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PRAGMATISM MIRRORS PLURALISM OF LIFE

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As we know, according to pragmatism everything is relational and the whole human life is a dialogue. Already the classical pragmatists shared these features of the philosophical movement. *John Dewey* (1859-1952) was one of the main figures of traditional pragmatism, along with Charles Sanders Peirce and William James, and his lifelong efforts made pragmatism a well-known philosophy.

Richard Rorty (1931-2007) was one of the most prominent philosophers in the world at the end of the 20th century, and his work served to renew pragmatism. Due to the immigrant Europeans, mostly analytic philosophers and logical positivists, the traditional version of American pragmatism became part of the history of philosophy during the 1930s and 1940s, and Rorty's neo-pragmatism has stirred much interest in contemporary developments, but it has also brought renewed attention to John Dewey and classical American philosophy. He frequently emphasized that he regarded John Dewey as his philosophical hero, and much of the secondary literature has tried to show first of all their common features as well as their differences.

Therefore, pragmatism was born twice, but it has never been a canonized philosophical movement. Nowadays, when we live in political, economic and ecological crises and our human world stands on the threshold of a new era, because we cannot stop globalization, we need dialogue more than ever. We need dialogue not only in politics, economics, ecology, but in every field. We need dialogue especially within pragmatism. We have to show the common and relevant features of this wide philosophical movement, in order to help us to achieve the best local and global ends.

We need dialogue even in culture and philosophy, especially in the fields of religion and democracy. From William James to Sami Pihlström, several examples show us that religion can help us to improve our life in harmony with a strong pragmatist attitude. The first part of this issue shows us some of the different approaches of religion within pragmatism. The second part speaks about some interpretational possibilities of democracy in this philosophical movement. It is beyond question that democracy is the main social purpose for most of the pragmatists. Nevertheless, there are two main types of its interpretation: the Deweyan deliberative and the Rortyan competitive comprehension of democracy. Our beloved readers can find both kinds of democracy's interpretation in this issue of *Pragmatism Today*. The third part is a miscellany, but a very valuable collection of two excellent papers and two interesting book reviews.

In recent years the CEPF meetings and a growing number of other regular conferences throughout Europe (look at the web site of the European Pragmatism Association: <http://europeanpragmatism.org/>) and other continents have helped to invigorate the study of pragmatism and have enabled a cross-fertilization among European, Asian, South-American and North-American philosophers. Pragmatist philosophers have very diverse views and approaches of different topics, but they agree in some basic features of pragmatism. Beside relationalism, naturalism, meliorism and dialogue they accept the view that everything is a tool. For pragmatists even philosophy is a *tool*, but a cherished tool to be employed in an intelligent reconstruction of all aspects of human experience and practice. The global purpose of this philosophy is to provide inspiration to develop and integrate our efforts in and through creative intelligence.

I. PRAGMATISM AND RELIGION

**A STUDY IN HUMAN NATURE ENTITLED
*THE VARIETIES OF RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE*¹**

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Shortly after the appearance of William James's volume, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, in June 1902, Josiah Royce commented on contemporary religious life at a meeting of the American Philosophical Association. Royce noted that, on the one hand, "Religion, in its higher sense, constitutes the most important business of the human being. . ." By this he was referring to his conviction that

man's present and worldly life, as experience shows it to us, is, even in the most fortunate cases, a comparatively petty affair, whose passing joys and sorrows can be viewed as of serious and permanent importance only in case this life means what it at present never empirically presents to us, namely a task and a destiny that have, from some higher point of view, an absolute value.

On the other hand, Royce complained that "in human history, Religion in proportion to its importance, characteristically appears as amongst the worst managed, if not the very worst managed, of all of humanity's undertakings" (1903, 280–81). Here he pointed to the array of con-tending faiths whose sectarian pursuits have resulted in an endless stream of misunderstandings and conflicts.

In his Gifford Lectures in Natural Religion, delivered in two series between May 1901 and June 1902, James said little about Royce's latter point but much about the importance of religion to human life. In this discussion of *Varieties*, I want to examine four general issues. The first is James's psychological method for approaching the topic of religious experience. The second is his understanding of the meaning of religious experience, and religion in general, in human life. James's prior

commitments to the importance of the religious interpretation of life are my third concern. Fourth and finally, I offer my own evaluation of what James accomplished in *Varieties*.

1.

From the start of his lectures in Edinburgh, James admitted to being "neither a theologian, nor a scholar learned in the history of religions, nor an anthropologist." What James was, of course, was a skilled psychologist; as he notes, "To the psychologist the religious propensities of man must be at least as interesting as any other of the facts pertaining to his mental constitution" (James [1902] 1985, 12). Thus, the reports of nervous instability and psychical visitations, trances and voices and visions, melancholy and obsessions and fixed ideas that he details in *Varieties* should draw the interest of the psychologist just as strongly as other mental phenomena do. Considering the phenomenon of instantaneous conversion, for example, James writes, "Were we writing the story of the mind from the purely natural-history point of view, with no religious interest whatever, we should still have to write down man's liability to sudden and complete conversion as one of his most curious peculiarities." Whether we are ultimately to interpret such a conversion as "a miracle in which God is present as he is present in no change of heart less strikingly abrupt" or as "a strictly natural process. . . neither more nor less divine in its mere causation and mechanism than any other process, high or low, of man's interior life . . ." (188), the conversion experience is an event to which the psychologist should attend. In the careful quasi-clinical setting into which his lectures introduced his audience, James the psychologist proceeds with an inquiry that attempts to provide "a true record of the inner experiences of great-souled persons wrestling with the crises of their fate . . ." (14).

James tells us that physiological psychology maintains "definite psycho-physical connexions to hold good" and assumes that "the dependence of mental states upon

¹ This text was already published in *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, Vol. 17, No. 1, 2003. This reprint edition happens with the author's permission.

bodily conditions must be thorough-going and complete” (20). He continues that, even though its methods are far different from those traditionally associated with inquiries into spiritual matters, this psychological mode of inquiry does not amount to a rejection, or even a disparagement, of religion. He recognizes, of course, that to handle the phenomena of religious experience “biologically and psychologically as if they were mere curious facts of individual history,” might suggest to some individuals “a degradation of so sublime a subject,” or worse an attempt “to discredit the religious side of life” (14); but he sees no necessary connection between his use of the methods of science and any efforts to undermine the potential human value of religion. As he writes, “[H]ow can such an existential account of facts of mental history decide in one way or another upon their spiritual significance?” Psychology explores, in a manner that applies equally well to “the dicta of the sturdy atheist” and to “those of the Methodist under conviction anxious about his soul” (20), how individuals understand their existence. James the psychologist maintains that religious behavior is still human behavior, and that the various phenomena of the religious life— melancholy, trances, conversions, and so on—are each “special cases of kinds of human experience of much wider scope” (28). To understand these religious phenomena as continuous with the rest of human behavior, he continues, “[W]e cannot possibly ignore these pathological aspects of the subject. We must describe and name them just as if they occurred in nonreligious men” (17).

James’s introduction of the concept of ‘pathology’ here ought not to suggest that he views religious experiences as episodes of mental illness. The term implies, rather, an amplification or excessiveness of a sort that he believes is particularly helpful to scientific inquiries. We know that, as a general tactic, James “loaded the lectures with concrete examples,” maintaining that “a large acquaintance with particulars often makes us wiser than the possession of abstract formulas, however deep. . . .” We know further that he chose many of these

examples from among what he calls “the extremer expressions of the religious temperament.” While he recognized that his concentration on such “convulsions of piety” (5) might make some in his audience uncomfortable,² his intention was to portray religion in “its more completely evolved and perfect forms” (12).

While James does not explicate this opaque phrase here, he does suggest what he has in mind through a series of analogies elsewhere in *Varieties*. He notes, for example, that “we learn most about a thing when we view it under a microscope, as it were, or in its most exaggerated form” (40). If we want to understand fully what arthritis or diabetes is, we should not attempt to study the medical impact of these diseases on patients who are only slightly or moderately afflicted. In a similar fashion, if we want to understand what religion is, we will not advance very far by studying its modest impact on the “ordinary religious believer, who follows the conventional observances of his country, whether it be Buddhist, Christian, or Mohammedan” (15). In a second analogy, James suggests that just as “[i]t is a good rule in physiology, when we are studying the meaning of an organ, to ask after its most peculiar and characteristic sort of performance, and to seek its office in that one of its functions which no other organ can possibly exert,” a similar rule applies in the case of religion. “The essence

² See, for example, Coe 1903: “No effort is made to separate the typical from the aberrational. . . . The average religious man is even said to be an imitator of the extremist, who is the ‘pattern-setter.’ . . . The finished picture, however, owing to the exceeding prominence given to morbid growths, can hardly be regarded as a portrait” (66–67). See also Sewall 1903: “Professor James has treated here of every variety of religious experience, save that of genuine religion itself . . . what is described in the entertaining and oftentimes amusing chapters . . . is only a collection of eccentric examples of emotional or intellectual disorder, and by no means of the normal and healthy religion of everyday life as the average world know and respect it, however varied and unsuccessful are their efforts to realize it. . . . To study religion by these examples is to the average religious mind like walking through a medical museum, as compared with watching a body of healthy youth on a spring morning in the athletic field” (246–50).

of religious experiences, the thing by which we finally must judge them, must be that element or quality in them which we can meet nowhere else," he writes. "And such a quality will be of course more prominent and easy to notice in those religious experiences which are most one-sided, exaggerated, and intense" (44). In a third analogy, James treats the more extreme figures as uniquely valuable witnesses. "To learn the secrets of any science, we go to expert specialists, even though they may be eccentric persons," he notes, "and not to commonplace pupils" (383). While the latter are more frequent and familiar, they can provide us with none of the special insights of the former who can offer us the exotic fruits of their extreme experiences. As he writes, "a religious life, exclusively pursued, does tend to make the person exceptional and excentric" (15).

Thus, for James, we need to examine not individuals for whom religion is "a dull habit," but those for whom it is "an acute fever." He understands the typical member of the former group as being religious only at "second-hand": "His religion has been made for him by others, communicated to him by tradition, determined to fixed forms by imitation, and retained by habit." Little is to be gained from the study of such individuals. The opposite is true of members of the latter group, made up of individuals who burn with religious fervor. These individuals, whom James characterizes as the "geniuses" of religion, have demonstrated in their lives all sorts of "peculiarities" that the typical churchgoer has not; but, while admitting that these experiences are "ordinarily classed as pathological" (15), he defends their careful examination. Consequently, we should stay with the most flamboyant examples of religious experience: "The only cases likely to be profitable enough to repay our attention will therefore be cases where the religious spirit is unmistakable and extreme" (40).

From this initial focus upon "the acute religion of the few against the chronic religion of the many" (98), James

develops *Varieties* in separate directions, which he calls "two orders of inquiry." The first is the continued psychological inquiry into the nature of our "religious propensities;" the second, a philosophical inquiry into their "significance" (13). And, while the exploration of the religious propensities of his many witnesses fills the bulk of the volume, this should not suggest that the latter inquiry into the significance of these experiences was of only secondary interest to James. The experiential data admittedly fascinated him and drew him to explore them more deeply than he had originally intended; but, at the same time, he was drawn to this project as a would-be believer seeking answers to his own philosophical questions about the value of religious experience. We can thus sense a strong tension in *Varieties*: while the psychological method for examining these religious experiences should lead to no conclusions about their overall meaning, James was strongly drawn to examine the data of these experiences by his prior beliefs (or hopes) about what they might mean. James begins the lectures attempting to balance out the contributions of the psychological scientist and the religious believer, but, during the course of the lectures, the believer wins.

2.

With a clearer sense of James's method, we can turn to a more careful examination of the topic of religion. As we have seen, his primary interest was in the vagaries of religious experience. As a consequence, he demonstrates little or no concern for institutional or doctrinal questions; his focus is upon individuals. "The religious experience," he writes, "lives itself out within the private breast" (269). For James, *Varieties* is thus intended to be an inquiry into the various "*feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine*" (34). Given this level of generality and individual distinctness, he

recognizes that it would be futile to hope to attain a science of religion. While James is dedicated to the appropriately rigorous inquiries of psychological science, he also recognizes that, at least with regard to this topic, our language is not capable of sustaining such rigor. In “a field of experience where there is not a single conception that can be sharply drawn,” he writes, to pretend “to be rigorously ‘scientific’ or ‘exact’ in our terms would only stamp us as lacking in understanding of our task” (39). Rather, what he attempts to do is to study the reports of his various witnesses free from sectarian blinders in an attempt to uncover commonalities among the experiences.

James’s tentative distillation of individuals’ religious feelings, acts, and experiences does not violate this openness. He writes simply that “the life of religion . . . consists of the belief that there is an unseen order, and that our supreme good lies in harmoniously adjusting ourselves thereto” (51). While he recognizes that theology offers many different interpretations of this unseen order and of our proper adjustment to it, he emphasizes that to explore these differences is to move away from the core aspect of religious experience. He writes:

When we survey the whole field of religion, we find a great variety in the thoughts that have prevailed there; but the feelings on the one hand and the conduct on the other are almost always the same. . . . The theories which Religion generates, being thus variable, are secondary; and if you wish to grasp her essence, you must look to the feelings and the conduct as being the more constant elements. (397)

Setting aside these feelings and conduct for the moment, we can linger briefly with the “common nucleus” of “intellectual content” that all religions share. James writes that, after “[t]he warring gods and formulas of the various religions do indeed cancel each other,” there remains a “uniform deliverance in which religions all appear to meet.” This common core has two aspects. The first aspect of all religions is an “uneasiness . . . a

sense that there is *something wrong about us* as we naturally stand.” The second is “the solution” to this uneasiness: the feeling that “*we are saved from the wrongness* by making proper connexion with the higher powers” (399–400).

There are two points to be made at this juncture. The first is the importance of remembering that James the psychologist is simply reporting the content of these religious feelings as distilled from the testimony of his many witnesses. Any claims about whether there *is* something wrong with us, or how we *might be* saved, must come later. The second point is James’s claim that this message enters human experience, if at all, only by means of feeling or emotion. Reason or argumentation—dogmatics—plays a distinctly minor role in his understanding of religion. The religious person is not one whose mind is particularly attuned to appreciate proofs, but one who has “a trustful sense of presence” (353) that turns his or her life around. Religion offers humans an “added dimension of emotion”; and, since it offers a solution to our uneasiness, religion plays a positive role in human experience. “Religious feeling is thus an absolute addition to the Subject’s range of life,” James writes. “It gives him a new sphere of power.” Those who have come through the sorts of religious experiences that he describes recognize a kind of salvation. There is, he writes, a “new reach of freedom for us, with the struggle over, the keynote of the universe sounding in our ears, and everlasting possession spread before our eyes. . . . This sort of happiness in the absolute and everlasting is what we find nowhere but in religion” (46–47). What we find in part, James writes, are feelings of two sorts: that there is more to existence than meets the senses, and that we can live in a comfortable dependence on unseen powers.

Beginning with the first of these feelings, James writes that the many experiences that he explores “prove the existence in our mental machinery of a sense of present reality more diffused and general than that which our

special senses yield" (58–59). Expanding upon this point, he continues: "It is as if there were in the human consciousness a *sense of reality, a feeling of objective presence*, a perception of what we may call '*something there*,' more deep and more general than any of the special and particular 'senses' by which the current psychology supposes existent realities to be originally revealed" (55). James's use of "proof" here should not suggest, of course, that there is such a more, just that many humans feel with certainty that a more exists. Similarly, when he writes that "[p]sychology and religion . . . both admit that there are forces seemingly outside of the conscious individual that bring redemption to his life," he is not asserting any scientific proof of redemption but only recording his witnesses' feelings that redemption is real. As James makes explicit, in fact, psychology defines these forces as subconscious rather than supernatural, and suggests "that they do not transcend the individual's personality" (174).

Further discussing the notion of the subconscious, James writes that as a result of nitrous oxide intoxication he was able to recognize that

our normal waking consciousness, rational consciousness as we call it, is but one special type of consciousness, whilst all about it, parted from it by the filmiest of screens, there lie potential forms of consciousness entirely different. We may go through life without suspecting their existence; but apply the required stimulus, and at a touch they are there in all their completeness, definite types of mentality which probably somewhere have their field of application and adaptation. (307–8)

Leaving aside the chemical origin of this insight, James maintains that any adequate psychological account must somewhere incorporate the reports of the similar religious experiences to which he points throughout *Varieties*. "No account of the universe in its totality can be final which leaves these other forms of consciousness quite disregarded," he writes. "How to regard them is the question— for they are so discontinuous with

ordinary consciousness" (308). One obvious way to incorporate them, of course, is through supernaturalism. Under such an account, "the level of full sunlit consciousness" becomes but the smaller region of consciousness, surrounded or fringed by a much larger "transmarginal or subliminal region." This larger region is the region of supernatural meaning to which not all humans have ready access. "In persons deep in the religious life," James writes, "the door into this region seems unusually wide open; at any rate, experiences making their entrance through that door have had emphatic influence in shaping religious history" (381). The supernatural approach thus can incorporate the psychological explanation into its religious version of the data of the subconscious. "If the grace of God miraculously operates," James writes for example, "it probably operates through the subliminal door" (218).

At this point, James steps back a bit from the religious interpretation. Noting that we need "a way of describing the 'more,' which psychologists may also recognize as real," he writes, "[t]he *subconscious self* is nowadays a well-accredited psychological entity; and I believe that in it we have exactly the mediating term required. Apart from all religious considerations, there is actually and literally more life in our total soul than we are at any time aware of" (402). In this vast well of memories and hopes, ideals and expectations, is to be found a broader self than is at any time actually present to consciousness. This well also functions as a vast reservoir of energies to which our normally tepid lives can gain access through proper efforts.³ And, drawing nearer to the religious interpretation of this subconscious, James is also willing to hypothesize "that whatever it may be on its *farther* side, the 'more' with which in religious experience we feel ourselves connected is on its *hither* side the subconscious continuation of our conscious life." Thus, he suggests that our interpretation of this feeling of a

³ Compare "The Powers of Men" (1907), in James (1982, 147–61).

more can start with the “recognized psychological fact” of the subconscious and still embrace the religious interpretation, preserving for his psychological inquiry “a contact with ‘science’ which the ordinary theologian lacks” (403). It would still seem to be possible, however, to recognize the more feeling without accepting the religious interpretation of it that James favors by emphasizing the possibility of delusion in our welcoming as other forms of consciousness what might be simple misinterpretations of normal consciousness.

The second of these religious feelings is that we live in a kind of benign dependency on unseen powers. James notes in the testimonies of many of his witnesses a feeling of passivity and a contentment with reliance upon the divine. “There is a state of mind, known to religious men, but to no others,” he writes, “in which the will to assert ourselves and hold our own has been displaced by a willingness to close our mouths and be as nothing in the floods and waterspouts of God.” James views this mentality of untroubled reliance as a “gift,” whether “a gift of God’s grace” or “a gift of our organism” he does not here decide. In either case, it is something that is unchosen: this feeling of benign dependency is “either there or not there for us, and there are persons who can no more become possessed by it than they can fall in love with a given woman by mere word of command” (46). Concentrating on those in whom this feeling of dependency is prominent, James continues:

That personal attitude which the individual finds himself impelled to take up towards what he apprehends to be the divine . . . will prove to be both a helpless and a sacrificial attitude. That is, we shall have to confess to at least some amount of dependence on sheer mercy, and to practice some amount of renunciation, great or small, to save our souls alive. (49)

Even the non-religious must all admit, James writes, that “we are in the end absolutely dependent on the universe. . . .” In the religious person, this dependence becomes a happy one in which we can rely confidently

upon divine support. “*Religion thus makes easy and felicitous what in any case is necessary,*” he writes, “and if it be the only agency that can accomplish this result, its vital importance as a human faculty stands vindicated beyond dispute.” What sort of vindication this might be is a difficult question to answer, however, since it is clear that the psychologist can do no more than recognize the power of this feeling in those who have it. While it is certainly true that, for those of us who have this feeling, religion “becomes an essential organ of our life, performing a function which no other portion of our nature can so successfully fulfill” (49), the psychologist must still maintain that this feeling is open to other non-religious interpretations by those who, unlike James, do not feel religion’s vital importance and who reject the moral holidays that dependency would allow.

One further theme from the topic of religion is the question of immortality. Focusing as he does upon religious experience, James almost completely avoids the extra-experiential question of immortality in *Varieties*.⁴ He recognizes, of course, the general importance of the question to many religious individuals, noting that “[r]eligion, in fact, for the great majority of our own race *means* immortality, and nothing else.” His defense of his omission is two-part. On one side, he asserts that religious persons do, or at least should, care more for their ideals than for themselves. As he writes, “[i]f only our ideals are cared for in ‘eternity,’ I do not see why we might not be willing to resign their care to other hands than ours” (412). On the other, he notes that in any case no *guarantees* of immortality are necessary. “For practical life at any rate, the *chance* of salvation is enough,” he writes. “No fact in human nature is more characteristic than its willingness to live on a chance” (414).

⁴ Compare “Human Immortality: Two Supposed Objections to the Doctrine” (1898), in James (1982, 75–101).

3.

I have already suggested that James the psychologist loses out in the course of *Varieties* to James the believer. We have seen several cases in which James inclined his interpretations of the data toward the religious, attempting to show that nothing in the data would preclude a religious interpretation. He, of course, does not assert proof of his case; but he does assert that the religious case has not been disproven, and that in this non-disproven state religious belief is justifiable. Further, the broad survey of religious experience as a study of human behavior is designed to strengthen James's case because it demonstrates the breadth of the religious interpretation.

One of the most important varieties of religious experience that James discusses is mysticism. He writes that "personal religious experience has its root and centre in mystical states of consciousness"; and he explores these states and their four "marks"—ineffability, noetic quality, transience, and passivity—at great length. With regard to such mystical states, however, James admits that "my own constitution shuts me out from their enjoyment almost entirely, and I can speak of them only at second hand" (301). Given his earlier disparagement of indirect religion, his admission about mysticism might have suggested that James would avoid the topic. He continues, however, to defend strongly the evidentiary value of reports about what he has not himself experienced:

The first thing to bear in mind (especially if we ourselves belong to the cleric-academic-scientific type, the officially and conventionally 'correct' type, 'the deadly respectable' type, for which to ignore others is a besetting temptation) is that nothing can be more stupid than to bar out phenomena from our notice, merely because we are incapable of taking any part in them ourselves. (95)

Although perhaps initially puzzling, James's position does not contain a contra-diction. Rather, he is maintaining

that our inquiries into areas like religious experience are not likely to advance very far if we admit into consideration only what is universally experienced. Proceeding from the general Jamesian premise that "to no one type of man whatsoever is the total fullness of truth immediately revealed," he reaches the clearly Jamesian conclusion that "[e]ach of us has to borrow from the other parts of truth seen better from the other's point of view." He continues that, "like the traveller, whose testimony about foreign countries we should be foolish not to believe," so too individuals' religious experiences are "fit to be taken as *evidence*. . . ." As to the question of whether such an individual can "instruct us as to the actual existence of a higher world with which our world is in relation, even though personally he be in other respects no better than ourselves," James leaves behind his psychological stand and, in accordance with his interpretation of the more and of human dependency, comes down on the side of supernaturalism and answers in the affirmative (383–84).

While James was neither a theologian nor a scholar of religions, he was—or at least wanted to be—a believer. A brief survey of his other writings on religion makes this clear. Earlier, in *The Will to Believe*, he tells us that "[w]e cannot live or think at all without some degree of faith". James sees this faith as present in the various working hypotheses that direct our living into the future, some of which "can be refuted in five minutes, others may defy ages" ([1897] 1979, 79). As we live forward, our faith will have the opportunity to verify itself. "Believe, and you shall be right, for you shall save yourself; doubt, and you shall again be right, for you shall perish," James writes. "The only difference is that to believe is greatly to your advantage" (80). When the case under consideration is live, forced, and momentous, he continues, "we have the right to believe at our own risk any hypothesis that is live enough to tempt our will" (32); and one category of such cases is the religious with its belief that "the best things

are the more eternal things . . ." (29). Then, in "Philosophical Conceptions and Practical Results," James writes that theism is superior to materialism if for no other reason than "it guarantees an ideal order that shall be permanently preserved." He continues that "[m]aterialism means simply the denial that the moral order is eternal, and the cutting off of ultimate hopes; theism means the affirmation of an eternal order and the letting loose of hope"; and he notes further that the desire that there be such an eternal moral order is "one of the deepest needs of our breast" ([1907] 1975, 264; cf. 55). Later, in *Pragmatism*, he recognizes the importance of this hope to human life, noting that: "On pragmatic principles we cannot reject any hypothesis if consequences useful to life flow from it" (131). For example, he continues, "if the hypothesis of God works satisfactorily in the widest sense of the word, it is true." Further, he maintains that "whatever its residual difficulties may be, experience shows that it certainly does work . . ." (143). And, while James admits that believing in God might not work for everyone, he still maintains the right of those individuals for whom it does work to continue to believe at their own risk. "In the end it is our faith and not our logic that decides such questions," he writes, "and I deny the right of any pretended logic to veto my own faith" (142).

In the "Conclusions" chapter of *Varieties*, James continues in this vein. "Disregarding the over-beliefs, and confining ourselves to what is common and generic," he writes, "we have in *the fact that the conscious person is continuous with a wider self through which saving experiences come*, a positive content of religious experience which, it seems to me, *is literally and objectively true as far as it goes*" ([1902] 1985, 405). There has surely been a gradual but complete shift here, from the earlier stance of psychological inquirer to this current religious stance. Earlier in *Varieties*, James spoke of an unseen order to which we should adjust as simply the message of religion. Now, he presents us with the claim that this message—that the conscious person is

continuous with a wider self through which saving experiences come—is literally and objectively true. Even if we take seriously his puzzling caveat "as far as it goes," James is no longer simply recording the experiences of his witnesses and telling us what they believe these experiences mean. He is now telling us that the picture the witnesses present is a true one. James tells us that there is another dimension of our existence, a "mystical" or "supernatural" one beyond "the sensible and merely 'understandable' world." He tells us that this "unseen region" is the source of our "ideal impulses" and that it produces "effects" in this world. He tells us that when we commune with this unseen region, "work is actually done upon our finite personality, for we are turned into new men, and consequences in the way of conduct follow in the natural world upon our regenerative change." And, using the term "God" as our "natural appellation . . . for the supreme reality" or for "this higher part of the universe," James tells us that "[w]e and God have business with each other; and in opening ourselves to his influence our deepest destiny is fulfilled." Surely, he has moved beyond the evidence present in his psychological inquiries. He has shifted from his exposition of what his witnesses believed to a defense, not of the actuality, but of the truth of their beliefs. The answer to the question of why James did this must be sought in his pragmatic justification of religion in terms of its effects in the lives of believers. As he writes, "that which produces effects within another reality must be termed a reality itself, so I feel as if we had no philosophic excuse for calling the unseen or mystical world unreal" (406).

4.

So far, we have considered James's presentation of a number of themes related to the broad topic of religion and religious experience. One was the sensible psychological theme that no apparently natural, or even pathological, roots can undermine "the worth of a thing" (193). Using this standard, no religious experience could

be eliminated from consideration by discrediting its bodily origin. "To the medical mind," James admits, "these ecstasies signify nothing but suggested and imitated hypnoid states, on an intellectual basis of superstition, and a corporeal one of degeneration and hysteria." He continues, however, that even if "these pathological conditions have existed in many and possibly in all the cases," this information tells us nothing about "the value for knowledge of the consciousness which they induce." Any judgment that we might pass upon those religious states must be based not upon "superficial medical talk" but upon inquiries "into their fruits for life" (327). A second theme was James's requirement that we be "as objective and receptive" (301) as we can to the testimony of others. *Varieties*, except for its thin shell of theory, a treasury of such testimonies; and admitting them into evidence is both good psychology and a way that we can broaden our perspectives on the meaning of life. We have most recently begun to consider the combination of these themes in James's pragmatic willingness to characterize various individuals' testimonies of the *value* to be drawn from religion as evidence for its *truth*.

James offers a brief sketch of aspects of his developing pragmatism in the course of *Varieties*. In particular, he is interested here in grounding theoretical discussions in "what practical difference would result from one alternative or the other being true" (350). Using this criterion, James maintains that God's "metaphysical attributes"—aseity, necessariness, immateriality, indivisibility, and so on—have no significance for human experience (351). As he puts it, "candidly speaking, how do such qualities as these make any definite connexion with our life?" Further, he wonders, "if they severally call for no distinctive adaptations of our conduct, what vital difference can it possibly make to a man's religion whether they be true or false?" (352). For James, on the contrary, the important aspects of religion are important because they do make a difference in life.

What keeps religion going is something else than abstract definitions and systems of concatenated adjectives, and something different from faculties of theology and their professors. All these things are after-effects, secondary accretions upon those phenomena of vital conversation with the unseen divine. . . renewing themselves in saecula saeculorum in the lives of humble private men. (352)

The situation is completely different, however, with what James calls God's "moral" attributes, like holiness, omnipotence, justice, and love. These attributes, James believes, *work* in life. "They positively determine fear and hope and expectation . . ." (353).

Throughout *Varieties*, James discusses the various religious experiences as "psychological phenomena." As such, he writes, they possess "enormous biological worth." Still, he recognizes that it is a fair question to ask about "the objective 'truth' of their content. . . ." Here James is separating into two questions what he normally wants to treat as one. Recognizing, he writes, "the natural propensity of man . . . to believe that whatever has great value for life is thereby certified as true," he here considers truth as "something additional to bare value for life. . . ." For example, while he considered previously the value of the feeling of a more, he now wants to consider this question: "Is such a 'more' merely our own notion, or does it really exist?" (401). The problem with pursuing this second line of inquiry is, as we have seen in the consideration of faith, that our attempts to reach an answer here may defy ages of serious effort; the lives of many potential believers could suffer in the meantime. Thus James is drawn quickly back to a blending of the questions of usefulness and of truth. This is the sense in which he writes "the uses of religion, its uses to the individual who has it, and the uses of the individual himself to the world, are the best arguments that truth is in it" (361). James had perceived all of this earlier in *Varieties*, when he wrote that religious opinions, like any other respectable opinions, must be tested "by logic and by experiment" and not by "their

author's neurological type." We must test our beliefs; but these tests must be broad in nature, considering such criteria as "[i]mmediate luminousness, . . . philosophical reasonableness, and moral helpfulness" (23).

This folding of the question of truth into the question of value is a further instance of James's position that in the fullness of experience there is much that reason cannot prove. As he writes early in *Varieties*, "if we look on man's whole mental life as it exists, on the life of men that lies in them apart from their learning and science, and that they inwardly and privately follow, we have to confess that the part of it of which rationalism can give an account is relatively superficial." There is much that we believe without "articulate reasons"; and, while James admits that this rational component has great prestige "for it has the loquacity, it can challenge you for proofs, and chop logic, and put you down with words," he still maintains that rationality is of lesser importance in the full life of the person. The rational part of your mental life, he writes,

will fail to convince or convert you all the same, if your dumb intuitions are opposed to its conclusions. If you have intuitions at all, they come from a deeper level of your nature than the loquacious level which rationalism inhabits . . . something in you absolutely knows that that result must be truer than any logic-chopping rationalistic talk, however clever, that may contradict it. (66–67)

James tells us here that he is speaking as a psychologist, not as a logician, simply recognizing the fact that people tend to follow their intuitions. "I do not yet say that it is *better* that the subconscious and non-rational should thus hold primacy in the religious realm," he writes. "I confine myself to simply pointing out that they do so hold it as a matter of fact" (68).

We have already seen how James works out the importance of results in his discussion of what he called the metaphysical and moral attributes of God. Setting

aside the former sort as irrelevant to life, James concentrated on our intuitions about the latter. Continuing on in this vein, he writes that religious people believe "that not only they themselves, but the whole universe of beings to whom the God is present, are secure in his parental hands." In this happy dependence, they rest assured of a happy outcome:

God's existence is the guarantee of an ideal order that shall be permanently preserved. This world may indeed, as science assures us, some day burn up or freeze; but if it is part of his order, the old ideals are sure to be brought elsewhere to fruition, so that where God is, tragedy is only provisional and partial, and shipwreck and dissolution are not the absolutely final things. (407)

In spite of the fact that the actual existence of God is the guarantee of this ideality, however, James is less concerned with what he sees as the necessarily futile attempt to prove the existence of God than he is with recognizing the power that individuals can draw from the belief in God to order their lives. In a similar fashion, we can consider James's discussion of non-petitional prayer, which he considers to be "the very soul and essence of religion . . . religion in act." What occurs in prayer, he writes, is "the very movement itself of the soul, putting itself in a personal relation of contact with the mysterious power of which it feels the presence . . ." (365–66). This formulation implies successful contact, although elsewhere in *Varieties* James is more guarded (or psychological) in his formulations. He tells us, for example, that one of "the characteristics of the religious life" is the *belief* that "prayer or inner communion with the spirit thereof—be that spirit 'God' or 'law'—is a process wherein work is really done . . ." (382). Ultimately, however, it seems that James does adopt the believer's position of contact through prayer. He writes, as we have seen above, that there is an unseen region that produces effects in this world. By this, James means that when we interact by prayer with the more, something positive happens to us: work is done upon us and we are turned into new men. Here again, James is

more concerned with the positive effects of our beliefs than with the reality of our religious objects. In both of these cases—the intuitions of dependency that give rise to feelings of comfort and the prayers that strengthen individuals in the troughs of life—James’s point is that for some people religious interpretations work wonders, bringing comfort and power to their lives. How are we to address, however, the problem that the content of these interpretations—that there is a caring God whom we can contact through prayer—may not be strictly true?

One possibility is to apply James’s criteria for evaluating mystical states to this larger issue to get a sense of the worth of religious experiences in general. In response to the question of whether “the mystic range of consciousness” furnishes “any warrant for the truth of the twice-bornness and supernaturality and pantheism which it favors,” he replies:

(1) Mystical states, when well developed, usually are, and have the right to be, absolutely authoritative over the individuals to whom they come. . . . (2) No authority emanates from them which should make it a duty for those who stand outside of them to accept their revelations uncritically. . . . (3) They break down the authority of the non-mystical or rationalistic consciousness, based upon the understanding and the senses alone. They show it to be only one kind of consciousness. They open out the possibility of other orders of truth, in which, so far as anything in us vitally responds to them, we may freely continue to have faith. (334–35)

Expanding this approach beyond the question of mystical states, we can say that, for James, those individuals whose religious propensities offer them a rich and working vision of life should be respected in their beliefs and practices. Because these beliefs and practices bring positive results for life, they are in some sense true for these individuals. For those, on the other hand, who have no such propensities, religious beliefs and practices can and should claim no authority. This clear and measured stance seems quite fine so far; but James’s third point is more problematic. He seems to be

advocating the position that, because some individuals recognize a more that works in their lives, we too must offer it a place in ours. The authority of the rationalistic consciousness would be forced to make room for other forms of consciousness and the demands of his third criterion would seem to eliminate the protections of the second.

In this justification of religious experience, James the believer moves too quickly. If a religious idea or belief yields *any* measure of success in life, he would characterize it as verified; but our rich history of hasty generalizations and successful superstitions and seemingly undying prejudices should caution us to greater restraint. Clearly, recognizing that some individuals claim that there is a more, and that these claimants derive personal benefits from living in accordance with their claim, need commit us in no way to the reality of a more. Democratic tolerance for others may challenge us to include their experiences, but it cannot require us to accept their interpretations of those experiences. We can, in other words, admit their testimony without accepting all of its content. I have no doubt, for example, that there are many individuals who believe that their recovery from addiction would never have happened without God’s help. I accept both their recovery and their interpretation of it; but this surely does not mean that there is a God. To the stalwart psychologist, it means two things: the first is that humans can, when challenged, accomplish remarkable things; the second, that the religious approach to living can provide powerful challenges. It surely does not mean, however, that the religious interpretation is true.

I realize that I live in a smaller and thinner world than people of religious convictions. It is possible that I am just spiritually myopic, unable to see the connections between the experiences that others report and their proper supernatural interpretation. In *Pragmatism*, James offers an analogical argument that seems apposite

here. He writes there that human experience is not “the highest form of experience extant in the universe.” Rather, “we stand in much the same relation to the whole of the universe as our canine and feline pets do to the whole of human life.” Just as they can take part in our lives only up to a certain level— inhabiting “our drawing-rooms and libraries” and dumbly witnessing “scenes of whose significance they have no inkling” ([1907] 1975, 143)—so too may I be able to recognize only part of what others can. I may be dumbly witnessing all sorts of religious mysteries that I cannot understand. James’s clever analogy is, of course, indefeasible, but that makes it neither true nor false.

I began with a brief consideration of a paper by Josiah Royce, in which he describes religion as the most important business of the human being because it can offer a context for our passing experiences and give our lives “absolute value.” In *Varieties*, James offers a similar comment:

The lustre of the present hour is always borrowed from the background of possibilities it goes with. Let our common experiences be enveloped in an eternal moral order; let our suffering have an immortal significance . . . and his days pass by with zest; they stir with prospects, they thrill with remoter values. Place round them on the contrary the curdling cold and gloom and absence of all permanent meaning which for pure naturalism and the popular science evolutionism of our time are all that is visible ultimately, and the thrill stops short, or turns rather to an anxious trembling. ([1902] 1985, 119–20)

From my myopic depths I must admit that, for some people, this is sadly true. Such individuals find the natural interpretation of human existence a pale and inadequate shadow when compared to the supernatural perspective. This fact is as true about human nature today as it was when James was preparing *Varieties* a century ago; and he may be correct when he predicts that “[r]eligion, occupying herself with personal destinies and keeping thus in contact with the only absolute realities which we know, must necessarily play an eternal part in human history” (396). It is fair to ask at this point, however, who is speaking: is it James the psychologist or James the believer?

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NATURALISM AND SUPERNATURALISM: CAN WE TALK?

I.

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Some philosophical naturalists have argued that all forms of supernaturalism are defective because they are at best debilitating, and at worst dangerous. In what follows I propose a moderate, pragmatic variety of naturalism based on the idea that any sort of belief that has effects within a society or a public, including those beliefs that are supernaturalist, is amenable to being assessed in naturalistic terms on the basis of practical results rather than on the basis of commitments of other sorts, including ontological commitments. For a pragmatic naturalism of the variety I am proposing, supernaturalist ontological commitments are regarded as interesting, and even important, details of the biographies of persons and communities; but their value can only be determined by evaluation that takes into account their relationship to persons, objects, events, and forces in a natural world amenable to empirical and experimental inquiry.

On the side of pragmatic naturalism there needs to be recognition that some forms of supernaturalism are primarily functional in a personal and private sense, and that they are capable of passing a pragmatic test in terms of their consequences for promoting integration of an otherwise fractured or debilitated personality. There also needs to be a recognition that even the most avid and public advocates of supernaturalism can compartmentalize their beliefs in ways that do not leak into the spheres of science, technology, commerce, industry, and political life. On the supernaturalist side, there needs to be a recognition that experience in the form of revelations, intuitions, the testimony of sacred texts, visions, and so on, does not constitute knowledge as what is assertable with warrant. In order for supernaturalist beliefs to have legitimate consequences in spheres of social and public life, immediate experience must be empirically and experimentally tested in order to determine its pragmatic value.

One of the reasons why philosophical discussions about supernaturalist religious beliefs¹ are often unproductive is that they tend to be situated within a complex network of unspecified and, at times, even unacknowledged subsidiary issues and debates that are themselves highly problematic. Some of the issues, such as personal beliefs about whether one will be reunited with family and friends in an afterlife, are so intensely personal that they tend to be conversationally taboo outside of circles of like-minded believers. There is also the matter of ritual or ceremonial events mounted within supernaturalist institutional traditions that serve to comfort victims of community tragedy and loss. Philosophical naturalists and others of naturalist persuasion are well advised to step carefully when such emotionally charged issues are in play.

Some of the debates, moreover, such as ones that involve ontological claims pertaining to the existence of a deity or deities, although amenable to (usually) amiable discussion among philosophers as well as the general public, tend to result in stalemate. On one side, they tend to produce little or nothing that naturalists are ready to count as evidence for or against such ontological claims, at least in the sense of "evidence" as the term is commonly understood in the sciences, technology, commerce, and jurisprudence, to name a few.² On the other side, supernaturalists insist that their experiences are real. The question, then, is how to dismantle, or at least lower, some of the barriers to more productive discussions between naturalists and supernaturalists. As a part of my answer to this question I propose that under certain conditions a moderate form of naturalism is capable of productive dialogue with varieties of supernaturalism I term "functional" and "compartmentalized."

¹ It is important to recall that some religions, such as some forms of Buddhism, espouse naturalism.

