as well as the mutual processes of stabilization which makes them so robust: Our way of life shapes our beliefs and interpretations, our feelings and evaluations, which in turn feed into our practices that constitute our way of life. If possessing and driving a car is a social hallmark of prosperity, it is hard to consider car-based individual mobility to be a problematic way of moving from one place

to another. It is a common practice that doesn't need a second thought. We build our cities to conform to this ideal of transportation. Our beliefs turned literally into concrete that determines the way we can move through our environment.

Very much in accordance with pragmatist ideas of human co-creation of reality, Haslanger describes the feedback-loops between our cultural schemes and the world we live in (and, actually, even ourselves), which renders it extremely difficult to criticize our way of life:

> Our responsiveness is mediated by social meanings and signaling mechanisms—I call this a cultural technē—that enable members of the group to communicate, coordinate, and manage the things taken to have value. This will create loops: culture provides tools to interpret some part of the world as valuable (or not), i.e., as a resource, and offers guidance for how to properly interact with it. In turn, our interaction with a resource affects it: we grow it, shape it, manage it, distribute it, dispose of it, etc. And how it responds to our actions affects our ongoing interactions with it. In cases where a practice takes hold, we shape ourselves and the resource in order to facilitate the ongoing practice. (Haslanger 2023a, 164)

To a certain extent, these "feedback loops" are inevitable. We cannot live or take a stance "outside" of our form of life. We always participate and perpetuate. Yet, as Haslanger notes, the societies we live in are not homogenous, but complex and show "some degree of fragmentation and dysfunction. Such fragmentation is both a blessing and a curse, for, as the saying goes, the cracks are where the light gets in" (Haslanger, 2023b, 10). These dysfunctions are like little stumbling stones on an otherwise well-paved road. They allow, at least potentially, for doubts, grounded in a feeling or hunch that there might be something wrong and could be done better. That is, we can make experiences that potentially change the way we see and evaluate reality. And making this kind of experiences can be promoted, for example by resistant practices such as creating counter-publics, acts of linguistic sabotage, or other disturbances of normal everyday-life that challenge the common (moral) sense. Haslanger pleas for an engaged and embedded practice of critique:

> However, critique cannot be done from an armchair: It is not merely an investigation into and reflection on social relations. Critique happens while engaged in practice as it becomes clear that the social know how we are relying on to organize us is harmful or wrong – perhaps we begin to find practices wasteful […] morally intolerable, or in other ways problematic. In reasonable good circumstances, the task is then to find ways of collectively reorienting ourselves to each other and the world. This happens by collective trial and error. (Haslanger 2023a, 169)

Following the suggestion of meliorist environmental pragmatism as not only theory but also practice of cultural criticism, it is clear that it cannot be considered to happen from a detached (and allegedly epistemically privileged or neutral) observer-perspective. Instead, it has to be acknowledged that it is practiced from within a concrete cultural and social situation and must develop its critical interventions from this standpoint and in collaboration with other humanities, arts and sciences (Koopman 2009, 197-200). Practicing environmental pragmatism, then, involves to move beyond the academic circle, for example by way of writing for a broader audience, experimenting with forms of public philosophy or engaging in social movements. It could mean to irritate common beliefs about what good transportation looks like by organizing a bicycle rally or to question a vulgar understanding of freedom by giving a public lecture on John Stuart Mill. That is, meliorist practices of cultural criticism cover a wide range of rather small acts of disturbance and engendering doubts, none of which will tip the system. Its revolutionary impetus is not realized by a single upheaval (which is unattainable with regard to the complexity of the situation), but by multifarious transformative interventions that disrupt and eventually refashion the feedback-lops.

Meliorism as uncertain hope

Finally, highlighting the meliorist dimension of a pragmatist account of environmentalism offers the conceptual means to deal with the ecological situation on an existential level. As outlined, meliorism fundamentally

relies on the idea of an open future. This non-teleological, non-determinist understanding of history is the basic premise of the possibility of human intervention. However, the acknowledgment of the precarious state of the world, a world that may be saved, to draw on James' image, forbids any optimism. Rather, it demands hope. First, hope is a condition for change, and therefore essential for meliorist strivings, as Koopman underlines: "The central idea of meliorism is that a philosophically robust conception of hope can function as a guide for critique and inquiry" (Koopman 2009, 16). The assumption that "another world is possible" motivates criticism and drives resistant practices. Meliorist hope thus is an active attitude towards the world (Koopman 2009, 16-20) and demands engagement instead of fostering quietism.

Second, because a turn for the better is far from guaranteed, meliorism restricts itself to an "uncertain hope" (Koopman 2009, 20). As Bauman and O'Brian pointed out, much of what is presented as hope, especially in an environmental context, just extends the present and bets on the cultural and technological means already at hand. Yet such "projections of certainty" (Bauman / O'Brian 2020, 17) are not sufficient in the complex and incalculable world of the Anthropocene. Environmental pragmatism in a meliorist spirit thus abstains from eco-optimism as well as from eco-pessimism and adopts a middle-position adequate to an already damaged, but not completely devastated world. It may be "too late" to go back to the Holocene. But there is still much to fight for, as Jamieson underlines: "It still matters what we do. Failures can be greater or lesser, and we live more or less successfully with the changes we bring about" (Jamieson 2017, 11).

Conclusion

I have argued for an environmental pragmatism in a meliorist spirit. Adopting this alternative version involves conceptual shifts with regard to what it means to make a difference for the better. My suggestion was to abstain from the ideals of efficiency and control and acknowledge meliorism as a call for responding to an uncertain future, including the possibility of total shipwreck. While the Anthropocene is a potentially self-destructive cultural crisis, I have advocated a democratic deceleration in order to address its character as a problem-solving problem. In order to strive for (social) improvement, we need comprehensive collective processes of deliberation and, above all, re-orientation. Environmental pragmatism as a transformative project relies on a pluralist methodology of practicing cultural criticism that aims at disrupting our common sense beliefs, everyday practices and eventually our harmful way of life. It remains a major challenge to create adequate philosophical interventions. Since academic philosophy in large parts, including pragmatism and critical theory, is at odds with the idea of being engaged in the real world and its problems, the need for a new self-understanding of what philosophers do may be as virulent as the need for a new environmental ethics.

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THINKING POLITICALLY ABOUT THE 'CLIMATE CRISIS': A PRAGMATIST INQUIRY INTO DEMOCRACY TODAY

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ABSTRACT: Crisis narratives are omnipresent in current society. The term "climate crisis" has become ubiquitous. But what exactly does the diagnosis of "climate crisis" mean? And what is a crisis, anyway? This article aims to contribute to answering these questions. Based on a pragmatist theory of meaning and action, it will develop a definition of the concept of crisis that enables us to conceptualize the political and transformative potential of social crisis diagnoses. In a first step, drawing on current discourses on the "climate crisis," the implications of crisis as a concept are analyzed, showing that this concept can be used for both authoritarian and democratic politics. However, a definition of crisis is required to systematize these implications and to distinguish crises from related phenomena such as emergencies, breakdowns, or disasters. Therefore, in a second step, this definition is developed based on a pragmatist theory of action. It is proposed that crises are to be understood as *systemic blockades of political problem-solving processes* that have *(self-)destructive consequences* and that pose *existential problems* for the subjects involved. This definition enables the third step of the argument, demonstrating that the climate crisis can be considered a crisis of liberal democracy. Resultingly, when understood politically in accordance with pragmatism, the diagnosis of a climate crisis possesses inherent socio-ecological *and* democratic transformation potential.

Keywords: crisis, climate crisis, critique of liberalism, ecological democratization, John Dewey, Charles S. Peirce

The main topic of this special issue has the catchphrase "Climate Crisis" in its title. This may seem unremarkable as the term "climate crisis" has been omnipresent for several years now. In view of the dramatic consequences of climate change and of the enormous political, economic, and cultural challenges that this "super wicked problem" (Levin et al. 2012) poses to our societies, the drama conveyed by the term "crisis" does not appear to be exaggerated. At the same time, despite its eloquence, it remains strangely unclear what is meant by the term of crisis in general and the term of climate crisis in particular. What is it that is actually in crisis in the climate crisis? The climate? Nature? The lives of people? Or a certain social or political way of life? How can crises be distinguished from other serious problems such as disasters, emergencies, or breakdowns? Is crisis as a concept exclusively a political term of struggle or also a scholarly instrument of analysis? Do problems have to be experienced as crises in order to be crises? And who is competent and legitimized to declare a crisis? Politicians? Activists, social or natural scientists, philosophers? These questions already indicate that the diagnosis of a "climate crisis" and the meaning of the term "crisis" in general are not quite as self-explanatory as their widespread use would suggest.

The following article aims to help clarify these terms. Such a contribution seems important to me because crisis is not a neutral or 'innocent' term: It is part of the repertoire of the semantics of escalation that can always be used politically to impose extraordinary measures in an authoritarian way (Agamben 2013; Berlant 2007: 760-761; Roitman 2012). Even the environmental movement and current climate debates are not free of authoritarian tendencies (Honnacker 2020).[1] Accordingly, it seems problematic to me to transfer crisis as a concept, or even a specific crisis diagnosis, from social discourse into academic language without further examination or explanation. This not only introduces ambiguity and a lack of clarity into scholarly inquiry. It can also reproduce and reinforce social power effects that result from the use of the concept of crisis (Folkers/Lim 2014; Roitman 2012).[2] It is therefore the task of critical scholarship to recon-

[1] Though this is often also used as a false accusation to delegitimize political demands, as Honnacker (2020) emphasizes as well.

[2] Andreas Folkers and Il-Tschung Lim observe that within the social sciences, "crisis semantics" is often "used like diagnostic plain language—as if it were completely undisputed that what is labelled a crisis is also a crisis" (Folkers/Lim 2014: 62, transl. DK). In this context, Janet Roitman speaks of crisis as a "moment of truth" (Roitman 2012): Whoever proclaims a crisis seems to have the truth on their side and appears to have been relieved of further justification. This makes talk of crises a powerful tool. However: "Why should crisis, as a category, be so self-evident?" (Roitman 2012).

struct and critique contemporary social concepts, and "crisis" is certainly one such concept.[3] However, the notion of crisis itself also represents a scholarly and philosophical category for the elucidation of social conditions. This is evidenced by an examination of the history of the term (Koselleck 2006). In ancient Greece, it was not yet different from the concept of critique and it has had a decidedly socio-diagnostic function since the end of the eighteenth century. This function is still evident today.

The objective of this article is to utilize the diagnostic and critical potential of the concept of crisis to facilitate a critique of climate policy. To this end, I will draw on the classical pragmatism of Charles S. Peirce and John Dewey. Although neither Peirce nor Dewey explicitly develop crisis as a concept, and ecological aspects play a minimal role in their thought, their philosophy of pragmatism appears particularly well-suited to addressing this task. Firstly, based on social discourse and concrete uses of the term, applying Peirce's *Pragmatic Maxims* (1992b), it is possible to develop important dimensions of meaning and pragmatic functions of the term "climate crisis." Secondly, the pragmatic notion of problem and action, as outlined by Dewey (1922/1988; 1938/1988; 1973), enables the systematization of those meanings and the formulation of a definition of crisis. Thirdly, building on this definition, following Dewey's *political philosophy* (1916/2008; 1927/1989; 1935/1991; 1973), the political implications of the diagnosis of a climate crisis can be worked out and reflected upon from a democratic theory perspective. Moreover, this article employs a methodology that draws upon the tenets of Peirce's idea of "abduction" (Peirce 1992c): According to this understanding, concepts and theories have the status of hypotheses that must be able to prove themselves in practice. The concept of crisis is also not an isolated object of the mind; rather, it is in a dialectical relationship with social practice, from which the concept is to be developed recursively. Therefore, the following article does not begin by introducing a theory of crisis, but rather by examining the current social practices of crisis talk and action.

The article contributes to three fields of research: firstly, to the field of democratic theory and climate change, drawing on literature from green political theory (Barry 2014), particularly on literature on eco-authoritarianism (Shearman/Smith 2007; DiPaola/Jamieson 2013; Honnacker 2020) and on climate movements (Serrano-Zamora/Herzog 2020; Fladvad 2021; Celikates 2022; Kersting 2023a). Secondly, this article will provide a clarification of the concept of crisis, for which pragmatism will be brought into dialogue with the history of this concept (Koselleck 2006) and contributions from critical theory (Habermas 1976; Milstein 2015; Jaeggi 2017; 2018), among others. Thirdly and finally, this article's claim is the development of a critical perspective on a liberalist understanding of democracy, picking up on debates over the crisis of democracy in general (Crouch 2020; Blühdorn 2019) and on critiques of liberalism in particular (Dewey 1935/1991; Heidenreich 2023).

In line with these objectives, my argument is organized as follows: First, I examine the pragmatics of the concept of crisis (1) as well as its authoritarian (2) and democratizing effects (3). I will then propose a pragmatist definition of crisis (4) and finally, on this basis, outline my thesis, according to which the climate crisis is to be understood as a crisis of liberal democracy (5). Resultingly, I show that the diagnosis of a climate crisis, if we understand it politically in accordance with pragmatism, has an inherent political potential for socio-ecological *and* democratic transformation (6).

[3] "Crisis is an omnipresent sign in almost all forms of narrative today; it is mobilised as the defining category of our contemporary situation. The recent bibliography in the social sciences and popular press is vast; crisis texts are a veritable industry" (Roitman 2012). However, this omnipresence is not a new phenomenon. According to Reinhart Koselleck, "crisis" has been "a structural signature of modernity" since the end of the eighteenth century (Koselleck 2006: 372).

1. On the Pragmatics of the Concept of Crisis

In accordance with Peirce's *pragmatic maxim*, the meaning of a term consists of the effects that its object produces in practice, or—in terms of the philosophy of language—of the specific ways in which it is used. In order to determine more precisely what 'crisis' means, it is necessary to ask: "What are we doing when we say there is a crisis? What function does the concept have? What assumptions are we putting into play when we use the term crisis?" (Milstein 2015: 142). One example: In May 2019, the editors of the British newspaper *The Guardian* updated their style guides and recommended replacing the term "climate change" with "climate crisis" (or instead: "climate emergency or breakdown"). "The phrase 'climate change,'" explained editor-in-chief Katharine Viner, "sounds rather passive and gentle when what scientists are talking about is a catastrophe for humanity" (Carrington 2019).

The term "crisis"—as this example shows—has a signaling effect: It can be used to emphasize that phenomena such as climate change are extraordinary and particularly threatening. The editor-in-chief also explained the *Guardian*'s decision by arguing that the change in editorial language rules was intended to communicate the urgency of the topic to readers, in line with current scientific knowledge. Apparently, the assumption brought into play here was that the term "crisis," in contrast to mere "change," evokes existential threats and indicates acute pressure to act. "To call something a 'crisis' denotes a plea for action—an urgency—which, if unheeded, would lead to something catastrophic" (Milstein 2015: 146). Talk of crises has an appellative character and is capable of mobilizing decisive action.

This pragmatic dimension of the term is also reflected in its etymology. As the conceptual historian Reinhard Koselleck explains, the term 'crisis' (Greek: *krisis*) comes from the Greek verb *krinein*, meaning "to 'separate' (part, divorce), to 'choose,' to 'judge,' to 'decide'; as a means of 'measuring oneself,' to 'quarrel,' or to 'fight'" (Koselleck 2006: 358). Originating in ancient jurisprudence and theology, the term for a long time was used primarily in the context of medicine and is still used today: The condition of an organism is considered 'critical' if it has not yet been decided whether it will survive or die, i.e., if both outcomes are still possible. "At all times the concept is applied to life-deciding alternatives meant to answer questions about what is just or unjust, what contributes to salvation or damnation, what furthers health or brings death" (Koselleck 2006: 361).

These etymological meanings are still reflected in contemporary social and political language, as is evident from the semantics of "climate crisis." Climate groups such as *Extinction Rebellion* or *Letzte Generation* (*Last Generation*) utilize the binary logic of crisis semantics—"right or wrong, salvation or damnation, life or death" (Koselleck 2006: 358)—even in the choice of their own names. In the context of the climate crisis, this is to suggest that there are only two possible outcomes: Extinction or rebellion—an alternative that is, of course, meant to imply an obvious choice. Since hardly anyone wants to become extinct, the only way to overcome the crisis is to rebel. And in the speeches of many activists and politicians, apocalyptic connotations are cropping up again and again: "So please, treat the climate crisis like the acute crisis it is and give us a future. Our lives are in your hands" (Thunberg 2018). The dramatizing effects of crisis semantics are perhaps nowhere more visible than in the angry face of Greta Thunberg, whose "I want you to panic!"[4] makes it quite explicit that crises must not only be recognized but also *felt* in order to develop a motivating force for action (Slaby 2023).

2. "Crisis" and Authoritarian Sentiments

Against this backdrop, it is understandable why crisis as a concept is so popular, especially in times of social up-

[4] The quote is from a speech that Greta Thunberg gave at the World Economic Forum in Davos on 25 January 2019.

heaval and uncertainty, and why climate change is also being 'framed'—or rather 'reframed'[5]—as a crisis. At the same time, the pragmatic implications of the term indicate that it has the capacity to be employed to proclaim the "state of exception" (Agamben 2005). In general, the lack of alternatives that crisis narratives suggest seems to be in tension with the concept of the political, at least if one shares Hannah Arendt's view that the very meaning of politics is freedom (Arendt 1993) and that the invocation of necessity always runs the risk of "rid[ding] [one] self of politics" (Rancière 1999: xii).

As evidenced by various contemporary environmentalist movements and ideologies, ecological crisis narratives can also have the effects of depoliticization and of the promotion of antidemocratic and authoritarian tendencies. Some supporters of *deep ecology* claim that environmental crises can only be resolved by radically overthrowing the prevailing social and political conditions. And *anarcho-primitivists* posit that the very notion of civilization, based on cultivation and mechanization, presents an obstacle to the resolution of social and ecological issues and must therefore be overcome (Humphrey 2007: 31-39; Aaltola 2010). These approaches are controversial less in the sense that they propagate a profound socio-ecological transformation to solve the crisis, but rather in "how this demand for change is realised, and how far-reaching it is" (Honnacker 2020: 4). While certain variants of *deep ecology* are perfectly compatible with achieving their goals in a democratic manner, "[t]he revolutionary impetus of anarcho-primitivism thus […] is not only anti-civilizatory, but anti-democratic and finally anti-political at its core" (Honnacker 2020: 5).

However, antidemocratic convictions and attitudes can also be found among environmentalist positions that are more sympathetic to the achievements of civilization, above all, eco-authoritarianism. This position is based on the view that democracies are fundamentally incapable of overcoming the climate crisis: Democratic action is too short-sighted, too slow, too arbitrary (DiPaulo/Jamieson 2018). Eco-authoritarians therefore argue that, at least in the context of climate-related matters, the authority to make political decisions should be vested in the hands of scientists, and that democratic procedures should be replaced with more efficient government techniques (Giddens 2011; Lovelock/Hickman 2010; DiPaulo/Jamieson 2018). Others argue even more radically, lauding the resilience of authoritarian structures and suggest learning from the *modus operandi* of the Catholic Church: According to them, what is needed is a government modeled on a green aristocracy, a "'green pope'" (Shearman/Smith 2007: 135). They call for the formation of "a new type of person who will be wise and fit to serve and to rule": "fighters for life and survival," "ecowarriors" (Shearman/Smith 2007: 133 f.). Even if by no means all representatives of eco-authoritarianism are in favor of the formation of a new type of person, they all agree in pleas for a greater concentration of political power in the hands of ecological elites. What unites them theoretically is the far-reaching conceptual shift in the normative grammar of the political: from "freedom" and "equality" to "life" or "survival," which has also earned this movement the name of "survivalists" (Dryzek 2021: 27-50).

It is not necessary to discuss these positions in more detail here;[6] I am only mentioning them to show that crisis semantics, especially in the context of climate change, can play into doomsday scenarios that make antidemocratic and authoritarian solutions appear necessary and rational. Nevertheless, the pragmatic implications of the concept of crisis can also be employed to enhance democratic practices. A case in point is the climate justice movement, whose members do not typically identify as advocates of an eco-dictatorship. Rather, they repeated-

[5] The term "climate change" is also the result of political intervention. The Republican US government under George Bush introduced it in 2002 on the recommendation of its chief strategist at the time, Frank Luntz, because it sounded more neutral than the then-common term of "global warming," which instead signaled a problem in need of regulation (Luntz 2002).

[6] For a more detailed critique, see Shahar (2015) and Gehrmann/Niederberger (2020).

ly link their efforts to combat the "climate crisis" with a demand for "more democracy."

3. Semantics of Crises as a Means of Democratization

For several years now, climate groups such as *Extinction Rebellion* and *Fridays for Future* have been bringing attention to the "climate crisis" through a variety of methods, including spectacular protest actions, emotional speeches, large-scale demonstrations, and school strikes. They have highlighted the discrepancy between promises of leading industrial nations to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions and a lack of tangible action to date. The crisis rhetoric employed by these groups is not limited to the numerous socio-ecological issues caused by climate change. It also encompasses the political action that could be expected to resolve these problems at the local, national, or international level. These groups do not merely observe a significant discrepancy between aspiration and reality, knowledge and action. They seek to identify the specific political causes that systematically impede the implementation of effective climate policy. *Extinction Rebellion* and *Last Generation*, for instance, highlight a lack of citizen participation in democratic bodies and explicitly advocate for "more democracy," for example, in the form of citizens' councils. Others view the causes of the "climate crisis" as being rooted in a capitalist and exploitative economic system, which they are fighting to overcome.

What these different diagnoses of crisis have in common is that they address the "climate crisis" not primarily as an ecological but as a societal and political crisis. In doing so, they explicitly or performatively assert a claim to codetermine climate policy that is denied to them in the existing political system. Hundreds of thousands of people who, as minors, are not even allowed to vote have become involved in climate policy through *Fridays for the Future*. And thanks to the international networking of the climate movement, non-European voices that are not formally entitled to exert political influence are increasingly being included in the climate discourse in Europe: Among other things, they draw attention to the link between colonialism and climate change (Ituen/Aikins 2019) and remind us that people in the global South have been resisting the destruction of their livelihoods for decades because, as Ugandan climate activist Vanessa Nakate writes, their house has long been on fire (Nakate 2021). The actors of the climate movement are thus claiming for themselves the public role which, according to Dewey, is not the privilege of elected "officials" (Dewey 1927/1989: 246) but belongs to everyone, provided that they act politically, i.e., that they assert a public interest and not merely a private one in public. While the dominant public sphere and its institutions unilaterally relegate them to the passive role of suffering the indirect consequences of social transactions, without being able to articulate them publicly and help shape social associations, the diverse forms of climate protest generate new "publics" (Dewey 1927/1989: 265) and "counterpublics" (Fraser 1990: 67). These counterpublics articulate hitherto excluded perspectives, experiences, concerns, and demands, and can thus, to some extent, also change public discourse and public opinion.

In these contexts, the concept of crisis functions as a "public concept" (Milstein 2015: 150) that actors use to politicize experiences of suffering and fears about the future which professional politicians have shown little interest in over a very long period of time. Such processes of political "articulation" are—as Justo Serrano Zamora (2017; 2022) shows, following Dewey—complex and presuppositional. "Problems" do not simply exist but must be developed from an initially "indeterminate situation" (Dewey 1938/1988: 109). Practical consequences must first be perceived, assessed as problematic, and understood as being shared experiences before they can be publicly problematized. This process cannot be understood in individualistic terms. As Brian Milstein emphasizes, it requires the creation of communities of expe-

rience and discourse—"crisis communities" (Milstein 2015: 152)—in which the participants develop a shared understanding of what they perceive as a crisis and mutually reinforce each other's belief that they have a legitimate claim to participate in overcoming the crisis.

The political struggles for climate justice thus provide an example of how the concept of crisis does not necessarily serve to reinforce authoritarian attitudes and moods but can also have a democratizing effect (Celikates 2016; 2022; Fladvad 2021 Kersting 2023a). This concept does not serve here as an "instrument of rule" (Agamben 2013) for the authoritarian enforcement of ecological goals. Instead, it is a political means of expanding democratic public spheres and intensifying political participation.

However, the rhetorical function of the term does not fully capture its meaning. For it is clear that "a society does not plunge into crisis when, and only when, its members so identify the situation" (Habermas 1976: 4). This is also evident from the aforementioned examples, in which actors not only articulate the *subjective* experience of suffering of a particular group by declaring a crisis but also make an epistemic and normative judgment about the *objective* nature of the situation. But how are the subjective and objective dimensions connected? And what criteria or procedures can be used to verify the claim to truth and right that is so vehemently asserted in crisis rhetoric in order to distinguish mere rhetoric and "crisis ideologies" from "valid experiences of crisis" (Habermas, 1976: 4)? In order to answer these questions, a more systematic examination of the *concept* of crisis is needed, and pragmatism can also make a helpful contribution here.

4. A Pragmatist Conception of Crisis

So far, pragmatism has been used as a *method* of clarifying concepts. However, a recourse to pragmatism is also useful for defining the concept of crisis because this concept itself is a central one in pragmatism or, more precisely, in a pragmatist *theory of action.* In terms of action theory, "crises" represent profound upheavals of behavioral routines or "habits" (Peirce, 1992b: 129) that arouse a "real and living doubt" (Peirce, 1992a: 115) towards the beliefs that guide our actions. The term "habit" should not be understood in terms of individual psychology. The practices of social groups, institutions, or ways of life can also be reconstructed as functions of habits (Dewey 1927/1989: 334–335) and scrutinized for the rules (beliefs, concepts, regulations, customs, or traditions) that are effective in them. They too can get into a crisis if their *habits* are permanently blocked.

This interpretation is based on a pragmatist model of action, the standard version of which is as follows: First and foremost, our perception of the world and all our actions in it are anchored in a network of unreflected convictions and corresponding habits. When we encounter evidence that challenges or even contradicts the underlying beliefs and expectations associated with our individual, collective, or institutional practice, our actions are disrupted and the flow of our actions is impeded. This experience of the discrepancy between belief and the world is the source of a "real and living doubt" (Peirce 1992b: 114) or the root of a "problem" (Dewey 1938/1988: 111). Doubt may be applied to either experienced facts or to one's own beliefs. In either case, it must be overcome, as it is not possible to act upon it. This implies at least some form of thinking, which in the best case reorients action and gives rise to new ways of acting, which in turn stabilize and become new habits of behavior.

The point of a pragmatist interpretation of the concept of crisis now is to understand "crisis" as analogous to Peirce's concept of doubt or as a certain kind of problem in the sense of Dewey, and thus to locate this conception within our individual and social *practice*. For pragmatists, "doubts" and "problems" are the linchpin of human life practice. Because they are the only reason to reflect upon oneself, one's own actions, and one's own

habits, pragmatists view problems and the doubts they raise not only negatively as disruptions of a functional context or of an order but also, positively, as facilitators of self-knowledge, change, and progress. At the same time, as mentioned above, problems do not simply exist in the world but must be developed, produced, and articulated as such. Problems, as Rahel Jaeggi states following Dewey, "are both—at once given and made" (Jaeggi 2018: 140).

The recognition of crises as problems enables the consideration of the experiences of individuals and groups in crises, both directly and indirectly, in the formulation of crisis diagnoses. It is crucial to acknowledge that crises are perceived and experienced in diverse ways, with varying degrees of mediation. Although droughts and floods are perceived and suffered from in the lifeworld, they can only be experienced as consequences *of* climate change through the application of climate science, its physical measurements, calculations, and models. It was interdisciplinary climate research that, over the course of decades, articulated and thus produced the problem that we now call climate change (often against considerable political resistance). The findings of this research have become so well established that we can take this problem for granted or view it as "given" today.

Conversely, purely scientific facts remain practically meaningless if they are not connected to or analyzed in regard to their consequences for social life. In other words, they need to become translated into facts that can be experienced in the lifeworld. The report of Working Group II of the IPCC's Sixth Assessment Report, for example, translates physical data into concrete medical, social, or economic risks (IPCC 2022). In the field of politics, it is climate activists who are now pursuing a kind of "catastrophe visualisation" (von Redecker 2020: 101) with their protests. Through specific practices of translation from the cognitive to the affective, they aim to make possible the experience of something that is almost impossible to grasp in terms of its multiple future consequences. Such performative acts aim to interrupt everyday routines—shopping in the city or commuting to work—in order to sow "doubt" and to create an awareness of the problem or to produce "crisis consciousness" (Milstein 2015: 153-156).

The reference to problems, however, covers only one aspect of crisis since, of course, we do not characterize every problem of action as a crisis. In light of the pragmatic implications and etymology of the concept of crisis as previously outlined, talking about crises also implies decision-making in the face of uncertainty: "It indicates that point in time in which a decision is due but has not yet been rendered" (Koselleck 2006: 361). This reference to judgment, decision-making, and uncertainty indicates that object and subject references are closely intertwined in the concept of crisis: Although it is the situation or a particular circumstance that appears problematic, the fact that it appears as such to us is due to the fact that it pushes our ability to judge and to decide to a limit. This distinguishes crises from other existential situations such as disasters or accidents. They do not involve the same degree of uncertainty about how they can be resolved and how control of the situation can be regained.

If we take this view, then the term "crisis" does not only or primarily refer to problems that a person, a group, or an institution experiences or is confronted with (first-order problems), but it refers rather to problems that arise in coping with or solving such problems (second-order problems). The peculiarity of this secondary or reflexive level is that it now concerns problems that the subject or problem-solving instance has with itself: It no longer gets its problems solved, perhaps not even adequately articulated. Crises are not mere problems like accidents or disasters, they are—to borrow Jaeggi's concept of life-form problems—*problem-solving problems*.[7]

[7] On the distinction between first-order and second-order problems, see: Jaeggi (2018: 163–172). For a more explicit consideration of the concept of crisis, see Jaeggi (2017). Although my proposal on the concept of crisis developed here is strongly inspired by Jaeggi's work on life-form problems, it differs from it in at least three ways: First, Jaeggi does not elaborate criteria

The conviction that crises are not merely problems but problem-solving problems is also expressed in the various diagnoses of a "climate crisis." When eco-authoritarians criticize prevailing climate policy for being too short-sighted, slow, and ineffective due to its democratic procedures, in their diagnoses of the crisis, they are referring to the problem-solving processes of climate policy in the same problematizing way as left-wing climate activists who accuse prevailing policy of not being democratic enough and merely serving the interests of fossil capital. Even if the diagnoses of its causes could not be more different—according to some there is too much democracy, according to others there is too little—both camps point in their diagnoses of the crisis not only to the many problems people are suffering in the face of climate change but also to the political process, which they believe is inadequate to deal with these problems. And even the diagnoses of the anarcho-primitivists, who blame civilization as a whole for today's problems, express the belief that it is the type of our collective problem-solving actions (above all invasive techniques of mastering nature) that is unsuited to curing the ills of our civilization. All of these diagnoses—in one way or another—reflect on those instances that are said to be in crisis, and it is precisely this *problematizing* function that constitutes the *reflexive* and *critical* dimension of the concept of crisis.

However, it would again be rash to characterize all problem-solving problems as crises. Just like mere action problems, problem-solving problems can also be solved more or less easily and not every unsolved or seemingly unsolvable problem immediately plunges its subject into a crisis. (A problem-solving problem also occurs when I try to open a jar of jam with greasy hands—and there are various simple ways to solve it: I can wash my hands, use a towel, use a tool...). Rather, crises seem to represent a specific type of problem-solving problem, for which four features seem characteristic to me, which, taken together, result in a definition of the concept of crisis:[8]

We can speak of social and political crises when problem-solving processes (1) are *permanently disrupted* or *blocked* and thus (2) generate *(self-)destructive consequences* that sooner or later threaten the functioning of the primary context of action, undermine its normative preconditions, and (3) are *experienced* as existential problems by the subjects affected. These problem-solving problems (4) must not arise by chance; rather, they must prove to be the result of a *structural limitation of the problem-solving* and *learning capacity* of the relevant instances from which the solution of the problems could be expected—in other words, they must be *immanently caused* or *systemically conditioned.*

These four characteristics can be used as criteria with which crises can be distinguished from simple problems of action (such as accidents or disasters) as well as from simple or other problem-solving problems (such as challenges or difficulties). The criteria also help to sharpen the diagnostic potential of the concept of crisis because they provide a heuristic for criticizing political and social action.

Although these four criteria may appear somewhat technical in the above formulation, they do not represent aspects that are alien to political and social practice itself or that are imposed on it from the outside. Rather, it is the participants of the practice themselves who apply the above criteria in their different diagnoses of a climate crisis. The most significant differences arise, above all, in regard to the fourth criterion, that of systemic condi-

by which crises can be distinguished from other problem-solving problems, leaving her conception analytically vague. Secondly, her conception of crisis relies on "a very strong notion of objectively existing practical contradictions" (von Redecker 2018: 30, transl. DK), which in my view prematurely narrows the analysis of structural problem-solving blocks. Thirdly, her conception of crisis, at least in her book *Critique of Forms of Life*, is strongly oriented towards an epistemic understanding of politics that hardly takes into account the conflictual nature of political disputes—as emphasized by radical democratic authors (cf. Laclau/Mouffe 2014; Rancière 1999, for example).

[8] Whether the concept of crisis proposed here can be applied to all crisis phenomena—including psychological crises, for example—would require a more detailed discussion and must be left open at this point. In the following, I will only use the term to refer to social and political crises. For an application of the term to the discourse on the crisis of democracy and post-democracy, see: Kersting (2023b).

tions. As we have seen, some argue that the lack of problem-solving resources is due to the inefficiencies inherent in the democratic system. Others posit that the undemocratic and capitalist nature of the economic system systematically impedes the implementation of a policy of sustainability. Of course, there are also those who doubt that there are any structural limits to the problem-solving capacity of capitalist and liberal-democratic societies in relation to prevailing climate policies. They point to technological progress (e.g., geoengineering), "green" growth potential (e.g., renewable energies), and the market (e.g., emissions trading), which would sooner or later bring about or at least facilitate the ecological turnaround.

