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Table of Contents

Introduction: A Philosopher and his Ordinal Contexts
Lyubov Bugaeva 6

Interview with John Ryder
Scott L. Pratt 8

PRAGMATIC NATURALISM AND EXPERIENCE

Reading John Ryder
James Campbell 20

John Ryder and the Career of American Naturalism
Larry A. Hickman 26

John Ryder and the Metaphysics of Pragmatic Naturalism
Robert S. Corrington 40

On Ryder's Naturalism
Emil Višňovský 45

Pragmatism and the Normative in Naturalism
John R. Shook 53

Intersectionality and Ordinal Ontology
Kathleen Wallace 62

Pragmatism, Experience, and Judgment
Henrik Rydenfelt 71

The Things in Heaven and Earth: A Theory of Everything?
Andrew Fitz-Gibbon 79

REFLECTIONS ON PHILOSOPHY

Pragmatism in a Post-Truth Era
Paul B. Thompson 88

Reading Ryder through Open-Mindedness
Carlos Mougan 100

Developing a Pragmatist Philosophy of the Humanities
Sami Pihlström 110

Conventions, Institutions, and Commitments: Coming Together Anew
Vincent Colapietro 121

AESTHETICS

A Note on Ryder, Literary Modernism, and Philosophical Pragmatism
Richard E. Hart 135

Ordinality and Film Image
Lyubov Bugaeva 141

On the Natural Roots of the "Aesthetic" in John Dewey and William James
Roberta Dreon 148

The Logic of Gardens: The Dynamic Entanglement of Space and Time
Rosa M. Calcaterra 159

SOCIETY and POLITICS

Higher Education: The Challenges and John Ryder's Response
Herman J. Saatkamp 169

Realizing Dewey's Dream of Democracy:
Reflections, Extensions, and Some Thoughts Regarding John Ryder's Assessments
Charles Munitz 178

Wholehearted Democracy and Its Rational Commitments, Revisited
Robert Howell 188

Common Goods or Common Interests: Two Visions of Democratic Society
Leszek Koczanowicz 198

On Education: John Ryder's Relentless Mirror
Radim Šíp 205

Some Thoughts on Dewey's Ethics and Rorty's Late Philosophy
Alexander Kremer 212

Truthiness vs. Post-Truth:
The Ethics of Resistance and Cohesion from Thoreau to Kropotkin
Nikita Pokrovsky 218

Billiard Balls, Ordinal Relations, and China
Marjorie C. Miller 225

John Ryder's Published Works 233

Contributors 240

INTRODUCTION: A PHILOSOPHER AND HIS ORDINAL CONTEXTS

Lyubov Bugaeva

This issue of *Pragmatism Today* is a celebration of the 70th birthday of John Ryder (b. 1951), American pragmatist philosopher and educator. On the cover of this issue is the "Portrait of a Philosopher" (1915) by Lyubov Popova (1889–1924), a Russian avant-garde artist. The central figure of the composition, the philosopher, melts into his environment. Everything in the painting – the philosopher, the objects that surround him, and the background itself, seem homogeneous. Erasing the distinctions between the organic and the non-organic, the pictorial and the verbal, the foreground and the background, the artist rejects the antagonism of binary systems as well as the very idea of hierarchy, and thus paves a path to an all-embracing worldview. This painting, created more than a century ago, captures something important about John Ryder, that is his openness to the world, his transgression of limited ways of thinking, his advocacy for the closely tied organism–environment relations and for the "pluralistic universe", and his talent for philosophical generalization.

Like all complexes of nature that are related constitutively to their environments, John Ryder's thinking has grown out of the complex relations of his professional life. It is shaped by experiences that he has had in various countries of the world, and it is wide in its scope. It is reflected in his publications on metaphysics, epistemology, American philosophy, social and political philosophy, education, in particular university education, art and aesthetics, and philosophical theology. Because of the remarkable breadth of Ryder's interest and the extent of topics of his philosophical analysis, the papers in this volume embrace the same wide range of themes and ideas. They fall roughly into the following categories that form the four parts of the volume: Pragmatic Naturalism and Experience, Reflections on Philosophy, Aesthetics, and Society and Politics.

The issue opens with an Interview that was conducted by Scott L. Pratt, in which John lays out his views on the origins of pragmatic naturalism and the idea of difference in the context of part/whole relations, discusses the rationale and value of a social and political theory grounded in common interests, and explains "how we might best understand the character of the environing conditions in which our own natures and interests are enmeshed". He also reviews appropriate responses to social oppression, and addresses such issues as international relations and climate change in terms of natural complexes and ordinality.

The first part of the volume presents papers that address Pragmatic Naturalism and Experience. Thus, James Campbell in his "Reading John Ryder" explores through the lenses of relational ontology Ryder's conceptions of pragmatic context for the Ryder's conception of pragmatic naturalism naturalism, democracy and education. Pragmatic naturalism is central in discussions of Ryder's ideas in articles by Larry A. Hickman, Robert S. Corrington, Emil Višňovský, and John R. Shook. While Larry A. Hickman builds up background and, Robert S. Corrington emphasizes his metaphysical pluralism and compares it to the four main types of naturalism that he identifies – *descriptive*, *process*, *honorific*, and *ecstatic*. Emil Višňovský demonstrates how naturalism and pragmatism become productively intertwined in Ryder's philosophical conception that surpasses the mind/body dichotomy and other binary oppositions. John Shook, appealing to Ryder's *The Things in Heaven and Earth: An Essay in Pragmatic Naturalism*, proposes an alternative to normless naturalism, which is a pragmatic "norming naturalism" that serves as the basis for philosophical inquiries into society and culture. Kathleen Wallace and Henrik Rydenfelt address Justus Buchler: Wallace applies ordinal ontology to social groups, and intersectional social groups in particular, and Rydenfelt, in a critical account of Ryder's view, relates Buchler's theory of judgement to various spheres of human experience. Andrew Fitz-Gibbon argues that *The Things in Heaven and Earth* does not only seek to make an account of everything but is "a complex and expansive 'theory of everything'".

The second part of the volume presents Reflections on Philosophy. Paul B. Thompson in his "Pragmatism in a

Post-Truth Era" highlights the tension between pluralism and realism, and makes use of Justus Buchler's idea of ontological parity, a concept that Ryder also advances. Carlos Mougan reads Ryder through "open-mindedness", which allows him to relate open-mindedness as a virtue to Ryder's pragmatic naturalism. Sami Pihlström proposes a pragmatist philosophy of the humanities, and Vincent Colapietro in his article "Conventions, Institutions, and Commitments: Coming Together Anew" honors Ryder by complementing his pragmatic naturalism with the analysis of the "elusive" concept of conventionality.

The application of pragmatist ideas to art is discussed in the four papers presented in the section on Aesthetics. Richard E. Hart in "A Note on Ryder, Literary Modernism and Philosophical Pragmatism", following Ryder on relationality and experience, traces similarities between literary modernism and American pragmatism. Lyubov Bugaeva finds inspiration in Ryder's application of the theory of ordinality to art when she claims that film images constitute an interesting case for discussing ordinality and the relations of the natural complexes of which they are constituents. Roberta Dreon ponders "On the Natural Roots of the 'Aesthetic' in John Dewey and William James" and pays tribute to John Ryder by demonstrating that the characteristic features of pragmatic naturalism that he identifies are part of the Classical Pragmatists' conception of the aesthetic. Rosa M. Calcaterra examines the relationality of time and space in gardens' spaces, and argues that the aesthetic experience of gardens corroborates the dynamic entanglement of space and time.

The next set of papers, Society and Politics, deals with pragmatist ideas put into action in social practice and politics. Herman J. Saatkamp discusses the challenges that higher education faces and elaborates on Ryder's response to those challenges. Radim Šíp places Ryder's educational theory in a broader social context, while Charles Munitz, Robert Howell and Leszek Koczanowicz focus on the concept of democracy, democratic society, and common interests, and Ryder's contribution to the topic. Alexander Kremer and Nikita Pokrovsky examine philosophers that they find relevant to the discussion of Ryder's philosophy. Marjorie C. Miller in her article "Billiard Balls, Ordinal Relations, and China" picks up the "baroque" metaphor of billiard balls that Ryder uses in his work and applies it to a discussion of the People's Republic of China. Not surprisingly papers in this section refer a good deal to John's educational ideas. His educational aspiration, like Dewey's, was to bring together two understandings of the nature of education, as "the preparation for the social position of life, the preparation of the individual to play his proper part in the community or state of which he is a member," and as "the complete development of all the powers of the individual, intellectual, physical, and moral" (LW: 17, 226). John consistently pursues this objective, both in his work and in his life. This is the reason he co-founded with Emil Višňovský the Central European Pragmatist Forum in 2000, and for ten years served as president of the Alliance of Universities for Democracy.

John Ryder's goal was and is to form community in Dewey's sense – community as the sharing of experiences and values. The authors who have contributed to this anniversary volume constitute such a community. And the result of the joint efforts presented in the articles in this issue is, to echo Popova's painting on the journal's cover, the *Portrait of John Ryder, a Philosopher*.

INTERVIEW WITH JOHN RYDER

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Scott Pratt [SP]: The concept of pragmatic naturalism that you have developed brings together the work of the classical pragmatist philosophers and what you call the Colombia University naturalists including your teacher, Justus Buchler, John Hermann Randall, Jr., and F. J. E. Woodbridge. Part of your case for the view is its usefulness as a view that can move debates beyond those tied to long-established dualisms and the search for absolute truths. Another part of your case is that pragmatic naturalism can play a role in addressing experienced problems of the present world in areas like international relations, religion, and cultural difference. Can you tell us a little about the origins of pragmatic naturalism in your thinking?

John Ryder [JR]: First, I should begin by thanking you, Scott, for these thought-provoking questions. I shall try in my responses to do them justice.

You ask here about the origins of pragmatic naturalism in my thinking, and my response will mix a bit of my own philosophical trajectory with conceptual articulation. Perhaps it is a matter of temperament (with a nod to William James), but since my student years I have been inclined to embrace, or at least entertain, a fairly wide range of ideas, often simultaneously. Like many people of my generation, coming of age as we did in the middle of the Vietnam War and the counterculture, I was inclined to radical political ideas and a sensitivity to spiritual matters. In relatively equal measure I was interested in Marxism and Buddhism, combined with a considerable dose of Wittgenstein. The nature of my interest in these ideas has changed over the years, but what has remained is a desire to understand the world and one's life such that conceptual and experiential variety, diversity, and depth can be maintained and enabled to cohere.

When I came to graduate school and became familiar with Buchler and Dewey's thinking, the conceptual pieces began to fall into place. The Columbia naturalist tradition that Dewey helped to define and from which Buchler emerged never accepted certain ideas that became more common in later versions of naturalism: that all presumed reality must be describable in material terms, and that genuine knowledge arises only in the natural sciences with the help of mathematics. Their alternative to these two ideas, namely that nature contains multitudes and that knowledge has many sources indicate, in my understanding, the ontological and epistemological openness and diversity that Dewey and Buchler's philosophical achievements elaborate.

Buchler, it should be pointed out, did not describe himself as a pragmatist, though he certainly understood his conceptual debt to Dewey, Peirce, James, Mead, and others. He was more interested in working out the details of a conception of nature, which is to say of reality generally, that does justice to the multiplicity and variety that we encounter in it. The ordinal ontology he develops is the result of this effort. Dewey devoted far more attention to the epistemological side of it all than did Buchler, and it is here that, as I see it, we find the most important features of his pragmatism or instrumentalism. Among them are an understanding of ideas as tools, of fallibilism, of inquiry as the solution of problems, and the interactional character of experience.

Taken together, Buchler's ordinality, which I read as a more detailed development of Dewey's relationality, and Dewey's interactional understanding of human being and experience, are the conceptions from which contemporary pragmatic naturalism emerges. My own work is an attempt to further ramify, and apply in the respects in which I presume to have some measure of competence, those basic insights,

SP: At the center of your view is the ordinal theory of relations developed by Buchler and it is in this context that dualisms, claims to absolute truth, and the nature of difference (among individuals, nations, cultures and so on) are framed. One means of understanding the idea of

difference is in the context of part/whole relations. In the ordinal theory of relations, you have observed, there can be no wholes because wholes depend only on internal relations and so are not dependent on relations with others, that is, external relations and so would have "no identity" (as you observe in *The Things in Heaven and Earth*, 2013). The term, 'whole' can also refer to something as both complete and related to other wholes (Buchler seems to affirm this sort of whole when he observes that the "whole is not simpler than a part, nor a part simpler than the whole".)[1] I'm interested in how pragmatic naturalism, with its emphasis on relationality, also accounts for things that are disconnected or at least bounded such that they are rightly called wholes.