² Alvin Plantinga, for example, uses the term "know" in patently non-naturalistic senses.

The terms "naturalism" and "supernaturalism" cover a great deal of ground, so it seems appropriate to establish some benchmarks before proceeding further. On the naturalist side, Kai Nielsen provides a well-crafted taxonomy that distinguishes the following varieties of naturalism: 1) cosmological (worldview) naturalism, 2) methodological naturalism, 3) ethical naturalism, and 4) scientific naturalism.

Cosmological naturalism essentially holds that "everything is either composed of natural entities or is dependent for its existence on natural entities." *Methodological* naturalism involves a commitment to the methods of the empirical and mathematical sciences. *Ethical* naturalism holds that ethical beliefs are subsets of empirical beliefs. And *scientific* naturalism is "the view that all knowledge or reasonably held beliefs are scientific, based on scientific beliefs or commonsensical beliefs whose method of confirmation and disconfirmation is of basically the same type as that of scientific beliefs and that they could not be legitimately held where they are not compatible with scientific beliefs."³

The moderate form of naturalism I propose accepts the first three of these types without reservation, and the fourth type, "scientific" naturalism," with reservations. The term "scientific" in this context is unfortunate, according to this position, given its history as a term associated with the view that the methods of science are universally applicable everywhere within experience. John Dewey, for example, rejected that idea. He thought that there are vast areas of human experience are not problematic, that therefore do not require inquiry and evaluation, and that are thus not the business of science. If Dewey's caveat is respected, then a moderate naturalist would also accept Nielsen's fourth type.

Supernaturalism, on the other hand, is a bit more

complex. It is generally understood as belief in persons, objects, events, or forces that exist outside of nature and that have some effect within the sphere of natural persons, objects, events and forces. Some forms of supernaturalism involve *core* or "ultimate" beliefs, whereas others are *peripheral* to those core beliefs. The history of interaction between religious institutions and the sciences, for example, exhibits a steady erosion of peripheral supernaturalist beliefs which, even though ardently held at one time, are currently treated as indefensible relics of the past.

In 1992, for example, Pope John Paul II (rather belatedly, as some might argue) declared that the Church's condemnation of Galileo in 1633 had been an error that had resulted from "tragic mutual incomprehension."⁴ Although this statement failed to satisfy some of the Vatican's more vocal critics, it did serve to draw a sharp distinction between core supernaturalist beliefs such as belief in the divinity of Jesus of Nazareth or the triune nature of the Christian God, on one side, and peripheral supernaturalist beliefs such as belief that the Judeo-Christian God placed the Earth at the center of the universe, on the other.

A subtle but significantly different distinction can be made between varieties of supernaturalism that involve beliefs that are *deeply felt as fonts of action* and others that involve beliefs that are best described as *nominal*. Historically, for example, it has been conventional wisdom that no seeker of a major public office in the United States could advance his or her career without professing some form of religious affiliation acceptable to his or her constituents. Occasional attendance at church or synagogue, at a bare minimum, has traditionally been an essential feature of a political profile. Given the strong presence of evangelical

³ Kai Nielsen, *Naturalism and Religion*. (Amherst, N.Y., Prometheus Books, 2001). See especially pp. 136-37.

⁴ Huffington Post, "Vatican Rewrites History On Galileo." First Posted: 01/23/09 05:12 AM ET Updated: 05/25/11 01:55 PM ET http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2008/12/23/vatican-rewrites-history_n_153232.html

Christians currently within the U.S. in federal and state governments, it is a fact that there are many politicians whose supernaturalist religious beliefs are both deeply felt and motivate their actions. But it is also undeniable that a significant percentage of politicians espouse supernaturalist views only in an "official" or nominal sense (as, for example, favoring the continued use of the phrase "In God We Trust" on coinage). Although several American presidents have been religiously "unaffiliated," not one has so far declared himself to be irreligious, agnostic, or atheist.⁵

Complicating this already complex picture, at least in the United States, is the fact that although a rapidly growing percentage of U.S. citizens do not identify with any religion, the majority of that cohort continues to harbor supernaturalist beliefs. According to a 2012 report by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life, "one-fifth of the U.S. public—and a third of adults under 30—are religiously unaffiliated today, the highest percentages ever in Pew Research Center polling. In the last five years alone, the unaffiliated have increased from just over 15% to just under 20% of all U.S. adults. Their ranks now include more than 13 million self-described atheists and agnostics (nearly 6% of the U.S. public), as well as nearly 33 million people who say they have no particular religious affiliation (14%)." Nevertheless, the report continues with the remarkable finding that "two-thirds of [the religiously unaffiliated] say they believe in God (68%)."⁶

Given the fact that naturalists and supernaturalists often talk past one another in debates that tend to produce little in the way of fruitful outcomes, how can barriers to more productive discussions be dismantled? My suggestion is that a pragmatic naturalist might well find common ground with some supernaturalists of the types

I have labeled "functionalist" and "compartmentalized" by distinguishing between what I will call "benign" supernaturalism and other varieties that are pragmatically less so. (I will say more about these two types in a moment.)

My suggestion is likely to be a hard sell among more extreme naturalists. Some, such as Richard Dawkins, have argued that supernaturalist commitments at their best amount to little more than superstition, and that at their worst they function as a brake on human progress. Responding to the attacks on the World Trade Center in New York after September 11, 2001, for example, he wrote that "Revealed faith is not harmless nonsense, it can be lethally dangerous nonsense. Dangerous because it gives people unshakeable confidence in their own righteousness. Dangerous because it gives them false courage to kill themselves, which automatically removes normal barriers to killing others. Dangerous because it teaches enmity to others labelled only by a difference of inherited tradition."⁷

Dawkins is of course correct in one important sense. After September 11, 2001 it can hardly be denied (nor, indeed, could it have been denied before that date) that there are individuals of supernaturalist persuasion who become "lethally dangerous" to others when energized by a combination of political zeal and faith in rewards of an afterlife. But I would suggest that Dawkins may have cast his net too widely. Whereas it is clear that in the case cited there was a malign form of supernaturalism at work, there are and have been "lethally dangerous" individuals also among non-supernaturalists such as materialists and self-described atheists (the case of Joseph Stalin provides a convenient example).

Moreover, it is hard to imagine that Dawkins' harsh condemnation could cover the case of a grieving daughter who has lost a parent with whom she shared

⁵ Thomas Jefferson held a position that was arguably close to agnosticism.

⁶ <http://pewresearch.org/pubs/2377/unaffiliated-one-in-five-twenty-percent-americans-no-religion-spiritual-religious-prayer-religious-organizations>

⁷ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2001/oct/11/afghanistan.terrorism2>

belief in an afterlife during which they would be reunited. On pragmatic grounds alone, all other things being equal, the case of the grieving daughter must surely count as an example of benign supernaturalist belief that is "functional" in the sense that it serves to assuage grief and deal in a positive manner with the fact of death. So Dawkins' broad brush condemnation of supernaturalist belief does not appear to be capable of accounting for fine distinctions among types of supernaturalist belief and action. He has simply neglected to take into account the ways that a more benign supernaturalism can function in a broader range of contexts.

From the standpoint of a pragmatic naturalism, the crucial difference between these two types of supernaturalism, one malign and the other benign, lies in their practical consequences. Although the two cases of supernaturalism have belief in an afterlife in common, they differ critically in terms of the ways that core beliefs function in social contexts. The pragmatic naturalist will be eager to point out that unlike ontological claims about supernatural entities, forces, and locations, behavior within social contexts is amenable to being evaluated. Such behavior supplies information that can be empirically and experimentally derived from natural contexts and examined by inquiring tools that have evolved naturally through generations of human interest and effort.

William James is helpful in this regard. In his 1898 essay "Philosophical Conceptions and Practical Results" he compared two types of naturalists to two types of supernaturalists. On the naturalist side there are outdoor naturalists, the hikers of mountains and "the field observers of living animals' habitats," but there are also the "closet naturalists" who are "collectors and classifiers, and handlers of skeletons and skins." On the supernaturalist side, corresponding to these two types of naturalists, there are persons of practical, quotidian religious belief that enriches their lives, but there also

dogmatists whose commitment to authority and literalism keep them in the "closet," sequestered from the practical needs, hopes, and ideals of wider human experience.⁸

On the naturalist side, the pragmatic naturalism that I am proposing is an "outdoor" type that attempts to be a "field observer" of significant contexts. This would be a type of naturalism that looks not at the *object* of the supernaturalists belief, but more properly at the way his or her belief *functions* the social and public spheres of the believer's life, which are, after all, natural domains. This "outdoor" type of naturalism is thus able to distinguish between a dogmatic, malign supernaturalism, on one hand, which is inflexible because committed to authority and literalism and whose effects are deleterious, and on the other hand a functional, benign supernaturalism that allows the believer to integrate the disparate elements of her life into a useful and productive whole. A pragmatic naturalism would thus evaluate both forms of supernaturalism in terms of a pragmatic maxim. The measure would be the conceivable practical consequences of belief.

But something more needs to be said about how these two expressions of supernaturalism can be evaluated. Here is William James once again in the "Postscript" to *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. "The practical needs and experiences of religion seem to me sufficiently met by the belief that beyond each man and in a fashion continuous with him there exists a larger power which is friendly to him and to his ideals. All that the facts require is that the power should be both other and larger than our conscious selves. Anything larger will do, if only it be large enough to trust for the next step. It need not be infinite, it need not be solitary. It might conceivably even be only a larger and more godlike self,

⁸ William James, "Philosophical Conceptions and Practical Results," *The University Chronicle* (Berkeley, California) September, 1898, reprinted in John J. McDermott, ed., *The Writings of William James*, pp. 345-362, esp. pp. 355-56.

of which the present self would then be but the mutilated expression. . . ."⁹

In this remarkable passage James attempts to lower the barriers to dialogue between naturalists and supernaturalists by the simple step of recognizing that the need to connect with something larger is common to both types. For the naturalist this may be a community of inquiry in the sciences, or a community of effort within one or more publics. For Emerson, this larger power was "a more godlike self." For John Dewey, this larger power lay in a "Great Community."¹⁰ For someone in a twelve-step program such as Alcoholics Anonymous, the larger power may be a vague and undefined "higher power." For the committed supernaturalist it may be a community of fellow believers, faith in a personal deity, or confidence in the existence of an afterlife. The point in each of these cases is to get to the next step, to satisfy practical needs. James's proposal does not in this context take sides between naturalism and supernaturalism.

James in effect opened the door to a variety of religious experiences that lie beyond those based on supernaturalist commitments. He not only provided a way of opening dialogue between naturalists and supernaturalists, but between religious humanists and secular humanists as well (although that is a topic for another time). He thought the key was commonality of needs and interests. This type of pluralism is based in a commonality that is fully compatible with a moderate, pragmatic form of naturalism; it is in my view much more productive than the scorched-earth approach that Dawkins has chosen. Nevertheless, James' proposal does have some drawbacks that I will discuss in a moment.

⁹ William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), 413.

¹⁰ John Dewey: "Till the Great Society is converted into a Great Community, the Public will remain in eclipse. Communication can alone create a great community. Our Babel is not one of tongues but of the signs and symbols without which shared experience is impossible. (LW.2.325)

An alternative proposal for mutual understanding offered by the late paleontologist (and committed naturalist) Stephen Jay Gould is also relevant to our topic. From the standpoint of a pragmatic naturalism of the type I am proposing, however, his attempt to reconstruct the naturalist/supernaturalist split suffers from difficulties similar to those encountered in the work of Dawkins. Gould proposed that we accept what he called two "non-overlapping magisteria," one for science, the other for religious belief. He claimed that "the lack of conflict between science and religion arises from a lack of overlap between their respective domains of professional expertise—science in the empirical constitution of the universe, and religion in the search for proper ethical values and the spiritual meaning of our lives." Again, "The net of science covers the empirical universe: what is it made of (fact) and why does it work this way (theory). The net of religion extends over questions of moral meaning and value. These two magisteria do not overlap, nor do they encompass all inquiry (consider, for starters, the magisterium of art and the meaning of beauty)."¹¹

In short, Gould thought of the two "magisteria" as completely separate in terms of the problems they address, though he did allow that they sometimes "bump up" against one another in interesting ways. Science was presented as more or less value free (just concerned with the facts and theories that have to do with the empirical constitution of the universe) and religion was presented as the search of ethical values.

Gould's view would be unacceptable to a pragmatic naturalist of the sort I am describing for several reasons. First, it honors a fact/value split that many contemporary philosophers, especially those inspired by the pragmatism of James and Dewey, perceive as a relic of

¹¹ Stephen Jay Gould, "Nonoverlapping Magisteria," *Natural History* 106 (March 1997): p. 16-22. (http://www.stephenjaygould.org/library/gould_noma.html)

the past.¹² For the pragmatic naturalist, facts tend to be either memoranda of past inquiry or facts-of-a-case that have been selected on the basis of certain values. Moreover, values tend to be amenable to evaluations, the success of which are based on empirically and experimentally derived facts.

Second, Gould's proposal runs counter to the observable fact that "questions of moral meaning and value" are matters of concern and debate also among those who are not supernaturalists, or for that matter, even religious. Most philosophers have long since realized that ethics can be decoupled from religious beliefs. From the standpoint of pragmatic naturalism, Gould thus places far too much within the circle of the supernaturalist magisterium. The pragmatic naturalist is both a methodological naturalist and an ethical naturalist. Matters that involve values and valuation are a part of the natural world, subject to empirical and experimental inquiry. They cannot be partitioned off from putatively value-free sciences and abandoned to the domain of the religious.

How, then, do we evaluate various forms of supernaturalism? To take just two examples, we can find malign forms of supernaturalism in theocracies based on supernaturalist dogma as well as in other types of societies where religious pluralism is suppressed. We can also find malign supernaturalism at work wherever factions within pluralistic societies work to subvert good science by rejecting the findings of evolutionary biologists and climate scientists in the name of religious dogma. These types of supernaturalism are malign because they tend to be uninformed, reductionist, exclusive, and dogmatic. They close down options for individual and community growth rather than fostering them.

Among the characteristics of what I am calling benign supernaturalism are tolerance of non-supernaturalist outlooks, including those of non-supernaturalist religions; emphasis on relatively flexible "belief systems" rather than rigid dogmas or ideologies; respect for what one is intellectually entitled to believe as a result of systematic, experimental inquiry; acceptance of methods of interpretation of sacred texts that honor conversation rather than an appeal to the authority of hierarchy or the constraints of literalism; hermeneutic and doctrinal flexibility in the face of changing historical circumstances; an appropriate balance between the distinct social and political roles of individuals as citizens and as believers; and recognition of the basic values inherent in most of the world's religions, including those that do not share supernaturalist beliefs. In short, benign supernaturalism is benign because it fosters enlarged options for individual and community growth.

In addition to the examples of "functionalized" supernaturalism that I have discussed, in which supernatural beliefs are for the most part either nominal or highly personal in the sense of private, however, there are also examples of what might be called "compartmentalized" supernaturalism that are of interest to the pragmatic naturalist. Compartmentalized supernaturalists, even though they may be profoundly *and even publically* committed to supernaturalist beliefs, tend to treat those beliefs as more or less walled off from and "quarantined" from what one is intellectually entitled to believe in terms of science, technology, business, industry, political life, and so on. Unlike the nominal supernaturalist, there is deep commitment. And unlike those whose supernaturalist commitments are personal in the sense of private, the compartmentalized supernaturalist tends to be a vocal advocate of his or her position within the public sphere. It is among compartmentalized supernaturalists of this sort that we find more sharply defined theological positions.

¹² See, for example, Hilary Putnam, *The Collapse of the Fact/Value Dichotomy and Other Essays* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002).

A somewhat controversial example of compartmentalized supernaturalism involves Dr. Francis Collins, the current director of the U. S. National Institutes of Health. The NIH is of course a government agency with an annual budget of some \$30 billion and one the highest-profile scientific organizations in the world. Dr. Collins is an avid supernaturalist who holds among other things, the following strong religious claims: that "God gifted humanity with the knowledge of good and evil (the Moral Law), with free will, and with an immortal soul" and, moreover, that "if the Moral Law is just a side effect of evolution, then there is no such thing as good or evil. It's all an illusion."¹³ Needless to say this type of compartmentalized supernaturalism has raised some concerns within the scientific community.

One difficulty in interpreting Collins' remarks is that supernaturalism compartmentalized *here*, having to do with alleged two thousand year old miracles or the existence of an immortal soul, may turn out not to be compartmentalized *elsewhere*, for example when it comes to whether creationism should be taught along side of or even instead of evolutionary theory in the public schools— or whether stem cell research should be prohibited or promoted. The myriad ways these issues can be parsed, of course, depends on background, temperament, type of profession, and other considerations as well.

As a compartmentalizer, however, it seems clear that Collins has much in common with those professors of civil engineering, so readily encountered in technical universities, who accept a type of "evidence" for supernatural events that they would never dream of accepting when it comes to judging the functionality and safety of their bridges, tunnels, or hydraulic systems.

In one of Collins' compartments there appears to be a God who is outside of nature and who does not, it seems, interfere with what scientists and others take to be the facts of the natural world. In the other compartment there is his, Collins', work as a scientist. His explicit claim, that *his* variety of supernaturalism is consistent with good practice in scientific research and science education, is thus constructed on a compartmentalization of facts (the concern of science) and values (the concern of religion) that is reminiscent of what we have seen in the proposal advanced by Stephen Jay Gould. Despite the fact that many moderate naturalists would find difficulty with Collins' rigid compartmentalization, and more specifically with his commitment to a fact/value split, there remains much common ground: in his view, scientists, whether they harbor supernaturalist beliefs or not, tend to go about their business in more or less the same way. They utilize similar methods of inquiry, they expect their work to be subject to peer review, and if they detect what appears to be a breach of the uniformity of nature then that is a matter for further research rather than evidence of a "miracle" of supernatural origin. It should be clear, however, that compartmentalization is not unique to supernaturalists. As I have already noted, naturalist Stephen Jay Gould advanced a compartmentalization of religion and science based on a split between facts and values.

Earlier in this essay I indicated that although William James provided a bridge between supernaturalists and naturalists faced with issues of personal belief, suggesting that what was required whatever "higher power" enabled the "next step," his position also left several difficulties on the table. Those difficulties involve evaluation in spheres of social and public life of personal attitudes and beliefs once that "next step" is taken. James thus opened the door to communication between pragmatic naturalists and functional supernaturalists.

¹³ From a PowerPoint presentation delivered at the University of California, Berkeley in 2008 and cited by Sam Harris in "The Strange Case of Francis Collins." http://www.samharris.org/site/full_text/the-strange-case-of-francis-collins

John Dewey stepped through that door. In a 1905 essay "The Postulate of Immediate Empiricism" he suggested that whatever we experience in an immediate fashion, and this would presumably include religious experiences of a supernaturalist sort as well as intuitions, insights, revelations, and so on, be accepted as *what it is experienced as*. In other words, he was noting that immediate experiences such as dreams, intuitions, and revelations are real, and that they need to be treated as such. But he also argued that such immediate experiences are not instances of knowledge. *That* immediate experiences such as insights, revelations, intuitions, and experiences of the supernatural are *what they are experienced as* does not tell us *what* they are in the sense of how they are related to a broader epistemic context. To determine *what* they are involves placing those experiences in a network of other beliefs of the sort that we are intellectually entitled to hold. It requires empirical and experimental inquiry, therefore, in order to determine the extent to which they are instances of knowing.

This, I believe, is the key to greater dialogue between pragmatic naturalists and moderate supernaturalists. The question would no longer be the object of faith, but the consequences of such beliefs in social and public spheres. Here is an example. As I write, the *New York Times* (December 17, 2012) contains a story about several older conservative, Evangelical men who have become supporters of same-sex marriage. One of those interviewed reported that although he "trusts most everything in the Bible and knows that Leviticus concerns homosexuality as an abomination," he also reports that "there's no other reason I can think it's wrong except the Bible." "I've coached youth sports for years and had a few kids with gay parents. . . . As far as I'm concerned, if it works for them, it's O.K. with me."¹⁴

On the side of pragmatic naturalism, then, there needs to be a recognition that some forms of supernaturalism are primarily functional in a personal and private sense, and that they are capable of passing a pragmatic test in terms of their consequences for promoting integration of an otherwise inharmonious or debilitated personality (or community). There also needs to be a recognition that the most avid and public advocates of supernaturalism can compartmentalize their beliefs in ways that do not leak into the spheres of science, technology, commerce, industry, and political life. On the supernaturalist side, there needs to be a recognition that experience in the form of revelations, intuitions, the testimony of sacred texts, visions, and so on, does not constitute knowledge as warranted assertibility. In order for supernaturalist beliefs to have legitimate consequences in spheres of social and public life, immediate experience must be empirically and experimentally tested in order to determine its pragmatic value.

What I am suggesting, then, is that the barriers to discussion between naturalists and supernaturalists need to be dismantled, or at least lowered. Confident assertions by hard-line naturalists on one side, or by hard-line supernaturalists on the other, tend to obstruct rather than promote dialogue. A moderate, pragmatic naturalism would seek dialogue with both functionalist and compartmentalized types of supernaturalism, which would be evaluated not in terms of supernaturalist ontological commitments, but rather to the pragmatic consequences of such beliefs for the resolution of the impediments to the growth of individuals and communities. On the side of functional and compartmentalized supernaturalism, there would need to be a willingness to compete in the marketplace of ideas without expectation of special privilege, as one type of public among many.

¹⁴ "Same-Sex Marriage Finds Allies in Conservatives of a Certain Age." *New York Times*, December 17, 2012, p. A 18.

RATIONALITY, RECOGNITION, AND ANTI-THEODICY:

THE PROMISE OF PRAGMATIST PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

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Introduction

Why is pragmatism an increasingly important philosophical approach today and, possibly, tomorrow – not only in philosophy generally but in a specific field such as the philosophy of religion as well? I will try to offer *an* answer to this question by considering, as a case study, the very special – almost unique – “promise” I see pragmatism as making in the study of religion, especially regarding the complex issue of the rationality (vs. irrationality) of religious belief. I won’t try to extrapolate this promise to other fields of philosophy here, although I do believe that the pragmatist perspective is, for analogous reasons, highly promising elsewhere, too.

My articulation of the “promise of pragmatist philosophy of religion” may have something to do with the “promise of pragmatism” Patrick Diggins discussed – rather critically – in his book with that title almost two decades ago,¹ although I would definitely not view these two ways of articulating the pragmatist promise as identical, or view the one I will identify as a version of Diggins’s. Yet, in both cases the promise is related to our need to adjust our ethical, political, religious, and other “higher” views and ideals to a world largely explained and accounted for by scientific means. This is an unavoidable problem for us *modern* thinkers (however “postmodern”, or perhaps rather “post-postmodern”, we believe we are).²

What I will have to say about pragmatist philosophy of religion is partly based on my new monograph, *Pragmatic Pluralism and the Problem of God*.³ Furthermore, I should note that my (re)articulation of the pragmatist promise in terms of theories of recognition (see below) is partly grounded in a highly stimulating process of planning a new research project together with colleagues *not* focusing on pragmatism. Such attempts to promote dialogue between pragmatism and other scholarly and/or intellectual orientations – both in the philosophy of religion and elsewhere – are highly important to keep pragmatism alive as an innovative philosophical tradition.

The epistemic interest and the existential interest

I will begin by discussing the situation in the philosophy of religion today from two quite different angles, or, as we may say, regarding *two different philosophical interests in the study of religion*. Let us call these the “epistemic interest” and the “existential interest”.

First, it is extremely important, for a thinking person in a modern (or “post-postmodern”) society largely based on scientific rationality and its various applications, to examine the perennial *epistemic* problem of *the rationality (or irrationality) of religious belief*. This epistemic problem arises from the – real or apparent – conflicts between science and religion, or reason and faith, in particular. Here pragmatism can offer us a very interesting middle ground. As William James argued, in *Pragmatism* (1907) and elsewhere, pragmatism is often a middle path option for those who do not want to give up either their scientific worldview or their possible religious sensibilities. Defending the pragmatist option, or seeing a deep promise in pragmatism regarding this

¹ Patrick Diggins, *The Promise of Pragmatism* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

² I find Larry Hickman to be right when he observes that pragmatism, especially John Dewey’s pragmatism, is a “post-postmodernist” way of thinking. See Hickman, *Pragmatism as Post-Postmodernism: Lessons from John Dewey* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007).

³ Sami Pihlström, *Pragmatic Pluralism and the Problem of God* (New York: Fordham University Press, forthcoming 2013). More generally, my views on the current state and future possibilities of pragmatism are available, for example, in a collection of articles I recently edited, *The Continuum Companion to Pragmatism* (London: Continuum, 2011).

epistemic interest, does not entail that one actually defends or embraces any particular religious views; what is at issue here is the *potential philosophical legitimacy* of such views, which leaves room for either embracement or, ultimately, rejection. Thus, pragmatism clearly avoids both fundamentalist religious views and equally fundamentalist and dogmatic (and anti-philosophical) versions of “New Atheism”. By so doing, pragmatism in my view does not simply argue for the simplified idea that the “rationality” of religious thought might be some kind of practical rationality instead of theoretical rationality comparable to the rationality of scientific inquiry. On the contrary, pragmatism seeks to reconceptualize the very idea of rationality in terms of practice.

We may formulate this suggestion in a manner familiar from the mainstream debates of contemporary philosophy of religion by saying that pragmatism proposes a middle path not just between reason and faith but between the positions known as *evidentialism* and *fideism*: we should not simply assess religious beliefs and ideas on the basis of religiously neutral evidence (in the way we would generally assess beliefs in science or everyday life), because we do need to understand religion as a special set of practices or language-games; on the other hand, we should not, when rejecting the simplifying evidentialist categorization of religion as little more than poor science, step on a slippery slope ending at the other extreme of fideism, which advances faith in the absence of evidence or reason and consequently in the end hardly leaves any room for a critical rational discussion of religion at all. We might say that pragmatism advances a *liberal form of evidentialism*, proposing to broaden the scope of evidence from the relatively narrowly conceived scientific evidence (which is something that religious beliefs generally, rather obviously, lack) to a richer conception of evidence as something that can be had, or may be lacking, in the “laboratory of life” (to use Hilary Putnam’s apt

expression).⁴ Pragmatism thereby resurrects a reasonable – extended and enriched – form of evidentialism from the extremely implausible, or even ridiculous, form it takes in strongly evidentialist thinkers like Richard Swinburne, without succumbing to a pseudo-Wittgensteinian fideism, or “form of life” relativism. This is one way in which pragmatism seeks, or promises, to widen the concept of rationality itself by taking seriously the embeddedness of all humanly possible reason-use in practices or forms of life guided by various human interests. To take that seriously is to take seriously the suggestion that in some cases religious beliefs may be a “rational” response to certain life situations.

It is extremely important to understand the broadened notion of evidence (and, hence, rationality) in a correct way here. What is crucial is a certain kind of *sensitivity to the practical contexts* within which it is (or is not) appropriate – or, indeed, rational – to ask for evidence for our beliefs. This must, furthermore, be connected with a pragmatist understanding of beliefs as *habits of action*: the relevant kind of evidence is something based on our practices and hence inevitably interest-driven. Evidence, or the need to find evidence, may play an importantly different role in these different contexts; moreover, it would be flatly irrational for us to ignore such context-sensitivity. Thus, the pragmatic question must always be how (or whether) evidential considerations *work* and/or satisfy our needs and interests within particular contexts of inquiry. Insofar as such contextuality is not taken into account, the notion of evidence is actually disconnected from any genuine inquiry. This notion, when rationally employed, always needs to respond to a specific problematic situation in order to play a role that makes a pragmatic difference in our inquiries.

⁴ On Putnam’s pragmatist philosophy of religion, see Niek Brunsveld, *The Many Faces of Religious Truth* (Ph.D. Diss., Utrecht University, 2012); as well as Pihlström, *Pragmatic Pluralism and the Problem of God*, chapter 3.

It might be objected that, according to pragmatism, religious thought ought to remain *arational* rather than being either rational or irrational. For instance, some of Putnam's views on religion might be understood in this Wittgensteinian fashion,⁵ and certainly "Wittgensteinians" like D.Z. Phillips have often been read in this fashion. However, it seems to me that the distinction between arationality, on the one hand, and the rationality vs. irrationality dimension, on the other, is itself based on a prior non-pragmatist understanding of rationality (and, hence, irrationality). If we do not begin from such a non-pragmatist (purely theoretical) conception of rationality but, rather, view rationality itself as practice-involving and practice-embedded all the way from the start, I do not think that we need to resort to the account of religion as "arational". On the contrary, we can understand religious responses to reality as potentially rational – and, therefore, also potentially irrational – in terms of the broader, practice-sensitive account of rationality that pragmatism cherishes.

Secondly, along with serving the epistemic interest in the philosophy of religion and the need to understand better the rationality (vs. irrationality) of religious belief, it is at least equally important, or possibly even more important, to study the *existential* problem of how to live with (or without) religious views or a religious identity in a world in which there is so much evil and suffering. When dealing with this set of questions, we end up discussing serious and "negative" concepts such as evil, guilt, sin, and death (or mortality). Here, I see pragmatism as proposing a fruitful form of *meliorism* reducible neither to naively optimistic views according to which the good will ultimately inevitably prevail nor to dark pessimism according to which everything will finally go down the road of destruction. It is as essential to mediate between these two unpromising extremes as it is to mediate between the epistemic extremes of

evidentialism and fideism. And again, I would argue that such a project of mediation is *rational* (and, conversely, that it would therefore be pragmatically irrational to seek a fully "rational", or better, rationalizing or in Jamesian terms "viciously intellectualistic", response to the problem of evil). Accordingly, pragmatist meliorism must – as it certainly does in James's *Pragmatism*, for instance – take very seriously the irreducible reality of evil and (unnecessary) suffering. Pragmatism, in this sense, is a profoundly *anti-theodicy* approach in the philosophy of religion: it is, or should be, very critical of all attempts to explain away the reality of evil, or to offer a rationalized theodicy allegedly justifying the presence of evil in the world. On the contrary, evil must be acknowledged, understood (if possible),⁶ and fought against.

Pragmatists, then, should join those who find it morally unacceptable or even obscene to ask for God's reasons for "allowing", say, Auschwitz. Pragmatism, when emphasizing the fight against evil instead of theodicy speculations about the possible reasons God may have had for creating and maintaining a world in which there is evil, is also opposed to the currently fashionable skeptical theism, according to which our cognitive capacities are insufficient to reach the hidden reasons for apparently avoidable evil. Such speculations about God's possible reasons for allowing evil, or about evil being a necessary part of a completely rational system of creation and world-order, are, from the pragmatist perspective, as foreign to genuine religious practices as evidentialist arguments about, e.g., the a priori and a posteriori probabilities of theologically conceptualized events such as Christ's resurrection.⁷

⁶ I am not saying that evil actions and events (or people) can always be understood; nor am I saying, however, that evil necessarily escapes understanding. For a pragmatist account of evil, see Pihlström, *Pragmatic Pluralism and the Problem of God*, chapter 5.

⁷ I am obviously referring to Richard Swinburne's ideas here – ideas that come close to being a parody of genuine religiosity.

⁵ See also Hilary Putnam, *Jewish Philosophy as a Guide to Life* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008).

“A new name for some old ways of thinking”

When dealing with these two challenges, or interests – the epistemic one and the existential one – pragmatism does not and must not claim that it is an absolutely novel approach never before proposed in any form by anyone. On the contrary, pragmatists (who, in James’s memorable words, are only offering a “new name for some old ways of thinking”) should clearly recognize their historical predecessors. One of those predecessors is undoubtedly Immanuel Kant, whose great insight in the philosophy of religion was that the religious and theological questions must be considered primarily on the basis of “practical philosophy”, that is, ethics.⁸ I see pragmatism as sharing this basically Kantian approach while not denying the epistemic and metaphysical significance of the philosophical study of religion. We are interested in the metaphysical (and epistemic) problems concerning the nature of reality, the possible existence or non-existence of the divinity, and our epistemic access to such matters, but as human beings embedded in our practices of life we are dealing with all this from an ethically loaded, value-laden, standpoint. For us as the kind of creatures we are, there simply is no non-interested standpoint to occupy in such matters.

Insofar as this Kantian-inspired *entanglement of ethics and metaphysics* is taken seriously, we may also say that pragmatism incorporates a modern, relaxed version of Kantian *transcendental philosophy*. The philosophical issues of religion are examined by paying attention to the ethical context within which they are so much as possible as objects of philosophically interested study for beings like us. This is, in a way, transcendental philosophy “naturalized”. Therefore, it also may be suggested that pragmatism simultaneously proposes a *liberal form of naturalism*, distinguishing between a narrow (or “hard”) scientific naturalism from a more

pluralistic (and “softer”) form of naturalism according to which even religious qualities in experience can be humanly natural.⁹

Furthermore, the two interests I have distinguished are not dichotomously separable but, rather, deeply entangled (just like ethics and metaphysics are). The pragmatist philosopher of religion, and the pragmatist philosopher more generally, can and should make distinctions wherever and whenever they serve useful pragmatic purposes; what s/he should avoid is turning those distinctions that really make a difference to our inquiries into essentialistic and ahistorical fixed structures and dichotomies, dualisms that cannot possibly be bridged. Even so, there are problematic and even deeply wrong ways of entangling the two “interests” I have spoken about. For instance, when the problem of evil, which I have categorized under the “existential interest”, is seen as a *purely* or even *primarily* epistemic and/or evidential issue having to do with the rationality of religious faith within an evidentialist context,¹⁰ things go seriously wrong.

It is, in short, unbelievable that there are philosophers who can speak about evil and suffering and use examples such as the Holocaust merely, or even primarily, in order to investigate an intellectual (or should I say, “rationalized”) puzzle about the compatibility of divine omnipotence and benevolence with the existence of apparently avoidable suffering. These are intellectual exercises so cold that, in James’s memorable words, “even hell-fire can’t warm” them.

⁸ See Kant’s *Critique of Practical Reason (Kritik der praktischen Vernunft, 1788)* for details.

⁹ This comes close to the picture sketched by John Dewey in *A Common Faith* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1991; first published 1934).

¹⁰ As it is, e.g., in Peter van Inwagen’s remarkable book, *The Problem of Evil* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2008).

Inquiry and mutual recognition

One way of cashing out the special pragmatist promise I have been talking about is by formulating the issues concerning the rationality of religious belief and the appropriate reactions to the problem of evil in terms of the concept of *(mutual) recognition*, which must be rooted in not only the Hegelian discourse on *Anerkennung* but also the underlying Kantian idea of there being limits or boundaries that shape human cognitive and ethical life and need to be recognized by people (and groups) engaging in common projects of inquiry, understanding, and moral deliberation. Let me explain.

Since Hume and Kant, philosophers of religion have generally acknowledged that it is problematic, or even impossible, to ground theological and/or religious beliefs in rational demonstrations, such as the traditional “proofs” of God’s existence. Kant, as was already noted above, drew a particularly sharp boundary between our cognitive capacities (that is, human reason and understanding), on the one hand, and matters of religious faith, on the other. Yet, while attempts to demonstrate the reality of God inevitably fail, according to Kant, God’s existence and the immortality of the soul must (along with the freedom of the will) be accepted as “postulates of practical reason”. Religious faith can only be grounded in what needs to be postulated to make sense of moral duty, not the other way round. Even so, theological issues are not beyond reason and rationality; they just require the *practical use* of reason, instead of theoretical or speculative use.

The concept of a *limit* is crucial for the entire post-Kantian paradigm in the philosophy of religion, and post-Kantian philosophy more generally. Kantian transcendental philosophy examines the necessary conditions for the possibility of, and thereby also the limits of, cognitive experience. Concepts and beliefs reaching out for the transcendent do not fall within

those limits. According to Kant’s famous dictum, he had to limit the scope of knowledge in order to make room for faith. This creates challenges for acts of recognition across boundaries constituted by the transcendental features of human capacities.

The central role played by notions such as limit, boundary, and reason opens up a number of fundamental issues in post-Kantian philosophy of religion (not only pragmatism) that can be approached in terms of theories of recognition. Most importantly, the boundary between religious belief and non-belief – or believers and non-believers – marks an intellectual, cultural, and political division that needs to be examined from the perspective of *(mutual) recognition*. In particular, such an examination may lead to novel ways of approaching the highly controversial issues of science vs. religion (or reason vs. faith) and thereby also the methodological debates within religious studies today.

The relevant issue of recognition here relates not only to the challenges of *recognizing different groups of people* (e.g., believers and non-believers) but also to the need to *recognize the relevant kind of limits dividing them*, as well as the reasons why those limits are taken to be there. These are often based on whether and how the relevant groups are recognized, or refused recognition, as certain specific kinds of groups or in some specific capacity. Accordingly, examinations of the limits of reason are, or contribute to, specifications of the *content* of the relevant act(s) of recognition. One must understand how “the other” – a person or a group “on the other side of the boundary” – employs certain concepts, especially normative concepts such as reason and rationality, in order to engage in any acts of recognition at all. Furthermore, one must realize that different people or groups may recognize the same limits (and each others’ ways of recognizing them) or quite different limits.

For example, from the point of view of atheism, theists simply fail to recognize certain limitations of human reason, or intellectually responsible thought more generally: they postulate an immaterial spiritual being without having adequate evidence for its existence (and in many cases even without seeking or evaluating evidence in appropriate ways). As Kant already argued, no rational demonstration of God's existence is possible, and as Hume and many others have noted, the traditional "design" argument is highly implausible as well (although it continues to flourish in contemporary "intelligent design" theories). Conversely, theists may accuse atheists for a failure to respect another kind of limitation or boundary: scientifically-oriented atheists may believe in the unrestricted capacities of scientific research, or human reason-use more generally, in providing explanations to all phenomena and thus solving the mysteries of the universe. Believers often find it important to acknowledge that there may be "more things between heaven and earth" than rationalizing philosophy – or science – can ever demonstrate. Accordingly, there is a very important boundary between these two groups – theists and atheists, or believers and non-believers, or their respective ways of thinking – and both groups emphasize certain humanly inevitable limits that according to them should not be overstepped.

Issues of recognition, then, are not restricted to the mutual recognition among persons or groups (e.g., representing different religious or non-religious outlooks) as being epistemically or rationally entitled to their (religious or non-religious) views, but extend to the need to recognize (from the perspective of certain intellectual and/or ethical outlooks) certain limitations or boundaries that define the proper sphere of human experience, cognition, or reason-use, and even to the need to recognize different groups and people as actual or potential "recognizers" of quite different boundaries. The diverging ways in which theists and atheists recognize something as a boundary limiting human

capacities should themselves be recognized by both groups – in a way that not merely tolerates these different boundary-drawings but acknowledges that there may be legitimately different ways of drawing them, without simply agreeing with the other party, either.

Various acts of recognition across the boundary dividing believers and non-believers may have as their content at least the following different types of recognition: one party may recognize the other as (i) human beings (e.g., with certain inviolable human rights), as (ii) thinkers capable of formulating thoughts and/or judgments with intelligible content, as (iii) actual or potential participants in political discussion and deliberation, and/or as (iv) "fellow inquirers" (e.g., possibly, philosophers) seeking the truth about the matter at issue (e.g., about God's existence or non-existence). These different specifications and qualifications of the content of the act of recognition involve quite different factual and normative commitments and expectations. For example, recognizing someone as a (fellow) inquirer in the pursuit of truth yields expectations significantly stronger than "merely" recognizing the same person or group as (a) member(s) of the human species, or even as sharing a common humanity in some stronger sense invoking, say, fundamental human rights. The different contents of acts of recognition may be crucially related to the concept of rationality: we may recognize someone as rational (as an inquirer, etc.) while disagreeing with her/him on fundamental issues – but can we also consistently disagree about the criteria of rationality itself?

A key meta-level issue in contemporary philosophy of religion is, therefore, *the very possibility of critical discussion of religious beliefs*. In order for such discussion to be possible across the boundary dividing believers and non-believers, both groups must in some sense recognize each other *as members of the same intellectual (and, presumably, ethical) community* – as

rational discussion partners – and thus in a sense overcome or at least reconsider the boundaries dividing them from each other. In order for such discussion to extend to ethical and political matters related to religion, the rival groups must also recognize each other as belonging to the same moral and political community. (However, again we should avoid drawing another sharp limit between intellectual matters, on the one side, and moral or political ones, on the other; this division plays only a heuristic role here.) The issues of recognition arising in this situation can again be philosophically analyzed by means of the model of recognition developed by scholars of recognition following Hegel, Axel Honneth, and others.¹¹ The pragmatist philosopher's job in this situation is to examine critically the conceptual presuppositions for the possibility of the relevant kind of mutual recognition acts. For a pragmatist philosopher, such presuppositions are always inevitably practice-embedded – in short, habits of action.