As far as the first three criteria are concerned, the representatives of these different positions can certainly agree that climate policy in recent decades has been *blocked* in many ways and has had *destructive* and even *self-destructive* consequences, which have indeed been *experienced* as crises by those affected. What is disputed is the *systemic* nature of this misguided climate policy, and thus the question of whether climate change can be described as a crisis at all or whether it is merely a problem of action that is extremely challenging but could in principle be tackled within the given framework of the existing economic and political system. In the following section, I would like to present my own position in this debate and make a proposal on how we should understand the systemic nature of the climate crisis.

5. Climate Change as a Crisis of Liberal Democracy

Environmentalists often justify the skeptical thesis that democracies are fundamentally incapable of dealing adequately with sustainability problems, such as climate change, by referring to the democratic principle: Democracies are characterized by the fact that citizens are involved in legislation and that political action takes their will into account. However, if citizens prioritize short-term preferences over long-term ecological goals, a democratic government that wants to be reelected will not be motivated to pursue a resolute climate policy. Based on this consideration, some scholars have concluded, as shown above, that expertocratic autocracies are better suited to solving problems than democracies. In this discussion, the climate crisis is thus interpreted as a crisis of democracy and eco-authoritarianism is presented as the solution to the crisis.

I would like to propose a reformulation of this diagnosis, which, however, leads to a very different perspective on a possible solution to the climate crisis. The overarching thesis is that we should understand climate change not as a crisis of democracy in general, but of specifically *liberal* democracy. In what follows, I use the term "liberal" as a placeholder for a bundle of characteristics that are more or less closely associated with the tradition of liberalism: (a) a negative conception of freedom, (b) an atomistic understanding of individuality, (c) a rigid distinction between the public and the private, and (d) a weak or thin understanding of the democratic process.

To avoid misunderstandings: I am not arguing that liberalism as such or some of its theories are fixed to one or the other understanding of these terms, or that they are incapable of solving the problems that might arise from these terms. Rather, my thesis is that the more a society or democratic politics is shaped by these characteristics, the more likely it is to undermine itself in the pursuit of its climate policies and thus exacerbate the 'climate crisis' instead of solving it. This is clear when we pragmatically ask what the socio-ecological consequences would be if we were to organize our social practice on the basis of these conceptions.

(a) *Negative freedom* refers to "the area within which the subject – a person or group of persons – is or should be left to do or be what he is able to do or be, without interference by other persons?" (Berlin 2002: 169).[9] In

[9] See already Locke (1963: II.2). Following Philip Pettit, liberal freedom can therefore also be defined as *non-interference* (Pettit 1997: 51-79).

liberal states, this understanding of freedom is institutionalized through a set of civil liberties, such as the right to personal liberty or the right to property. As subjective rights, they protect individuals from state interference and give them the legal power to assert their legitimate interests. We do not need to deny the emancipatory function that this understanding of freedom has historically had, initially for the bourgeoisie and then for a large number of oppressed and marginalized groups. Nevertheless, from the outset, this understanding has had social effects that are at odds with its original emancipatory intent, as demonstrated by numerous scholars, including Dewey (1935/1991) in the tradition of Hegel (2001) and Marx (1844/2008): The protection of individual freedom has historically been employed as a rationale for opposing the redistribution of social wealth or rejecting the regulation of the fossil fuel economy by the state. Even the introduction of a speed limit on motorways is perceived by many as an unacceptable encroachment on citizens' freedom and is currently being successfully prevented by the Liberal Democratic Party (FDP) in Germany through precisely this argument. Negative freedom, as Berlin says, also includes the "freedom to do what is irrational, or stupid, or wrong" (Berlin 2002: 194). John Rawls (2001) defended this liberal claim with the argument that individuals pursue diverse ethical conceptions of the good life and that a political theory needs to take into account "the fact of reasonable pluralism" (Rawls, 2001: 3). However, climate change demonstrates that there are notions of the 'good life' whose realization has such destructive consequences that they are diametrically opposed to the developmental opportunities of the majority of people living today and even more so of future generations.

Of course, liberalism's conception of freedom has never been unconditional. It has always been subject to the restrictive condition that everyone should be able to invoke an *equal* claim to freedom and that no one should be harmed (see e.g. Mill, 1982; Rawls, 2001: 111-115). Nevertheless, the universalist ideal of *equal* freedom appears to be relatively powerless in the face of the substantial global social inequalities that are created and maintained in the name of individual freedom. This becomes more evident when we consider the other three aspects.

(b) Negative freedom corresponds, in Dewey's words, with the idea of *individuality* "as something ready-made, already possessed, and needing only the removal of certain legal restrictions to come into full play" (Dewey, 1935/1991: 30). However, this idea is obviously misleading. On the one hand, the individual and its preferences themselves always already have a social form: Which way of life an individual chooses and can choose for itself is, in Foucault's (2005) words, dependent on the modes of subjectivation through which it is produced. From this perspective, the preferences of citizens are not merely "given" to politics; rather, they are socially generated and can be politically shaped. On the other hand, the developmental opportunities of individuals are not their "possession," but depend in many ways on social and ecological conditions that individuals cannot create and maintain alone but only in community with others. While the release of the individual from socio-ecological responsibility may appear to be an increase in freedom, it undermines the conditions under which freedom and individuality can fundamentally develop in the long run.

(c) The reifying and atomistic notion of individuality corresponds with a rigid distinction between *the public* and *the private*. For if individuality is understood as something already possessed, then it seems to be able to decide pre-politically what belongs in the realm of private affairs and what should be under public control. But this kind of distinction obscures the fact that any demarcation between the private and the public is the result of political action and often of political struggle. *Who* is the subject of the public sphere and *what* becomes the object of political negotiation is historically contingent and cannot be separated from the experiences of those who suffer the indirect consequences of social transactions (Dewey 1927/1989: 243–246). Whether and to what extent the de-

cision on the sustainability of individual or social ways of living is a private or a public matter is therefore a genuinely political question. Its answer, as Dewey says, "has to be discovered experimentally"—and this requires "room for dispute" (Dewey 1927/1989: 275) between different social groups and their experiences, concerns, and perspectives.

(d) Finally, this raises the question of the form of the political process in which such disputes could be productively conducted. In an understanding of politics characterized by a primarily negative and individualistic idea of freedom, individuality and privacy only seem to allow such disputes to a very limited extent. This is because these ideas correspond with a merely "thin" form of political decision-making and democratic self-government (Barber 1984). This is evident, for example, from the fact that in the liberal political model, primarily voting is regarded as the political function of citizens. Although citizens are supposed to contribute their preferences to the democratic process, their representation and political processing is primarily reserved for professional politicians or the government. "In the liberal tradition, politics means, above all, governmental activity and institutions" (Held 2006: 77). This model undoubtedly has a relieving function: It "makes it possible for the individual," as Hannah Arendt notes, to be "unmolested by politics" (Arendt 2005: 115). However, this 'relief' from politics comes at a steep price: It means that individual preferences are merely aggregated in the process of political decision-making, but are not themselves reflected upon, modified, or transformed. This removes precisely what the 'democracy-skeptical' objection identifies as a problem—the short-term preferences of citizens that contradict long-term ecological public welfare interests—from the political process and thus naturalizes these preferences. Moreover, to the extent that a political community prioritizes the protection of individual freedoms, it becomes challenging for the political community to impose strong sustainability demands on its citizens, at least if they run counter to their individual preferences.

In light of these considerations, it is evident that the preference of citizens for short-term private interests over long-term public interests and the inability to adequately regulate unsustainable social lifestyles are no longer viewed as inherent flaws of democracy. Rather, these issues emerge in the context of a democracy that is defined and shaped by a negative and individualistic understanding of freedom, an atomistic conception of individuality, a rigid and thus apolitical distinction between the public and private spheres, and a weak understanding of political self-government. For it is these characteristics that favor particular political decisions, institutions, modes of subjectivation, and ways of life that have contributed to climate change and that continue to block effective climate protection policy. But then the democracy-skeptical thesis, according to which democracy and sustainability are *per se* in contradiction or at least in tension with each other, also proves to be too generalizing. It is more appropriate to speak of *liberal* democracy, whose problem-solving capacities reach a limit to the extent that it exhibits the above-mentioned characteristics. However, if it is not 'democracy' in general, but rather a specifically liberalistic *self-limitation* of democracy that has brought about and maintains the climate crisis, then it would be expected that this limitation could in principle also be remedied with the means of democracy. From this perspective, not less—as eco-authoritarians believe—but, on the contrary, "more democracy" would be "the cure for the ills of democracy" (Dewey 1927/1989: 324).

6. Towards a Green *and* Democratic Transformation

Within current research on green democratic theory, there already is a lively discussion on how democracy should be understood and practiced to shape our social practice in an ecologically sustainable *and* democratic way. Proposals range from republican (Heidenreich 2023) and deliberative (Niemeyer 2013) to radical democratic (Machin 2013) approaches, and pragmatism has also pro-

vided a significant impetus to this debate in recent years (Fesmire 2021; Honnacker 2020; Thompson/Piso 2019). However, approaches to such an ecological democratization of democracy can not only be found in theory but can also be observed among the diverse socio-ecological practices and struggles for a more sustainable, just, and more democratic world. We encounter them in peasant and indigenous movements in the Global South, in local initiatives for alternative agriculture, and in global struggles for climate justice. Under the banner of the "climate crisis," these various groups not only criticize the overexploitation of nature and the diverse structures of inequality that make us humans vulnerable to the consequences of climate change to such varying degrees. They also discuss proposals for an alternative world and try to realize them to some extent in the here and now. In the course of their political practice, they form new communities and public spheres—"crisis communities" (Milstein 2015: 154)—that "rest on principles of solidarity and justice and on the democratic self-organisation of commonly shared resources" (Fladvad 2021: 237).

These principles and practices express a different understanding of freedom, individuality, privacy, and political action than the "liberal" understanding of these terms outlined above: The negative conception of individual freedom is juxtaposed here with a positive conception of socio-ecological freedom. By demanding that politicians enact collectively binding laws to phase out fossil fuels and to self-restrict non-sustainable lifestyles, climate activists demonstrate that "social agreements" are not only "external limitations" on individual freedom but can also be experienced as "positive forces" for shaping life together (Dewey 1935/1991: 30). Rather than viewing the individual in opposition to society and understanding the assumption of socio-ecological responsibility primarily as a restriction of individual freedoms, practices of solidarity and the collective self-organisation of shared resources recognize the constitutive dependency of the individual on social and ecological conditions that are eroding in the context of the climate crisis. Their protest practices shift the boundaries between the private and the public, problematizing the global and intergenerational consequences of supposedly private lifestyles and demanding that they have to be "systematically cared for" (Dewey 1927/1989: 245–246). Thus, the political practices of the climate movement also express a different understanding of politics and the democratic process: By organizing themselves in solidarity-based economic units and networks and experimenting with more participatory forms of communication and decision-making, the actors involved in the practice not only invent and test more intensive forms of political self-government. In their actions, they also *prefiguratively* anticipate part of the society that they hope to live in one day. In doing so, they practice a type of politics for which Dewey once used the term "planning society" (Dewey 1933/1986: 76). In contrast to the "planned society," which is designed by experts on a drawing board, only to be implemented "top down" by politicians, the plann*ing* society is a society that develops proposals for solutions based on concrete practical problems and tests them by anticipating their practical consequences or their practical implementation. In other words, it adopts the *method of inquiry* (Dewey 1938/1988; Peirce 1992b) in its political action and this is precisely where its superiority over autocracies and expertocracies lies (Fesmire 2021). It makes it possible to learn from the experience of concrete problems, to sharpen political judgment, and to develop new and better methods of problem-solving by taking past mistakes and errors into account. And because in a democracy—at least according to its *idea*—everyone is in a position to "enquire about, criticize, and perhaps even reject reasons for the actions or inactions of institutions" (Gehrmann/Niederberger, 2020: 235, trans. DK), it can be assumed that democratic procedures guarantee more sustainably that scientific insights are also taken into account in the political process.

Such a practice, characterized by a socio-ecological understanding of freedom and individuality, an exper-

imental understanding of the public sphere, and a participatory conception of politics, should contribute to a democratization of liberal democracy that makes it more likely to break through the problem-solving blockades in climate policy and to fight climate change sustainably.

Conclusion

In this article, I have proposed a definition of crisis as a concept based on current discourses on the climate crisis that makes it possible to critically analyze these discourses and to systematically discuss diagnoses of crises. My contribution to this discussion was to use a critique of liberalism to reformulate the green, democracy-skeptical thesis in such a way that democracy rather than authoritarianism can be understood as a 'solution' to the crisis. This demonstrates that the conception of the "climate crisis," beyond its diagnostic and critical value, also opens up a constructive perspective on a socio-ecological *and* democratic transformation. To achieve such a transformation, democracy must be understood not only in liberal terms as a form of government but also and primarily as a way of life. Whether or to what extent the manifest problem-solving blockades of today's climate policy can be resolved will then at least depend on whether we succeed in realizing more democratic forms of life.

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AGENCY & ENVIRONMENTAL PRAGMATISM: A DEFENCE FROM VIRTUE THEORY

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ABSTRACT: Environmental Pragmatism has come under increasingly scrutiny in recent years for resting on supposedly philosophically contradictory foundations. These criticisms typically present Pragmatism's philosophical commitment to open-minded inquiry as at odds with holding any specific philosophical convictions, including environmental ones. In this paper, I build upon Campos and Vaz's "Justified Moral Pluralism" (JMP) to present an agent-focused account of Pragmatism that, I will argue, allows for a philosophically tenable understanding of being an Environmental Pragmatist. My account presents the Pragmatist as treating open-minded inquiry as intrinsically valuable and, subsequently, phenomena conducive to open-minded inquiry as instrumentally valuable. This will present the Pragmatist as capable of holding and acting on environmental values so long as they can justify these values and the way they elect to act on them as consistent with a commitment to open-minded inquiry. The resulting theory, I will argue, provides a framework of making case-specific, holistic, practical decisions grounded in philosophically tenable foundations, perfect for the complex and ever-changing political landscape that is the climate emergency.

Keywords: Environmental Pragmatism, Non-Ideal Theory, Agency, Virtue Ethics, Policymaking

Introduction

At the start of 2024, Murray Auchincloss, the CEO of BP, one of the world's largest oil and gas producers, stated that the company would be taking a more pragmatic approach to its environmental policies in response to BP's significant reduction in profits.[1] Mr. Auchincloss clarified what he meant by being "pragmatic" as: maintaining an aim to reduce emissions whilst protecting the company's value and its shareholders' returns. Unsurprisingly, this decision was met with frustration from many Environmentalists who questioned how it can be *environmentally* pragmatic to increase ecological damage. An Environmental Pragmatist might respond to this question by highlighting that BP's capacity to provide a greener alternative to their competitors depends upon their finances, casting this decision as unideal but the more ecological option amongst those available.

Situations like these have fuelled both support for and scepticism over Environmental Pragmatism (EP). For its defenders, this serves as another example of EP being capable of assisting individuals in using philosophy to make practical decisions in unideal situations.[2] For its sceptics, meanwhile, it demonstrates EP as a philosophically vacuous position that merely uses philosophical rhetoric to justify what the user wants.[3]

One of the main questions Environmental Pragmatists are frequently confronted with is how they reconcile Pragmatism with Environmental Values. Specifically, scholars like Okke Loman (2020) have argued that Pragmatist's commitment to open-minded inquiry as incompatible with holding other normative values, including Environmental values.

In this paper, I present an agent-focused account of EP that, I will argue, should satisfy Loman concerns. Within my framework, the Pragmatist is presented as assigning intrinsic value to open-minded inquiry and, subsequently, instrumental value to the necessary conditions for open-minded inquiry. This, I will argue, allows for a path from Pragmatism to holding and acting on Environmental values, so long as their rationale for both comes from their Pragmatic commitment to open-minded inquiry.

This paper is presented in 4 of sections. In the first section, I will outline the nature of Pragmatism and EP. The second section will then present Loman's concerns regarding the normative foundations within EP before outlining Campos and Vaz's efforts to address these concerns via Justified Moral Pluralism (JMP).[4] I will then

[1] https://www.theguardian.com/business/2024/feb/06/bp-profits-halve-oil-gas-share-buybacks [accessed on 15/04/2024]

[2] Ansell, C., & Geyer, R. (2017); Campos, A.S. and Vaz, S.G., (2023); Donelson, R., (2017); Honnacker, A., (2023); Pearson, C.H., (2014); Robinson, J.G., (2011)

[3] Callicott, J.B, (2003); Eckersley, R., (2003); Loman, O., (2020); Samuelsson, L., (2010); Rolston, H., (1988); Rydenfelt, H., (2023)

[4] Loman, O., (2020); Campos, A. & Vas, S.G., (2021)

conclude the second section with Erik Rydenfelt's argument that JMP still fails to demonstrate how Pragmatism permits favouring environmental values.[5] The third section will then present my account of Pragmatism where open-minded inquiry is assigned intrinsic value, committing the Pragmatist to assign instrumental value to phenomena, including beliefs and values, if they are conducive to open-minded inquiry. This, I will argue, allows for a logically tenable path from Pragmaticism to holding and acting on environmental values, presenting the contradiction Loman identifies with some approaches to EP as avoidable. The final section then responds to Rydenfelt's concerns that JMP is exposed to challenges of Moral Relativism because of the normative significance it allows for people's beliefs and values, regardless of their validity and/or soundness.[6] Here, I will an agent-focused account of being a Pragmatist with the environment that borrows from Virtue Theory and, I will argue, should address Rydenfelt's concerns.[7] I will then conclude that EP does present a promising way to approach environmental ethics and policymaking and arrive at practical, case-specific guidance for non-ideal situations that can rest upon philosophically tenable foundations.

It is not the aim of this paper to argue for EP nor a particular understanding of being an Environmental Pragmatist. My aim is more modest: to challenge the common idea that Pragmatism is necessarily incompatible with holding values, including environmental values. I will accept that Pragmatism is incompatible with approaching environmental values in certain ways but that the pro-active and fallibilist nature of Virtue Ethics offers the Pragmatist a way to approach environmental values in a manner consistent with Pragmatic ideals. It is the hope that this paper may contribute to the ongoing discussions on how philosophy can better offer truly actionable guidance both within and beyond environmentalist debates, to have a greater role in policymaking and practical decision making.

1. Environmental Pragmatism

i. Pragmatism

Pragmatists hold a functional view on philosophy. For Pragmatists, philosophy only exists because there are inquiring minds, and these inquiring minds use philosophy to help them (1) better understand the world and (2) solve problems. This leads Pragmatists to the position that philosophy should not be used in a manner that obstructs greater understanding nor in a manner where it is philosophy that creates problems, as these outcomes contradict the function of philosophy.[8]

Campos and Vaz present the kind of philosophising the Pragmatist is antagonistic towards with, what they refer to as, METHOD 1.[9] In METHOD 1, an individual arrives at a situation with a pre-selected moral perspective and then uses this to analyse and problematise their situation and options. The individual therefore *defers* to their theory and merely applies it to their current situation.

For Pragmatists, this act of deference is immediately problematic in a practical sense because it encourages epistemic habits that are detrimental to better learning and understanding (and therefore detrimental to philosophising).[10] Campos and Vaz illustrate this with the example of an individual deferring to an imperative based upon a factual error.[11] Each time this individual defers to this imperative it always yields the same (wrong) answer which the individual gets accustomed to being the "correct" response. Over time, because of our human susceptibility to confirmation bias, this habit makes the indi-

[5] Rydenfelt, H., (2023)
[6] Ibid, p. 7
[7] Hursthouse, R., (1991)

[8] Light, A. & Katz, E., (1996); Morgan, D.L., (2014); Norton, B.G., (2015), pp.33-34; Rorty, R., (1985)
[9] Campos, A. & Vas, S.G., (2021), p.6
[10] It is this that leads Pragmatists to Fallibilism: that philosophy should be used in a manner that reflects our epistemic shortcomings to mitigate the extent to which they can undermine our capacity to philosophise. Fesmire, 2019, pp. 20-21
[11] Ibid

vidual less responsive to (potentially mounting) evidence that there is something wrong with their beliefs, making it increasingly unlikely that they will learn.[12]

Making this act of deference more problematic for the Pragmatists is that observers may defer to our example, meaning that we may encourage the same bad epistemic habits in others and, subsequently, encourage the formation of bad epistemic habits in others.[13] Our epistemic shortcomings and our capacity to cultivate poor epistemic habits in ourselves and others therefore reinforce the Pragmatists' argument for more reactionary and less deferential uses of philosophy: to be a force for good epistemic habits and, subsequently, philosophy.

Moving to "philosophy for problem solving", Pragmatist are antagonist towards deferential uses of philosophy like METHOD 1 that can yield impossible guidance and do not allow for compromises.

Campos and Vaz illustrate the former with the example of moral impasses. Suppose one can only do A or B but one's theory says both are impermissible.[14] For the Pragmatist, these situations reveals that one's respective theory is unsound, given that it cannot be achieved.[15] As their theory is reactionary, it allows context to have normative significance. This allows the Pragmatist to approach a situation where the only options are A or B and treat it as a case where the only options are A or B. This allows the moral significance of A to be determined by the context, including for example, if the only options are A or B.

This brings us to the topic of compromises. METHOD 1 precludes the possibility of compromises because one's moral convictions come from their unchanging moral principles. This is immediately problematic to the Pragmatist because it obliges the individual to limit their considerations to options that do not contradict their theory. METHOD 1 is therefore, and once again, counterproductive to open-mindedness because it encourages the individual to limit their considerations for the sake of the theory and not for the sake of discovery or problem solving.

Furthermore, the impermissibility of compromises is also problematic to the Pragmatist because this can lead to obligations that contradicts the values that informed there obligations' normative authority.[16] For example, suppose there is a politician contemplating a policy supporting more humane animal farming, a politician that believes that animals have a right to life. Supporting the policy is therefore incompatible with their position that animals have a right to life. Failure to support the policy, however, will result in a worse situation according to the politician's own values. As Donelson notes, we should be mindful that any moral red line is a product of the values that led the line to be drawn, meaning that it gets its normative force from these values.[17] This means that a given red line should not be used in a manner contrary to the values that are used to make the line normatively informative.

Returning to the animal welfare bill, two variables are relevant to the Pragmatist:

1.) the implications of (not) supporting the policy

2.) how these implications relate to the individual's values

The Pragmatist would reflect on these two variables and recognise the contradiction in prioritising a rule for animal welfare over doing what is most conducive to animal welfare.[18]

Now, it is important to note that whilst context and consequences are normatively significant to the Pragma-

[12] Ibid; Misak, C., (2009), pp. 34-36; Alfano, M., Lurino, K., Robinson, B., Christen, M., Yu, F., & Lapslet, D., 2017
[13] Dewey, J., 1988; Kotzee, B., Carter, J.A., & Siegel, H., (2021); LaFollette, H., (1997), p. 403
[14] Campos, A. & Vas, S.G., (2021), p.6
[15] Misak and Robinson both make the point that theoretical impasses also reinforce the Pragmatist's argument that deferential uses of philosophy encourage poor epistemic habits because one rarely has the luxury of an absolute impasse to reveal the unsoundness of their beliefs and/or values. Misak, 2009, p.34; Robinson, J.G., 2009, pp. 958-961
[16] Selznick, P., 2008
[17] Donelson, 2017, p.385
[18] Fesmire, 2019, pp. 7-8, 13-14

tist, Pragmatism is not Consequentialism.[19] Consequentialism is the belief that the consequences determine the justness of one's (in)action. Pragmatism, meanwhile, is a school of thought concerning the role and proper use of philosophy use of philosophy. We can see this by comparing the use of METHOD 1 Consequentialism with a Pragmatic approach to Consequentialism. With METHOD 1 Consequentialism, the individual arrives "knowing" what good and bad consequences are and uses this to evaluate their options and determine what course of action they should take given the perceived consequences. A Pragmatist, meanwhile, may have some preconceptions about what good/bad consequences are but they would arrive prepared to reflect on these preconceptions and prepared to revise them based upon new information.

For Pragmatists, the important question is "what do we use philosophy for?". This informs their functional understanding of how we should use philosophy: as a tool for better understanding and navigating the world, meaning that it should not be used in a fashion contrary to these ends.

ii.) Environmental Pragmatism

Environmental Pragmatism, unsurprisingly, is a school of thought that advocates Pragmatic approaches to environmental ethics and policymaking.[20] Bryan G. Norton presents EP as a reactionary movement to the limited and sometimes detrimental role philosophy has played in environmentalism, questioning the logic of sacrificing the environment for the sake of honouring an environmentalist theory. Focusing on how philosophy can encourage zealotry and undermine the possibility of ecologically beneficial compromises and collaborations, Norton argues that environmentalists should ensure that they are only using philosophy to achieve ecological ends, disallowing uses of philosophy that undermine this aim.[21] This led Norton to his conclusion that Environmentalism requires Pragmatism, given how non-Pragmatic approaches have proven detrimental to the environment.

John G. Robinson makes a similar argument by demonstrating how the success rate of any environmental policy can be contingent on one's capacity to convince their audience to support it and that the best way to convince people is to appeal to *their* values.[22] Like Norton, Robinson questions the individual's environmentalist credentials if they prioritise theory over achieving ecological ends. Robinson uses the example of an environmentalist engaging with business executives. This environmentalist recognises that their audience is more familiar with and sympathetic to the cost-benefit analysis logic of Consequentialism. This means that the most promising way to get this audience's support is to defend the policy on Consequentialist terms.[23] Assuming this Environmentalist has misgivings about Consequentialism, the situation presents them with a choice between loyalty to an Environmentalist theory or to the environment, with Robinson presenting prioritising the theory in this case as both environmentally and logically untenable.[24]

Environmental Pragmatism, therefore, advocates a results-orientated use of philosophy in Environmental policymaking, with the "right" philosophies and policies being dictated by practical considerations including what

[19] Enoch, D., (2017), pp. 6-7 where Enoch uses the example of an unconscious patient in immediate need of a blood transfusion to demonstrate how context and probable consequences should have normative signigicance in one's moral thinking because they can be relevant to the practical significance of one's options. Enoch uses the example of following the imperative "do not give transfusions without consent" to demosntrate the need to reflect on the values behind the imperative, valuing individual autonomy, and using this to determine what they should do given the specifics of this case and potentially revise the imperative for non-ideal situations.
[20] Light, A & Katz, E., (1996), p.4
[21] Norton, B.G., 2015, pp.33-34
[22] Robinson, J.G., 2009, pp. 958-963
[23] Ibid, pp.961-962
[24] These sentiments also support the conclusions of Eckersley, R., (2002); Hall, E., (2018); Herzog, L., (2023); Honnacker, A., (2023); and Huber, J. (2023) in their discussions on improper use of theory, each providing similar arguments to Robinson's against evidence and theory based policymaking because of these models undervalue and even omit the practical and therefore normative significance of people's beliefs, values, and motivations.

one can convince others to (not) do. From the Pragmatic tradition, EP borrows the functional understanding of philosophy and a wariness of how philosophy can create problems rather than help solve problems.

2. Environmentalism or Pragmatism?

For scholars like Okke Loman, EP is a contradiction in terms, with the Pragmatist's commitment to open-minded inquiry necessarily being at odds with presupposing any values, including Environmental values.[25]

Focusing on Norton's account of EP, Loman notes that Norton embraces the Pragmatic idea that the correct action is born out of open-minded debate and deliberation, with a focus on using philosophy to help find a workable solution.[26] Loman then presents a scenario where a Nortonite is engaging with a climate change sceptic (CCS) with incompatible beliefs and values to environmentalism.[27] Loman notes that Norton may say that the CCS lacks the necessary deliberative powers for discourse and philosophising, providing Norton with parameters for who and what ideas the Environmental Pragmatist does (not) need to accommodate.[28] However, as Loman then notes, this would be incompatible with the Pragmatic tradition. As Loman notes, Norton recognises that accommodating conflicting views allows for more open-minded philosophising and dispute resolution, believing that these conditions are necessary to (eventually) achieve consensus on (environmental) values and policies. There is, therefore, a Pragmatic and an Environmentalist argument for tolerating the CCS and not one for prioritising one's environmental values over the beliefs and values of one's critics.

Loman goes on to present how Norton Justifies assigning environmental values normative power via his Sustainability Principle.[29] This is the idea that values should be compatible with the necessary conditions for their continued existence. The problem here is that the Sustainability Principle is achieved via non-Pragmatic thinking and applied in a manner akin to METHOD 1. Returning to the CCS, Loman presents Pragmatism as at odds with the Sustainability Principle regarding the source of normativity, a problem Loman generalises to an EP which starts with Environmental convictions before engaging with Pragmatic reasoning.

Campos and Vaz endeavour to respond to this issue by presenting a way to go from a Pragmatic commitment to open-mindedness to having ecological values via, what they refer to as, Justified Moral Pluralism (JMP). JMP embraces the Pragmatist's position that philosophy is for decision making and that decision-making should be reactionary to avoid the problems associated with deference to theory. Within JMP, one's initial responsibility is to understand the practical logistics of one's scenario including the beliefs, values, and motivations of the relevant stakeholders, including those of the users. [30]

Open-mindedness and fact-sensitivity are presented as essential within JMP for testing the validity and soundness of one's beliefs and values, both moral and non-moral, and for determining how one can best accommodates the various beliefs and values in each scenario. Non-moral facts, like the progressing climate emergency, therefore, gain normative significance, not because of some pre-selected moral values, but because people hold ecologically relevant values and because these non-moral facts are relevant to one's (in)actions.[31] For example, assume that one has a CCS who assigns great value to their family. Within JMP, one must balance the non-moral fact that is climate change does exist and balance this with the CCS's values concerning their family. In this instance, to not push for ecological policies would be to do a disservice to this individual's family values.

So long as there are people with Environmental val-

[25] Loman, O., (2020)
[26] Ibid, pp. 295-297
[27] Ibid, p. 302
[28] Ibid
[29] Ibid, pp. 302-303
[30] Campos and Vaz, 2021, pp.751-752
[31] Ibid

ues and so long as the environment is relevant to their values, Pragmatists therefore have a Pragmatic rationale for treating environmental values as normatively significant. Assuming one is an Environmentalist, JMP, therefore, allows the individual to arrive on the scene with their environmental values so long as they are prepared to reflect upon them and their application given, amongst other things, the specifics of the situation, including the beliefs and values of others. If after these reflections they still see reason to hold their environmentalist beliefs and values, they can, as a Pragmatist, justify assigning these beliefs and values normative significance.

Though sympathetic to both Environmental Pragmatism and Campos and Vaz's efforts to defend it, Erik Rydenfelt is unconvinced that JMP solves the issue with combining Environmentalist values with Pragmatic ideals. Rydenfelt's main concern is that JMP does not do enough to present EP as immune from challenges of Relativism.[32] Within JMP, the appropriate course of action will be subject to the beliefs, values, and motivations of others, independent of how valid and/or sound they are, as this will determine what is ultimately feasible. As Rydenfelt notes, this means that what is morally justifiable is subject to the beliefs, values, and motivations of others, regardless of the validity and/or soundness of these beliefs. This presents the "right course of action" as synonymous with the most accommodating course of action. When it comes to favouring environmental values, Rydenfelt then questions how a theory that gives normative power to public opinion regardless of soundness and validity can then justify favouring ideas because of their soundness and validity.

Rydenfelt concludes his paper with Norton's optimism that these problems will cease being practical problems because people's beliefs and values regarding the environment will converge.[33] Norton's assumption was that as evidence becomes increasingly overwhelming and education increasingly accessible, more and more people will adopt ecological perspectives and even agree on specific environmental policies.[34] Though this would solve the practical problems for the Environmental Pragmatist, it still leaves the philosophical questions unresolved as it is still unclear how one can both embrace Pragmatic open-mindedness and a commitment to specific (environmental) values.

3. An Environment for Pragmatism

To respond to Loman and Rydenfelt, it is important to note that Pragmatism does not entail an absence of normative values. Pragmatists value philosophy and, by proxy, the necessary conditions for philosophy. It is this sentiment that fuels their antagonism towards deferential uses of philosophy as counterproductive to the open-mindedness and responsiveness necessary for philosophical inquiry.[35] Pragmatists, therefore, assign intrinsic value to philosophy and instrumental value to the necessary conditions for philosophy.

In this section, I build upon these sentiments by exploring the necessary conditions for philosophy, providing a schema for going from Pragmatic values to Environmental values as well as an outline for relating to one's environmental values without compromising one's Pragmatic credentials.

The first and most obvious necessary conditions for open-minded inquiry are the necessary requirements for an organism to engage with open-minded inquiry. Human cognitive development and performance are tied to numerous environmental factors, like, for example air quality.[36] This immediately gives the Pragmatist cause to

[32] Rydenfelt, H., (2023), p. 4
[33] Ibid, p.10
[34] Norton, B.G., (2003), pp. 237-243
[35] Rorty, R., (1985)
[36] Thompson, R., Smith, R.B., Karim, Y.B., Shen, C., Drummond, K., Teng, C. and Toledano, M.B., 2023. Air pollution and human cognition: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Science of The Total Environment*, *859*, p.160-234; Shehab, M.A. and Pope, F.D., 2019. Effects of short-term exposure to particulate matter air pollution on cognitive performance. *Scientific reports*, *9*(1), p.8237.

be open to assigning instrumental value to environmental factors currently proven necessary for and/or conducive to human cognition. Pragmatists therefore cannot be indifferent to the environmental variables that necessary for and/or conducive to human inquiry.

To retain their Pragmatic credentials, Pragmatists must then approach these beliefs and values prepared to debate them and open to the possibility that they may be erroneous. Keeping with the example of "clean air is good", the Pragmatist must first best determine if both having this belief is conducive to the necessary conditions for philosophy.[37] This requires them to engage with the multitude of contradictory beliefs and values as opportunities to learn, validate, and falsify various positions to identify the optimal way forward for the sake of the future of philosophy.