JR: If I read the question correctly, you are asking about how identity is sustained without losing the relationality of entities. If that is indeed the question, then the answer necessarily has recourse to some of the details of an ordinal ontology. I would repeat the point I made above, which is that my own thinking rests, with very little emendation, on the details of Buchler's ordinality and Dewey's pragmatism. One point of divergence with Buchler is that I hold what has been called an emergent naturalism that, while accepting the ontological parity of whatever complexes and whatever kinds of complexes nature presents, the material order does appear to be prior in time. I refer to this idea as ordinal materialism, a term that I imagine might not have been well received by Buchler. With respect to Dewey, one important disagreement I have with him is his reliance, I would call it an over-reliance, on inquiry as a feature of experience. Not all experience is characterized by inquiry, nor in fact does knowledge require inquiry as its source. We experience, or in Buchler's terms we judge, in more ways than inquiry presupposes, and knowledge may arise in any of them. Aside from points like this, I am prepared to accept most of the technical details of Buchler and Dewey's work, at least until someone offers preferable alternatives.

The question about relations, wholes, and parts requires us to return to some of the details of Buchler's ordinal ontology. First, I would pose the question a bit differently than you have done. Neither Buchler nor I would say that there can be no wholes, if by a "whole" we mean an entity or complex that has an identity that can be specified, indicated, described, or generally discriminated. There are in fact countless such wholes or complexes in nature. What there cannot be is a "whole of nature," or "nature as a whole." The reason for this has to do with the structural character of any and all complexes.

Any complex, which is the generic term for any entity of any kind, is characterized by the complexes which it locates, which is to say those complexes that are its traits, and those complexes of which it is a trait, or in which it is located. And, it should be pointed out, not all such relations are relations of parts to wholes. Among the constituent traits of the complex which is the grapefruit tree in my yard are its branches, leaves and roots. These complexes are parts of the tree, but there are other complexes that are equally constituents of the tree that are not parts, for example the chemical traits of its atmosphere and the nutritional features available in the soil in which it grows. These traits are equally constitutive of the nature of the tree, though they are not in any normal sense parts of the tree. As for the more pervasive orders or relations in which the tree figures as a constituent trait, there is the fact that it is growing in my yard, and provides fruit that I eat, and that it is now an example in a philosophical discourse. These ordinal locations contribute to the character of the tree as a whole, as an identifiable complex.

There is a more technical way to put all this, and it is in fact the way that Buchler defines identity in his *Metaphysics of Natural Complexes*. Each constituent trait of a complex provides an integrity, which simply means that each identifiable trait is distinct and can be discriminated from among other traits and complexes. The trunk of my grapefruit tree is an example. Every complex has an indefinite

[1] Buchler, Justus. 1990. *Metaphysics of Natural Complexes*. Second, expanded edition. Eds. Kathleen Wallace, Armen Marsoobian, with Robert S. Corrington. SUNY Press, p. 24.

number of such traits, some of which are parts and some of which are not, and all are constitutive of the complex. This is what it means to say that all complexes are relational. Every complex is constituted, then, by a more or less expansive set of integrities, and taken together these integrities define the complex's gross integrity. Due to the number and variety of constituent relations and therefore of integrities, every complex has a unique set of integrities, and thus a unique gross integrity, or contour. The gross integrity or contour of a complex is what defines its identity and distinguishes it from all other complexes. Thus, an entity of any kind is simultaneously relationally constituted and a distinct and discriminable whole.

This, as I mentioned, is a structural and static account of identity, and it leaves to be discussed the question of identity through time. Buchler describes the identity of a complex through time, and again I have no reason not to accept his account, as the ongoing relation between the contour of a complex and any of its integrities. So, again as Buchler puts it, Heraclitus was wrong to say that we cannot step twice into the same river because he was confusing the contour of the complex which is the river with a subset of its individual integrities. The river is not simply its water, or its banks, but a contour with shifting relations among its various traits, including the water flowing through it, the shape of its banks, the chemical constitution of the water, the wildlife that lives in or near it, and countless other features. The ongoing relation between the contour of the river and any of its constitutive integrities allows us to understand how the river retains its identity amidst constant movement and change.

These are the technical details that enable a relational conception of nature to account for wholes, constitutive relations, identity, and identity through time. These are of course important because without them a relational conception of nature would not cohere, and the rest of pragmatic naturalism would be a flimsy edifice at best.

SP: The issue of individual things (whether they are people, groups, institutions or ideas) and their boundaries (concrete and otherwise), raises a question about how you respond to cultural and ontological differences. I'm thinking in particular about how you would conceptualize places, especially as they function in understanding indigenous conceptions of themselves and the world. Your robust cosmopolitanism, which avoids the problems of the received version (inspired by Kant among others), may provide a useful framework for understanding place, but the view turns on the idea of recognizing the interests of others. The challenge, I suspect, is that interests are themselves relational and so, given quite different ontologies, the interests of Lakota communities, for example, might not be accessible to a non-indigenous cosmopolitan. In the face of such radical differences, I'm reminded of Lakota philosopher, Vine Deloria, Jr.'s proposal in *Custer Died for your Sins: An Indian Manifesto*: "What we need is a cultural leave-us-alone agreement, in spirit and in fact".[2] What resources does pragmatic naturalism give those of us from dominant cultures and places to engage with peoples and their places who would rather be left alone?

JR: There are several issues at work here: the meaning of a social and political theory grounded in common interests; the rationale and value of such a theory; and the potential problem of the existence of conflicting interests. I cannot take up all these questions here, but it is possible to point in some directions that may be relevant to the concerns you raise.

As you indicate, I have been chasing the idea of a social and political theory based on common interests for some years. There is still a good deal of work to do in articulating and justifying the theory, and I am working on it. But the very basic outlines of the idea are available now. The initial conception comes from Dewey's definition of democracy in *Democracy and Education* in which he specifies the two basic traits of a successful community: the existence of common interests among member

[2] Deloria, Vine. 2014. *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, p. 27.

of a community, and the active pursuit of common interests with others outside of one's community. This is an immensely rich insight on Dewey's part, and one that has not yet been explored and developed adequately.

The first point, which is the existence of common interests, engages a number of issues. Most importantly, it offers an alternative to social and political theories that assume the need for common goals or common conceptions of a social "good". It is also an alternative to theories of deliberative democracy that are predicated on extensive engagement with one another over social and political problems with an eye toward achieving common purpose or values. With respect to the presumed need for common goals or conceptions of the good among members of a community or broader society, it may be that in a small community it is possible to accomplish them, but it is increasingly unlikely in larger and more complex societies. If we think instead of common interests rather than common beliefs and conceptions, we may find it much easier to locate grounds for both communication and collaborative action. My neighbor and I may disagree about many features of the good life, the good society, and ways to achieve them, but by virtue of being members of the same community we have some interests in common: good roads, clean water, high quality schools, baseball, etc. We are unlikely to achieve common notions of the good, or even to deliberate on the question, but we are likely to act, and often act in concert with common purpose, in pursuit of the interests we hold in common.

The attempt to develop a useful theory along these lines confronts the problem, to which your question alludes, that in some cases interests conflict. The Founders of the US political system dealt with this problem by designing a system of government through which they thought the various conflicting interests would be balanced. When one reads their analyses carefully, though, for example Madison's 10th Federalist Paper, it is clear that they only recognized some interests as legitimate, and it was therefore only those interests that the political system was designed to balance. Specifically, they are the differing and conflicting interests among owners of various forms of property, and Madison is explicit about this. The interests of the unpropertied do not even come up as legitimate interests to be accommodated. Average Americans have been struggling against this inappropriately weighted feature of our political system ever since. The example you give of Lakota conceptions and wishes may be seen as an instance of this feature of our history, society, and polity.

So, we have not resolved the problem of the existence of conflicting interests, and a workable theory based on common interests would have to do so. One clue along these lines arises from the second of Dewey's features of successful communities, which is the pursuit of common interests with those beyond one's community. This feature of a defensible society, which I have referred to as a democratic responsibility, is possible only if we engage the other with respect and with an assumption of moral equality. To pursue common interests with others is not to insist that they adopt ours, or that we adopt theirs. Nor does it presume that there are no conflicting or antagonistic interests among us. It is, rather, to engage with the other such that common interests, if they exist, can be identified and acted on. It is also to say that if circumstances call for it, explicit efforts are made to engender common interests as a way of enabling us to live with one another.

Unfortunately, these ideals in concept and action are rarely, if ever, adopted. We can again consider American history as an illustration, though there is nothing uniquely American about these faults. The tendency has been that those with the power to set policy have simply assumed the necessity and justifiability of imposing their interests, vision, and will on others. This has been the history of the US government's engagement with Native peoples, of men's engagement with women, of the various forms of racial dominance that characterize the society, and not least of the dominance of the propertied over the unpropertied. A comparable point may be made about the state's engagement with other countries. None of this is justifiable for a social and political

theory that derives from the importance of common interests, respect for one another, and the moral equality among all of us.

These ideas are applicable, to return to your question, to the engagement with people who wish to retain a sense of distinctiveness and difference. You offer the example of the Lakota, who may emphasize the distinctiveness of their place and a wish to maintain it and all that it implies for their community. Other similar cases are also available to us, for example such communities as the Amish, who also wish to retain their ways even as they engage with those outside their community. To pursue common interests with such people and their communities is not to impose anything on one another. As long as we begin with the presumptions of respect and moral equality, it is possible to engage with one another in such ways that the interests we have in common can be advanced without imposition and domination on anyone's part, and without requiring agreement on social values or the common good or democracy or any other such ideals.

Whatever other reasons any community may have for emphasizing the distinctiveness of their place and its meaning, members of communities have interests, and some of those interests are common to members of other communities. The details differ from time to time and place to place, but for whatever common interests we have in any time and place, it is to the advantage of all of us that they be advanced. We all need natural resources, and individual and collective security, and appropriate conditions to raise our children, and opportunities for them to grow and develop, and opportunities for us to live our lives in all the richness that can be found, regardless of the fact that each of us may define those conditions differently. It is interests such as these, adjusting for time and place, that I have in common with my neighbors, and a Lakota community has in common with those around it, regardless of what else we may think about the social good, democracy, religion, or anything else. Not only is it possible to take account of uniqueness of place and its meaning, a social and political theory based on common interests, respect, and moral equality requires it of us. Though it remains to be worked out, my sense is that the resources available to us in Dewey and pragmatic naturalism generally can help us sort all this out conceptually such that the values can be applied fruitfully in practice.

SP: The tensions between indigenous worlds and those that are part of dominant cultures (both Western and Eastern) lead to a question on the limits of the humanism that is central to pragmatic naturalism. As you say, humanism starts by finding in humanity "the natural sources of our circumstances, the natural sources of our solutions and indeed the natural source of the principles on which we act".[3] The result, one might argue, is a view that confines pragmatic naturalism's concern to the problems of "men" (to quote Dewey). But what of the problems of non-human others? Native peoples in the Northwest of the United States have long held that the problems faced by species such as salmon are not to be understood as human problems but problems for the salmon themselves. The human role in responding is not guided by human interest, but the interest of individual populations of salmon whose origins are in particular rivers. Likewise in the Northwest, where I am from, forests are often seen as individuals faced with problems that extend well beyond human relations and call for responses that at times sound like Deloria's leave-us-alone proposal. I suspect that pragmatic naturalism can provide resources for engaging these problems as well, but can it do so only at the loss of its commitment to humanism and especially the "principles on which we act"?

JR: Humanism, as I use the term anyway, means that it is the responsibility of people, rather than, say, God or fate, to address the problems we encounter. It does not mean that only human problems are worth addressing, or that only human interests are worth advancing. There

[3] Ryder, John. 2013. *The Things in Heaven and Earth: An Essay in Pragmatic Naturalism,* Fordham University Press, p. 288.

is nothing in humanism so understood that precludes regarding the interests of, for example, other species or natural ecosystems warranting the attribution of value, and perhaps even in some cases a value greater than this or that human interest. There is nothing about the interests of other species or of ecosystems that would require us to commit individual or collective suicide, but there is also no reason to assume that any individual or collective human interests necessarily override the interests of other species and ecosystems.

While I do not think that the conceptual resources available to us provide necessary or automatic answers to questions concerning non-human others, the relationality of our ontology and the nature of experience that it suggests do point us in some directions rather than others. Our lives are constituted by our relations, if only because everything is constituted by its relations, and our experience, individual and collective, is an ongoing, constitutive interaction with our environing conditions. Those conditions include other human beings, but they also include the vast and varied non-human constituents with which we interact. What characterizes me, including whatever interests I may have, may be distinguished but not separated from what characterizes the many constituents of my environment. My interests are constitutively related to the interests of those around me. They may be common or they may be conflicting, but they are intimately related in that they constitute one another with some degree of relevance. This general point applies to the salmon and forests as it does to my next-door neighbors.

This, so far, is an ontological point. The question that arises from this concerns how we might best understand the character of the environing conditions in which our own natures and interests are enmeshed. The rocks in my garden are constitutively related to me, though I am unlikely to think of them as having interests. When we turn to organic complexes, though, it seems more plausible to ascribe interests to them. This is no doubt a complicated matter and should not be treated breezily. The point here is simply that the relational constitution of all entities (complexes) suggests the possibility of an intimacy in our relations with non-human beings that renders possible the attribution of interests to them as well as to ourselves. What those interests might be, and how we might most reasonably determine what they might be, are much larger questions. My suspicion is that the way we answer those questions most defensibly will in the end have a pragmatic dimension. Indeed, whether we want to talk in terms of interests on the part of salmon and forests may itself be determined pragmatically. We will choose the alternatives, in these cases as in others, that solve the problems we face most effectively without causing greater problems than alternative solutions. This makes sense, it seems to me, as long as we keep in mind that our own traits and our own interests, and by implication what in the longer run is good for us, is constitutively related to the broader inorganic, organic, and social ecosystems of which we ourselves are constituents. Moreover, in any particular case the good of constituent elements of that ecosystem, such as salmon and forests, may override any of our own interests.