The actual or potential acts of recognition occurring between, say, Christians and scientific atheists (or “new atheists”) are highly contextual (that is, in need of various specifications and qualifications), and interpretations of their exact content will remain at these groups' and their members' own responsibility in the specific historical and cultural situations they find themselves in. The occasionally heated discussion around new atheism today may, however, benefit from an enhanced understanding of the general structures and practices of recognition. The role that religious considerations might play in public debates, including political discourse, is obviously also an issue for which theories of recognition are quite explicitly relevant.¹²

¹¹ In addition to contemporary classics such as Axel Honneth's *Kampf um Anerkennung* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1995), recent works by scholars like Arto Laitinen and Risto Saarinen should be consulted. (In this essay I cannot provide adequate references to this growing literature, but I do hope to address the relations between pragmatist philosophy of religion and theories of recognition on another occasion in more detail.)

¹² Recent contributions to this discussion include, e.g.,

If Christian believers and “new atheists” are able to recognize each other ethically, politically, and/or intellectually, can they also recognize each others' belonging to the same community of inquirers (a community that is, arguably, constituted by mutual acts of recognition)? That is, can they recognize each other as “fellow inquirers” committed to the pursuit of truth? Could they do this even while maintaining very different normative conceptions of the role of reason and evidence in the evaluation of religious thought and beliefs, recognizing quite different (both factual and normative) limits for human thought and capacities? Examining these questions pragmatically, from the point of view of the theory of recognition, can again be expected to lead to rearticulations of the traditional issues of, say, evidentialism vs. fideism in the philosophy of religion. Thus, it will also be necessary to pragmatically re-evaluate the mainstream methods of contemporary philosophy of religion, seeking to critically transform the methodology of the field from the perspective of the theory of recognition. In brief, the different ways in which evidence can and ought to be taken into account in the evaluation of the rationality of religious belief must themselves be subjected to a critical examination in terms of actual and potential structures of recognition: an evidentialist (or anti-evidentialist, for that matter) methodology in the philosophy of religion must be grounded in (potential) acts of recognition across the post-Kantian boundaries identified above.

Jürgen Habermas's, Martha Nussbaum's, Thomas Schmidt's, Juha Sihvola's, and many others' attempts to define the legitimate area of religious beliefs in political discourse. Let me here just refer to Schmidt, “Reflexionsgleichgewicht: Die Rechtfertigung von Gerechtigkeit in einer pluralen Welt”, in Thomas Schmidt *et al.* (eds.), *Herausforderungen der Modernität* (Würzburg: Echter, 2012), pp. 137-158.

Science and religion (again)

What *is* it to recognize someone or some group as belonging to the same intellectual community of inquirers? What is it to be committed to a membership in such a community? Is this ultimately a matter of recognizing certain *people* (“fellow inquirers”) as rational (or attributing some other normative properties to them) or of recognizing certain *methodological norms or criteria* as valid or binding?¹³ Are these acts of recognition essentially different from the corresponding acts required for one’s being able to live in a moral, political, and/or religious community? One research hypothesis that a pragmatist could examine further is that the structures of recognition at work in these various cases can be used to clarify and evaluate certain important cases of conflict, e.g., situations in which one’s intellectual duties seem to run into conflict with one’s religious (or, possibly, ethical) commitments. The very notion of an intellectual duty, investigated in what is often called the “ethics of belief”, could thereby also be analyzed and redefined.¹⁴

Moreover, it may be asked why the relatively heterogeneous “scientific worldview” is usually regarded as a single and unified picture of the world maintained by a single, unified community of inquirers based on relations of mutual recognition, even though that worldview is itself undeniably full of tensions and disagreements (and so arguably *fails* to be a unified worldview at all).¹⁵ Why should religious views be

automatically excluded from such a worldview? This is again a question addressing our practices of recognition. It is not immediately obvious why, for instance, the different philosophical interpretations of basic ontological structures of reality – regarding, e.g., universals (realism vs. nominalism) or modalities – would be any less dramatic conflicts of reason or rationality than the opposition between theism and atheism. Why do, say, realists and nominalists belong to the same community of rational inquirers committed to a scientific worldview and to the same rational methods of inquiry, while theists (according to new atheists, at least) do not? Analyzing these relations of recognition, or the lack thereof, is a key task for both pragmatists and non-pragmatists today, regarding both philosophy of religion and interdisciplinary religious studies.¹⁶

In cases of extreme intellectual conflict (between, say, conservative Christian fundamentalism and militant new atheism), there is little hope for mutual recognition or even tolerance. In some other cases, including the much narrower gap between liberal Christianity and, say, philosophical agnosticism based on some version of non-reductive naturalism rather than eliminative scientism, it is possible to aim not only at tolerance but at deep mutual respect grounded in acts of recognition. Even then, the somewhat conflicting accounts of reason and its role in religion and theology must be considered, though. It might be suggested that a kind of *intolerance* may already be built into the Enlightenment project of reason-use itself, if the latter is understood as being committed to the idea that the “best argument” necessarily “wins” and that argumentative and/or

¹³ Such as, e.g., Charles S. Peirce’s characterization of the scientific method in his famous 1877 essay, “The Fixation of Belief”, reprinted in *The Essential Peirce*, vol. 1, eds. Nathan Houser *et al.* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992).

¹⁴ For novel pragmatist contributions to the ethics of belief discussion, inspired by James, see Henrik Rydenfelt and Sami Pihlström (eds.), *William James on Religion* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, forthcoming 2013).

¹⁵ Compare this to the discussion of the “disunity of science”, e.g., in John Dupré, *The Disorder of Things: The Disunity of Science as a Working Hypothesis* (Chicago:

University of Chicago Press, 1993).

¹⁶ Furthermore, the challenges posed by “postmodern” trends in the philosophy of religion – e.g., attempts to “save” religion from “onto-theological” doctrines postulating divine reality beyond language – may also be re-examined from this perspective. How does the postmodern project of deliberately blurring all rational, normative, and other boundaries change this problem framework?

intellectual considerations always ought to be followed “wherever they lead”. Philosophical argumentation may itself have (e.g., ethical) limitations that again need to be duly recognized.¹⁷ The pragmatist will therefore also need to consider models of recognition that can be employed in a self-critical examination of one’s ethical limitations, and those of the groups and social practices one engages in: it should be possible to recognize (while disagreeing with) a perspective from which one’s argumentation, however intellectually sound, leads to ethically problematic conclusions.

Religious believers may also maintain that the scientific and explanatory discourse manifested in, e.g., cognitive study of religion today fails to appreciate yet another kind of limit that must be recognized. This could be called *the limits of scientific explanation*. Religious practices or forms of life, some believers may argue, can only be adequately understood “from within”; to attempt to explain them causally and/or with reference to, e.g., evolutionary history from an external non-religious point of view sets a serious limitation for the adequate understanding of religious life *qua* religious. Here the critical discussion of the recently influential cognitive paradigm in religious studies could be connected with the Wittgensteinian orientation in the philosophy of religion, which emphasizes understanding rule-governed practices and/or forms of life from within them – and comes in that respect close to pragmatism. Again, the limits between these two groups – not identical to the groups of atheists and believers – may be crossed by means of mutual recognition. And again the same kind of questions arise: can, e.g., a cognitive scholar of religion and a Wittgensteinian philosopher emphasizing the fundamental differences between religious forms of life and scientific appeals to reason and evidence even recognize each other as members of the same intellectual community of inquirers committed

to shared conceptions of reason, rationality, and science? Is religion a special case here, fundamentally different from science or everyday reasoning? Pragmatism may, by offering its middle path, facilitate such processes of mutual recognition among participants of these and other practices.

Concluding remarks and open issues

Possibly – returning to the second way in which pragmatism offers us a “promise”, namely, the existential one – an even more important boundary can be perceived to lie between those (religious or non-religious) thinkers who maintain that religious thought requires a theodicy – and who may further disagree about whether this requirement can be satisfied – and those who deny this, possibly arguing that theodicies are pseudo-religious or even blasphemous attempts to overstep yet another human limitation, our incapacity to fully understand evil and suffering.¹⁸ The problem of evil has, as is well known, developed considerably in the course of intellectual history; a general pattern of development seems to be the transformation of an originally more or less purely theological problem into a less unified ethico-political set of issues connected with questions of historical memory and recognition, that is, questions of how to adequately recognize the historical and social reality of evil and its victims and their suffering. One open question here, still insufficiently addressed, is whether there is in some usefully definable sense just one single “problem of evil” in its different historical and contemporary manifestations or whether there is, rather, a whole set of quite different problems that have little to do with each other. For example, are those contemporary theorists of evil who engage in a theological debate (e.g., van Inwagen) working on the “same” problem of evil as those who deliberately bracket theological and religious considerations,

¹⁷ I deal with this issue in Sami Pihlström, *Transcendental Guilt: Reflections on Ethical Finitude* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2011), chapter 4.

¹⁸ Cf. Pihlström, *Pragmatic Pluralism and the Problem of God*, chapter 5.

focusing on the historical and political dimensions of the matter (e.g., Richard Bernstein)?¹⁹ Pragmatism could illuminate this issue as well, refusing to draw a principled boundary between non-religious and explicitly religious ways of addressing the problem of evil. Such dichotomies may hinder the enhancement of understanding instead of illuminating the nature of evil; clearly, no pragmatist should stick to dichotomies that are an obstacle to inquiry.

Again, a key question that needs to be addressed in any pragmatist inquiry into evil is this: can the “theodicist” and “anti-theodicist” (as we may call them) recognize each other as belonging to the same community of inquirers (thinkers) attempting to understand, and cope with, the presence of evil and suffering in human experience? Or is the gap dividing them too wide for any genuine recognition to take place, given that the anti-theodicist may believe that the theodicist is fundamentally ethically misguided in her/his attempt to “justify God’s ways to men”? Can these two groups, or ethico-intellectual orientations, even tolerate each others’ views on the proper religious response to human suffering and evil?

Without seeking to settle this issue here, I want to address one more worry.²⁰ Pragmatism claims to take seriously the genuine human practices people engage in – religious and non-religious. Now, “common people” (whoever they are) engaging in those practices may in some cases very well find theodicies plausible and even consoling. They may, and indeed often do, speculate about God’s reasons for allowing horrible events such as the Holocaust to happen. What should the pragmatist say? This is once again a matter of recognition – and of thereby seeking sufficient common ground enabling critical inquiry. Certainly the pragmatist, while taking

seriously our common human practices, should not simply agree with those engaging in such “common practices”, any more than they should agree with conservative supernaturalist believers (e.g., creationists), for instance. Instead, the pragmatist seriously advancing inquiry into the nature of evil and into proper religious responses to it should seek to critically persuade religious believers out of their theodicist predicament. There is in pragmatist philosophy of religion ample room for normative discussion of the criteria of “genuine religiosity”, as distinguished from pseudo-religion or superstition.²¹ But there is certainly no easy solution available here, no royal road to drawing such distinctions.

I have emphasized pragmatism as a middle path between the implausible extremes of evidentialism and fideism. If there were more space and time, it would be interesting to further reflect on this proposal to develop pragmatism as a critical *via media*²² by making a comparison to an apparently very different but on a closer look interestingly related position developed by Richard Kearney, also intended as a middle ground option between traditional theisms and atheisms, offering an intriguing contribution to the issue of evil.²³ I see Kearney’s “anatheism” as analogous to the kind of pragmatism I am defending in relation to both the epistemic and the ethical interest distinguished above. Both the pragmatist (in my sense) and the atheist seek to move beyond the standard dichotomies between evidentialism and fideism, or theism and atheism; both also reject all rationalizing attempts to resolve the problem of evil as manifestations of “vicious intellectualism”.

¹⁹ See van Inwagen, *Problem of Evil* (cited above); and Richard Bernstein, *Radical Evil: A Philosophical Interrogation* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002).

²⁰ This was raised by Niek Brunsveld in discussion.

²¹ See again Pihlström, *Pragmatic Pluralism and the Problem of God*, “Conclusion”.

²² Cf. also Sami Pihlström, *Pragmatist Metaphysics: An Essay on the Ethical Grounds of Metaphysics* (London: Continuum, 2009).

²³ Richard Kearney, *Anatheism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).

In addition to pragmatism's relation to atheism, several open questions remain to be considered, and pragmatist contributions to their further elucidation are highly welcome. For example, it is still far from clear how exactly James's "will to believe" argument – his most famous but also perhaps most notorious contribution to the philosophy of religion – ought to be interpreted: does it lead to a fideistic position, or can the concept of evidence be broadened (e.g., in the manner sketched above) within the context of this idea?²⁴ Furthermore, could religious experiences (ever) play an evidential role in our choosing (or not choosing) to believe, and how does James's account of religious experiences, as spelled out in *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902), help us in cashing out this notion?²⁵ Moreover, one may ask whether naturalism – religious naturalism in particular – becomes too liberal if even God can be included in a naturalistic scheme along the lines proposed by Dewey in *A Common Faith*, that is, as an "active union of the ideal and the actual". Can recognition thus in a sense go too far? This is a question that must never be neglected by the pragmatist who takes seriously the theories of recognition in philosophy of religion and elsewhere.

Moreover, the fundamentally important issue of *realism* – largely set aside in this paper – is at the core of both Jamesian and Deweyan philosophy of religion,²⁶ and its history, especially in the Kantian tradition, must be taken seriously when developing pragmatism in this field. Finally, the problem framework known as "religion in the public sphere" needs further pragmatist articulations and rearticulations; this is, increasingly, a hot issue in our

multicultural societies. Accordingly, it should be clear that the pragmatist philosopher of religion will not run out of interesting issues to inquire into.

Pragmatism in no way proposes quick and easy answers to any of these and other difficult questions. Yet, it does show a way in which answers – painful and difficult ones – can be sought and possibly found, thereby also keeping the questions themselves alive, and *recognizing* them as serious philosophical questions. This is its melioristic promise: neither optimistic (that is, recognition is not easy) nor pessimistic (that is, recognition, or the increased understanding it may yield, is not impossible either).

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²⁴ See, again, Rydenfelt and Pihlström (eds.), *William James on Religion*.

²⁵ Cf. Brunsveld, *The Many Faces of Religious Truth* (cited above), chapter 10; as well as Brunsveld's contribution to Rydenfelt and Pihlström (eds.), *William James on Religion*. James's *Varieties* is available in *The Works of William James*, eds. Frederick Burkhardt *et al.* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1985).

²⁶ As I try to argue at some length in *Pragmatic Pluralism and the Problem of God* (forthcoming).

SENSIBILITIES AND BELIEFS

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I have at times described myself as a person with religious sensibilities and no religious beliefs. I would like to dwell on that phrase in these pages and consider whether and how such a claim might make sense.

The context for this discussion of religion is philosophical pragmatism, so let us begin with a consideration of what both terms mean. Religion is, as we all know already, notoriously difficult to pin down. Some religions, most obviously Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, include at their heart a belief in a single absolute God who stands above nature as its creator and redeemer; some religious traditions, Buddhism for example, may but do not necessarily involve such a belief. Some religions regard themselves as having universal applicability, and thus are likely to incorporate more or less aggressive forms of proselytizing; others, such as Shinto, make no claim to anything more than local relevance. Some religious traditions rest on complex ecclesiastical structure and hierarchy, while others are primarily a matter of direct spiritual practice. Some religions emphasize the individual's spiritual life and practice, while others rest much more on community. Some highlight experience, while others rest on tradition and ritual; some emphasize creative spiritual life, and some obedience; some require agreement to some set of beliefs, even if a very small set, and others are defined more by how one lives than what one believes; some look toward personal redemption in an afterlife, while others ask one to give up one's attachment to redemption, along with everything else; for some one's ethical life is paramount, and for others it is more or less irrelevant; some rest on complex theologies, and others not; some involve a decided sense of mystery, while for others things are much clearer; some have a sexual dimension, and others eschew sexuality; some have political aspirations, and others retreat from political life. And then there is

William James' well-known elaboration of the many varieties of religious experience.

It is worth noting that this list of traits of religious traditions, as diverse as it is, does not even have a historical reach, which is to say that examples of religious communities, individuals, and traditions matching each of these traits may be found somewhere in the world today. Presumably if we took a broader historical view the list of possible characteristics of religion would be longer still. It is also worth noting that religious traditions and practices overlap with respect to these traits in the sense that, for example, Christianity and Islam may have similar approaches with respect to some of them and quite different approaches with respect to others. We should also mention the fact that even within religious traditions that we can identify by a single term there are or can be serious disagreements. Many Sunni Muslims, for example, suspect that Shia Islam is not Islam at all; some Christians do not accept Mormonism as a form of Christianity; and there are many Christians for whom the reliance of the Roman and Orthodox traditions on the Trinity, Mary, and ranks of saints amounts to a not very subtle form of polytheism. There is, then, no single trait that defines all religions and on the basis of which we may distinguish what is religious from what is not. Like most other things, the many social and individual phenomena that we are inclined to describe as religious are related to one another through a set of family resemblances rather than a single common feature or set of features. In light of this variety, there is little point in trying to offer a single definition of religion. The situation is somewhat less complicated in the case of philosophical pragmatism, but not much. Early on, Peirce so much disliked the direction that James was taking the idea that he began to refer to his own view as "pragmaticism". Not long after, A. O. Lovejoy published his famous essay "The Thirteen Pragmatism" to try to sort out the terrain as it appeared to him in 1908.¹

¹ C. S. Peirce, "What Pragmatism Is", *The Monist*, vol. XV, no. 2, pp. 161–181, April 1905 and *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce, Volume V*, eds. Charles

Peirce's pragmatism has a logical and methodological bent; James's is oriented toward the individual; Dewey's and Mead's versions are distinctly socially inclined. All of the classical pragmatists were predisposed to taking seriously traditional philosophical questions about the nature of reality and knowledge, while the Rortyan version of neo-pragmatism does not take them seriously. Some versions of contemporary pragmatism continue to draw on the classical traditions, while others pursue certain pragmatist ideas through methods, assumptions, and issues that come from the Anglo-American analytic tradition, while still others are thinking through a Gadamerian hermeneutical lens.

It may be slightly more likely that we can find a common thread in all of these than is possible for religion. If there is a candidate for an idea or method common to the many pragmatisms it is that ideas are not to be understood as reflecting reality but as provisionally useful tools with which we may solve problems of various kinds, theoretical and practical. For our purposes that may be sufficient, because it would be as pointless to try to adjudicate among the forms of pragmatism as it would be to try to decide which religion or religious tradition is preferable to or more genuinely "religion" than the others. For my part I find the classical pragmatist tradition far richer in resources and more valuable methodologically than any of the current versions of neo-pragmatism, though I prefer to modify it with a heavy dose of the Columbia naturalism of Dewey, Buchler, Randall, and others.

Then there is the question of how pragmatism may take up religion, and again there have been various efforts to do so. It is well known that Peirce was religiously inclined, and James, perhaps more than any other prominent

pragmatist philosopher, made no secret of his interest in demonstrating both that pragmatism may be used to explore theological questions and that on pragmatist grounds it is intellectually defensible to endorse certain religious ideas and beliefs even in the absence of sufficient evidence for them. For his part Dewey made a clear effort to render religious concepts and commitments meaningful in ways that are consistent with his general naturalism and instrumentalism. Over the years many others have also attempted to construe religion in pragmatist ways, from Eugene Fontinell some time ago to Sami Pihlström most recently.²

I do not at this point wish to survey the many interesting pragmatist approaches to religion, but to return to the question posed at the beginning, which concerns the sense that may be given to a life of religious sensibilities without religious belief. Perhaps it would be best to begin with the issue of religious beliefs. There are, as I have said, religious traditions that rely much more on practice than on belief, so the question at this point is not whether it is possible to "be religious" without such beliefs. In fact I am not much interested in the question whether I or anyone else is or is not "religious". I do not see what is gained by deciding whether the adjective fits in any particular case. At this point I would simply like to explore the reasons one might have for doing without religious beliefs altogether.

Which beliefs may usefully be considered to be religious? The most obvious initial candidate is the belief in the existence of God, specifically the standard God of monotheism. In most accounts this God is eternal and is responsible for the existence of everything outside himself, which is to say for reality in general. The God of monotheism is typically absolute, or absolutely complete

Hartshorne and Paul Weiss, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1935; A. O. Lovejoy, "The Thirteen Pragmatisms", *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology, and Scientific Methods*, (now *The Journal of Philosophy*), Part I, 2 January 1908 pp. 5-12. Part II, 16 January 1908, pp. 29-39.

² For Eugene Fontinell see for example *God, Self and Immortality: A Jamesian Investigation*, New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2000; for Sami Pihlström see *Pragmatic Pluralism and the Problem of God*, New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2013.

and perfect, and therefore immutable; he, she, or it, depending on one's political, cultural, or other predilections, is generally understood to be omniscient and omnipotent; and perhaps most importantly, the absolute God is understood to offer salvation and redemption to individuals, communities, and/or to nature generally. May one believe in such a God? Of course one may, and as we have noticed, James went to great lengths to demonstrate, convincingly in my view, that it is intellectually defensible to so believe if one is inclined to do so.

But there are also many good and perfectly plausible philosophical reasons not to be inclined to hold this belief. One of them is that to posit a creator God that stands outside nature does nothing to help us understand anything about nature, least of all its creation. It is sometimes thought, tacitly or explicitly, that because nature contains no principles that could help us explain its origins, there must be something outside nature to explain it.³ But it seems to me that such an idea simply pushes the puzzle back one step, because then we are compelled to ask what explains the origins of God? The standard answer to that question is that God is eternal, but if that is the best we can do, there is no reason not to offer that explanation about nature itself. That is not to say that there is better reason to posit nature's eternality than God's, but simply that there is no reason not to do so, in which case to posit God as creator in order to explain nature fails as an explanation, and complicates the situation immensely. And on a purely ontological level, if one endorses a pragmatic naturalism then one has by definition ruled out the possibility of a God standing outside of nature

simply because nature is defined as whatever there is. Some naturalists, pragmatic and otherwise, have offered various conceptions of a God that does not stand outside nature, but they are quite different from the standard God of monotheism, and fall outside our immediate scope.⁴

It is worth noting that there are probably many people who simply cannot imagine reality in general or their lives in particular without an absolute God. That may well be a sufficiently compelling reason for such a person to hold a belief in God, but it is in no way compelling for those of us who can imagine both reality and our lives without God.

What, we may ask, about the other prominent attribute of an absolute God, namely its role as redeemer? This belief prompts the question why we think we need a redeemer at all? I do not have an answer to this question, probably because I do not in any way feel the need. We no doubt all have occasions in which we feel the need to be forgiven for some action or behavior, and to have the opportunity for a fresh start. But this is quite different from the need for redemption or salvation in general. And certainly there is sufficient imperfection in nature and in our individual and social lives, some of it grotesquely immoral, to incline us to desire something better, some kind of improvement. Such a desire for melioration is of course understandable and entirely valuable, but it is quite different from a desire for or expectation of absolute redemption or salvation. I find it far more useful to regard the desire or hope for melioration as most fruitful when tied to the understanding that it is we who have primary responsibility for it. If we wish forgiveness then it is incumbent upon us to so organize our behavior that we

³ For a new argument along these lines, and one made in the context of an otherwise naturalist ontology, see Lawrence Cahoon, *The Orders of Nature*, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2013. For another interesting and new approach to God, or more accurately "god-ing", see Robert Corrington, *Nature's Sublime: An Essay in Aesthetic Naturalism*, New York, NY: Lexington Books, 2013.

⁴ One model for this sort of thing is Whitehead, given his conception of God's consequent nature. I say this is a model more than an example because speaking strictly, Whitehead was not a naturalist philosopher given his reliance on eternal objects.

deserve it; and if there is redemption to be had, it is we who are in a position to so act that we bring it about to whatever extent is possible. If it is we who are responsible for whatever redemption, salvation, and melioration there may be, then redemption, salvation and melioration are very much aspects of our lives and dimensions of nature, not conditions that lie beyond them.

Another function that belief in the God of monotheism may play is to provide an account of things in general, or a justification of whatever goes wrong, or what John McDermott calls a 'canopy of explanation'.⁵ As in the case of redemption, there are many people for whom such an account or justification seems a necessity, and God offers it. But also as in the case of redemption, there are those of us who do not need or expect a justification or account of everything collectively. We may, if we are naturally inquisitive, seek an explanation or justification of this or that phenomenon, but that is an entirely different matter. To be inquisitive about aspects of nature, for example the behavior of matter, or human psychology, or oceans, or art, makes perfect sense on any terms. It does not imply, however, an assumption of, never mind the necessity for, an explanation or account of everything taken together. Furthermore, on a technical level it is impossible within the framework of pragmatic naturalism to posit a "whole" of nature, in which case there is no sense to be given to the idea of an account, explanation, or justification of everything.⁶ And in light of the more or less standard pragmatist expectation that we think in so far as we encounter problems, we can expect those problems to arise quite normally in the course of life and we can expect to

engage one another and our environments continually in the resolution of those problems. There is good reason to agree with McDermott when he says, as he has done repeatedly, that there is no canopy of explanation, rather we make sense of ourselves and our world, to the extent that we are able, in the course of living our lives.

One additional point is worth making in the context of belief in an absolute God, and that has to do with ethical principles. Philosophers tend not to make this mistake, but many other people appear to think that without an absolute God as the source of ethical principles neither ethics nor an ethical life would be possible. This is of course not true on the face of it, if only because there are many examples of secular ethical principles, some of which have been with us for many centuries, their durability justified, presumably, by their success in guiding our lives. And pragmatists have a rich history of ethical analysis on which to draw, the basic point of which is that our ethical principles arise, like everything else about our lives, in the process of addressing the issues that face us.

Other beliefs may also appropriately be considered religious, one of which is the belief in personal immortality. This is of course related to beliefs that we have already discussed, most clearly the belief in redemption and salvation. As in other cases, the belief in personal immortality is one that many people find congenial, or even necessary. I probably do not need to say that I am not one of them. On technical grounds, it would be difficult to maintain a belief in personal immortality on pragmatist, and certainly on pragmatic naturalist grounds, if only because such a belief in its standard forms is usually tied to some notion of a soul and related conceptions of personal identity. Pragmatism is unlikely to be a comfortable home to a traditional conception of the soul because unlike most traditional ontologies, pragmatism to a great extent endorses the importance of relations. James' radical pluralism is a sustained argument for the ubiquitous

⁵ John J. McDermott, "Afterword: You are Really Able", in James Campbell and Richard Hart, eds., *Experience as Philosophy: On the Work of John J. McDermott*, New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2006, pp 237-271.

⁶ See Justus Buchler, "On the Concept of 'the World'", in *Metaphysics of Natural Complexes*, 2nd ed., eds. Kathleen Wallace and Armen Marsoobian, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1990, pp. 224-259.

presence and importance of relations; Dewey's 'situations' are thoroughly relational; and recent and current pragmatic naturalism rests entirely on an ontology of constitutive relations.⁷ In any such relational understanding of personal identity it is impossible to incorporate a traditional understanding of the soul, and therefore it is equally impossible to sustain a traditional conception of personal immortality.

Of course it is possible to have a different understanding of personal immortality, as has been the case in Buddhist philosophy and theology. Buddhism, at least in several of its forms, is as relationally oriented as is pragmatism, but it nonetheless has also held a notion of personal reincarnation, if not immortality. Presumably pragmatists could do the same if they were so inclined. And perhaps some are so inclined. I, however, am not, nor do I see the point. Without philosophical or theological commitments to drive one, there is no intellectual force inclining a pragmatist toward a belief in personal immortality. Of course there may be psychological reasons of various kinds for people to hold such a belief, but I have no special knowledge to enable me to comment on that. Suffice it to say that I also feel neither psychological nor intellectual inclinations to endorse a belief in personal immortality. Moreover, I do not see that any aspect of my life suffers as a result of not expecting to outlive myself. If there is something I would like to achieve I had better do it now.

So whatever else my stock of beliefs may contain, it does not include these typically religious beliefs. That is not to say that I think that other people who consider themselves to be pragmatists ought not to believe them. The corridor of pragmatism, to repeat James's well-known expression, can accommodate a room wherein a theologian is at work. Such a person would have some particularly difficult challenges if he or she were

developing a religious conception within the context of pragmatic naturalism as I understand it, but I would not want to rule out the possibility. I accept, as I have said, James's argument in "The Will to Believe" that in the case of religion we have an intellectual right to accept key religious beliefs if we so choose. But I choose otherwise.

What then about religious sensibilities? What does it mean, and does it make much sense in the end, to embrace religious sensibilities in the absence of religious beliefs? Let us consider first what it might mean. Despite the centrality for many people of beliefs to their religious identity, it is not clear that beliefs are as critical as they appear to be, or as uniquely critical as they appear to be. Of course the belief in Allah is at the heart of what it is to be a Muslim, and for many Christians acceptance of the Nicene Creed, with "I (We) believe in..." as its opening words, is profoundly important. But still, on a day-to-day level I suspect that there is greater significance for the religious life in how one lives than in what one believes. The two may of course be related, but I suspect the relation between beliefs and patterns or habits of living is contingent rather than necessary. A devout Muslim prays several times each day, and there is no question that the habit of prayer is in his or her case related to the belief in the existence of Allah, but one can also without much of an effort imagine a case in which the humility and devotion that characterize prayer might be practiced in the absence of such a belief. One might, for example, understand some forms of meditation in such a way.

This points to the distinction I would like to make, which is that religious sensibilities are to be understood, or anyway may be understood, more in terms of how one lives than what one believes. One of the prevalent forms that such sensibilities takes is faith. This may sound surprising in that faith is often associated with beliefs in the sense that to say that one has faith in this or that entity, or in this or that outcome of an action, is to say that one believes in that entity's existence or that that

⁷ See John Ryder *The Things in Heaven and Earth: An Essay in Pragmatic Naturalism*, New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2013.

outcome will come about. That is a normal use of the English word “faith” and I do not mean to propose that we should use the word otherwise. I simply wish to point out that we do in fact use the word otherwise when, for example, we refer to someone as a person of faith, or a person of deep faith. We are generally in such a case not commenting on the person’s beliefs, or the strength with which a person holds his or her beliefs, but rather on the aspects of that person’s life, behavior, habits, actions, and commitments. A life of faith, we may say, is at least as much a life lived in certain ways, as it is any one belief or set of beliefs. In fact in practice it is probably far more about how one lives than what one believes.

There are no doubt many ways to characterize a life of faith, and surely others can do it better than I. On the face of it, though, we might say that a life of faith is one that embodies certain values and predispositions to act in certain ways. Among them are likely to be a noticeable degree of humility, perhaps even piety; a practical commitment to the possibility of melioration, redemption, and salvation, even if piecemeal rather than general; a sense that whatever is wrong with the world and with us, there is nonetheless a sense that in general things are more or less “right”; a trust in the general decency and goodness of others; and a commitment to justice, individual and social. Of course each of these characteristics that can be ascribed to a person admits of degrees, and each is also subject to wide range of interpretations. Humility may be moderate or abject; trust may be naïve or worldly; the sense of rightness may be Panglossian or realistic; melioration may be gradual or revolutionary; and certainly justice admits of a wide range of interpretations. Nonetheless, the point is that each of these traits and their associated actions, behavior, and habits, may be ascribed not simply to a person of faith and associated with specifically religious beliefs, but also to people who endorse none of the standard beliefs that we have characterized as religious.

Once we disassociate these characteristics from a belief in God, for example, we can see how and why one might embody them in one’s life for reasons other than religious beliefs, and the reasons tend to be pragmatic in nature. Our personal and professional lives require a degree of trust, and it may well be that we will succeed more often than fail if we assume that the people with whom we interact are on the whole worthy of our trust rather than not; humility is a far preferable approach to take in relation to others than arrogance, preferable in the sense that up to a point we are more likely to maintain constructive relations with family, friends, and colleagues if we engage them with a sense of humility rather than superiority; there is surely a great deal wrong with the world, on both micro- and macro-levels, but in practice it would be debilitating to dwell on that, so that however much we would like to see things better than they are, we live, and sensibly so, on the assumption that things are right enough to move along; still, though, if we act to improve what we can, at least a good deal of the time, we are likely to inhabit stronger communities and a better world; and that melioristic approach to our lives may, one could argue that it should, suggest ongoing action and behavior oriented toward rather than away from greater justice. There are many reasons, in other words, for us to embrace the sensibilities that are embodied in a life of faith without any appeal to the religious beliefs that are usually associated with them.

All of this suggests that there is a degree of plausibility in the idea that traditionally religious sensibilities may be endorsed even when they are divorced from religious beliefs. But to do so is, I like to think, more than merely plausible in that there are good reasons of various kinds to do so. The pragmatic justifications of trust, humility, and the other sensibilities associated with faith suggest that there are desirable outcomes if we embrace them, and that is one good reason. Another good reason concerns how we, that is to say those of us without religious beliefs, interact with believers.

This is not an empty or merely formal question because there are various ways such interaction can occur. One common way that non-believers approach believers is with some measure of dismissiveness. Some of the better-known atheist writers may be described this way. For them, and for many others, religious beliefs are a species of superstition that on the whole is detrimental to individual and social development and progress. The reasons often given for such an attitude are familiar enough: 1) religious beliefs are inconsistent with a serious commitment to science and scientific methodology, and we need the latter to learn about the world and develop technologically; 2) more generally, the most valuable method we have for examining issues of any kind, and for adjudicating disagreements and controversies, is reason, and religious beliefs are not available for rational inquiry and critique because they are not based on rational principles or evidence; 3) insisting on the truth of propositions and ideas that derive from allegedly divinely inspired sources leads not to the development of knowledge and understanding but to ideological rigidity; and 4) traditional religious social norms and principles have their origin in ancient times and cultures, and are generally a hindrance to our attempts to deal with contemporary social problems.

Each of these claims about religion is contested by the many more careful theologians and religious believers among us, and I do not wish to come down on one side or the other of such debates. On the one hand it is sensible enough to say that if propositions made in books that are held to be divinely inspired are unavailable to examination or criticism, then it is hard to see how any conceptual development can be made with respect to them. On the other hand, all major religious traditions have had among their adherents some of the most intelligent, insightful, and influential thinkers in our history. So in the end the question whether religious beliefs are a hindrance or a reliable guide to knowledge and life is not an easy one to resolve.

It is also not necessary for us to resolve it because the issue is not whether religious beliefs are true and reasonable, but whether those of us who do not hold them are warranted in regarding believers as anachronistic obstacles to human advancement. My view is that the critics of religion and religious belief who engage in this sort of dismissive interaction are not justified in doing so, and that we would be far better served to take a wholly different approach. The primary reason is that in this case at any rate, communication is a greater good than truth. Let me explain what I mean.

There are analogies on which we can draw to clarify this point. We may, if it is not reaching too far rhetorically, paraphrase the traditional religious believer's claim in relation to sin and sinners, which is that one may, or ought to, hate the sin but love the sinner. In our case, we may reject the truth claims of religious beliefs, but nevertheless maintain the kind of respect for believers that enables further communication and constructive interaction. A different analogy may also help. There are cases around the world of cultural practices that many of us, especially though not exclusively in the liberal West, find objectionable or even abhorrent. Some of the ways women are treated in parts of the world come to mind as the most ready examples. We quite properly reject such practices unequivocally, but at the same time we have every good reason to continue to interact with the people who practice and endorse such traditions with the respect that human beings deserve and that is a necessary condition for further communication and continued engagement.

Another case, closer to home for some of us, has to do with the growing tolerance for and resort to torture in recent years. The parties responsible for this surprising and reprehensible behavior are primarily American, though they had help from a number of European and Middle Eastern regimes, some of which no longer exist. The political leadership, policy makers, legal apologists, and military and security personnel who led, justified,

and carried out the many cases of torture in “black sites” around the world needed to be stopped and exposed. But they also need to be engaged, regardless of the moral seriousness of their transgressions. We may have thought that after Nuremburg, the Geneva Conventions, and the UN Declaration of Human Rights, this would be a conversation that we would no longer need to have. But we would have been wrong in thinking so. If torture can so easily be resurrected as an instrument of policy and security in the contemporary “liberal” West, then clearly we need to be talking about it. And we need to be talking about it with the very people who seem so easily persuaded of its value and acceptability.

Whether it is unacceptable beliefs or unacceptable behavior, and I do not mean to equate them at a moral level, the most valuable approach on our part is to engage rather than to shun. If that is right, then to dismiss religious believers as a species of fool is inappropriate. Though it may seem a bit ironic in an argument for the appropriation of religious sensibilities, the primary impulse here is humanistic. In the end, if our collective, social problems are to be solved, it is we who have to solve them. Some of the problems we face at the macro-level are monumental, and solving them presents challenges that we may or may not up to. But whatever else is required, and there is a great deal else, we do not stand a chance if we are not willing to accept and engage one another respectfully, regardless of our disagreements.

Such a deep respect, and the communication and engagement it enables, has a humanistic character, but it also has a religious pedigree, and it is the latter that inclines me to regard it as a particularly important illustration of a religious sensibility. I do not mean to say that such respect for human dignity and communication necessarily follows from any one or set of religious beliefs. On the contrary, I would like to distinguish beliefs and sensibilities in this case. The reason I am inclined to regard such sensibilities as religious is that they are a

natural component of a religious life, in the sense of the life of faith as I described it above. Furthermore, there are many examples of people whose religious faith prompts them to act in just these ways, and to extraordinarily noteworthy effect. I think, for example, of the representatives of many religious traditions currently at work on the project of deep interreligious dialogue, which is something that is desperately needed in the current environment of intercultural misunderstanding and tension;⁸ or the members of Christian orders, some of whom I had the privilege of knowing in Central America many years ago, who have given so much of their lives, in some cases their lives themselves, in the exercise of respect for and commitment to the poor; or the religious leaders who urged and provided moral leadership for the Reconciliation Commissions in South Africa in recent memory, which more than any case I can think of exemplifies what is so profoundly significant in religious sensibilities.

One may wonder whether it is necessary or appropriate to regard the sort of sensibilities to which I am pointing as religious, especially when, as I have been arguing, they do not need religious belief to underpin them. In my view it makes sense to consider them to be religious sensibilities because they are so much of what it can mean to live a religious life. That they also have a humanistic context is what allows those of us who do not accept religious beliefs to endorse them.

I began by saying that I sometimes describe myself as someone with religious sensibilities and no religious beliefs. I should qualify that comment now, after working through these thoughts. I would not want to ascribe to myself the wisdom, courage, and moral strength that I am ascribing to the ideals and most outstanding examples and illustrations of religious sensibility. For one thing it would be descriptively false, and for another it

⁸ As an example I would refer the reader to the Dialogue Institute (<http://institute.iesdialogue.org/>) and its president Dr. Leonard Swidler.

would be inconsistent with the humility that is also a profound religious sensibility. It is better to say that though I find nothing to endorse in religious beliefs, I find a great deal to endorse in the finest examples of religious life.

WILLIAM JAMES' CONCEPTION OF RELIGION

IN JOSIAH ROYCE'S MATURE THOUGHT:

THREE APPROACHES

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"The problem of the worth of life is often regarded among men of the world as one that the healthy have no wish to discuss, and the unhealthy no right to decide" Josiah Royce.¹

Introduction

A person who only reads Josiah Royce's (1995 [1908]) *The Philosophy of Loyalty* and (2011 [1913]) *The Problem of Christianity* could easily assume that William James' philosophy takes opposite views to Roycean ones on every fundamental issue with which they deal. Absolutism, on the Roycean hand, and individualism, on the Jamesian hand, are the labels that seems to articulate two contrary approaches to philosophy: the stress on the "eternal truths" and "the Community of Interpretation" within Royce's approach, the emphasis on "provisional truths" and "individuals' experience" for James' view. However, consideration of Royce's insightful works after James' death challenges this assumption. After 1910 Royce acknowledges the unambiguous influence of James on his thought as well as the role of Jamesian philosophy for the development of his own idealism.

Within this context I would like to examine how Royce's *mature* philosophy relates to James'. Regarding the label "mature" a few clarifying words are necessary. Royce scholars usually follow Frank Oppenheim (1976, 1983) when he divides Royce's work in three phases: an early period (1883-1895), an intermediate period (1896-1911), and a mature period (1912-1916). This distinction is grounded in what Oppenheim names as Royce's major insights. About the later insight he writes,

¹ Royce (1920: 155). The quotation belongs to the article "Pessimism and Modern thought," originally written in 1881.

Yet it was only after his late (1912) insight into C.S Peirce's method of interpretation and doctrine of signs that Royce best displayed this sensitivity. His breakthrough to Peirce, then, can mark the start of Royce's mature period (1912-1916). For his insight into the life of Peirce's "musing mind" transformed Royce's method of philosophical thinking and exposition (Oppenheim, 1983: 381)

For some authors, however, this distinction is useless or even dangerous from a hermeneutical point of view. Randall Auxier, for example, denies the existence of insights as marks in which one can see radical turns within Royce's work.² I do not say anything *substantive* in this paper regarding this question. For the purposes of my work I use the adjective 'mature' for the works that were written after James' death (that refer practically to the same years 1911-1916).