It also requires them to make the context dependent decision as to whether pushing for the belief now is most conducive to the necessary conditions for philosophy. Assigning instrumental value to a phenomenon does not mean that one's actions should always prioritise the given phenomenon. Returning to the clean air example, as a Pragmatist one should only prioritise promoting cleaner air when doing so would be consistent with valuing open-minded inquiry. Two variables may lead the Pragmatist away from prioritising clean air:

1. When doing so would be at the expense of some other option that would be more conducive to open-minded inquiry
2. When doing so would undermine the necessary conditions for open-minded inquiry.

Focusing on 1, suppose that a Pragmatic politician has done all the first stages of Pragmatic thinking and identified two options: supporting an initiative for clean air or one for improving nutritional regulations. Their rationale for the two are the same: that clean air and a nutritious diet have been positively linked to cognitive development and performance. Unfortunately, this politician only has enough funding for one of the initiatives. Assume that the two policies enjoy equal and sufficient support from the public, but not enough that they would accept tax rises for both initiatives. The context is normatively significant because it forces the politician to choose between two options, impacting the normative significance of these options.[38] If the politician could support both measures, the choice to not would be different. The fact that they must choose one means that by not choosing the other they are not rejecting the idea that the other is also valuable, just not always prioritizable. Now, suppose the politician concludes that the food initiative is more beneficial to human cognition. As a Pragmatist, they would have a Pragmatic justification for not supporting the clean air policy. This demonstrates a Pragmatic relationship with environmental values: ever subject to Pragmatic values and, therefore, only authoritative if, after Pragmatic thinking, they are determined as conducive to open-minded inquiry.

Moving to 2, this is where the topic of public opinion and validity become relevant to Pragmatic thinking. Open-mindedness does not just happen. As we saw with METHOD 1, humans have many epistemic foibles that can prevent them from greater open-mindedness. We can mitigate this problem by concerning ourselves with the validity and soundness of our beliefs as ways to test whether they are ones we should hold or reject.[39] This requires a mind open to the possibility of having erroneous or less valid beliefs and values, and this possibility is dependent upon the individual's socio-political experiences and learning. For example, exposure to an environment hostile to unsubstantiated claims will likely make one more concerned with the validity and soundness

[37] Campos, A.S., & Vaz, S.G., (2021), pp. 744-747

[38] Enoch,D., (2018); Herzog, L. (2012); Volacu, A., (2018)
[39] Kotzee, B., Carter, J. A., & Siegel, H. (2021); Tanesini, A., (2018); (2024)

of their positions. Equally, exposure to an environment where valid arguments are dismissed can lead people to devalue these epistemic habits and disengage with the deliberative process, both mentally and publicly, which would be detrimental to open-minded inquiry and deliberation.[40] This leads the Pragmatist to a commitment to the necessary socio-political conditions for people to cultivate a value in validity and soundness and to ensure their actions reflect this Pragmatic commitment.[41]

It is this that allows Pragmatism to explain how both validity and public opinion can have normative significance within the same paradigm. The Pragmatist needs to be and seen to be committed to soundness and validity but only because this is necessary for socio-political conditions necessary for open-minded inquiry. They also need to recognise that humans are fallible, including their audience. And their audience's reaction will dictate what is in the interests of open-minded inquiry. For example, suppose a politician is engaging with an audience sympathetic to climate change scepticism. This politician has the executive authority to enact the clean air act despite their constituents' misgivings towards climate politics. As a Pragmatist, they have sought to understand their constituents' beliefs and values, finding them invalid and unsound. The politician has two options, each problematic for a Pragmatist:

1. They humour their constituents, undermining their credentials as someone committed to validity and soundness and subsequently undermining the socio-political conditions conducive for open-minded deliberation and inquiry.
2. They reject their constituents' beliefs and values as unsound and invalid. This risks cultivating greater hostility toward ecological policies and, by rejecting their firmly held beliefs and values, it also risks their constituents disengaging in deliberation, both mentally and political, by demonstrating how their firmly held beliefs and values can be dismissed. This route, therefore, also comes with the risk of undermining the necessary conditions for open-minded deliberation and inquiry.

Public opinion is therefore only normatively significant to the Pragmatist because of its relevance to the future of open-minded inquiry.

The problem this still leaves is how this does not just lead to Relativism. Returning to Rydenfelt, his concerns with JMP were that public opinion can dictate what is morally justifiable, leading him to question how this is not just Relativism and, therefore, incompatible with any form of environmentalism. [42] In the following section, I present this problem as arising from act-focused understandings of practical philosophy and how an agent-focused account of Pragmatism avoid these issues, allowing for a promising and philosophically tenable understanding of what it means to be Environmentally Pragmatic.

4. Virtue Theory and Environmental Pragmatism

In his critique of JMP, Rydenfelt argues that the spectre of Relativism persists because the appropriateness of an action or policy can be subject to beliefs and values of the agents, regardless of how valid or sound these beliefs and values are. This is a common criticism lobbied at EP, and Pragmatism more generally, one that fuels the idea that Pragmatism entails Moral Relativism and, therefore, EP is self-contradictory.

This argument, however, is contingent on the premise that the ethics of the act should be determined independently of the context, including how the beliefs

[40] Levy, N. & Alfano, M., 2020
[41] Ferkany (2019) presents this as the moral limits of open-mindedness whilst Battaly (2018) presents going beyond these parameters as a moral failing in their defence of the position that some close-mindedness demonstrates epistemic virtues because they are necessary to be able to process information logically, clearly, and fairly.
[42] Rydentfelt, 2023, p.4

and values of the involved agents influence the context. This, however, goes against all three traditional ethical theories once we transition from theory to application.[43] For example, Kant famously said that for something to be an obligation, it much be possible, meaning that the individual's relative agency, as determined by their context, will shape their moral responsibilities.[44] Consequentialists, meanwhile, oblige one to pursue the optimal consequences, which will be determined by the context their find themselves in. Finally, in Virtue Ethics, context determines how a virtue manifests, for example, courage is not necessarily demonstrated by someone who overcomes their fears and faces a threat but by someone who responds to a threat appropriately, given the context.

Already we have seen the problems Deontologists and Consequentialists face when it comes to EP, with scholars like Campos and Vaz highlighting how preconceived rules or ideas regarding acceptable outcomes compromising the individual's open-mindedness and capacity to Pragmatically.

What sets Virtue Ethics apart from the other two traditions is that virtue ethics does not attempt to pre-empt debate by providing guidance on the right kinds of actions or consequences but, instead, guidance on how one should approach their decisions.[45] The criteria for good decision-making varies greatly within the Virtue Ethics canon, but there are a few common features.[46] The first is prudence, specifically prudence over one's options and their probable outcomes. Second is humility, specifically over our epistemic and cognitive shortcomings, with Virtue Ethicists cautioning individuals to be wary of their lack of omnipotence and how their beliefs, values, and emotions may influence both their perception and their reasoning.[47]

Immediately, one can see similarities between Virtue Ethics and (Environmental) Pragmatism. Virtue Ethics' Prudence can be compared to Pragmatism's Fallibilism, with both theories assigning value to engaging and understanding the beliefs, values, and motivations of others, at least to validate, falsify, and/or refine one's own beliefs and values. [48] In both, the ethics of the act is determined by how one approached the decision. Furthermore, the Pragmatist's commitment to the necessary socio-political infrastructure is there to enable others to engage in open-minded inquiry can be compared to the idea that the virtuous should best ensure others can also achieve virtue. In both theories, therefore, one's aim in a decision is to demonstrate good decision-making, with considerable overlap in how the two theories conceptualise good decision-making.

Let us now consider what it means to *be* a Pragmatist. Suppose we have two Pragmatic politicians contemplating an unpopular green policy. They have undertaken all the Pragmatic procedural checks and concluded that their values and this policy (in the abstract) are consistent with Pragmatic values. Let's assume that a major motivation for their perspective comes from Pragmatically re-validated ecological values. They must then consider if it would be Pragmatic to push for it. This leads them to the conclusion that pushing for the policy is justifiable iff it will lead to more ecological ends than not pushing for it. To answer this question, they now must consider how their electorate will react. The two disagree on answers to this question and have different conclusions regarding what they should do with the policy as Pragmatists. However, the two have satisfied the necessary and sufficient conditions to equally justify their contradictory positions as the Pragmatic answer.

Now, it should first be noted that the possibility of disagreements should not be considered a weakness for a theory when it comes to guidance in addressing uncertainty. As we saw with the Pragmatist's criticisms of non-Pragmatic theory, the fact that one's paradigm can give the

[43] Volacu, A., (2018)
[44] Kant, I., (2012), p.36
[45] Hursthouse, R., (2010), pp. 26-27
[46] MacIntyre, A., (2008), pp. 209-213
[47] Aristotle, 2009, pp, 114-117;

[48] LeBar, M., (2008), p.182: what LeBar refers to as "Aristotelian Constructivism"

user clear and certain guidance should not justify the use of it, given that this clear guidance could also be unsound and invalid. The strength of an agent-focused account of Environmental Pragmatism is that it can advise the individual on engaging with uncertainty *as* uncertainty.[49]

Prima facie, we could attempt to avoid this issue with a comprehensive and definitive definition of what it means to be a Pragmatist. Keeping with our two politicians, this would, hopefully, allow one to tell the other that they are overstating or understating the situation concerning the electorate. However, there are no guarantees of this, if both are thoroughly convinced of their position and that they have better embodied the Pragmatic schema.

Furthermore, doing so would be fundamentally incompatible with Pragmatism, as it would prove detrimental to open-minded inquiry. MacIntyre responded to a similar problem with efforts to qualify what it means to be virtuous.[50] As MacIntyre noted, since Aristotle, philosophers have endeavoured to qualify what it means to be virtuous, many of them unjustifiably convinced that their conclusions were immune from cultural bias and ignorance. In response to this, MacIntyre concluded that so long as we lack omnipotence, part of human virtue must include an openness to the possibility that even one's most fundamental convictions may be erroneous, complementing the Pragmatist's rationale for Fallibilism.[51] To be Pragmatic, therefore, entails an openness to the possibility that even one's conception of Pragmatism is flawed and a preparedness to defend one's conception via proactive reflection should a challenge come.

This does leave us with Pragmatism as a vague concept. Whilst this is an issue for the individual who wants philosophy to give them instructions, it is not an issue for those who want it to help them with making decisions, nor should it be viewed as a weakness for the theory.[52] A common criticism lobbied at Virtue Ethics is that virtuousness is too vague for ethical guidance. Rosalind Hursthouse accepted this. However, Hursthouse compared this to the imperative to "do good actions" for Deontology and "pursue good consequences" for Consequentialism, labelling both as equally vague, useless, and open to challenges of Relativism.[53] As Hursthouse notes, the first jobs of anyone embarking on moral philosophy is to outline and defend their understanding of their theory and its ideals before then explaining how these considerations led them to their conclusion on how they should act.[54]

This sentiment can be applied to Pragmatism. The Pragmatist's first responsibility should always be to revisit how they understand Pragmatism before using the input from others to reflect and revise their Pragmatic and Ecological beliefs and values, both on Pragmatic terms. Next, they will explore the practicalities of their options, making their ultimate decision once they are confident that they could defend the epistemic steps they took from Pragmatism to their ecological decision.

In this formulation, the Environmental Pragmatist is first and foremost a Pragmatist who by accident may find themselves supporting Environmental values and policies but only because they align with their fundamental commitment to philosophy. This will justifiably appear rather mercenary to most Environmentalists. However, given the threat the climate emergency poses to the future of human existence and, by extension, philosophy, it does mean that the Environmental should often expect to find an ally in the Pragmatist. Should the Pragmatist diverge from the Environmentalist, they should also be prepared to explain how their position can be considered Pragmatic given the threat ecological collapse poses to their precious philosophy.

As Rydenfelt concluded, Pragmatism is not a philosophy for those looking for fixed views because that is not the aim of Pragmatism. Pragmatists understand philoso-

[49] Ansell, C., & Geyer, R. (2017)
[50] MacIntyre, A., 2007), pp. 212-214
[51] Ibid, pp. 235-236
[52] Rydenfelt, H., (2023), pp. 9-10
[53] Hursthouse, R., (1991)
[54] Hursthouse, R., (1991), p.245

phy as a tool used by imperfect minds looking for guidance in unprecedented and imperfect situations. What the Pragmatist took from these observations was the folly of trying to pre-empt debate and the benefits, both philosophical and practical, to a perpetual openness to debate, deliberation, and learning. Within this open-ended project we can include the Environmental Pragmatists, charged with the responsibility to explain how they went from their conception of Pragmatism to their environmental values, undertaking the necessary epistemic steps to ensure their positions remain valid and sound. Environmental Pragmatism, therefore, can offer a philosophically tenable approach to practical decision making, but only with considerable epistemic legwork to avoid the challenges of self-contradiction, Relativism, or crude instrumentalization of philosophical rhetoric.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, I have presented how one can arrive at Environmental values through Pragmatic reasoning and how one should, as a Pragmatist, relate to these values once one has adopted them. In doing so, I presented a Pragmatist that is fundamentally committed to the continuation of philosophy and capable of assigning environment an instrumental value via its current necessity for philosophy. This, I argued, allows us to arrive at a conception of an Environmental Pragmatist that does not invite challenges of contradiction, because their environmental values originate from their Pragmatic convictions and not from some independent, non-Pragmatic reasoning.

This version of Environmental Pragmatism can offer a philosophically tenable position to defer to and help make decision regarding the environment when we are confronted with unideal options often made worse by the beliefs, values, and motivations of others. However, I concede that to avoid the contradiction one should be prepared to undertake considerable epistemic legwork. However, this should only prove an unsatisfactory conclusion for those uninterested in best ensuring their beliefs and values rest upon justifiable foundations.

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ORGANISM, ENVIRONMENT, AND AFFECTIVITY: FOR A PRAGMATIST READING OF ECO-EMOTIONS

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ABSTRACT: The increasing amount of scientific research on the topic attests to a growing interest in the psychological effects that the ecological and climate crises have had on people. Specifically, climate psychologists have adopted the term 'eco-emotions' to characterize people's emotional reactions to the danger or consequences of climate change and related calamities. This article aims to employ a pragmatist theoretical framework in order to provide a philosophical analysis of eco-emotionality, in relation both to its nature and its potential to transform climate-relevant habits. The concept of 'eco-emotion' is not a rigorous one and often relies on generic definitions and an intuitive understanding of the term. To better comprehend this notion, three relevant aspects are highlighted: its multilayered nature, which involves practical, political, moral, personal, and existential factors; the distinction between more general eco-emotions and more specific climate emotions; and the significance of the geographical context in which they appear. After that, the theoretical backdrop is established, by presenting the pragmatist understanding of emotions developed by William James and John Dewey. In this view, emotions are relational, situated, intelligent, and action-oriented. By placing emotions beyond the narrow borders of the human mind and extending them not only to the body but to the whole environment (both social and natural) James and Dewey present a nuanced ecological conception of emotions. Furthermore, by connecting them to habits they offer a precious insight into their functioning. Finally, building upon the previously established theoretical framework, the article proposes a pragmatist understanding of eco-emotions. This perspective is beneficial in more than one way. From a theoretical standpoint, it provides a direct connection between an organism's emotional life and the environment that organism inhabits. At the same time, by maintaining the continuity between nature and culture, it avoids naïve naturalistic solutions. From a practical standpoint, the pragmatist approach advocates for the political value of eco-emotions, by negating the affectivity-rationality dualism and, instead, insisting on the action-oriented character of emotions. Furthermore, given the link between emotions and habits, it highlights the role eco-emotions could play in changing climate-relevant habits.

Keywords: eco-emotions; pragmatism; environment; climate psychology; ecological crisis; climate-relevant habits

Introduction

In recent years, the study of the psychological impact of the ecological and climate crisis on human beings has garnered much attention, as testified by the growing body of scientific research on the subject. In particular, climate psychologists have started utilizing the concept of 'eco-emotions' in order to describe the emotional response people have when faced with the consequences or the threat of climate change and climate disasters. In this article, I will argue that (1) the pragmatist theoretical framework can be extremely useful to understand the nature of eco-emotions and (2) the pragmatist approach can also enable the potential for pro-environmental transformation inherent in eco-emotions. In order to clarify the terms of the discussion, section 1 will be dedicated to the notion of 'eco-emotions' by covering three crucial aspects: its multilayered nature, which involves moral, political, personal, and existential elements; the distinction between eco-emotions and the more specific term 'climate emotions'; how geographical distribution influences the type of eco-emotional response. Section 2, instead, will be focused on the pragmatist understanding of emotions as found in the works of William James and John Dewey. This approach, I argue, is inherently ecological as it conceptualizes emotions as always relational, situated, and action-oriented. In the final section, the general pragmatist approach to the philosophical study of emotions will be applied to the specific case of eco-emotions. I suggest that this analysis provides both theoretical and practical advantages, not only by fully accounting for the complex stratification of the multiple aspects composing eco-emotions but also by acknowledging their precious role in influencing and changing climate-relevant habits.

1. Defining eco-emotions

In broad terms, eco-emotions are emotional states that people experience in relation to the environment and,

more often than not, in relation to the ecological crises that threaten and affect said environments. Psychologists have identified a great number of eco-emotions (Pikhala (2022) counts about 56 throughout the literature) such as eco-anxiety, eco-anger, eco-guilt, eco-despair but also eco-joy, eco-hope, and many others. Such a proliferation of eco-emotions calls for the identification of some common traits among them in order to better manage the subject. A good starting point to understand this notion is the work of the American philosopher Glenn Albrecht, who pioneered the study of the emotional aspects of the relationship between humans and the Earth (see Albrecht 2005). In general, he suggests, eco-emotions involve "a psychic or emotional state tied to the particular condition of a person's biophysical environment" (Albrecht 2019, 63). In the contemporary psychological literature on the topic, the term "emotion" is utilized very broadly, not paying much attention to its exact definition but rather relying on an intuitive understating of it (Pikhala 2022). This largely depends on the fact that there are many competing theories of emotion, each providing a different definition. Rather than a simple terminological clarification, then, every distinction requires a certain theoretical commitment. This ambiguity, however, can sometimes lead to some confusion. For example, intuitively "emotion" refers to a transient, momentary state, while phenomena such as eco-depression or even eco-anxiety continue over a longer period of time (Schwaab et al. 2022). I shall, both for simplicity's sake and in order to remain coherent with the psychological literature, continue using "eco-emotion" as a broad and flexible umbrella term. That being said, in sections 2 and 3 I will also propose a model of affectivity that I consider the most useful to fully comprehend and discuss eco-emotions.

What is most interesting about this phenomenon is that it reveals a psychological dimension of humanity's involvement with the environment that has been often overlooked. The study of eco-emotions is, therefore, relevant in at least two ways. On the one hand, they are, at least in part, a consequence of climate change and therefore should be investigated together with the other negative consequences of the ecological crisis on human well-being. The health risks of a damaged environment should not only be understood in terms of direct physical harm (natural disasters, droughts, pollution, etc.) but also from the perspective of its psychological and psycho-somatic consequences (Clayton *et al.* 2014). On the other hand, studies have shown how climate-related emotions play an important role in shaping one's behavior. They not only testify to an awareness of environmental issues but also function as prompts to take action. Additionally, as I will argue later in the article, they could also be a tool to better understand affectivity in general and the relationship between humans and their (social and natural) environment.

Before diving into any philosophical discussion of eco-emotions, however, some clarifications are needed. This section will focus on three aspects that are necessary to properly understand the notion of eco-emotion: (1) the layered nature of eco-emotions and how they are composed of multiple elements and motivated by various causes; (2) the distinction between climate emotions, which are by far the most studied, and eco-emotions, which are a more general category to which climate emotions belong; finally, (3) the geographical distribution of eco-emotions and how the presence of different kinds of eco-emotional responses relates to social, economic and political differences.

As mentioned earlier, the climate crisis has led to the development of mental disorders in response to both primary consequences of climate change, such as extreme weather events and disasters like floods and wildfires (Colishaw 2022), and secondary consequences, such as food insecurity and migration (Walinski *et al.* 2023). On the other hand, even those not directly touched by the climate crisis experience forms of psychological and emotional distress such as eco-anxiety. The latter emerges both as an empathic response to the suffering of oth-

ers and as a deep concern for one's own future (Ágoston 2022 *et al*.).

What makes eco-emotions such a fascinating but complex phenomenon are the many kinds of interests that constitute and shape them. There is, of course, the practical concern for one's future situation, which would certainly be negatively impacted by the devastation of one's living environment. However, even this preoccupation has a certain depth, for it is often temporally extended so as to include future generations and thus brings the question of intergenerational justice into the discussion. Morality seems, in fact, deeply linked with the experience of eco-emotions (Kurth & Pikhala 2022). Even without directly suffering from the climate crisis, feelings such as eco-anger can be linked to the perceived injustice of people suffering the consequences of an unsustainable model of natural exploitation. But this need not be limited to the suffering of other humans. The disastrous impact that extractivism and climate change have on Earth's ecosystems, leading to the destruction of non-human animals and plants, can also be the source of moral outrage. Furthermore, the recognition of anthropogenic climate change forces us to reconsider our role *as* human beings. There is, therefore, an existential dimension to emotions such as eco-anxiety, eco-guilt, and eco-despair, which stems from the role humanity has played and keeps playing in the aptly called Anthropocene (Pikhala 2018). If anxiety as a feature of subjectivity is evidently tied to the subject's relatedness to the environment, then eco-anxiety emerges when this environment is specifically characterized as natural (Budziszewska & Jonsson 2021). The responsibility towards the environment, which may in some cases extend beyond the specific interest to preserve one's way of living, must nonetheless return to the practical plane of action, political action in particular. For example, one may experience eco-anger in relation to their government's inability or unwillingness to adopt pro-climate policies (Kleres & Wettenberg 2017; Hickman *et al*. 2021), suffer eco-depression realizing the limited efficacy of individual action or eco-anxiety when confronted with denialist or minimizing opinions in discussions with friends and family (Ágoston *et al*. 2022).

Although most studies speak in general of eco-emotions, most of them are dedicated to a specific subset of eco-emotions, climate emotions. Put simply, climate emotions are those eco-emotions that arise from facing climate change. Of course, the difference between climate emotions and eco-emotions can be connected to the difference between the climate and the ecological crisis. Like in the case of the emotions we presented, the climate crisis is only a part of a wider ecological crisis. Let us take the case of eco-anxiety, probably the most famous and most discussed of all climate emotions (Pikhala 2020). When a person is feeling anxious about the conditions of the environment, they are likely mostly worried about how those changes will impact them and their community. Floods, droughts, desertification, massive crop failures, and similar phenomena directly threaten to forever alter the way of life of millions of people. These worries are, of course, legitimate and, in a time where climate denialism is still a topic of discussion, might even be considered noble and far-sighted. They do not, however, concern the ecological crisis to its full extent.

Take, for example, the human-induced decline in biodiversity, which proceeds at an abnormally accelerated rate and has therefore led some biologists to denounce a sixth mass extinction (Leaky & Lewin 1995). From the point of view of Earth's ecosystem, this is a tragedy. Yet, given the fact that the species that fall victim to this mass extinction are mostly species of insects (which, in actuality, constitute about 80% of earth's biodiversity) one may not be so touched by this fact. This bias toward non-human animals which somehow feel more human compared to alien-looking insects is so strong that some studies denying the sixth mass extinction fail to consider the insect population entirely (Cowie *et al*. 2022). Someone may be anxious when imagining their future in a climate apocalypse, while not necessarily caring about a

number of unknown 'bugs' who disappear from the face of the earth at an alarming rate. If one intends to consider eco-emotions beyond their role in the individual's psychological well-being, as instruments to understand, and act in, the ecological crisis, it may be wise to not exclusively insist on climate-related emotivity.

In criticizing the rise of an often catastrophic and pessimistic outlook on the current climate crisis adopted by certain authors (Scranton 2018; Franzen 2021), some have pointed out that despair is a privilege that only those not directly faced with its consequences can enjoy (Whyte 2020; Higgins 2022). Those in the global West, who only recently have come to face the consequences of the environmental crisis and yet only in milder ways, can more easily declare that it is "too late". This becomes even more egregious if we think that the privileged Westerners not only do not directly face the environmental crisis' harshest consequences but also enjoy the benefits of the exploitative economic system that caused them in the first place.

This seems to be confirmed by recent evidence on the geographical distribution of the different kinds of eco-emotions. Although the study of eco-emotions has been heavily skewed toward the Global North (Coffey 2021), centering mostly around young adults in White, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic (WEIRD) contexts (Hiser & Lynch 2021), recent studies move towards embracing a wider variety of experiences (Cooper *et al*. 2019; Hickman *et al*. 2021). In a recent exploratory study, Voski *et al*. (2023) found that, unlike their Western counterparts, Turkish environmentalists are more likely to experience eco-anger and eco-grief rather than eco-anxiety. It is also worth mentioning where this eco-anger is directed: not just to the Turkish government, but to the Global North, identified as responsible for the current crisis. Privileged Westerners seem to agree, as they are also more prone to experience eco-guilt, together with the aforementioned eco-anxiety.

Something should however be highlighted. Despite maybe being dictated by a more privileged position in the geo-political map, emotions such as eco-anxiety and even eco-depression do, in fact, contribute to elicit engagement with environmental issues. Though there is only limited evidence, initial studies present, at least in the case of climate activism, a much more complex picture than the traditional equation between psychological despair and political inaction. A 2021 study reports that participants who experienced feelings of eco-depression while doubting the effectiveness of activism at the individual level were more likely to be involved in collective forms of activism; those who experienced eco-anxiety, instead, focused more on their own individual behavior veering towards more sustainable habits (Stanley *et al*. 2021). Though we might have expected the opposite, eco-depression does not inhibit political and climatic activism but uses the latter as a means of managing feelings of sadness and psychological malaise (Schwartz *et al*. 2022). Eco-paralysis, i.e. the inability to decide and act when faced with the psychologically distressing reality of climate change, is, of course, a possibility (Davenport 2017). Engaging in pro-environmental behavior is, however, a successful coping strategy (Ciancioni *et al*. 2023), that enables individuals to take control of their environmental impact and even to form communities.

2. The pragmatist view on emotions

Classical pragmatists have greatly contributed to the development of the contemporary study of emotions ever since its conception, and are still to this day a precious source of inspiration for the research on the topic. In this section, I will highlight one particular aspect of the pragmatist view on emotions: their ecological and relational nature. This feature, as will become apparent later, is crucial to understand that special subset of the emotional life which falls under the name of "eco-emotions".

Among the pragmatists, William James is probably the one most directly associated with a theory of emotions even outside the philosophical circles. The James-

Lange theory of emotions (called this way in recognition of the similar but independently developed work of Danish physician Carl Georg Lange) represents an important step in the field of psychology. The most well-known feature of James's account is his focus on the somatic aspects of emotionality. Against the commonsensical idea that bodily changes follow an emotion triggered by an exciting external factor as if they are expressions of an internal feeling, he identified those bodily changes with the emotion itself. In James's own words, his theory is that "the bodily changes follow directly the perception of the exciting fact, and that our feeling of the same changes as they occur IS the emotion" (James 1884, 189-190). While in Darwin's reconstruction (1872), which had a great influence on the pragmatists, bodily changes follow the emergence of an internal state, James inverts the order. According to the famous (some would say infamous) slogan: It's not that I run because I'm afraid; rather, I'm afraid because I run. Rather than debating the viability of this thesis, which has its contemporary defenders in neo-Jamensians such as Damasio (1994) and Prinz (2004), it is important to recognize its merits.

The most well-known, and maybe even most important, contribution to the philosophical and psychological discussion of emotion is the establishment of the prominent role of the body. James's somatism is very influential, but there are other interesting aspects that should be considered. By emphasizing the plasticity of the human nervous system, James (1890) introduces the idea that the brain is a constant relation of exchange with its surroundings. Social, cultural, and environmental factors contribute to shaping the organism since birth, and emotions, in this sense, are a sign of the radical openness of the organism to its environment. In fact, James, in true Darwinian fashion, connects our emotional life to an adaptive function: "Our various ways of feeling and thinking have grown to be what they are because of their utility in shaping our *reactions* on the outer world" (1892, 4). Furthermore, since "the most important part of my environment is my fellow man" (James 1884), a social dimension is also present. It is not the single object to elicit a certain emotion, but the situation in which the organism encounters said object. Past experiences, as well as socially derived interpretations, contribute to situating the emotion-provoking object in the present circumstances (Barbalet 2001).

Emotion is, thus, not only corporeal but situated. It defines the organism's involvement with the world and, again following a Darwinian approach, its capacity to navigate it. According to James, emotions let us assign value to things and therefore direct our actions; without them, we would be detached and lost in our own environment (Ratcliffe 2005, 188). The emotional encounter with the situated object contributes to shaping both the object and the situation by bringing the needs and concerns of the organism into the picture. An interesting consequence of this view (and one which James coherently develops) is that cognition cannot be separated from affectivity, let alone stand on its own: Rationality itself is guided in some form by elements belonging to the realm of affectivity (James 1879).

These ideas can also be found in the works of John Dewey. Already in his first book, *Psychology*, of 1887, Dewey connected the concept of emotion with that of interest. The organism participates in the world by evaluating its surrounding environment, but such an evaluation cannot be reduced to a purely cognitive judgment. Adopting the functionalist psychology developed by James and inspired by Darwin (Dewey 1971), the philosopher connects affectivity with the function of preserving and advancing life. Similarly, Deweyan instrumentalist logic, which is maximally developed in *Logic: Theory of Inquiry* (1986), traces abstract reasoning and knowledge acquisition back to a biological basis. Again inspired by Darwinian evolutionary theory, Dewey considers the ability to reason and know things about the world as a tool developed by the human organism in relation to its environment in order to survive and thrive. Cognition and

reasoning, however, cannot be separated from emotivity, let alone be placed on a superior level (Cunningham 1995). On the contrary, Dewey is quoted by his student Earl Peckham as saying that "knowledge is a small cup of water floating on a sea of emotion" (Williams 1982, 127). Furthermore, emotion is not simply the foundation of rational thought, from which the latter develops in continuity rather than in opposition, but also its culmination. Rationality does not stand on its own, disembodied, unemotional, and aethereal. Rather "'Reason' at its height cannot attain complete grasp and a self-contained assurance. It must fall back upon imagination—upon the embodiment of ideas in emotionally charged sense" (Dewey 1980, 33). Thus, emotion does not simply aid the process of knowledge acquisition through its initial role of proto-valuation (Dewey 1984a), but guides it and completes it (Quéré 2018). As stated before, emotions are the organism enjoying or suffering the environment and thus rest on the same level of cognitive reasoning, for "knowing is but one special case of the agent-patient, of the behaver-enjoyer-sufferer situation" (Dewey 1978, 120).

On a Deweyan reading, emotions carry an element of proto-valuation, that is, a form of evaluation that is not the result of a cognitive judgment but depends on how the organism feels in the situation it is in (Dreon 2019, 86). There always is, then, an intelligent content to emotion, although not a reflexive one. What the (proto-)valuative aspect of emotions indicates is that their relationality should not be understood simply as object-oriented, but also as action-oriented (Hufendiek 2021, 105). Better yet, object-orientedness should be understood directly as action-orientedness. According to Dewey (1971), in fact, emotions are characterized by a "readiness to act in a certain way" that the body assumes towards some object or situation. This idea is even present etymologically in the word emotion, which comes from the Latin *emovere*, to cause movement. Such a reading bears some similarities with the cognitivist position on emotion. For example, much like Dewey, Arnold and Gasson (1954) define emotion as "the felt tendency towards an object judged suitable, or away judged unsuitable, reinforced by specific bodily changes". The limits of such a definition, however, are evident and constitute a step back from pragmatism. To think of emotions this way would mean restricting them to an afterthought, something once again emerging from cognition and depending on it. But, as noted by the American neuroscientist Joseph LeDoux, "it is, indeed, possible for your brain to know that something is good or bad before it knows exactly what it is" (1998, 65). This distinction between a primary, non-reflexive, appraisal and a secondary, reflexive, appraisal (Colombetti 2014) is very much in line with the role that Dewey attributes to emotions.

They not only extend through the body, as James observed but are also always about the environment in which the organism finds itself and is directed towards acting in said environment. As expressed by Dewey in this passage of *Experience and Nature*, the nature of emotion is not passivity but participation:

> Emotion in its ordinary sense is something called out *by* objects, physical and personal; it is response *to* an objective situation. It is not something existing by itself which then employs material through which to express itself. Emotion is an indication of intimate participation, in a more or less excited way in some scene of nature or life; it is, so to speak, an attitude or disposition which is a function of objective things (Dewey 1929, 390).[1]

The constitutive role of our surroundings intended not only as the origin of affect but also as a resource and a field of action, is an aspect many psychologists have come to recognize. Emotions, as Frijda & Mesquita write, are "first and foremost, modes of relating to the environment: states of readiness for engaging, or not engaging, in interaction with that environment" (1994, 51; see also Lazarus 1991). But Dewey's view seems to go further than that. Emotions are not an internal, private matter; on the contrary, they exist 'out there', in the world (Morse 2010).

[1] Emphasis in the original.