SP: I have recently taught what I find to be a particularly challenging essay by Leonard Harris, titled "Insurrectionist Ethics."[4] The central claim of the paper is that moral philosophies are "defective" if they fail to support or engage in slave insurrections or if they fail to make advocacy of the oppressed a fundamental, "meritorious feature of moral agency". Harris argues that the moral theory generated by pragmatism is such a defective theory. The problem, Harris argues, is that pragmatism, since it lacks principles that demand insurrection in the face of oppression, leads to actions and policies that let oppressions stand in the hope that things will eventually change. And, since pragmatism requires that the solutions it purses are ones that are likely to succeed, even if insurrection is a possible response, pragmatism cannot

[4] Harris, Leonard. "Insurrectionist Ethics: Advocacy, Moral Psychology, and Pragmatism." In *Ethical Issues for a New Millennium*. Ed. By John Howie. Carbondale & Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 2002, pp. 192–210.

support it because it is usually a lost cause. Pragmatic naturalism has resources that pragmatism alone does not bring to problems. How can this view help us respond to present day problems – such as the systemic mistreatment of Blacks in the United States or the mistreatment of immigrants and refugees around the world – that, for Harris at least, call for insurrection?

JR: I begin by making it clear that I have not read Leonard's essay, and so nothing I say here should be understood as commentary on his position or his argument for it. Harris is a first-rate philosopher, and his paper no doubt rewards careful reading and consideration. We may, though, generalize the issue and approach directly the question of social oppression and appropriate responses to it.

The point should be made, if it is not clear already, that when we talk about pragmatic naturalism's approaches to various kinds of problems, we find ourselves once again in James's corridor, with many possible, and at times quite different, alternatives available to us. We may find in one room a theist and in another an atheist, in one room a pacifist and in another a revolutionary, all drawing on the same conceptual resources. James thought this to be a philosophical strength of pragmatism, and I similarly think it to be a strength of pragmatic naturalism, for largely the same reasons. These are among the most pressing challenges of human life, and a conceptual system that hands us ready-made answers to them seems to me to be far more dangerous than helpful. A system of ready-made answers to questions of how to live our lives, for which I use the term "ideology", short circuits one of the most experientially enriching features of our lives, which is our ability, more or less refined, to engage our problems carefully and to resolve them successfully, whether the problems are practical or theoretical, quotidian or monumental.

So, two questions present themselves: what is the proper response to conditions of social oppression, and what resources if any does pragmatic naturalism offer to address the issue properly? It is certainly true that classical pragmatism was not a revolutionary or insurrectionist social theory. This was one of the objections that Marxists had to James and Dewey. Dewey did not rule out the legitimacy of insurrection, but, as is well known, he thought that once we resort to violence, we obviate the crucial human capacity of the application of intelligence in the resolution of problems. Though there are perfectly sensible and reasonable people who argue that in no instances is violence a defensible response to social problems, I am inclined to agree with Dewey that the default response ought to be something other than violence, which means something other than insurrection, though I see no reason to insist that there can never be a circumstance in which the oppression is so egregious that no other option is available. We would have to acknowledge, though, that once we resort to violence, we have created another layer of social problems that will have to be addressed after the insurrection. One of the problems with insurrections is that even if they succeed, the cure can be as bad as the disease.

One can certainly understand how unsatisfactory it could be for someone who, while a victim of oppression, is advised to use what may seem like only half measures to respond to it, in the hope that they will work in the long run. I imagine that this was something like what Martin Luther King felt when the Kennedys asked him to stand down because it was not the right time for the struggle he advocated. Fortunately, he did not comply with that request. A philosophical position that tells us to let oppression stand because other possible evils are worse is likely to be an unacceptable philosophic position for one who suffers the oppression.

The social conception that I have for many years argued for has turned in part on the idea that the most defensible social and political arrangements are those that are most conducive to a rich and meaningful life for all members of the relevant community, society, or country. There is a good deal of detail that has to be filled in here, for example stipulating what we mean by "a rich and meaningful life", and making the case for the necessary moral equality and mutual respect that the

ideal requires, among other relevant issues. Assuming that all of that can be satisfactorily articulated, what would follow is that any tradition, practice, or policy is oppressive and thereby unacceptable in so far as it fails to meet the standard of equity of access to the conditions necessary for a rich and meaningful life. Contemporary social oppression, in so far as it meets this description, is morally unacceptable, which implies that we are obliged to reject it.

I am reluctant to say that such a philosophic position implies an obligation on members of a community or society to respond to oppressive conditions in this or that specific way. There is in our corridor, as there presumably was in James's, room for people to respond to life in various ways, including, for example, a kind of quietism that might preclude social action. But even if an obligation to act, through insurrection or in some other way, in response to oppressive conditions does not follow, a justification, even an encouragement, of such action surely does.

An action in response to oppression, all other things being equal, is a virtuous action and to be encouraged. The question remains, though, which such actions are called for in general and in specific cases. Different people have different strengths, and different people invariably think differently about how they may best respond to oppressive conditions. I may think that my best contribution can be in education, while someone else may think that her most useful actions are in union organizing, or in journalism, or scholarly analysis, or community organizing, or in a range of other possible activities. Whichever form the pursuit of the social conditions appropriate to a rich and meaningful life for all takes, there has to be room for the diversity of people, our capacities, and our aspirations.

SP: I worry that James's corridor is exactly the thing that should concern us. Along the corridor, it seems, some doors open to theism, atheism, pacifism and revolution. Other doors might open into thinking framed by hierarchical structures that affirm the natural character of oppression and still others into thinking that holds that the dignity of humanity demands that any solution must respect the oppressors as much as the oppressed. Pragmatism allows us to step out of limiting ideologies to choose the "best" resources, but does it give us something – or rather some values – with which to make the choice? You say that you have long argued for the idea that "the most defensible social and political arrangements are those that are most conducive to a rich and meaningful life." Is this, then, a principle that applies outside any specific view that supports our pragmatic selection of resources? Or is the commitment to a rich and meaningful life simply another room in the corridor? Put another way, is the commitment to foster rich and meaningful lives an emergent principle that overrides other such principles or is it a principle alongside other principles available for selection?

JR: I am not sure how much pressure we can put on the "corridors" metaphor, but we can try a bit more. While it is reasonable to say that there are many different rooms one may enter from the pragmatic naturalist corridor, this should not be taken to imply that all possible rooms are equally available. An idea or a point of view may be attractive to someone, but that does not mean that the idea or point of view can reside reasonably within a pragmatic naturalist framework. This, I take it, is something like what Dewey meant when he said that being satisfying does not make an idea or an action satisfactory. To be satisfactory, other criteria must be met, and to be a justifiable and defensible idea it must be consistent with the general parameters of a pragmatic naturalist philosophic perspective.

To offer one example, in one of my first publications I made the argument that given the relationality of an ordinal metaphysics, and other features of its categorial detail, it is impossible for there to be a creator God of the sort typically endorsed by monotheists. Even though there is nothing about pragmatic naturalism that precludes a religious and even theological development, consistency requires that such development not include the God of traditional monotheism.

Conceptual consistency is one of the criteria that I have argued is necessary to establish the adequacy of an idea. The way I am inclined to put the general point about valuation is that an idea may be philosophically justifiable to the degree that it is coherent, plausible, and useful. Conceptual consistency is what we mean here by coherence; the plausibility condition is met when an idea can reasonably be expected to be applicable to people's lives as they are lived, rather than to some ideal conditions concocted by philosophers; and the condition of usefulness is met when an idea resolves more problems than its alternatives, and more problems than it creates. Ideas and theories that do not meet these conditions are not justifiable, and, given the metaphor, are not available from our corridor.

The specific question, even if we grant the justifiability of a social and political theory that rests on the basic value of conditions and policies conducive to rich and meaningful lives for people, is whether alternative conceptions are equally justifiable. So, for example, one may wonder whether a conception that rests on class, gender or racial oppression may be available from our corridor as well.

This is a good question, and the answer is "no," which is to say that conceptual systems that rest on or assume the legitimacy of oppression are not justifiable. The case may be stated through a loosely articulated argument. The basic ontology with which we operate is relational, which means that everything, including people and societies, are constituted by their relations. When this assumption is applied to individuals and our experience, several points are suggested. The first is that the experience of individuals is a relational affair, which means in part that the features that define us are themselves products of the relations in which we stand to other people, as well as to our non-social environments. We are what we are, in ways that can be specified, by virtue of our relations with one another. This ontological point has social implications, which include the fact that people are by our natures social entities. Conceptions of social life that pit one set of individuals against another, on the basis of nationality or race or class or gender or anything else, fail to take account of the constitutive relations in which we stand to one another. To understand ourselves and our societies, we need to take account of the full range of constitutive elements of our social circumstances. In that account, any one person or any group of people may be more or less relevant to us and to our lives, but none are more or less constitutive.

This feature of our individual and social conditions suggests a second point, which is that there is a basic parity in the character of each person's experience that is analogous to the ontological parity among all things. Everything that prevails in some set or sets of relations is equally real, and similarly, every individual, in that an individual is a center of experience, is equally in possession of the general traits of experience. At the very general level, experience is characterized by the dimensions of knowledge, art, and power. To make the point quickly, this means that for each of us our experience consists of the capacity to learn and to understand our lives, to organize and appreciate the integration of our experience, and to affect our lives through our own action. We are in possession of these features of experience equally because they describe what it means to be human, beyond the merely biological.

Ontological equality suggests experiential equality, which in turn suggests moral equality. There is nothing in our natures as human beings that would justify one individual or set of individuals having greater freedom than another to exercise the defining traits of experience, and certainly not at the expense of another. To push the point one step further, moral equality implies the need for social equality, if only because anything less than social equality is an unjustifiable impediment to the exercise of our power to engage the world as fully as possible. We are all equally human, which means that we all are equally entitled, if any one of us is, to the exercise of the capacities that make us human. The basic principles of pragmatic naturalism, then, imply a liberatory social and political environment, so that any social and political principles that lead to or assume social inequality and oppression are inconsistent, and thereby

fail to meet the basic justificatory criteria. To that extent, there are no doors from our corridor that lead to them. Of course, the fuller details of the liberatory social and political theory and practice that would be most consistent with our general conception of nature and experience are yet to be worked out, though as I read him, this is basically what Dewey and others have been pointing to, so we are not starting from scratch.

SP: The last issue is closely related to your career-long interest in international relations. You've made a good case for pragmatic naturalism's usefulness in thinking about the ways in which national concerns can be engaged in a pragmatic naturalist foreign policy. How would this sort of approach assist us in thinking about – and responding to – climate change. Where many problems are faced by nations locally or regionally, climate change seems to start with a problem faced by the whole, or at least the relational whole, of the planet but can only be addressed in the context of individual national policies and practices. In a related way, these national responses are also constrained and enabled by what we often call the globalized economy that is itself the product of a long history of colonization and imperialism. Such problems mostly seem out of anyone's reach, but I think that pragmatic naturalism, since it escapes some of the limits of the narrow nationalism that usually blocks effective action, might have something to contribute.

JR: I think you are right to raise these two issues – international relations and climate change – in the same breath because they are comparable challenges. Both involve the policies and actions of nations, in one case because it is entirely about the behavior of nations in relation to one another, and in the other because in the end, effective policy and action require the commitment of nations and governments. Both, however, also invite to an extraordinary degree dissimulation and disingenuousness on the part of nations and governments, including the self-appointed and self-aggrandizing leaders of the democratic world, to such a degree in fact that one despairs of the possibility of theoretical insight making any practical difference. But we keep trying.

The fundamental point here, as in all the other issues, is that all things (complexes) have the traits they have, which is to say they are what they are, by virtue of the relations that constitute them. This is as true of nations, and of global problems, as of anything else. Unfortunately, with respect to the prevailing conception of nations we remain stuck in the seventeenth century. We do not use the same language as Hobbes, but we act on the same assumptions: nations are wholly independent (sovereign) entities that engage one another in a state of nature that, with the exception of some tenuously sustained agreements, is a lawless condition; in the engagement with one another, nations compete, or cooperate when it seems advantageous, each to advance its own, self-determined interests.

If we look at this issue through the lens of the basic ontological propositions of pragmatic naturalism, this entire picture is wrong, or at least so distorted as to be counterproductive. Nations are not wholly independent entities that define their own interests. They are, rather, complex entities that possess the traits they do, including their interests, by virtue of their relations with their environing conditions. Among those environing conditions, and therefore among the relations that constitute the traits of any nation, are other nations. Nations do not exist in a state of nature, but in a mutually conditioning set of relations, in an ecosystem, or more precisely a set of ecosystems, and none may be extricated from that complex environment. Sovereign nations are sovereign up to a point, just as individuals are independent of one another up to a point. The "point" in both cases is defined by the sets of interests, common and conflicting, that arise in the relationally constituted environment in which they prevail.