Meanwhile, the aims of this paper are mainly three: firstly, to reconstruct James' influence on Royce's mature philosophy; secondly, to highlight a similarity between them: the initial distinction that both establish between religion and morality;³ finally, to support two hypotheses: first, to show that Royce's criticisms of James are mistaken, i.e., that the problem between them relates not to individual vs. social religious experiences but to justification by faith alone vs. justification by works; second, to show why James' developments are more fruitful starting from some of his positions in the *Varieties*. To carry out these aims I divide this article in four sections: first, I examine the direct influence of James on Royce's "The Philosophy of William James and the Philosophy of Life" in section I (After James' Death: Royce on James); then, I analyze how Royce interprets

² "One certainly *can*, as Oppenheim has done, document important insights that deepened Royce's understanding of his own earlier thinking, but one *cannot* show that these moments of insight, or of sudden clarity, resulted in any decision to drop his existing major doctrinal commitments and substitute for them ideas that were at odds with the earlier ones. Royce never changed his mind in any major way, and most particularly, he never "abandoned" the concept of the Absolute (the most egregious and oft-repeated error of fact and interpretation)". Randall Auxier (forth.: 14)

³ I use morality and ethics indistinctly.

James in *The Sources of Religious Insight* in section II (Beyond James: *SRI* and Individual's Religious Experience); after that, I refer to some aspects of *The Problem of Christianity* where Jamesian issues are taken in section III (Against James: *PC* and the Religion of Loyalty); fourthly, I develop my hypothesis in section IV (The Battle for Justification). Finally, I present some conclusions.⁴

I. After James' Death: Royce on James

The first of my approaches refers to *WJ*. Royce sustains that James is an American philosophical giant of the stature of Jonathan Edwards and Ralph W. Emerson, i.e., a philosopher who was at the centre of the problems of his time.⁵ This is one of the central statements of the essay, the first that Royce wrote after James' death.⁶ From a philosophical perspective Royce highlights two aspects as essential for James' thought: that he was an evolutionist of the second generation (i.e., one more occupied with trying to understand the consequences of evolutionism than with continuous quarrels with religion), on the one hand; and that he was the outstanding head of the new psychology, on the other. Furthermore, Royce stresses the *American* character of James' philosophy with the following words:

⁴ Hereafter I refer to Royce's works in the following way: *The Philosophy of Loyalty (PL)*, "William James and the Philosophy of Life" (*WJ*), *Sources of Religious Insight (SRI)* *The Problem of Christianity (PC)*.

⁵ See, for example, the following paragraph of *WJ*: "the essence of a philosophy, in case you look at it solely from a historical point of view, always appears to you thus: A great philosophy expresses an interpretation of the life of man and a view of the universe, which is at once personal, and, if the thinker is representative of his people, national in its significance" (Royce, 1911: 6)

⁶ See, for example, the following statements of Vincent Buranelli: "James had only the warmest regard for Royce, even when denouncing him as a misguided absolutist. Royce would not let his aversion for pragmatism mar his admiration of James. His utterances over three decades prove that he was not simply honoring the precept *de mortuis nil nisi bonum*, when after James's death in 1910, he wrote the appreciative memoir "William James and the Philosophy of Life"" (Buranelli, 1964: 76)

Viewed as an American, he belongs to the movement which has been the consequence, first, of our civil war, and secondly, of the recent expansion, enrichment, and entanglement of our social life. He belongs to the age in which our nation... has been attempting to find itself anew, to redefine its ideals, to retain its moral integrity, and yet to become a world power (Royce, 1911: 6)

Paradoxically, despite his Eastern background, as American James also embodied the *frontier's spirit*. In Royce's description, James was an example of the following *dictum*: "You can only win your way on the frontier in case you are willing to live there. Be, therefore, concrete, be fearless, be experimental" (Royce, 1911:23). Thus, James seems to represent the image of an intellectual pioneer, a fearless experimentalist that forges America's deepest philosophy. To examine James' work, stressing its American character, Royce divides his account in two parts: the first deals with religion; the second refers to ethics.

Regarding religion, Royce sustains in this essay the most sympathetic view he ever had on James. Although he explicitly rejects James' individualism, Royce rescues his egalitarianism: "James' view of religious experience is meanwhile at once deliberately unconventional and intensely democratic" (Royce, 1911:24). Two aspects should be pointed out here: firstly, both share unconventionality in looking for the ground of religion outside narrow theologies; secondly, both openly vindicate religion before the growing agnosticism of the day. In other words, one of the cores of James' influence, for Royce, lies in the fundamental consequence of *The Varieties of Religious Insight*,⁷ that is, the *vindication* of religion:

The result of this portrayal was indeed magical. The psychologists were aided towards a new tolerance in their study of religion. The evolution of religion appeared in a new light. And meanwhile many of the faithful, who had long

⁷ Hereafter *Varieties*.

been disheartened by the later forms of evolutionary naturalism, took heart anew when they read James' vigorous appeal to the religious experience of the individual as the most authoritative evidence for religion (Royce, 1911:21).

Despite this friendly picture, however, religion is not the best aspect of James' philosophy that Royce wants to highlight. James' individualism is insufficient to grasp the essence of religion, on the one hand, or it irremediably pervades the core of religion (its communal aspect), on the other.⁸ As I will develop in the following sections, Royce sustains this interpretation in his next books: *SRI* and *PC*.

Meanwhile, the second part of Royce's interpretation of James refers to ethics. Royce is not only describing James' philosophical development but he is pointing out the core of James' legacy: "He was, as a fact, profoundly ethical in his whole influence" (Royce, 1911: 36). For Royce, the best legacy of James should be looked for in his ethical attitudes and his ethical writings, particularly in "The Will to Believe"

If you want to estimate his philosophy of life in its best form, you must read or re-read, not the "Pragmatism," but the essays contained in the volume entitled "The Will to Believe." (Royce, 1911: 36).

Royce offers in his account a subtle and unorthodox explanation of "The Will to Believe." Usually, this article is interpreted as a way to defend the right of the believer to believe against the attack of agnostics or atheists. For Royce, instead, "The Will to Believe" is an ethical work

⁸ Regarding the distinction between collectivism and individualism, Del Castillo writes: "Following Robert Bellah, one could note that even those American ways of interpreting religion that emphasize community and external authority do *not* exclude personal freedom, autonomy as their central values. On the contrary, it is supposed that commandments and other norms liberate individuals from constrictions and allow them to be truly autonomous. The point, then, does not consist just in opposing religious *individualism* to *collectivism*, but rather in contrasting different ways of interpreting individuality" (Del Castillo 2002: 15).

whose focus lies not in stressing the importance of *consequences* –as pragmatism sustains?– but remarking the centrality of individual's *ideal attitude* toward the world:

Our estimate of our world is not to be forced upon us by *any mereinspection of consequences*. What makes life worth living is not what you find in it, *but what you are ready to put into it by your ideal interpretation* of the meaning that, as you insist, it shall possess for you (Royce, 1911: 38, *my italics*).

Consequently, Royce is doing something more than depicting James' philosophy from a general point of view, i. e., he is stressing James' influence on his own philosophy. In his words:

... but I can assure you that I myself learned a great part of my own form of absolute idealism from the earliest expressions that James gave to the thoughts contained in "The Will to Believe" (Royce, 1911: 43).

In other words, Royce's interpretation of James in this essay is relevant for several reasons: firstly, he distinguishes between religion and morality within James' thought; after that, Royce acknowledges James' influence on his philosophy –particularly James' ethics; finally, he sustains that *individualism* is the core of religion while *interpretation* is the core of morality. I draw on the first two in order to articulate my argument. I will refer to them in the following sections, particularly in Section IV.

Meanwhile, I have said that James and Royce initially distinguish between religion and morality. Perhaps, the clearest Jamesian example is the following paragraph of the *Varieties*:

Morality pure and simple accepts the law of the whole which it finds reigning, so far as to acknowledge and obey it, but it may obey it with the heaviest and coldest heart, and never cease to feel it as a yoke. But for religion, in its strong and fully developed manifestations, the service of the highest never is felt as a yoke. Dull submission is left far behind, and a mood of welcome, which may fill any place on the scale

between cheerful serenity and enthusiastic gladness, has taken its place (James, 1982 [1902]: 41).⁹

Royce sustains similar statements within *PC*:

For the moral cultivation just described is cultivation in "the law", that is, in the rules of the social will. But such cultivation breeds individualism; that is, breeds consciousness of self-will. And the burden of this self-will increased with cultivation (Royce, 2001 [1913]: 113).¹⁰

Therefore, both agree in that *mere* morality clearly distinguishes from religion. There exists, however, a crucial difference: for James, on the one hand, religion and ethics should be *always* sharply distinguished; Royce, on the other hand, initially distinguishes both aspects but looks for its *reunification* through his conception of loyalty. To sustain that James would make this kind of reunification is, in my view, Royce's crucial misinterpretation of James. In his words of *WJ*:

In consequence of all these features of his ethical doctrine a wonderful sense of the deep seriousness and of the *possibly divine significance* of every deed is felt in James's every ethical counsel (Royce, 1912 [1911]: 21, my italics).

Here one faces Royce's momentous error in his interpretation of James: James never looks to reconcile morality and religion, for this would be fatal for his entire conception. In other words, there is no *possibly divine significance* within ethics for James without destroying the religious justification *by faith alone*, which is one the essential grounds of his philosophy of religion. I will take up this issue again in Section IV. Before that, I examine Royce's interpretations of James in *SRI* and *PC*.

⁹ Hans Joas pointed out this distinction between morality and religion in James's thought. See, for example, Joas (2000) chap. 3.

¹⁰Another example of Royce's position is the following paragraph: "This evil constantly increases. The Burden grows heavier. Society can, by its ordinary skills, train many of its servants, -servants who, being under rigid discipline, submit because they must... He may obey. That is conduct. But he will naturally revolt inwardly" (Royce, 2001 [1913]: 112-3).

II. Beyond James: *SRI* and Individual's Religious Experience

My second approach is based on Royce's interpretation of James' conception of religion in *SRI*. A first remark to be made turns on the link between *WJ* and *SRI*. Although they were written only a year apart, they depict different pictures of James. While in *WJ* Royce establishes a difference between morality and religion and acknowledges James' influence on his philosophy via morality, in *SRI* he only deals with James' thought as a proponent of individual religious experiences. In other words, only the James of the *Varieties* (the religious individualist in Royce's account) is considered in *SRI*; the James of the "Will to Believe" is put aside.

Meanwhile, for the purposes of my paper *SRI* is important for three reasons: first, Royce analyzes individual and social experiences regarding religion in relation to James; then, he expounds the conception of religion of loyalty that is the ground of *PC*; finally, he deals with the idea of the church as the zenith of religious insight. Therefore, from Royce's seven sources of insights (individual and social experience, reason, will, loyalty, sorrow and church) I examine three: individual experience, loyalty and church, as they are presented in *SRI*.

But, what is an insight for Royce? In *SRI* he offers this definition:

Insight is knowledge that makes us aware of the unity of many facts in one whole, and that at the same time brings us into intimate personal contact with these facts and with the whole wherein they are united. The three marks of insight are breadth of range, coherence and unity of view, and closeness of personal touch (Royce, 1940 [1912]: 6).

Meanwhile, insight relates to a Roycean postulate, the postulate of salvation:

The central and essential postulate of whatever religion we, in these lectures, are to consider, is the postulate that man needs to be saved. And religious insight shall for us mean insight into the way of salvation and into those objects whereof the knowledge conduces to salvation (Royce, 1940 [1912]: 9).

In other words, the need for salvation is a basic mark of religion for Royce and the insights are the sources to answer to this need (*SRI* 11-12). The core of the book, however, is based on the idea that there is a gradual difference of richness between primary and higher forms of insights, from individual experience to the church.

Consequently, individual religious experience is the most basic form of insight to the extent that it is the more capricious for Royce and needs to be supplemented.¹¹ Society then channels this energy toward more ordered forms. Although Royce refers to individualism in general, he is discussing James' conception in particular. Perhaps one of the most exquisite passages of *SRI* refers to the nature of individual religious experience:

James insists that the sources are mainly from within the individual and are only incidentally social. A religious discovery has in common with a poetic creation that fact that the religious genius, like the artist, sees his vision, and produces his spiritual miracle, in solicitude (Royce, 1940 [1912]: 63).

However, social experience as a source of religious insight is very limited, or, in Royce's expression, it is *narrow*. As I attempt to show in the following section, genuine individuals arise only from genuine societies, i.e., *natural* social experience –to use Royce's terminology- should be always supplemented by higher forms of insight. As with individual religious experience, thus, social religious experience should be supplemented

for other forms of insight within Royce's framework. Loyalty and church will be the insights that accomplish that task, i.e., they are the insights *par excellence*.

As is well known, Royce uses the term loyalty in one of his more popular books: *Philosophy of Loyalty*. The way for Royce to unify human beings' lives is through loyalty to a cause, i.e., to serve definite purposes. A higher cause, however, exists: the cause of loyalty to loyalty, a purpose that unifies detached human beings. In Royce's terms:

Moreover, that which I have called the cause of all the loyal, the real unity of the whole spiritual world, is not merely a moral ideal. It is a religious reality. Its servants and ministers are present wherever religious brotherhood finds sincere and hearty manifestation (Royce, 1940 [1912]: 279).

The point to be stressed is that Royce's philosophy sustains the necessity of an ideal order (contrary to the natural order) as a way to redeem individuals. This is a moral as well as a religious undertaking for Royce, which is fully grasped by a particular insight, the idea of church:

I call the community of all who have sought for salvation through loyalty the Invisible Church. What makes it invisible to us is our ignorance of the facts of human history and, still more, our narrowness in our appreciation of spiritual truth (Royce, 1940 [1912]: 280).

Royce's richest religious insight is the Invisible Church, i.e., the universal community of loyals. This church is invisible because it is not grounded in a visible and institutional church but in the moral action of individuals. Therefore, *SRI* could be read as Royce's attempt to edify a "natural religion," i.e., a religion that is not based on revelation, on the one hand, and that looks for universality beyond particular creeds, on the other. Royce is beyond creeds in *SRI* but he is also beyond James when he sustains that individual religious experiences are necessary as well as precarious. However, I think that Royce misses the target with his criticisms. In other words, the critical point, as I will show at length in the remaining sections, relates not to

¹¹ See, for example, the following statement of *SRI* "Without intense and intimate personal feeling, you never learn any valuable truths whatever about life, about its ideals, or about its problems; but, on the other hand, what you know only through your feelings is, like the foam of the sea, unstable –like the passing hour, doomed to pass away" (Royce, 1940 [1912]: 30).

individual vs. social religious experiences but to justification by faith alone or justification by works.

III. Against James: *PC* and the Religion of Loyalty

The ground of my third approach is *PC*. It is well known that this book is the peak of Royce's mature thought where he attempts to merge his philosophy of loyalty, individual and collective religious experience, and to answer the question if in creed one can be modern and Christian simultaneously (Royce, *PC*,). It is beyond the scope of this article to analyze at length Royce's theses and my purposes are limited to Royce's interpretation of James' conception of religion. Regarding religion, it should be said that Royce departs from James' views in *WJ*. Consequently, James' *Varieties* appears, at the very beginning of *PC*, as an intellectual endeavor in the antipodes of his own project:

Yet in one very important respect the religious experience upon which, in this book, I most depended, differs very profoundly from that whose "varieties" James described. *He deliberately confined himself to the religious experience of individuals. My main topic is a form of social religious experience... This social form of experience is that upon which loyalty depends.* James supposed that the religious experience of a church must needs be "conventional," and consequently must be lacking in depth and sincerity... this, to my mind, was a profound and a momentous error in the whole religious philosophy of our greatest master in the study of the psychology of religious experience (Royce, 2001 [1913]: 40-1, my italics).

I analyze two categories of Royce's *PC* that are relevant for my work: loyalty and church. Regarding the first, one cannot appreciate many differences between *SRI* and *PC* in relation to the concept of loyalty. In the latter he writes that

Loyalty, if it comes at all, has the value of a love which does not so much renounce the individual self as devote the self, with all its consciousness and its powers, to an all-embracing unity of individuals in one realm of spiritual harmony, the object of such devotion is, in ideal, the community which is absolutely lovable, because

absolutely united, conscious, but above all distractions of the separate self-will of its members. Loyalty demands many members, but one body; many gifts, but one spirit (Royce, 2001 [1913]: 132).

There exists, then, the same purpose: the unity of individuals through a universal cause, loyalty to loyalty. This is a persistent view of Royce's in his intermediate and mature period. Meanwhile, regarding church one can see the same *spirit* in *SRI* and *PC*:

For the true Church, as we will see, is still a sort of ideal challenge to the faithful, rather than an already finished institution, -a call upon men for a heavenly quest, rather than a present possession of humanity. "Create me," -this is the word of the Church, viewed as an idea, addresses to mankind (Royce, 2001 [1913]: 77).

There exists, however, some differences: firstly, while the idea of invisible church is genuinely universal the idea of church in *PC* circumscribes itself to Christianity as the superior religion of loyalty;¹² secondly, Royce takes again revelation as necessary, i.e., as an indispensable condition for the interpretative role of Paul. I will take up these topics again in Section IV. Consequently, while *SRI* is an attempt to edify a natural religion, *PC* is an effort to give simplicity and modernity to Christianity appealing to social bounds.

Based on Royce's purposes and developments in *PC*, then, one can find that Royce and James differentiate each other on at least three points: first, while James circumscribes himself to "religious geniuses" Royce

¹² An example of this is the following paragraph of *PC*: "other religions have been inspired by loyalty. Other religions have identified a community with a divine being. And, occasionally... non-Christian thinking and non-Christian religion have conceived an ideal community as inclusive as mankind, or as inclusive as the whole realm of beings with minds, however vast that realm may be.

But historically speaking, Christianity has been distinguished by the concreteness and intensity with which, in the early stages of its growth, it grasped, loved and served its own ideal of the visible community, supposed to be universal, which is called its Church" (Royce (2001) [1913] 134).

attempts to analyze religious experiences as could be lived for anybody; second, James highlights the subconscious aspect of religion within *Varieties'* final chapter, while Royce openly says that his view of religion is grounded in a conscious effort to be loyal; third, while James clearly distinguishes between morality and religion, Royce wants to join them. Let me put the first two points aside and focus on the latter one.

Despite their differences, I have said before that Royce and James agree *primarily* to distinguish between morality and religion. In this sense, at the core of *PC* lies a kind of dialectical movement: the *natural* man has natural ties with his society that can be overcome only through an act of unconditional love or, in Roycean terms, through a loyal act. I have highlighted some features of loyalty above. So, through loyalty morality and religion link each other. In his terms,

Although this was so far a too abstract conception to conquer the world of contending powers, the spirit of loyalty was also not without its religious relationships, and tended, to make the moral realm not only a world of human consciousness, but a world of divinely ordained unity (Royce, 2001 [1913]: 96)

In a similar way to Royce, James also uses a dialectical schema to explain the redemption of the sick souls. But the ways in which those souls are saved never includes a *moral* salvation. There are aesthetic redemptions, mystical ones, etc. but never moral redemption. What is more, the forms of redemption in James are essentially anti-moralistic:

Under these circumstances the way to success, as vouched for by innumerable authentic personal narrations, is by an anti-moralistic method, by the "surrender" of which I spoke in my second lecture. Passivity, not activity; relaxation, not intentness, should be now the rule (James, 1982 [1902]: 110)

This is what I call James' *Lutheranism*: the idea of salvation by faith alone.¹³ Although there are outstanding differences between Martin Luther's and James' conceptions, James several times refers to Luther's idea of salvation by faith as a way to give place to genuine religious feelings. In the *Varieties* this Lutheranism appears in passages like the following one:

On the whole, one is struck by a psychological similarity between the mind-cure movement and the Lutheran and Wesleyan movements. To the believer in moralism and works, with his anxious query, "What shall I do to be saved?" Luther and Wesley replied: "You are saved now, if you would but believe it." And the mind curers come with precisely similar words of emancipation (James, 1982 [1902]:107-8)

In other words: from a psychological and philosophical point of view as well, James thinks that religious experience can be grasped only if one already has a belief in salvation. Moral action, therefore, adds nothing to this state. On the contrary, if one incorporates the moral dimension one destroys the radicalism of the belief because salvation turns on the works of the individual and, in this case, applies James' statement against the "moral athletes"

The moralist must hold his breath and keep his muscles tense; and so long as his athletic attitude is possible all goes well—morality suffices. But the athletic attitude tends ever to break down, and it inevitably does break down even in the most stalwart when the organism begins to decay, or when morbid fears invade the mind... The sanest and best of us are of one clay with lunatics and prison inmates, and death finally runs the robustest of us down. *And whenever we feel this, such a sense of the vanity and provisionality of our voluntary career comes over us that all our morality appears but as a plaster hiding a sore it can never cure* (James, 1982 [1902]: 46-47, my italics)

¹³ It is well known that Lutheranism refers not only to salvation by faith alone but to the principle of *sola scriptura*. James refers only to faith and he says nothing of the second principle. In this frame when I speak of Lutheranism I refer only to the principle of justification by faith alone.

At least for some temperaments, for James, morality never cures. In other words, James thinks that moralism destroys the most genuine aspect of religious experience while Royce thinks that without moral religious experience lacks fundamental features.

IV. The Battle for Justification

After comprehensively researching Royce's and James' philosophical relationship, Oppenheim writes that "it seems no exaggeration to say that William James was even more present to Royce's reflections after James' death" (Oppenheim, 2005: 86). Furthermore, following Oppenheim, Royce's philosophy seems to correct or supplement (or both) James' thought:

American philosophy is indebted to Royce for his crucial correction of William James' one-sided approach to religious experience. Counterbalancing James' individualistic tone, Royce insisted on communal religious experience and on the form, depth, and potential genuineness of such experience (Oppenheim, 1987: 310).

I think this correction is not possible and can be added to several examples of misunderstandings between James and Royce. Against James' interpretation of Royce, for example, Vincent Colapietro accurately highlights that Royce's conception of the Absolute does not attempt to sustain *moral holidays* but to transform lost causes in the most genuine ones.¹⁴ Another instance turns on James' view of Royce's temperament as *healthy*. This is openly mistaken because it does not consider that Royce continuously employs the conception of the natural as a stage to be overcome. Consequently, contrary to James' interpretation, Royce rejects once-born philosophy and develops a twice-born one.

On the opposite side, meanwhile, Royce erroneously interprets one of James's philosophical cores to revolve around the notion that moral redemption can have a

religious aspect. Furthermore, Oppenheim and Royce think that it is possible to supplement James' conception of religion with a social ideal source of religious insight. Therefore, they would take James' pearl (the vital faith) and the conceptions of loyalty and church to make the religious experience more adequate.

In my view James and Royce converge on two essential issues: firstly, both sharply distinguish religion and *mere* morality; secondly, both stress the importance of the dark side of the existence. Regarding the first issue, I noted above not only that James draws this distinction without any attempt to later reconcile morality and religion, but that Royce establishes a distinction between moral and religion only to attempt to unify them through his theory of loyalty. Meanwhile, the second issue reveals an important coincidence: that their conceptions of "natural man" (Royce) and "sick souls" (James) have some similarities. In other words, both conceptions need a kind of redemption; the condition of the natural man and of the sick soul must be overcome and this is *primarily* a religious task.¹⁵

Despite this convergence my argument is that James' and Royce's conceptions cannot be coherently complemented (as sustains Royce and nowadays Oppenheim). They entail two contrary views of religion: justification by faith alone, on the one hand, and justification by works, on the other. For James, salvation presupposes faith and faith requires relaxation and not action. In other words, the state of faith is all that one needs to have a religion. He thinks that morality brings anxiety about individual action while religion essentially brings relaxation. On the other hand, Royce acknowledges a role for faith in *SRI*. His mistake, from a Jamesian framework, lies in trying to supplement faith with action because it destroys the essential psychological task of religion: to bring peace to

¹⁴ Colapietro (2011).

¹⁵ There are also non-religious redemptions for James in the *Varieties*. They are, however, beyond the scope of my work.

individuals through their relationships with "higher powers."

The decisive question is the following: is it necessary to link religion and morality? Regarding this question I have shown that James thinks that it is not necessary to join religion and morality and that eventually moralism destroys faith. On the other hand, Royce sustains that without morality one cannot grasp the complexity of religious experience. So, how can one decide between these contrary approaches?

I think that two topics are important for this analysis: first, some issues that James deals with in the *Varieties*; and second, the relevance of James' and Royce's Protestant background. Regarding the first, James in the *Varieties* magisterially shows that there are several forms of religiosity: the once-born, the sick souls and the twice-born. In other words, the point of James' *Varieties* does not revolve mainly around his individualism but around the descriptive pluralism he offers in his phenomenology of the religious souls. Without attempting a detailed analysis of James' view, one can appreciate a pluralistic endeavor to capture essential features of religion.

One could say, then, that Jamesian pluralism fits better with the modern world than Royce's moral monism. But I think that there is something more: James' view depicts a more empirical sensibility and this sensibility grasps better the irreducibility of religious feelings than moral monism. In other words, there can be some links between morality and religion, to take Royce's purposes, but these are *contingent* links. This contingency is shown in the heart of James' *Varieties*: healthy souls, for example, need some kind of moral milieu to develop. On the other hand, sick souls need some kind of anti-moralistic redemption. Consequently, *morality is not essential for religion*. Therefore, James' pluralism and James' *Varieties* as well seem to be more sensitive to the many faces of religious experiences.

What is the core of religion? Morality has only contingent ties with religion. Another possibility is to appeal to faith. James shows that only faith can be considered a nucleus shared by several religious temperaments: first, the healthy ones are the examples of pure faith to the extent they trust that everything is going well in the universe; second, the sick souls need a strong faith to overcome their natural tendency to morbidity; finally, the twice born, who have recovered because they had faith. So, the nucleus of religion turns on faith and justification by faith, which have indispensable ties with religious feelings, while works and justification by works alone have contingent links with religion.

How does this account relate to the Protestant background of James and Royce? In my view Royce did not see something that James clearly perceives: the religious power of individuals. Confronted with an age of growing secularization James radicalizes the best aspect of the Reformation, conceiving that, in religion, everyone is a pastor:

The pivot round which the religious life, as we have traced it, revolves, is the interest of the individual in his private personal destiny. Religion, in short, is a monumental chapter in the history of human egotism. The gods believed in—whether by crude savages or by men disciplined intellectually—agree with each other in recognizing personal calls. Religious thought is carried on in terms of personality, this being, in the world of religion, the one fundamental fact. To-day, quite as much as at any previous age, the religious individual tells you that the divine meets him on the basis of his personal concerns (James (1902) 472).

This is why James sounds paradoxically more modern than Royce who explicitly looks to conciliate modern thought with Christian creeds: "can the modern man consistently hold a Christian creed?" (Royce 2001 [1913] 65). Royce is still trapped with an old vocabulary ("atonement," "original sin" above all "Church") while James, in the words of Charles Taylor, prefigures our

post-Durkheimian era.¹⁶ To put it another way, Royce is still talking with words that reference a Catholic tradition prior to the Reformation. On this point I openly disagree with Oppenheim (1987: 311) who sustains that Royce's Protestant background causes a shortcoming in his philosophy. On the contrary, he was not Protestant enough to see the power of individuals.

What, then, is the problem with the use of the term Church? There are several problems in Royce's thought with this term. First, his conception of church depends on his conception of morality and, therefore, the church—invisible or ideal—is a community of moral agents. This does not allow him to understand the sick souls, for example, as a religious phenomenon as described by James; second, derived of the first, the idea of church as a community of moral agents puts aside faith as the essential core of religion; finally, Royce puts aside the best aspects of *SRI*—it does not deal with revelation—highlighting that Christianity is the superior religion of loyalty in *PC*. Consequently, his conception of a natural religion surrenders before Christianity.¹⁷ As I have said before moral can have a contingent link with religion, but Royce's conception of church does not grasp this phenomenon because it interprets the connection between moral and religion as necessary.

Conclusion

I have examined three approaches of Royce's mature philosophy to James' conception of religion. In *WJ* he acknowledges James' influence on his philosophy and establishes a distinction between religion and morality. After that, he departs from James' philosophy in *SRI* dealing only with the James of the *Varieties*. In other words, in *SRI* Royce goes beyond James. Meanwhile in *PC* Royce presents their works as opposites: an individual account of religious experience vs. a social explanation of religious experience. Therefore, in some ways Royce writes *PC* against James. In *SRI* and *PC* as well, Royce puts aside the James of the "Will to Believe" and criticizes the James of the *Varieties*. Moreover, he does not recover the distinction he made between morality and religion within James' work.

I have attempted to point out that Royce is mistaken in his interpretation of James (the opposition between individual and social views). What is at stake between them is the clash between the idea of justification by faith and the idea of justification by works respectively. Within this frame I have tried to show that James's philosophy of religion fits better with the modern religious pluralism, on the one hand, and that the *Varieties* help us to establish a contingent relationship between religion and moral, on the other hand.

¹⁶ See Charles Taylor (2002).

¹⁷ See Footnote 12.

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RELIGIOUS INSTINCTS AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF INQUIRY IN PEIRCE'S PRAGMATISM

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Between Peirce's 1898 lectures known as "Reasoning and the Logic of Things" and his last published essay in 1908 "A Neglected Argument for the Reality of God" he introduces an emphasis on instinct. In the briefest of terms, Peirce collects instinctive beliefs and sentiments, like those of Scottish Common Sense philosophy, in his extended argument for the quality and expansion of knowledge through inquiry. "Reasoning and the Logic of Things" focuses on the necessity of transformation of conceptual forms for the continuing expansion of scientific reasoning. In that exercise Peirce fails to find a suitable content or ground to sustain that transformation. However, in "A Neglected Argument" it appears that a religious instinct, the reality of God, constitutes a central role in grounding Peirce's logic and expansion of knowledge, and making a step toward validating the logic of pragmatism.

The development of Peirce's conception of pragmatism and pragmatism has captured the interest of many scholars, like Phillip Wiener, who tracks Peirce's evolutionary thinking in its Darwinian and Lamarckian forms.¹ Wiener concludes that Peirce's notion of inquiry does not consistently follow an evolutionary model, unlike Spencer. Wiener cites a 1909 letter from Peirce to Arthur Lovejoy because it reveals a "different mainspring to his evolutionism." Peirce writes,

To me there is an additional argument in the favor of objective chance – I say to me because the argument supposes the reality of God, the Absolute, which I think the majority of intellectual men do not very confidently believe. It is that the universe of Nature seems much grander and more worthy of its creator, when it is conceived of, not as completed at the outset, but as such that from the merest chaos with

nothing rational in it, it grows by an inevitable tendency more and more rational. It satisfies my religious instinct far better; and I have faith in the religious instinct. (Wiener, 350)

The consideration of a creator God discovered within the "universe of Nature" through inquiry follows a long trajectory in Peirce's thought, taking into account his early essay "The Place of Our Age in the History of Reason" (1863). The puzzle is fitting this trajectory together with the essays on cognition in 1868 and the logic of science essays such as "The Fixation of Belief" (1877) in which Peirce refines his critique of authority as a means of fixing belief, a method he explicitly associates with Church doctrine and discipline. The tension apparent in the essays from 1863 to 1878 concerns the recognition of a community's standards (belief in God, for example) and the philosophical challenges of avoiding the false closure of beliefs through tenacity, authority, or apriorism, arriving at inquiry modeled on the self-correcting movement of scientific reasoning.

Two questions appear central to Peirce's thinking. One is how our thinking overcomes a previous tradition without merely negating it, as he criticizes Descartes for doing. The other is handling the consequences of adopting Kant's critical philosophy, that all conceptions are in the mind, but taking it more thoroughly than Kant by excluding the noumenal realm as a limit to inquiry. Peirce's pragmatism, which he re-articulates as pragmatism from 1905, moves between scholastic realism and a completely critical philosophy. The move is not an *aufgehoben* producing a new model, but an inquiry into how these two traditions are dually constitutive of inquiry. I claim that occupying this space entails a transformation of inquiry and of the inquirer. Instincts, guiding ideas or principles that emerge in thought apart from desires or wishes, become the objects for inquiry and increasing self-control of thought and practice. Hence self-control, the act of discovering the "real" within one's own practice, is similar to the goal of scientific inquiry. Self-control of reason is possible only with this basis in instinct. Complete knowledge, Peirce says, is the condition of habits of thought in such close

¹ Philip Wiener "The Evolutionism of Peirce" *Journal of the History of Ideas* Vol. 7, no. 3 (June 1946)

correspondence with the real that no further self-control is possible, wherethere remains no error or occasion for regret.² (EP2, 237) Instinctive beliefs, those ideas “we cannot help but believe” are the content for initiating the movement toward this kind of self-control. While Peirce and James are agreed that any belief, religious or otherwise, can only be described in terms of its potential expression in action, for Peirce this means a movement through inquiry to discover a normative character. James's pragmatism is problematic because its orientation is dependent on where the will arbitrarily locates itself.³ This will not satisfy Peirce because inquiry is only successful if it discovers an orienting teleology, and the only sign of this is the growth of self-controlled action.

In this essay I begin by tracking the transformation of Peirce's notion of inquiry from “The Place of Our Age” to “The Fixation of Belief” which lays the ground for pragmatism. I next trace the movement from pragmatism to pragmaticism via the role of instinct, and then conclude by showing how the content of Peirce's religious faith and his instinctive love for the church and the reality of God shapes the telos of inquiry, a telos that is evident in the transformation of the inquirer, most poignantly described in “A Neglected Argument for the Reality of God.”

² References to Peirce's writings use the following convention: *The Essential Peirce Vol. I and II* (Indiana University Press, 1992, 1998) are EP 1 and 2 followed by page. *Writings of C.S. Peirce A Chronological Edition* (Indiana University Press, 1982) is abbreviated CE followed by volume and page. *Reasoning and the Logic of Things*, eds Ketner and Putnam (Harvard, 1992) is shown as RLT and page.

³ See Gail Kennedy “Pragmatism, Pragmaticism, and the Will to Believe - - A Reconsideration” *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol 55, No. 14 (July 1958). She points out the pre-pragmatic force of “The Will to Believe” and the connection between “the right to believe” and James's conviction of the indeterminate nature of reality. (581)

From “The Place of Our Age in Reasoning” to “The Fixation of Belief”

Peirce's Kantian and Christian convictions constitute the core of an essay he wrote in 1863 for a high school reunion in Cambridge. In this complex speech Peirce outlines his basic convictions as an intellectual and scientist. For later readers the element that is most striking is his recognition that Kant's great accomplishment was his methodic doubt, the key to his *Kritik*, searching for the more insoluble doubt in the questions of “Immortality, Freedom, and God.” (CE 1,104) Kant asks the Humean question “how do we know our innate ideas are true?” not in order to dismiss such skepticism, but to extract the greatest possible nourishment from it. Peirce claims that progress in modern thought has stagnated because it has separated itself from “its ancient mother,” the church. By rejecting the church, and hence awareness of its place in the larger story of reasoning, modern mind is floundering without real doubt to orient it. Peirce takes his stand: “The only cord which ever bound them, and which belonged to either [modern thought and the dark ages] is Christianity. Since the beginning of Christianity the growth of civilization has had six stages.” (CE1.105) Peirce dwells in these stages in order to rehabilitate modern mind in the context of the history of reason, which coalesces into two driving questions:

The first is, is Christianity a fact of consciousness merely, or one of the external world? And this shall be answered by the end of our own age. The second is, is this predicate true to the understanding merely, or also to the senses? And this, if we may look forward so far, will be answered by Christ's coming to rule his kingdom in person. And when that occurs, religion will no longer be presented objectively, but we shall receive it by direct communication with him. (CE 1.114)

This overt Christian idealism seems far removed from Peirce's later articles on the logic of science. Until, that is, we focus on the way Peirce portrays science as an exercise principally concerned with exploring the deepest doubt possible to the modern mind – its own

method. That method can be validated as a reliable and coherent means of raising itself to self-critical doubt only in light of its approach to an articulated end or telos. In "The Fixation of Belief" Peirce critiques inquiry that self-deceptively searches into false objects, making a show of unlocking doors it has surreptitiously hidden the keys to in its pocket, or exhibits the false trust that scattering interest like a broadcast sower will generate scientific progress. For science to progress it must engage its most elemental doubt, the doubt of its own method. This entails an overarching frame of reference, a guiding conviction. Bringing this guiding conviction, a vague truth, to further clarity is a goal of inquiry. This process would go some way to answering the first question above by illuminating the difference between inquiry enclosed within "consciousness merely," and inquiry oriented toward an "external world".

The concluding section in "Fixation" hones in on common methods of fixing belief and their attendant errors. Tenacity, holding a belief arbitrarily, is undone by the social impulse; authority, promulgating a set of beliefs for the good order of the community, fails when experience loosens the totalizing grip of enforced belief. Peirce writes "the willful adherence to a belief, and the arbitrary forcing of it upon others, must, therefore, both be given up." (EP1, 118) Peirce associates *apriorism* with intellectual taste, and these beliefs change rapidly demonstrating that "sentiments in their development will be very greatly determined by accidental causes." (EP1, 119) The arbitrary nature of these sentiments shows their ungrounded character, and he restates his conviction that our thought must be fixed "by some external permanency – by something upon which our thinking has no effect" to overcome such an accidental character. (EP1, 120)

It is important to note that in cataloguing the errors of each method of fixing belief Peirce does not challenge the content of the beliefs. Indeed, the description of instinctive beliefs developed in his later essays reflect

some aspect of each method. Instinctive beliefs guide the lives of most people (authority), carry their own credibility (apriorism), and are evidences of the real if followed out diligently despite the criticism of doubters (tenacity). The difference is that beliefs arising from the erroneous methods are mixed with the doubts of those methods, whereas *no doubts arise* from the method of scientific reasoning. Inquirers cannot pursue this method wrongly, making an essential step in the transformation of inquiry in two ways. First, since the method does not generate doubt it can be used to pursue occasions of doubt that arise from the content of beliefs; second, the framing character of teleological beliefs now becomes a part of the orienting fabric of scientific inquiry. Kant's questions of God, freedom, and immorality are in the offing, but these must arise as genuine doubts within the process of methodological and self-critical scientific inquiry.

In Peirce's later essays "instinct" expands on the goods of the three methods he dismisses – fixing upon ideas and holding them despite challenges (tenacity), explicating communally orienting beliefs that change only very slowly (authority), and believing as one is inclined to believe as a guide to truth (apriorism). These virtues are brought within the scientific method by focusing on public criticism, the fallibility of all knowledge claims, and strictly excluding personal preference or willful belief for private (and hence opaque) reasons. This is further evidence that his method of inquiry is discovering an external permanency in thought, because even these errors are now instructive and positive examples for increasing self-controlled inquiry.

Instincts in the Development of Pragmatism

The historical appearance of "pragmatism" in the August 26, 1898 lecture by William James follows the remarkable success of Peirce's Cambridge lectures, "Reason and the Logic of Things" in March of that same year. Ketner and

Putnam, in their fine introduction to the published version of these lectures, note that the event also was pivotal for Royce. (RLT 36) Although auspicious, the happy birth of pragmatism was short lived if we consider that in the 1905 *Monist* essays Peirce distances himself from the doctrine of pragmatism found in "literary journals."⁴ In published essays, "What Pragmatism Is" and "Issues of Pragmatism", and unpublished work Peirce intended for a third essay, "The Basis of Pragmatism", Peirce expands on the role of instinct as a principle difference between his understanding of pragmatism and that which developed from James's popularizing work.

Instincts are prominent in "Reason and the Logic of Things". For example, in Lecture four, "The First Rule of Logic" Peirce says, "one thing is needful for learning the truth, and that is a hearty and active desire to learn what is true." (RLT 170) This is a sentiment, an acritical orientation to seeking "eternal verities." Science cannot provide this kind of orientation because there is no proposition in science that answers to the conception of belief. "[F]ull belief," Peirce says in the first lecture, "is willingness to act upon the proposition in vital crises . . . and matters of vital importance must be left to sentiment, that is, to instinct." (RLT 112) Reasoning begins with what we already think as the beginning of increasing self-control. Instincts provide the ground for this development since they are beyond the thinking of any individual, and also because they are not static. Peirce writes

Instinct is capable of development and growth, - though by a movement which is slow in the proportion to which it is vital; and this development takes place upon lines which are altogether parallel to those of reasoning. . . . Not only is it of the same nature as the development of cognition; but it chiefly takes place through the instrumentality of cognition. The soul's deeper parts can only be reached through its surface. (RLT 122)

⁴ John Dewey, "The Pragmatism of Peirce" *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods*, Vol. 13, No. 26 (Dec. 21, 1916) pg.710.