"Emotion belongs of a certainty to the self", Dewey notes, "but it belongs to the self that is concerned in the movement of events towards an issue that is desired or disliked" (1980, 42). Dewey's ecological conception of emotions should therefore be understood in the context of his 'eco-ontology', as Alexander (2013) has called it. Organisms and environment are not separate and independent beings that could stand on their own. They are, instead, complementary and interdependent. Their interaction is primary, while the separation of the two as distinct elements is secondary and only the result of a subsequent operation of abstraction (Dewey 1984a): By vindicating the priority of transaction and processes over the traditional notion of static and independent objects, Dewey salvages the reality of qualitative experience, including emotional experience (Dewey 1960). Through the primitive concept of 'association', Dewey (1984b; 1988) is able to present the objects in which we normally divide the world as primarily and constitutively in relation to each other and to their environment. Even the traditional philosophical distinction and contraposition between subject and object fades, as it is not possible to clearly distinguish one from the other once one recognizes their constant permeation and cooperation (Dewey & Bentley 1991). Yet, one should not consider this as a form of Parmenidean monism where the variety of the world is but an illusion veiling an unchanged Oneness. On the contrary, organisms and environments are in a constant relationship of *transaction*, whereby each transforms and adapts in a looping circle of creative and reciprocal exchange.

The notion of transaction is essential to understanding Dewey's conception of habit and its relationship with emotions. According to Dewey, in fact, habit is the result of the dynamic process of transaction between an organism and its social and natural environment. Both the physiological conditions of the organism and the material and social conditions of its surroundings contribute to the cooperation between organisms and environment necessary for the birth of habits: walking requires the ground as well as the legs and even breathing involves both the air and the lungs (Dewey 1983). Despite the widespread prejudice painting habits as mindless, automatic, and mechanical, Dewey insists on their adaptiveness. They require, at the same time, both the adaptation of our behavior to the environment and the adaptation of the environment to our behavior. Even though habits are, by their nature, acquired and stable dispositions and therefore somewhat resistant to change, they also demonstrate a sensitivity to variations which determines their ability to change. This ability to capture malfunctioning habits is, indeed, emotion. As Dewey puts it, emotion emerges from "the failure of habitual teleological machinery, through some disturbance in one or more of the adjusted members of the habit" (1971, 139). While a person might not pay attention to a habit as long as it is doing its job and might not even be fully aware of its presence, once the habit fails or malfunctions its existence becomes apparent. As Dewey writes in *Human Nature and Conduct*:

> Emotion is a perturbation from clash or failure of habit, and reflection, roughly speaking, is the painful effort of disturbed habits to readjust themselves. [...] In truth, feelings as well as reason spring up within action. Breach of custom or habit is the source of sympathetic resentment, while overt approbation goes out to fidelity to custom maintained under exceptional circumstances (Dewey 1983, 54).

During our everyday transactions with the world surrounding us, a single habit might not yield the expected result, or a certain situation might involve two conflicting habits. Although this is presented as an unpleasant experience, it still has a crucial and indispensable function: emotions detect both a change in the environment and the need for a proportionate change in the organism.

3. Eco-emotions from a pragmatist standpoint

Having provided a general overview of what eco-emotions are and the pragmatist understanding of emotions, I proceed now to combine the two and apply the

pragmatist framework to the philosophical study of eco-emotions. A pragmatist understanding of eco-emotions offers both theoretical and practical advantages. As for the theoretical advantages, pragmatism enhances our understanding of eco-emotions by establishing a direct correlation between the organism's emotional life and the environment and by affirming the continuity between the cultural and the natural. For what concerns the practical advantages, pragmatism reveals the potential of translating eco-emotivity in practical, political, and concrete ways by showing the interrelatedness of the emotional and the rational and action-oriented character of this union, and by framing eco-emotions as tools to acknowledge and transform eco-relevant habits.

Dewey's non-dualistic naturalism certainly offers a way to dispute the asymmetry between humans and the non-human world. Qualitative experiences such as eco-anxiety, eco-anger but also eco-euphoria, and other positive eco-emotions are not confined to the realm of closed subjectivity but are a way of actively participating in nature. This fundamental intuition informs Dewey's masterpiece *Experience and Nature*:

> Experience is *of* as well as *in* nature. It is not experience which is experienced, but nature — stones, plants, animals, diseases, health, temperature, electricity, and so on. Things interacting in certain ways are experience; they are what is experienced. Linked in certain other ways with another natural object — the human organism — they are how things are experienced as well. Experience thus reaches down into nature; it has depth (Dewey 1929, 4a)[2].

The emotional holism evoked by these words is deeply connected to the aesthetic aspects of experiencing nature often found in poetry and works of art. As expressed by Lord Byron in his 1818 poem *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*: "I live not in myself, but I become/ Portion of that around me; and to me,/ High mountains are a feeling" (Byron 2014). For another example, one could also think of the comprehensive harmony of nature found in *Leaves of Grass* by Walt Whitman, a poet whom Dewey greatly admired (Garrison 2011). The assumption that there is a special emotional relationship between humanity and nature seems to capture a distinctive aspect of eco-emotions. At the same time, however, a simplistic and naïve biophilic interpretation of these affective phenomena is destined to fail in at least two ways. Firstly, it would not be able to properly account for the political aspects of eco-emotions; secondly, it would disregard the fact that human organisms are, as Dewey would put it, naturally cultural and can in no way be reduced to one dimension or the other.

The biophilia hypothesis, first proposed by biologist E.O. Wilson (1984; 1993), suggests that there is a distinct and innate bond connecting humans with nature and other living organisms. A consequence of the hypothesis that there is a specific "emotional affiliation" (Wilson 2002, 134) between humans and nature is that exposure to the natural environment has positive effects on human well-being, especially mental and emotional health. This affiliation can also be connected with the idea of 'biospheric values', i.e. the intrinsic worth some people attribute to nature, the environment, and all living organisms, usually leading them to engage in pro-environmental behavior (Wang *et al*. 2021). Wilson argues in favor of biophilia on an evolutionary basis: throughout human evolution, our ancestors who were more attuned to nature and had a strong connection with the natural environment were more likely to survive and reproduce (Berto & Barbiero 2021). As a result, a predisposition or affinity for nature has become ingrained in human psychology. Though not without criticism (Joye & DeBlock 2011), it has been suggested that the biophilia hypothesis captures the very intuition at the basis of eco-psychology in general (Roszak *et al*. 1995). Furthermore, although not conclusive, there is a fairly vast pool of scientific evidence pointing to the beneficial effect of exposure to nature (McMahan & Estes 2015; Gaekwad *et al*. 2022). By being grounded in evolutionary theory, the biophil-

[2] Emphasis in the original.

ia hypothesis demonstrates an immediate affinity with pragmatism. However, if it were to stop at the level of a primitivistic theory of a return to nature, with a static and idyllic (as well as unclear and obscure) notion of what nature is, it would fail the pragmatist test. In fact, Dewey's "cultural naturalism" is based on the rejection of both the nature-culture dualism and reductionism, in favor of a dynamic and plastic interplay between the cultural and the natural (Gregoratto *et al*. 2022). The most recent developments in biophilia recognize the risks of failure to account for the continuity between the natural and the cultural settings and actually try to utilize said continuity. For example, biophilic design tries to translate the inherent affinity of human organisms for natural environments to the design of built environments (Kellert *et al*. 2013). The notion of "topophilia", on the other hand, replaces the controversial distinction between natural and non-natural environments with the concept of *topos*, a specific and experienced place characterized by the continuity of natural and cultural aspects as interacting with each other (Beery *et al*. 2015). "The capacity of the human species *to bond with*",[3] Barbiero (2011) notes, "is only in part genetically programmed, and instead depends to a large degree upon the development of psychological potentials that themselves depend more upon cultural than genetic contexts". Thus, the biophilic framework calls for the development of an affective ecology aimed at educating people at cultivating the required awareness and sensibility necessary to understand their connection to the environment (Barbiero 2014).

Take the term 'solastalgia', coined and developed by Albrecht (2005; 2020) as a blend word resulting from the union of 'solace' and 'nostalgia'. This very specific eco-emotion describes the psychological distress suffered by people who are impacted by climate change in direct connection to their home environment. A lived place where they could solace and rest is now disrupted, severing the connection that the organism had with that environment. Given the co-constitutive relation between organism and environment illustrated in the previous paragraph, an ecological disaster represents a direct loss of an emotional resource. In particular, the distress identified by Albrecht could be understood in relation to the notion of *affective environmental scaffoldings* (Colombetti & Kruger 2015). The idea at the core of affective scaffoldings is that the processes of emotional regulation are not exclusively mental but are corporally, socially, and materially distributed. Consequently, the devastation of a *topos*, a specific lived and experienced place, also represents the devastation of an emotional space. Importantly, though, emotional regulation through scaffoldings does not equate to emotional alienation. For this reason, some have suggested avoiding the reification of affective scaffoldings (the body, other people, material objects) by thinking of them as processes and activities (Candiotto & Piredda 2019). In particular, I follow Dreon & Candiotto (2019) in thinking of affective scaffoldings as habits. As they rightly observe, the constant transaction between organism and environment, illustrated in section 2, is always emotionally charged and therefore bound to generate affective habits. Though the example of solastalgia is especially fitting, as it deals directly with the previous emotional implication of the organism-environment whole, I suggest that this model could be applicable to all forms of eco-trauma. Take the case of droughts, an increasingly common consequence of the climate crisis which a great number of studies link to anxiety, depression, as well as other mental health issues (Vins *et al*. 2015). After prolonged exposure to a drought, the psychological distress caused by the situation decreases, although other well-being factors such as life satisfaction also decrease (Luong *et al*. 2021). This could be interpreted, through the pragmatist framework presented here, as processes of habituation in which the warping of the environment calls for an adaptation, at the emotional level, of the organism. The Deweyan trans-

[3] Emphasis in the original.

action, one should keep in mind, is not a one-and-done exchange but a constant process of shaping, reshaping, and adapting. Habits do not simply form in accordance with the environment, but they constitute both the environment itself and the organism, up to the very psychological and physiological level (Sullivan 2015).

As mentioned before, however, being situated in nature and in society as a form of co-constitutive participatory cooperation only makes sense if understood in terms of an activity. Kałwak & Weihgold (2022), for example, lament that focusing exclusively on the personal therapeutic level of eco-emotion-related pathologies is an overall misguided attempt at individualistic solutions to a broader societal problem. The pragmatist approach, however, by establishing a continuity between the rational and the emotional and by emphasizing the action-oriented character of the latter, enables the political potential of eco-emotions, whose constitutive function is both detecting and eliciting change. Although the debate on the nature of populism often relies on the use of 'emotional' as a derogatory term representing the polar opposite of rationality, the emotional dimension of politics has also received much positive attention, as part of the so-called 'affective turn' (Nussbaum 2015; Massumi 2015). Of course, in a sense, every emotion is in some way political, as it is concerned with people's relationship with their environment and with others, thus influencing how individuals act. As seen in section 1, eco-emotions express in uninterrupted continuity both the attribution of biophilic intrinsic value to nature and the concern for the socio-economic problems caused by climate change (economic crises, forced migration, physical health risks, etc.).

Eco-emotions testify to the failure of patterns of habitual behavior. In the case of victims of some form of ecological disaster or extreme phenomenon (droughts, wildfires but also desertification or rising sea levels), habits malfunction as they lack the previously stable environment in which they were developed. Eco-emotions resulting from indirect experiences of the ecological crises (such as eco-anxiety or eco-depression), instead, derive from a forceful reconsideration of habits. Although there are still climate-change deniers and other forms of opposition to environmentalism, the widespread green awareness has made it so that deeply engrained and fully mechanized habits are now being questioned. Previously silent habits, which we would reproduce unattentively, now become loud because something has gone wrong with their execution (James 1890). Unexpected consequences of what is supposed to be a reliable behavior which we have internalized call for a re-framing of said behavior and a consequent re-adjustment of the whole organism. In the case of eco-emotions, they specifically detect the relevance of natural environments and resources for our ways of living, attributing to certain inattentive habitual behaviors the unseen feature of being 'ecologically relevant'. As a matter of fact, the environmental impact of each individual depends largely on habitual behaviors. Factors such as means of transportation, diet, waste production and management, recycling, water, and energy consumption, and general purchasing habits are all determinant climate-relevant habits (Abrahamse 2019; Verplanken & Whitmarsh 2021). Rather than thinking of environmentally consequential actions as the result of deliberative thought, one should frame them as routines ingrained in everyday life and connected to wider social practices (Kurz *et al*. 2014). For example, water consumption on the individual level is mostly associated with hygiene, which does not only refer to the health of the body but also to a social requirement and a social practice. As it turns out, however, it has also an important impact on the world around us, beyond those expected. And so, simple habits such as leaving the water running while brushing one's teeth or regularly buying fast fashion to stay up to date with the latest fad, become ecologically charged. This ecological awareness, which could be thought of as the habit of considering the ecological impact of the actions we take, often clashes with everyday life.

For these reasons, a major problem for anyone interested in promoting pro-environmental policies is how to transform habits. Emotions, due to their close relationship with habits, appear to be a promising candidate for this role (Petit 2021; Petit & Ballet 2021). Unfortunately, however, there is no clear-cut, mechanical formula to translate emotions into desired actions. The very ecological-transactional nature of habit makes it so that it is impossible to determine *a priori* how to transform it, without considering the specific situation which constitutes it. Nevertheless, we are still able to investigate the possibilities and the limits of the eco-emotional approach in order to find potential strategies to stimulate pro-environmental attitudes. In their pragmatist analysis of the so-called 'ecology of fear', Ballet, Bazin & Petit (2023) emphasize the importance of distinguishing between intense fear and moderate fear. Where intense fear, which is fueled by generic narratives of collapse, is a malfunctioning emotion because it is directionless and does not lead to action, moderate fear is purposeful, intelligent, and action-oriented. The latter, in fact, functions as a way of rationally assessing the situation with the precise objective of acting in some useful way. Negative emotions do not, simply by virtue of being negative, inhibit active interest in the issues of climate change, nor do they discourage people from changing their behaviors. On the contrary, research shows that negative emotions are as likely as positive ones to increase awareness of the climate crisis and willingness to act accordingly (Wong-Parodi & Feygina 2021). A violent burst of fear, however, might paradoxically lead to numbness and disinterest. For example, Pedwell (2017; 2021) points out that overexposure to dramatic images of suffering, while effective at first, may lead to 'compassion fatigue', for every repeat emotion, over time, starts to wither and lose intensity. If this is the case, emotionally shocking but ultimately transient communication strategies are destined to fail even if they attempt to evoke moderate fear. The sustained pro-environmental behavior necessary to have a lasting impact cannot be fueled by simple emotion-inducing processes, as emotional responses dwindle and fade away as time goes by (Schwartz & Loewenstein 2017). The solution to the problem of habit transformation may, instead, be found in habit itself, as "more enduring forms of sociopolitical transformation may emerge less through affective revolutions than through the accumulation, reverberation, and reshaping of minor affective responses, interactions, gestures, and habits" (Pedwell 2021, 132).

If we desire to harness the power of eco-emotions, I suggest we should think of ecological affective education as the development of a meta-habit sensitive to the world around us and its changes. By meta-habit, I mean a habit that is geared towards the reconsideration and, if necessary, transformation of other habits. Of course, it would mean finding ways to stimulate in this direction those who do not experience eco-emotions. On the other hand, however, it would also mean avoiding both the threat of desensitization and that of being overwhelmed by excessively intense feelings.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper has delved into the intricate realm of eco-emotions, exploring their multifaceted nature and the crucial role they play in shaping human responses to the ecological and climate crisis. By employing a pragmatist theoretical framework, inspired by the works of William James and John Dewey, I have argued that this perspective offers valuable insights into understanding and harnessing the potential for pro-environmental transformation inherent in eco-emotions. The analysis of eco-emotions highlighted their multilayered composition, encompassing moral, political, personal, and existential elements. The distinction between eco-emotions and climate emotions has been clarified, in order to provide a nuanced understanding of the emotional responses triggered by environmental challenges. Moreover, the examination of how geographical distribu-

tion influences eco-emotional responses has highlighted the contextual nature of these reactions. Building upon the pragmatist philosophy, which conceives emotions as inherently relational, situated, and action-oriented, this paper has proposed a framework that aligns with the ecological dynamics of eco-emotions. By recognizing emotions as active agents capable of influencing and changing climate-relevant habits, the pragmatist approach offers both theoretical and practical advantages in comprehending the complexities of eco-emotions. In the broader context of philosophical studies on emotions, the application of a pragmatist lens to eco-emotions has unveiled a promising avenue for further exploration. The insights gleaned from this analysis contribute to a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness between human emotions and environmental concerns, fostering a holistic approach to addressing the ecological and climate crisis. As we navigate the challenges posed by a changing climate, it becomes imperative to acknowledge the profound impact of eco-emotions on individual and collective behavior. By integrating the pragmatist framework into discussions on the psychological dimensions of the ecological crisis, we can pave the way for informed and actionable strategies that leverage the transformative potential inherent in human emotional responses. Ultimately, this paper advocates for an ecological perspective on emotions, urging us to consider the complex interplay between human feelings and environmental issues as a tool to modify existing climate-relevant habits.

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TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE ARCHITECTURE. NON-DESIGN AND MULTISENSORY EXPERIENCE AS ADAPTIVE STRATEGIES

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ABSTRACT: Architecture plays an important role in human activities and, at the same time, contributes significantly to greenhouse gas emissions. Even though it is closely linked with capital and growth, the field is undergoing new directions. Multiple crises like pandemics, climate change, and wars influence designers and thinkers. It results, among other outcomes, in a shift away from the concept of creating impressive architectural masterpieces to designing spaces that prioritize the perspective of everyday and ordinary experiences. One of the most interesting and radical strategies involves the concept of minimizing architects' interventions, at times nearly reducing them to nothing. This paper elucidates a method referred to by some researchers as 'non-design.' It outlines how this approach aligns with critical theory and leads to the analysis of potential links between architecture and somaesthetics. I explore how a pragmatic perspective can potentially transform not only our approach to bodily care and our connection to sensuality but also influence the organization of our living spaces and adaptation to climate change for the sake of maintaining the balance and sustainability of our planet. Just as we train and treat our bodies to resist vulnerability and aging, similar forces have been reshaping architecture recently. One of the probable causes is the prevalent ocular-centric attitude and the demand for rapidly changing, visually striking images in our cities. A potential solution lies in cultivating sensory introspection and the ability to experience everyday moments in a multi-sensorial way, fostering joy and satisfaction. To present a non-design method, the project of Lacaton and Vassal, the Pritzker Prize winners, is described and analyzed. It is the Leon Aucoc Plaza in Bordeaux that kept its original form following architectural intervention, a consequence of the design process. As further elaborated, the project also provides residents with a multisensory experience of ordinary space.

Keywords: architecture, non-design, climate crisis, somaesthetic, ocular-centrism, multisensory, experience

Introduction

The complexity and severity of the climate crisis as a wicked problem underscore the idea that we, as human beings, need to change in every aspect of our lives. Just as scientists who work on IPCC reports show, to adapt to the consequences of global warming and reduce its speed and level, wide-ranging actions are needed. They consist of changes in energy production, agriculture, and industry, but also transportation, waste management, and its reduction (Bińczyk, 2018, loc. 524). Most of them necessitate actions that are beyond an individual's capacity and should be undertaken by political entities and corporations, but at the same time, lots of work is to be done in reshaping how we contemplate our lifestyles and consumption patterns. This always exists in certain relations to the environment, commonly referred to as nature, and to others, often less privileged. It is based on the everyday life experiences organized by bodies, forming its core—a concept crucial to pragmatic philosophy (Shusterman, 2011, 283). As a cultural studies scholar and architect, my interest is focused on the meanings and values embedded in architecture. These are experienced during dwelling or as one passes through them (Ibid., 294).

The building industry is rarely considered an impactful branch in terms of climate change, while it covers about 1/3 of the whole world's emissions. This number consists of "production of materials, construction, and maintenance of buildings, followed by their demolition, storage, and disposal" (Kępiński and Krężlik, 2022, 29). While some architects, and scientists struggle to discover more sustainable materials and building strategies (for example utilizing materials available in nearby neighborhoods), there is also a significant need for critical reflection on what really needs to be constructed. This consideration is based on the observation that many investments do not serve society but rather benefit companies (Ibid., 29), invertors, or municipal authorities who prove their commitment through renovations or reconstructions of public spaces and buildings. This dynamic fits perfectly with the capitalist narrative of continuous growth, modernization, and consumerist fashions characterized by short seasons and a desire to change style and aesthetics from the ones that are currently promot-

ed. While inventing real innovations that help build in a sustainable way may be important, reducing interventions in architecture and urbanism is crucial. A possible and necessary change in architecture towards preserving as much as possible of the urban design and buildings as they are, as opposed to replacing them with new ones, may involve accepting aesthetic imperfections. At the same time, it can be a gesture that maintains a sense of continuity through an appreciation of longevity. As shown in subsequent sections, such architecture has the potential to influence the senses and counteract the anxieties of a culture that desires frequent change and superficial aesthetics. In this paper, this is explained by analyzing successively: the non-design method and its possible references to critical theory, the sensual and somaesthetical potential of architecture, and the problematic ocular-centric attitude that characterizes our culture. Furthermore, these theories are applied to describe and analyze an exceptional architectural project: Léon Aucoc Plaza in Bordeaux, (non-)designed by the Lacaton & Vassal architectural studio, that earned the Pritzker Prize.

Non-design method and its connections with critical theory

The non-design method was anticipated and developed by Tony Fry and Cameron Tonkinwise. It does not concern architecture alone but more widely refers to the design industry in general. The fundamental insight of non-design theorists stems from the awareness that the process of design leads to destruction in two ways.

The first is the result of how we define it: after Herbert Simone understood design as a process that "chang[es] existing situations into preferred ones," (Simone, 1969, 111) it consists in creating new products with novel features or resembling their already-existing forms. A product that ceases to be attractive because it has been replaced stops being used or bought, and then whole consignments of unwanted equipment end up as rubbish and certainly cease to be produced. In this sense, design based on the creation of preferences is ultimately a matter of the life and death of products (Tonkinwise, 2018, 74). As Cameron Tonkinwise writes, "designers do not change existing situations into preferred ones; they destroy what exists, replacing it with the preferred one" (Ibid., 75). To illustrate this mechanism in relation to architecture, one can cite situations in which existing buildings are demolished to construct new ones that will generate more profit, manifest wealth, or possess other qualities. Sometimes, if demolition is not legal, historic buildings are intentionally exposed to destruction by stripping them of their roofs or windows.

The impact on infrastructure is the second type of harm that new designs have the potential to cause. This occurred, for example, when new kitchen appliances were popularized. Because they required a different installation than primitive kitchens, it resulted in a change in the entire electrical system (Ibid., 76). Another similar case is the replacement of fuel-powered cars with electric ones. This change necessitates adjustments across the entire network of petrol stations, requiring the addition of charging stations. Thus, a significant modernisation was required when cars were first invented. Their current number and drivers' expectations mean that wider and wider or simply new roads are constantly being built in cities, often cutting down trees and destroying valuable natural places in the process. As research by David Lewis and Martin Mogridge shows, there is not necessarily any potential in this to solve the problem of the congested city (Lewis, 1997, 155–16; Mogridge, 1990, 8). More road capacity only encourages more drivers to use it, and in this way, perpetuating traffic jams. To eliminate them, we need fewer cars. Thus, an intangible but once-promising design action would be to improve public transport; only this has a chance of preventing traffic jams. But it is not only new infrastructure that may be required for new projects or new actions. What also emerges is a new habit: the way we read the news may influence our breakfast, and in turn, how we get to work

implies other facts. Opting to cycle, for example, might prompt us to bring a second, clean t-shirt and allocate more time for commuting than if we were driving. Additionally, we can anticipate an improvement in our fitness; thus, some innovations also require managing expectations (Tonkinwise, 2018, 76).

The double-edged nature of design, understood from an ontological perspective as 'emergence' and a way of creating the socio-material world (Fry, 2012), is expressed through both its power and its harmful potential. "In other words, human creation, including design culture, encompasses the totality of Promethean power and is both far-reaching and destructive. Creating new devices, objects, and technologies is like opening Pandora's box: once created in the world, things create a life of their own, which does not always correspond to what their creators expected" (Mareis, Greiner-Petter, Renner, 2022, 9). That's why non-design does not succumb to the fad of green products, because de facto, they do not affect the greater sustainability of all consumption that exists in the world. As Tony Fry points out, substituting objects and services for those that are more sustainable is ineffective insofar as it only creates an alternative product liked by those interested in environmentalism, and among the dominant user base, unsustainable designs have little clout (Fry, 2015, 146). In a reality where the very existence of objects and innovations can be problematic, the non-design method appears as an interesting alternative. One of the representatives of this movement, Cameron Tonkinwise, calls for deprogressive design and the renunciation of objects. Refusing to design and build, to alter things needlessly results in a fresh perspective on design itself.

Thinking about design as an ambivalent and destructive activity is not only a reflection of the designers but also aligns with past considerations of thinkers from the Frankfurt School. As Bińczyk recalled, following Herbert Marcuse, the structure of human actions in capitalism is dualistic: "satisfaction is always tied to destruction. The dominance of nature is tied to the violation of nature. The search for new sources of energy is tied to the poisoning of the life environment. Technical progress is tied to the progressive manipulation and control of human beings" (Marcuse, 1992, 33, cf. Bińczyk, 2022, 2, 121) and it "has the character of a superficial and inauthentic 'euphoria in misery'" (Ibid.). Marcuse criticized consumerism, showing that it transforms „waste into need" (Ibid. 120)—which can easily be connected with the design industry supported by the advertising sector that produces „artificial needs and aspirations [...]" (Ibid., 121). In "Dialectic of Enlightenment," written by Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, an engine of self-destructive processes is identified as technocratic rationality. The authors pointed it out as a danger for both human and natural existence. With this base, the founders of critical theory postulate a complete shift from material objects to the immaterial sphere of the intellect (Geiger, 2022, 39). In this way, philosophers from the Frankfurt School deny the possibility that material objects would have the capacity to serve as media for critical thinking (Ibid., 36).

I do not think that an absolute renunciation of production of new objects or buildings is possible; nevertheless, strict limitations are both possible and essential. Since most objects already exist, what is sometimes needed is only some change, refurbishment, or reconstruction. Also, if the paradigm of architecture (or more broadly, design) changed from serving capital to serving people and their everyday life experiences, this new attitude could improve not only the quality of human lives but also our relationship with the environment. I believe this can be reinforced by reflective thinking and theoretical analyses. Still, what is also crucial is the experience of our bodies and senses—the field of interest of somaesthetics.

Somaesthetic and overproduction

"The body is the storm center, the origin of coordinates, the constant place of stress in [our] experience train. Ev-

erything circles round it, and is felt from its point of view," wrote William James, who continued by explaining that our experience of the world "comes at all times with our body as its center, center of vision, center of action, center of interest" (James, 1976, 86, c.f. Shusterman, 2011, 288). While this may seem problematic at first due to the anthropocentric perspective, especially in relation to the climate crisis and the non-human, the pragmatic perspective does not ignore the experiencing subject's relationship with the environment. That is why I am eager to consider the pragmatist tradition as useful and important, which I identify for one more reason. Studies by Pierre Bourdie, Judith Butler, and Susan Bordo demonstrate how the body is both sculpted by and used as a tool to uphold power, how social pressures are reflected and sustained in bodily norms of ability, health, and beauty, and even in our classifications of sex and gender (Shusterman, 2008, 23). But just as the body, when treated as an object, can be subordinated to culturally promoted aesthetic requirements, somaesthetics suggests, it might have the potential to create embodied wisdom and become a place of emancipation (Koczanowicz, 2016, 10-12).

As it is understood by Shusterman, *soma* means "living, feeling, sentient body rather than a mere physical body that could be devoid of life and sensation, while the "aesthetic" in somaesthetics has the dual role of emphasizing the soma's perceptual role (whose embodied intentionality contradicts the body/mind dichotomy) and its aesthetic uses both in stylizing one's self and in appreciating the aesthetic qualities of other selves and things" (Shusterman, 2008, 1-2). The somaesthetics project is broad and encompasses several areas, but what is specifically of interest here is the improvement of self-practice as a strategy of adaptation to the climate crisis. This provides more ideal means in the pursuit of the classical philosophical aims of knowledge, self-knowledge, virtue, happiness, and justice. I believe that experiencing architecture and the city in general, but also designing it, if done consciously, can trigger a new attitude towards it and promote new expectations about how the city should and shouldn't be changed. As it was pointed out, "if the soma is the crucial medium through which architecture is experienced and created, then developing its critical discriminatory powers could enrich architecture's critical and creative arsenal, since critical perception is always part of the creative process" (Shusterman, 2009, 290). Let's compare Shusterman's views to the seminal thinking about architecture that characterizes Pallasmaa.

As he analyzes the process of creation for the last decades, it has been focused on developing new technologies, optimization, and aesthetics, while usually avoiding analyses of natural science, neuronal science, and what is experienced by humans, both consciously and precounsciously (Pallasmaa, 2022 [2013], 321). Nowadays, a possible shift can be observed in slowly developed tendencies that focus on care and vulnerability. Usually connected with buildings used by us, health care centers, or social care should extend to widely understood architecture of all functions. The need for architecture that strengthens the well-being and balance of humans and non-humans is recognized and could serve as a new proposal for a world that is immersed in climate and ecological crises. If, as Juhani Pallasmaa says following Maurice Merleau-Ponty, we live in "the world's body" and architecture should be seen as a part of it, in a perspective where these connections are becoming important, it could involve environmental-aware decisions too.

"'My body is made of the same tissue of corporeality as the world (that is, that which is perceived), and, moreover, in this tissue of corporeality of my body, the world participates,' explains the philosopher [Merleau-Ponty]. Both doctors and architects operate on the living body of the world; it is in this body that their achievements are intertwined. We also grasp the essence of the meanings of our own existence intuitively through this body, which is the real condition of our life: we are creatures of this world. At the same time, it seems that the rational, con-

ceptual, and utilitarian thinking of our time increasingly distances us and cuts us off from a state of inclusion in the world and a silent, embodied understanding." (Pallasmaa, 2022 [2021], 360)

Usually, thinking about the body (or *soma*) starts when something is wrong with it, and this problem needs to be solved. Rarely do we think about our lives as vulnerable, like the whole life and ecological system on our planet. For architects, thinking about designing spaces with a careful understanding of the fragility of life begins when they design for healthcare. Nowadays, the attitude has changed a bit, and in those cases, instead of prioritizing the doctor's or caretaker's comfort, the emphasis is placed on the patients and the idea that architecture can itself have features and atmosphere that support the healing process. I believe this is true and can be expanded to every form of architecture that could heal and train multisensory but mild experiences of everyday life in an information-crowded society. As researchers have shown, people receive a significant amount of data every day. According to a report prepared by the University of California, San Diego, the average person who lives in the USA consumes about 34 gigabytes of information daily. This is estimated to be equivalent to reading or hearing approximately 100,000 words every day (AskWonder, Wahira, 2022). The abundance of information, but also the eagerness to seek intense experiences, leads to hyperstimulation. Consequently, rather than bringing happiness as predicted, it degenerates sensory sensitivity. The culture of late capitalism, with its imperative of continuous growth, also promotes "constantly greater stimulation, ever more speed and information, ever stronger sensations, and louder music" (Shustermann, 2008, 39).

The problem does not lie only in the amount of data but also in the quality and type of perception that influence everyday life experiences. As many philosophers have pointed out, the predominant mode of perception nowadays is visual and excludes the participation of the other senses[1]. The ocular-centric paradigm merges seeing with knowing and leads to the conclusion that sight, as well as any image, reveals universal truth (Pallasmaa, 2012, 18–19). Heidegger wrote that "the fundamental event of the modern age is the conquest of the world as a picture" (1977, 134; cf. Pallasmaa, 2012, 24). Historically, the system of perception was complex and flexible; however, it has now become isolated. The dominance of sight reduced experiencing the world and environment to its representation that can be seen. David Michael Levin analyzed the way of seeing and divided it into two methods. The first one, called assertoric gaze, is narrow, dogmatic, and intolerant. With its one point of view, it becomes rigid and exclusionary. The opposite of assertoric gaze is aletic gaze, which offers a more democratic and pluralistic perspective. It is conscious of its contextuality, making it more horizontal, inclusive, and filled with care (Levin, 1988, 440; cf. Pallasmaa, 2012, 40–41). What should be done is liberate the eye from its patriarchal domination (Levin, 1993, 112-115; cf. Pallasmaa, 2021, 21), and this can be achieved by promoting multisensory experiences. In such cases, peripheral vision is activated and the eyes are not focused. They abandon their controlling and prejudicial way of seeing in favor of participating and activating all senses (Pallasmaa, 2012, 40–41). The question I am eager to ask is: could architecture help regulate our sensory system, influence our relationships with other people, and heal our approach to nature, which usually suffers from the consequences of human action and (design-connected) decisions, while the loss of multisensory character is also specifically seen in it?

It seems that the problem is caused by commodification and its demand to produce aesthetic images that refer to what's intellectual, in contrast to sensual. This has led architects to design buildings that serve to be admired as artwork, rather than being experienced as

[1] A brief summary of such views is made by Pallasmaa in the Vision and Knowledge subsection (17-22) of his book The eyes of the skin (2012), often cited here.

places to live in, spend time in, or pass through. However deprived it may be, the sensual character of buildings and city spaces is an immanent feature of well-designed architecture, which “is fundamentally existential in its very essence, and it arises from existential experience and wisdom rather than intellectualized and formalized theories” (Ibid., 107). If architects were to get back on track, the sensual character of architecture would come to light in its practical usage, as architecture has the main potentiality in action: in the touch of objects like handles, experiencing the weight of doors when we push them open, or the kinesthetic feeling when stairs are climbed. (Pallasmaa, 2012; Shusterman, 2011). Its atmosphere and sensual character, which influence people’s perceptions, also determine the type of materials used. Natural materials, like wood or stone, show their provenance and age, which are visible in its structure and small imperfections. In contrast, materials produced with a high level of processing through technology are timeless, as their durability can be positive, but they do not show the process of getting older and being used, which may be associated with the fear of passing time and impermanence.