The ways in which nations behave toward one another will greatly improve if nations and governments can come to recognize this feature of their international context. Achieving that recognition is something governments

and leaders could do; it is a matter of understanding and of choice. My neighbors and I do not regard the neighborhood in which we live as a state of nature in which we are in competition with one another. Regardless of our individual politics, and of whether we agree on anything in particular, we understand that the neighborhood is a highly complex entity with relations to the city, to law, to transportation, to finance, to cultural formations, to families and children and school, and to a host of other factors that together enable the neighborhood to be a neighborhood. It was not always here. It emerged, in part by design, and has developed over time with some degree of understanding on the part of its residents of the complex social networks in which it prevails.

The same is true of nations in relation to one another, except that national leaders do not realize it. They continue to pretend that they lead wholly independent entities that maneuver as best they can to best the others, even those they regard as friends and allies. It is small wonder that much of the detail of the engagement of nations with one another is characterized by killing people and destroying things. In the neighborhood, it is possible to collaborate within the complex social and political context in which we exist to get the roads paved, the schools operating, the garbage collected, and make food available, among a range of other achievements. In the international context, we cannot even figure out how to stop killing one another.

Enter such big problems as climate change, which affects all of us, though some more urgently than others, regardless of national identity. Nonetheless, it is a national and an international problem, and without some greater degree of understanding and commitment by national governments the challenge will not be met. The problem is not that there are not individual national leaders who grasp the situation and want to address it. I am sure that there are at least some such leaders. Their efforts are hampered, however, by the failure to understand that each of our nations is constituted by its relations with the others. One of the implications of that ontological feature of our situation is that at least many of our interests arise in common and require us to work together in their resolution. Such collaborative work, however, is very difficult to undertake in a broader environment in which we see the other as a potentially hostile actor with whom we engage in a veritable state of nature. As long as we think about national relations that way, it is immensely difficult to maintain the trust and the habits that enable collaboration.

Had we understood the intimacy of the relations that already prevail among nations, and of the mutual constitution of our common and even diverging interests, it would be far easier now to address problems like climate change. Without understanding our condition, and without the habits attendant to that understanding, it is and will remain immensely difficult to address the problem of climate change effectively, not to mention the many other problems we face collectively. And we do not have to agree with one another about much in order to do that. My neighbor and I can disagree about many things, even important things, but still live with one another in ways that are conducive to our shared advantage. Nations can do the same, but not if they refuse to understand the realities of their circumstances.

PRAGMATIC NATURALISM AND EXPERIENCE

READING JOHN RYDER

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ABSTRACT: This paper explores some aspects of the recent writings of John Ryder. After noting a few career parallels between him and myself, I consider three themes from his work. The first is his discussion of pragmatic naturalism as a central intellectual orientation. The second is his defense of democracy as a fundamental component of an adequate social existence. The third theme that I consider is his conception of an education adequate for a fulfilling life. In closing, I speculate a bit about his response to our current social and political situation.

Keywords: pragmatism, naturalism, democracy, education, Justus Buchler, James Campbell, John Dewey, John McDermott, John Ryder

I have known John Ryder for nearly five decades. We met as philosophy graduate students at Stony Brook in the 1970s, where we studied with Justus Buchler and John J. McDermott among others. Ryder's high regard for these two thinkers can be drawn from a number of his comments. He offers in *Knowledge, Art, and Power* an appreciation of the former that all that Buchler wrote represented "an insightful and painstaking effort to do conceptual justice to the lived realities of our experience" (Ryder 2020, 7), and he notes in *The Things in Heaven and Earth* that "the primary source of the first several chapters has been Justus Buchler's ordinal ontology and theory of judgment" (Ryder 2013, 179). Elsewhere, Ryder writes that "I have lived with McDermott's thinking on education for so long that it has become the framework for mine" (Ryder 2006, 290). After leaving Stony Brook, we both have had careers in public higher education. (At some point, Ryder moved increasingly into administration, but he has recently returned to an emphasis on research and writing.) We both published initial volumes that for non-philosophical reasons had little success. My book, *Selected Writings of James Hayden Tufts* (1992), appeared just as the publishing business shifted away from such studies; and Carbondale's subsequent withdrawal from philosophy left it an orphan. Ryder's study, *Interpreting America: Russian and Soviet Studies of the History of American Thought* (1999), carefully presented a history of ideas for an audience that, because of events on the world stage, had moved on to other issues. Over the years, we have worked together on any number of conference and publishing projects. And, just like the generations of philosophers before us, as senior scholars we now find ourselves to be defenders of vital aspects of the American philosophical tradition that many of our younger colleagues do not fully appreciate.

In recent years, Ryder has become a noted international scholar. For my part, I have spent a number of years working in a German bank or teaching on Fulbright grants in Germany and Austria. During this time, I was able to pick up a passable knowledge of German, do some research in various local archives, and travel internationally to an extent that I never anticipated. Ryder has done much more in all of these categories. Here I can point to his extensive travels, his facility with a number of languages, his many publications, his participation and leadership in numerous international organizations (especially the Central European Pragmatist Forum), and finally his administrative work for a trio of universities abroad. As a result, Ryder's writings contain a plethora of examples from his rich cosmopolitan experience that he can apply to both analyzing the philosophical and political situation abroad and to understanding the American situation from the outside.

I have attempted to follow Ryder's diverse interests over the years; but their breadth will necessitate that I focus this essay on exploring only a limited number of interrelated themes with an emphasis on his recent writings. One of these themes is pragmatic naturalism, the metaphysical approach that we both adopted in our Stony Brook years and then developed – he more than I – in our subsequent work. A second theme is an emphasis upon a broad conception of democracy that goes beyond the simple periodic counting of votes to undergird the functioning of a vibrant community. Third, I will consider some of Ryder's discussions of the possibilities of education. My final theme will be a consideration of our current political climate in the light of his work.

Ryder offers a fine short-hand description of pragmatic naturalism as an integration of "the instrumentalism of John Dewey and the ordinal naturalism of Justus Buchler" (Ryder 2013, 6). He roots this perspective in "the Columbia Naturalist tradition" (ibid., 8) which would incorporate, in addition to Dewey and Buchler, John Herman Randall, Jr. Within pragmatic naturalism, Ryder explores what he characterizes as "the tension between pragmatism and naturalism. For pragmatism, the central category is experience […] For the naturalist […] the central category is nature, and experience is an aspect of it" (Ryder 2013, 21–22). I would hold back a bit from his use of the term 'tension' here, and emphasize instead the duality of the themes of pragmatism and naturalism as they function differently in our experience. Ryder's conception of experience, of course, "is not the experience of the empiricists, the passive reception of sense data, nor is it subjective, but something broader and more inclusive" (ibid.) that would enable us to recognize, *inter alia*, "the aesthetic dimension of experience" (Ryder 2020, 117). Similarly, his conception of naturalism is drawn from "the *American* naturalist tradition and not the scientistic tradition" (Ryder 2013, 22) that would seek to reduce nature to a deterministic or materialistic system that requires "that whatever there is must be material or explainable in material terms" (Ryder 2020, 92).

It is important to recognize here Ryder's repeated emphases that this conception of pragmatic naturalism requires "a relational view of nature" (Ryder 2013, 41), or "a relational ontology" (Ryder 2020, 16). In this, he relies especially on the work of Buchler, as when he writes that "all 'things,' i.e., anything whatsoever, are constituted by constituents and their relations, and that no constituent, no matter how deeply or broadly one looks, or how thoroughly one analyzes, is atomic." He then formulates this point more positively, noting that "every thing, entity, or complex is constituted by its constituents and their relations, including the constituents themselves" (Ryder 2013, 41). Adopting this stance would require that we abandon the Cartesian/Newtonian quest for greater clarity and distinctness, and pursue nature as a set of interrelated and processive systems.

"The dominant understanding of entities in the history of Western philosophy is that in one way or another they are atomistic," Ryder writes. While he is not denying the recognition of "the existence of relations" in these various approaches, he maintains that "the assumption, to many people a common sensical assumption, has been that while entities may of course enter into relations, that which enters into relations, which is to say the core or essence of the entity, is not itself relational" (Ryder 2020, 15). Mistakenly assuming the indivisibility of the original notion of the atom would allow us "the assumption that the ultimate entities in any given sphere are essentially unrelated to one another. Each material atom, each human individual, each economic actor, and each melodic line, has its nature, its character, its traits, independently of the others" (Ryder 2013, 196). One great flaw of this approach is that "in the bulk of our intellectual tradition we are inclined to regard individuals as essentially or inherently unrelated to one another" (ibid., 33). Ryder rejects these inherited ideas for those of "contemporary pragmatic naturalist ontology," deeply influenced by "the American pragmatist and naturalist traditions beginning in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries" (Ryder 2020, 16). Ryder includes here such figures as Dewey, Randall and Buchler, as well as William James, George Herbert Mead and Alfred North Whitehead. A good example of the inadequacy of this atomism can be found in Dewey's repeated reminders of the different meanings of the term 'in' when considered atomistically or contextually. He writes, for instance, of the difference between the way that "coins are in a box" and "a plant is in the sunlight and soil" (Dewey 1922, 204; cf. Dewey 1925, 224; Dewey 1938, 25).

The fundamental assumption behind pragmatism is that ideas are tools or working hypotheses that gain their value through the role that they "play in the resolution of social problems and the development of public policy." Ryder continues that "treating ideas as tools

with which to experiment in the social arena" offers "an alternative to the more ideological use of ideas" (Ryder 2013, 211–212) that presents them in an absolutistic fashion. Because, as he writes, it is "definitive of pragmatism as a distinct philosophical position, to regard ideas as tools in the solution of problems," it is necessary that we see inquiry as "an effort to solve problems rather than to describe states of affairs" and recognize that "the truth of an idea is to a significant degree a function of how well that idea solves the problem or problems to which it is applied" (Ryder 2020, 162).

Ryder's account of the functioning of ideas differs a bit from the one that Max Lerner presented in a simpler time. Lerner wrote that the "real difference between the totalitarianisms and the democracies in their attitude toward the use of ideas […] does not lie, as many would have us believe, in the assumption that a totalitarian state uses ideas for its purposes whereas a democracy does not." On the contrary, Lerner maintains that "[i]deas do not exist in the void, separated from the purposes and survival of the culture. In every culture they are weapons." For Lerner, all ideas are tools (or weapons) and the important distinction is whether we use them democratically or not. He thus focuses on "the difference between the *instrumental* approach to ideas and the *manipulative* approach": "If you view ideas instrumentally, your primary regard is for their validity and for the creative action they will evoke through that validity, and for the social cohesion that will result. If you view them manipulatively, your only regard is for the use you can make of them" (Lerner 1939, 10–11).

Democracy is for Ryder a relational conception. He points to a sense of "thick democracy" that, while frequently idealized in the course of our political history, was actually central to the philosophical sense of democracy that percolates throughout the writings of such figure as Thomas Jefferson and John Dewey. Ryder notes that this "conception of democracy […] is a strain that is in one sense a romantic one, having its roots in Rousseau and Jefferson, and developed in the last century in the work of Dewey and others." Under this vision, "democracy is to be understood as a way of life, and not simply as a form of government or a mechanism for making political choices." Under Ryder's conception of democracy, the narrowly political understanding that we have inherited must be replaced with a broader conception that permeates our educational, economic, religious, medical, and other institutions as well. Democracy in this sense, Ryder writes, "reaches deep into a society and a culture" (Ryder 2013, 182).

In good pragmatic fashion, Ryder connects up his conception of democracy with our ongoing efforts to understand what holds a society together. For him, a society is held together from the bottom by various shared interests. This assemblage of relations is not necessarily conscious – certainly not in all individuals at all times – but it functions as a web of overlapping values. As Dewey writes, "to be really members of a social group, is […] to attach the same meanings to things and to acts which others attach" (Dewey 1916, 35). He continues that this communal sense is learned: "To learn to be human is to develop through the give-and-take of communication an effective sense of being an individually distinctive member of a community" (Dewey 1927, 332).

Democracy is thus rooted in and fosters cooperative inquiry and experimentation. Ryder writes that when we understand democracy as a tool, we see it as "a willingness to try new possibilities, to look at things in new ways to see what happens, to test one's own ideas and others, to alter one's own conceptions when experience, query, and inquiry call for it." Democracy is for him a process of cooperative inquiry that is founded "not on blind custom, nor on dogma, nor on rigid ideology, nor on clichés and slogans, but on the exercise of our collective capacity to study ourselves and our world, to perceive its problems, and to apply in our lives a mode of interaction that opens to the possibility of new and creative solutions" (Ryder 2013, 185). When vibrant, democratic community is able to foster and even create consensus.