Inquiry into "vital" sentiments and inquiry in science is crucial for logic, which is seen only in its application within the self-critical refining of habits of action and belief. The vitality of instinct lies in its being an object of inquiry without being an arbitrary product of thought. Peirce's main insight in the paragraph above is the continuity between the development of instinct and cognition as the same that operates in scientific inquiry. In the context of both science and instinct inquiry seeks the law-like regularity subtending thought, that is, the real. The force of instinct leads to the desire for self-control as our practice that deviates from "what we cannot but believe" generates regret. Science does not carry this same motive force – we don't regret believing in a wrong hypothesis -- but science does exemplify the success of probabilistic inquiry and recognizing error. Time, the reality that inquiry is always destabilized toward the future, is the nearest corollary to the motivation to self-correction arising from instincts. The reality of time is the basis of all scientific explanation, but scientific inquiry alone cannot explain the impetus discovered in reasoning. Science, as an exercise in the method of cognition, has its place in the approach to "the soul's deeper parts" mentioned above, but science cannot supply the goal of inquiry, which is advancing self-control and discovering the real which is accessible through inquiry into what we cannot help but believe.⁵

Instinct in inquiry takes on a new character in Peirce's 1905 *Monist* essays. For Peirce "What pragmatism is" is an occasion for the development of pragmatism. Only through the errors of pragmatism is this next level of precision possible. In fact, the undisciplined thought appearing in "literary journals" precipitates he says a "sort of cross between a dialogue and a catechism, but a good deal liker the latter". (EP 2, 338)

⁵ See Sandra Rosenthal "On the Epistemological Significance of What Peirce is Not" *Transactions of the C.S. Peirce Society*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (Winter, 1979), especially page 24 where she writes that for Peirce "the objects within our world do not copy the independently real but rather emerge through our modes of grasping the independently real."

In response to the third question of this catechism, Peirce pronounces that his doctrine focuses on “a series of problems capable of investigation” by “its retention of a purified philosophy; secondly, its full acceptance of the main body of our instinctive beliefs; and thirdly, its strenuous insistence upon the truth of scholastic realism.” (EP 2, 338-9) Readers aware of the role of 2nds in Peirce’s triads will note the placement of instinctive beliefs in this description. Preserving philosophy for science turns on the content of instincts! In a crucial sentence he connects the product of instincts in self-controlled practice to the product of scientific inquiry:

Now, just as conduct controlled by ethical reason tends toward fixing certain habits of conduct, the nature of which does not depend upon an accidental circumstances, and in that sense may be said to be destined; so, thought, controlled by a rational experimental logic, tends to the fixation of certain opinions, equally destined, the nature of which will be the same in the end (EP2,342).

The essence of thought is the convergence possible due to the reality of its object, a movement connected to a test of his cosmological theory to the point that it is either “sustained or exploded” by its outcome. The incarnational component in Peirce’s inquiry is most evident when he says “thirdness can have no concrete being without action; as a separate object on which to works its government, just as action cannot exist without the immediate being of feeling on which to act.” (EP2, 345) The spirit of discipline, self-control over thinking, is the goal of inquiry from the beginning of Peirce’s work. This is achieved only in objective thought that aims at an end of thirdness manifested materially in the lives of inquirers. Such concrete being that reflects a “destined” end is, I think for Peirce, immortality.

In the following *Monist* essay, “Issues of Pragmatism”, Peirce praises Thomas Reid as a philosopher well focused on the content of instinctive beliefs.⁶ (EP 2, 349)

⁶See Christopher Hookway, “Critical Common-Sensism

However, pragmatism has six distinguishing characters from the Philosophy of Common Sense, but it accepts the beginning point that “we have an occult nature of which and of its contents we can only judge by the conduct that it determines, and by phenomena of that conduct”. Inquiry touches this hidden character and changes it:

to say that determination affects our occult nature is to say that it is capable of affecting deliberate conduct; and since we are conscious of what we do deliberately, we are conscious habitualiter [by approximation] of whatever hides in the depths of our nature; and it is presumable . . . that a sufficiently energetic effort of attention would bring it out.

The object of reasoning resolves into relating all inferences to “one guiding principle.” (EP 2, 347-8) Translating acritical inferences (instincts) into products of logical argumentation, therefore, is a work of reasoning that alone manifests the affective influence on our occult nature from which we are able to discover the telos of reason by following the phenomena of self-control.

Transformation of Inquiry and the Reality of God

The third essay Peirce planned for the *Monist* on “The Basis of Pragmatism” was never completed. The six extant drafts show him casting around, at times wildly, for a platform for his logic. I think his effort to ground his logic issued in his last published work, “A Neglected Argument for the Reality of God.” This essay tracks, in surprisingly existential terms, the transformation of the instinctive belief in God into a piece of logical argumentation.⁷ God, an “infinitely incomprehensible

and Rational Self-Control” *Nous*, Vol. 24, No. 3 (June 1990) for the claim that Peirce was an adherent of common-sense from the 1860s.

⁷ See Paul Forster *Peirce and the Threat of Nominalism* (Cambridge, 2011) for an excellent description of abduction. His point can be included to support the abductive claim that the instinctive belief in the reality of God is a test for the validity of his logic. 134ff.

object," provides an orienting character to inquiry by "supplying an ideal for life, and a "thoroughly satisfactory explanation of his whole threefold environment." (EP 2, 439) Telescoping the essay a bit, we read in section V that a "trained man of science" would accept that

an individual soul with its petty agitations and calamities is a zero except as filling its infinitesimal place and accepting its little utility as its entire treasure, . . . and bless God for the law of growth, with all the fighting it imposes upon him – Evil, i.e., what it is man's duty to fight, being one of the major perfections of the Universe. In that fight he will endeavor to perform just the duty laid upon him, and no more. Though his desperate struggles should issue in the horrors of his route, and he should see the innocents who are dearest to his heart exposed to torments, frenzy, and despair, destined to be smirched with filth, and stunted in their intelligence, still he may hope that it be best for them, and will tell himself that in any case the secret design of God will be perfected through their agency; and even while still hot from battle, will submit with adoration to His Holy will. He will not worry because the Universes were no constructed to fit the scheme of some silly scold. (EP 2, 445)

I conclude this essay with Peirce's words which, for me, are almost as puzzling as Phillip Wiener found his "faith in the religious instinct." I am convinced that Peirce is the trained man of science he refers to, and so agree with Anderson that the "[NA] is the fullest attempt he made to illustrate the continuity of religion and science, to show that they need not be fundamentally antagonistic tendencies in one's life, despite the tension between their spirits," and that Peirce's "critical common-sensism attempts to bring the full belief of instinct and practice to the provisional belief of critical inquiry; the two are not reduced one to the other but are seen as dimensions of a fuller system of belief – a life."⁸ (SOS 137) Peirce writes in MS L224 "the human intellect is of the kin of the Creative Spirit", and this kinship is discovered only through the transformation of inquiry into a growing, vital image of the reality of God expressed in human action and the obedient service of inquiry.

⁸ Douglas Anderson *Strands of System* (Purdue University Press, 1995)

II. DEMOCRACY: A PRAGMATIST APPROACH

RORTY AND DEMOCRACY

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I. Politics and Philosophy

Modern political mass democracies are not perfect at all. We can claim lots of their negative features (from the decline of the Spenglerian culture into civilization; through the revolt of the masses described by Ortega; to the culture industry of Adorno and to the critique of the existing social order by Foucault and more), but it would be difficult to deny some of their extremely important positive features. First, these kinds of mass democracies decreased so much suffering and pain caused by nature and society that it compensates for the remained old and new social constrains. Second, the Western-type political democracy is the best socio-economic formation, because there is not any other one working, functioning in practice in a better way nowadays. Finally, it is the best one, because it involves also the possibilities of its own development, which means that it can be even better in the future.

On the basis of his historical experiences and theoretical considerations, Rorty was a believer of Western democracies. According to Rorty, *history is also contingent* (beside language, self and community, etc.), and the change of vocabularies (quasi Wittgensteinian „language-games“) cannot be taken as a result of human will or argumentation. Human being as a finite and radically timely and historical being rather loses and acquires the habit of using some vocabularies.

The same happens also in politics, since it is already clear for the supporters and representatives of western democracies that ideological and political vocabularies change from time to time. If we would like to maintain

democracy, according to Rorty we have to insist on certain principles and institutions built on these principles, at least up to a historical experiment. However, it is not a lucky choice to choose or build these main political principles from moral values and basic moral principles because of two reasons. On the one hand, these values will break down in the first, serious social crisis. On the other hand, there is a theoretically unbridgeable gap between the generality of moral values, principles and the individual situations of concrete decisions, actions, and it always makes it difficult to apply these values and principles. (As it is well-known, Aristotle has already seen this problem in the field of morality and tried to solve it with the help of phronesis.) That is why it is much better to build democracy on such procedural rules and structures, institutions of power *empirically accepted* by the majority of people, which *practically have already been proved* as good and functioning ones. These procedures, structures and institutions will always be filled up with concrete political, ideological content by actual participants of the political, ideological arena.

It follows from this that *Rorty held that with democracy identified justice and freedom are more important in society than some kind of philosophical truth. He claimed the priority of democracy not only to the metaphysical type of foundational philosophy but also to his own, self-creating philosophy, in other words to every philosophy.* His imagination regarding liberal utopia was an always changing, developing Freedom:

A historicist and nominalist culture of the sort I envisage would settle instead for narratives which connect the present with the past, on the one hand, and with utopian futures, on the other. More important, it would regard the realization of utopias, and the envisaging of still further utopias, as an endless process - an endless, proliferating realization of Freedom, rather than a convergence toward an already existing Truth. (CIS xvi)

It is worth emphasizing here that the first paper („Cultural Politics and the Question of the Existence of God”) of Rorty’s posthumous volume of his „Philosophical Papers”, which has almost the same title as the volume itself, „Philosophy As Cultural Politics” also strengthens his above mentioned views. Let us think over this title: *Philosophy As Cultural Politics!* Rorty shows already with his title that politics is the most important thing for him *in the public sphere*. It is, because he handles every philosophy as a special type of politics. With this standpoint („philosophy as cultural politics”) Rorty *not only* draws the consequences of the latest development of European philosophy (early Heideggerian phenomenology, Gadamerian hermeneutics, late Wittgensteinian and Derridian approach, etc.). He *not only* makes philosophy a kind of politics, he *not only* emphasizes that every human feature is a social construction, *but* he makes philosophy and politics connected directly to morality. The social welfare and democracy, that is the *social good* will be namely the *highest moral good, the main goal of philosophy understood as cultural politics* in this way in the public sphere!

This is the reason, why Rorty supports *liberal democracy*, as a society where philosophy can really become cultural politics. He saw this type of society – contrary to a conservative society – as an open society: open for the challenges, open for the changes, open for the future. This is a society which includes even the possibilities of its own future development.

II. Democracy

As a pragmatist, Rorty claims that our life is first of all practice, even theory belongs to practice, and our main aim is to improve our life. To make our life continuously better means on the social level that we have to promote building democracy. The importance of politics in Rorty’s oeuvre is out of question. Although it became important for him gradually, he clearly saw from publishing his book, *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* (1989) on that politics is more important than not only philosophy but even science.

The late Rorty have seen Dewey as his philosophical hero. He called him one of the most important thinkers of the twentieth century beside Wittgenstein and Heidegger already in the *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (cf. PMN 5.). We can mention three dimensions where Dewey’s ideas have especially influenced Rorty’s thinking: the question of truth, the concept of philosophy and the theory and practice of democracy. Let us focus here exclusively on democracy and, as a kind of introduction, allude to some ideas of János Boros’ paper, „Dewey and Rorty”:

To maintain and develop democracy, this is the best and noblest task for today intellectuals and philosophers. Dewey and Rorty agree that philosophers should turn their attention toward the questions of a just society. Rorty accepts and develops the idea of Dewey, that with the constitution of the United States of America a new epoch in human history began, or more precisely, the history of mankind restarted. The first modern democracy was founded, in which human beings are recognized as equals in law and they receive the same respect and the same possibilities to develop their own life. The constitution guarantees, that no tyrants can take over the political power, that the elections are free, that presidents cannot be longer on the top of the administration as two terms. Dewey discovers, and Rorty applauds, that democracy is the form of government, which correspond the best to human nature. Democracy is not only a political structure, but „it is primarily a mode of

associated living, of conjoint communicated experience". Rorty argues that although there is no foundation for democracy, democracy is the common search for justice. In searching justice we can have, what we cannot have in searching truth: agreement, where we can be sure, that we have agreement. It is difficult to reach truth, and to know, that we reached it. But we can realize when we have justice. The task of intellectuals should be to work on justice in the constitutionally just society.¹

Every social phenomena is connected to the centrally positioned democracy both in Dewey's and Rorty's philosophy. Nevertheless, we have to emphasize that Dewey has represented the *deliberative* but Rorty the *competitive* interpretation of democracy. According to this distinction, which originates from Richard Posner's book, *Law, Pragmatism and Democracy*,² the strongly theoretical and moral *deliberative approach* emphasizes first of all the will of the people and the personal rights of the citizens to participation in the political life. These rights come together of course with the obligation of active participation in the political life (orientation in political questions, taking part in political discussions and making decisions in political questions after thoroughgoing deliberations, etc.), which is the realization of the so called positive freedom. The *competitive model*, on the contrary, is oriented on the practical life and emphasizes rather the institutional side of democracy. This approach does not expect the acceptance of politics' priority and the active participation in the public life from the citizens, and accepts that citizens make their political decisions with taking into account also their special interests. The competitive model of democracy corresponds rather to the existing representative democracy and prefers the

negative freedom of citizens to their positive freedom. This model allows great space for realization of personal life plans, and does not regard it as an anti-democratic attitude if somebody does not want to deal with politics at all. Beside all of this, the competitive democracy still keeps the political changes within the checked frames by the help of the political parties which control each other and by the legal system which restrains abuses. Rorty's conception of democracy stands closer to the competitive model, preferred also by Posner, both according to his texts and according to these texts' contents, and it takes the wind out of his critics sails, because they called Rorty to account for such expectations, to which Rorty did not want to come up at all.³ In the background of Rorty's choice can be found a logical consideration that it is really difficult to build a *true* democracy without democrats, but it is still worth starting the social change at some point. The chicken-and-egg paradox is namely a fictitious one! It may indeed appear that it is impossible to build democratic institutions without democrats, and democratic personalities cannot be created without democratic institutions. *Although the birth of a socially considerable population of democratic personalities is a historically long and slow process, full of obstacles and regressions, and it is mostly a result of individual happenings and developments, some democratic statesmen can create a more or less democratic system of institutions within a historically much shorter period of time if they have the proper political power.* Naturally, the first institutions of a new social formation are not identical with the latter, developed institutions of the same formation (e.g. think of the difference between the institutions of the early

¹ Boros János: „Dewey and Rorty”. In: *Pragmatism Today*, Vol. 1. Issue 1. p. 6.

http://www.pragmatismtoday.eu/summer2010/Boros-Dewey_and_Rorty.pdf.

² Richard Posner: *Law, Pragmatism and Democracy*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003.

³ Pápay György argues for such an interpretation of Rorty's political thinking in his excellent article. (Pápay György: „Demokrácia illúziók nélkül”. In: *Filozófia a globalizáció árnyékában: Richard Rorty*. Ed.: Nyíró Miklós. Budapest: L'Harmattan Kiadó-Magyar Filozófiai Társaság, 2010, 94-109.)

and the present capitalism). However, the creation and maintenance of a democratic system of institutions as long as possible, means always a step forward in connection with experiencing the democratic form of living, with building-up the necessary democratic abilities, and in this way with evolving the new democratic personalities.

After all of these introductory sentences, it is worth collecting Rorty's philosophical presumptions and the most important general characteristics of his *liberal utopia*, in order to get a comprehensive picture about his conception of democracy. We will see that these characteristics are going to prove also his commitment on the side of the competitive model. If we look at Rorty's *philosophical premises* regarding democracy, we can enumerate minimum four:

1. On the one hand, it is obvious for Rorty that pragmatists have to replace „Greek and Kantian dualisms between permanent structure and transitory content with the distinction between the past and the future“. (PSH 31.)

2. On the other hand, Rorty does not accept any kind of non-human authority. The only authority which is accepted by Rorty is the human consensus. (Cf. RC xi.) The human consensus, to be created, is essentially the new solidarity, which is a purpose to be achieved, and its objectivity will be given by intersubjective agreements.

3. Rorty's third basic thought in connection with democracy is that democracy cannot exist *in the long run* without economic and social welfare. (Cf. CIS 84, TP 175.) Democracy behaves like philosophy: people are interested in it only after satisfying their needs. It is possible to create a democracy on a social level and for a

long time if the basic human needs are safely satisfied. (Already Aristotle has seen this regarding philosophy.) What is more, we can draw a valid conclusion in the opposite direction, too! If an economic crisis breaks out, or the welfare society gets in danger from any kind of reason, democracy is also in danger. People give up namely very easily their high-pitched values, principles, and many of them can even fall back into the level of animals regarding their relations to each other. (Think of the pilferages done by lots of people after different natural catastrophes – hurricane Katrina, earthquake in Haiti, tsunamis, etc.!))

4. Finally, it is also clear, that lots of things are *contingent* for Rorty, but – if there are exceptions – democracy can be regarded as one of them. Although the realization of his liberal democratic utopia is contingent, its importance was always out of question. This importance has got clearer and clearer after his pragmatic turn, that is for the late Rorty.

If we focus after these philosophical premises on the main characteristics of the Rortyan liberal democracy described as a utopia, then we can see that Rorty, as a consequent pragmatist, uses the relations of past and future also regarding society. We can mention at least five characteristics, which all differ significantly from the characteristics of our present democracies:

1. *The present mass democracies – Rorty's liberal democracy*: Rorty does *not* identify his utopian liberal democracy with any of the existing plural mass democracies. In his opinion, it is a society of the future, this possible liberal democracy which is to be created. Looking at the question from a historical perspective, we can say, that the autarchical and static pre-capitalist societies were replaced by the dynamic capitalist society

featured by expanded reproduction, and in the second half of the 20th century the plural, welfare democracies were born in many western countries. From these western democracies the most developed social formations became information societies for the turn of the century, for the beginning of the 21st century. However, the economic crisis of 2009-2010 has also showed that there are more historical possibilities in front of mankind, and one of them can be Rorty's liberal democracy in the future. Rorty has described this society always as a society of hope and he has always interpreted and characterized it in the relationship to the present, existing democracies.

Rorty had imagined his future democracy on the basis of a high level and general welfare and according to liberal principles. The members and the representatives of liberal democracy, which members will be mostly liberal ironists, have already understood the contingency of the main columns of our social existence (language, self, community), and, on the one hand, they handle separately the public and the private spheres of society. Plus, on the other hand, they strive to create the newer and newer, proliferating forms of Freedom. It follows from this, that this liberal utopia would be, according to Rorty, a society in which irony means contingency, which is the acceptance of the accidental character of the world's happenings. Contingency, understood in this way, is not a negative characteristic, but, on the contrary, contingency has a positive meaning and importance. It would namely assure for us a greater possibility of activity and freedom, which opened a gateway also to the creation of the new type of solidarity.⁴

⁴ *Contingency* means for Rorty „only” the lack of the Absolutum, the necessity of chance, and therefore the human changeability of our world and institutions, plus the recognition all of this. *Contingency* does *not* mean

2. *Traditional solidarity – Rorty's new solidarity*: Rorty has replaced the traditional solidarity, understood essentially as sympathy and based on pre-given, unchangable human nature, with the new solidarity, which is a social aim to be achieved. It means, that this type of solidarity still does not exist, but we have to create it, in forms of intersubjective agreements, and its essence is to increase “our sensitivity to the particular details of the pain and humiliation of other, unfamiliar sorts of people” (CIS xvi.). This new solidarity, as *the permanent expansion of our community*, gives also the essence of moral progress for Rorty.

3. *Private-public disruption's present fact – its conscious realization in the future*: Rorty has sketched the private-public distinction in harmony with the refutation of the pre-given human nature and with the preference of the negative freedom.⁵ *The private-public disruption exists already in the present societies, democracies*, but Rorty votes for its more conscious future realization because of two reasons: it would be desirable to defend more the private sphere of the individuals and their life-world, which is in danger already today, against the „system,” as Habermas calls it, plus because of the realization of the liberal principle, „everything is permissible, that does not harm others”. Our philosopher sees it well, that theoretically it is impossible to reconcile the private and the public vocabularies, but their practical, peaceful coexistence is realizable very much. (CIS xiv.) Such a relative separation of the private sphere assures a much

for Rorty a sceptic behaviour toward our actual value-order, institutions, or such a permanent scepticism which leads to quietism.

⁵ Rorty knows well the fuzziness of this distinction, but he regards it as good enough for distinguishing between the responsibility toward others and ourselves. (Cf. Krémer Sándor: „A filozófia mint kulturális politika”. In: *Filozófia a globalizáció árnyékában*: Richard Rorty. Ed.: Nyíró Miklós. Budapest: L'Harmattan Kiadó-Magyar Filozófiai Társaság, 2010, 112.)

bigger freedom and space for the individual life plans on the international or global level, too. If we want to illustrate the *future proliferating diversity of human freedom*, one of the best examples would be perhaps the almost intransparent and global system of the cultural and scientific connections in our world. An important scientific exploration or conference was an outstanding event one hundred years ago, but today we can experience very important explorations every day in lots of different sciences, and hundreds of conferences, exhibitions, cultural events are organized on a daily basis in the mostly developed regions of the world. In the future this will be the case everywhere and in every field of our social life, not only in the field of sciences and culture. It also shows that the main question for mankind is no more the production of goods which satisfy the basic human needs, but the really serious question is the just distribution and redistribution of the social goods. However, it is not a philosophical, nor a scientific, but it is first of all a *political* question.⁶

4. *Traditional justice based on metaphysics – justice as larger loyalty*: The former paragraph has showed us the main reason for emphasizing social justice, for creation of a more just society. Rorty votes here for John Rawls' solution, on the one hand, and interprets justice in a new way. The new meaning of justice is understood as larger loyalty to a larger community, and Rorty does not want to give any kind of foundation, especially not a metaphysical foundation of justice.⁷

⁶ I have written more about the question in my other article, „Philosophy as Cultural Politics. Richard Rorty's Political Philosophy" (In: *Pragmatist Perspectives*. Acta Philosophica Fennica. Ed. by Sami Pihlström and Henrik Rydenfelt, Vol. 86, 2009. p. 69-81.).

⁷ More about the question in my other article, „Philosophy as Cultural Politics. Richard Rorty's Political Philosophy." (Ibid.)

5. *Traditional rationality – Rorty's new concept or rationality*: Accepting Michael Walzer's distinction between *thick and thin morality*, Rorty creates a new meaning of rationality. Rationality does not mean for him any more a relation to some ultimate principles, but „only" such kind of activity, which is called by Walzer „thinning-our process," and which can lead us to an overlapping consensus in a lucky situation.⁸

Democracy has meant first of all human freedom and social justice for Rorty. Both the idea of *freedom* and *social justice* were supported by him also at the end of the 20th century, in his book, *Achieving Our Country*, what can be regarded as his political testament. (Cf. AOC 45.) In this book (1998) Rorty analyzes the history of the American Left. He has distinguished the traditional, reformist Left from the new, cultural or academic Left. It is true that he has acknowledged the latter's results (e. g. the „closure" of the Vietnam War), but he has considered a really progressive social and political movement, regarding the future of his country, the reformist Left, which was featured also by Dewey. We have to emphasize, that the social-democratic, reformist left-wingism is the organic part of Rorty's liberalism. It is not a surprise of course, for it is well-known, that the American concept of „liberal" means almost the same as the „social-democrat" in Europe. In AOC we can also find a suggestion for the essential question of our epoch: how can a non-democratic society become a democratic one. In Rorty's opinion, the solution for this acute problem is the common power of the interlocked top-down and bottom-up social initiatives (contrary to the Marxist solution which prefers only the bottom-up initiatives), which reinforce each other. (Cf. AOC 53-54.)⁹

⁸ More about the question in my other article, „Philosophy as Cultural Politics. Richard Rorty's Political Philosophy." (Ibid.)

⁹ Bujalos István offers a really detailed interpretation of

However, Rorty himself did not want to create a detailed political philosophy, for in his opinion it is not the philosopher's task. In a liberal democracy it is much more the task of decent men and women, who "sit down around tables, argue things out and arrive at a reasonable consensus" (PSH 112.). It is not the philosopher's task, for he creates theories on the most general level, contrary to the political scientists and politicians. There is a need in this field to harmonize more, different and independent interests, views, and it must not be done neither by philosophers, nor political scientists, but rather by politicians and by the people themselves.

Beyond that, Rorty has claimed that the final and ultimate theoretical, philosophical foundation of politics and democracy is neither possible, nor necessary. It is not possible, because there is nothing like the natural order of things and reasons (cf. e. g. PSH 34. and 36.), and that is why argumentation, justification also does not have a natural, pre-given order. But it is also unnecessary to strive for giving a theoretical foundation of democracy, for there is not any consistent theoretical basis. If we give up namely the metaphysical idea of a pre-given, eternal and unchangeable big-hearted human nature created by God, then it becomes clear that in human beings not only the possibilities of the good, but also the possibilities of the bad are given. Do not think only of the idealized democracy of the ancient Athens or Plato's, Morus' utopian societies, or our own comfortable political mass democracies, but think also of the enormities of the WW I and WW II, that of the Holocaust

and the Gulag camps in the 20th century! *Democracy is only one of the historical possibilities of mankind, and there is not such an all-kind, eternal human nature from which it could be deducted with a logical necessity.* According to the late Rorty, *only our socio-historical experiences serve us as foundations for apprehending that until now democracy is the best, functioning social formation.* It means that democracy cannot and should not be based theoretically, only historically. However, our historical experiences offer us an adequate basis for the conclusion, that we can look at the utopia of the Rortyan liberal democracy as a social aim to be achieved and achievable, for which is worth practically striving.

Anti-foundationalist philosophy professors like myself do not think that philosophy is as important as Plato and Kant thought it. This is because we do not think that the moral world has a structure that can be discerned by philosophical reflection. We are historicists because we agree with Hegel's thesis that "philosophy is its time, held in thought". What Hegel meant, I take it, was that human social practices in general, and political institutions in particular, are the product of concrete historical situations, and that they have to be judged by reference to the needs created by those situations. There is no way to step outside of human history and look at things under the aspect of eternity. (...) The moral of the anti-foundationalist sermon I have been preaching to you is that for countries that have not undergone the secularization that was the most important effect of the European Enlightenment, or that are only now seeing the emergence of constitutional government, the history of Western philosophy is not a particularly profitable area of study. The history of the successes and failures of various social experiments in various countries is much more profitable. If we anti-foundationalists are right, the attempt to place society on a philosophical foundation should be replaced by the attempt to learn from the historical record.¹⁰

AOC in his article, „Rorty a baloldaliságról”. (In: *Filozófia a globalizáció árnyékában: Richard Rorty*. (Ed.: Nyírő Miklós) Budapest: L'Harmattan – Magyar Filozófiai Társaság, 2010, 81-93.)

¹⁰ Richard Rorty: "Democracy and Philosophy". *Kritika & Kontext* 34 (May) 2007. (<http://www.eurozine.com/pdf/2007-06-11-rorty-en.pdf>) p. 5. and 8.

Rorty claims – in harmony with Dewey – that philosophers have to create visions about the future of society and mankind. If he has been able to do it only on an ethnocentric basis, Rorty has still dreamed, on the one hand, such a liberal democracy which would be an inclusivist society contrary to the old type of the exclusivist society, and it would create also a new type of solidarity. (Cf. RC 1-30.) On the other hand, Rorty calls his expected liberal democracy *utopia*. The reason for that is, in my opinion that *contingency* is valid even in connection with his *utopia*, but we cannot say that Rorty does not hold it his most important social aim or a reliable social goal. *Although future is incalculable, but the necessity and importance of his liberal utopia is not contingent for Rorty, only its future realization.* It is obvious that mankind can even destroy itself. Regarding our future, Rorty's liberal democracy can be deemed only one of mankind's possibilities.

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**DEMOCRACY AS A WAY OF LIFE AND DEATH:
RETHINKING PRAGMATISM'S DEMOCRATIC VISION¹**

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"Philosophers make dying their profession."
--Socrates²

This paper is part of a book I am writing called *Existential Pragmatism*. The idea for the book is that pragmatists have something important to say about issues of pressing existential concern—of matters of life and death. In the present paper, I want to show how the pragmatist vision of democracy, in particular, can help us to come to terms, of all things, with our own mortality. To show how the pragmatist conception of democracy can respond to death will point to a current inadequacy with its traditional conception and also point the way toward a new, modified conception that I will develop. I hope to shore up a potential flaw I detect in the pragmatist vision of democracy by showing how it can be modified and improved to help us to deal with the perennial problem of death.

The paper consists of three parts. In the first part, I provide an account of the traditional pragmatist conception of democracy. In the second part, I show how the fact of death would seem to pose the ultimate challenge the traditional conception. In the third part, I sketch the key features of a new pragmatist vision of democracy and show how the new vision can respond to the fact of death in such a way as to have a distinct

¹ This article is a revised version of a paper I presented at the sixth annual meeting of the Central European Pragmatist Forum in Cadiz, Spain, May 2010. I am grateful to the participants of the conference for their helpful comments and suggestions, especially to Larry Hickman, Miklós Nyírő, and Scott Pratt. This article is dedicated to the memory of Michael Eldridge (1942-2010).

² As quoted by Plato in "Phaedo," in *The Last Days of Socrates*, trans. Hugh Tredennick and Harold Tarrant (London: Penguin Books, 1993), 121.

advantage over the traditional conception. I conclude by calling on pragmatists to adopt my new, modified, existential pragmatist vision of democracy as a supplement to the traditional vision.

Democracy as a Moral Vision

I begin with a reminder of what democracy means for a pragmatist. Everyone knows that it is first and foremost "a way of life," a way of life in which everyone is treated as equal.³ This is the first clue that the pragmatist conception of democracy should pertain to death. For death is a part of life, its end stage; any *way of life*, to be coherent and complete, should have something to say about life at its end stage, about how to *live* up to and within the event of dying.

Another thing to note about the pragmatist conception of democracy is that it is primarily a moral "vision," that is, a *projection* of a way of life. The pragmatist, as Dewey notes, is someone who first develops "moral convictions," as for example the conviction that democracy is good.⁴ The pragmatist, being a philosopher, does not simply wish to see this conviction dogmatically asserted and enforced, however, but wants to know that it is a reasonable and plausible vision to pursue, one that is consistent with the facts. The moral aspiration for a democratic way of life is thus "an intellectualized wish," a reasonable choice, based on a solid and defensible account of the way the world is, according, for example, to "the best science" available.⁵

³ For the famous sentence, "democracy is a way of life," see John Dewey, "Creative Democracy—The Task Before Us," in *The Essential Dewey, Volume 1: Pragmatism, Education, and Democracy*, Ed., Larry A. Hickman and Thomas M. Alexander (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1998), 341. For more on Dewey's conception of equality, in which he holds that "every existence...has something unique and irreplaceable about it" and "must be reckoned with on its own account," see John Dewey, "Philosophy and Democracy," in *The Essential Dewey*, 77-78.

⁴ For the term "vision," see John Dewey, "Philosophy and Democracy," in *The Essential Dewey*, 78. For the phrase, "moral convictions," and its meaning, see *Ibid.*, 73.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 72, 74.

For example, people who believe in democracy believe that each individual either is or can become an autonomous agent, capable of directing him or herself, as well as their society, well. This belief by itself would be fruitless however, if the world were such that everyone was physically determined and no one could change. But if science—for example, the science of evolution—shows that we can change and adapt, we can become educated and improve, then the case for a democratic life, in which each person is able to help direct the whole with insight and maturity, becomes a more reasonable belief, if we can only provide the right conditions for helping individuals to become autonomous.⁶

The pragmatist moral vision, in any case, is one that strives to be consistent with the facts, to be supported by what we know of the world, rather than being a blind desire. In particular, it is a moral vision that seeks to give primacy to the individual, by which I mean that it seeks to persuade us that each person is important and vital, indeed that each person is as important and as vital as any other. As Dewey has said, “individuals will always be the centre and consummation of experience.”⁷ They are what most fully matter in the course of things, and each one in his or her own way.

⁶ Ibid., 76. Here Dewey partially sketches out such an idea. More specifically, he connects the democratic concept of freedom with the concept of a changing universe. See also the preface to *Democracy and Education*, where he links democracy with “evolutionary ideas in the biological sciences,” although the example I mention above also resembles in part what he calls “the superficial explanation” of how democracy relates to education. See John Dewey, *Democracy and Education in The Middle Works of John Dewey, Volume 9: 1899-1924*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University, 1985), 3; 93. In any case, it is a standard account of democracy to see it as requiring educated, autonomous individuals and this account serves to illustrate the point under consideration.

⁷ John Dewey, “I Believe,” in *The Later Works of John Dewey, Volume 14: 1939-1941*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1991), 91.

I borrow a phrase, too, from Dewey’s early philosophy, which I would argue informs this Deweyan emphasis on the individual. The early Dewey is determined “that personality shall not be the playground of natural forces, but shall itself be a moving force counting for something in the universe.”⁸ Dewey finds value in the person, the individual; he would like to believe that each individual is significant and is even somehow essential to the world. The democratic belief is a moral vision about the importance of individuals; and a pragmatist wants to know if it can be supported by the facts.

How Death Challenges the Moral Vision

It is at this point, however, that the pragmatist conception of democracy, as traditionally formulated, begins to show its limitation.⁹ When it comes, above all, to the ultimate challenge of death, to the certain annihilation of the individual, the facts of the world would seem to flatly contradict any way of life that gives primacy, or even any importance, to the individual. The pragmatist vision that each individual (or each personality) shall possess some meaning in the makeup of events is robbed of its realism by the sharp fact of death, which destroys the individual and his person forever, as if he or she counts for nothing, and in fact never even existed in the first place.

⁸ John Dewey, “The Lessons of Contemporary French Literature,” in *The Early Works of John Dewey, Volume 3: 1889-1892*, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1975), 42.

⁹ Charlene Seigfried also sees death as posing a challenge to pragmatism, seeing it “as a limit-concept for the deliberately earth-bound philosophy of pragmatism.” The present paper focuses more specifically on death as potentially restricting pragmatism’s conception of democracy in particular. Later in the paper, I will also speak of death as a restriction that helps us to define individuality. See Charlene Haddock Seigfried, “A Pragmatist Response to Death: Jane Addams on the Permanent and the Transient,” in *Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, Vol. 21, No. 2, 2007, 138.

Let me linger over this last point for a moment. The singular fact of death, its true horror, I take it, is that when death occurs, and we cease to exist, we do not simply cease to exist. We enter a space or zone, so to speak, in which, for all practical purposes, *we never did exist*. If it was possible to think of some actual occurrence that renders any and all occurrences as if they had not, in fact, taken place, then we could perhaps sufficiently understand the predicament of death. From what we know about the world as we grow up and take a serious look around, and especially from the perspective of modern science, it seems that death robs us of everything. It is the total eradication of what actually once was and had substance, a sheer nothing. In it, we enter a kind of blackness in which our entire world is dissolved and destroyed forever. Indeed, so total is death's annihilation that it renders every "what is," as if it never was. For consider: when we die, we enter eternal nothingness; time stops, one moment is as good as the end of all time, and surely by the end of all time, all humans and all records of our very existence will have completely vanished. When we go, we enter a space in which everything is already gone, without anything leaving a trace to remind anyone of the presence of anything having been there at all.

I would like to call this idea that death renders actual things as if they had never been, "negative actuality," in order to have an easy way to refer to a difficult concept throughout the paper. Mersault has in mind something like negative actuality when, at the end of the *Stranger*, he says that "it doesn't much matter whether you die at thirty or at seventy." It makes no difference because death foreshortens every length of time, however long. "It would all come down to the same thing anyway."¹⁰

In addition to negative actuality, what renders death horrible is that *I* must die. As Mersault again says, either way it is *him* that is going to die, "I would still be the one

dying."¹¹ What this means, I take it, is that with each of us dies a world. The unique record of *our* personal experience, so important to each one of us, occurring in our own individual mental life, and wrought into our very bodies and bones, it all goes. Each of us contains within him or herself a world of experience. But all of that—everything of any importance to us, all importance itself—perishes with us. It seems like a pretty hopeless situation for the individual.

I say these things about death with one major qualification, however, remembering the warning of Socrates, who was, at the time when he issued the warning, on death's very door. He said that "To fear death, gentlemen, is no other than to think oneself wise when one is not, to think one knows what one does not know. No one knows whether death may not be the greatest of all blessings for man, yet men fear it as if they knew that it is the greatest of evils. And surely it is the most blameworthy ignorance to believe that one knows what one does not know."¹² In other words, only a fool thinks he knows what death has in store for us. Given this warning from such a wise person, I would not be so foolish as to say that somehow I know for sure that the above description of death, or something like it, is correct. But what I do want to say is that this is the account of death that modern science seems to leave us with; this is what our best known facts *seem* to say. And it to these facts that, as pragmatists, we are supposed to turn, at least according to Dewey, as we try to confirm that our moral vision of democracy is actually a reasonable moral vision, one supported by the facts.

Peering into the face of this version of death, at any rate, how can we possibly consider the individual to count for anything substantial in the course of things? What a naïve illusion it is to suppose that we count for anything. Death will get each of us in the end, you and I will cease

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 114.

¹² Plato, "Apology," in *The Trial and Death of Socrates*, Third Edition, trans. G.M.A. Grube (Indiana/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Co., 2000), 29b, 32.

¹⁰ Albert Camus, *The Stranger*, trans. Matthew Ward (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 114.

to exist, and negative actuality will do its grisly work and it will be as if we never even had existed.

Modifying the Vision

Suppose, then, that these are the facts about death. They upend any moral vision that would have us believe that individuals have real worth and should count for something in existence, should each be capable of directing the course of things in their own special way. For death defined in this way is the ultimate director: it folds the curtain, collapses the set, and destroys all records of the play. As J. Glenn Gray puts it, "death seems to make a mockery of all human potentialities and dreams."¹³

Now a reasonable moral vision about the importance of individuals, one responsive to the facts, would modify itself in light of these facts of the individual's existence. I do not have humility in mind here (nor, I hope, undue pride). I would not say that we should see ourselves as less important after all. On the contrary, seeking to preserve what is best about the moral vision, I would say that we need to find a way that lets us continue to assert the importance of individuals, but in a way consistent with the grim facts of death.¹⁴

¹³ J. Glenn Gray, "The Problem of Death in Modern Philosophy," in *The Modern Vision of Death*, ed., Nathan A. Scott Jr. (Richmond, Virginia: John Knox Press, 1967), 66.

¹⁴ For an alternative pragmatist response to this problem, see Josiah Royce's reflections on this issue. Royce and I agree that significant projects help to make people more memorable individuals. There are, however, differences between our two views, as the remainder of my paper should demonstrate. Royce holds that "the death...which here concerns us is the ending that seems to defeat all the higher types of individual striving known to us." Josiah Royce, *The Philosophy of Josiah Royce*, ed. John K. Roth (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1971), 262. For Royce, death seems to render insignificant our projects, which in fact help to define us as individuals, and thereby to render us insignificant. However, as Royce sees it, the failure of our individuality thus to be achieved in the world points to the reasonable expectation and promise that it will be fulfilled in a life to come in which each person finds an adequate place in the life (and the life project) of the

We know about the pragmatist conception of democracy that one of the ways in which the individual is supposed to get his or her importance is through other individuals. My suggestion for how to modify pragmatism's vision builds on this perspective. In order to more adequately give importance to the individual in a world where death is certain, I believe that we must recognize several principles, which as pragmatists should guide our conduct.