> Transparency and sensations of weightlessness and flotation are central themes in modern art and architecture. In recent decades, new architectural images have emerged that employ reflection, gradations of transparency, overlay, and juxtaposition to create a sense of spatial thickness, as well as subtle and changing sensations of movement and light. This new sensibility promises an architecture that can turn the relative immateriality and weightlessness of recent technological construction into a positive experience of space, place, and meaning. The weakening of the experience of time in today’s environments has devastating mental effects. In the words of the American therapist Gotthard Booth, ‘nothing gives man fuller satisfaction than participation in processes that supersede the span of individual life’ (Pallasmaa, 2012, 34–35)

The not-easy attitude of being focused on what is social instead of individual was also a new idea of what rationality should mean. From the perspective of Theodor Adorno and Horkhaimer, seeking optimal actions that serve all, not just the priviledged, was a process that leads to consensual solutions. As they put it, it means that "not every individual wish must necessarily be fulfilled, because there is a greater comprehensive rationality” (Giger, 2022, 40). Being conscious of capitalistic mechanisms that influence people and their way of consumption, the destructive forces of innovation, problems connected with aesthetics and production, short-term trends, ocular-centric orientation, and more leads to the conclusion that limitations in our production, consumption, and actions should be a direction to follow. The emphasis could shift from the quantity of things and experiences to their quality in a multisensory direction. The reasoning for 'sensory moderation' was provided by Shusterman, who follows Weber-Fencher’s law, as he is well aware from everyday life experience.:

> A smaller stimulus can be noticed more clearly and easily if the already preexisting stimulation experienced by the stimulated organ is small. Conversely, the threshold for noticing a sensation will be so much greater the larger the preexisting stimulation is. The light of a cigarette, for instance, while barely visible from a short distance in blazing sunlight, can be seen from afar in the dark of night; the sounds of windblown leaves that we hear in the silence of the woods at midnight are inaudible in the city’s noise of day. A strongly clenched fist will not be as sensitive to fine discriminations of touch and texture as a soft hand free from muscular training (Shusterman, 2008, 39)

Somatic introspection and conscious habit formation could be the postulated course of action and development needed to create and receive ecologically rational architecture and influence other fields of life. This would be in line with James's theory of habits, who noted that they are evidence of the connection between body and mind and, above all, saw in them the potential for change. Since “our nervous system grows to the modes in which it has been exercised” (James, 1980, 18; cf. Shusterman, 2008, 140), changing the way we use it can lead to a change in habits toward more desirable ones. "The role of the body disciplined through habit extends far beyond private ethical efforts at self-improvement; it sustains the entire social structure through which habit itself

is formed and within which the efforts of the individual find their places as well as their limitations. “Habit is thus the enormous fly-wheel of society, its most precious conservative agent" (Ibid., 141).

While considering possible individual change, the first step could be conscious, introspective, and personal analysis of the way we use our sense of sight. This involves avoiding its judgmental usage or seeking only aesthetically pleasing images to consume. Instead, the focus should shift towards activating all senses in contact with our environment and cities, done with careful consideration. As it is postulated and observed in this paper, the need for empathetic design, creating spaces that serve life, and sensorial introspection could be connected to the need for limitations for modernization and growth. These unique features are exemplified in the Bordeaux Square project, which will be analyzed below and presented in the context of the design values and methods presented by its authors.

Lacaton & Vassal: Plaza in Bordeaux

The architectural duo of Lacaton and Vassal stands out from other architectural bureaus. As part of their commitment, the first step in designing a new space is not drawing but observing and talking to residents. They are willing to find potential in what already exists—buildings, trees, atmosphere, etc.—and take it as a starting point. Also, people and the social situation are crucial for them, but what is even more special is noticing the natural qualities of a place, such as sunlight, smell, or airflow (Lacaton, 2012, 13–15). For years of their work, they have been guided by several principles. They follow a self-made rule about trying to achieve the "maximum effect with minimum intervention" (Deumeland, Osterholz, 2018), and also about respecting and bringing out the qualities of what is found. This Pritzker Prize-winning duo designs by adding something new but never demolishing what they have found. By building, they mean "adding to and transforming what already exists, [because] usually a lot of what is needed already exists" (Ibid.). For their action, the priority becomes "bringing out all the existing features. Especially that, what is neglected, disliked, and infinite; everything that is vulnerable." This special attitude can be seen in their refurbishment project of Palais de Tokyo (Paris, France, 2012), but also in the modernization of La Tour Bois le Prêtre (Paris, France, 2011), a high-rise block of 16 storeys and 96 apartments that expanded its size by removing the original facade and adding bioclimatic balconies. This project could also be analyzed here, but I would like to focus on another, which, in my opinion, is the most radical and powerful: the Léon Aucoc Plaza in Bordeaux.

The idea to renovate this plaza was part of urban design initiated by the city council in the 1990s. The first principal's requirements were to completely redesign and 'beautify' it (Lacaton, Reuse). The square itself, with a triangular shape and surrounded by lime trees, serves as a space for daily recreation and meetings. Thanks to its gravel surface, it is suitable for playing boules. Together with the surrounding terraced houses and semi-detached houses, it creates a peaceful, unpretentious urban interior. The architects' analysis lasted three months, during which they observed the square and talked to residents and users. They found out that it is functional, and since the first visit, they have found it authentic and beautiful in its simplicity. They were also wondering:

> What does the idea of "embellishment" [beatification] boil down to? Does it involve replacing one with another? A wooden bench with a more-up-to-date design in stone? Or a lamp standard with another, more fashionable one? Nothing calls for too great a set of changes. Embellishment has no place here. Quality, charm, and life exist. The square is already beautiful (Lacaton & Vassal, n.d.)

That’s how they decided to leave the square unchanged. As Lacaton says, not interfering with the square is not a refusal to do the project, and the decision not to change anything is a conscious one (Lacaton, 2012) and is a design decision. “It has the beauty of the obvious, the necessary, and the right. Its meaning emerges directly. People seem

at home here, in an atmosphere of harmony and calm shaped over many years" (Wojciechowski, 2021). As a result of this non-design, the square received recommendations for maintenance and care. This was not only to improve the appearance of the square but also to serve as an impetus 'to change the perception of what was already there: to recognize, appreciate, and further develop the features' (Deumeland, Osterholz, 2018). It has been suggested that the gravel should be replaced, the plaza cleaned more often, and the linden trees should be cared for (Wojciechowski, 2021). Only a slight modification of traffic has been suggested to improve the use of the square and satisfy those living in the area.

This gesture not to rebuild the plaza "destabilized the ideologies of many iconic architects at the time (...) and questioned the expected role of the architect to produce objects (...) [on the basis of] an assumption that something was wrong" (Alonso L Ortega, n.d). As Marco Enia and Flavio Martella say, "circumstances have changed, and reality often forces architecture to a large modesty by adopting a different set of strategies. Architects capable of making grand gestures are still present. However, another professional figure is becoming increasingly important, namely, an architect who can regenerate a place by realizing few and careful operations. This architect rediscovers the human being as the real protagonist of architecture, using it as the measure for his or her interventions" (2019, 157). In Bordeaux, the idea of the city council that the improvement of public space lies in changing its aesthetics was rejected. Even though it resulted in some hesitations, the final decision made by the city council and residents was to keep the plaza as it is.

That is how it becomes a new story for designers and users. It stems from caring observation, from designing from within, slowly noticing "the superiority of concern for social values over design ambitions" (Wojciechowski, 2021). The priority then becomes "bringing out all the existing features. Especially what is neglected, unloved, and infinite; everything that is vulnerable" (Ibid.). The approach of this French duo, as compared by Lukasz Wojciechowski with ideas propounded by Jane Jacobs, includes "an interest in the freedom of use of architecture, a sensitivity to the need for encounter and the joy of using space, as well as a retreat from the over-representationalism of finite form in favor of interaction with users"(Ibid.). They also share an opposition to "treating the city... as a rigorous work of art, which is an attempt to replace life with art" (Ibid.). What is also noteworthy here is that the designers "maintain their actions in tactics of suggestion", which aligns with Jacobs' view that "the control imposed by designers leaves nothing for others to discover, nothing to organize, nothing intriguing" (Jacobs, 2014; cf. Wojciechowski, 2021). As the Polish architect would have it, [this] "refusal has the potential to become a milestone in the development of the profession, in the shape of even the symbolic demolition of Pruitt-Igoe, and then the myth of the superiority of building from scratch, of solving urban problems through masterplans and impressive buildings, will finally collapse. May it be replaced by thoughtful design from within—from the everyday little things" (Wojciechowski, 2021).

This project is gaining recognition despite being created more than 20 years ago. It probably happens because, as a society, we are more conscious of our vulnerability, which also became evident in times of pandemic and growing awareness of the climate crisis. The square in Bordeaux is a perfect example of non-design action and refusal to treat material intervention as the only solution and direction for the future. In Bordeaux, nothing was very new, so while the plaza just stayed the same, nothing was wasted, but its authentic character was highlighted. I also believe that the architect's work here can be comparable to that of a psychologist or a good friend who is saying, "You are just fine," and probably this process made residents proud of their plaza and appreciate it even more.

When thinking of the sensual character of this place and the abandonment of the idea of beautification, it can

be treated as resignation from following visual trends in our culture but also in architecture specifically. Instead of designing a representative space that creates an image, architects decide to follow their intuition focused on the usage and atmosphere that can't be just seen. As one can imagine, the presence of trees here is creating some shade in which residents can hide to avoid sunlight during hot summers. The shape of the row of linden trees that grows around it and the surrounding buildings make you feel at ease, as if you were in the interior. The leaves during the windy days are rustling, affecting aural perception. During autumn, they die and fall to the ground to remind us about the seasons and time passing. The plaza's surface, along with small pebbles, can be felt with every step. This makes it possible to play boules, but also to slowly soak rainwater into the soil and keep it in the ground. Probably, sometimes small puddles form on the surface of the square, allowing children to trample them, splash water, and play. The squere's aura offers a multisensory experience and creates an unpretentious space for the small pleasures of everyday life.

Conclusion

"Although architecture and urban planning are only parts of a huge system of tools of power and capital, they are the most tangible and effective elements of human activity. If we do not change our approach to what we expect from cities and buildings, but also the way we design and build, we will not prevent a disaster" (Kępiński, Krężlik, 2022, 31). Thinking about architecture, limitations, and changes in it, we locate this discussion rather in well-developed, rich places in the world, and it happens also while inviting educated and privileged people to analyze the sensual character of their experience. However, it doesn't seem to be inaccurate, according to knowledge that global emissions are highly connected to class and wealth. That is why emissions can be divided into luxury and survival (Bińczyk, 2022, 364). But where does the line between these two groups lie? It seems that a lot is in between and can also be defined by societies as groups that are diverse. I believe that Bińczyk's proposal to take the well-known climate-change discourse term 'tipping point' and (re)use it in social, not only scientific, contexts is a hopeful concept. It asks about the possibility of social change caused by accumulated crises and processes that would lead to the dissolution of 'business as usual'. (Ibid.). "Only disasters bring reflection, and they are already close. In my opinion, we are currently experiencing the agony of capitalism as we knew it—economic thinking based on interests. Humanity never learned anything during periods of stability; only disasters caused real change (Pallasmaa, 2022 [2013], 328). Also, as Bińczyk claims after Walter Scheidel, abrupt events make elites more likely to "proceed political changes and redistribution—to share among society the power and goods" (Bińczyk, 2022, 367).

The idea of self-limitation usually raises questions about freedom and causes resistance. If it is motivated by multiple crises, whether it is a conscious decision made by many or not, it is rather inevitable. Is it possible to treat limitations as a joyful concept that, as a part of reality, serves as "justification for our choices and ground under our feet" (Pallasmaa, 2022 [2013], 328)? Sensory introspection and the project of somaesthetics here draw on an additional appealing perspective. In this view, the body, as subject to the symbolic power of capitalism, regains its independence and possibility of self-determination, escaping the rules of the market and the aesthetic-visual imperative, appearing as a political force. This possibility of a turn: from the body that is subject to biopower, towards the body as a tool of emancipation and liberation, is analyzed in detail by Leszek Koczanowicz. It also involves capturing the body beyond its individuality and placing it in a broad communal-context in which *somapower* appears (Koczanowicz, 2023, X).

As Shusterman wrotes "[s]omaesthetics connotes both the cognitive sharpening of our aesthesis or sen-

sory perception and the artful reshaping of our somatic form and functioning, not simply to make us stronger and more perceptive for our own sensual satisfaction but also to render us more sensitive to the needs of others and more capable of responding to them with effectively willed action" (Shusterman, 2008, 43). In this context the turn to corporeal wisdom embedded in the exercise of sensory awareness can elude the power of ocular-centric and capitalist culture, giving birth to the possibility of finding satisfaction in getting in touch with oneself and experiencing the value of ordinary and small pleasures every day. But also it is an act that promotes the development of relationships, collective action, coexistence, and solidarity. In this sense, it is ideologically compatible with the idea of decelerating growth and finding pleasure in non-emissionary ways of spending leisure time. This implies that, by reducing working hours and minimizing production, we can have more time for such activities.

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BETWEEN UTOPIA AND PRAGMATISM: CRITICAL DESIGN IN DEBATES ON CLIMATE CHANGE

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ABSTRACT: The article examines the role of critical design in the context of environmental pragmatism thus guided by the idea that, faced with a prolonged climate crisis, which is not only environmental, but also cultural and social, humanity must look for more creative solutions and more efficient ways of overcoming passivity. Taking into account the most common objections faced by an alternative form of engagement with climate change, the text identifies potential inaccuracies in the way doubts against critical design are justified, and then demonstrates the discipline's commitment to practical usefulness. The article builds on the thesis, that the critical design approach embodies open-ended inquiry dedicated to and bound up with the issues that eminent environmental pragmatists find pivotal, including moral pluralism, a decreasing relevance of theoretical debates, and the striving for environmental democracy. It takes into account such issues as the production of collective visions of the future and thus projected social change, countering the hegemonic narrative of the future produced by capitalism, methods and tools to engage audiences in action. As a result, the article attempts to synthesize environmental pragmatism and critical design as a visual-practical approach capable of inspiring and bringing alternatives to reality. Through theoretical analysis, examples of design practices, and reflection on criticism, it highlights the potential of critical design as a tool for shaping more environmentally responsible social attitudes.

Keywords: Critical design, Climate change, Environmental Pragmatism, Aesthetics, Utopia

> To captivate and to transform are the most fundamental ambitions of activism and art, which is why climate change, as subject matter, fares so poorly in both realms.
>
> (Foer 2019, 12)

Introduction

Multiple overlapping environmental emergencies, such as ocean acidification, biodiversity loss, depletion of water resources, irreversible soil degradation and public health crises, put the very existence of humankind at risk, yet they still fail to make us seriously concerned. Despite there being alternative and more sustainable solutions, we continue to rely on ineffective energy-supply systems, waste food, incinerate waste, and condone the cutting of rainforests. The global conjuncture we inhabit today, with its disintegration of democratic institutions, soaring populism, an upsurge in migrations and exacerbating social inequality, makes it challenging for us to believe that we have any agency. Consequently, it does not come as a surprise that environmental reflection in the 21stcentury has increasingly articulated frustration, helplessness, disappointment, inability to see any alternatives, and even apathy(e.g. Hansen 2010; Klein 2000; Klein 2014; Mann 2021; Norton 2015; Scranton 2016). Researchers of environmental policies warn that interventions launched to counteract climate change are ineffective, provisional, limited and entirely superficial. The belief that letting people know of the realities of climate change would be enough to mobilize them to act, a notion that was widely held until recently, has proven a painful delusion. The fact is that even though we realize ever more precisely how we affect the ecosystem and the geology of the Earth and we understand ever more clearly what a misrepresentation the myth of ongoing progress, based on the use of the planet's exhaustible resources, has been, we still do not find it either easy or obvious to proceed from awareness to action. One of the dramas of the Anthropocene seems to be that both the more ignorant we are (the problem of denialism)and the more we know in a purely rational manner (the problem of the intellectual comfort zone), the less inclined we are to act.

In their introduction to *Environmental Pragmatism*, the editors Andrew Light and Eric Katz suggest that the modest set of acceptable approaches to environmental ethics may be inapplicable to devising acceptable environmental policies and, consequently, that it is urgent to study other possible sources and foundations of truly moral ecologism (Light and Katz 1996). Light and Katz cite Anthony Weston, who insisted in his "Before Environmental Ethics" that "we should (…) expect a variety of fairly incompatible outlines coupled with a wide range of

proto-practices, even social experiments of various sorts, all contributing to a kind of cultural working-through of a new set of possibilities" (Weston 1996, 151). This idea is further developed to highlight that, faced with a prolonged climate crisis, which is not only environmental, but also cultural and social, humanity must look for more creative solutions and more efficient ways of overcoming passivity. At the same time, an inherent problem of such non-standard and abstract methods is that they tend to be dismissed as merely declarative, standing no chance of success or even based on naïve premises. Charges of marginality and ineffectiveness are often leveled at activist and performative ventures, engaged art, and grassroots social initiatives. In this paper, I examine critical design, one of such niche practices supposed to overcome the public's inertia through generating alternative andremedial scenarios. My argument aims to illuminate a practice whose uncommon form may contribute to fostering more environmentally responsible attitudes. Given that alternative forms of climate change engagement tend to provoke a lot of criticism, I seek to establish what role critical design can play in confrontation with the current environmental crisis. I discuss skeptical beliefs about critical design practice and attempt to identify defects in the premises of this criticism in order to show the commitment of critical design to practical utility.

My choice of critical design as the central thematic concern of my paper is bound up with the intrinsically pragmatic approach of critical design to the steep challenges posed by climate change and environmental crisis. Lightand Katz defineenvironmental pragmatism as "the open-ended inquiry into the specific real-life problems of humanity's relationship with the environment" (Light and Katz 1996, 2), which focuses on ethics, responsibility, and practical solutions in the face of the environmental crisis. In this paper, I posit that the critical design approach embodies such an open-ended inquiry dedicated to and bound up with the issues that eminent environmental pragmatists find pivotal, including moral pluralism, a decreasing relevance of theoretical debates, and the striving for environmental democracy. As a result, critical design can be regarded and used as a tool for visualizing and implementing these ideas. Light and Katz identify at least four forms of environmental pragmatism. I believe that critical design is mostly aligned with the one they dub "the articulation of practical strategies for bridging gaps between environmental theorists, policy analysts, activists, and the public" (Light and Katz 1996, 5). At the same time, emphatically, I do not identify critical design with the promise of comprehensive social change; rather, I locate it on the trajectory whose vector is turned toward "the better," where "better" does not mean more attractive, newer, or competitive, but connotes the capacity to step beyond what is and envisage what can be. In this way, I agree with Monika Rosińska, who professes in her *Utopie dizajnu* (Desing utopias): "Against the commonsensical perception of design as a practice that solves instrumental problems and effectively improves reality as it is, I arguethat the vitality, power, charm, and allure of this practice stem from thoroughly its utopian and poetic qualities. What is it exactly that I mean by utopian and poetic (…)? I mean that it makes it possible to experience a better future not so much in its imagined reality as in potentialities and boundless possibilities expressed in the present" (Rosińska 2020, 23.)

Sources and Theoretical Underpinnings

My reasoning and conclusions are underpinned by examination of the premises of critical design and interpretation of selected critical-design projects. The theoretical framework of my argument is provided by environmental pragmatism, and I also draw on the classic studies on design, regarded as representative for critical design (Dunne 1994; Dunne 2006; Dunne and Raby 2001; Fry 2011; Papanek 1971), and on the recent accounts of the history of critical design and its relationships with other disciplines, such as philosophy, ethics, technology and politics

(Bardzell et al. 2018;DiSalvo 2014; Malpass 2017; Manzini 2015;Tharp and Tharp 2019). This literature is particularly helpful to me, because the authors express their concerns and doubts about the critical design approach and its limitations. I believe that common critiques of critical design coming from academics, theorists, and writers, voiced in public debates, and expressed on social media must be contextualized (i.a. Malpass 2015; Bardzell and Bardzell 2013; Ansari 2015; Ward 2019). At the same time, in my view, this criticism, though not always fully warranted, can be useful to the constantly evolving design practice as such. By bringing together and confronting a range of opinions, I develop the hypothesis I offer in this paper, and my conclusions, which largely assert the advantages stemming from critical design, logically follow from this confrontation. At the same time, I substantially rely on the literature on environmental ethics, which seeks to go beyond theorizing and enables the environmental movement to devise new policies. Thus, I build on publications by philosophers dedicated to developing the debate from the positions of environmental pragmatism (Garvey 2008;Fesmire 2020; Light and Katz 1996; Norton 2015). They are all unanimous in their apprehensions about the unfolding crisis of action, which is also a point of departure for my argument in this paper.

Knowledge Is Not Enough

Jonathan Safran Foer explicitly stated in his *We Are the Weather: Saving the Planet Begins at Breakfast*(2019) that the narrative of planetary crisis was not just difficult to convey; first and foremost, it was not a good narrative. When he was writing this, much more was known about climate change than ever before, yet, despite that, in 2018 alone, humans produced the greatest amount of greenhouse gasesin history, at the pace three time as quick as the increase of the world's population. Foer's book pivots on the fact that even if climate crisis matters something to us as humanity, we do not seem to realize that we are part of this event. Rather, we think of it as a "war being fought 'over there'"(Foer 2019, 9). Even though we acknowledge that our sheer existence is at stake, we do not engage in fight for survival.

The second chapter of Foer's book, titled "How to Prevent the Greatest Dying," leaves the reader most overwhelmed. It cites innumerable and vivid data to convey the gravity of our situation:

> If human history were a day, we were hunters-gatherers until about ten minutes before midnight. Humans represent 0.01 percent of life on Earth. Since the advent of agriculture, approximately twelve thousand years ago, humans have destroyed83 percent of all wild mammals and half of all plants. (…) During theGreat Dying, a series of Siberian volcanoes produced enough lava to cover the United States up to three Eiffel Towers deep. Humans are now adding greenhouse gases to the atmosphere ten times faster than volcanoes did during the Great Dying. (Foer 2019, 58, 63).

To make the magnitude of these and other issues palpable, Foer employs evocative comparisons, statistics, and apt observations about what obstructs our perception of global warming. Further in his book, Foer makes a candid confession and "reveals" his own weaknesses. For example, he admits that even though he had spent long years studying factory-farming, touring the world with hundreds of talks, and writing a book expressively titled *Eating Animals*, he would eat meat every now and then on the promotional tour of this very book. Worse even, the meat he ate often came from factory-farms, against which he was vehemently campaigning. Foer reproves his own choices, when confessing that the reason why ate meat made his hypocrisy even more horrendous; specifically, burgers improved his mood (Foer 2019, 50).

We Are the Weather perfectly epitomizes contemplation on our incapacity to absorb the lesson of the harrowing scientific findings. I dwell on Foer's book, because it captures—and censures—the human condition with impotence at its core. This standpoint, I believe, parallels the attitudes of environmental ethics, where, to quote James Garvey, "[f]ailing to act in accordance with moral reasons when you have them is something probably worse

than meaninglessness" (Garvey 2008, 41).While *We Are the Weather* does not offer easy answers and is rather a record of searching for them, there are issues in which it leaves nothing to doubt about. Taking the truth expressed in the subtitle, which indicates the role of animal products in aggravating the climate crisis, as his starting point, Foer appears to suggest the attitude that forms the cornerstone of environmental pragmatists' thought. Ultimately, what matters most is our action rather than our intentions, experience, or knowledge. Too much attention is lavished on the distinction between those who accept science-based knowledge and those who deny global warming, while too little is said about the split into those who engage in action for climate and those who are complacent with knowledge alone. In identifying the problems faced by environmental ethics, Light and Katz argue: "The intramural debates of environmental philosophers, although interesting, provocative and complex, seem to have no real impact on the deliberations of environmental scientists, activists and policy-makers" (Light and Katz 1996, 1). Eye-catching charts, appealing calculations, and scholarly jargon are useful, but they often render the planetary crisis in purely intellectual ways as an intriguing computation, instead of as an immediate existential hazard. This does not force people out of their cognitive comfort zone, which impedes practical action. From the viewpoint of pragmatism, we should actually do things to counteract climate change, instead of debating the terms and conditions of such preventive action. The latter is reminiscent of the traditional and conventional manner of presenting and preserving a certain method of world perception, in which technical, objective, and quantifiable (hard) knowledge served to marginalize ethical, moral, emotional, social, psychological, and cultural (soft) issues. As most powerfully motivating and inspiring, these soft aspects are the fundamental pillars of critical designers' practices. Their focus on cultural norms and social attitudes makes them flexible, open to experimentation, and willing to venture beyond narrow design definitions, traditional institutions, and entrenched practices.

A Short Story of Critical Design

Although the genesis of critical design goes back to the counterculture, protests, and pursuits of situationists of the 1960s, critical design as a distinct design discipline developed in the early 1990s, mainly powered by academics affiliated with London's Royal College of Art. This research community did design research as a direct response to the development of ICT and electronic products. The notable RCA figures included, in particular, Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby, whose designs and publications are considered crucial to the dissemination of possible future explorations. This impact primarily resulted from the kind of questions they asked (and still do) about the role of the techno-utopian frenzy of the early 21th century. The development of "thinking" machines not only prompted a revision of ideas about the nature of the mind, but also sparked new desires and encouraged establishing certain relations with them. This is a salient context in terms of the aspirations of critical design at the time, as it aimed to undermine unreflective techno-optimism and, at the same time, "prevent certain material realities taking shape and encourage others to flourish" (Dunne and Raby 2013, 37). Aware that materiality has an axial capitalist dimension to it and that it expresses a certain ideology (in this case one subordinated to the dominant market regimes, where objects are economy-fueling commodities), the designers began to search for creative and intellectual autonomy, while also propelling the demand for design services different from the previously prevailing ones, heavily exploitative of the planet, as they were. Critical design came then to be recognized as a response to consumer culture, which was one cause of the passive attitudes and eschewal of social responsibility among the Western public and diluted people's awareness of their potential as decision-makers. Yet, to contextualize critical design as part of an older critical tradition is not my aim in this paper; this has already been done, and superbly too, by, for example, Matt Malpass, who identified the social

and technological conditions conducive to the emergence of critical design (Malpass 2017). In pinpointing the key and recurrent factors in its development, Malpass insightfully observes that "examples of critical practice emerge out of turbulent political, economic, and technological shifts. Whether it was the disillusionment with functionalism, the political turmoil of the 1960s, or the technological shift from the mechanical to the digital paradigm, designers active at this time find their voice throughdesign practice" (Malpass 2017, 45).

As viewed by critical designers, the currently worsening climate crisis is not only a political and economic issue. It is also relevantly correlated with social responsibility, informed by the belief that the degradation of the environment results from human actions and, more importantly, that to save the planet should become a strategic goal of actors who are not part of the decision-making mainstream. If the decisional design trend does not feel obligated to commit to this goal, an alternative design practice should arise to help humanity assume responsibility for the environment. The pragmatic position holds, as Dale Jamieson elucidates, thatit is crucial to "develop new values and conceptions of responsibility" (Jamieson 2003,377). This might support the transition from material overproduction to the production of things non-material, such as ideas, reflection, responses, commitment, and action. "There are professions more harmful than industrial design, but only a very few of them," Victor Papanek wrote in the preface to his *Design for the Real World*(Papanek 1971, xxi). I believe that critical designers subscribe to this view in and through their insistence that traditional design, which is integral part of a greater economic system, is co-responsible for the exploitation of the natural environment.

What does "critical" mean in critical designs and what isit that sets them apart from the consolidated design tradition that is regarded as dominant? Dunne succinctly explains that "[t]he critical sensibility, at its most basic, is simply about not taking things for granted, to question and look beneath the surface" (Dunne and Rickenberg 2009).In this sense, critical design can be thought of as a performative action in which objects are supposed not so much to work in an efficient way or to look pleasing as to "challenge the legitimacy of thinking of them in such terms. In this way, critical design practice negates the meaning that modernism developed for design by relativizing the notions of aesthetics, utility, and functionality, and, above all, it re-directs the fundamental model of effectuating design by fostering a fertile space of speculation with a potential to undermine the status quo" (Rosińska 2020, 180).In critical design, things are not just functional objects whose efficiency and mass sale are determined by the market; rather, they work as designed ideas that are expected to appeal to users, make them think, and motivate them to act for change. The non-obvious, puzzling component of critical designs, regarding their forms, the strategies they use, and even the theoretical tenets behind them, not infrequently exposes them to questioning or belittling. In the following part, I address the most frequent accusations critical design encounters and illuminate this practice in more detail as developing the pragmatic approach to the challenges of climate change.

The Post-optimal Function and Moral Pluralism

The most direct accusation against critical design stems from the belief that design should focus on solving real-life problems and abide by the modernist dictum that "*form ever follows function*"(Sullivan 1896, 408; italics original). This notion results from the assumption that design is lucid and neutral and that, as such, it should reinforce the status quo, that is, meet the social, technical, and economic expectations of capitalist ideology. A vast majority of design projects belongs to this category. While these disciplinary norms are endorsed as a dogma in and by dominant affirmative design (dedicated to creating solutions), they are not heeded in and by crit-

ical design (dedicated to spotting problems and identifying their scale, causes, and consequences). The critics of critical design claim that this approach does not offer a concrete, measurable value in the form of effective solutions to real problems in real time. In a debate between Ahmad Ansari and Jamer Hunt, which was held as part of the inaugurating MIT Media Lab summit, suggestions were voiced that, before starting to imagine a new future, design must first meet current human needs. Ansari argued: "If the critical project claims that it can, and I quote 'inspire us to imagine that things could be radically different than they are today,' then I see little evidence that this kind of radical reimagining is rooted in an understanding of the today' (Ansari 2015). The opponents of critical design claim that it is a useless, if not downright egocentric, practice which not only is a waste of time but also is devoid of any specific function. Doubts like those expressed by Ansari overlook the fact that the horizon for the future identical with the world we now inhabit is still determined by nothing else than the functional, increasingly intelligent, and ever moreeffective devices and systems catering to the needs of today. The point is that being innovative does not change either the obvious mode in which products are present in our daily life or the manner in which they are co-constitutive of this life. The critical designer creates an alternative to utilitarian design in the semblance of, to quote Kelly Parker:

> [t]he pragmatist [who]attends to difference and change as well as to similarity andconstancy. As the world evolves, and as human thought and activities change along with it, new kinds of ethically problematic situations inevitably emerge. To cope, we need to develop new ways of comprehending what is right. No list of virtues, no list of rights and duties, no table of laws, no account of the good should be expected to serve in every possible situation that we confront. (Parker 1996, 26)

Environmental pragmatists conceive of moral pluralism as the belief that no single moral principle orsuperior moral theory of what is right is properly applicable to all the problematic ethical situations (Parker 1996, 31). In this very spirit, critical design asks questions and sparks discussions instead of imposing unambiguous ethical solutions. Promoting interaction and user engagement, critical design prioritizes multilateral dialogue over any one-sided perspective. This approach seems to counter dogmatic models of morality and to invite varied viewpoints on ethical questions. Problem-solving or, more precisely, supplying ready-made solutions may not be the major intent of critical designs, but they can hardly be accused of lacking utility. From the perspective of environmental pragmatism, which expands our notions of the environment and society, central to critical design is affect as an outcome of its appeal to users and influence on their behavior. In this sense, critical design is absolutely functional, but it is up to us to discern, grasp, and, so to speak, "operate" this function. Rosińska points out that speculations on other possible interpretations of functionality can be replaced with Dunne's concept of "an aesthetics of use" (Dunne 2005). She clarifies that "it is about shifting the focus from how a device performs its assigned function and how it looks onto what it does besides that, how it 'behaves,' how it is integrated with the user's life, and what feelings it triggers. In other words, an aesthetics of use seeks to fathom a deeper level of objects and devices of everyday use" (Rosińska 2020, 194). Even if subtle, very fine and ethereal, this difference is deeply meaningful. Critical design delineates new practical goals and areas that do not promise to improve the quality of life by means of efficient objects but create conditions that make it possible to perceive other perspectives and, paradoxically, "gain" more. The notion of "non-rational design," which has been theorized by William Gaverand others, involves developing, elaborating, and communicating ideas in the form of prototype designs based on deliberate ambiguity(Gaver, Beaver, and Benford 2003).The method of "reclaiming" functionality thus aims to demonstrate than objects need not be limited to having their ends explicit or their use readily spelled out. Rosińska notes that "[t]heoretically, functionality could be something else than it is, and it could

be fostered by a different kind of imagination than the one underlying effective sales of commercial commodities" (Rosińska 2020, 199). This encourages users to interpret situations on their own, to tackle conceptually objects, systems, and their contexts, andto relate more deeply and personally to the meanings they bear. Sometimes bizarre and sometimes controversial both in their form and in their message, critical designs activate users' irony, humor, imagination, and senses.

For example, *Climate Dress is* a design of an interactive dress which responds to air pollution by shrinking to a degree determined by the surrounding air quality (Climate dress 2009). NatalieJeremijenko's *Environmental Health Clinic* imitates a health care facility, but only responds when one reports not individual ailments but environmental problems related to them (Jeremijenko n.d). Instead of drug prescriptions, its visitors obtain a list of concrete things to do for the sake of the planet. *The Guide to Free Farming* is an ironic handbook with instructions on how to become a farmer in an urban setting (Protofarm 2050: The Guide to Free Farming, n.d). Informed by environmental pragmatism, critical designs defy a-priori deductions and aspire to be appreciated on the basis of experience and perception. Parker directly states that:

> The central emphases on experience and on the experimental approach to establishing our knowledge and practices, make for a value theory that highlights the aesthetic dimension, sees ethics as a process of continual mediation of conflict in an ever-changing world and lays the groundwork for a social and political philosophy that placesdemocratic and humanitarian concerns at the center of social arrangements. All value emerges in experience. (Parker 1996, 25)

Developing new functionalities of designs promotes receptivity to new values, which can be grasped through active experience, indeterminacy, and change. This form of design can be a platform for a collective redefinition of the ways of relating to reality, because it "thrives on imagination and aims to open up new perspectives on what are sometimes called *wicked problems,* to create spaces for discussion and debate about alternative ways of being, and to inspire and encourage people's imaginations to flow freely" (Dunne and Raby 2013, 2).