An important aspect of community in Dewey's sense is the recognition that each community has an inside and an outside. This offers Dewey two criteria for evaluating

communities, one internal and one external: “How numerous and varied are the interests which are consciously shared? How full and free is the interplay with other forms of association?” (Dewey 1916, 89). Under these criteria, a failed community like “a criminal band” (ibid., 89) or “a robber band” (Dewey 1927, 328) demonstrates its own failure. For Dewey, “the worth of a form of social life” can be measured by “the extent in which the interests of a group are shared by all its members, and the fullness and freedom with which it interacts with other groups” (Dewey 1916, 105). On this dual scale, however, while the gangster may be “highly ‘social’ in one connection,” he is just as “anti-social in other connections” (Dewey 1946, 221). Ryder develops Dewey’s criteria when he writes that “[a] democratic individual in this sense is someone who is inclined to look beyond his community to seek common ground, common interests, with members of other communities,” and “a democratic society is one that is characterized by public policies and social habits that promote the pursuit of shared interests within and across its many internal boundaries and beyond its national borders” (Ryder 2013, 188). He continues that “a democratic society should promote an interest in and familiarity with those beyond national borders” (ibid., 189; cf. 191).

In a related point, Dewey writes that “[d]emocracy is the faith that the process of experience is more important than any special result attained” (Dewey 1939, 229). Ryder echoes these words when he notes that “[t]he democratic process of experience is more important than any specific predefined result” because “results or ends can be defined only in the context of the process.” He continues that “[i]n the case of democracy, means and ends are basically the same thing; i.e., they enrich and order the ongoing process of experience” (Ryder 2013, 187).

Ryder adopts the general melioristic strain that runs through pragmatic social thought. He writes, for example, that “individual development and democratic growth require a faith in the capacity of people to examine their circumstances, explore possible alternatives, and take the action, individual or collective, to recreate their lives, to reconstruct their individual and social circumstances in ways that better meet the needs and more adequately supply the conditions necessary for rich and satisfactory life” (Ryder 2006, 212). The foundation of this hopefulness is the belief that “the average person is really capable of developing the level of intelligence and understanding necessary to govern his own life and collectively his society” (Ryder 2013, 184). This stance is not delusional but rather hypothetical, based in a guarded faith in possibility.

In this regard, Ryder quotes Dewey: “Democracy is a way of personal life controlled not merely by faith in human nature in general but by faith in the capacity of human beings for intelligent judgment and action if proper conditions are furnished” (Ryder 2013, 183 = Dewey, 1939, 227). In the conception of democracy that Ryder is developing, there is a fundamental place given to education.

In his discussions of education, Ryder relies both on Dewey and McDermott. Ryder writes that, for McDermott “as for his intellectual forebear John Dewey, questions of the nature and goals of education in a democratic society are fundamental for an understanding of American culture and philosophy and for an adequate consideration for the problems of contemporary American society” (Ryder 2006, 211). The aim of our educational activities should be to develop “intellectually and morally well-developed individuals who can understand themselves and their world, including their complex relations with their environments and with each other, well enough to make their own way in life successfully and to bequeath to subsequent generations better conditions than they had themselves” (Ryder 2006, 214).

Ryder writes that “an education appropriate to what I am calling a thick, i.e., Deweyan, democracy must have certain characteristics” (Ryder 2013, 221). First of all, it is not a system for providing answers or a process of indoctrination. Ryder is clear in his rejection that “education is important as a way to inculcate certain values and views of the world into young people” or “to raise young people to believe certain things” (ibid., 214). On the contrary, he continues that education must “instill in young

people an appreciation for open-ended inquiry, for a hypothetical approach to problems, for a willingness, even an eagerness, to revise ideas in and through experience, and for the importance of the collective pursuit of solutions to shared problems" (ibid., 221).

Because he believes that "[t]he challenge to public education in America specifically is posed by our own egalitarian ideal," Ryder writes that "the problems of education must be understood within a social context, which is to say in light of the specific needs of a society at a specific time" (Ryder 2006, 220). Further, in addition to this social context, "there is also a cultural context that should inform our thinking about education" (ibid., 225). For Ryder, as for McDermott and Dewey, education fosters and develops a consciousness of common interests. "The principle we have articulated as central to a healthy, democratic society," he writes, "holds that we are to look for, and when necessary create, common interests among the groups and communities within a society" (Ryder 2013, 194). Further, this "development of common interests among diverse national, ethnic, and religious groups is a necessary condition of a strong democratic society" (ibid., 197).

As the foregoing might suggest, I find great value in reading the work of John Ryder. In closing, I would like to consider how Ryder's understanding of pragmatic naturalism, democracy and education might help to illuminate the social and political calamity that has boiled over only in the last few years, and thus has not functioned prominently in his published work. What I have in mind by this characterization is the complex web of *Dummheiten* in which we currently find ourselves enmeshed. We are living at present, for example, in a situation in which many individuals reject the naturalism of science as a means of understanding and dealing with our social problems. To cite just two instances, I can point to our failed social responses to the coronavirus pandemic and to the climate emergency. In both cases, a substantial minority of the population has decided to hide behind a wall of comfortable dogmas that precludes a rational response. In America, we also find ourselves at present in a situation in which many individuals have rejected widely available facts for the lies of a failed would-be dictator who, with their support, has transformed a formerly legitimate political party into cult of personality. Admittedly, neither of these current problems is without historical precedent. They are, however, unique in this sense: they are exacerbated by unprecedented levels of propaganda and deliberate miseducation in a media climate that makes Dewey's caveat on democracy "if proper conditions are furnished" – seem almost quaint.

From one point of view, we are living at present within a perversion of the conception of democracy that involves a near total commitment to individual freedom and a near total rejection of equality and community. From another point of view, we are living within a perversion of democracy that divorces it from inquiry and education and proudly announces its abandonment of the pursuit of knowledge. Under this perverted view, citizens are fully justified in believing whatever they happen to believe now, for whatever reasons (including no reasons). Further, to suggest otherwise is to challenge their right to freedom. In the context of dissent, Ryder asks, "[w]hat happens when a significant portion of the population refuses to accept the results of the [democratic] process?" (Ryder 2013, 224). But we now seem to have moved beyond legitimate dissent as a necessary component of a functioning democracy to a defense of an alternative reality that will cripple the democratic experiment. Ryder in general seems to demonstrate great tolerance for dissenters. Perhaps this is a result of his extensive experience in both domestic and international academic life. I wonder whether this experience offers him a clearer understanding of the difference between legitimate dissent and what lies beyond that can help us as we face the future.

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JOHN RYDER AND THE CAREER OF AMERICAN NATURALISM

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ABSTRACT: In this essay I comment on some of the features of John Ryder's naturalism and provide background and context that I hope will further illuminate his project. I consider the difference between pragmatic naturalism and W. V. O. Quine's *naturalizing*; claims by some of its critics that naturalism entails materialism; naturalism's response to supernaturalism and secular nonnaturalism; the biological/cultural roots of John Dewey's naturalism; some recent work in cognitive neuroscience that takes its point of departure from John Dewey's pragmatic naturalism; the materialist and idealist aspects of science; naturalism as a postulate; Ryder's four modernist/postmodernist postulates for a pragmatic naturalism; elements of both realism and idealism in pragmatic naturalism; the relevance of Dewey's "philosophical fallacy" to pragmatic naturalism; and finally, the place of God and faith in Ryder's ordinal/pragmatic naturalism.

Keywords: naturalism, naturalizing, antinaturalism, nonnaturalism, materialism, cognitive neuroscience, ordinal naturalism, God

I am grateful to the editors of this volume for their invitation to comment on John Ryder's philosophical *oeuvre*. As Archilochus once said of the hedgehog, Ryder certainly knows one big thing, and that is the career American naturalism. His anthology, *American Philosophical Naturalism in the Twentieth Century*, has been a treasured resource for those of us who have taught courses on the subject. Add to this his numerous lectures, published essays, edited volumes, and substantial monographs, *The Things in Heaven and Earth: An Essay in Pragmatic Naturalism* and *Knowledge, Art, and Power*, and you have a well-crafted treatment of the career and contours of American naturalism and its implications for religion, the arts, and political life.

But it can also be truly said, as Archilochus said of the fox, that John Ryder knows many things. He knows, for example, how to bring people together. As organizer of the Central European Pragmatist Forum, he has for many years brought American philosophers together with their European counterparts for week-long conferences in a variety of Central European venues (and elsewhere as well). In his roles as professor and administrator at a number of European and Middle Eastern universities he has built an extensive network of students and colleagues and a deep understanding of the many and diverse issues that confront educators in many parts of the world. He has also been active in the Alliance of Universities for Democracy (AUDEM), an international organization dedicated to discussion of the university's role in promoting democracy.

In addition to his work as an ardent proponent of the tradition of American naturalism that reaches back to George Santayana and the "Columbia Naturalists,"[1] Ryder's work also points forward as an exploration of the possibility of a "pragmatic naturalism" which can appeal to non-pragmatist naturalists as well. In this he has offered his readers insights into the place of naturalism within the history of philosophy, especially with respect to its treatments of alternatives to ontology and epistemology as received and long-debated within the tradition of European philosophy.

He describes his own position as closely associated with American naturalists including John Herman Randall and his teacher Justus Buchler. He has been greatly influenced by Buchler's "ordinal" naturalism, which departs radically from the European tradition of substance/accident, mind/body metaphysics by postulating an alternative that is thoroughly relational. Nature is characterized in the following way: "whatever is, in any sense or way at all, is in its nature complex, and complex in such a way that its nature is constituted by the relations among traits, and that its traits, whatever they are, are themselves relationally constituted complexes" (Ryder 2013, 58).

He has thus argued for a pragmatic naturalism that would be attractive to naturalists of a wide variety, including both ordinal naturalists such as Buchler and pragmatists such as Dewey. Of course, he admits that Dewey is already known as both a pragmatist and a naturalist, but he is attempting to construct a bigger tent

[1] Columbia Naturalists included John Dewey, Frederick J. E. Woodbridge, John Herman Randall Jr., Ernest Nagel, and Justus Buchler, among others.

since there are naturalists who do not wish to buy all that Dewey has on offer, or for that matter all that Buchler proposes. Nevertheless, he thinks there is enough overlap that promising alliances can be made.

To be sure, his project requires application of a principle of charity on all sides. But it does seem to have the advantage of advancing conversations among naturalists with common insights and agendas. I propose here to comment on some of the features of Ryder's work and to provide some background and context that I hope will further illuminate his project. I will also highlight some of Dewey's ideas about naturalism that can serve to support and encourage the alliance that Ryder proposes. In all this, I believe, pragmatic naturalism will nevertheless be understood differently by different readers, since, as William James reminded us, temperament (and therefore selective interest) plays a large part in what ideas we accept as valid and important for the ongoing reconstruction of our lives.

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Naturalism versus Naturalizing

It is significant that Ryder distances his understanding of American naturalism from W. V. O. Quine's "naturalized epistemology," which proposed to off-load traditional philosophical questions about knowledge to the empirical sciences. There is more than a hint of logical positivism in this idea. Joseph Margolis discussed this difference at length and concluded that the naturalizing that Quine proposed "is demonstrably incompatible with the pragmatism of the classic figures" (Margolis 2002, 6–7). Ryder goes further to include not only pragmatists, but also the work of non-pragmatist naturalists such as Santayana, Woodbridge, and Randall as incompatible with Quine's "naturalizing."

Margolis characterized the naturalism of the original pragmatists as "little more than a refusal to admit nonnatural or supernatural resources in the descriptive or explanatory discourse of any truth-bearing kind. In that sense, naturalism is a conceptual scruple that pragmatism shares with all sorts of heterogeneous doctrines: positivism and Marxism, for instance" (Margolis 2002, 6). In fact, if we look back (as Ryder urges us to do) to one of the primary resources for understanding Columbia Naturalism, *Naturalism and the Human Spirit* (1944), a collection of essays by both pragmatist and non-pragmatist naturalists edited by Yervant Krikorian, we find that the situation may be a bit more complex than Margolis suggested.

Antinaturalism

It is true that a common theme among the Columbia Naturalists is rejection of anything supernatural or nonnatural. But an equally important theme is rejection of 19th and 20th century forms of reductive materialism. Dewey's essay in the Krikorian collection, "Antinaturalism in Extremis" (Dewey 1944, 1–16 / LW15: 46–62)[2] provided several examples of supernaturalist attacks on naturalism, including the charge that its rejection of "absolute spiritual" values rendered it morally vacuous. He also called out secular nonnaturalists who hold that "mere natural knowledge must be placed in the most disparaging opposition to a higher realm of truths accessible only to extranatural organs" (Dewey 1944, 10 / LW15: 56). Dewey apparently could not resist having a bit of fun with one proponent of this view: "As one critic of naturalism remarked (somewhat naïvely), without such absolute and final truths there would be in morals merely the kind of certainty that exists in physics or chemistry" (Dewey 1944, 12 / LW15: 58).

One does not have to look far to find contemporary examples of these antinaturalist positions now on offer.

[2] Standard references to John Dewey's published work are to the critical (print) edition, The Collected Works of John Dewey, 1882–1953, edited by Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale and Edwardsville: 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). These designations are followed by volume and page number. "LW1: 14", for example, refers to *The Later Works*, volume 1, page 14. In order to ensure uniform citations of the critical edition, the pagination of the print edition has been preserved in *The Collected Works of John Dewey, 1882–1953: The Electronic Edition*, edited by Larry A. Hickman (Charlottesville, Virginia: InteLex Corp., 1996).