Absolute, or, on a different reading, Royce at least holds that our belief in our own individuality is not thwarted by the fact of death because it is meaningful to think of ourselves as now living in the Absolute and counting for something within its life and its works. See Josiah Royce, *The Conception of Immortality* (Cambridge: The Riverside Press, 1900), 78-80. One difference between Royce's view and my own is the fact that Royce downplays the role of the individual as such, with her unique, idiosyncratic qualities, preferring instead to see the individual in light of her general projects, and he seems to say that it is the self as defined by these projects who lives on after death. As Royce says, "it is, in fact, the ideally extended self and not, in general, the momentary self, whose life is worth living, whose sense outlasts our fleeting days." My own view, however, while it recognizes the role of one's projects in getting one remembered, emphasizes the importance of remembering, and keeping alive in our memories, the peculiar, unique self, or what Royce calls the momentary self. Even so, for both Royce and myself, there is something vital in the act of remembering, which to some extent prevents personal loss, and this vital aspect depends on the people who are doing the remembering, or people who make up what Royce calls "the community," although this would be true in different respects for Royce and I, since Royce focuses on the individual who remembers past achievements of others in order to see herself as part of them, while I focus on the person who remembers others who are dead in order to afford these others a continuing measure of individuality (as well as on the individual who strives herself to be memorable). See Josiah Royce, *The Philosophy of Josiah Royce*, 373, 372-373. For more on Royce and death, see Matthew A. Foust, "Tragedy and the Sorrow of Finitude: Reflections on Sin and Death in the Philosophy of Josiah Royce," *The Pluralist*, Volume 2, Number 2, Summer 2007: pp. 106-114. PDF file, accessed through the *Philosopher's Index* via EBSCOhost (<http://web.ebscohost.com/library3.webster.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=4&hid=104&sid=035f64e2-375d-4a8a-8a83-f2e36548e974%40sessionmgr115> (6/3/2011)). I am grateful to Scott Pratt for referring me to Royce in this context.

- 1) We have an obligation to remember.

Just as we can support living individuals today through our interactions with them (support them in being individuals), giving them recognition and the conditions for individual action, so we can do things for the dead that will help to promote their individuality, their uniqueness as persons. When I remember the dead, I keep them alive in some sense. As Charlene Seigfried has pointed out, in reference to the thought of Jane Addams, people who die “are not unquestionably immortal, but can be made so by us, the survivors, insofar as we immortalize their lives and works in our own.”¹⁵ We can keep alive “the principles, beliefs, and values” that the dead person stood for, and in this sense we can preserve the dead.¹⁶ Moreover, I would add that when we explicitly remember the dead person as an individual, a wholly unique self, then we allow her personality as well as her principles and beliefs to continue to amount to something, although the person is physically gone. We should have equality here too: although memorable events help us to remember a person, these events should only be an aid; we should remember the person, the unique self who participated in the events, remember them *as* individuals. That is the goal. Re-visioning the dead individual in this way takes to its final logical outcome democracy as a way of life; for I am then letting each individual still assert herself as an individual even when she is gone, and so still be able to count for something in the course of things, although otherwise she loses all force and power, if we leave the matter to nature alone. I value the other person’s individuality so much that I let it continue to exist in my memory to the extent that I can. As a pragmatist, then, valuing the individual, I owe a duty to the dead, which is to learn to cultivate my remembrance of them.¹⁷

¹⁵ Charlene Haddock Seigfried, “A Pragmatist Response to Death: Jane Addams on the Permanent and the Transient,” 136.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 136.

¹⁷ For an interesting account of democracy conceived in a similar fashion, see David L. Hall and Roger T. Aimes,

But a democratic approach to death does not only involve a duty that I have to the dead, but also involves a duty that I have to the living. Knowing we will die, and that those who will live on after us have a duty to remember us, we owe them a duty too; we have a duty to the living to be memorable to them. We, the future dead, have an obligation to the future living, something to take into account before we die:

- 2) We have an obligation to be memorable.

Richard Rorty can help us to see better what I mean here. As I read him, Rorty’s conception of “the strong poet” is a conception primarily motivated by death and concern for death. The strong poet is someone who is trying to be memorable. One feels “terror” at the prospect “that one might end one’s days in . . . a world one never made, an inherited world.”¹⁸ What one wants is to create an entirely new vocabulary, one in which one defines oneself in one’s own terms. If one would have achieved one’s own unique vocabulary, “then one would have *demonstrated* that one was not a copy or replica.”¹⁹ Achieving this demonstration is important because then “one would know what one has succeeded in becoming.”²⁰ To die and be like everyone else is dreadful; but to die as oneself, as a unique being, a distinct self, is to have achieved something special. One at least knows “what it is that will die,” what it is that is really lost.²¹ The strong poet achieves a kind of self-recognition that takes away some of the sting of death, the sting of dying a generic death.

The strong poet, however, does not want to achieve this understanding of who distinctly dies only for himself. He

The Democracy of the Dead: Dewey, Confucius, and the Hope for Democracy in China (Open Court: Chicago and Lasalle, Illinois, 1999), 186. I am grateful to Larry Hickman for making me aware of this book.

¹⁸ Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 29.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 24.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 24.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 24.

also wants his new vocabulary to be adopted by others, which would mean that he succeeded in becoming a "genius." Everyone has their "idiosyncrasies," but not everyone is a genius. "The difference between genius and fantasy . . . is the difference between idiosyncrasies which just happen to catch on with other people" and those that do not.²²

The strong poet is the person who wants to be a genius, a memorable person, someone that others will recall as the creator of their way of speaking and acting. We remember our geniuses, those that paved the way toward our own self-understanding. The genius gives us a reason to remember him. The genius presents before our minds a true individual; someone we can distinguish from the mass of men, someone we can remember and be thankful for.

Another example of the memorable person would be the person who performs his social role exceptionally well with a distinctive excellence in the performance. Alasdair MacIntyre helps us to understand this type of person when he discusses the virtues. Someone who is virtuous has the kind of skill that allows him "to achieve those goods which are internal to practices."²³ The virtues are a kind of excellence in our actions, relative to specific practices; the skill to perform those actions well. I would add that we remember people for their virtuous actions. Some examples would be, to borrow and slightly alter one from MacIntyre, Achilles, who is renowned for his heroism;²⁴ or Socrates, who is remembered for his courage and his philosophical prowess; or Hypatia, who is remembered for her exceptional acumen, which enabled her to transcend the intellects of all the men of her time in an age when women were not encouraged to be intellectuals.

²² *Ibid.*, 37.

²³ Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, Second Edition (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), 191.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 123. MacIntyre uses the Achilles example for a somewhat different purpose, but I believe the example of Achilles can fit the present case as well.

As Hannah Arendt observes, this ability to get ourselves remembered may well be what is distinctive about human beings. "The task and potential greatness of mortals," she says, "lie in their ability to produce things—works and deeds and words—which would deserve to be and, at least to a degree, are at home in everlastingness, so that through them mortals could find their place in a cosmos where everything is immortal except themselves." We have the ability, even in the face of inevitable death, to make things, which will make people remember us.²⁵

I would like to claim that we all have an obligation to be memorable in ways like this, that is, to be distinctive either in words or deeds, either as strong poets or virtuous people. I believe we possess this obligation, first, because others are under an obligation to remember us when we are dead. We ease their burden if we give them something to remember. Second, we owe it to our democracy to be memorable individuals, because then we will be shining lights of individuality, teaching others the value of being a distinctive self and not a generic rendition. Third, I believe we owe it to ourselves to be memorable, for then we ourselves will be more likely to be remembered. If Rorty is right, and one feels terror at the prospect that one will die without knowing what distinct individual one managed to become; that one will die as *any man or woman*, utterly interchangeable, indistinct, and easily forgettable, then one will want to try to overcome this terror by trying to become oneself, a distinct self, a memorable self.

²⁵ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*. Second Edition (Chicago and London: the University of Chicago Press, 1998), 19. Arendt emphasizes the importance of this conception for the Greeks, saying that their community was itself a special arena for the efforts of individuals to become immortal. As Arendt puts it, "the *polis* was for the Greeks...first of all their guarantee against the futility of individual life, the space protected against this futility and reserved for the relative permanence, if not immortality, of mortals." Hannah Arendt, "The Public Realm: The Common," in *The Portable Hannah Arendt*, ed., Peter Baehr (London: Penguin Books, 2000), 203. I am grateful to Miklós Nyirő for his comments about Arendt.

Of course, there is an important objection that presents itself here in that one can be memorable by being evil; and we certainly do not want to promote this kind of activity. My response is to say that we then have a third principle of obligation imposed upon us by a pragmatist vision of democracy, which is this:

3) We have an obligation to be worth remembering.

By "remembering," I mean a quality of mind of recalling someone that also includes other qualities like cherishing, willingly preserving, sustaining, keeping alive, his memory; and I would argue that these qualities are typically only brought to bear on someone who is worthy of being remembered. In this sense of remembering, it is better to forget evil individuals; to deny their worth as individuals; not to cherish their memories. Of course, we should remember evil individuals in the sense that, by understanding who they were, we can try to prevent someone like them from occurring again. But we should not do evil people the honor of giving them any glory.

For us, as individuals trying to be memorable, this third obligation means that we should try to behave in such a way as to be worthy of being cherished, to be an individual whose memory others will want to keep alive, which means we should be good, or excellent, or truly creative, and so forth, anything except evil.

I would also argue that there is one more duty that pragmatists owe to one another, according to a vision of democracy as a way of death (and not only a way of life). This is the duty to create conditions by which to promote remembering.

4) We have an obligation to make remembering more feasible.

What I have in mind here are rituals; habits; education; tombstones and memorials. A society that truly values individuals will make it possible to raise monuments to

the dead; it will practice rituals that to some extent keep the dead with us in our memories. It will be a society in which we read the great dead authors, and so on. In this sense, it would be less of an individualistic culture than one might suppose. For too often in our highly individualistic culture, we praise youth at the expense of the aged; the living over the dead. We make short work of history (at least in America). But increased historical understanding would be necessary to make remembering more feasible. We should not see our dead as dead. We should see history as part of ourselves; and the dead as part of the living. This is because, for one thing, we owe an obligation to them as individuals under a pragmatist conception, but also because, as exemplars of individuality, dead individuals can provide us with valuable clues for how we, too, can become individuals.

Summary and Conclusion

To speak of democracy as a pragmatist would, we would say, with Dewey, that "individuals are the finally decisive factors of the nature and movement of associated life."²⁶ We would place great value in the individual. But we would also want to say that this value is realistic and rational; that the physical and social worlds within which we live will allow us to harbor this value. And then we are confronted by the grim fact of death, which annihilates each individual one by one forever. We are confronted by a great "army" of the dead, to borrow and modify a passage from James, who refers to suicides in particular, "an army whose roll-call, like the famous evening gun of the British army, follows the sun round the world and never terminates."²⁷ Each individual is leveled. And ultimately we will all pass away and be forgotten. And thus the grim fact of death would seem to prevent us from harboring the value of the

²⁶ John Dewey, "I Believe," 91.

²⁷ William James, "Is Life Worth Living?" in *Essays on Faith and Morals*, selected by Ralph Barton Perry (Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Company, 1962), 6.

importance of the individual in a world like ours, where death is the undisputed king.

But then again, and on the other hand, there are things we can do, and ought to do, to reassert the value of the individual in the world, even if it is a world ruled by death. For while we are still alive, we can remember; we can be memorable; we can be worth remembering; and we can make remembering each other more feasible. These goals are realistic; they are not beyond all human power. And what they give us is something significant: a fuller and richer democracy, a democracy not only of the living, but also a "democracy of the dead."²⁸

Ultimately, however, I do not see how even democracy conceived in this way can overcome negative actuality. In the end, everything will be as if it had never been. In the end, there will be no one to remember anybody. Therefore, no one will be remembered. Everything will be lost. But perhaps it is only in this eventual loss of the individual that democracy is even possible. Perhaps one can be an individual (and hence, one can have a democracy) only by having limitations, a delimited field in which one can act and relative to which one can define oneself.²⁹ That there is the sorrow of infinite loss

²⁸ See David L. Hall and Roger T. Aimes, *The Democracy of the Dead*.

²⁹ This view follows Heidegger's concept of "being-towards-death," which involves the idea that only as we realize that we move toward the end of ourselves in death are we able to see our lives as a whole and as lives in which we can develop ourselves freely as individuals. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), 307-311. For an excellent account of Heidegger on death, one that shows how, for Heidegger, the awareness of death is what make our truly individual efforts possible in the first place, see Kenneth W. Stickers, "Commentary on Matthew A. Foust, 'Tragedy and the Sorrow of Finitude: Reflections on Sin and Death in the Philosophy of Josiah Royce,' Volume 2, Number 2, Summer 2007: 115-118. PDF File, accessed through *Philosopher's Index* via EBSCOhost, <http://web.ebscohost.com.library3.webster.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=4&hid=104&sid=035f64e2-375d-4a8a-8a83-f2e36548e974%40sessionmgr115> (6/3/2011). The whole debate between Foust and

is something we know accompanies death; nothing can avoid this fact and this fate. But such a fate is not the whole story. Limitation, even ultimate limitation, is the circumscribed field of activity which is a precondition of individual effort.³⁰ And so, although everything will be lost, much can nonetheless be gained. The individual, who we value in a pragmatist vision of democracy, can once have been, and can once have been remembered and cherished, even if, paradoxically, the condition for this reality is that, in the end, the individual and his memory never will have been.

It is an idea as old as the poets. Beauty and sorrow go together, the permanent with the impermanent.³¹ I like how Whitehead puts it, quoting "a famous hymn":

Abide with me;
Fast falls the eventide.³²

Stickers brings out nicely some aspects of the contrast between Royce's view of death and my own, which in some respects pertains more to Heidegger's than to Royce's.

³⁰ This is similar to what Karl Jaspers meant by a "limit situation," as discussed, for example, by Jean T. Wilde, William Kluback, and William Kimmel. See Jean T. Wilde, William Kluback, and William Kimmel, "Introduction," in Karl Jaspers, *Truth and Symbol*, translated by Jean T. Wilde, William Kluback, and William Kimmel (New Haven: College and University Press, 1959), 10-11. The difference between Jasper's view and this one, however, is that Jaspers make the limit situation an occasion for seeing beyond human life, or what he calls "transcendence," whereas the present view only makes it an occasion for seeing and appreciating finite human life all the more, as I go on to clarify. Both views, however, suggest that a limit reveals new perspectives. For Jasper's account of transcendence, see Karl Jaspers, *The Philosophy of Existence*, trans., Richard F. Grabay (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), 81. For more on the difference between the awareness of death as transcendence and as fuller immersion in life, see Sean Ireton, *An Ontological Study of Death: From Hegel to Heidegger* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2007), 1 ff.

³¹ Seigfried sees this tension at work in Addam's philosophy, as can be seen in the subtitle of her essay. See Charlene Haddock Seigfried, "A Pragmatist Response to Death: Jane Addams on the Permanent and the Transient," 133.

³² As quoted by Alfred North Whitehead in *Process and Reality*, Corrected Edition, ed., David Ray Griffin and Donald W. Sherburne (New York and London: The Free

We want to persist, even as we perish. Hegel, too, has a similar idea in mind when he writes: "*there is nothing which is not an intermediate state between being and nothing.*"³³ Everything shimmers and fades; but this is the condition of anything existing at all, and of our appreciation of anything's existence. Crispin Sartwell also invokes the idea when he speaks of the connection between death and beauty. "That we can lose things," he says, "that in fact we are always in the process of losing everything we have, underlies the longing with which we inhabit the world. And in that longing resides the possibility of beauty . . . Grief and death and beauty call on us to yearn, and perhaps they call on us to yearn impossibly, to yearn for an object that is always slipping from our grasp."³⁴ There is no getting around death; but beauty is its consolation. It all fades away; but *there are moments*; there is this moment here; there is the poignancy of what is fading. In a similar fashion, I submit that, although negative actuality conquers all in the end, and it reigns supreme over individuals, nonetheless something like the philosophy of remembering, as I have sketched it here, may be the best chance that we have in the face of such overwhelming odds. To keep individuals alive in our memories as long as we can before everything is finally annihilated is not to conquer death in the end; it is only conquer death for a little while. It is something small, but it is something; and this something, this semblance of individual value, may be the best that we can hope for in a world like ours, a world in which we are all, each one of us, fated to live and to die and ultimately to be forgotten.

Remember me, the dead person says to us. And we will remember you, we say to him or to her. And we say to those who are still living when we die: remember me, too, for as long as you can. And we all say this for just so long as there is someone to hear our plea, until none of us will say anything anymore.

Press, 1979), 209.

³³ G. W. F. Hegel, *Hegel's Science of Logic*, trans. A.V. Miller (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 1999), 105.

³⁴ Crispin Sartwell, *Six Names of Beauty* (New York and London: Routledge, 2006), 4.

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M. NUSSBAUM, J. DEWEY

AND EDUCATION FOR DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP

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“And not just because when the show fills our entire life are people left passive, superficial, easily manipulated victims, but also because they have lost the taste for the more beautiful things in life. In the education of citizens and professionals, making people cherish the best values, teaching them to taste them, encouraging high aspirations is essential to the revitalization of a decadent culture that is slipping away from us through the cracks of banality.”

(Cortina in reference to the book by Vargas Llosa, *La sociedad del espectáculo*.)

It is a somewhat disturbing suspicion that our culture and our civilization is moving in a direction in which the illustrated aspirations of a world guided by knowledge, truth, beauty and solidarity are defeated by another where the desire for the pursuit of material goods, banality and superficiality reign, and that these ideals are those held high by the new generations. The extraordinary technological progress and the triumph of the competitive mentality seem to explain the development of a type of thinking that ignores complexity, ignores the issues relating to the search for guidance and sense. The fact that ignorance, selfishness, materialism, and blinkered individualism may be ruining the moral and cultural development of democratic societies is one of the most common sources of rejection and criticism of Western democracies.

Hence the importance of citizens capable of developing their best qualities. This was undoubtedly a central concern for Dewey, who believed that in a democracy it was of the utmost importance to have an "audience" that deliberated using experimental intelligence cooperatively in order to solve collective issues. Dewey believed in the possibility of the training and education

of citizens capable of acting reflexively, developing their skills both morally and aesthetically.

Today, one of the thinkers who has drawn attention to this problem is M. Nussbaum, who, from a philosophical perspective similar to Dewey, has converted the defense of the teaching of humanities into one of the main keys to the deepening and development of democracy.

This article tries to outline Nussbaum's perspective while pointing out some difficulties in its proposal and interpretation. A Deweyan perspective will be used to correct and interpret such difficulties in the context of the problematic situation in the European Union.

Nussbaum opens her impressive work on the Greek world *The fragility of goodness. Luck and ethics in Greek tragedy and philosophy* by stressing that human experience in the world implies activity and passivity. On the one hand, our achievements and our goods are to some extent dependent on external circumstances beyond our control. On the other hand, humans can deliberate, choose and decide, selecting those things that we value and cherish. As Dewey did in his day, and following a naturalistic line, Nussbaum thinks that human experience is an exchange between human beings and the environment and understands rational activity as the human response by which to give this exchange guidance and direction.

"This splendid and equivocal hope is a central preoccupation of the Ancient Greeks. First, a fundamental sense of the passivity of human beings and their humanity in the world of nature and, second, a response of horror and anger at such passivity, coexisted side by side, encouraging the belief that rational activity could save human life and thus make it worth living" (Nussbaum, 1995, 30). It is therefore "to rescue good human life from pure random luck through the power of reason." (Nussbaum, 1995, 31)

A constant preoccupation can be seen throughout her

various works on Greek culture: her concern for vulnerability. For Nussbaum the problem of much of philosophy has largely been the lack of recognition of the fragile and context-bound character of the human experience and our false attempts to escape from it: "What I propose, in fact, is something that we will never fully achieve: a society that acknowledges its own humanity and that we do not hide from, nor she from us; a society of citizens who admit they have needs and are vulnerable, and who discard the grandiose ideas of omnipotence and completeness which have remained in the heart of so much human misery, both public and private." (Nussbaum, 2004, 30)

In the field of political philosophy both in *Hiding from Humanity* and later in *Frontiers of Justice* Nussbaum criticized contractualist theories for leaving aside the empirical situation of dependence and weakness that marks the existence of many people. Her idea is that contractualist and liberal theories are based on a complete and self-sufficient individual with full capacity instead of seeing human beings as vulnerable and needy "whose capabilities require a rich support of material things" (Nussbaum, 2004, 390). In this regard, Nussbaum appeals to the theory of basic skills that she developed in collaboration with Amartya Sen and which are constituted, in her view, in basic rights for all citizens.

However, the vulnerability and fragility of the human experience constitute, at the same time, an opportunity and a hope: the possibility of combating them by forming a community to develop the skills of cooperation and reciprocity. These are capabilities, consequently, that should be encouraged through education.

"In the educational theory of Rousseau, learning about the basic weakness of the human being is central, because only the recognition of this weakness allows us to transform ourselves into social beings and, therefore, create humanity. Thus, our shortcoming can function as a basis for our hope of creating a decent community." (Nussbaum, 2012, 60)

This means to say that it is an awareness of our vulnerability that allows us to develop the mechanisms of empathy required for the creation of a fair society. For Nussbaum, a liberal society not only requires fair public institutions but also a certain psychology among citizens (Nussbaum, 2004, 29). Thus, in *Hiding from Humanity* the central task is to analyze the relationship between emotions and the law. In short, Nussbaum starts from an analysis of fragility and moves on to a theory that stresses the development of the emotions and the training of citizens as one of the key elements in her philosophical approach.

In *Cultivating Humanity* Nussbaum considers the relationship between liberal education - in her opinion an ideal not yet achieved - and the condition of the citizen. The question is to find out what this requires and how to understand the cultivation of humanity. Nussbaum summarizes the cultivation of humanity, the aim of liberal education, into the development of three skills.

- a) The ability of critical examination of oneself and one's own tradition, which is what she calls "examined life". It is a lifestyle in which a fact is not accepted purely as what is communicated by authority or tradition. It requires the cultivation of logical thinking, reasoning, attention to the accuracy of facts and of judgment. It is the Socratic idea of appealing to reason and deliberation as opposed to propaganda and manipulation.

- b) The second capacity is for humans to see themselves as human beings linked to other human beings by ties of mutual recognition and concern, not only as belonging to a group or region. According to Nussbaum, this means "we are not aware of the many possibilities of camaraderie and communication that we can have with them, nor of the responsibilities we may have to them."
- c) However, in addition to factual knowledge, it is necessary to teach what may be termed "narrative imagination". "This means thinking about what it would be like in the place of another person; be an intelligent reader of the history of that person, and understand the emotions, desires and wishes that someone like that could experience." It is in this sense that Nussbaum stresses the role of literature.

The cultivation of these capacities, which has been the core of liberal education, is for Nussbaum the key to the possibility of a democracy as she understands it.

"In order to foster a democracy that is thoughtful and deliberative, and not just a marketplace of competing interest groups, a democracy that truly takes into account the common good, we should produce citizens who have the Socratic capacity to reason about their beliefs. It is not good for democracy that people vote based on feelings that have absorbed from the media and have never questioned. This lack of critical thinking produces a democracy in which people talk to each other, but never hold a genuine dialogue. In such a climate, bad arguments pass for good, and prejudice can easily be confused with reason. To uncover prejudice and to ensure fairness, we need discussion, an essential tool of civic freedom." (Nussbaum, 1998, 42)

Thus, Nussbaum is between those who advocate a clear link between democracy and deliberation and considers that where there is no reasoning in common, - Dewey might say where there is no social intelligence -, we cannot possibly speak of a genuine democracy. Nussbaum does not consider that the sum of individual

reasoning, thoughts and attitudes is sufficient for democracy. In democracy she believes we should aim "to produce a community that can truly think together about a problem, and not simply exchange claims and counterclaims." Democracy requires the rejection of epistemological, social and political atomism and the recognition of the social and interactive nature of human beings. Democracy is liberal because it is based on the individual, on the objective of developing and improving individual skills. But this individual is not understood, as a part of the liberal tradition understood him, as being unconnected from others. As also shown by Dewey, the essence of democracy is not the conflict of interest but the possibility of cooperative and constructive resolution. "The argument to prefer democracy to other forms of government is weakened when one imagines the democratic election as a simple clash of interests. It is much stronger if it is conceived in a more Socratic way, as the expression of a considered judgment about the general good" (Caspary, 51)

Nussbaum believes that the role of the education system is very important in shaping these citizens to be able to cooperate intelligently in solving collective problems. In this regard, Nussbaum is in favor of the extension of higher education, thus opposing the Platonic, elitist, and aristocratic argument that reserved the recognition of humanity for only a minority. Against this, she defends the Socratic and Stoic conception, because Nussbaum understands that this is committed to the idea that all citizens should have such recognition and supports the maximum development of capacities that identify us as humans. "Higher education can be generalized because it is the development of practical reasoning powers that I believe to be an attribute of all citizens" (Nussbaum, 1998, 57)

It is important to note that the concept of citizenship that Nussbaum is concerned with is not the local community of our birthplace or where we have settled but, as can be deduced from the second of the skills noted above, the community of reason and human aspirations. The latter community is essentially the source of our moral and social obligations" (Nussbaum, 1998, 82). For Nussbaum, the naturalistic origin of human relations, which also can be found in Dewey and Mead, serve to denounce the false or arbitrary conventions of local and national loyalties. She therefore advocates a cosmopolitan conception, a moral and ethical position that is based on the idea that we are citizens of the world. The moral direction of such citizenship is not to be found in national or political loyalties but in our natural vulnerable, social and interactive state. Consequently, she advocates education for cosmopolitan citizenship in clear disagreement with patriotic or national education. Hence she finds the background to her position in authors such as Diogenes or the Stoic tradition.

Nussbaum believes that this Socratic education committed to building cosmopolitan citizenship is now under threat. A global crisis in education, which passes almost unnoticed in relation to the economic crisis that began in 2008, may be, however, more harmful than this for the future of democracy.

"What we might call the humanistic aspect of science, i.e. the aspect of the imagination, creativity, and thoroughness in critical thinking, is also losing ground to the extent that countries choose to promote short term profitability by cultivating utilitarian and practical capacities, suitable for generating income." (Nussbaum, 2012, 20)

This is the thesis that Nussbaum defends in *Not for Profit: why democracies need the humanities*. What

Nussbaum defends is that the humanities are essential for the development of skills that are central and basic to the exercise of citizenship. She does not mean that we should neglect scientific thought and method, but she warns about the consequences of the dominance of thought that is guided solely by the demands of competitiveness.

The emphasis on education for democratic citizenship is concerned largely with the connection she sees between what happens inside the individual and what happens in public life. Just as Dewey established a direct relationship between individual habits and social institutions, Nussbaum emphasizes the role of emotions in the public development of people. So it is necessary "to account for the internal forces within each person that are opposed to mutual respect and reciprocity, but also the internal forces that form the basis of democracy" (Nussbaum, 2012, 54). She considers that the fight for freedom and equality must be configured first in the internal struggle of each individual so that, as Gandhi said, "the desire for wealth, aggression and narcissistic concerns are the enemy forces of a free and democratic society." (Nussbaum, 2012, 54)

Because the university can cultivate these emotions and capacities, Nussbaum believes that it has to play a key role in the development of democratic societies. The spread of liberal education is an essential element and delivers significant benefits in increasing the quality of democracy. But this is precisely what is in crisis because the economic and commercial criteria are ruining the presence of liberal education in universities. After stressing the importance of universities to the deepening of democracy, Nussbaum adds a very personal account, typical of liberal culture in the USA. Thus, referring to the presence of liberal education in American universities, she says:

"At the university where I work, for example, we do not need to go begging to the bureaucrats who lack any interest in what we do. Instead, we turn to the more affluent alumni whose academic values match ours." (Nussbaum, 2012, 176)

It is noteworthy that Nussbaum relies more on private initiative than on the public support of a democratic state. It seems that democratic education should be supported solely by the altruism of rich donors, rather than by a state structure which defends the values of public education aimed at promoting civic and democratic values.

Nussbaum's skepticism about the state promotion culture and democratic liberal education is, in fact, consistent with her position on political perfectionism. In an article devoted to the topic, "Perfectionist Liberalism and Political Liberalism" Nussbaum confirms this bias - in my opinion liberal, but undemocratic - in her position. To be specific, Nussbaum wants to be associated with the liberalism of Rawls and Larmore and to distance herself from Berlin and Raz. The latter assumes that liberal society is committed to the value of individual autonomy. Now, for Raz, autonomy is significant when used to carry worthy lifestyles. Autonomy to be evil is not beneficial since not all ends are worthy. Hence, Raz defends the position that the government should protect existing worthy lifestyles and also promote tolerance among them. Nussbaum believes that this point of view is inadmissible. This is because Raz on stressing the concept of autonomy - a concept in my view entirely compatible with his own characterization of liberal education - establishes and prioritizes lifestyles rejecting those based on faith or irrational beliefs. According to Nussbaum, the Raz approach, for example, leaves no room for people with irrational ideas, but who are socially prepared to cooperate on the basis of mutual respect.

"So long as people are reasonable in the ethical sense, why should the political conception denigrate them because they believe in astrology, or crystals, or the Trinity? Why not let them, and their beliefs, alone" (Nussbaum, 2011, 28)

Larmore and Rawls' point of view, however, seems to convince her more. They maintain that since the state has to respect all citizens as equals then it should not cite metaphysical or epistemological doctrines which, in her view, is what she finds in the pluralism of Raz and Berlin. So, Nussbaum believes that while Rawls's conception of political autonomy is defensible, Raz's is not because in his case "no announcement is made by the state that lives lived under one's own direction are better than lives lived in submission to some form of culture or religious or military authority " (Nussbaum, 2011, 34) The text from which Nussbaum takes the fragment is extremely enlightening since it claims that the state should not promote the individual's ability to choose for himself and that the democratic state must not push in one direction, that of self-direction, but rather in the other, that of religious tolerance.

"What seems very problematic, however, is to license the state to criticize doctrines that are "unreasonable" in the theoretical sense. If I want to believe something silly, or to subordinate my judgment to that of some irrational authority, it is not the business of a pluralistic society to state that I am in any sense inferior for so doing" (Nussbaum, 2011, 29)

So the idea that she finds defensible in Rawls and Larmore is that respect is the primary value of liberalism and that this ignores theoretical considerations. What is irrational in theory need not be in practice. The thesis that we can cooperate without agreement on religious or ideological matters appears to be in line with the pragmatist spirit. So, what matters is not the agreement or disagreement on principles or theory, but rather the attitude and disposition towards cooperation. It is clear

that this is an idea of democracy that is practical and moral, not epistemological.

In my opinion, at least two objections can be raised to Nussbaum's argument. On the one hand, it seems that Nussbaum is right to criticize, as Dewey did, an excessively theoretical approach in political philosophy, which prevents us from considering that what is important in democracy is rather agreement on attitudes and values, than on theoretical convictions. The issue is whether and to what extent in criticizing the rationalism of those who believe that the theoretical agreement is the most important and leaving aside attitudes, she revives a dualism in considering now that beliefs and convictions - the theoretical - are irrelevant to the determination of attitudes and behaviors. To avoid falling into the dualism between theory and practice that Dewey criticized so severely, it is not appropriate to consider that anti-democratic beliefs are irrelevant to the adoption of appropriate attitudes. One wonders if there are many irrational beliefs that lead to free and fair cooperation of citizens (consider, for example, issues relating to the role of women in religious beliefs). In this regard, the criticism made of Raz does seem somewhat questionable because respect for people cannot mean anything other than respect for their autonomy, for their equal capacity to decide freely about their own lives. And that, as Raz says, requires the provision of appropriate social conditions, which in turn requires decisive promotion by the government.

Secondly, Nussbaum is inconsistent in her defense of a commitment to democratic citizenship. After claiming that democracy requires the extension of Socratic skills, the development of critical thinking, empathy and narrative imagination, it is not easy to understand how she can argue that the government should not protect

those options compatible with such skills and should stay equidistant between these skills and those that do not allow the extension of these capacities. Clearly, it is always pertinent to clarify that the defense of democratic perfectionism need not be interpreted as linked to coercion.

Dewey's reflection on this is extremely enlightening. Dewey distinguished between the ideas of control, guidance and direction. In making this distinction, it is now important to note that Dewey rejects that the idea of control must imply coercion or compulsion. This is so true that sometimes people want to take a different path from others, just as they "are interested in intervening in the activities of others and taking part in joint and cooperative action" (Dewey, MW 9:33). And this is all the more clear when the goods we are considering are of a social nature. But above all, it is clear from Dewey that a lack of direction and control has no intrinsic meaning. Human beings, given that we are social beings, participate in community activities in which we share meaning through the use we make of things. And this is, for Dewey, the social control mechanism par excellence. Common interests are the true vehicle of social control. Therefore, we cannot speak about the need for the absence of mechanisms of social control, but rather about becoming aware of how they operate - under self-acquired habits - and how to redirect them towards goods that are the result of rational and conscious deliberation.

It is a perspective similar to that of Sunstein who advocates what he calls "libertarian paternalism." "Once you understand that some forms of organizational decisions are inevitable, that a type of paternalism cannot be avoided, and that the alternatives to paternalism are not attractive, we can abandon the less

interesting question of whether to be paternalistic or not, and turn to the more constructive question of how to choose among the options to influence the choices." (Sunstein, 1159) Sunstein rejects that his defense of paternalism can be accused of imposition in distinguishing between liberal paternalism and what is not. Thus, "libertarian paternalism insists on preserving choice, whereas non-libertarian paternalism is to avoid the choice." (Sunstein, 1185)

It is clearly therefore a call to a strong conception of politics; calling for public authorities to defend autonomy and individuality through the promotion of public culture and a set of policies that strengthen public and civic education.

Beyond the theoretical objections, I think a point of a strictly practical nature could be raised. In the European context, dependence on private initiative and enterprise agreement as a means of funding of the humanities is both inconsistent with a particular understanding of democracy, and unrealistic. In the same way as Nussbaum's defense of the need for liberal education for democratic citizenship is relevant, it is extremely damaging for such citizenship not to argue in favor of the role that government should play in it. Her last argument seems to take the side of the enemies of the political education of citizens and of the erosion that this is suffering: the progressive privatization of the various areas of public education and the growing influence of economic neoliberalism that makes private choice in education seem an indisputable reality.

In short, Nussbaum cites J. Dewey's work as a milestone in the defense of education for democratic and cosmopolitan citizenship. She certainly shares significant philosophical assumptions with him: concern for human

frailty; uncertainty as a characteristic of experience; a naturalistic and interactive conception of experience; a critical conception of philosophical rationalism and an emphasis on non-cognitive factors as critical elements of citizenship education; and, above all, the central role of education for citizenship as a core element in deepening the quality of democracy.

But, in my view, Nussbaum is not entirely consistent with the proposal of the social environment as a defining factor in the educational process. The withdrawal from the public sphere of the promotion of those capacities – those involved in Socratic and liberal education – that makes us worthy of humanity contains an antidemocratic element in relinquishing the social control of a decisive factor in the defense of democratic capacities.

If we look at the positions taken in *Democracy and Education* on the importance and necessity of social control, we could consider Dewey an advocate of democratic perfectionism. This is a social control that, without destroying individual initiative and without coercive imposition, seeks to promote public awareness in keeping with the characterization that Nussbaum makes of liberal education.

This idea is particularly relevant in the context of the European Union. The increasing rise of neoliberal ideology is implying the withdrawal of the humanities, of a university committed to the creation of a European democratic social conscience. And in the context of Europe, an "education for cosmopolitan citizenship" has to be an "education for democratic European citizenship" as a means by which to overcome localism and nationalism and develop those capacities that link humans to humans. The idea of a cosmopolitan

education is an idea that today lacks the institutional references that could make it something significant. By contrast, the European Union represents a space characterized by the integration into a higher body which incorporating the best values of our tradition overcomes the limitations imposed by local and national realities. On the other hand, it is a large enough body to develop policies to appease the economic tendencies of an increasingly globalized market.

The fact is that the dominance of the culture of competitiveness implies destroying the human capacities for a culture of collaboration and cooperation that is, according to Dewey's conception, what democracy consists of. Therefore, the contrast between market requirements and the demands of democracy implies the difficulty of reconciling an education guided by economic interests and an education for democratic citizenship. And, in accordance with Nussbaum, this conflict plays an essential part in the future of democracy. As has been noted by many different authors, we could also think about the business and commercial world in terms of teamwork, complementary activities, development of attitudes of cooperation, etc., but the reality is that the absence of political mechanisms and the triumph of a free market that leaves education in the control of the economists is the loss of education for democracy. As Dewey noted, the success of the measures depends on the context in which they are applied, in their ability to solve the problem, in this case, the problem of democracy in Europe. What is needed, according to this approach, is not the withdrawal of the political authorities from citizenship education, but on the contrary to convert them into the axis for the creation of an integrated policy in different countries and cultures. This movement, which has an institutional background (see

the Eurydice report on citizenship education 2005), seems to have become dormant in recent times, putting us on alert regarding the moral scope of the meaning of the European Union.

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DEWEY AND RORTY ON DEMOCRACY AND EDUCATION*

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In this paper I'll try to compare, even to contrast in some important respects, but also to adjust to one another the views of John Dewey and Richard Rorty on two interrelated topics, namely, democracy and education. Since Rorty has often been criticized for a kind of betrayal of the heritage of Dewey's radical liberalism, it is advisable, first, to investigate to some extent the specifics of the notion of democracy Rorty may have entertained. Therefore, I begin with a short attempt at reconstructing what appears to be Rorty's non-Deweyan, although latent, concept of democracy (1). One of the central features of Dewey's views on democracy is the emphasis he has put on the model value of the experimental sciences for the publics. In the second section I concentrate on a recurring type of criticism leveled against that stance of his, and also Dewey's possible answer to such a charge, namely, the one stressing the fact that a risk of the so called „tyranny of the ignorant” is inherent in his approach (2). Rorty's main criticism over against Dewey arrives from a different angle, however. In the third section I try to demarcate one of the important points where Rorty decisively departs from some of the basic views of Dewey. I do so by briefly reconstructing Rorty's philosophical objections against Dewey's metaphysical project, and by summarizing his own starting point and some of the consequences of it for his alternative view of large scale community (3). Finally, I attempt to show that the main differences between Dewey's and Rorty's ideas on education are due to a large extent – in accordance with their enumerated views – to the differing role they ascribe to cooperation in community life (4).

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As an introductory note, first of all I'd like to emphasize the fact, however, that beyond all the differences one may find between Dewey's and Rorty's respective convictions and suggestions, there is a fundamental kinship between their intellectual outlook, a kinship due to their exceptional commitment and devotion to democracy, to progress in democratic institutions, as well as to the democratization of society. Both of these pragmatist philosophers are equally concerned with individuality and social freedom, and they are to a large extent in agreement, also, concerning the final goals of philosophical reflection and the ultimate role such a reflection might play regarding culture as a whole. With that in mind, and hoping to contribute to a possible exchange of ideas derived from the works of these two champions of democratic thought, rather than trying to show some alleged superiority of one of them at the expense of the other, now I turn to my topic.

1. Rorty's Latent Non-Deweyan Notion of Democracy

In his article titled „Democracy without Illusions? Rorty and Posner on Liberal Democracy,” the young Hungarian scholar György Pápay examines the following question: How eligible is it to criticize Rorty – as it had often been done² – by saying that „he himself became a defender of social status quo, and thereby proved to betray the heritage of radical liberalism, above all that of John Dewey”³

In answering that question, Pápay proceeds by showing that there are two important features of Dewey's notion of democracy which are not shared by Rorty. The first of

² György Pápay, „Democracy without Illusions? Rorty and Posner on Liberal Democracy”. In: Miklós Nyírő ed., *Filozófia a globalizáció árnyékában: Richard Rorty [Philosophy under the Shadow of Globalization: Richard Rorty]*, Budapest, L'Harmattan, 2010, pp. 94-109.

³ Pápay refers to the following two articles written by important critics of Rorty: Richard Bernstein, „One Steps Forward, Two Steps Backward. Richard Rorty on Liberal Democracy and Philosophy.” *Political Theory* 15. (1987) p. 540.; Thomas McCarthy, „Ironist Theory as a Vocation. A Response to Rorty's Reply.” *Critical Inquiry* 16. (1990) p. 655.

them is what Putnam regards as an „epistemic justification” of democracy.⁴ Such a justification would ultimately reside in the claim that it is democracy that can guarantee the most the appropriate conditions of „intelligently conducted inquiry”, the kind of inquiry desirable according to Dewey not only within the sciences but also in solving social problems. The second feature is Dewey’s vision of a „creative democracy”. Just as Dewey emphasizes cooperation in scientific inquiry and rejects all individualistic models of acquiring knowledge, he also stresses cooperation in political matters. Accordingly, his creative democracy demands as much participation of the citizens in political matters as possible, and therefore it regards democracy as a way of life – as opposed to the merely negative freedom warranted by democratic institutions.

Rorty, in turn, is skeptical whenever *any* form of „rationality” is being privileged and an attempt is made to show that democratic praxis and politics embody – or at least it is desirable that it embody – just that kind of rationality. Then again, it is quite obvious that Rorty emphasizes the sort of negative freedom John Stuart Mill had advocated, and that he regards the institutional guarantees of democracy as of primary importance, without exhorting an extensive participation of citizens in public matters.