Art and the Decreasing Role of Theory

Another broadly discussed polemic is pervaded by viewpoints deriving from art history, history of aesthetics, and visual culture. The crux lies in defining critical design in terms of designart, which is taken to mean any artwork that experiments with the place, function, and style of art by combining them with architecture, furniture, and graphic design (Malpass 2015). Artists were in fact the first group to integrate social critique with the use of everyday appliances. Presumably, critical design practice, inspired by conceptual art, employed this tactic to dismantle traditional design norms. Because of this similarity, critical design faces charges that ensue from the context of arts and are fueled by the fact that conceptual vocabulary strongly associated with art (e.g., "sense impressions" and "aesthetic experience") is overused in relation to critical design and, more importantly perhaps, that designs are identified as artefacts that work aesthetically beyond global capitalism, foregrounding transgression, relying on provocation, and exposing cultural presumptions. In critical design, aesthetics is a dynamic, immanent, and social property that hinges on practices which situate a designed object withing the system of use. Dunne and Raby have time and again emphatically denied that art and critical design share the same field:

> It is definitely not art. It might borrow heavily from art in terms of methods and approaches but that's it. We expect art to be shocking and extreme. Critical Design needs to be closer to the everyday, that's where its power to disturb comes from. (…). If it is regarded as art it is easier to deal with, but if it remains as design it is more disturbing, it suggests that the everyday as we know it could be different, that things could change. (Dunne and Raby n.d).

Treating specimens of critical design as works of art triggers a misconceived discussion on the objects them-

selves and the symbolic meanings generated around them. Malpass is certainly on the mark when he notes that: "A problem with criticism grounded in art is that it feels like an attempt to fit critical design practice into a discourse in which product design aspires to be art, or at least places design on the same critical footing" (Malpass 2017, 89). This discourse flagrantly tends to perceive design in a very narrow fashion and to reduce discussion on critical designs to the question: Is it not just art by any chance? Skeptical commentators talk of a hybrid form of critical design that merely aspires to achieve new aesthetic and conceptual potentials. This breeds a double contradiction as, besides their alleged failure to fulfil their fundamental utilitarian role, critical design objects are perceived by sceptics as an excess of form over content, carefree play, or abuse of form. The generation of utopian or dystopian worlds, extrapolation, and sensory experiences are treated as aesthetic and sometimes also ethical experiments that violate good taste. Other detractors suggest that the vision of criticality is but an engineered "maneuver" and a ploy mobilized by designers who internalize guilt for their choice of a contentious "industry" and use the imagination to pay back an ultimately unpayable social debt.

Meanwhile, critical design deliberately permits sensory and imaginative engagement with a critical idea so that it could suggestively appeal to the users. Pragmatic philosophy is preoccupied with consequences of actions and their practical impact on humans and the environment. Therefore, in the context of critical design, actions should be evaluated on the basis of the actual effects of changes that designs can trigger in users. The performative dimension of critical design as a vehicle for social interactions, emotions, and actions is what intrigues the Dutch designer Marije Vogelzang. Vogelzang develops new consumption scripts woven around alternative rituals of eating and the production, transport, and disposal of food. For example, in *Eggchange,* a project she developed for the poultry farmer Twan Engelen, she launched "an exchange office for fertilized eggs (capital)" (Vogelzang n.d). Buyers could obtain fertilized or unfertilized eggs and then behave like investors buying shares in a company and making business decisions about what to do with their new capital. They could choose to take their egg home and eat it or to let it hatch. Hatching gave investors a broiler chicken they could keep for meat or a hen, which could lay eggs. However, the accumulation of capital was not really viable without taking care of it. Interest rates were determined by the laws of nature rather than by the market forces. Vogelzang's project shed light on the production chain underlying our food industry and questioned the ethics of our economic systems. Participants in the debate on farm animals often hurl accusations at one another and come up with moralizing answers. Consumers should have different shopping habits, farmers must change their system, and governments must adopt better legislation. We dispute with one another, but fail to see that we are all stuck in the same economic system. Vogelzang's project thus created a physical place where ideas about poultry farming, the economy, and ethics could be shared. The participants could become involved in social interaction and take part in a consumer "ritual," in this way engaging in dialogue without fathoming any theoretical framework. As the central element of the project, the egg morphed into a metaphor for capital, the economy, life, and ethics. Owing to this symbolic layer, there was no need for intricate theories, with the concrete representation that supplanted them being likely easier to understand and emotionally acceptable to the audience.

For her part, the designer Andrea Vlad chose to explore how some design decisions made by the meat industry affected consumers' perceptions of meat, and how psychological triggers and responses disclosed these perceptions (Vlad n.d.). Disgust and empathy are regulatory factors that can potentially reduce meat consumption, but they are themselves diminished by cognitive dissonance caused by the visual representations of packaging. Therefore, Vlad remade the materiality of the packaging

and developed its prototype by imitating on its surface the skin and fur purportedly coming from a given animal. The potential of aesthetic values should thus be treated as an auxiliary strategy for reorienting consumer behavior. Because eating meat is underpinned by a complex system of beliefs that mold our values and behavior when making food choices, the project aimed to redefine our dietary decisions and relations with other creatures. Pre-eminence was given to the arousal of emotions, such as disgust and empathy, in response to the aesthetics of packaging. Instead of theoretical deliberations on morality and meat consumption in relation to the condition of the environment, the project explored very practical aspects of the influence that sensory representations of animals have on consumers' minds. This approach dovetails with the pragmatic idea that feelings and practical experiences are key factors in establishing ethics. Pragmatic necessity means that any analysis of problems that does not promote the building of a larger community or problem-solving actions is philosophically misguided. Such an investigation usually "petrifies" the participants of theoretical discussions in their fixed positions, and its only outcome is that each party consolidates its theoretical argumentation for the policy it supports. Paul Thompson opposes traditional applications of theory to the solving of issues in need of repair, proposing, instead, "pragmatic deconstruction," which

> is the pedagogical tool for ending moral gridlock, and beginning the reconstruction of community. Nevertheless, it is not appropriate to propose solutions here. For one thing, proposing a policy mechanism may be inappropriate in advance of the reconstruction needed to form a community capable of addressing key problems. For another, there will be few universal solutions to generalized problems. (Thompson 1996, 205).

The relevance of the performative dimension of critical design is only amplified by the decline of the role of theory, and the aesthetic qualities of designs do not simply speak to the stylization of the objects, but above all mediate their message and directly affect their users.

Participation and Environmental Democracy

Art-based criticism is probably also sparked by the distinctive space that critical designers use as a basic platform for disseminating their concepts and communicating with the users. Their opponents believe this thwarts the circulation of reflection, which is sustained in closed discourse, circumscribed mainly to art galleries, museums, design journals, and niche publications. This accusation presupposes that users of critical design are primarily educated individuals, and that the discourse produced by critical design practice is founded on expert culture. The critics of critical design complain that critical design is unable to fulfill its promise of fostering an inclusive, space because its impact is restricted to recipients who are anyway conscious and, additionally, affluent and white. Notably, the same educated, "enlightened," and, again, white and rich people live in a parallel reality as lobbyists for the fossil fuel industry and deforestation, who fund ventures of high environmental risk and embrace unreflecting consumer lifestyle, determining the demand on the market. Given this, even if critical design is indeed only an emotionally triggered, value-based ethico-moral pursuit, morality, ethics, and values appear as the most pragmatic starting point in our situation. If success-pursuing people and organizations will be losing their raison d'être as the planetary conditions deteriorate, people and organizations abiding by the moral approach will be able to continue their activity, and the ethical grounds for action will be ever more relevant. Thus, critical designers seem to feel the consequences of inability to fulfill one of the most important obligations modern society places on us, specifically, the obligation of agency.

Being confined to museum spaces, though not ideal for critical design, has a significant effect for the product itself, making it independent of the whims of the mainstream market. Should critical design be ushered onto the mass market and commercialized, it might lose some of its impact as a result of factors such as capitalism. As part of

the market, critical design would no longer focus on questioning human perception and exposing presuppositions, but, instead, aim to produce and sell. The power of critical design chiefly stems from the fact that it is an alternative to affirmative design. If critical design can imagine a new world through recasting the ultimate end and intention of the product, the entire process of "delivering" these objects to users must also be altered. Inspiring visions of the future that diverge from the popularly known technological versions demands other methods and research tools that those geared to promoting the current market trends and capitalist standards. Rosińska points out that, unlike the utopia understood as a vision of an all-encompassing and revolutionary transformation of the social order,

> real utopias" are interested in remaking individual social institutions and practices in real, even if minor ways. (…) The aim is to find concrete ways of "tinkering" with the system to change it, rather than designing radical systemic makeovers. Furthermore, the concept of "real utopias" holds that the notion of the contradiction of dreams and reality or of phantasy and practice is intrinsically wrong. What is made real is not independent of the imagination or distinct from it; rather it is shaped by visions, fantasies and dreams. (Rosińska 2020,203–4)

While discussions are rarely generated in consumer culture, museums and institutions of art offer convenient space for discussions around the meanings of designs. Limits are differently conceived in such settings; they are not dictated either by corporate language or by any set of guidelines to be included in the design, but by the imagination. The language of design is to be freed from the hands of the market, and an alternative discourse is to be sparked through material culture, which illustrates selected values, norms, rules, and ideologies. Essential to this activity is the emancipation and autonomy of design from the market. Critical design can then develop an imagination approximating that of sociology, anthropology, and culture research.

I perceive the potential of critical designers whose work responds to an array of initiatives including, besides museum projects and curatorial themes, institutions that want to collaborate with designers and tap into their practical experience to launch more sustainable solutions. The idea of open spaces where critical designs can be displayed also presupposes more democratic relations between experts and the non-expert public, researchers and the researched, designers of social change and beneficiaries of this change. Environmental pragmatists believe that the participation of the public, therein of various stakeholder groups, contributes to better and more sustainable outcomes, and critical designers likewise assume that various social interests must be taken into account and balanced. This democratic facet encourages considering design activity not only in the context of the indispensable activation of people as subjects, but mostly through endorsing and supporting the existing forms of legitimate and valuable bottom-up actions. The effectiveness of change depends on the capacity to marshal the existing practices and to catalyze the processes through which communities create an organized social world on their own.

One frequent charge against critical design is that critical designers are allegedly elitist and, simultaneously, politically naïve in simplifying and banalizing broader causes behind problems. Critical design practice is time and again accused to originate from European privilege, one culturally colonizing, to boot (Prado de O. Martins and Oliveira, 2014). As its prime (and notorious) example, this discussion usually cites *Republic of Salivation* by Michael Burton and Michiko Nitta, exhibited as part of the Design and Violence series at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. The work, unfortunately representative enough to provide a basis for judging the movement as a whole, envisages the situation of food shortages and hunger that compels governments to implement a rigorous nutritional policy: food is apportioned to individuals, depending on the physical, intellectual and emotional requirements of their work. This makes the audience confront a vision of dietary changes hinging on one's occupation and also find

out about possibilities of altering one's body for synthetic feeding. The project has provoked heavy objections, among others from John Thackara, who denounced it, interestingly, on the MoMA website, writing that "this kind of work masquerades as radical (…) it belongs squarely within the neoliberal worldview that only Man is smart enough to correct the odd mistake that He may have made" (Thackara 2013. This accusation sparked a broad discussion in the comment section and proved quite divisive. Some posts deplored the naivete of the project that might seem dystopian in some places of the world but had long been a reality in other regions. Other posts emphasized that the work was deliberately not founded either on scientific accuracy or on a moral connection to our values, or even on the probability of enacting them.Rather, it was founded on the capacity to make the audience discuss and respond to its pivotal theme—food shortages and hunger. Consequently, the proposal of a scientifically viable solution could only evince the effectiveness of the project, while denouncing it as a neoliberal demonstration could not possibly be more off the mark.

To re-emphasize, critical designs do not adhere to the problem-solution paradigm, but seek to contribute to consciousness-raising and public debate by generating fictional scenarios, even if the designers themselves do not necessarily endorse those. At the same time, to furnish their projects with practical nuances and comply with the democratic order, critical designers must embed the future they envisage in the sphere of experiences intelligible and relatable to the audience. Fredric Jameson's frequently rehashed remark: "Someone once said that it is easier to imagine the end of the world than to imagine the end of capitalism" (Jameson 2003)has become a colloquial shorthand for today's crisis of the imagination. Importantly, the crisis of the collective imagination springs not only from our lack of language in which to conduct public debate on environmental issues. Therefore, the solution cannot be limited merely to illuminating the area that has gone unnoticed before. It is far more pressing to present the urgent issues in ways that not only capture attention, but also trigger certain responses.

Conclusion

This paper grows out of my belief that experimental, explorative, and discursive forms of tackling climate change are underappreciated, whereas they appear to fulfill the desire of building a better—safer, cleaner, and more equitable—world. I believe that the vision of this world can attract even those who are not concerned with issues related to concrete planetary mechanisms or are skeptical about them. Given that the challenges of climate change are exacerbating today, I view critical design as a tool for binding utopian aspirations and practical solutions more closely. The pragmatic approach to environmental challenges foregrounds the exigency of focusing on ethics, pursuing environmental democracy, and abandoning purely theoretical debates. In this context, critical design appears to be a normative practice that not only assesses and analyses reality, but also points to potential paths toward change. Although critical design does not state clearly what should be done to overcome our passivity, it does project various routes leading from beliefs to actions. It attends both to the structural causes of our activities (contemporary capitalism and consumer culture) and to individual responsibility. If we are unable to switch to veganism (Foer himself could not bring himself to that), we can at least reduce the amount of animal products we eat before dinner. Foer warns that"our descendants won't distinguish between those who denied the science of climate change and those who behaved as if they did" (Foer 2019, 28), and I deliberately draw on his observations, because he argues that, all in all, we need total and comprehensive action; we must not limit ourselves to technological solutions or market regulations alone:

> When it comes to working against the destruction of our home, the answer is never *either/or*—it's always *both/and*. (…) We must strive to end the extraction and burning offossil fuels and

> invest in renewable energy, and recycle, and employ renewable materials, and phase out hydrofluorocarbons in refrigerants, and plant trees and protect trees, and fly less, and drive less, and advocate for a carbon tax, and change our farming practices, and reduce food waste, *and* reduce our consumption of animal products. (Foer 2019, 94).

Irrespective of criticisms levelled at critical design, its practical value lies in its capacity to think out of the box and generate new possibilities of action. Confrontation with objections and doubts can hopefully prompt the further development of critical design and help better understand its role in the ecological context. Reflection on the potential of critical design practice represents a fundamental step toward building more effective and sustainable societies prepared to take on global environmental challenges. Of course, some people will remain unconvinced, but a reconfiguration of foci can win over new allies, including those who do not know yet that they may become engaged. Ultimately, it is not about amassing new data, facts, and evidence; the point is what I, you, and we will do in our everyday life, the only real life that we live.

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ENVIRONMENTAL PRAGMATISM AS A SOUND ENVIRONMENTAL PHILOSOPHY

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ABSTRACT**:** By countering Lars Samuelsson's concept of environmental pragmatism, this paper presents environmental pragmatism as a genuine environmental philosophy. Samuelsson argues that the position of environmental pragmatists, which has led environmental philosophers away from theoretical debates, is not a proper philosophical debate at all. However, we are living amidst an ecological crisis. The problems we are facing are practical, not theoretical. Hence, practical solutions are urgently required for these tangible problems. To do so, a pragmatic environmental philosophy is established. Environmental pragmatism, a prominent viewpoint in the field of environmental ethics since the 1990s, would tackle the failure of traditional environmental ethics. Accordingly, it deemphasizes any dualistic discussion in conventional environmental ethics by leaning toward classic American pragmatism. As a result, it redirects the field's core focus from theoretical debates to tackling actual environmental concerns. This can be accomplished by prioritizing policy implementation. Therefore, this work promotes environmental pragmatism as a robust environmental ethics.

Keywords: Pragmatism; environmental pragmatism; sound environmental ethics

Introduction

Living squarely in an ecological crisis, we face practical and untheoretical problems. Practical solutions are therefore urgently required for these tangible problems, and one solution is the establishment of a pragmatic environmental philosophy[1]. Recently, the meaning of environmental pragmatism has been discussed among environmental philosophers. Environmental pragmatism, a prominent viewpoint in the field of environmental ethics since the 1990s, tackles the failure of traditional environmental ethics. Some believe that environmental philosophy has become meaningless because it overemphasizes abstract conceptual issues and does not address the pressing issues of environmental policy. This view implicitly suggests that philosophers must be concerned with real-world practical issues such as pollution, environmental destruction, and environmental justice.

For environmental pragmatists, one of the main questions is why environmental ethics is unable to resolve the practical issues at hand. One of the reasons for them is theoretical and methodological dogmatism. Conventional environmental ethics have grown out of the limited perspective that certain methods are more appropriate in this domain than others. This implies that only specific avenues in the evolution of environmental philosophy will result in environmentally sound policy. Of course, several perspectives have been expressed in the literature about the inclusion of non-anthropocentrism, holism, moral monism, and some sort of intrinsic value in a suitable and workable environmental ethic. The task of proof is usually placed on those who must take a different stance or push one outside the bounds of a traditional theory; these individuals are rarely heard or taken seriously (Katz & Light, 1996:2-3). This study, as previously mentioned, aims to show how environmental pragmatists significantly rely on the idea of mainstream pragmatism rather than providing a general exposition of pragmatism's philosophy.

Having questioned the role of environmental ethics in decision-making and policy discourse, environmental pragmatists offer a radical reconstruction that seeks to uphold the principles of law and justice. About typical environmental concerns, this reconstruction raises fundamental questions. For conventional or mainstream environmental ethicists, public opinion, discussion, debate and criticism of their reasons for preserving the intrinsic value of nature are insignificant. Monistic environmen-

[1] Environmental ethics and philosophy are closely related and are sometimes used interchangeably. But they have subtle differences. Environmental ethics focuses specifically on the moral principles and values that guide how human beings interact with the environment. It is concerned with what is right or wrong in our treatment of the natural world. Environmental philosophy, on the other hand, is a broader term encompassing a range of environmental philosophical enquiries. It includes not only ethical but also metaphysical, epistemological, and aesthetic aspects of humanity's relationship with nature. In this paper I will use them interchangeably only as moral principles and values that guide human interactions with the environment, although I recognize the slight difference between them.

talism seems designed to avoid such problematic political discourse (Chatterjee, 2017:36).

Environmental pragmatism lends itself to context-sensitive assessment of environmental values and to public participation and democratic engagement in developing ethical norms. Depending on the context, pragmatists view knowledge and values as temporary and subject to revision (Hourdequin, 2015:243). Furthermore, environmental pragmatism is a practical way of reconstructing or reorienting a conventional and theoretical approach to environmental philosophy. Although still a philosophical endeavor, environmental pragmatism anticipates a move away from theoretical debates about the fundamental authenticity of environmental practices and policies (Chatterjee, 2017:36).

In contrast to the metaphysical approaches that dominate contemporary environmental ethics, and the never-ending debates about what and who have intrinsic value, pragmatics supports an inter-temporal and normative logic of inquiry. If we see the pursuit of sustainability as a communal effort to understand and sustain a learning process, establishing objective truth involves more than aligning one's goals and policies with those of the outside world. It involves understanding and projecting a kind of transformation of one's own subjective consciousness. In this way, environmental philosophy shifts its primary attention from moral theory to epistemological questions of justification, methods of inquiry and, more generally, possibilities for their improvement (Norton, 1999:456).

In his essay "Is There a Need for a New, an Environmental Ethic?", Richard Sylvan, largely inspired by environmental concerns, posed a new question. This environmental ethic would render us more sensitive to the needs and values of the non-human natural world. Disputes have broken out over various theories that recognize the value and moral position not only of the human individual, but also of animals, of non-sentient natural beings, of ecosystems, and of the planet itself. Philosophers often attempted to develop a monistic theory capable of encompassing all of our moral obligations in the early stages of environmental ethics. Also, the legal scholar Christopher Stone has observed: that in their quest for a monistic theory, environmental philosophers became mired in theoretical discussions that distracted them from addressing actual policy issues (Edelglass, 2006:9).

The pioneers of pragmatism could not have imagined the environmental problems we face today. However key insights of environmental philosophy can be found in their work. Both pragmatists and many contemporary environmental philosophers share the observation that the human realm is embedded in each point of the natural realm, that each inescapably affects the other in unforeseen ways, and that values arise in the ongoing transaction between humans and the natural world (Parker, 1996:21).

This paper consists of six parts. The first provides a brief historical development of philosophical pragmatism. The link between philosophical pragmatism and environmental pragmatism is discussed in part two. In part three and four, moral monism and moral pluralism will briefly be discussed respectively in the context of environmental ethics. In part five, I will carefully analyses Lars Samuelsson's article "Environmental pragmatism and environmental philosophy: a bad marriage" and counterargue to make my point and show how environmental pragmatism should still be considered a robust environmental ethic. In the last part I will give a general conclusion.

Historical Development of Philosophical Pragmatism: An Overview

Etymologically, pragmatism is derived from the Greek *pragma*, meaning action, from which the words "practice" and "practical" are derived. The first person to use pragmatism to describe a specific philosophical doctrine was the American logician and philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce (James, 1907:21).

Pragmatism is a distinctly American phenomenon. The Metaphysical Club began as an ad hoc group at Cambridge in January 1872. It included thinkers like William James, Charles Peirce, and Oliver Wendell Holmes, whose philosophy later came to be known as pragmatism. Still later, and from entirely different sources, John Dewey was drawn to this philosophy, and he eventually became the archetypal pragmatist as that doctrine came to be understood by the end of the 1940s (Biesenthal, 2014; Ryder, 2004).

In America in the early 1920s, pragmatism predominated as a philosophy; it was a movement that opposed idealism and has had a subtle impact on many academic subjects, including law, education, political and social theory, religion, and the arts. Pragmatism is best understood as a conventional philosophy concerned with establishing specific good goals (Godfrey-Smith, 2015; Thayer, 1981).

The apparent formative conditions of pragmatism are enigmatic for two main reasons. First, it is curious that the pragmatists' forebears did not give a precise or coherent account of the historical roots of their theory. As a philosophical stance or as an organizing principle, they did not fully agree with what pragmatism represented. Peirce and James, for example, adopted a broad perspective of historical lineage, attributing the idea that all philosophical behavior ultimately becomes pragmatism to figures such as Socrates, Aristotle, Spinoza, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, Kant, and Mill, among others (Thayer, 1981:5), whereas Dewey sees Francis Bacon as having pioneered a pragmatic understanding of knowledge (Dewey, 1920:28). The second problem that obfuscates the historical development of pragmatism is the fact that pragmatism is a theory that maintains that criteria of practical usefulness determine the validity and meaning of reasoning (Thayer, 1981:5).

Even though a great deal of ambiguity and confusion about certain more specific formative conditions of pragmatism exist, there are some unifying themes in classical philosophical pragmatism including, inter alia, (a) attempts to discard human knowledge by referring to a unique set of foundational beliefs that underpin all others. Both individual beliefs and general techniques of investigation, according to pragmatism, should be assessed by their consequences, by their utility in attaining human aims, and (b) they reject corresponding conceptions of truth, which argue that a genuine belief or statement represents the world as it truly is; (c) they argue against philosophical frameworks that treat the world as complete or resistant to the consequences of choice. Finally, (d) pragmatists also tend to have humanistic attitudes on morals and values, rejecting both nihilistic viewpoints that discard any moral judgment as based on illusion and viewpoints that situate moral and other evaluative realities outside of the ordinary world of human striving and well-being (Godfrey-Smith, 2015:2-3).

Pragmatism was developed and expressed in large part by individual thinkers like Peirce, James, and Dewey. Each of them uniquely formed his own entire ideology, even though they all contributed significantly to the formation and direction of the philosophy. Following his studies in psychology, James adopted pragmatism and carried on his radical empiricism and pluralist philosophy, whereas Peirce, influenced by Kant and Schelling, developed objective idealism. Philosophical naturalism, is a well-articulated concept of Dewey's evolving pragmatism. Simply put, pragmatism is a philosophy initially articulated by Charles Peirce in the 1870s, reestablished as a theory of truth in 1898 by William James, and further developed, widened, and promoted by John Dewey and F.C.S. Schiller (Thayer, 1981:3-5).

Peirce's major works, "The Fixation of Belief" and "How to Make Our Ideas Clear", both published in the Popular Science Monthly in 1877 and 1878 respectively, deal with the relationships between doubt, inquiry, belief and action. According to Peirce, inquiry always begins with uncertainty. Doubt motivates inquiry, which leads to belief. According to Peirce, the essence of belief is the

formation of a habit of action; this connection between belief and action was important to his and other pragmatists' philosophies. Peirce claimed that science is the most efficient way to dispel uncertainty and form good habits of action (Godfrey-Smith, 2015:3). – EDDIG!!

William James furthered the theory of pragmatism in his 1907 book titled *Pragmatism*, which is the most widely read of all pragmatists' writings. Before he started calling himself a pragmatist, his views in his books adhered to those of Peirce. According to James, pragmatism began as a technique of addressing binary philosophical disagreements such as one versus many, fated versus free, and the material versus spiritual. If not decided pragmatically, such conceptions are controversially unending, and, to make pragmatic decisions, we must understand each thought by tracing its distinct practical repercussions; that is, when a disagreement develops between an idea seen as a binary opposition, we must ask one critical question: What difference would it make to anyone if this or that belief was true? If no practical difference can be found, and the alternatives imply the same thing, then all debate is futile. When a debate is serious, we should be able to demonstrate some practical difference that must result from one side or the other being correct (James, 1907:21).

Proposing an illusionary distinction between mind and substance, thinking and object, theoretical and practical, Dewey pursued the philosophical tradition in *Experience and Nature* (1925), arguably his most influential work. Dewey argued for his naturalistic theory of mind and knowledge. Due to dualisms, which cause pseudo-issues and make it difficult to communicate between realms that shouldn't have been placed against one another in the first place, the philosophical tradition is loaded with problems. A separation between the flawless and the imperfect, the permanent and the changing, and the relational and the self-possessed, which was established by the ancient Greeks, serves as the foundation for these dualisms (Godfrey-Smith, 2015:6).

The dualism that dominated Western philosophy gave rise to pragmatic thought. René Descartes, a French philosopher, proposed a separation of the mind and body and held that knowledge existed apart from the knower. Pragmatists view philosophical concepts like positivism against postmodernism or theory against practice as linguistic games and are hence disinterested in dualistic debates over them. In contrast, pragmatics are more interested in the practical application, integration, and importance of these philosophical ideas than in their ultimate meaning. Pragmatism rejects the idea of ultimate truth, arguing that all knowledge, opinions, and scientific theories are temporary. Truth only endures for as long as a notion offers meaningful, useful solutions; knowledge is never distinct from the knower (Biesenthal, 2014:3-4). Furthermore, Biesenthal notes that pragmatism is an approach that bridges the dualism divide by emphasizing the problem-solving inquiry process. The conceptualizations of meaning interpretation and truth interpretation are the foundation of this integrated philosophical investigation (Ibid).

Although the fundamental idea of pragmatism—a problem-solving strategy based on practical knowledge—has remained constant, the pragmatic method has been applied to various professions since its origin in the late nineteenth century. As a result, it allows various theoretical perspectives, some of which are contradictory. Because of this internal dispute, it is impossible to articulate a singular definition of pragmatism (Ibid:8). The purpose of this study, however, is not to discuss mainstream pragmatism in depth but rather to focus on its conceptual basis and how it affects environmental pragmatists. Let us now turn to how philosophical and environmental pragmatism are linked.

The Connection Between Philosophical and Environmental Pragmatism

As previously mentioned, the theoretical underpinnings of environmental pragmatism are derived from philo-

sophical pragmatism, an earlier movement that emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries as a result of the contributions of American philosophers like Peirce, James, and Dewey (Hourdequin, 2015; Loman, 2020). Also, Pragmatists disagree with the foundationalist objective of establishing a stable and unalterable framework for ethics and epistemology, holding that the veracity of a hypothesis should be assessed in relation to experience. Frequently, their views are pluralistic (Parker, 1996:25).

While there are differences amongst environmental pragmatists regarding their views on non-anthropocentrism, the intrinsic value of nature, and adherence to American pragmatism, what unites them all is their support for moral heterogeneity in the approach to environmental ethics. The necessary consensus won't be hampered by theoretical incompatibility. For example, the sentience criterion or the respect teleological center of life criterion can both be used to justify the morality of animals. They both seek to address the morality of animals, despite their theoretical differences (Campos & Vaz, 2021:4).

Therefore, acknowledging moral diversity, downplaying the importance of theoretical arguments, and realizing that concentrating on practical issues allows us to get to a political consensus more quickly are the three essential pillars of environmental pragmatism. In general, environmental pragmatism emphasizes the importance of firsthand experiences while rejecting the idea of ultimate knowledge or metaphysics. Furthermore, environmental pragmatists reject of the duplication of dualism or dichotomies since they think it hinders the development of fruitful dialogues. Examples include individualism opposed to holism, anthropocentrism versus non-anthropocentrism, and intrinsic value of nature against its utilitarian value (Ibid: 4-5). In line with this, Light and Katz argued that which side of individualism/holism, anthropocentrism/non-anthropocentrism, instrumental/intrinsic value, and pluralism/monism is correct doesn't seem to be relevant to decide. It is generally agreed upon that one would be better off investing time in the quest for a single hypothesis that could explain everything else (Light & Katz, 1996:2).

Environmental pragmatists argue that it is fatalistic to assert that the only effective method to address environmental issues is to steer a total cultural paradigm shift that fundamentally alters human value systems. The main aim of environmental pragmatists is not to persuade skeptics that natural systems or sentient beings have values; instead, they place more emphasis on creating a democratic environment for adaptive decision-making, which of course includes the examination of ultimate principles. In other words, they place greater emphasis than do monists on finding ameliorative solutions to conflicts and on reaching practical, ecologically responsible judgments. Environmental pragmatists foster a democratic atmosphere for adaptive decision making without taking a side in the fundamental values dispute that has characterized environmental ethics since the 1970s (Fesmire, 2022:1).

Environmental pragmatists contend that without transcendental criteria, a priori deductions that are removed from the investigation, and unassured judgments, we may intelligently handle issues and guide ourselves toward realistic goals. As a result, they are moral naturalists. They also fervently support various values that cannot be distilled down to a single final value; therefore, they do not advocate for the highest moral principle, value, standard, legislation, or notion. In addition, environmental pragmatism clearly denies the mainstream environmental attempts of a sole justifiable model with which we may align ourselves. Indeed, a monistic point of view is not rejected but is rather remodeled as an instrument to open an inquiry in doing so compositing for (Ibid:2).

The argument between monists and pluralists has been particularly significant in the field of environmental ethics. Many academics connected the state of the environment to destructive environmental activities and to conventional moral and philosophical frameworks that

appeared to support these activities in the 1960s and 1970s in response to the growing body of evidence supporting environmental degradation at the time (Ibid:9). Due to the pluralistic nature of environmental pragmatism, it could be beneficial to discuss and examine moral monism and pluralism. This paper will examine them both below.

Moral Monism

There can only be one legitimate and correct theory of morality, according to the monists. One of the driving forces behind moral monism is the fear of the alternative — that there will be no single, coherent ethical theory. They fear that ethical relativism will take its place. The other options are to give up trying to create a rational ethics or to accept a single ethical system (Desjardins, 2013:256). It follows that moral monism means believing that there is a single, fundamental moral principle that should guide how we behave in all circumstances. This suggests that in the context of environmental ethics, we should give priority to one overriding value or principle in environmental decision-making. For example, a moral monist would argue that protecting biodiversity is the most important priority and that all other considerations need to be subordinated.

Monistic environmental ethicists believe that a single moral philosophy or theory of values is both necessary and sufficient to provide a basis for our expanded duties and obligations to the environment. Because they are suspicious of competing viewpoints, they assert that there can only be one legitimate and correct moral theory. The implication is that a single ethical framework must embrace the wide range of diverse moral concerns that holism embraces, and that all humans, other animals, living things, ecosystems, species, and perhaps even the earth itself, are within the realm of concern (Chatterjee, 2017:32).

The relationship of moral theories to moral principles is one way of classifying them. For example, because they are both based on higher moral principles, utilitarianism and natural law theory share a formal structure. In utilitarianism, all moral considerations must be derived from the principle of utility. These theories are monistic because they are based on an overarching moral principle that ensures unity and coherence (Edelglass, 2006:9).

Both anthropocentrism and non-anthropocentrism are included in monistic views. Anthropocentrism deals with the main locus of value. Whereas biocentrism holds that all forms of life are important in and of themselves, anthropocentrism holds that value is primarily created by or for humans. Ecocentrism emphasises the importance of the whole ecological system, including natural processes, interactions and the non-living components of organisms. Whether value is attached to individual things or whether value must be considered collectively is a point of contention in this discussion. The pragmatist might ask whether we should be expected to pledge allegiance to one of these flags and ignore the others, since authentic values develop at each level of focus (Parker, 1996:32).

Turning Enlightenment thought inside out, the pragmatists proposed reforms of epistemology and metaphysics. No less revolutionary are the implications of pragmatic thought about value. A theory of value that emphasizes the aesthetic dimension, sees ethics as a process of continuous mediation of conflict in an ever-changing world, and lays the groundwork for social and political change is produced by a central emphasis on experience and an experimental approach to establishing our knowledge and practices (Ibid:25).

Pragmatists believe that all values are the result of experience. The ethical question of what is good ultimately boils down to the particular question of what is good in the interaction of an organism with its environment. Of course, the inquiry goes beyond the subjective feelings of the individual. It simply recognizes them as the only viable place of birth. The first question of value is not what we should desire, but what each person ultimately desires and why. There are many complex answers. They

are not entirely contained within a classification such as the utilitarian calculus of pain and pleasure (Ibid:25-26).