Supernaturalism

In an almost acrobatic series of arguments Alvin Plantinga, for example, has attempted to drive a wedge between science and naturalism, the former being consistent (he argues) with theism – especially of the Christian variety – and the latter (he continues) having no place for God or "anything at all like God: there is no supernatural realm at all" (Plantinga 2011, 169). When evolution (which he admits as a basis for science) is presented as unguided, he argues, it is subjected to a "philosophical gloss, or add-on" (Plantinga 2011, xii). But if you just agree that evolution is guided by God, then you get harmony between theism and science. The same goes for the existence of miracles. If you just agree that science operates in a closed system and that there is in addition an open system in which God is active, then there is no conflict between science and theism because each has their own sphere of influence.

Plantinga's remarkable argument that the real conflict is between science and naturalism hangs on a debate that goes back to Descartes about the reliability of our cognitive faculties. In short, since God is the guarantor of the reliability of our cognitive faculties, naturalism is left without such access, and is therefore to be dismissed as non-scientific. "[S]uppose you are a naturalist: you think that there is no such person as God, and that we and our cognitive faculties have been cobbled together by natural selection. Can you then sensibly think that our cognitive faculties are for the most part reliable? I say you can't" (Plantinga 2011, 312 ff).

The naturalists under discussion here, of course, will have none of this. The God claim on which the first argument relies is theological or confessional, not scientific. The notion that evolution is "guided" in the sense in which Plantinga uses the term is not a part of current science. Second, the claim of an "open system" in which God is active and operates in parallel with a closed system of science has no basis in science. It is a matter of religious dogma. And third, resurrection of the hoary radical doubt argument, enlisted in a curious attempt to drive a wedge between naturalism and science, relies on the premise that unreliability of our cognitive faculties is the default position for naturalism. For Plantinga's argument to work, it is (once again) God who is summoned to be the guarantor of the reliability of our cognitive faculties. But of course, this is a gross mis-characterization of American Naturalism.

In some corners of the theological world this is known as the "God of the gap" strategy: if there is a gap between what the evidence supports and the conclusion you want to reach, just plug God into it to make it work. (It should be noted that in what appears to be a diversion from his own utilization of this very strategy Plantinga ostentatiously argues against a version of the "God of the gap" move, but in a tightly tailored sense that links its application to "semi-deism," leaving its wider implications untouched) (Plantinga 1997).

Ryder will have a great deal to say about the place of God in his version of pragmatic naturalism: a bit later we take a careful look at his argument in chapter six of *The Things in Heaven and Earth*. Of course, as a naturalist he is not willing to admit a supernatural deity, but, as we shall see, he is cognizant of the fact that deities have played a major narrative and mythic role in human experience, as well as serving as an organizing principle around which social bonds can be built and maintained.

Secular Nonnaturalism

It is not entirely clear whom Dewey has in his sights regarding secular nonnaturalism (although Hegel would be a likely suspect). A current example, however, can be found in the work of the late Derek Parfit. Briefly, he argues that our moral reasons are not natural facts that can be confirmed by observation, so moral judgment must be based in "intuition," by which we know nonnatural normative truths.

> If, as I believe, reason-involving normative facts are in a separate, distinctive category, there is no close analogy for their irreducibility to natural facts. These normative facts are in some ways like certain other kinds of necessary truths. One example are mathematical truths, such as the

> fact that 7 x 8 = 56. According to some empiricists, this fact is some natural fact, such as the fact that, when people multiply 7 by 8, the result of their calculation is nearly always 56. This view misunderstands arithmetic, and the way in which mathematical claims can be true. Nor could logical truths be natural facts about the ways in which people think. In the same way, I believe, normative and natural facts differ too deeply for any form of Normative Naturalism to succeed (Parfit 2011, 326).

And perhaps most remarkably, "if there were no such normative truths, nothing would matter, and we would have no reasons to try to decide how to live" (Parfit 2011, 619). In his review of Parfit's *On What Matters*, Allan Gibbard writes that "[t]wo decades ago, most ethical theorists saw the non-naturalism that Parfit cleaves to as a relic of a more credulous age, but more recently a host of ethical theorists have embraced it" (Gibbard 2012).

I am tempted to suggest that if you are just analyzing the meanings of the word "good," ignoring the biological/cultural approach to ethics that undergirds Dewey's variety of philosophical naturalism, for example, then non-natural entities such as "nonnatural normative truths" would be useful to fill a gap – in this case a secular one.

Naturalism and Materialism

Some critics of naturalism have charged that naturalism was just one more form of materialism. Since the question regarding whether naturalism entails materialism is important to a wider understanding of the implications of naturalism, and to Ryder's project, it is worth examining this issue in more detail. One reviewer of the Krikorian volume was particularly critical of Dewey's essay. He was bothered by what he took to be a reductive materialism lurking in Dewey's essay.

Distinguished Yale philosopher W. H. Sheldon charged that Dewey's naturalism was "just materialism over again under a softer name" (Sheldon 1945, 254 / LW15: 454). Sheldon argued that Dewey's position was reductively materialistic in the sense that "states and events we call conscious or mental or spiritual [are] *wholly* at the beck and call of states and processes we call physical […]" (Sheldon 1945, 255 / LW15: 455). In other words, Sheldon was asking Dewey to specify whether what we call the mental or spiritual can control what we call the physical, or whether the physical, that is spatio-temporal factors, are the sole determining factors.

Sheldon employed an imaginative strategy against Dewey. Knowing that Dewey as a pragmatist was concerned with the practical effects of our beliefs as habits of action, he based his response on a premise that he knew pragmatists held dear, that is, that the answer to his question would have important consequences for practical ordering of one's life and so must be answered with care. He was convinced that Dewey was a materialist, that materialism was not consistent with Dewey's pragmatism, and was attempting to put him in an untenable position.

In his reply Dewey simply rejected the charge of materialism as Sheldon had characterized it. In doing so, he turned the tables on Sheldon by implicitly charging him with mind/body or matter/spirit dualism, that is, with the belief that mind and body (or matter and spirit) are substantially different. Then Dewey clearly articulated his rejection of traditional mind/body dualism. "[T]he qualities and behaviors displayed by physical things when they are properly organized – the qualities and behaviors called mental or spiritual – are not exhibited by those things unless they are so organized. But these qualities and behaviors of organized wholes are not additional things which are *substantially* distinct from the properties and behaviors of spatio-temporal objects in their organized unity" (Dewey, Hook, Nagel 1945, 521 / LW15: 116).

So, Sheldon was charging naturalism with holding that spiritual values, for example, are at the beck and call of physical processes, and therefore that any attempt at organizing human societies, for example, must be done purely in terms of knowledge of spatio-temporal distributions. But in following this line of argument he tipped his hand. His own dualistic assumption invited an assessment of matter as "lower" and spirit as

"higher." A consequence of Dewey's naturalism, he was arguing, was that matters of the higher, spiritual, order would only be possible by a redistribution of matters on the lower level.

But Dewey and his colleagues were not impressed. If solving problems by means of redistributing spatio-temporal objects was materialism, then engineers, educators, and farmers were by definition materialists. The only alternative would be non-materialism, that is, the view that changes in spatio-temporal things must be effected by such remedies as "wishes, silent prayers, angelic or magical powers, and the like" (Dewey, Hook, Nagel 1945, 516 / LW15: 111). A non-materialist would be someone who thinks of minds as capable of existing apart from spatio-temporal things. Dewey and his colleagues were accusing Sheldon of basing his argument on a type of mind/body dualism that had the smell of Cartesianism.

Dewey and his colleagues were not finished. They pointed out that although properties and processes such as temperature, viscosity, and reproduction are not spatial, they are nevertheless properties or qualifications of things that are spatio-temporal. And if the non-materialist wishes to say that they are in fact physical, then he or she would also be committed to holding that emotions and feelings, as properties or qualifications of physical bodies, must also be physical.

Dewey and his colleagues thus built a platform for distinguishing between two types of materialism. The first, reductive materialism would hold that there is nothing but the physical. According to this view, psychological terms such as fear would have the same meaning as some physical description. An emotion would be synonymous with a set of neurons in the brain. Put in more contemporary terms, a mental event would be nothing more than the firing of a c-fiber. But this is not the version of materialism that the Columbia Naturalists were offering.

Dewey and his colleagues argued that first, the reductive materialism with which they were being charged demeaned the mental or spiritual, and second that they were also being charged with the view that minds are "substantial but ethereal entities, capable nevertheless of controlling or being controlled by physical substances." Their reply was succinct. "Naturalists will dismiss these [charges] as not being addressed to themselves. They simply do not subscribe to such notions of the *mental*" (Dewey, Hook, Nagel 1945, 520 / LW15: 115).

To illustrate their own non-reductive version of materialism, Dewey and his colleagues turned to an analogy. In the case of oxygen and hydrogen combining to produce water, a structured unity is thereby produced that has a mode of behavior distinct from either oxygen or hydrogen. But it would be a mistake to say that water is an additional thing that controls from some external vantage point the behavior of its components. In redistributing themselves to produce water, oxygen and hydrogen molecules change their behavior, but their behavior is not imposed on them by the water.

In the case of minds, the mental or spiritual exists when certain arrangements of physical things take place. Moreover, the mental or spiritual does not exist unless those certain arrangements are present. But "the qualities and behaviors of organized wholes are not additional things which are *substantially* distinct from the properties and behaviors of spatio-temporal objects in their organized unity" (Dewey, Hook, Nagel 1945, 521 / LW15: 116). Finally, for the naturalist, "there is no more mystery in the fact that certain kinds of bodies are able to think and act rationally than in the fact that cogs and springs arranged in definite ways can record the passage of time or that hydrogen and oxygen atoms ordered in other ways display the properties of water" (Dewey, Hook, Nagel 1945, 522 / LW15: 117).

Biological /Cultural Naturalism: The Reflex Arc

This type of biological/cultural approach to naturalism is a major theme in Dewey's work, certainly going back at least to his 1896 essay "The Reflex Arc Concept in Psychology." Basing his work in part on experiments with perception by Addison Webster Moore and James Rowland Angell at the University of Chicago, together with

earlier work by William James at Harvard, Dewey argued that our reflexes (the classical example is of a child seeing and touching a flame and withdrawing a hand) are not a series of "arcs" or "jerks," but a continual rebalancing of organic tensions. "A set of considerations which hold good only because of a completed process is read into the content of the process which conditions this completed result. A state of things characterizing an outcome is regarded as a true description of the events which led up to this outcome […]" (Dewey 1896, 367 / EW 5: 105). In his comments on Dewey's essay, Louis Menand points out that "[a]nalytically speaking, the response actually *precedes* the stimulus – that is, we label the seeing a 'stimulus' because we have already labeled another part of the act, the reaching, a 'response'" (Menand 2001, 328). In other words, already in 1896 Dewey's naturalism was based in part on the view that mental states were not something foreign to physical bodies, but were responses of organized systems (organisms) to changing environmental conditions. That is, they were adjustments within the tensions of adaptive behavior. It is important, I suggest, to understand this as a key to appreciating Dewey's reply to Sheldon in 1945, some fifty years after publication of the "reflex arc" essay.

Naturalism and Recent Advances in Cognitive Neuroscience

Recent advances in cognitive neuroscience have utilized Dewey's ideas as a platform for their own development. W. Teed Rockwell reads Dewey's 1896 essay as him having seen "the reflex arc as ultimately not being divisible into parts at all, and having existence only insofar as it was a temporary outstanding moment in the flux of experience." He writes that Dewey "leapfrogged over both behaviorism and cognitive psychology and articulated the basic principles of dynamic systems theory" (Rockwell 2005, 177). The term "dynamic" is important here because it captures one of the reasons that it has taken so long for philosophy to feel the full effect of Dewey's insights. Dynamic systems theory conceives of cognitive systems first of all in terms of processes from which particles can be abstracted rather than the more common view which assumes that the relation is the other way around. "Reality, Dewey claimed, was fundamentally a continuity, and most philosophical problems arise from artificially dividing this continuity into absolute dualisms […] Stimulus and response, mind and matter, subject matter and method, are but moments in a flux that we define only by their relationship to each other within that flux" (Rockwell 2005, 179–180). Failure to understand the important points that organisms are continually in flux with shifting tensions occasioned by both organic and environing events, that most of the traditional philosophical problems have not taken that into account, and that mind and body, subject and object, are names we give to ongoing processes after the fact is what Ryder calls the "Humpty-Dumpty fallacy." Mark Johnson also recognized this important strain in Dewey's naturalism:

> Dewey recognized the underlying continuity that connects our physical interactions in the world with our activities of imagining and thinking […] If we could only disabuse ourselves of the mistaken idea that thought must somehow be a type of activity *ontologically* different from our other body engagements […] [we] would cease to interpret the problem as how two completely different kinds of things (body and mind) can be united in interaction. Instead, we would rephrase the problem as that of explaining how increasing levels of complexity within organisms can eventually result in the emergence of progressively more reflective and abstractive cognitive activities, activities we associate with "mind" (Johnson 2007, 140).