The contrast between Dewey and Rorty regarding these two issues seems to be fairly clear, and the main question is whether one can find plausible reasons for Rorty’s obvious departure from these aspects of Dewey’s notion of democracy. One of the obstacles in answering this question is the fact that Rorty’s views on democracy are generally not elaborated systematically – it is characteristic of him, indeed, that he refers to „liberal democracy” mostly in broad terms. However, as Pápay attempts to show, there is a conception of democracy –

namely, that of the practicing judge and jurisprudent professor Richard Posner⁵ – that seems to challenge to a considerable extent the views of Dewey, *and* that conception is in accord – at least in some important respects – with Rorty’s pertaining views.

It is not my intention here to present Posner’s approach extensively. Few points will suffice. Posner differentiates between Concept I and Concept II democracy, which more or less correspond to a deliberative and a competitive notion of democracy, respectively (and I will refer to the two concepts by using the latter names).

Deliberative notions of democracy – such as Dewey’s, Hannah Arendt’s republicanism, and other, contemporary theories of it – tend to have a rather normative aspect. They characteristically prefer political participation on the citizens part as opposed to, or at least besides, their representation, and accordingly build upon more or less well-informed citizens who are also willing to get directly involved in public issues. Therefore, as Posner claims, they ascribe moral rights – such as that of participating on equal terms in governmental work – *and* corresponding moral requirements (if not duties or responsibilities) to the citizens. Moreover, deliberative conceptions tend to favor the kind of discussion that is consensus-oriented and is pursued with public interest in view. For Posner, such conceptions are inspired rather theoretically, being regulated by some kind of a vision.

As opposed to them, the so called competitive model of democracy tries to take extant social praxes as its starting-point. It is a rather practically-oriented notion also in the sense that it takes into account and builds upon individual, selfish, often utterly a-political, interests, instead of proceeding from a requirement to recognize interests of the narrower or broader community, or society itself. In general, this approach is skeptical toward the demand of consensus, takes into account the limits of

⁴ See Hilary Putnam, „A Reconsideration of Deweyan Democracy.” In his *Renewing Philosophy*. Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1992.

⁵ See Richard Posner, *Law, Pragmatism and Democracy*. Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2003.

discussion, and thinks of democracy – accordingly – as being fundamentally pervaded by conflicts. On this account, it is not adequate to regard the system of representation as a field where social conflicts are to be resolved by means of discussion aiming at consensus, but rather, it should be seen as a procedural system which operates on the principle of trial and error. Such a competitive view – as opposed to the deliberative one – demands much less of political activity on the part of the voters, and devotes much more attention to the institutional dimensions of democracy. As a whole, the competitive model is much less idealistic, less normative, less illusion-laden, and more accepting than the deliberative ones, whereas the latter typically tend to display certain impatience toward existing conditions and practices.

As I see the matter, Pápay is justified in claiming that Rorty's views „on several points advocate, or even explicitly presuppose a pragmatic notion of democracy in a Posnerian sense.”⁶ Rorty's emphasis on the public/private distinction, on the incommensurability of so called „final vocabularies”, and again, the fact that instead of stressing consensus he takes into account the unavoidable conflicts among group-interests, and that he urges proceeding from extant political practices and institutions over against normative social theories, etc. – all these seem to testify to that claim. From this perspective, then, it is advisable to acknowledge the fact that Rorty's departure from important notions in Dewey's vision of democracy might be due to a deliberate commitment of his to a conception of democracy which is of *other kind* than that of Dewey. It is also important to note, however, that this account corresponds only – as Pápay is well aware of it – to the „more pragmatic, less illusion-laden side” of Rorty, at the expense of the „more romantic, utopian” Rorty who exaggerates hope in democracy into a kind of civil religion.⁷

⁶ György Pápay, *ibid.* p. 104.

⁷ *Ibid.* p. 109.

2. The Question of the Model Value of the Experimental Sciences for the Publics

In his paper titled „Representative Democracy, Participatory Democracy, and the Trajectory of Social Transformation” Larry Hickman calls attention to the fact that controversies pertaining to the question of deliberative versus so called competitive democracy are not at all something new, and that Dewey himself was also engaged in a debate, one with Walter Lipmann during the 1920's, where the case at issue was the more or less same topic, namely, the question of representative democracy versus participatory democracy.

One of the highly important upshots of Hickman's reconstruction is that Dewey „had [...] argued for [a dynamic] balance or reciprocity between participatory and representative dimensions of democracy that anticipated some of the basic concepts of what contemporary political theorists now term »deliberative democracy«. But [...] Dewey went well beyond most contemporary treatments of deliberative democracy in ways that anticipated some of the thinking behind some of the more radical experiments in participatory democracy [...].”⁸ As Hickman points out, Dewey argued for the indispensability of the experimental potential of exercises within both the participatory *and* the representative dimensions of democracy, precisely in order to secure the desirable, continual renewal and mutual adjustment of these two dimensions.

Dewey's idea of democracy is comprehensive. It goes far beyond mere „political democracy”, and includes „a democracy of rights”, „social democracy”, and also „economic democracy”, where „the first theme lays out the basis for representative democracy – Hickman emphasizes –, but the remaining three themes lay out the

⁸ Larry A. Hickman, „Representative Democracy, Participatory Democracy, and the Trajectory of Social Transformation” [henceforth: „RDPD”]. In. John Ryder and Radim Sip eds., *Identity and Social Transformation*. Central European Pragmatist Forum, Volume Five, Amsterdam - New York, NY, Rodopi Press, 2011, p. 174.

conditions under which participatory democracy can be engendered and fostered.”⁹ To that extent, these ideals also embody an implicit critique of corporate capitalism, as well as an „implicit formula of redress” (Hickman).

As far as I see, Rorty is no less explicit on the need to conceive democracy in such a broad, Deweyan terms. Instead of explicitly referring here to the pertaining aspects of his work, I’d like only to mention that in one of his last talks he has differentiated between „two distinct meanings” of the word „democracy”, namely, between what he calls „constitutionalism,” and in turn, „egalitarianism”, corresponding more or less to Dewey’s first and the other three aspects of democracy.

„In its narrower, minimalist meaning [the term ‘democracy’] refers to a system of government in which power is in the hands of freely elected officials. I shall call democracy in this sense ‘constitutionalism’ – Rorty writes. In its wider sense, it refers to a social ideal, that of equality of opportunity. In this second sense, a democracy is a society in which all children have the same chances in life, and in which nobody suffers from being born poor, or being the descendant of slaves, or being female, or being homosexual. I shall call democracy in this sense ‘egalitarianism’.”¹⁰

To my mind, then, no one who is concerned in democratization can find anything objectionable in these *ideals pursued by both Dewey and Rorty*, that is, in the emphasis laid on the need to go beyond the merely political democracy of constitutionalism, and the need to extend those ideals to the spheres of rights, economy, and society as a whole in the spirit of egalitarianism. And for that reason, the question of difference between these two thinkers concerning the issue of democracy is not so much that of ends, but – perhaps – of means.

As opposed to most of the contemporary proponents of deliberative democracy, Dewey thought that – using the words of Larry Hickman – „deliberation must go beyond conversation and debate to include matters that are at basis technoscientific.”¹¹ Since he was committed above all to experimental methods in the sciences, and he thought that „the methodological successes of the sciences [...] in large measure depend on dynamic reciprocity between participation and representation” (Hickman), therefore, this reciprocal relation within the communities of scientific inquiry served for him as a model for informing other democratic practices, eventually most part of the public sphere.

Cornel West, in his *The American Evasion of Philosophy*, said that to the changes taking place in Dewey’s time – such as population shifts, the rise of industrial capitalism and increasing immigration, etc. – he basically responded by stressing three points: the need of radical journalism; association with WASP efforts to amalgamate the immigrants; and urging reform and leadership in teaching and education.¹²

In Hickman’s account, the first and third of these points appear also as the most important means on the ground of which one is to reject the key argument in Lipmann’s advocacy of an elitist version of representative democracy – the claim that „the intelligence and skills of citizens were insufficient (or unnecessary) to provide the basis for the choices that would determine the shape of community life and the activities of various publics, including the state” (Hickman). Dewey’s extended experimentalism, his call for improved education and radical journalism, are supposed to reinforce one another.

⁹ Larry A. Hickman, „RDPD”, p. 175.

¹⁰ Richard Rorty, „Democracy and philosophy,” In. *Kritika & Kontext* 34 (May) 2007.

¹¹ Larry A. Hickman, „RDPD”, p. 176.

¹² Cornel West, *The American Evasion of Philosophy: A Genealogy of Pragmatism*. Wisconsin, 1989, pp. 80-85.

West's criticism of Dewey includes – among others – the charge that his ideal of democracy is that of the small homogeneous community, not the new, urban, heterogeneous society of the U.S.¹³ Hickman addresses the same issue when he takes into account a possible criticism of the model value of experimental sciences for the public, the criticism according to which scientific communities are relatively narrow, having more or less well defined interests and norms, which is not the case in politics. The problem he deals with, however, is that extensive participation in the public fields runs the risk of „the tyranny of the ignorant” (Phillip Kitcher), the risk that significant questions may be undervalued, as well as „methods that threaten to terminate deliberation” may gain importance. In reconstructing Dewey's possible answer to that matter, Hickman refers to two arguments. First, to a „preclusionary one” that basically limits the scope of participation in deliberative democracies, and it does so on the ground that there are norms of deliberation – which arise out of democratic practices and remain revisable if necessary. The second, „inclusionary argument” resides in Dewey's philosophy of education.

Before we turn to the problem of education, however, we must ponder – I'd like to suggest – whether the problem of the model value of small homogeneous communities, such as the scientific ones, is or is not exhausted by that of „the tyranny of the ignorant”, that is to say, whether or not there are obstacles to the creation of a well operating and as much participatory as representative public sphere other than ignorance or lack of willingness within one and the same community.

3. Rorty's Answer: Incommensurability and the Need for Moral Change

In *The Public and Its Problems* (1927) Dewey spoke about „the great community” and took into account as such obstacles to its creation mainly the followings: popular

cultural diversions, bureaucratization of politics, geographical mobility, and cultural lag in ideals and communication.

This is a point where – as I see it – Rorty decisively *transcends, but without denying it*, the general perspective of Dewey. For his very starting point – as it is first displayed in his *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, without mentioning critically his intellectual hero, Dewey – is the distinction between what he calls commensuration and conversation, i.e. commensurable and non-commensurable, „normal” and „abnormal” discourses. This distinction corresponds in philosophy to the epistemological and hermeneutical discourses according to Rorty, where „epistemology proceeds on the assumption that all contributions to a given discourse are commensurable, [whereas] hermeneutics is largely a struggle against this assumption.”¹⁴ The point is that these two types of discoursing correspond to *two different types of community*, one concerned with inquiry, and the other concerned with something which is more elementary, and pragmatically or existentially prior to the otherwise desirable democratic interest in inquiry, that is, with peaceful coexistence. „Epistemology views the participants [of discussion] as united in [...] an *universitas* – a group united by mutual interests [and norms, one should add – M. Ny.] in achieving a common end – Rorty writes. Hermeneutics views them as united in [...] a *societas* – persons whose paths through life have fallen together, *united by civility rather than by a common goal*, much less by a common ground.”¹⁵

From this perspective, the greatness of Dewey's „great community” resides not so much in an ideal of a cooperative community of inquiring citizens, but rather in a kind of pluralist democracy which is „a community of communities”: a *societas* of a plurality of *universitas*,

¹³ Ibid. pp. 101-2.

¹⁴ Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, Oxford (UK) - Cambridge (USA), Blackwell, 1980 (henceforth: *PMN*) pp. 315-16.

¹⁵ Ibid. p. 318. [Emphasis added – M. Ny.]

wherein neither a „common ground” nor even a mutual interest in arriving at a consensus can be taken for granted. And this means that the two philosophers, Dewey and Rorty address *different levels* of the problems, where these levels do not at all exclude one another, but rather, the second one emerges beyond, or on the top of the first, and in that sense presupposes *and* includes it. Regarding the relation between epistemology and hermeneutics Rorty writes, indeed, that „it seems clear that *the two do not compete, but rather help each other out.*”¹⁶ Accordingly – and put in a rather simplistic way –, all that Dewey said regarding democracy could remain intact and valid within the frames of Rorty’s neopragmatism, as far as more or less homogenous communities are concerned. As to the coexistence of heterogeneous communities, however, the hermeneutically inspired pragmatism of Rorty should come into play.

What I’d like to suggest, then, is that Rorty’s approach does not deny or exclude *any* of the practically important aspects of Dewey’s philosophy. Although Dewey doesn’t seem to, because for historical reasons he could not, take into account plurality in the sense that is central to Rorty’s post-Kuhnian and post-Heideggerian work, namely, radical incommensurability, Rorty never criticizes him on that ground.

In the articles devoted explicitly to Dewey, the only really important critique is – as I have shown it elsewhere¹⁷ – what Rorty levels against Dewey’s constructive attempt to give a kind of metaphysics of experience and nature. The reason for critique is that Dewey’s project, in its attempt to give non-dualistic accounts of phenomena by finding „continuities

between lower and higher processes”¹⁸ – very reminiscent, by the way, of his early panpsychism –, tries to dissolve both spirit and nature *in a way* that merges them in the one and perpetual process of „evolving,” a way that acknowledges differences only in degree. As opposed to such an approach, in the *Mirror* Rorty devotes a chapter to the Spirit-Nature distinction, and says: „Nature is whatever is so routine and familiar and manageable that we trust our own language implicitly. Spirit is whatever is so unfamiliar and unmanageable that we begin to wonder [...] *whether we do not need to change* our vocabulary, and not just our assertions.”¹⁹ Clearly, at stake is something that is of *moral significance*. For the difference between Dewey and Rorty on this point is the difference between emphasizing *change in degree*, due to intelligent reconstruction of our practices, and emphasizing the possibility of *change of identity*, of personality as a whole, of becoming an other person, via redescribing ourselves and creating or choosing a new „final vocabulary” and thereby a new self. „The notion that the empirical self could be turned over to the sciences of nature, but that the transcendental self, which constitutes the phenomenal world and (perhaps) functions as a moral agent, could not, has indeed done as much as anything else to make the spirit-nature distinction meaningful”²⁰ – a distinction Rorty finds it important to adhere to (although to a pragmatic reformulation of that metaphysical distinction), precisely for its moral impact. For the Deweyan notions of evolving and growth, fundamental as they are in his thought, suggest only continual alteration, rather than a possible, overall, qualitative change.²¹

¹⁸ Richard Rorty, „Dewey Between Hegel and Darwin.” In: Herman J. Saatkamp, Jr. ed., *Rorty & Pragmatism. The Philosopher Responds to His Critics*. Nashville-London, Vanderbilt University Press, 1995, p. 4.

¹⁹ Richard Rorty, *PMN*, pp. 352-3.

²⁰ *Ibid.* p. 343.

²¹ On this difference, explicitly drawn also by Gadamer in contrasting the Kantian notion of culture with the Humboldtian and more generally humanist notion of *Bildung*, see Gadamer’s chapter on *Bildung* in his *Truth*

¹⁶ Richard Rorty, *PMN*, p. 346. [Emphasis added – M. Ny.]

¹⁷ Miklós Nyírő, „Rorty, Dewey, and the Issue of Metaphysics.” *Pragmatism Today*, Summer 2010, <http://www.pragmatismtoday.eu/summer2010>

4. Consequences for Education

Now, there can be no doubt that both Dewey and Rorty assign to education a decisive role in democracy. As we saw it, Dewey's answer to the problem of „the tyranny of the ignorant” is twofold: direct preclusion *and* indirect inclusion via education. Rorty agrees with both. He writes: „There are credentials for admission to our democratic society [...]. You have to be *educated* in order to be a citizen of our society, a participant in our conversation [...].”²² There are some important differences, however, regarding the way they conceive the role of education, respectively.

In his *Democracy and Education*, Dewey – in his own words – „connects the growth of democracy with the development of the experimental method in the sciences, evolutionary ideas in the biological sciences, and the industrial reorganization, and points out the change in [...] education indicated by these developments.”²³ From these achievements he extracts the notions central to his educational – and democratic – philosophy, namely, experimentalism, growth, and reconstruction. He says, for example:

„Since growth is the characteristic of life, education is all one with growing; it has no end beyond itself.”²⁴ „The idea of education advanced [...] is formally summed up in the idea of continuous reconstruction of experience [...]”²⁵ „The result of the educative process is capacity for further education.”²⁶ Or elsewhere: „What Humanism means to me is an expansion, not a contraction, of human life, an *expansion* in which nature and the science of nature are made the willing servants of human good.”²⁷

and Method.

²² Richard Rorty, „Universality and Truth,” in Robert B. Brandom ed., *Rorty and his Critics*, Oxford, Blackwell, 2000, p. 22. [Italics are in the original – M. Ny.]

²³ John Dewey, *Democracy and Education*, Preface. *The Middle Works, 1899-1924, Volume 9*. Carbondale and Edwardsville, Southern Illinois University Press, p. 3.

²⁴ Ibid. p. 59.

²⁵ Ibid. p. 86.

²⁶ Ibid. p. 74.

²⁷ John Dewey, „What Humanism Means to Me,” first

Compared to Dewey's perhaps somewhat one-sided emphasis on the continuity of organic interaction, and growth in the sense of intelligent reconstruction of experience – the importance of which is nowhere called into doubt by Rorty, of course –, in his educational writings Rorty puts forward the difference between two tasks of education which do not stand in such a continuity, but rather, mostly clash with one another, namely, socialization and individualization. It should be realized – he warns –, that „education is not a continuous process from age 5 to age 22. [...] the word 'education' covers two entirely distinct, and equally necessary, processes – socialization and individualization. [It is but a] trap of thinking that a single set of ideas will work for both high school and college education.”²⁸ Although Dewey was obviously well aware of these aspects of education, the very fact that he described the process and the end of education *in terms of growth*, formation of habits, perpetual reconstruction, etc., seems already to imply that it is the aspect of socialization, rather than that of individualization – in the radical sense, as Rorty has it in view –, that concerned him more.

The following words of Rorty on the theme of edification are especially telling if we read them with Dewey's notion of education in mind:

„I shall use »edification« to stand for [the] project of finding new, [...] more fruitful ways of speaking. The attempt to edify [...] may consist in the hermeneutic activity of *making connections* between our own culture [...] or discipline and another [culture or] discipline which seems to pursue incommensurable aims in an incommensurable vocabulary. But it may instead consist in the »poetic« activity of *thinking up* such new aims, new words, or new disciplines [...]. In either case, the activity is [...] *edifying without being constructive* – at least if »constructive« means the sort of cooperation [...]

published in *Thinker 2* (June 1930): 9-12. Dewey: Page 1w.5.266, *The Collected Works of John Dewey 1882-1953*, The Electronic Edition.

²⁸ Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and Social Hope*, London-New York, Penguin Books, 1999, p. 117.

which takes place in normal discourse. For edifying discourse is supposed to be abnormal, to take us out of our old selves by the power of strangeness, to aid us in becoming new beings."²⁹

Exercise in edifying, abnormal discourse is less cooperative and more individualistic, yet, it can serve equally well both making connections between people holding incommensurable views, and coming up with something incommensurably new. „Hermeneutics is not »another way of knowing« [...]. It is better seen as *another way of coping [...] with our fellow humans*” – Rorty stresses.³⁰ In turn, it is poetic activity in a broad sense which introduces whatever is originally new.

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Thus, when we compare Dewey's and Rorty's overall approach, it is not the ends – as we said already –, but not even the means that differ significantly. It is rather the emphasis that shifts considerably. This shift is displayed in their case for example in that from accent laid on reconstruction of experience to that laid on redescription of practices; from accent laid on intelligence, and education in experimentalism to that laid on imagination, and education in humanities; from accent laid on the technoscientific aspect of deliberation to that laid on the issue of moral progress. And such a shift is prompted – in my view – not so much by the need of the growth of democracy, but above all by the need to secure peaceful coexistence, and thereby the very survival of democracy itself, in the midst of the plurality of individuals and communities holding more or less incommensurable views.

²⁹ Richard Rorty, *PMN*, p. 360. [Emphases are mine – M. Ny.]

³⁰ *Ibid.* p. 356.

GOOD SOCIETY AND DEMOCRACY AS CULTURE

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1. Introduction

My key questions in this paper are the following ones: what is the relation between democracy and a good society? Are they synonymous? Or is democracy just a part of a good society? Or is it an instrument for it? Is it also possible to have a good society without democracy? The answers, of course, depend on how we understand both concepts: democracy and good society.

2. Good Society

Who would not like to live in a good human society? But who knows *what good society is*? No doubt, the answers to this question are so variable that one might be tempted to say that they answer nothing at all. It definitely depends on individual preferences as well as cultural traditions: each social subject may have their own ideas of a good society. However, we can certainly identify some common and cross-cultural features that apply to any good society, and which have been highlighted by classic modern philosophers such as Hobbes, Locke, and French Enlightenment *philosophes*, etc. These features include, at least: peace, prosperity, liberty, equality, justice, human rights and rule of law in addition to many others, such as a satisfactory living standard; quality healthcare and education; security including low levels of criminality (or none); friendliness and generosity in human relationships etc. The concept of a good society thus reflects fundamental social and political values and principles.

Without analyzing this topic in great detail, let me just give you a few examples of explicit conceptions of a good society, all rather contradictory, but all with some relation to pragmatism, despite not being explicitly pragmatist.

Walter Lippmann described the good society in his book of the same title¹ as a new modern society to which humanity is oriented; yet, it is not only an idealistic project but also a realistic aim to be achieved by economic and technological transformations and which is to be based on both social reforms, leading to the reduction of exploitation and reconciliation of conflicts, and on moral virtues (such as responsibility, justice, etc). His vision of a good society was a relatively standard modern liberal vision drawing on developments within the USA. Nonetheless, John Dewey dismissed it in his review of Lippmann's book as "reactionary", "idealistic" and "utopian", resting on "abstract simplification", improper "legalism" and "economic determinism", and above all, declared it a failed conception on the basis of the means proposed: "Every system of social thought which sets up ends without reference to the means by which they are to be brought about tends in effect to support the status quo, no matter how good the intentions of those who paint the picture."² According to Dewey, the problem of any vision of a good society consists not so much in the features to be postulated and agreed on as goals, but in the means and ways in which they can be achieved: "Definite and systematic exploration of the means, compatible with a free society of free human beings as the end, is, to my mind, the central problem, intellectually and practically..."³

Another, more recent example of a theory on good society is the work of a liberal and Keynesian economist, John Kenneth Galbraith (1908-2006). He insisted on a clear definition of what the good society is and considered it achievable. He wrote:

In the good society all of its citizens must have personal liberty, basic well-being, racial and ethnic equality, the opportunity for a rewarding life. Nothing, it must be recognized, so comprehensively denies the liberties of the

¹ Walter Lippmann, *The Good Society* (Boston: Little and Brown, 1937).

² John Dewey, *The Later Works of John Dewey*, vol. 11, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1987), p. 488.

³ See *ibid.*, p. 495.

individual as a total *absence of money*...nothing so inspires socially useful effort as the prospect of pecuniary reward, both for what it procures and not rarely for the pleasure of pure possession it accords. This too the good society must acknowledge; these motivations are controlling.⁴

Therefore, according to Galbraith,

[T]he essence of the good society can be easily stated. It is that every member, regardless of gender, race or ethnic origin, should have *access to a rewarding life*...There must be economic opportunity for all... No one, from accident of birth or economic circumstance, may be denied these things; if they are not available from parent or family, society must provide effective forms of care and guidance.⁵

For him it is clear that: "The role of economics in the good society is basic; economic determinism is a relentless force. The economic system in the good society must work well and for everyone. Only then will opportunity match aspiration, either great or small."⁶

The communitarian sociologist Amitai Etzioni has dealt with the issue of a good society in a number of his works and provides perhaps the richest vision to date. He grounds his understanding of a good society in the concept of community (but completely ignores Dewey and pragmatism), and thus according to him,

[O]ne attribute of a good society is that it is one in which strong communal bonds are balanced by powerful protections of self. Such a society is not simply communal, but also firmly upholds both social ties and autonomy, social order and liberty.

And: "A good society, it follows, is one that keeps conflicts within the bounds of shared bonds and culture." In his search for the common good, Etzioni provides a number of signs of a good society such as the reduction of "inequality to a larger extent"; governance

"not merely by contracts, voluntary arrangements, and laws freely enacted, but also by a thick layer of mores that are in turn derived from values"; bearing "heavily on such moral dialogues to determine the values that will constitute the shared cultures"; regulation "by reliance on the moral voice rather than on the law, and the scope of the law itself must be limited largely to that which is supported by the moral voice." Again, "the good society is defined as one that balances two values, social order and autonomy, rather than maximizing one."⁷

However, Etzioni, strangely enough, rarely mentions democracy as a dimension of a good society, and even criticizes the liberal idea of civil society as not being a good society. He argues:

The civil society rests on classical liberalism and its contemporary offshoots. Given that this philosophy seeks to rely on each person to define the good rather than the society, liberalism seeks to leave value decisions as much as possible in the private realm, keeping the public realm thin and procedural and hence of very limited substantive normative moral content.

According to Etzioni,

The good society builds on communitarian philosophy. It assumes social definitions of the good, and that a well functioning society, let alone a good one, requires a core of substantive (rather than merely procedural) shared values which in part define not only public but also private proper behavior. To transmit these values from generation to generation, the good society heavily relies on the family, schools, and the community (including its places of worship and civic associations).⁸

He further claims:

We aspire to a society that is not merely civil but is good. A good society is one in which people

⁴ John Kenneth Galbraith, *The Good Society: The Humane Agenda* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1996), p. 4.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

⁷ Amitai Etzioni, "The Good Society." *Seattle Journal of Social Justice*, vol. 1, issue 1 (Spring/Summer 2002), pp. 83-96.

⁸ Amitai Etzioni, "Law in Civil Society, Good Society, and the Prescriptive State," *Chicago Kent Law Review*, vol. 75, no. 2 (2000), pp. 355-377.

treat one another as ends in themselves and not merely as instruments; as whole persons rather than as fragments; as members of a community, bonded by ties of affection and commitment, rather than only as employees, traders, consumers or even as fellow citizens.⁹

For Etzioni, “The good society is an ideal. While we may never quite reach it, it guides our endeavours and we measure our progress by it”.¹⁰ He suggests many more trends and provides greater detail of this ideal within the framework of the “third way” between capitalism and socialism (e. g. mutuality of social services; new orientations in education, partnerships, disarmament of population; diversity of cultures; spiritual pursuits, and the like).

A different conception of a good society with explicit inclusion of civil society and democracy, drawing substantially on Dewey, has been proposed by sociologist Robert Bellah and his fellow academics.¹¹ From their perspective on institutions, they cannot imagine how democracy and citizen participation could be eliminated from the concept of a good society. Despite the fact that they outline some of its features, their standpoint is that “there is no pattern of a good society that we or anyone else can simply discern and then expect people to conform to it”. It is central to their “very notion of a good society that it is an open quest, actively involving all its members.”¹² These authors are well aware that democracy itself is “an ongoing moral quest, not an end state” and with reference to the democratic transformation in former Czechoslovakia they rightly expect “a long process of institutionalizing democratic participation.”¹³ They think of a good society much in terms of Dewey’s concept of “great community” and apply his idea of creative democracy to the creation

of democratic institutions whose purpose is to enable intelligent public opinion and the responsible social participation of all citizens.¹⁴ There is an organic relationship between active citizenship and the reshaping of institutions.¹⁵ In pursuit of a good society, they also call for a reshaping of democracy in theory and practice, based on the Deweyan conception of politics and a renewed public. Democratic citizenship for these authors is active democratic participation in all spheres of public life and democracy for them is “paying attention” to all the important things in life that matter, that is to the self-cultivation of all citizens.¹⁶ A value-based approach, recognizing that “money and power are necessary as means, but they are not the proper measures of a good society”¹⁷ is also essential in their approach to democracy. Such values as cooperation, responsibility and trust are both the values of democracy as well as the vehicles of a good society. As to the meaning of a good society itself, it is “to sustain a good life on this planet for ourselves and the generations to come.”¹⁸

That it is hard to find any consensus amongst the theoreticians of a good society is clear from my last two examples.

One approach is exclusively positive and it sees a good society mostly as a “harmonious” society whatever its characteristics may be. For instance, a good society is a society, where neither institutions nor people humiliate one another; it is a society based on the premise that human nature finds its key expression in *work*; and a society that does not lose its sense of shame at the wrongs it commits is a society that may also be called a “decent society”.¹⁹

⁹ Amitai Etzioni, *The Third Way to a Good Society*, (London: Demos, 2000), p. 11.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

¹¹ See Robert Bellah et al., *The Good Society*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1992).

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 9.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

¹⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 13.

¹⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 107.

¹⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 254.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 272.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

¹⁹ Avishai Margalit, *The Decent Society* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996).

On the other hand, does it mean that contradictions, controversies, conflicts, various kinds of struggle and power games should be eliminated from any type of a good society? The well-known post-Marxist Chantal Mouffe poses the question as follows:

What is a 'good society'? Is it a society pacified and harmonious where basic disagreements have been overcome and where an overlapping consensus has been established about a single interpretation of common values? Or is it a society with a vibrant public sphere where many conflicting views can be expressed and where there is the possibility to choose among legitimate alternative projects? I want to argue in favor of this second view because I am convinced that, contrary to what is usually taken for granted today, it is a mistake to believe that a 'good society' is one where antagonisms have been eradicated and where the adversarial model of politics has become obsolete.²⁰

This is the claim that Mouffe espouses particularly in her conception of democracy which she calls "agonistic pluralism". She considers the dominant liberal model of democracy to be impotent in understanding the nature of dissensus and antagonism, which are linked to the ways in which power operates in a democratic society. Since this can by no means be eliminated, it means

[T]hat the democratic society cannot be conceived any more as a society that would have realized the dream of a perfect harmony or transparency. Its democratic character can only be given by the fact that no limited social actor can attribute to oneself the representation of the totality and claim in that way to have the 'mastery' of the foundation.²¹

The substance of this is that power relations are constitutive of society, so "the main question of democratic politics is not how to eliminate power but how to constitute forms of power that are compatible with democratic values."²² She has proposed (along with

Ernesto Laclau) an alternative conception of democracy which does not privilege consensus. The second point that Mouffe considers important in changing current conceptualization of a good society is globalization.

I am sure there are a lot of points in these conceptions with which we, pragmatists, can agree. But we should develop our own specific pragmatist conception of a good society (and of a good human life). It can also be shown that: 1. To contrast civil society with good society is a mistake since civil society is part of a good society; 2. There is an alternative conception of a civil society to the liberal one denounced by Etzioni, that is the pragmatist conception; 3. Pragmatism is the middle ground between the unhelpful controversy between liberalism and communitarianism. 4. Pragmatism includes, but should further develop, a contemporary conception of social conflicts;²³ 5. Pragmatism includes, but should further develop, a contemporary conception of social and political power.²⁴

3. Models of Democracy

Democracy is not a final goal – democracy, no matter how important it may be, is just an instrument used to achieve a substantial goal, which is the good society.

So, I began with the concept of a good society because I do not think that it makes sense to think of democracy in contexts other than this, and there are few today who would disagree with the claim that a good society is a democratic society, and *vice versa*: a democratic society is a good society. Setting apart all other conceptions that might consider a non-democratic or even anti-democratic society as a good society we may also pose the question: *What is a democratic society?* Again, although we may find some general features that might

²⁰ Chantal Mouffe, "Pluralism, Dissensus and Democratic Citizenship", in Fred Inglis, ed.: *Education and the Good Society* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 42.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ See e. g. William R. Caspary, *Dewey and Democracy* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2000).

²⁴ See e. g. Melvin R. Rogers, *The Undiscovered Dewey* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009).

be present in all democratic societies of any kind, such as elections and voting at the very least, this question is not as trivial as it may seem. The reason is this: *there is not just one model of democracy and there never has been*. Democracy, apart from being both a celebrated as well as a contested concept, is also a *pluralistic* concept, which, seen from the pragmatist point of view, is a good thing. That is, democracy is a “democratic” concept and should be taken as such, that is, understood “democratically”. However, this is not so simple, for at least one reason: there are those who think and insist that their conception of democracy is the one and only “true” democracy”. Let us call them “democratic essentialists”, who pretend to have the privilege of having grasped the nature of democracy as such once and for all.

If we look at the history of the idea and practice of democracy, we shall see that there is no such thing as the essence of democracy. David Held, one of the leading scholars in the field, distinguishes several models of democracy, which are basically the following three models: 1. Classical ancient; 2. Modern European; 3. Modern American. These basic models can be further broken down into sub-models, but this does not change the kernel of the matter.²⁵ What is important to understand is that it is *not enough to profess democracy as such*; it is the model or type of democracy that we are professing that matters. There are “internal” controversies among democrats themselves as to which model or type of democracy is better, more appropriate, most efficient, etc.

4. Democracy as a Matter of Culture

Democracy, whatever it is, be it a way of government or a way of life (which should neither be taken apart, nor put in opposition to one another), is a matter of culture.

²⁵ David Held, *Models of Democracy* (Cambridge: Polity, 2006).

There is no democracy that exists separately from a particular culture (I mean mostly ethnic, national, local culture; the issue of a global or “Western” culture is different but it also applies here – we may speak, for instance, of Western culture as traditionally democratic as opposed to other continental cultures). Democracy is and can only refer to the quality of the culture, and in that sense we may perhaps speak of more or less democratic or undemocratic cultures. There is no space for me to describe the features of “democratic culture” in any detail here, I just want to make it clear that democracy is possible only where and when that particular culture has developed in that direction internally with its own values and structures, and naturally demands democracy. Let us label this democracy “*organic democracy*”, one which has matured and reflects the character and level of progress of a particular culture. Of course, there are many organic democratic cultures around the globe, but this does not mean that these cultures, and moreover their democracies, are all the same, of one identical type and model. Nothing like that is the case. Democracy comes in as many colors as human cultures and its universality is on a par with the universality of human culture.

This cultural conception of democracy, according to which democracy is a matter of culture rather than of politics,²⁶ is encapsulated in the following claim:

Democracy is a tradition. It inculcates certain habits of reasoning, certain attitudes toward deference and authority in political discussion, and love for certain goods and virtues, as well as a disposition to respond to certain types of action, events, or persons with admiration, pity, or horror. This tradition is anything but empty.²⁷

Of these important components, let me point to just one: Deweyan habits. Unless the culture produces in its

²⁶ See also Sor-hoon Tan and John Whalen-Bridge, eds., *Democracy as Culture* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2008).

²⁷ Jeffrey Stout, *Democracy and Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), p. 3.

members what we would call “democratic habits” of behavior, there is little hope of building and developing democracy. To my understanding, such habits include an open attitude toward others, a natural interest in public issues, etc.

Additionally, we may also speak of democracy as a phenomenon that is “imported” from one culture to another; that is, democracy which is foreign in nature rather than intrinsic and that has to struggle in adapting to the culture. This does not mean that this may be a negative or a pointless process as such, since it has always been the case that cultures interact and influence each other, especially in our contemporary multicultural world. However, this is a much more difficult process than that which has its own domestic cultural roots.

In either case, the fruits of democracy can only be grown in domestic cultural soils. The seeds of democracy must be sown sufficiently deep into the foundations of culture no matter whether planted by national or international agents. But the character of democracy will always reflect and express the specific features of that particular culture. When it comes to the “export” or “import” of democracy, the only way of succeeding is through the mutual interaction of cultures, that is, the acceptance by one culture of another culture along with its model of democracy, which will, nonetheless, have to be adopted and adapted in any case.

Where there is no cultural tradition of democracy, there is no democracy, not even any hope for democracy unless such a cultural tradition is to be established and developed in the long term. *To understand democracy is to understand culture, and to understand culture is to understand the “habits of the heart” of the people.* In particular it means understanding the phenomena of social power and social trust, without which we cannot solve the problem of democracy at all. I do not think that any set of enthusiastic ideas in any of the deepest of democracies can do the job. If democracy is to be real,

ideas alone, even when combined with the faith in these ideas, are not sufficient. It is only through understanding culture and the continual organic transformation of culture toward these ideas that may help. Transformation and the formation of everyday “democratic social habits” could be the key.

5. Participatory Democracy as the Outcome of American Culture

Modern western democracy has developed two basic traditions and models – European and American. These are different and this difference should not be neglected. The modern European model has as its dominant sub-model liberal or representative democracy; its accidental and secondary model is so-called “direct democracy”.

If we consider Europe historically, then for centuries we have had a prevailing tradition of various kinds of kingdoms with their lords: emperors, czars, kings, princes, dukes, counts, marquises, barons, etc., that is the tradition of authorities with their sovereign, absolute power to whom all other citizens were subjugated. Not only did they obey them, but they also respected and worshipped them as the sponsors of their bare existence and perhaps also of a good society. This is the tradition of monarchy and royalty, aristocracy and nobility (currently there are 13 monarchies in Africa, 14 in Asia, 6 in Oceania, another 17 include the countries of the United Kingdom and Canada and Australia, dozens of others on the sub-national levels with their sultans, emirs and kings as heads of state. There are another 12 in Europe including such important countries as Spain, those in Scandinavia and Benelux, alongside smaller countries such as Andorra, Lichtenstein, Luxembourg and Monaco). Despite the fact that modern political revolutions in the West have sought to limit aristocracies and monarchies in the form of “constitutional monarchies” with their parliamentary systems, that is in the shape of “representative democracy”, the overall

culture, spirit and mentality have still maintained the tradition of nobility, tacitly or openly, as something to which people aspire and which attracts them even today. The current forms of this tradition include various privileged social positions with their exclusive rights and prerogatives, titles and benefits, no matter that formally all of this may fall under the umbrella of “democracy” as a form of government (a kind of fake nobility is represented by the so called “celebrities” manufactured by the current media in the services of the financial aristocracy). Formal representative democracy is even compatible with various kinds of autocratic leadership, despotism and dictatorships of which the totalitarian regimes of the 20th century serve as clear evidence (the party elite in the USSR and its satellites had adopted the tacit manners of fake nobility or patricians, which were one of the causes of their being overthrown by their fellow plebeians).

Another danger to democracy, apart from various forms of aristocracy (“rule of the best”, e. g. in the form of timocracy) is oligarchy (“rule of the few”, e. g. in the form of plutocracy, “rule of the wealthy”) in the form of different interest groups, financial elites and mafias even on a global scale. So it seems that the obstacles to democracy are extremely deep and broad in scope; one of these, which I wish to highlight here, is what I would call the “*anti-democratic mentality*”, a feature of culture, which consists, to my mind, of the *elitist or anti-egalitarian habits of the heart*, as exemplified particularly in the high-headed self-image of oneself (expressed as “I am/we are of some higher value than you/them”) resulting in an attitude of dominance toward others and a desire to govern them; or the submissive self-image of oneself (expressed as “I/we are of some lower value than you/them”) resulting in a slavish attitude toward others and a desire to serve them. Aristotle and Hobbes (despite their controversies) would simply argue that this mentality is part of human nature, but the Hegelian dialectics of master and slave would again be appropriate here. Even the modern conception

of meritocracy (“rule of the most talented”) can be doubted from the standpoint of democracy. All these problems, that is, the cultural roots for democracy, social obstacles to democracy, mental dispositions towards democracy, elitism as a psychosocial phenomenon, aristocracy and oligarchy as alternative means of social order, are awaiting further pragmatic analysis.

On the other hand, American democracy, itself a complex phenomenon which includes various features, has come mostly to be associated with “participatory democracy” or with “Deweyan communitarian democracy”.²⁸ It is a particular outcome of American culture, which has not emerged in such a way elsewhere, including Western Europe. Even if American culture is not fully or exclusively participatory, the potential for it to become so is much greater in comparison to other cultures. But this also means that to adopt this model of democracy within a culture that has no such tradition, or a different democratic tradition, may be accomplished basically in two ways: 1. either the domestic culture understands that this type of democracy is a good thing to be had and will start to develop it using its own power; 2. or it will start to be adopted and adapted via the influence of foreign culture, in this case of American culture that has developed participatory democracy to its furthest point (at least in theory due to pragmatism). All those who rely on this second method will have to take into account that this type of democracy will not be accepted unless at least some part of American culture is accepted as well. That is, even if someone understands that the idea of participatory democracy is an American idea, which might have worked on American cultural soil, it is hard to imagine that they will accept this idea unless they have also accepted some features of American culture, e. g. a similar way of life, their domestic culture. Even if there was someone who might accept the idea alone, without the American context,

²⁸ See Sor-hoon Tan and John Whalen-Bridge, *Democracy as Culture*, p. 15.

they will always be confronted with the resistance of other local democrats who will argue that such an idea is not workable in this country and should be rejected. We can imagine how long it will take to plant an idea, with no local roots and traditions, into a culture with different organic ideas generally and of democracy in particular.