A cornerstone of pragmatic ethics is the idea that the rightness of an action is essentially system-dependent. Value arises in an ever-evolving, infinitely complex system of beings in situations. Because many ethically challenging situations mirror one another so closely, the Enlightenment goal of a universally valid ethical theory may at first seem acceptable. But a pragmatist is interested in similarity and consistency as well as in distinguishing and changing. As the world changes and human ideas and behavior evolve, there will inevitably be new kinds of ethically challenging situations. In order to deal with them, we must develop new frameworks for the determination of what is appropriate (Ibid:26).

Parker argues that the main problem with intrinsic value is that there can be no authentic environmental ethics as long as the non-human world is seen as a pool of resources with a purely instrumental value. The non-human universe must provide more than benefits for it to have moral significance. It must be beneficial in itself (Ibid:33).

However, a community of scholars has rarely been in complete agreement about the right direction for progress in the field. According to the environmental pragmatists, the failure of this unifying vision to influence practical policy ought to give pause for thought, and they conclude that environmental ethics needs to embrace some new positions and reassess the direction of the field. First, the gap between acceptable approaches to environmental ethics and applicable and acceptable environmental policy needs to be bridged. Secondly, other possible sources and foundations of moral environmentalism need to be explored (Katz & Light, 1996:3).

Monistic environmental ethics has been called into question for a variety of reasons. For example, it oversimplifies complex ethical dilemmas through its reduction to a single value, such as the intrinsic value of nature. Moreover, since its inception, moral monism has made little contribution to environmental policy. In the same way, environmental ethicists have not been able to provide valuable practical assistance by offering concrete management directions on the multi-faceted and controversial topics of environmental planning, management and administration. Additionally, narrowing and limiting of the range of issues explored in environmental ethics is another inherent and practical effect of the monistic argument. As a result, the monistic perspective tends to be disadvantageous for environmental ethicists when it comes to environmental policy disputes. (Chatterjee, 2017:36).

In order to adapt to the changing demands of the environment, many of today's environmental philosophers have abandoned their commitment to a single environmental philosophy. Many contemporary theorists combine different environmental ideologies rather than seeking a single overarching environmental philosophy. Environmental pragmatists argue that we should set aside our disagreements and take comfort in the inclusion of a variety of useful benefits, such as environmental preservation, as long as the theory appears to be designed to improve the environment. For environmental pragmatists, understanding the relationship between theory and practice is crucial (Williams, 2019:5).

Furthermore, by rejecting the notion that instrumental and intrinsic values are mutually exclusive, pragmatism resolves this conundrum. The existence of a being, whether human or non-human, is defined by its relations to other things in a framework of meaningful connections. Consequently, everything good is instrumentally and intrinsically important. We can distinguish between two kinds of value. However, nothing can be instrumentally useful without also having intrinsic value. He adds, that understanding that we are connected to our environment and that it is connected to us is the essence of pragmatic thinking about the environment (Parker, 1996: 34-35). Moral pluralism comes into the picture here because moral monism has not really been able to deal with moral problems in an ever-changing world.

Moral Pluralism

Moral pluralism is the point of view that claims there is no single, all-encompassing moral theory or principle that can be applied appropriately in every morally challenging situation. Pragmatism recognizes that there are real distinctions in moral situations. This is because there are so many different kinds of elements and possible connections between them (Parker, 1996:31). Therefore, Pluralists have the view that there is no single monistic theory that can encompass the whole moral realm with all its complexities. But we do have a theory that gives true principles for particular kinds of moral conduct, intentions, or situations. Moreover, moral pluralism is an appropriate and necessary response to many moral problems in our lives, rather than a form of relativism (Edelglass, 2006:9).

Pluralism is an alternative to monism and relativism. Its adherents reject the monist view that there is only one right answer to ethics, and the relativist claim that there can be no right answer. Instead, the claim of moral pluralists is that there are many moral truths that cannot be reduced to a single principle. According to monists, this position is tantamount to relativism (O'Neill et al., 2008:74).

Andrew Light, Bryan Norton, and Anthony Weston - three eminent environmental ethicists —proposed moral pluralism in environmental ethics, a theory that supports an environmental philosophy that can be implemented in real-world environmental regulation. Moral pluralists, who typically identify themselves as environmental pragmatists, claim that there is no single, all-encompassing ultimate principle that addresses all aspects of environmental conduct. However, they maintain that these separate entities have different moral obligations on different grounds. Rather than rejecting a theory outright and embracing monism, pluralists and environmental pragmatists, for instance, carefully evaluate whether moral principles apply to a given scenario when competing theories, like animal rights and ecocentrism, produce inconsistent outcomes (Edelglass, 2006:9-10).

Brennan (1992) offered two different views of moral pluralism either to make difficult choices or to take complex actions when faced with a particular set of circumstances. Consequently, several valuable activities are involved in the evaluation of each circumstance. There is no single lens through which to view a situation with a particular set of ideas, principles, or frameworks in the second type of pluralism he described. Kelly also divides pluralists into two groups: radicals and moderates. The radical pluralist maintains that at least two, but usually many more, values are incommensurable. To put it another way, two measures are not comparable if the comparison is meaningless, like body temperature and intelligence. According to the moderate pluralist: All values are comparable but not reducible (Kelly, 2014:112).

Pluralism is a tool used by pragmatists to denounce the core ideas that ethical theorists and philosophers may hold to be the highest ideals. Pluralism is in a far better position than monism in relation to theories that arise only from the recognition of a particular theory because numerous hypotheses offer important and crucial ecological issues. Since the environment is constantly changing, pluralism is also essential from a pragmatic point of view. An increasing number of scientists and philosophers are arguing in favour of the acceptance of ecological interventions that provide answers for a world in which human beings have lost control due to the overwhelming amount of demands that need to be met (Williams, 2019:9).

Rather than being based on theoretical ideas, moral environmental pluralism is based on a pragmatist philosophy that derives moral principles from negotiated solutions to real-world management challenges. They provide guidelines and language for presenting solutions to environmental dilemmas. Environmental pluralism aids environmental decision-making by helping to identify the values and trade-offs that are being negotiated

(Hull, 2007:2). In other words, a theory of morals that is able to serve as a keystone species of morals, organizing all moral criteria into a hierarchical structure from which logical and consistent conclusions can be drawn. Monism can best be defined as the pursuit of a "golden rule" that is derived from some fundamental truth and that reasonable people accept as the solution to the resolution of vexing problems and environmental dilemmas. Opponents of monism argue that it is both wise and essential to believe in and practice pluralism, since no unifying system exists and is unlikely to be created (Ibid:1-2).

According to pluralists, a singular ethical theory is not possible because of the variety of scenarios in which we find ourselves, and our myriad ethical connections with both humans and nature require a variety of methods to satisfy our moral obligations. For pluralists, no one ethical theory can be made appealing to all people to build support for real environmental change. They recognize the possibility that more than one hypothesis is acceptable and appropriate. The argument over moral pluralism among environmental philosophers has heated up in recent years owing to the vast diversity in policies concerning the environment (Chatterjee, 2017:32).

Pragmatists are supportive of value pluralism — the idea that there are different legitimate values — and tend to reject hierarchical perspectives in which a single value can justify all the others. This is partly because of pragmatists' basic view of values as something we create through the process of valuation (Hourdequin, 2015:242).

Value pluralism holds that the universe contains numerous fundamental, irreducible, intrinsically valuable features. Because they capture evidence of value more easily, pluralist theories of value offer significant advantages over existing monistic theories. Superficially, there is much to be valued: people and art, food and kindness, flowers and physics, autonomy and enjoyment. Some of these are considered to be ends in themselves. If they all have intrinsic value, the monist must show that each of them possesses a unique attribute that determines its value (Kelly, 2014:112).

In contrast to the seemingly never-ending intrinsic value debates, one of environmental pragmatism's main aims is to make environmental ethics more applicable and political. The challenge to intrinsic value theories from pragmatism is twofold. First, in their a priori attempts to identify fundamental sources of value, they see these theories as flawed. The pragmatic idea that values are diverse, situational and derived from lived experience conflicts with such aims. Furthermore, environmental pragmatists fear that a theory-first strategy would never be implemented in real life (Hourdequin, 2015:242).

Pragmatists for the environment argue that we should start by looking at how people value plants, animals and the natural world, rather than focusing on a single set of fundamental values. Values have less to do with a solid foundation than with an intricate, interconnected web in which values in one part of the web support values in others (Hourdequin, 2015:242).

Environmental pragmatism sees moral monism as dangerous and problematic because it seeks to exclude or marginalize different points of view and condense them into a single master narrative. In contrast, environmental pluralism argues that it is difficult to impose a single concept as an overarching and structuring framework. This is because the world is infinitely complex, fluid and negotiated. There will be legitimate differences of opinion among reasonable decision-makers who come from different communities of practice. In addition, moral environmental pluralism holds that there are a variety of competing, overlapping, self-consistent frameworks for distinguishing between right and wrong, and between good and bad. No one framework is superior in all situations, and no one hierarchy subsumes the others (Hull, 2007:2-3).

Environmental ethics is able to shed new light on existing issues if moral pluralism is accepted as a philosoph-

ical point of view. It is problematic to see non-anthropocentric ethics critiquing the Western human-centered tradition as seeking to replace one theory with another. Instead, the study of non-anthropocentric ethics must be pursued in order to make our moral discourse more sophisticated. It must help us to understand more aspects of our daily lives. For example, utilitarianism and its rivals should not be abandoned, but rather seen as part of the moral life. From this perspective, Andrew argues, environmental ethics is more an appreciation of the more sophisticated direction ethics has taken than a contest for a particular moral viewpoint (Brennan, 1992:30).

There are many who disagree with environmental pragmatism, even though it is supported by many scholars. Loman (2020) and Samuelson (2010) are among those who argue against environmental pragmatism. Loman claims that the tenets of environmental pragmatism contradict each other. Norton, for example, defines sustainability as a set of behaviors (an institution, a policy, or a management practice) that persists over time only if the constraints faced by a given generation are not reduced for succeeding generations. Thus, Loman concluded that sustainability seemed to have a firm foundation, even if environmental pragmatism did not. However, Loman is wrong in his criticism of Norton's definition of sustainability because there is a big difference between beliefs and guiding principles. Norton describes sustainability as one of the useful concepts that can improve institutional, policy, and management practices, not as the only fundamental principle.

Some scholars are also critical of moral pluralism, arguing that it reduces all ethics to rhetoric while encouraging relativism and skepticism. What is right and wrong, good and evil, is determined by personal taste and class preferences. This argument claims that pluralism allows eloquent, knowledgeable villains to influence discussions to justify whatever conclusions they wish, whatever ethical norms they find persuasive (Hull, 2007:2). Hence, such a critique of pluralism seems unworkable and perhaps even utopian from the perspective of pragmatic decision-makers. Decisions about how to build forest roads, how much sewage to discharge, where to build poultry houses, how to apply fertilizers, how to design power plants, how to release genetically modified crops, how to restore critical habitats, how to mine and drill, and so on, are all decisions that affect the quality and future of our environment. These decisions must be made with imperfect knowledge and in a timely manner. There is no full awareness of values or their implications (ibid:3).

However, for the purpose of this work, I would like to focus on Samuelsson (2010) article entitled "Environmental pragmatism and environmental philosophy: a bad marriage*!*". In his paper, he argued that the goal of environmental pragmatists, which is to lead environmental philosophers away from theoretical debates and toward more practical discussions driven by pragmatic considerations, is not a proper philosophical position. Samuelsson contends that philosophy, inter alia, is an effort to gain clarity on the problems that matter to us (Samuelsson, 2010:405). In what follows, I will argue against his main arguments in order to make my point. I will then go on to show how environmental pragmatism is a valid environmental philosophy.

How Environmental Pragmatism Considered a Sound Environmental Philosophy

Samuelsson argues that pragmatic positions that lead environmental philosophers away from theoretical debate are not proper philosophical debates at all. Philosophy is, among other things, an effort to gain clarity about the problems that matter to us (Ibid).

Given the variety of viewpoints, establishing a single definition of environmental pragmatism is a challenging task. Thus, it is best understood as an umbrella term that encompasses a range of approaches in the field, all of which are believed to have something vital in common — prioritize practice over theory — that is, they should shift away from theoretical debates about nature's intrinsic

value and towards more practical ones concerning environmental policy and decision-making. The genesis of this viewpoint is grounded on the belief that theoretical arguments are problematic for the development of environmental policy because they make mainstream environmental ethics incapable of influencing environmental decision-making and policy formation, and thus fail to contribute to the task of solving environmental problems. As a result, as stated by Light and Katz, we should seek to develop acceptable solutions to environmental concerns as rapidly as possible (Ibid:406).

This new direction in environmental philosophy goes beyond theory to call for a comprehensive exploration of the practical advantages of moral plurality. This plurality is divided into two categories: theoretical and metatheoretical. The former involves the acknowledgment of several conceptually incommensurable bases for direct moral judgment, whereas the latter is open to the prospect of diverse ethical theories collaborating on the same moral effort. According to Samuelsson, both types of moral plurality are not unique to environmental pragmatism since, depending on how incompatible they are defined, both types of pluralism may be found in conventional, non-pragmatist environmental ethical perspectives. This is because many environmental ethicists contend there are several grounds for moral judgment. Furthermore, people who hold competing ethical theories can work together to achieve comparable goals—in fact, most environmental ethicists, despite subscribing to opposing theories, can be seen working together to attain multiple common goals related to the environment (Ibid:407-408).

Furthermore, Samuelsson contends that philosophy, in its broadest sense, is an endeavor to elucidate the difficulties that confound us. Therefore, the role of environmental philosophy is to shed light on perplexing environmental issues. However, instead of seeking explanations for problematic topics, environmental pragmatism advises us to ignore them. As a result, Samuelsson makes the audacious argument that environmental pragmatism is not a valid philosophical viewpoint at all. Even while seeking clarity on confusing matters should be one of the bare minimums of a philosophical stance, a philosophy that urges us to do otherwise is not philosophical. Thus, philosophers should not allow pragmatic concerns to drive their choices of investigative themes because as philosophers, they should ask and endeavor to find solutions to philosophical issues that have sparked their interest—that puzzle them—regardless of the consequences (Ibid:408-409).

Since philosophy is concerned with complex problems such as free choice, the explanation for avoiding philosophical issues like free will is non-philosophical. According to Samuelsson, some people believe that disputing the notion of free will would endanger morality. However, he claims that even if this argument were true, philosophers should ignore it and continue to examine and develop the concept of free will. Similarly, if we had a compelling reason to avoid discussing intrinsic value, it would be a non-philosophical justification. Moreover, the question of whether nature has intrinsic value is philosophically interesting, and there is a good reason to pursue it even if doing so would put certain impediments in the way of policy-forming environmentalists. They will simply have to face the challenge of overcoming these obstacles.

He goes on to explain that philosophy is primarily theoretical and that fields of philosophy such as epistemology, metaphysics, and philosophy of language have little direct practical importance. They may continue their intellectual studies without first establishing their practical utility. If this is the case, environmental philosophers who are interested in the possibility of inherent value in nature should be allowed to carry out investigations without first demonstrating its practical usefulness (Ibid:410).

The fundamental notion is that if one is an environmental philosopher, one's primary purpose is to save nature. Indeed, given the urgency of environmental issues, environmental philosophy may be viewed as a special case. People with critical skills, such as astrophysicists,

psychologists, and linguists, who do not have the overriding purpose of conserving nature, must also be allowed to study environmental philosophy (Ibid: 410-411).

Moreover, from the standpoint of an environmental pragmatist, two questions stand out: (1) Which conditions of distinct natural systems best serve different (human) ends? (2) What are the most effective methods to motivate individuals to participate in the work of attaining such states of these numerous natural systems? Both concerns are better suited for empirical sciences such as ecology, psychology, human physiology, and sociology (Ibid: 411).

Environmental pragmatists are worried that theoretical arguments in environmental philosophy inhibit policy progress. However, Samuelsson perceives that the tension is greatly exaggerated for two reasons: (1) it overstates the practical importance of environmental philosophy and (2) it underestimates the practical importance of investigating issues of intrinsic value in nature (Ibid:412).

The overall objective of finding practical responses to environmental problems now, as environmental pragmatists assert, is undoubtedly a worthy undertaking, but it should not be the overarching purpose of environmental philosophy in general. The question of whether nature has intrinsic value is not incompatible with the issue of finding effective solutions to environmental concerns. On the contrary, such issues are often linked.

Samuelsson argues that environmental pragmatism structures things improperly. Instead of questioning what is valuable, i.e., what we have reason to value or bring about—environmental pragmatists simply state that there are some basic policy imperatives that we should carry out.

These are the imperatives on which we may expect many environmentalists from various groups philosophical and otherwise to agree: The bounds and content of environmental philosophy and political theory will be determined by appropriate environmental praxis (Ibid:414).

It may appear evident that there are certain fundamental environmental measures that are desirable and should be supported. However, this fact does not justify these practices in and of itself. It is the responsibility of philosophers to offer such reasoning if they believe these policies are correct. In addition, we should not decide that such a claim is true beforehand and then build the most plausible framework for making it appear correct or convince decision-makers and others that it is correct. If anything, that appears to be dogmatism! Most importantly, it is profoundly anti-philosophical.

Indeed, I agree with Samuelsson on his claims — that the issues of environmental philosophy should include more fields such as astrophysicists, psychologists, and linguists because people in these fields have critical skills to evaluate environmental problems. Also, environmental ethics issues concern the empirical sciences — ecology, psychology, human physiology, and sociology. Of course, environmental ethics from the very beginning is multidisciplinary. Even though environmental ethics categorized as sub-fields of philosophy in the 1970's those who involved in addressing environmental problems are from different backgrounds. For instance, Rachel Carson who wrote very influential book entitled *Silent Spring* was a biologist. Also, a historian, Lynn White wrote a very important article titled "Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis".

However, Samuelsson compelling argument that the issue of theoretical debate and intrinsic value is crucial and that we should continue discussing them, even if doing so would put certain impediments in the way of policy-forming environmentalists, is flawed. Because it is critical to grasp what environmental pragmatists mean when they say we should shift from theory to practice. This notion does not imply that the theory is insignificant in the sense that we should dismiss every theoretical debate entirely. On the contrary, they claim that theoretical debates hinder the ability of the environmental movement to forge agreement on basic policy imperatives (Light and Katz, 1996:1). Samuelson rejected the environmental pragmatist position entirely because it advises us to move away from seeking clarity on puzzling problems, which is a minimal requirement in phil-

osophical positions. However, the very premise of environmental pragmatism is clear enough, i.e. the puzzling environmental problems have been identified and clarified by mainstream environmental ethicists. For example, questions such as: what duties do humans have to the environment, and why? Should we value human life above all other forms of life on earth? Or are they equal? How should we treat non-human animals is at the heart of traditional environmental ethics? But the idea is that we should not stop discussing these problems. Rather, environmental philosophy should move beyond theoretical debates to practical benefits.

Furthermore, environmental pragmatists claim that conventional environmental ethics is trapped in a dualistic dispute between individualism and holism, anthropocentrism and non-anthropocentrism, instrumental and intrinsic value, and pluralism and monism. Being using the method of philosophical pragmatism within the context of environmental philosophy, they argue that we should not get caught up in the dualism argument. Therefore, we must emphasize practice. Similarly, environmental pragmatists claim that no one needs to ponder which side of these theories is right. Accordingly, transition to other projects is required, that is, the search for a unified theory that unites all others. Hence, it must be noted that such a theory is not a monistic theory. Rather it is a theory that encompasses value pluralism. Pragmatists support value pluralism — the concept that there are various, legitimate values—and tend to oppose hierarchical perspectives in which a single value can justify all others. This is due, in part, to pragmatists' basic view of values as something we make, via the process of valuing.

Moreover, environmental pragmatists disagree with the notion that instrumental and intrinsic values are mutually exclusive. A being's existence, whether human or non-human, is defined by its relationship to other components within a framework of significant interactions.

In a nutshell, Samuelsson's compelling argument that the issue of theoretical debate and intrinsic value is crucial and that we should continue discussing them, even if doing so would put certain impediments in the way of policy-forming environmentalists, is, however, flawed. Because it does not cohere with the pragmatic concept of an idea, belief, or proposition's meaning being stated to reside in the separate class of concrete experimental or practical results naturally follows from the notion's use and application. As a result, Samuelsson's argument on environmental pragmatism has been erroneously interpreted and requires correction.

Conclusion

As the preceding discussion has shown, environmental pragmatism is a viewpoint that prioritizes lived experience while challenging foundationalist conceptions of knowledge and value. Foundationalist theories recognize some significant ideas or values as basic or given and then support additional beliefs, values, or principles while taking these fundamental foundations into account. Pragmatism, founded on the notion that ideas, programs, and proposals should be helpful, workable, and practical, was a dominant school of thought in the United States until the 1930s. Accordingly, environmental pragmatism is rooted in philosophical pragmatism, which rejects many traditional philosophical questions because they are not genuine problems. Environmental pragmatism seeks to tackle mainstream environmental problems using the model of philosophical pragmatism.

The concept of centrism is at the heart of traditional environmental ethics. In other words, it emphasizes a particular component of nature. For example, anthropocentric environmental ethics overemphasizes humans, whereas non-anthropocentrism overemphasizes individual organisms, living beings, and ecosystems**. This is a distorted view of environmental concepts**. Conventional environmental ethics have helped in some way to address environmental problems such as population growth, overconsumption, deforestation, and pollution.

But such concerns tell us why we are in a crisis, not how to get out of it. **Therefore, environmental pragmatism has proposed an alternative view:** the question of environmental ethics should be addressed by making legitimate connections between different webs of life, rather than focusing on one particular area of life. **Pragmatists also emphasize practical policies that can be derived from multiple moral principles, rather than arguing for a single, always correct, indisputable metaphysics of morality: ecocentrism versus anthropocentrism, biocentrism versus sentientism, deep ecology versus social ecology, pluralism versus monism, intrinsic value versus instrumental value.**

According to environmental pragmatism, **conventional environmental ethics failed** because the discipline became bogged down in theoretical argument. However, it is important to note that environmental pragmatists did not reject theoretical debate altogether; rather, they clearly argue that it cannot alleviate current environmental problems. What those opposed to environmental pragmatism, such as Samuelsson, fail to understand is that environmental pragmatism implicitly accepts the importance of theoretical debates in mainstream environmental ethics. It is the discussions and debates in mainstream environmental ethics that have helped them to understand the serious environmental crisis. Such a crisis requires a practical solution if it is to be resolved. However, their disagreement with traditional environmental ethicists is that the environmental problems they have identified cannot be solved by endless theoretical discussions. **Rather, the solution must come in the form of practical engagement.**

In sum, pragmatist environmental ethics rejects the dualism of conventional environmental ethics and embraces the spirit of American pragmatism and practicality. Because it veers from the philosophic debate and embraces concrete policy implementation instead, it presents a sound and robust approach to tackling thorny environmental and ecological issues.

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Varia

A PRAGMATIC APPROACH TO SETTLING THE DEBATE ON THE MORAL AGENCY OF TECHNOLOGY: DEWEY IN FOCUS

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ABSTRACT: In the contemporary debate on the moral status of technology, some scholars have categorized technological artifacts under the realm of means, attributing mere instrumental value, while others have positioned them in the realm of ends with moral agency. Both stances treat means and end categorically as if connections between them are only casual or instrumental. This discussion is becoming more complex as technology becomes more sophisticated, and its influence on normative values grows. To resolve this contention, this study suggests a middle ground from Dewey's pragmatic ethics, specifically his interpretation of the means-end continuum. Inspired by his treatment of the relation between means and ends as inclusive, temporal, and contingent, this paper asserts that in the digital age, ethical dilemmas are more effectively addressed by a pragmatic approach than by classical ethical theory.

Keywords: moral agency, technological artifacts, means-end, Dewey

1. Introduction

As beings capable of innovation and evaluation, humans have made remarkable advances in technology and ethics, from living in caves to walking on the moon, from hunting to gene editing, and from stone carvings to computer coding. Normatively, we have progressed from slavery and racism to the animal and plant rights movement. However, normative progression cannot keep up with technological advancement and has attempted to do so using a framework designed for a previous situation. Although mainstream ethical theories may have been suitable for norm-rich societies that lack complex technology, the current situation shows an opposite trend.

In our application of technological artifacts or systems to various aspects of life, our traditional moral principles are becoming less effective in addressing ethical dilemmas in the digital age. For instance, we are compelled to reexamine and fine-tune our moral principles by the rapid growth of technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) writing tools in education, surrogacy, and gender transition in medicine, genetically modified organisms in agriculture, online privacy and the digital divide on the Internet, algorithmic trading and market manipulation in trade, and social media manipulation in politics.

Innovators, technicians, and designers have been engaged in a misunderstanding with politicians, philosophers, and spiritual leaders regarding the moral agency and responsibilities of technology. According to Val Dusek (2006,p.34), stakeholders lack a shared understanding of technology. Whereas technologists often place less emphasis on the social and political implications of technology, politicians and social scientists have limited technical knowledge. Winner (1980, 2017, p. 3) suggests that artificial or technical boundaries continue to separate technology creators and users. John Dewey who believed that such a gap could be eliminated through science and technology democratization also observed this false demarcation between creators (scientists) and users of technology (1971). While creators consider themselves inventors, engineers, or designers tasked with the maintenance and operation of artifacts (machines and systems), users are often considered ignorant of the underlying material principles or techniques employed in these fields. Such exclusivity in technological perspective leads to a limited understanding of the moral or nontechnical dimension of artifacts. Modern technology continually produces artifacts and systems from which ethical dilemmas regarding moral agency and responsibility emerge.

Answers to questions pertaining to the moral agency of an unmanned aerial vehicle and whether it can be held responsible for killing innocent children at school, the moral responsibility of vending machines that sell expired foods and drinks, whether an AI language model software that generates full literature is neutral in value, and the role of AI language model software in diminishing

or preserving its users' intellectual honesty and integrity could stem from two incompatible evaluations of technological artifacts. While most engineers, innovators, and designers (Roeser, 2012) have advocated the instrumental assessment of technology, other thinkers from different disciplines have developed counterarguments asserting that technological products and systems are value-laden and can affect the ethical, societal, and spiritual dimensions of human beings. Hanson (2013), Sanders (2004), Brey (2013), Latour and Venn (2002), Mitcham (2013), and Verbeek (2013) argue that technological artifacts are not value-neutral and rather ascribe moral agency to artifacts immediately. Meanwhile, advocates of the conventional view—that artifacts are mere tools and are always in the realm of means—deny the possibility of artifacts having moral agency. For instance, Joseph C. Pitt suggests that technological artifacts neither contain nor embed values (2013).

The debate over whether the value of technology is determined by the ends it brings or the means it follows is becoming increasingly complex with ongoing technological advancements. "Emerging technologies, such as AI, biotechnology, and automation, often present ethical dilemmas that are not easily addressed by traditional ethical theories" (Florida & Sanders, 2004, p. 349). Floridi and Sanders observe that mainstream ethical theories cannot fully address such debates and other ethical dilemmas in the realm of technology. Deontology (duty-based ethics), consequentialism (e.g., utilitarianism), virtue ethics, and other mainstream ethical theories offer comprehensive, fixed, ideal principles rather than consider the dynamic nature of things. The gap between complex, rapidly evolving technology and the lack of ethical theories that can address novel ethical questions necessitates consideration of multiple factors in ethical evaluation instead of adopting a single approach to seek solutions. Philip Brey notices this gap in his examination of the "limitations of contemporary philosophy of technology" in which he contended that there is a lack of comprehensive, workable principles in the ethics of technology, that is, the absence of methods and theories (a deficiency of a "single monograph in technology ethics," in Brey's terms), to approach issues such as how new technology can be designed, used, and innovated in a morally responsible manner. Simply put, technology ethics has no principles that prevent technology from influencing "accepted social values and norms" and conceptualizing technology-generated values and norms (Brey 2010, p. 44).

Thus, this paper aims to demonstrate that the incorporation of pragmatic ethics into the discussion addresses the lack of all-inclusive, case-sensitive, flexible, and situational principles in technology ethics. By exploring moral agency and responsibility regarding technological artifacts within the framework of Dewey's ethics, particularly his view of the means–end continuum, I contend that pragmatic ethics can facilitate the discussion and conceptualization of moral dilemmas posed by the design, application, and systems of modern technology.

This study also explains how Dewey's dynamic view of the means–end relation can offer insights to settle the debate on the moral status of technology, which is viewed as a means and morally neutral by some but is positioned under ends with the moral agency by others.

Thus, by examining Dewey's pragmatic ethics and his treatment of means and ends, this study provides a pragmatic account beyond the categorization of technological apparatuses as either means or ends.

2. Moral Agency and Technological Artifacts

Moral agency is a relevant subject to moral philosophy, psychology, and legal and medical literature. Its classical conception is often dominated by the Kantian formulation of the categorical imperative, which states that an autonomous agent is a crucial part of the equation. A rational moral agent possesses autonomy over their will, the capacity to set universal law, and a will to be governed

by it, that is, the "powers of self-determination," and is independent of any authority except their self-imposed law (Reath, 2006, p. 208). Contemporary Kantian philosopher Christine Korsgaard defines a moral agent not only in terms of whether their actions are rationally willed but also as an integral part of the agent's identity.

Korsgaard also identifies two forms of agency: "natural" and "normatively constituted." Natural agency pertains to the causal link between actions guided by certain "mental states" (e.g., desire and intention), and the action is "attributed to the agent" as it is caused by the agent's mental states, whereas normatively constituted agency presupposes the existence of norms, values, and laws that help evaluate or confirm the capacity of the agency (Korsgaard, 2014, p. 2). Korsgaard further argues that the agent's decisions, the changes they cause, and their actions are carried out under the implicit "threat of disunity." This perspective allows for an examination of the legitimacy, acceptance, and rightness or wrongness of the agent's actions or behavior. Thus, Korsgaard concludes that the connection between an agent's action or behavior and an evaluator's reaction is not merely considered causal; rather, both the doer's and evaluator's actions show the participants' essential identity. The person's identity, their essential being, reveals itself "in some special way" in their actions (p. 15). This is the reason Monisha Pasupathi and Cecilia Wainryb associate moral agency with self-recognition and argued that moral agency can be understood as the moral agents' awareness of themselves and their experience of other human individuals "whose morally relevant actions are based on goals, laws, and beliefs" (Pasupathi & Wainryb, 2010, p. 55). In this sense, causing harm to a moral patient (wronging) results from one's forgiveness of oneself and others. Therefore, awareness of such moral facts enables agents to experience themselves as fundamentally moral beings.

According to Nomy Arpaly, agency is the conjunction between an individual human being and their mental capability for self-control amid challenges or tempting choices. He associated agency with a state of self-dependency and considered moral autonomy as "personal efficacy"—the independence to pass judgment, evaluate, hate, will, desire, praise, and blame in one's own light. His account of autonomy seems to be based on the agent's overall state. However, personal efficacy is not meant to refer to the agent's non-normative actions. Arpaly referred to such normative efficacy as "agent autonomy," which is not influenced by experience, power, and knowledge. People may become more autonomous or have different levels of autonomy if autonomy implies non-normative personal efficacy. Here, knowledge, power, wealth, and experience are critical. Nevertheless, agent autonomy (normative personal efficacy) "is the kind of thing the slave in chains has just as much as her master" (Arpaly, 2002, p. 120). It is based on the agent's "capacity to be sensitive to moral considerations" and willingness to incorporate them in their actions and evaluation and not on the nonnormative personal efficacy for which they are morally blamed or praised (Vargas, 2023, p. 6). Vargas's discussion of normative personal efficacy appears to capture H. G. Frankfurt's perception of the freedom of will. Frankfurt adds more criteria for humans to be considered rational moral agents, arguing that the application of normative principles to evaluate actions or behaviors may not be enough. Rather, freedom of will (which distinguishes humans from primates) is a significant element for one to become a full-fledged moral agent (Frankfurt 2018). Frankfurt also distinguishes "an agent who acts freely" from one "whose will is free"; while the former represents freedom of action, the latter signifies freedom of will. The point here is that acting freely does not necessarily imply possessing free will, nor does one's inability to act freely necessarily mean lacking free will, for freedom of will is not influenced by external factors. Understanding Frankfurt's two orders of *desire* (first-order and second-order desires) may help us figure out the difference between freedom of action and freedom of will. First-order desire pertains to the condition

in which an agent (be it human or animal) desires to act on something or desires not to be involved in something. This can be exemplified by someone's desire to get married; there is only the desire and its object. Meanwhile, in second-order desires, the object of the desire becomes the desire to desire (I may desire to desire to get married). The rational moral agent falls under the second category. Frankfurt concludes that only humans have the capacity for "reflective self-evaluation manifested in the formation of second-order desires" (p. 76).