Materialism and Idealism in Science: The Humpty-Dumpty Fallacy

Elsewhere, Dewey acknowledged that there was a non-reductive materialist basis for science. But he suggested that science means two different things. On its materialist side, there is a body of discovered facts and laws. On what may be called its idealist side, however,

> science also means mental attitudes and the rules of such activities as thinking, observation, experimentation, reasoning, and inquiry […] While science from one aspect refers to the facts which

> are discovered and classified, at the same time, from another aspect, it refers to the accumulation of convictions of man reached by intellectual processes. It is possible to call the second aspect of science the idealistic or spiritualistic characteristic. And, this is based on a moralistic characteristic. No one, so long as he is not moved by love for truth, by courage, by sincerity, by a firm belief in the general or public nature of truth, would be able to lead science to its present condition (Dewey 1969, 7 / MW 13: 433–434).

In two passages I have quoted, one from Dewey's reply to Sheldon and the other from his essay "Idealism in Science," we see his functionalism as well as his geneticism at work. In both passages there is a refusal to honor traditional ontological splits. In a typical move, he simply addresses matters "on one side," and "on the other side" with respect to what is under discussion (a natural organism in the first example, and science in the second). We also see Dewey's geneticism at work. In both passages there is a reference to determinations that have already been made and are either in use or stored away for further use as required (the material basis of organisms in the first example, and the discovered "matter" of science in the second) but also the implied reach of future deliberation (the increasingly complex organization of organisms in the first example, and the experimental and moral imperatives of further scientific research in the second example).

Here we also see an example of a major theme that, despite their differences, is important to both Buchler and Dewey. Both rejected Ryder's Humpty-Dumpty Fallacy, which philosophers commit when they "unnecessarily and artificially [shatter] a fairly coherent world into many pieces, and cannot seem to get it back together without creating monsters" (Ryder 2013, 45).

Despite some detours, the contributors to the Krikorian volume had a good deal in common. Summing up their efforts in the final chapter, Randall wrote that "Second only to the unanimity with which these writers reject supernaturalism and acclaim scientific procedures is their agreement that the richness and variety of natural phenomena and human experience cannot be explained away and 'reduced' to something else. The world is not really 'nothing but' something other than it appears to be: it is what it is, in all its manifold variety, with all its distinctive kinds of activity" (Randall 1944, 361).

Naturalism as Postulate

As Ryder points out, however, there is an important difference between Buchler and Dewey: Buchler starts with nature, whereas Dewey begins with experience. I would prefer to say that both Buchler and Dewey begin with postulates. Buchler begins with an ontological postulate of nature as complexes of relations and Dewey begins with a biological/cultural postulate of the immediate empiricism of an experiencing organism. Ryder suggests that Buchler's view tends to the realist side, whereas Dewey's tends to the constructivist side. Nevertheless, it seems that they shared a general sense of the ways in which their respective postulates work to advance judgments. I suggest the term "postulates" in this case since neither philosopher is beginning *ab ovo*. Their places of beginning are neither arbitrary nor externally *a priori*. As Dewey suggested:

> [a] postulate is thus neither arbitrary nor externally a priori. It is not the former because it issues from the relation of means to the end to be reached. It is not the latter, because it is not imposed upon inquiry from without, but is an acknowledgment of that to which the undertaking of inquiry commits us. It is empirically and temporally a priori in the same sense in which the law of contracts is a rule regulating in advance the making of certain kinds of business engagements. While it is derived from what is involved in inquiries that have been successful in the past, it imposes a condition to be satisfied in future inquiries, until the results of such inquiries show reason for modifying it (Dewey 1938, 17 / LW12: 25).

We can perhaps view the difference between Buchler and Dewey as similar to one that Randall characterized as between Woodbridge and Dewey. He thought that Woodbridge's "language of Being" was opposed to Dewey's language of philosophies of experience (Randall 1944, 366). Here is Randall:

> Woodbridge's use of the language of Being rather than of experience often makes his naturalism seem more different from Dewey's than it really is. Dewey, of course, finds that ontological

> language far from congenial; where he occasionally attempts to employ it, largely under Woodbridge's influence, the difference between them seems to shrink to minor proportions, and Dewey's own fundamental realism stands out clearly – his 'functional realism,' it might be called (Randall 1944, 361).

Ryder's Four Postulates about Pragmatic Naturalism

Ryder is also keen to deny that this difference can prevent a meeting on common ground. To this end he presents four postulates, which he thinks it is possible to endorse simultaneously:

1. Natural phenomena have objectively determinate traits.
2. The traits of natural phenomena are knowable.
3. The process of inquiry is necessarily conditioned and perspectival.
4. Human interaction with the rest of nature, cognitive or otherwise, is active and creative (Ryder 2013, 25).

He describes the first two propositions as modernist in that "they assert an independently existing reality and our ability to learn about it." The third and fourth propositions are described as "postmodernist in the sense that they assert that we do not just encounter a world waiting for us, but rather that the processes we employ in investigating our world […] condition what we find and are therefore constructive of what we find" (Ryder 2013, 25).

Ryder gives us additional information about what he regards as the issues that separate the first two postulates from the remaining two. He points out that many philosophers and scientists tend to be on the modernist side, and other philosophers and literary theorists tend to be on the other, postmodernist side. On the modernist side it seems clear that geology, for example, is the study of the earth's materials in the sense that those materials existed previously to being found. On the other side, however, it also seems clear that fictional characters have been created and that they therefore exist. In some cases, we even say that they have "taken on a life of their own" in the sense that their character traits and back stories (think of Sherlock Holmes) continue to develop over time from one generation of writers and readers to the next. So, Ryder thinks that it is plausible that they have an existence that could in some sense be called independent and objective. He notes that logical and mathematical entities are not just invented, but discovered.

But what about nonmaterial entities such as moral values and laws of nature? I have already addressed some of the issues involved in nonnatural approaches to moral values, but there are also questions about the extent to which we "construct" our knowledge of the world. Postmodernist literary studies, for example, include assertions about the infinite re-interpretability of signs, leading some critics to claim that some forms of postmodernism harbor an unfortunate form of relativism that has contributed to what is becoming known as a "post-truth" social and political culture that admits what one presidential advisor has defended as her "alternative facts." Ryder's four postulates thus represent the tip of an enormous iceberg of philosophical, literary, scientific, artistic, political, and even judicial debates. Where one comes down on the issues that motivate these debates will in large measure tend to reveal the type of naturalism – or nonnaturalism – with which one is sympathetic.

So, Ryder has put his finger on one of the most important and complex issues in contemporary culture. Avoiding a deep dive into the details, however, I would argue that the central issue for Western philosophy is whether it will continue to cherish assumptions developed in classical antiquity and Medieval Europe and only imperfectly reformed during the modern period of European philosophy, or whether there will be a new philosophy that takes into account Darwin's demolition of the idea of fixed species and the enormous changes in science and society that have occurred during the 19th and 20th centuries. Ryder is clear that he finds expressions of this new philosophy in the work of American philosophers and sociologists such Chauncy Wright, Charles S. Peirce, William James, John Dewey, Jane Addams and others who developed this new type of philosophy. Although not all were naturalists (James spent much of his life trying to

believe in God and even attempting communication with the dead), they were nevertheless part of a movement that produced the basis on which a pragmatic naturalism could be articulated.

Pragmatic Naturalism

As I said, this is a very large and complex subject, and therefore not one that can be dealt with in detail in this essay. Nevertheless, it seems clear that Dewey would have been comfortable with all four of these postulates. As for the first postulate (that natural phenomena have objectively determinate traits), which is perhaps the most debatable of the four, Dewey argued in a 1905 essay, "The Postulate of Immediate Empiricism," that "things – anything, everything, in the ordinary or non-technical use of the term 'thing' – are what they are experienced as" (Dewey 1905, 393 / MW3: 158). But he also pointed out that "In each case, the nub of the question is *what sort of experience* is denoted or indicated" (Dewey 1905, 394 / MW3: 159). In other words, *that* things are experienced is clear enough. But *what* they are is a matter for inquiry. It is likely therefore that he would have preferred the term "determinable" rather than "determinate." But this may be a minor matter, since if they are determinable then they should, given proper effort dedicated to finding out what they are, be determinate as well. The remaining three proposals are clearly consistent with Dewey's version of pragmatic naturalism, including the second, that traits of natural phenomena are knowable, which Ryder labels "modernist."

Ryder suggests that one of the virtues of pragmatic naturalism is that it "allows us to accept the reality of our experience, contrary to many postmodernisms" (Ryder 2013, 47). On the pragmatist side, inquiry is always perspectival, never absolute. On the naturalist side, whatever our experience, "there remain aspects or traits of nature that are what they are, entirely independent of human interaction with them." This means that "there are traits of nature that are objective" (Ryder 2013, 47).

From a Deweyan perspective it can be admitted that there is a certain objectivity involved in experiences that are so settled that they do not call for additional inquiry (since they present no problems). Most of us go about our daily lives relying on the accumulated results of successfully completed inquiry with respect to naturally and culturally experienced reality. On the other hand, Dewey would probably have emphasized another sense of objectivity, that is, that when our experience becomes problematic, then traits of nature are *found* or *determined* to be objective. Going forward, that they are found to be so provides a cultural inheritance that accumulates over time in the sciences, arts, humanities, jurisprudence, and so on.

Ryder thinks it important that nature, for pragmatic naturalism, "does not serve as a category in any normal sense. It is not simply one among a number of concepts that taken together constitute a philosophical system. Rather, it suggests a general perspective or frame of mind" (Ryder 2013, 41). This is also similar to a Deweyan position; he treats nature as "an indefinite congeries of changes. Laws are not governmental regulations which limit change, but are convenient formulations of selected portions of change followed through a longer or shorter period of time, and then registered in statistical forms that are amenable to mathematical manipulation" (Dewey 1910, 72 / MW4: 47).

Realism, Idealism, and Pragmatism

In order to gain increased appreciation of the importance of Ryder's four postulates, it may be helpful to reconsider them through a somewhat different lens. As we have seen, Ryder identified the first two postulates as modernist, and the remaining two as post-modernist. If we look with care, however, it is also apparent that the first two also express a variety of realism and the remaining two articulate a variety of idealism.

On this reading it should not be surprising that Dewey would have accepted all four postulates since one of his basic strategies was to overcome inherited dualisms. He was fond of examining views such as idealism and realism, then taking what he needed to construct his own position and discarding the remaining elements.

During his early career Dewey was a steadfast critic of idealism, but in the early decades of the 20th century, as the ideas of Royce and the British idealists faded from the philosophical mainstream in America and new forms of realism began to take their place, Dewey's main critics were realists of various sorts.

Proponents of stripped-down forms of realism, such as the logical positivist Hans Reichenbach, were not able to accept Dewey's naturalism because of its idealist component. Reichenbach's stratified naturalism attempted to establish a foundation for science by assuming a hierarchy of the sciences, with physics at its base. But for Dewey that version of naturalism was much too thin. Because it dismissed moral and aesthetic experience as cognitively meaningless, it could not come to terms with the richness of a naturalism that can take such experiences into account.

Dewey's naturalism supports neither the positivist's stripped-down realism nor the type of extravagant idealism that flirts with the idea that all of reality is a function of human ideation (or ideas in the mind of an absolute). His is a measured naturalism that exhibits the best elements of both realism and idealism. Failure to grasp this point is perhaps why, even after the decline of philosophical idealism in America, philosophical realists of various stripes continued to accuse Dewey of idealism. Even some European idealists were sure that Dewey was an fellow idealist. Benedetto Croce, for example, described Dewey's position in *Art as Experience* as idealist. (Dewey flatly rejected what Croce had meant as praise.) Dewey's pragmatic naturalism tends to exist in the spaces between these extremes. If realists believe that objects of knowledge exist prior to being known, and if idealists believe that we (or an absolute mind) create objects of knowledge, then Dewey was convinced that we construct a world out of found materials – tangible as well as intangible – with the tools – again, tangible as well as intangible – that we have fabricated. Technological analogies are in fact a major supporting theme in Dewey's work.

Naturalism and the "Philosophical Fallacy

One of the issues that led to considerable confusion among Dewey's realist critics and to their charge that he was an idealist is relevant to our understanding of just how Dewey managed to bridge this realism/idealism gap. Some of Dewey's realist critics held a theory of knowledge according to which a knower is said to be a "spectator" who "mirrors" or "copies" external reality. Dewey thought that this view did not do justice to the dynamic, adjustive, nature of knowing, that is, to knowing as a continuing accommodation of the organism with respect to environing conditions, and a continuing alteration of environing conditions with respect to a knowing organism. As a part of his theory of inquiry, Dewey introduced what he termed "the philosophical fallacy," that is, the fallacy of converting eventual functions of inquiry to antecedent existence. His realist critics complained that this notion was either unintelligible or idealistic, since he seemed to be saying that knowing something changes it by the very fact of its being known. One of his critics, for example, complained that Einstein's theory that gravity bends light did not change anything about gravity or light that did not exist before the theory was confirmed.[3]

At first glance, even a thoughtful pragmatic naturalist might be tempted to agree with this realist critic. Dewey, however, confronted this issue in a friendly response to remarks by his Columbia University colleague Frederick Woodbridge, who had presented a realist argument similar to the one I just described. Dewey admitted that just as Woodbridge had claimed that the object existed prior to being known, he also conceived the object to be "had in direct experience prior to its being known." But, he continued,

> I deny the identity of things had in direct experience with the object of knowledge *qua* object of knowledge. Things that are *had* in experience exist prior to reflection and its eventuation in an *object* of knowledge; but the latter, as such, is a

[3] See, for example, McGilvary, Evander Bradley. 1939. "Professor Dewey: Logician–Ontologician", *Journal of Philosophy* 36, no. 21 (October 12), 561–565.