Pragmatist philosophy is the strongest agent for developing the idea of participatory democracy. It has developed classic Deweyan as well as several contemporary “neoclassic” variants such as deep democracy, radical or prophetic democracy, and the like (see e. g. the works of Judith Green, Cornell West and others). So the task is analogical here: to accept participatory democracy means to accept pragmatism, and *vice versa*.

6. Conclusion

By way of conclusion, I wish to make just one final point: there is no democracy, no democratic culture and thus no good society without *social trust*. I know of several works on this topic,²⁹ but of no work specifically analyzing it from the pragmatist perspective. And this (including such concepts as social and human capital) is what we should do if we want to ensure that our pragmatist conception of democracy truly keeps up with the times.³⁰

²⁹ See e. g. Francis Fukuyama, *Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity* (New York: Free Press, 1995).

³⁰ The text is a part of the research conducted within the grant VEGA SR No 2/0053/12.

III. MISCELLANIES

THE JURISPRUDENCE OF DEMOCRATIC EXPERIMENTALISM

EXEMPLIFIED: POSNER'S MOORE V. MADIGAN

AND THE INFORMATION PRODUCING JUDICIAL OPINION

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Last year in *Pragmatism Today* I argued in "Law, Pragmatism and Constitutional Interpretation: From Information Exclusion to Information Production" that a conception of law as an information production machine was plausible.¹ The article was centered upon the problems caused by the "information exclusion" methodology Scalia and the majority of the United States Supreme Court used in the recent Second Amendment cases *Heller*² and *McDonald*.³ In those cases the Court found both a federal and state right to individual ownership of a handgun for personal protection under the Second Amendment due to a purportedly originalist understanding of the Constitution. As opposed to this methodology I proposed a more empirical interpretive strategy based upon the work of Richard Posner, most specifically his analysis of judicial reasoning in *How Judges Think*⁴ and the "democratic experimentalism" methodology described in Michael Dorf and Charles Sabel's "A Constitution of Democratic Experimentalism."⁵ The earlier article, while advocating for an information production methodology, was frustratingly short on evidence of what such a methodology would look like in practice because at the time there was no example of such an opinion in actual legal practice to point to. This was a truly unfortunate

lack given that the aim was to bring about a more evidence-based legal practice. Fortunately there is now an example of what just such a pragmatic and democratic experimentalist opinion would look like. Further, it is an opinion on the Second Amendment's "bear arms" clause. Maybe most significantly, the opinion, *Moore v. Madigan*, is written by none other than Judge (Richard A.) Posner.⁶

In this brief follow-up to the earlier article the critique of "information exclusion" strategies such as Scalia's will not be repeated. Instead, a short outline of the democratic experimentalism strategy of legal decision making will be offered. Then, an analysis of Posner's *Moore v. Madigan* opinion will be mapped on to this outline in a manner that will show how it exemplifies many of the factors central to democratic experimentalist jurisprudence, such as placing a heavy emphasis upon empirical evidence, treating judicial decision-making as centered upon systemic collaboration and a preference for informed democratic processes over legalistic boundary setting.

The Jurisprudence of Democratic Experimentalism

The basic outline of the jurisprudence offered in the earlier article is quite simple. Posner's description of the "constrained pragmatism" is held to offer a realistic baseline picture of the information necessary for a judge to make a decision. Dorf and Sabel's proposal offers a way to supplement Posner's baseline and recreate the judicial decision as an integral aspect of an information producing political system.

Posner, in *How Judges Think*, offers "constrained pragmatism" as a descriptively accurate and normatively more workable theory of judicial decision making than the information reducing picture of Scalia and the like (this would also go for the theories of Hart, Dworkin,

¹ Brian E. Butler, "Law, Pragmatism and Constitutional Interpretation: From Information Exclusion to Information Production," *Pragmatism Today* 3 (2012): 39-57.

² *District of Columbia v. Heller*, 554 U.S. 570 (2008).

³ *McDonald v. City of Chicago*, 561 U.S. 3025 (2010).

⁴ Richard A. Posner, *How Judges Think* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008).

⁵ Micheal Dorf and Charles Sabel, "A Constitution of Democratic Experimentalism," *Columbia Law Review* 98 (1998): 267-473.

⁶ *Moore v. Madigan*, 7th Cir. Nos. 12-1269, 12-1788 (December 2012).

etc., all of which spend much energy figuring out what types of reasons and information are not allowed into the legal box). The constrained pragmatist uses more information and analytical tools than the traditional legalist ones. Because statutes and the Constitution are full of vague language, gaps in meaning and inconsistencies, he argues that in the most difficult cases the legalist tools are the least useful. Judges, in this situation, are faced with "involuntary freedom" and therefore have no choice but to make a decision as best as they can. One way out of this is the adoption of a single meta-rule such as Scalia's public meaning originalism. But, Posner notes, any choice of meta-rule is controversial. So, the constrained pragmatist judge, involuntarily, uses politics and policy to fill in the necessary substance in order to arrive at a decision. Of course if Posner is correct in his analysis then Scalia does this as well, but only pretends or is oblivious to having to use these tools. In any case, the claim of "political" in relation to a judge's analysis is less damaging for the constrained pragmatist because while his or her judgment is political, in that it reluctantly deals with political issues and must choose one way or another, it is also conscious and as non-partisan as the judge can make it. This is because a judge's reputation is constrained by public and professional reputation, professional training and broader social norms. The policy choices are also so constrained, and further determined by an understanding of judicial limits as well as the limits of other political branches. For instance, Posner thinks that the pragmatist judge, by allowing policy into the judicial mix, can more intelligently allocate information costs of legislation. On the other hand, originalism, so his argument goes, forces the legislature to carry all the information costs in an unrealistic manner. Ultimately, therefore, Posner argues that there is a limited "zone of reasonableness" the judge must stay within. So, the constrained pragmatist judge is not a purposively "activist" judge, but is rather quite reluctant to venture beyond legalist tools, and does so involuntarily and only when forced to by the

occasion. Posner's real point is that the standard legalist tools are so information poor that there is no way to avoid recourse to the tools utilized by the constrained pragmatist.

From acknowledging this claim of necessity in relationship to the tools of American jurisprudence there arises a question of why the aim should be to eliminate information as much as possible at all? What if, that is, information could be enhanced so as to better inform a judicial decision? Further, why not create a system, if possible, that would actually produce information that could better inform the whole political process?

In the earlier paper I argued that Dorf and Sabel's conception of democratic experimentalism offers a picture of judicial decision making that helps do just that. Their picture of democratic governance starts with governmental activity being presumptively local. Congress, administrative agencies and the like do less rule making than they are expected to do presently and are, rather, more aimed at assisting local units with information (by expressly aiming at the function of information pooling) and resources to support experimentation. They also, along with the courts, set basic standards and ensure transparency through investigation of the decision making process utilized in political choices. This is rendered less invasive and top down because the basic standards are created by and through the process required of local government. Through benchmarking, simultaneous engineering and learning by monitoring, local government would be required, in return for the freedom to experiment, to create an informed record as to the content and manner of decision making. What courts do in particular is to make sure the broad aims set out in legislative rules are followed and decision making at every level is sufficiently informed and transparent. This is done largely through evaluation of the record created during decision making of benchmarks and alternatives considered, etc. A challenger to a governmental decision

offers the claim that the process disclosed or should have disclosed better options than those chosen by the governmental unit in question. An experimentalist court, in turn, defers to the judgments of local governmental unit only if the unit developed a record that makes the choices made and the reasons for the choices properly transparent. Review is deferential, but only if the record shows a certain level of diligence. The judge's reasoning, that is, turns to the reasons given and that of evaluating the sufficiency and transparency of the process rather than to the finality of a rule. In this way, judges function less as referees and more as collaborators in an active problem-solving process. This, in turn, if practiced effectively, creates a process that encourages mutual learning. Of course basic legalist tools are used, but when their usefulness runs out, instead of the judge turning to his or her own favorite information excluding theory and then crafting a somewhat arbitrary rule, the judge learns from the record placed before the court. First, if the record is insufficient, the judge learns that the decision making process of the governmental unit in question was not properly informed. Second, if the record is sufficient, and shows proper benchmarking, deliberation, monitoring, etc., then the judge is offered an informed and information rich record from which to evaluate the ultimate decision.

So, combining Posner's claims with those of Dorf and Sabel, I argued in the earlier paper that there can be constructed an attractive democratically enhanced conception of judicial decision making that actually produces rather than excludes information. The constrained pragmatist judge, when inevitably confronted with a vague statute or clause of the Constitution looks, under this theory, to the record offered by both the governmental unit in question, as well as the options advocated by the challenger. The evaluation is deferential as long as the record shows sufficient attention to benchmarking and other values such as transparency. Ultimately the judge functions less as an external rule interpreter and more as a fellow

inquirer – encouraging and sometimes prodding the more ostensibly democratic branches of government to consider possibilities and document the reasons for the ultimate choices made.

Moore v. Madigan

This is all well and good, but aren't the barriers to implementation of such an experimentalist judicial decision making too high? Isn't it the case that "law day" ideas about what law must be as well as what it must not be are so entrenched (even though largely conflicting and controversial) that a democratic experimentalist court is impossible in fact if not theory? This conclusion was certainly a real possibility given my admission in the earlier article that we have no actual examples of court opinions available from which to develop the benchmarks necessary to develop the proper democratic experimentalist precedents. But happily there is now a circuit court opinion available to reference that exemplifies many of the most important aspects of the information-producing jurisprudence outlined above. Further, the case is a Second Amendment case centered upon the right to bear arms so it can directly supplement the earlier analysis. Finally, and significantly, the opinion is by Judge Posner. The case, *Moore v. Madigan*, gives a concrete example of an experimentalist opinion that shows deference to democratic procedure but that also places high premium on and informed and information producing legislative process.

Moore v. Madigan was argued in front of the Seventh Circuit June 8, 2012 and decided December 11 of the same year. The panel of judges was made up of Posner, Flaum and Williams. Judge Posner wrote the court's 21 page opinion. Williams wrote a 25 page dissent. Posner begins his opinion with a description of the challenged law. The Illinois law in question forbade a person, with narrow exceptions, to carry a gun ready to use other than in his or her home, his or her fixed place of business

or on another's property with permission of the property owner. Appellants claimed that this restriction was unconstitutionally narrow under *Heller* as applied to the states via *McDonald*. *Heller* held that the Second Amendment protected a core right to self-defense in the home. The question before the court in *Moore v. Madigan* was whether the interpretation of the Second Amendment offered in those two Supreme Court cases also required a right to carry a gun for self-defense outside of the home.

To answer this question Posner starts his opinion with a description of the record before the court as "hundreds of pages of argument," largely focusing on the historical understanding of the constitutional clause at the time of its enactment and before.⁷ He notes that the historical analysis offered in the voluminous record goes back to fourteenth century statutes, cases in the 1600's and a reading of Blackstone. He then writes of the various conclusions as to this historical analysis: "All this is debatable of course, but we are bound by the Supreme Court's historical analysis because it was central to the Court's holding in *Heller*."⁸ Posner, therefore, quickly deflects this issue by refusing to revisit the history as constructed and used to decide the issue in *Heller*. Instead he rests his first move on an expressly functionalist premise. He argues that if the Second Amendment protects a right to self-defense, then "one doesn't have to be a historian to realize that a right to keep and bear arms for personal self-defense in the eighteenth century could not rationally have been limited to the home."⁹ Further, he argues that there is a significant historical continuity in that, as in earlier times, people are more likely in the present day to be attacked outside of the home than in it. Therefore, functionally a self-defense justification for the right to bear arms must encompass more than just the home. That is, if self-

defense is the point of the Second Amendment then the project must be taken as more than that of just protecting the Castle (one of the purported historical understandings found in Blackstone). Posner rejects this by arguing that this narrow view would conflate a self-defense right with a defense of property right. His argument here is colorful enough to quote in full: "To confine the right to be armed to the home is to divorce the Second Amendment from the right of self-defense described in *Heller* and *McDonald*. It is not a property right – a right to kill a houseguest who in a fit of aesthetic fury tries to slash your copy of Norman Rockwell's painting *Santa with Elves*. That is not self-defense, and this case, like *Heller* and *McDonald* is just about self-defense."¹⁰

At this point, from pages 8 to 15, the opinion changes from a functional analysis of the meaning of self-defense to a wide-ranging investigation of empirical literature on the effect of public bearing of guns. He cites a substantial set of studies investigating the evidence available for the claim that guns are effective for self-defense as well those investigating the effects of gun legislation. Ultimately, though, he finds that the empirical evidence is ambiguous and when read carefully "fails to establish a pragmatic defense of the Illinois law."¹¹ Here he notes that more is required than merely the judicial finding that the law is "not irrational." Such a "blanket prohibition" in the core of the Second Amendment rather requires more justification than a ban on guns in specific places such as public schools because in this case, "a person can preserve an undiminished right of self-defense by not entering those places; since that's a lesser burden, the state doesn't need to prove so strong a need."¹² Therefore the court can expect to see at least some positive empirical evidence in favor of the legislature's chosen law.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹² *Ibid.*, 15.

Having surveyed the data and distinguished the standard of review, Posner turns to the matter of options. As he puts it, "Illinois has lots of options for protecting its people from being shot without having to eliminate all possibility of armed self-defense in public."¹³ In this section of the opinion, therefore, benchmarking anchors the analysis. He continues, "Remarkably, Illinois is the *only* state that maintains a flat ban on carrying ready-to-use guns outside the home."¹⁴ Part of the benchmarking he offers entails a survey of the laws of other states that enables him, in turn, to describe the Illinois law the most restrictive among all of the states. He concludes, "If the Illinois approach were demonstrably superior, one would expect at least one or two other states to have emulated it."¹⁵ Because of the benchmarking process the opinion doesn't just end on a negative holding but includes a discussion of alternatives. Alternative possibilities offered as tentatively acceptable include competency tests, training, bans from specific premises such as churches, and demonstration of "proper cause" in order to be allowed to get a license.¹⁶ So, the opinion requires evidence for the specific regulatory regime chosen, and expects the evidence to be more than just an argument that the connection between the aim and the means is not irrational. But ultimately he explains that, "our analysis is not based on degrees of scrutiny, but on Illinois's failure to justify the most restrictive gun law of any of the 50 states."¹⁷ That is, the analysis rests largely upon the combination of lack of empirical justification with other less restrictive means available learned of through an investigation of other state strategies in the same legal realm. Indeed, he continues, "The key legislative facts in this case are the effects of the Illinois law; the state has failed to show that those effects are positive."¹⁸ Therefore the court finds the law

unconstitutional and reverses and remands. Yet here Posner avoids setting down a bright-line rule but rather hands that task off to the state legislature (the more democratically accountable and - at least potentially - more empirically informed branch); "we order our mandate stayed for 180 days to allow the Illinois legislature to craft a new gun law that will impose reasonable limitations, consistent with the public safety and the Second Amendment, as interpreted in this opinion, on the carrying of guns in public."¹⁹

Conclusion

Posner's opinion shows many of the most important aspects of an information producing court design along the lines of his own theory of judicial pragmatism and supplemented by Dorf and Sabel's theory of governmental arrangement and constitutional analysis. The opinion treats the project of gun regulation as a collaborative project and then analyzes the aim functionally. Further, he supplements the traditional venue-surveying benchmarking already practiced within the federalism of the U.S. system with a careful investigation of the scientific and academic evidence on the effectiveness of guns and gun-control legislation for

¹³ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 16.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 16-17.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 18-19.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 20.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 21. Williams's dissent focuses much more of its energy on the historical analysis of the Second Amendment's meaning. But the conclusion is the same - the 9 pages of historical analysis ends inconclusively. Then the argument turns to strength of justification especially if in "core" of right protected and appeals to common sense for the conclusion that the Illinois law as passed would protect individuals.¹⁹ Tellingly, though, the dissent also devotes 10 pages to an empirical analysis. Ultimately the disagreement between the court's majority and Williams rests upon the proper level of deference. That is, Williams argues that Posner did not defer enough to legislature and references Brandeis's advocacy of the states as laboratories for experimentation. So, even though the argument in dissent is more grounded in historical analysis, it too is notable for advocating for experimentation and evidence. As opposed to the type of analysis offered by Scalia in *Heller* and followed by Alito in *McDonald*, both Posner and Williams at least grapple with the actual world - and therefore think things not words. *Ibid.*, 22-46.

the aim of self-defense. Finally, he refuses to lay down a bright-line prohibition but rather prods the legislature to find a more effective and less restrictive strategy for the implementation of its aims. Instead of creating a determinant rule himself he, if successful, forces the legislature to make transparent the information and reasoning behind the choice of regulation it ultimately makes.

Admittedly, reactions to the case have been mixed. For instance, after the decision the Defendants petitioned the 7th Circuit for an en banc rehearing. They were denied, but there were four dissents out of ten judges. Further, an application for an extension of time to appeal to the Supreme Court has been filed. In this application the Appellants, among many legal disagreements with the opinion, argue that *Moore v. Madigan* erred in its demand for strong or extensive empirical evidence and should have been more deferential to legislative judgments.²⁰ I must confess that my intuitions are more with Williams and the appellants in the Supreme Court extension application when it comes to how much judicial deference to the initial choice of regulatory strategy is appropriate. Further, my intuitions are squarely in the "more regulation is better" camp when it comes to guns. (There goes my hope for elected office in the U.S.) On the other hand, Posner's benchmarking analysis outlines the multiple other options available and was supported by an extensive investigation into the data available on the matter. In an experimentalist court intuitions - the traditionally dominant (and determinant) tool of legal analysis - are decentered in favor of empirical investigation and decisions based upon a factual record. In this sense, the whole point of an information producing court is to discipline intuitions through empirical fact, rather than be controlled by them.

In any case, *Moore v. Madigan's* requirement of a higher standard of evidence is information forcing and, ideally, information producing rather than information eliminating if the legislature follows its requirements. Further, the case is also more democratic than the standard case that hands down a bright-line judicially created rule in order to police boundaries. By remanding to the legislature with a requirement of supporting evidence Posner avoided the legalist tendency to see the courts as final rule givers while forcing the more democratic branches to offer up tangible evidence for their ultimate decisions. Of course, as in this case, the empirical evidence might be ambiguous as well. But here the ambiguity can, at times, at least discipline judicial intuitions by keeping the judge from deciding the absolute limits of an area too soon. And, if the system works as imagined, the iterative process will produce an expanding pool of information from which to choose from as decision making proceeds. Further, it is worthy of note that by remanding the choice from remaining options back to the Illinois legislature rather than creating any bright-line statement of law, Posner showed a different type of judicial deference by declining to determine one option just for the sake of having a determinant judicially created (or in Scalia's case purportedly "found") outcome.

²⁰http://capitolfax.com/093565_9900001.00000_201304_29120156617_00000001-c.pdf, p. 4-5. Last accessed June 3, 2013.

BOOK REVIEW:

JOHN DEWEY BETWEEN PRAGMATISM AND CONSTRUCTIVISM.

(Edited by Larry A. Hickman, Stefan Neubert, Kersten Reich. New York: Fordham University Press, 2009.)

RECONSTRUCTING DEMOCRACY, RECONTEXTUALIZING DEWEY: PRAGMATISM AND INTERACTIVE CONSTRUCTIVISM IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY.

(Edited by Jim Garrison. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2008.)

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J. Dewey hinted that the task of philosophy could be described as reconstruction. The philosophy betrays its function when it fails to consider the current problems of humanity and is dedicated to the philosophers' problems, to theoretical and abstract problems disconnected from public concerns. Hence, philosophy needs to use intellectual resources, reconstructing them to try to address the problems that each situation and context launch.

The comparison and contrast between constructivism, and indeed interactive constructivism formulated in Cologne, is very instructive when thinking about the scope and meaning of pragmatism, in its classic and Deweyan version, in the twenty-first century. It means to reconstruct classical pragmatism to answer our current problems.

1. Throughout the two books, not only Neubert and Reich but also Garrison strive to show the several points at which interactive constructivism, one of the six versions of constructivism as rated by Reich (2009)¹, extends the perspective of J. Dewey.

¹Neubert, S. "Constructivism: Diversity of Approaches and Connections with Pragmatism", p. 47-54. *John Dewey between pragmatism and constructivism*. Edited by Larry A. Hickman, Stefan Neubert, Kersten Reich. New York: Fordham University Press, 2009.

Constructivists and pragmatists agree to adopt an anti-metaphysical attitude and to reject such that the task of our mind is to copy reality as that there is a reality outside the human mind. As observers, participants or agents we construct reality from transactions with the existing environment. Hence the construction of reality and the world versions we have are always culturally dependent.

Constructivists and pragmatists have also coincided with the lack of pure and value-free rationality and therefore that the philosophical task is to highlight the interests and power relations that underlie rational discourse.

Moreover, pragmatism and constructivism agree to establish a close link between the validity of forms of knowledge and communication and social structures that make it possible. The development of science requires democracy and also the other way around. The forms of knowledge are a reflection of social forms so that intercultural dialogue should respect the values and principles of an open and frank cultural exchange.

In any case, this is perhaps the point that constructivist most strive to emphasize in Dewey's philosophy, we are facing contextualist philosophical perspectives. They share that problems should be tested and endorsed within the cultural context in which they are embedded. Hence one of the most quoted among Dewey's work by constructivists is "Context and Thought", where he presents his thesis that "The most pervasive fallacy of philosophic thinking goes back to neglect of context"².

Hickman summarizes the points of agreement between them in the following terms: anti-foundationalism, perspectivism, anti-transcendentalism, fallibilism and contextualism. (Hickman, 2009, 161)

²Dewey, LW 6: 5. Standard references to John Dewey's work are to the critical (print) edition, *The Collected Works of John Dewey, 1882-1953*, edited by Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1969-1991), and published in three series as *The Early Works (EW)*, *The Middle Works (MW)* and *The Later Works (LW)*.

2. From all this, we can deduce that, indeed there is a "family air" between constructivism and pragmatism. Thus the differences we can find between each other are produced on a shared framework. Neubert, Garrison and Reich seem to understand this relationship as complementary. Thus, once the Deweyan philosophical background is accepted, while constructivism would come to correct weaknesses or deficiencies in his philosophy, classical pragmatism would repair the excesses of constructivism.

Regarding the former, there are two types of complaints. On the one hand, since the constructivist emphasises the cultural and subjective dimension of our representations of reality, it manifests a certain claim that Dewey was still trapped or yearned for a naturalist ontology (Neubert, 2009)³. Also, as constructivists, "we, Neubert says, reject any attempt to devise an ontology of the real"⁴. Consequently they strive for an interpretation of Dewey wherein the presence of these natural elements is overcome by constructivists' thesis. In the same vein there is a suspicion that Dewey's appeal to the solution of problems through experimental methods has the danger of understanding that solutions would be equally valid for all human beings. Constructivists would find, therefore, in the classical pragmatism, a universalist lust which clashes with the constructivists tenets (Reich, 2009)⁵. The suspicion is that behind the universalism there is a hegemonic attempt to force other cultures to accept our own (Reich, 2009)⁶, or as Neubert (2009)⁷ indicates, there is a tendency to universalize specific aspects of American progressivism. The reproach to Dewey is that, ultimately, he would not have been

contextualist or culturalist enough, that is, he would not have carried it to its logical conclusion of the idea that there is neither fixed nor previously constituted realities.

On the other hand, as noted above, both constructivists and pragmatists have established strong links between the idea of democracy and the construction of knowledge. Now, the reproach to Dewey is that he has not sufficiently taken into account the mechanisms of power that shape the public discourses, as for example Foucault did (Neubert, 2009)⁸, or that there is not a systematic critique of the theory of power comparable to other recent approaches such as Mouffe and Laclau do (Neubert, 2008)⁹. In addition, Neubert (2008)¹⁰ considers that the idea of social control, included in Dewey's democratic proposal, is outmoded and should be replaced by the idea of interaction.

Regarding the help that Dewey's classical pragmatism pays to correcting excesses of constructivism, there seems to be some ambiguity, calculated or not, between advocates of constructivism. What once appeared as deficiencies in Dewey's approach are also read, on other occasions, as a corrective factor. Thus, it occurs with one of the most criticized aspects of constructivism, that is, the excessive subjectivism and thus the charge of arbitrariness and relativism. In this sense, they understand that Dewey could come to the aid of constructivism: "The challenge for constructivism consists in further elaborating the basic constructive notion at the heart of Dewey's experimentalism -

³Neubert, S.(2009) "Pragmatism, Constructivism, and the Theory of Culture", op. Cit., p. 176.

⁴Ibidem, p. 189

⁵Reich, K. (2009) "Observers, Participants, and Agents in Discourses: A Consideration of Pragmatist and Constructivist Theories of the Observer". Op. Cit., p. 107

⁶Ibidem, p. 126.

⁷Op. Cit., p. 220.

⁸Op. Cit., p. 176.

⁹Neubert, (2008) "Dewey's Pluralism Reconsidered – Pragmatist and Constructivist Perspectives on Diversity and Difference". P. 110. *Reconstructing democracy, recontextualizing Dewey: pragmatism and interactive constructivism in the twenty-first century*. Edited by Jim Garrison. Albany, NY State University of New York Press.

¹⁰Op. Cit, p. 106 – 107.

namely, that our constructions of reality are not arbitrary, but result of inquiry" (Reich, 2009)¹¹. This same ambiguity can be found in issues such as the relationship between experience and language, the interpretation of pluralism, the contextualism or the characterization of democracy.

3. Hickman meanwhile adopts a more distant attitude wanting to warn us of those aspects of interactive constructivism interpretation of Dewey that put this author in line with poststructuralist theses in the way Rorty does, and leading to a misunderstanding of the genuine contribution of Dewey. Unlike the ambiguity that seems to characterize the constructivists in relationship with the points already mentioned, Hickman makes clear his position criticizing some of the poststructuralist's thesis.

As to the claim about Dewey being committed to a naturalistic ontology, Hickman aims not to defend him of this accusation but to clarify how the term is understood. So, in his opinion what Dewey holds is "naturalism without naturalizing", that is, without a kind of reductionism to physical forces. In this way "Dewey's version of naturalism does not entail reductionism of the materialistic or physicalist variety, or for that matter any other variety of reductionism" (Hickman, 2008)¹². The body-mind dualism, matter-spirit, etc., are transformed, according to Dewey's anti-dualists positions, in functional distinctions to which the philosopher would have traditionally given a separate existence (the philosophical fallacy that Dewey regrets). After removing the ontological distinction we only have a functional distinction. What we have are distinctions between the different elements that develop distinctive roles in our

dealings with reality. Elements stable in front of other more fleeting instant, qualitative factors versus reflective elaborated constructions, aspects easily manipulated against other hardly malleable, and all them within the ultimate reality that is the experience.

But the decisive argument in Hickman is its emphasis on showing that the validity of the experimental method should not be relativized by culturalist considerations. Once abandoned the rationalist and intellectualist thesis, to talk about what is absolute and relative may not have the same sense it had before. Hence for Hickman the interesting issue "is not whether judgments are absolute or relative, but whether or not they are reliable, either locally or in the global sense that I term *universalizable*" (Hickman, 2009)¹³. To say that a proposition is universalizable is to indicate that it provides channels and courses of action that give maximum guarantee of being successful, that is, they are "reliable generalizations". We have to distinguish between the conditions of emergence of ideas, concepts or theories that are always local, temporal, spatial and culturally contextualized and the validity of its application that can transcend these contexts. Constructivism states and investigates the cultural and conditioned origin of the speeches but has more difficulty in pointing out the sources of their validity. Hickman claims the disputed view that "that there is truth - or warranted assertability - that transcends observational variability" (Hickman 2009)¹⁴. Note that the validity of a proposal is local, it is a way of denying a priori openness to experimentation. We can affirm the superiority of the scientific method over other non-experimental methods in solving scientific and technical problems given that the method has been built over several centuries of experience

¹¹Op. Cit, p. 63.

¹²Hickman, L. (2008). "Evolutionary Naturalism, Logic, and Lifelong Learning: Three Keys to Dewey's Philosophy of Education". In Garrison, J. Op. Cit., p. 123.

¹³Hickman, L. "Pragmatism, Constructivism, and the Philosophy of Technology" in Hickman, Neubert, Reich (2009), op. Cit., p. 148.

¹⁴Ibidem, p. 149.

controlled by experimental intelligence. It is appropriate the appeal Hickman does to Peirce for whom "universalizability does have a quarrel with non-experimental means of fixing belief" (Hickman, 2009)¹⁵. And the issue is that once we have determined that something is good and valuable for human affairs, we should desire that it has the widest circulation. Dewey's quote clarifies how Hickman understands universal: "universalization means socialization, the extension of the area and range of those who share in a good" (Hickman2009)¹⁶.

Now, the most relevant way to understand terms as "universalizable" and "objectivity" is that it applies the same way to moral values. Hence the difference between universalized and universalizable appears now as the distinction between "valued" and "valuable" not only within but also across different contexts. When we face moral propositions, that we consider valuable as a result of the analyses of our experience, we have something more than a cultural expression. If we think in an example, see the case of female genital mutilation, we are not, as some constructivist pretend, in a conflict between two cultural interpretations but as Hickman notes "is a matter of good medical practice, good health, and promotion of the values of human flourishing against their opposites" (Hickman2009)¹⁷.

Finally, Hickman draws attention to an issue that has often clarified the dialectic between classical pragmatism and postmodern pragmatism represented by Rorty: the contrast between language and experience. It is clear that while postmodernists believe that the philosophical task is the construction of discourses, Dewey's position contained in its appeal to

the qualitative immediacy, is that the experience contains non-cognitive elements that are central to the experience and determine our knowledge of reality. In fact, both C. H. Seigfried (2008)¹⁸ and J. Garrison (2008)¹⁹ highlight the importance of these aspects to understand Dewey's philosophy.

4. In this line to point out the differences between Dewey and interactive constructivism we find the critics made by these authors to Dewey's political philosophy. Neubert (2009)²⁰ considers that in this area there has been a change from holistic positions as Dewey defended to antagonists versions of plural democracy that are sceptical about comprehensive views. Thus, Neubert emphasizes the need for dissent and articulation of unresolved antagonisms. He complains about mechanisms of power and defends a democracy which is characterized by pluralism. Neubert refers to positions like Laclau and Mouffe's that make the difference, struggle and antagonism the key to understand the politics²¹.

Dewey, in contrast to these authors, understands the differences as instrumental factors to the development and flourishing of the individual and the enrichment of the experience. He understood that the proper mechanism of democracy is that of cooperation, not conflict of differences. Forgetting cooperative mechanisms stuns the fact that reality is interactive. For Dewey differences do not entail negativity since they are used constructively. "To cooperate by giving differences

¹⁵Ibidem, p. 150.

¹⁶ Ibidem, p. 151; Dewey MW 12:198.

¹⁷ "After Cologne: An Online Email Discussion about the Philosophy of John Dewey", in Hickman, Neubert, Reich (2009), op. Cit., p. 212.

¹⁸Seigfried, C. H.: "Thinking Desire: Taking Perspectives Seriously" in Garrison (2008), op. Cit., p. 137 – 156.

¹⁹Garrison, J. "A Pragmatist Approach to Emotional Expression and the Construction of Gender Identity", in Garrison (2008) op. Cit, p, 157 – 184.

²⁰Op. Cit, Note, 17, p. 220

²¹Hickman shows this contrast between Mouffe and Dewey's position in "The genesis of democratic norms". Pp 21 – 31. *Democracy as Culture*. Ed. Sor-hoon Tan, J. Whalen-Bridge. SUNY Press. 2008.

a chance to show themselves because of the belief that the expression of difference is not only a right of the other persons but is a means of enriching one's own life-experience, is inherent in the democratic personal way of life"²².

Thus it happens that for Dewey pluralism is a conviction that, as in the case of James, was part of their worldview. They have an ontology of plurality that understands that this is not merely a cultural construct but an inescapable natural reality. The non-recognition of it is what produces misleading and distorts the positions. Instead to adopt pluralism as a starting point it means the democratic task is to articulate the differences and create links that characterizes what is distinctive of democracy: intelligence in cooperation regime. Creating common bonds and sharing attitudes are the task of democratic education.

Bernstein has recognized this Deweyan and pragmatist classical approach maintaining the defence of "an engaged fallibilistic pluralism"²³ that rejects the a priori impossibility of overcoming the isolation and lack of understanding. "The pragmatists advocated a commitment to pluralism, an orientation in which we recognize what is different from us, but which we seek to understand and relate to in a critical way"²⁴.

5. In short if, as we noted at the beginning, the goal is to reconstruct the classical pragmatism in order to give an answer to the problems of our time, the Dewey who interests us today is that who shows us the way to think a multicultural and globalized world governed by private economic forces. In this sense, Neubert (2008) raises the background on which this comparison between

pragmatism and constructivism makes sense: "the project of radical rethinking democracy in the face of the multicultural societies of our increasingly globalized world"²⁵.

Misak (2007)²⁶ likes to distinguish between New Pragmatists, followers of the classical pragmatism, and neo pragmatist symbolized in the R. Rorty's figure. The former are those who unite "their efforts to articulate a position that tries to do justice to the objective dimension of human inquiry". Neo pragmatists held "Richard Rorty's view that there is no truth or objectivity to be had, only solidarity, or agreement within a community, or what our peers will let us get away with saying"²⁷. Now, the question is where we could place constructivists. Initially, because of the stress the human aspect of inquiry we are led to say that they are more neo-pragmatist. But it is not very clear when you read some of the sentences endorsed by Neubert and Reich: "Constructivism, like Pragmatism, does not plead for constructions for the sake of constructions, but looks for solutions to problems of human import"²⁸.

Whatever the case, throughout these two books we find an alive and fresh dialogue between interactive constructivism and pragmatism which gives us important clues to understand the relevance of Dewey today. Interactive constructivism is a powerful ally of the lines marked out by Dewey when thinking of what it is to denounce attempts to pass off natural as cultural as, for example, attempts to pretend neoliberalism as a natural result of innate impulse. But in the line indicated by Hickman, it is convenient to remind that Dewey also claims the opposite, the arbitrariness of cultural and ideological constructions that are not based on

²²Dewey, "Creative Democracy: the task before us". LW14, 228.

²³Berstein, R. *The New Constellation*. Blackwell Publishers. 1991, p. 336.

²⁴Bernstein, R. *The Abuse of Evil*. Wiley. 2006

²⁵Op. Cit, Note 9, p. 112.

²⁶ Misak, Cheryl (Editor). *New Pragmatists*. Oxford, GBR: Oxford University Press, UK, 2007.

²⁷Ibidem, p. 10.

²⁸Reich, op. Cit. Note 1, p. 63.

experimentation and controlled facts by intelligence, or the conclusions drawn without being subjected the free exchange of opinions and rational analysis. To get the control of the environment to achieve the goods we want, i.e., better education and more democracy, the flourishing of individuals and the enrichment of the experience, far from being outdated, are symptoms of the application of intelligence to social issues, the only path that seems to us feasible is to improve the world we all share.

BOOK REVIEW

PRAGMATIST EPISTEMOLOGIES

(Edited by R. Frega, Lexington, Lanhan, 2011)

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Many students and scholars think of pragmatism as a local and peripheral school of thought, wittingly unable to deal with serious metaphysical issues. This book edited by Roberto Frega is strongly recommended to those who share this naïve and superficial point of view. It is also a precious tool for scholars involved in more specialized ongoing debates. Each one of the essays composing *Pragmatist Epistemologies* shows how authors like C.S. Peirce, John Dewey, C.I. Lewis are still able to provide practical tools for contemporary theoretical inquiry. The revolution started by Richard Rorty has been very useful in broadcasting a tradition of thought which has been underrated for too many years. However, reading the whole pragmatist movement through the lens of Rortian anti-foundationalism might be misleading, even if fascinating. For instance, it is hard to label authors like Peirce and Putnam as non-pragmatist because of their commitment to realism. In order to avoid these misunderstandings, Roberto Frega aims at showing that “epistemology has always been and still remains a central concern for pragmatism, but that this concern radically refashions the very concept of epistemology”. As the editor points out, this new epistemology evolves around the “threefold core” of consequences, practice, and experience, and refers to a reason which is unavoidably immanent to the process of inquiry.

Each one of the essays composing *Pragmatist Epistemologies* provides an interesting insight about these manifold issues spinning around the central epistemological topic. In some cases, the authors deal with little known and overlooked subjects: see for instance Frederic R. Kellogg’s essay about legal fallibilism, which provides an interesting

multidisciplinary approach inspired by the preeminent member of “Metaphysical Club” O. W. Holmes. Most likely, also Rosa M. Calcaterra’s paper on C. I. Lewis shines a light on a author who is still unfamiliar to many contemporary scholars. On the other hand, David L. Hildebrand, Giovanni Maddalena and Douglas Anderson try to open new perspectives starting from classic pragmatist authors. Hildebrand shows how the concept of experience in John Dewey’s thought must be necessarily considered as something more than a mere method of inquiry. In turn, Maddalena and Anderson focus on C.S. Peirce: the former by elaborating an original and interesting theory of figural identity, the latter by analyzing the importance of attention in relation to the process of inquiry. There are also chapters discussing more general topics like realism (Sami Pihlström) and moral philosophy (Joseph Margolis), which show how precious pragmatism is in dealing with basic philosophical issues.

All these papers are interesting and insightful. However, while reading the entire volume, we could wonder if there is a common ground for these multi-faceted perspectives. A possible answer could be put forward starting by Randall E. Auxier’s article “Two types of pragmatism”. By sketching two different “pragmatic temperaments” — radical-empirical and idealistic — Auxier explicitly recommends the restoration of the latter, which is “now missing from contemporary pragmatism”. In fact, underestimating idealistic pragmatism, whose major exponents are C.S. Peirce and Josiah Royce, has restrained pragmatism from elaborating an original epistemology, either by getting rid of epistemology itself (Rorty’s anti-foundationalism), or by integrating “key parts of the pragmatist tradition into the canon of the analytical tradition in epistemology”, as Roberto Frega states in his introduction. Both solutions underrate the power and the originality of a pragmatist epistemology, which is of course pluralistic and motley, but at the same time endowed with a specific identity. *Pragmatist Epistemologies* gives us many good reasons for

considering this identity as deeply shaped by the productive tension between the two “pragmatic temperaments” outlined by Auxier. The majority of the essays composing this volume shows in a rather implicit manner the most peculiar feature of pragmatist epistemology: the capacity of dealing seriously with dichotomies. For instance, in his essay *Evolutionary Prolegomena to a Pragmatist Epistemology of Belief*, Roberto Frega points that pragmatist epistemology is structured by the “crossing of normative and evolutionary criteria”. This “crossing” compels us in keeping a key role for a concept of rationality, which must be necessarily reformulated in evolutionary terms. Another entanglement which must be taken seriously into account is the nature-history one. As Rossella Fabbrichesi Leo suggests, reading Darwin and Nietzsche together might be a good way of drifting away from the Scylla of reductionism and the Charybdis of weak anti-scientific approaches.

By sketching an original epistemology which defies dichotomies, Frega provides a living alternative to both hardcore naturalism and unbearable ultra-postmodern approaches. In fact, differently from reductionist approaches, pragmatism takes seriously into account the two dichotomic terms, and recognizes their value. By claiming the “entanglement” of these opposite items, we presuppose the acknowledgment of their meaningfulness. So therefore, a logic based on conjunction connectives (“and”) should be preferred here to an “either ...or” logic. Then, pragmatist epistemology is a matter of nature and history (Fabbrichesi), a matter of normative and evolutionary criteria (Frega), a matter of radical empiricism and idealism (Auxier), a matter of experience as a method and experience as a concept (Hildebrand). In my opinion, this is the most important philosophical upshot of the volume.

Finally, another interesting, even if more implicit, aspect of *Pragmatist Epistemologies* is the relation between pragmatism and the other contemporary philosophical currents. I guess that one of the assumptions implicitly stressed by the most part of the authors is that pragmatism is epistemologically self-sufficient. Of course, there is room for a dialogue with analytic philosophy, hermeneutics and phenomenology. By definition, pragmatist tools of inquiry can be improved by mean of reflexive attitude and practice; however, they can work on their own. But this perspective opens a further fundamental question: the relation between pragmatist epistemology and contemporary natural and social sciences. There is more than hint about this main subject in Frega’s paper, but it would be interesting to ask in more general terms whether pragmatist epistemology is independent of the development of the special sciences or not. The point at stake is again the troublesome coexistence of naturalism – even if considered in a “liberalized way”, which encompasses social and human sciences – and “idealism” (as Auxier would say) in pragmatism. This brings us to the question: is pragmatist epistemology able to solve this immanent dichotomy?



COVER DESIGN BY *Susanna Kremer*
DESIGN AND TYPESETTING BY *Thomas Kremer*