So far, we have briefly explored the classical view of moral agency, which attributes agency/responsibility exclusively to human beings, specifically adult, free, and reflective human beings. However, recent times have witnessed the prevalence of a counterargument that expanded the scope of moral agency to include technological artifacts. The belief that technology can be considered a moral agent arises from the recognition that it possesses both instrumental/technical and normative values. With the rise in technological advancements and more complex modes of innovation and internal and external operating systems, a new understanding of its nature and dimensions has been developed. I will now explore the counterarguments placing technology in the realm of ends beginning with Bruno Latour's arguments, which discard the instrumental view of technological artifacts. Because of their complex internal algorithms, some technological artifacts are not only automatic but also autonomous as they enter the realm of ends with their own logic and laws of domination, which lack the moral and ethical values inherent to humanity (Latour, 2002). The dual nature of technology (automatic and autonomous) has led Latour to doubt the possibility of clearly distinguishing their realm. Because humans' ability to create artifacts and their normative and biological capabilities (e.g., using language, developing social values, etc.) have been intertwined since antiquity, in terms of priority, "technical ability preceded the emergence of human language by several hundred thousand years" (p. 248). Thus, Latour considers technology not as a mere tool to increase human efficacy but rather as a "mode of existence"; that is, imagining human beings without their potential to be technological is impossible, implying that their technological and normative dimensions are inseparable. Whether this means we cannot mark the realm of technological artifacts as well as the region to which it neither belongs, if in the end nor the means, must be discussed. To explain the realm of technology, Latour proposes the concept of "fold"; that is, any technological artifact "folds heterogeneous temporalities," which can be explained in terms of time, space, and agents. His famous example, the hummer, shows how artifacts combine various aspects of reality. A single hummer can fold the planet's history because of the minerals it is made from; "the age of the oak" used for the "handle, and the age of the factory" that produces such account of technology assert that morality does not lie outside the folding of technology. This is why Latour argues that technological artifacts affect our everyday morality. "Of course, the moral law is in our hearts, but it is also in our apparatuses" (p. 254). This implies that technological artifacts can encode/carry moral values through their mode of operation and application although we have the moral consciousness or inner light to offer ethical appraisal. He concludes that technical apparatuses, despite not being technical tools, perform significantly more tasks in preserving humans' "ontological dignity." However, Heidegger firmly stands against the view that technology safeguards the "ontological dignity" of humanity, arguing that technology is neither a mere tool nor something with intrinsic value; rather, it has ontological tasks focusing on the "revealing" and "unconcealment" of being. "The essence of technology is by no means anything technological" (1977, xvi). Through this ambiguous phrase, Heidegger conveys that artifacts or devices never manifest the essence of technology, whose true nature is revealed in how it affects our relationship with the world. His fear of technology stems from its tendency to reduce everything to a

resource for human use, which conceals its true nature and transforms it into a "standing reserve." Hence, technology reveals only a specific aspect of being and not its true nature, which technology cannot access. Heidegger insists that technology, like "ancient techne, science, and metaphysics," exposes the essence of being; its persistent influence allows being to make itself known in all aspects of our existence, which implies that humans do not allow being to naturally show itself. As a result, by using technology, humans continually construct and manipulate their version of reality. Thus, Heidegger suggests that to understand our relationship with technology, we should not simply regard it as a tool to be accepted or rejected. An instrumental view of technology renders us ignorant of its true nature (1977, p. 3). However, Heidegger's idea of the danger that technology could impose upon us or the issue that surrounds technology's revealing task must be discussed. In sum, technology forcefully exposes being, challenging everything that exists and imposing a demand to grasp everything. Under the dominion of such challenging revelation, nothing is permitted to appear as it truly is in itself (1977, p. 17).

While Heidegger and Latour agree that technology is not a mere apparatus, they have different appreciations of it; the former sees technology as a threat to human ontology whereas the latter views it as an agent that preserves human beings' ontological dignity. The question, then, is how we can establish a strong link between apparatuses and moral agency. To understand the moral agency of technological apparatuses, we must first explore intention as a significant concept in moral agency. Along with consequences and means of action, intention is a central issue for most moral theorists to pass ethical appraisal. Because "only intentional behavior constitutes action in the most serious sense." Carl Mitcham (2013, p. 13) defines intention as constituting one's desire, plane, and state of mind. The contending issue as regards artifact agency is the extent to which technical artifacts are moral agents. In their separate contributions to the book *The Moral Status of Technical Artifacts*, Peter-Paul Verbeek and Allan Hanson explain and specify the level of an artifact's status in moral agency.

Verbeek observes that in the digital age, most actions and technical apparatuses facilitate moral decisions, which is why he views moral agency as a "hybrid affair"; that is, agency is established by combining humans and nonhuman things (their artifacts). Human subjects cannot pass effective moral judgment in cases such as abortion, surrogacy, and euthanasia, nor are the artifacts used here moral agents in themselves. Verbeek attributes to technology a mediating role between humans and reality, because of which "technological artifacts should be located in the realm of moral agency. Morality is a hybrid affair; it should not be attributed exclusively to artifacts, but not in humans either" (Verbeek, 2013, p. 78). In this case, both human selves and artifacts play their own roles in creating moral agency. In the digital age, the exclusive allocation of moral agency to either humans or artifacts is practically and theoretically unjustified. Because isolated human selves and artifacts do not exist in practical life, practical moral actions and decisions take place in combination between people and things, from which moral agency emerges. Thus, in light of Verbeek's idea, the account of mediating artifactual moral agency can help address the challenging notion that agency presupposes freedom and intention—qualities that are absent in artifacts. "Human intentions, including moral intentions, can be technologically mediated because technologies help to shape our intentional directedness at the world" (Verbeek 2013, p. 81). Verbeek adds that unintentional outcomes of certain technological artifacts (e.g., a car's unintended contribution to global warming) demonstrate that generally, intention is not always within the control of the designer, innovator, or humans.

Hanson highlights the idea that moral agency is composed of human beings and their apparatuses, calling this interwoven relation "composite agency theory." His point of departure for describing moral agency as con-

sisting of human beings and nonhumans is that the former cannot achieve anything in the absence of the latter. Thus, he argues that viewing artifacts as mere tools for the "deed" is wrong; if they are essential to perform the deed, "then they should be considered part of the agency itself, that which accomplishes the deed" (Hanson, 2013, p. 81). Similarly, Deborah G. Johnson and Merel Noorman (2013) emphasize the inseparability of human beings and artifacts in determining moral agency. Although they acknowledged artifacts' instrumental role through their "causal efficacy" and "delegating intention," they argue that humans and artifacts are inseparable. They also assert that human beings are an integral part of the natural world, which sets limits on human capabilities. Therefore, humans innovate artifacts by further manipulating nature (Johnson & Noorman, 2013). The point here is that humans, as part of nature and technology as their making, are inseparable at work.

3. Dewey's Means–End Continuum: Addressing the Contention on Artifactual Moral Agency

As discussed previously, scholars who attribute moral agency to artifacts categorize them under the realm of ends whereas those who deny them moral agency place them in the realm of means. However, both seem to fall into the trap of dualistic thinking in which the realms of end and means are examined separately to assess the moral status of technological apparatuses. This dualistic view was harshly criticized by Dewey, who situates the end–means continuum in the process of inquiry, application, and evaluation.

Dewey begins his deconstruction of the conventional view of means and ends by identifying its root cause. He associates this dualistic thinking with ancient philosophy or classical metaphysics, which categorizes natural objects with defined potentials that could culminate in "form" or "essences" supposed permanent, real, and universal. Thus, everything that is used to attain essence or form has instrumental value whereas the ideal end possesses intrinsic value. Epistemologically, Dewey argues that knowledge is considered the ability to contemplate and enjoy essences or forms (Dewey, 1971). Therefore, he raises the urgent need for "unpurposive changing processes" to replace this teleological view of nature and its end forms. He adds that knowledge or enjoyment of the essence or human-determined end of nature should evolve from an inactive, "quasi-aesthetic" appreciation of ends to an engaged exploration of causal relations that can help manage the natural world (Dewey 1971). Removing ideal ends from metaphysical and epistemological inquiry could help establish a direct link between means and ends. The traditional approach to the means-end relation has shaped the perception of both theory and the application of technical actions, implying that means are the subject of scientific inquiry. From this perspective, technical actions and means are understood as value-neutral apparatuses that are used to objectify predetermined ends. Simply put, technical actions determine the preconditions for value without possessing intrinsic value. Meanwhile, ends are out of the scope of scientific or technological evaluation; that is, values associated with ends are considered to exist either in a "transcendent realm beyond the scope of science or as directly intuited qualities of immediate experience " (Waks, 1999, p. 597). Thus, I argue that such dualistic thinking is the root cause of moral philosophers' debate on the moral agency of artifacts. Most of them place such moral agency either in the realm of the means or in that of ends categorically as if the two are separate states of things. However, Dewey's analysis of means and ends highlights and rejects these categorical approaches.

In *Theory of Valuation,* Dewey uses "ends-in-view," which is conceptualized as a plan, to replace the notion of an ideal, fixed, and predetermined end. By definition, a plan is neither final, fixed, nor ultimate. He further argues that a "plan functions more as a method" than an end. An example would be an architect's plan/design for building a house, which functions as a tool to lead the construc-

tion phase. However, the act of building is a means to attain the actual house (Visalberghi 1953, p. 739). This scenario makes it explicit that the end-in-view is a potential, contemporary, and open-ended goal achieved by following various causal connections. Because it schematizes a series of causes, it will also serve as a beginning for a new series of causes to occur. In this case, the end-in-view is both a means and an end.

Contrary to the conventional view, Dewey asserts that the situation in which the end is situated is never fully revealed by the one from which it emerges. The end situation is always novel, dynamic, and indeterminate, and this fluid nature of the end-in-view highlights the need for a new investigation and assessment in terms of its practical effectiveness in the newly discovered conditions (Kaufmann 1959). Hence, for Dewey, the means and the end reciprocally determine each other. He also argues that one cannot understand the end or construct a full picture of it until one acquires a complete understanding of "the course of action that will take us there" (Anderson 2023), implying that any course of action taken as a means will not disappear in the end situation. In *Human Nature and Conduct*, Dewey elaborates on the impossibility of establishing a single and fixed end:

> It is willful folly to fasten upon some single end or consequence is liked, and permit the view of that to blot from perception all other undesired and undesirable consequences. It is like supposing that when a finger held close to the eve covers up a distant mountain the finger is really larger than the mountain. Not the end—in the singular—justifies the means; for there is no such thing as the single all-important end. To suppose that there is such an end is like working over again, on behalf of our private wishes, the miracle of Joshua in arresting the course of nature (Dewey 2002, p. 229).

Here, Dewey warns against focusing only on a single desired end and ignoring all other undesired consequences. Narrow-mindedness or short-sightedness fails to anticipate new conditions that may produce new problems and challenges because nature is always in the flux of change through its disregard for our private wishes and assumptions.

Dewey's analysis of means and ends can settle the debate among moral philosophers who view both distinctively to establish the moral status of technological artifacts. Moreover, his evaluation of ends and means helps us understand how he viewed science and technology. Although Dewey did not author books specifically titled "Technology," Larry Hickman argues that in Dewey's philosophical journey, it is evident that science and technology were not outside his insights. Dewey's evaluation of science and technology can be found in some of his works, such as *The Public and Its Problems*, *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry*, and *Art as Experience*. He also considers the implications of science and technology through his pragmatic philosophy on education, democracy, and psychology. Unlike Heidegger and other technophobes, Dewey holds a positive account of technology.

Dewey starts his analysis of technology by categorizing it more as an experiential rather than a cognitive activity of human beings. Concurrently, he replaces the notion that "rationality is purely cognitive" with the view that it refers to one's capacity ("intelligence") to formulate and test ends that are proposed in the context of experimental activities (Hickman, 1990, p. 11). For Dewey, technology is the manifestation of intelligence at work and is not a mere tool to achieve certain goals, nor are human beings just tool users as they have various modes of living. Simply put, creating tools and using them for practical purposes constitute only one aspect of various human experiences. Dewey never considers artifacts as value-neutral but rather as "teeming with values and potentialities that form the basis for intelligent selection of ends-in-view, or things to be done" (Hickman, 1990 p. 13). Before Langdon Winner asserted the value-ladenness of artifacts in his article "Do Artifacts Have Politics?" (1980), Dewey argued that not only are artifacts value-laden, but they can also create their own social settings and contexts. For instance, Dewey argues that the political failure of the European fascists of the 1930s was a result of the "misunderstanding of the values implicit in the situations that

gave rise to their artifacts and in which they used them. Political inquiry, as a form of technological inquiry, requires successful instrumental investigation for it to produce satisfactory consequences" (Hickman 1990, p. 15). In other words, a political decision at a given time is influenced by the situation created by a certain use of technological artifacts; that is, political situation and technological inquiry are reciprocally determined. In *The Public and Its Problems*, Dewey demonstrates how technological artifacts are the main factor in setting new social interactions. "Only geographically did Columbus discover a new world. The actual new world has been generated in the last hundred years. Steam and electricity have done more to alter the conditions under which men associate together than all the agencies that affected human relationships before our time" (Dewey 2012, p. 141).

Dewey emphasizes here that technology's impact on society is influenced not only by the tools themselves but also by the ideas, beliefs, and societal structures in which they are embedded. Hence, technological artifacts function as primary components for determining an undetermined situation through inquiry, which Dewey defines as "the controlled or directed transformation of an indeterminate situation into one that is so determinate in its constituent distinctions and relations as to convert the elements of the original situation into a unified whole" (Dewey 1954, 2007, p. 181). As a systematic and organized search for knowledge, inquiry enables a situation to transform from being indeterminate or disorganized to determined and measurable. For Dewey, a situation affected or determined by inquiry is not a single end or isolated experience and is rather a result of a combination of different experiences. In addition, the technology used during this process is not meant to discover a single termination. This is why Dewey developed a "non-straight-line instrumentality" view of technology. The conventional view of technology is described by a linear instrumentalism that presupposes or establishes fixed ends and then organizes means to achieve those ends. Dewey boldly criticizes this linear instrumentalism as it "works toward fixed goals, heedless of the collateral problems and opportunities that arise during the thick of deliberation" (Hickman 1990, p.137). Contrary to this mechanical instrumentality, Dewey proposes a kind of end or goal considered as an end-in-view that is active and engages in internal and external interactions with the means. Mechanical instrumentalism clearly delineates the used means from the anticipated ends, taking means and ends categorically as though no multidimensional interaction exists between them. Dewey objects to mechanical instrumentalism because of its potential to disregard the complexity of interactions between various means and ends, overlooking the dynamic nature of the processes involved. Simply put, mechanical instrumentalism, in light of Dewey's view, conceptualizes the relation between means and ends as linear and straightforward.

We must then discuss how Dewey's dynamic view of the means-end relation can offer insights into the resolution of the debate on the moral status of technology, which is viewed as a means and morally neutral by some but positioned in the realm of ends with moral agency by others. Dewey's understanding of tools challenges the collective view that regards technological instruments as objects external to users, asserting that tools and artifacts do not neatly fit into rigid internal and external categories relative to an organism. Demarcating the internal and external aspects of being is difficult as it is "highly flexible and permeable" (Hickman 1990, p. 12). From this, we can deduce that viewing artifacts merely as external instruments and denying them normative value are challenging as artifacts, as a means, are agents that help shape experience, creating a context for many aspects of human life or situations. To pass moral judgment on the function and system of technological artifacts, we must heed Dewey's suggestion that tools or technological artifacts are active agents for both the quantitative and qualitative parts of the context. Dewey's pragmatic perspective holds that technology's quantitative, qualitative,

normative, and descriptive impacts are assessed based on its capacity to effectively resolve practical problems

In this context, we can claim that artifactual moral status or agency cannot be determined distinctively by either their instrumental or normative effects; rather, the whole context must be assessed. Inquiry, which must also include technology), is not a mere descriptive enterprise but is also conditioned by cultural and social values, for these normative values will shape the problems that inquiry intends to resolve. Dewey believes that "every inquiry grows out of a background of culture and takes effect in greater or less modification of the conditions out of which it arises" (Dewey1938, p. 20). That is, every inquiry, whether scientific, philosophical, or otherwise, is not a detached or isolated endeavor but instead emerges from and is shaped by the cultural background in which it unfolds. The cultural or practical setting influences the questions raised, the methodology employed, and the perspective adopted. The nature of inquiry is neither static nor directed toward a single goal and instead dynamically interacts with the conditions and values inherent in the cultural environment. In addition, Dewey highlights that the outcomes of any inquiry reciprocally affect the cultural conditions from which they emerge.

In the process of the reciprocal determination of inquiry and situation, Dewey argues that means and ends are not treated categorically or separately. In *Democracy and Education*, he deconstructs the categorical accounts of means and ends and loosens the rigid categories between the two courses of action. Dewey believes that means and ends have no mechanically interconnected causal connection but rather exchange roles in the process and application of inquiry. That is, an end that serves as a directive plan for activity "is always both ends and means", and "every means is a temporary end until we have attained it" (Dewey 2001, p. 110). He attributes the temporal differences between them, referring to an action or state of affairs as an "end" when it signifies future directions and as a "means" when it directs the current course. Considering ends as foreign to activities and as something discovered out of nowhere not only constitutes a logical error but also "limits intelligence" to the given circumstances alone as well as prevents the mind from testing alternatives.

Dewey observes the integrated and flexible relations between means and ends in scientific inquiry, allowing him to assign non-instrumental value to technological artifacts. Understanding this fact is an important step in his effort to humanize or democratize science. Dewey's idea of a humanized science and technology begins with an aestheticization of the process and production of art. That is, an innovation is considered truly artistic if it possesses aesthetic qualities designed to be appreciated through "receptive perception." Without this aesthetic nature, the task becomes emotionless and merely serves as a prompt for the next mechanical step in the process (Dewey, 2008, p. 34). He highlights the importance of combining artistic experience and aesthetic appreciation in creating meaningful and truly artistic works that are less mechanical. "In a work of art, different acts, episodes, occurrences melt and fuse into unity, and yet do not disappear and lose their own character as they do so" (Dewey2008, p. 34). Simply put, the components (whether on the side of the end or means) strengthen the unity of the artwork or the establishment of a harmonious synthesis, yet each part maintains its unique features within the larger context of the composition. Dewey's judgment of science and technology is not only limited to the end they produce but also considers their normative and aesthetic influences. His non-instrumental evaluation of technology makes him a "powerful ally today in the fight against deadening efficiency, narrow means–end calculation, frantic exploitation, and the industrialization of everything" (Fesmire 2016, p. 1).

Dewey is neither an instrumentalist nor an idealist in his assessment of science and technology. Rather, he attempts to democratize technology by reconciling its instrumental and normative values. He strives to strike

a balance between "practical science" (the instrumental parts) with "contemplative esthetic appreciation" (the normative aspect). Technological knowledge and skill enable us to overcome natural limitations. However, without normative values, "mankind might move into a race of economic monsters, relentlessly driving hard bargains with nature and each other" (Dewey 1920, p. 127). Indeed, whereas the former is crucial when navigating and mitigating natural challenges, the latter prevents humanity from becoming excessively consumed by economic pursuits, ensuring a balanced and meaningful existence.

Dewey's treatment of ends and means captures the essence of Hanson's composite agency theory and resonates with Latour's conceptualization of the "fold." Hanson and Latour attribute moral agency to technological artifacts by categorically locating them at both realms of end and means. They regard technological artifacts not merely as instruments for achieving predetermined ends but also as integral components of moral agents carrying normative values. However, their perspective on ends is marked by a perception of fixed, final, and determined goals, which Dewey challenges. Dewey's stance differs in that he views ends not as rigid endpoints but rather as temporal and directive plans, recognizing that they could function as means for other or future circumstances. Thus, I argue that Dewey's dynamic and evolving understanding of means and ends can significantly help address the ongoing ethical challenges surrounding the application and creation of technological artifacts. Specifically, determining the status of artifacts in terms of their moral agency requires a comprehensive examination of the holistic situation, which considers elements such as the self, the tool or artifact, the nature of the problem, the proposed solution, and the overall context. In this sense, one cannot ensure moral agency through a singular criterion, such as will or freedom, as conventional ethics often maintains. The ever-increasing complexity of technological contexts necessitates a more practical, contextual approach to the establishment of artifactual moral agency.

Conclusion

Rapid technological advancements and their application in most spheres of life demand normative check-ups. A close investigation and conceptualization of new technological innovations and systems require the development of evolving normative principles as classical moral principles cannot fully address the moral dilemma resulting from the application of new technological artifacts and systems. Therefore, I argue that pragmatic ethics can address this gap by providing case-sensitive, contextual, flexible, and practical guidelines for passing and evaluating moral judgments in the digital age. Drawing on Dewey's treatment of means and ends as a continuum and his pragmatic and aesthetic evaluation of technology, I assert that a pragmatic approach can address ethical dilemmas far more effectively than conventional ethical theories. The core effort in technology ethics involves determining artifactual moral status. Scholars who attribute moral agency to artifacts position them in the realm of ends, while those who deny them moral agency place artifacts under the realm of means. Rejecting this dualistic view, Dewey situates the end–means continuum in the process of inquiry, application, and evaluation of artifacts and asserts that means and ends are reciprocally determined and are engaged in a temporal relation contingent on the time and situation. In other contexts, an end can be a means, with a possibility for the means to be an end-in-view. The establishment of artefactual moral agency requires not only the instrumental or causal connections between means and ends but also context, applicability, and situation. Hence, Dewey's analysis of means and ends and evaluation of technology as pragmatic and aesthetic inquiries allow us to humanize or democratize technology.

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Book review

REVIEW[1]: HANS HERBERT KÖGLER'S *CRITICAL HERMENEUTICS* EDITED BY LUBOMIR DUNAJ AND KURT MERTEL (LONDON: BLOOMSBURY, 2022)

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Introduction: Avenarius and Kingsblood

In their introduction, the editors of the volume mention one of the characters from Milan Kundera's novel *Immortality* - Professor Avenarius.[2] He rebels - but only internally, in the form of an attitude that remains resigned. He is the representative of a subjectivist-existential reaction to the precarious and historically unsuccessful realization of an ideal in relation to reality.

One can only agree with the editors, Dunaj and Mertel, that Kögler's philosophy represents an alternative to this kind of thinking. It is interesting to introduce Kögler's philosophical project with just such a literary allusion.

But perhaps this alternative offered by Kögler could also be put in literary terms. Neil Kingsblood, the protagonist of Sinclair Lewis's novel *Kingsblood Royal*,[3] is, like Avenarius, a literary fiction. While searching for his supposedly royal ancestors, he discovers that he is African-American. After the initial shock of this discovery, we follow Neil's journey through his own understanding from denial to an increasingly strong African-American self-consciousness. This consciousness is a self-understanding that has gradually accepted the supposed Other and integrated it into its own to become a Self.

Thus, throughout most of the story, Neil is also a rebelling. His revolt, however, is different from that of Avenarius. We observe it as a part of a larger socio-ontological structure in which Neil is only just emerging as a concrete historical subject, standing somewhere between the racial prejudices he had previously accepted as his own and his new identity, which is constituted precisely by overcoming them.

His revolt is not a revolt of resignation, but an affirmative revolt – it consists in reflexively grasping the givenness of race as a physiological and social category, becoming aware of it and dealing with it.

Philosophical hermeneutics has undoubtedly grown into another dimension thanks to Kögler. The new dimension, however, is not only this explicit elaboration of the relationship between structure and the individual as a search for freedom and hope for change despite the historical scepticism and relativism of the postmodern situation, as the editors of the book aptly state. The texts arranged by Dunaj and Mertel offer many thematic layers that grow out of the basic conclusions of Kögler's project of a critical reconceptualization of hermeneutics, and all respond to some degree to this kind of scepticism and relativism.

The edition is divided into three parts. The first part (*Critical Hermeneutics as Social Theory*) contains three studies, while parts two and three (*Recognition, Cosmopolitanism and Religion*; *Towards a Critical Hermeneutics of the Present*) contain four each. On the basis of the argumentative complexity of each text, a detailed reconstruction is not possible here. An overall reading allows me to accentuate three themes that I consider to be defining. These themes roughly correspond to the division of the book into three parts, but at the same time they help to grasp the text as a whole.

A very interesting concept and, given the dialogical character of Kögler's hermeneutic ontology, also a characteristic facet, is, then, the answer given by Kögler himself, dealing especially with the critical tone of some of the contributions.

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[2] See Kundera Milan. *Nesmrtelnost.* (2016) Brno: Atlantis.
[3] See Lewis Sinclair. *Kingsblood Royal.* (1947), New York: Penguin Random House.

Analysis and Hope

In formulating the first thematic layer, we can again refer to Dunaj's and Mertel's preface. The editors understand Kögler's hermeneutics as "a much-needed theoretical framework that combines analysis and hope" (p. viii). As shown primarily by the contributions of Simon Susen (pp. 7-69) and Rainer Winter (pp. 71-86), Kögler's hermeneutics represents a distinctive theoretical framework that cannot simply be subsumed under phenomenological, explanatory, or structuralist approaches in the social sciences. Rather, its distinctiveness can be seen in its attempt to stand, so to speak, between the structural-determinist and the individualist-autonomist paradigms.

Susen and Winter, however, use the summarization of Kögler's project primarily to formulate some critical points. In fact, the most general one seems to me to be the most crucial. Critical philosophy has traditionally been very sceptical about the Gadamerian tendency to idealize language, whether real or supposed. In a way, Susen and Winter formulate a similar objection to Kögler, albeit as an idealism of reason rather than language, or as an underestimation of the corporeal dimension of our situatedness. In this case, however, Kögler's response is quite convincing. It is precisely the emphasis on the institutionalization and embodiment of practices that underlies Kögler's own interpretive distinction from Gadamer, as he himself points out. Language itself is thus not an independent and unsituated medium, but rather the site where this structural conditioning is articulated as a meaning reciprocated and reproduced by the individual. It is here in language, Kögler points out, that we gain a certain interpretative autonomy that transcends structure in a reflexive, i.e., primarily linguistic appropriation.

Only a proper comprehension of the structural moment of our self-understanding thus opens the gap of autonomy as hope. In a sense, this is also demonstrated by Kögler's response to the third contribution in the first part. In it, Stephen Turner (p. 87-102) seeks to juxtapose hermeneutic and naturalistic approaches to the self, especially in the relation of the normatively conceived recognition of the Other that forms one of the epicenters of Kögler's thought. Turner emphasizes naturalistically the pre-speech acquisition of identity but does not actually dispute Kögler's position as such. Rather, he draws attention to one of its difficulties. Pre-speech sociality "always already" locates the person in a particular cultural context. Kögler uses this idea to re-emphasize language as a tool through which we experience the possibility of distance from this basic hermeneutical situation. Hermeneutics is about understanding, and this takes place "by transforming things that are already here" (p. 99). For example, even our culturally conditioned understanding open to revision, i.e., dialogue.

Dialogue and Dialogue in a Global Context

Thus, understanding in Kögler is not "Geschehen"[4] as in Gadamer, but a moment of autonomy, which comes into play primarily as a dialogue. Dialogue is the second major theme of the edition. The various forms of dialogue, again on the basis of Kögler's conclusions, are thematized by several authors.

The above-mentioned dialogue between the seemingly irreconcilable naturalistic and hermeneutical approaches can be included in this theme. The latter is also implicitly present in Karsten Stueber's contribution (p. 105-121), which questions whether a normative universalist claim can be made at all from the position of critical hermeneutics. Against Stueber's grounding of normativity in Smith's psychologizing notion of empathy, Kögler defends the hermeneutic capacity to "imaginatively adopt another's stance as recognizing the Other's interpretive and reflexive agency" (p. 262). Or, in other words, to take his perspective. Though it presupposes psychological capacities, it is articulated – along with the totality of situatedness – again linguistically.

[4] See Gadamer Hans Georg, *Wahrheit und Methode* (2010), Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.

It is indeed appropriate to question in this context the standard problem associated with the hermeneutic tradition since Gadamer: can a moral universalism really be consistently associated with the primacy of situatedness? In one of the most interesting parts of his text, Kögler shows that hermeneutics, since its Gadamerian foundation, has been grappling with this problem in a progressive way. It is very symptomatic that Kögler's answer is based again in the notion of reflexivity, which alone allows for a universalizing act that always transcends the particular situatedness. Only in this act can one transcend, so to speak, from the situated self to the notion of equally situated others possessing dignity.

Dialogue in a religious context is the subject of John Maraldo (pp. 159-177) and Paul Healy's (pp. 140-158) contributions. Maraldo's article rightly points out the limits of traditional – text oriented – hermeneutics when applied to religious experience and interreligious dialogue. Kögler himself agrees with this conclusion but rejects the hypostasis of practical understanding into which he believes Maraldo's contribution slips. The pre-speech sociality that is present in religious ritual, for example, must be reflexively mediated by language in the last instance, and only here does the hermeneutic dimension, which can be called critical, come into play.

Healy, on the other hand, focuses on the dialogue between the religious and the secular. His text is presented as a critique of Habermas's alleged unequal recognition of religious discourses in the democratic-secular public sphere. It is precisely the concept of dialogical hermeneutic understanding that Healy contrasts with Habermas, which is also inspired by some of Kögler's conclusions. However, Kögler considers hermeneutic, i.e., the mutual openness of the religious and the secular, to be too general a term. He thus ends up defending Habermas against Healy. For Habermas's approach to religion also contains a hermeneutical dimension. Moreover, the latter is presented in a much more concrete way. Thus, while Habermas, as Kögler agrees with Healy, does to some extent aim at the assimilation of the religious by the secular, he also says what religion could contribute to a possible dialogue.

Finally, Werner Delanoy's contribution (pp. 123-138) also has a dialogical perspective, exemplifying some of Kögler's basic conclusions on foreign language learning, with which he agrees. It is foreign language learning that can constitute a dialogical relationship between the local and the global. In this sense, language is also a suitable starting point for rethinking one of the basic frameworks of Kögler's thought – dialogue or, better said, self-understanding with a global dimension.

What We Are Living Today and Hope Once Again

In connection with Delanoy's article, another thematic layer comes into play, which is also announced by Dunaj and Mertel: the globalization of critical theory. It is a pity that this theme ends up slipping a bit into the whole of the edition, or at least is not grasped quite explicitly, which is further enhanced by the fact that the authors of the last, i.e., critical part, consider mainly the problems of Western countries.

The exception is Frédéric Vandenberge (pp. 181-194), who at least partially attempts to conceptualise problems that are global, especially the ecological crisis. This brings us to the third, perhaps the most interesting topic of the edition. It is increasingly evident that in today's philosophical discourse, which at least aspires to political relevance, the theoretical frameworks conceived in the 20th century are slowly losing their persuasiveness (as Vandenberge also suggests). Therefore, it is very desirable to ask, precisely in the context of Kögler's critical work, whether such an approach does not open up a new perspective, or at least partially stimulate a solution to the problems we are living today. The third main theme of the edition is thus a kind of "practical test" of Kögler's conclusions.

Accordingly, Vandenberge offers a brief proposal for an "ontology of the present" (p. 181) as a task for con-

temporary sociology. His approach emphasizes an appropriate theoretical foundation for sociology, a diagnosis of the present, and an interdisciplinary dialogue with Studies in particular. The highly terse paper refers to Kögler as an inspiring author of dialogue.

It is the dialogical ethos that is needed, among other things, to overcome the second postmodernism as a gradual collapse. Indeed, it is one of the conditions for the analysis of the three intertwined phenomena of today: neoliberalism, populism, and the Anthropocene. Vanderberge ends the pessimistic tone of the paper with a reference to hope, or rather to the optimism of the will, which is characteristic of our edition, as I consider it. In fact, I think this tone also connects critical theory since their founders and critical hermeneutics as we know it since Kögler.

Unfortunately, Vandenberge's paper does not further thematize the ecological crisis and the possibilities that critical hermeneutics can offer us in addressing it. Of William Outwait (pp. 195-213), Lauren Barthold (pp. 215-230) and Randi Gressgard's (pp. 231-248) contributions, then, the orientation towards the problems of the Western world – populism and nationalism – is more applicable. However, this also shifts the emphasis to the polarization and fragmentation that Western politics is experiencing. These problems are then seen in the context of a critical hermeneutics. All three contributions thus draw at least part of their inspiration from some of Kögler's conclusions and combine it with a correction or critique of them.

Outhwait's contribution is particularly critical or rather sceptical. The author warns against overestimating the dialogical approach, which can simply fail in heated debates, for instance, of an identitarian nature. Kögler thus responds with a brief reflection on the dialogical resources of democratic deliberation. For example, certain cognitive capacities that can be developed through educational policy.

Barthold grasps Kögler's hermeneutics again from its historical roots and wants to point out the hidden Cartesian foundation. At the same time, she questions whether an emancipatory understanding can be based on Kögler's notion of reflexivity and contrasts Kögler's dialogical model with an enactivist notion of empathy. Kögler, for obvious reasons, counters the charge of Cartesianism in his reemphasis on the self that is constituted by its relation to the Other. At the same time, this relationality always includes a dimension of social and historical situatedness, which again contradicts the basic features of Cartesianism.

Gressgard then concludes the series of texts again in a very actual and urgent contribution on the possibilities of a dialogical approach in times of fragmentation and polarisation. In a way, it is related to the aforementioned issue of emancipatory understanding. Gressgard reconceptualizes the notion of critique, emphasizing the necessity of a sensitivity to emotional and bodily experiences of injustice. Kögler fully agrees with such an aspiration and adds at the very end of the book some elements of the hermeneutic notion of critique, which is necessary for the functioning of a democratic society.

Conclusion

From a historical-systematic perspective, the edition shows that the theoretical foundations of twentieth-century philosophy, especially hermeneutics, post-structuralism, and existentialism, are being further developed today. From a purely philosophical point of view, Kögler's philosophy is to a large extent a synthesis of them. However, this synthesis is very intelligent because it responds to their theoretical problems and thus takes philosophical discourse a little further again. The edition is a great testimony to that.

I see its main contribution, however, more on the level of, shall we say, politics. I began my review with a brief

literary allusion. If we speak of a certain hope in relation to Kögler's work, then it must be emphasized that it lies only where autonomy is realized and the conditions for change are created. Neil Kingsblood may be a suitable example precisely because in his revolt he realizes autonomy as a part of the givenness. Or, again in the words of the editors, he "disclose[s] modes of non-conformist agency, both individual and collective, embedded within the complex, manifold layers of social life." (p. viii) His revolt is neither existential nor subjectivist, but critical-hermeneutic.

Today we know that the problems Neil faced as a self-discovered African-American seventy years ago may not be solved, but at least in some respects the situation has improved. And this is a source of hope that can be placed in the reflexivity that is an aspect of our linguistic situatedness in a socially shared world.

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