> deliberately effected re-arrangement or re-disposition by means of overt operations, of such antecedent existences. The difference between Mr. Woodbridge and my self […] is not that he believes in the existence of things antecedent to knowledge and I do not; we differ in our beliefs as to what the character of the antecedent existences with respect to knowledge is. While Mr. Woodbridge says 'the object exists prior to its being known,' I say that '*the* object' is the eventual product of reflection, the prior or antecedent existences being subject-matter *for* knowledge, not *the objects* of knowledge at all (Dewey 1930, 273 / LW5: 211–212).

What Dewey is doing in this remarkably clear statement is admitting to a realist view of objects as being *had* as direct experience, but then moving over to the other, idealist side by denying that what is *had* in direct experience is known in the full sense of the word. In order to have knowledge, there must also be an idealist component: reflection that produces a new object of knowledge (otherwise, what would be the point of reflective inquiry?). So, there is a realist component and there is an idealist component.

But he also adds something more, his instrumentalism, that ties the two together. The record of human evolution is in great part the record of improved tool use. Of course, there are tangible tools, like flint scrapers, hammers, and computers, and there are also tools that are intangible, such as myths, contracts, and algorithms. The point, however, is not whether a tool is material or ideal, but whether it can be effectively employed as a means to the resolution of an indeterminate or problematic situation. A metaphor is no less a tool than a drill or a saw. With the aid of his instrumentalism, Dewey thus brings the best of realism and idealism together under the umbrella of his naturalist theory of inquiry. As we have already seen, his theory of inquiry cuts across the mind/body, inner/outer tradition, and is grounded instead in a biological/cultural matrix that is thoroughly naturalistic.

In the 1939 *Library of Living Philosophers* volume dedicated to Dewey, Donald A. Piatt provided a very precise statement about how to think about Dewey's critics in the realist and idealist camps and Dewey's reaction to them.

> The enduring truth of idealism is that factuality must be qualified by meanings before we can make judgments about it. The enduring truth of realism is that factuality must have a brute quality and articulate structure of its own before judgments can have relevance and validity. The enduring truth of pragmatism is that, as active organisms, we are in the world and of it, we don't altogether have to acquiesce in facts as they come, we can alter the facts as they affect us by operationally applying our purposes and meanings to them so that they become data for knowledge by becoming data for successful action (Piatt 1989, 126).

In sum, reading Ryder's four postulates in this way, the first two as expressing a realist position and the remaining two as expressing an idealist view, and allowing that Dewey would have accepted all four on pragmatic grounds, what becomes clear is the poverty of a stripped-down realist naturalism, the excessive extravagance of an idealist naturalism, and the considerable power of a pragmatic instrumentalist/naturalist alternative.

Naturalism, God, and Faith

I have already discussed naturalism's rejection of supernaturalism and secular nonnaturalism and provided an example of how some of those arguments proceed. It is now time to venture further into this matter, *i.e.*, how and to what extent naturalism can take account of the religious dimensions of human experience.

Ryder's chapter six, "God and Faith," takes on the difficult task of finding a place for God and faith within a system of ordinal naturalism (which, as we have seen, is for Ryder a version of pragmatic naturalism). On one side, the idea of a creator God outside of nature is rejected, since, according to ordinal naturalism, nature is what there is, and all there is. On another side, however, since God is culturally located within natural complexes, Ryder has no wish to reduce belief in God to sociological or psychological events. For Ryder, "there are ordinal locations of which God is a constitutive trait," that is, "God prevails in some order or orders" (Ryder 2013, 121).

To make this work, Ryder distinguishes between concepts and beliefs. Concepts are not usually motiva-

tional in the sense in which beliefs are. And belief in God discriminates, identifies, and picks out the orders in which God prevails. These include "the orders of myth, of symbol, of literature, of historical events, of many people's experience, of piety, and of many others in which God has figured" (Ryder 2013, 125). In short, for Ryder's pragmatic naturalism, 1) God prevails in various aspects as a significant cultural factor, 2) the idea of God as creator *ex nihilo* outside of nature is rejected, since like everything else, God is a natural complex and "complexes are what they are by virtue of their ordinal locations" (Ryder 2013, 126) and finally, 3), given the principle of ontological parity, religious experience, no less than other sorts, is respected. (But it must be emphasized that for ordinal naturalism "God has no explanatory power with respect to nature in general or to specific natural, material events" (Ryder 2013, 129).

Ryder then turns to the subject of religious faith, which he thinks is more difficult for a pragmatic naturalist to handle. Regarding the claims by some religionists that only absolute values can provide a basis for a moral life, Ryder reminds his readers that there are numerous ethical systems that are not based on supernaturalism. Many atheists, for example lead exemplary lives. Moreover, fear of eternal punishment (as a Pascal-type wager might suggest) is capable of producing only the very thinnest of ethical veneers (if that). The point is that religious belief need not necessarily be tied to a supernatural world creator. Religious faith tends to orient itself pragmatically to commitments – to family, neighbors, justice, trust, humility, and redemption. The upshot of this is that "such a life can be coupled with a God differently understood [than God as outside of nature], one that makes sense within a natural world." Moreover, "such a life can also be lived without any conception of God" (Ryder 2013, 139).

One of my favorite examples of how this can work is from the pen of Shailer Matthews, a liberal theologian who accepted evolution as a part of his religious belief and who served as dean of the Divinity School of the University of Chicago from 1908 to 1933. He offered what could well be a naturalist's characterization of God. "God is our conception, born of social experience, of the personality-evolving and personally responsive elements of our cosmic environment with which we are organically related" (Matthews 131, 226). It is our adjustment with those elements in our environment which produces personality and a life of meaning. As I read Ryder, he would probably be sympathetic with this formulation: there is no reference to a God *ex nihilo*, there is emphasis on the social dimension of experience, there is an evolutional component, and there is reference to adjustment and generation of meaning.

For his part, Dewey consistently refused to criticize individuals for their religious beliefs (although he did suggest that fundamentalists had gotten matters backward: as fundamentalists they should be searching for fundamentals instead of claiming them as absolute). As a naturalist, however, he could not accept the notion of a supernatural God. As Ryder reminds us, Dewey wrote of God in social and moral terms, as the unification of the ideals we hold in highest esteem, such as justice, truth, beauty, wisdom, and benevolence (Ryder 2013, 129). He thought that "the religious" is a quality of experience – not something that can exist by itself but instead a quality that can leaven many types of experience, making them richer and more satisfying.

Given the importance of Ryder's claim, it seems appropriate to offer a second example of his claim that religious belief is not necessarily tied to a supernatural world creator and that moreover, that "a life of faith is a way of life in the sense that it is about how one lives rather than simply what one believes" (Ryder 2013, 136).

In her long career as an author of some 20 books on various aspects of religion, Karen Armstrong has, I believe, developed a position that resonates with the core aspects of a pragmatic naturalism as Ryder has articulated it. In *The Case for God* (2009) she argues that belief has been overrated and that it is religious practice that is important. It is in this vein that Armstrong points out that

> [r]eligion as defined by the great sages of India, China, and the Middle East was not a notional activity but a practical one; it did not require be-

> lief in a set of doctrines but rather hard, disciplined work, without which any religious teaching remained opaque and incredible. The ultimate reality was not a Supreme Being […] it was an all encompassing, wholly transcendent reality that lay beyond neat doctrinal formulations […] The ultimate was not alien to human beings but inseparable from our humanity. It could not be accessed by rational, discursive thought but required a carefully cultivated state of mind and the abnegation of selflessness (Armstrong 2009, 26).

She argues that it was the Enlightenment of the 17th and 18th centuries that created two current phenomena: the hard-edged atheism of Richard Dawkins, for example, and the type of fundamentalist Christianity that has now become radically politicized in the United States. As a response to the Enlightenment, theologians began to compete with science, then even to attempt to co-opt it (as I suggested is the case with apologists such as Alvin Plantinga). As for current atheists, she thinks that they are not radical enough. “Jewish, Christian, and Muslim theologians have insisted for centuries that God does not exist and that there is ‘nothing’ out there; in making these assertions, their aim was not to deny the reality of God but to safeguard God’s transcendence” (Armstrong 2009, xvi).

As I read Armstrong in this book, *The Case for God*, and also in her more recent one, *The Lost Art of Scripture* (2019), she uses the word “transcendence” in a sense which would not give a pragmatic naturalist pause. For example, she writes that “What we regard as truth […] is inescapably bound up with a world that we construct for ourselves. As soon as the first humans learned to manipulate tools, they created works of art to make sense of the terror, wonder, and mystery of their existence” (Armstrong 2019, 4). Echoing William James, she comments on the vagueness and fringes of experience: “We are surrounded by a reality that transcends – or ‘goes beyond’ – our conceptual grasp” (Armstrong 2019, 4). Like Dewey, she thinks that the religious is a quality of many types of experience.

I have included these remarks by Shailer Matthews and Karen Armstrong because I believe they exhibit support for Ryder’s program of pragmatic naturalism as he attempts to find a legitimate place for God within the biological/cultural history and context of human life, that is, within “the orders of myth, of symbol, of literature, of historical events, of many people’s experience, of piety, and of many others in which God has figured” (Ryder 2013, 125).

Ryder’s treatment of the place of God within an ordinal naturalism refuses to treat the experience of God either as an illusion or as exhausted by sociological and psychological considerations. He also skillfully avoids the traditional ontological questions regarding God’s existence by providing an example of the ways that pragmatic naturalism can find a place for the many varieties and nuances of human experience without resorting to reductionism.

I have argued elsewhere that pragmatic naturalism may be able to accept the idea that some forms of belief in God, or supernaturalism, are primarily nominal or functional, and not ontological in their personal and private sense (Hickman 2012, 19–29). If that is true, then the question becomes whether there is any significant difference between the nominal or functional supernaturalist and the pragmatic naturalist. In other words, would a nominal or functional supernaturalism pass a pragmatic test when the stakes are promotion of integration of an otherwise fractured or debilitated personality? William James was interested in a slightly different version of this question, and he struggled with it throughout his life.

As I write, the head of the National Institutes of Health is both a devout Christian and a highly respected scientist. Perhaps the pragmatic naturalist needs to accept the fact that, in this case at least, a supernaturalist can compartmentalize beliefs in ways that do not “leak” into the spheres of science, technology, commerce, and other areas of public life. There are and have been other public figures, of course, who have failed the compartmentalization test. As I write, for example, the supernaturalist religious views of a majority of justices of the U. S. Supreme Court appear to be leaking into their decisions about the constitutional guarantees of separation of church and state and the rights of women. Might

a pragmatic naturalism be obligated, on pragmatic grounds, to distinguish between a dogmatic, inflexible supernaturalism on one side, and on the other side a functional, benign supernaturalism that seeks to integrate the various aspects of life into a productive whole? To a pragmatist, the difference would turn on the conceivable practical consequences of those beliefs.

In sum, John Ryder has given us an excellent guide to a well-articulated version of pragmatic naturalism that can satisfy both those whose postulates involve ordinal naturalism and those whose postulates are more properly biological/cultural. He has also given us a sensitive, beautifully articulated proposal for a pragmatic naturalist account of God as a part of nature. I conclude by suggesting that *The Things in Heaven and Earth*, especially chapter six, "God and Faith," constitutes a significant contribution to the career of American Naturalism.

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JOHN RYDER AND THE METAPHYSICS OF PRAGMATIC NATURALISM

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ABSTRACT: This essay compares John Ryder's *pragmatic* naturalism with four main types of naturalism and their metaphysics: *descriptive* (Santayana and Dewey), *process* (Whitehead, Hartshorne, and Neville), *honorific* (Schelling and Emerson), and *ecstatic* (Jung, Tillich, and Corrington). Ryder's paleo-pragmatism is contrasted with the constructivism of neo-pragmatism and its abjection of relata and Peircean secondness (brute external causality). Ryder's metaphysical pluralism, his rooting of ontology in human experience, and his spirit of democracy are highlighted. Throughout, a transformed and expanded notion of psychoanalysis is shown to be a proper organon for metaphysics.

Keywords: Justus Buchler, Martin Heidegger, American philosophy, pragmatic naturalism, descriptive naturalism, process naturalism, honorific naturalism, ecstatic naturalism, natura naturans, natura naturata, Arthur Schopenhauer, providingness, George Santayana, John Dewey, Ralph Waldo Emerson, spirit, unconscious of nature, reductive naturalism, Heinz Kohut

I met John Ryder around 1980. He was working on his Doctorate in Philosophy at SUNY Stony Brook, while I was working on mine in Philosophical Theology at Drew University. We subsequently got our PhD's in 1982. I became friends with several of his cohorts, primarily around the teaching and thought of Justus Buchler. then on the faculty at Stony Brook. I first encountered the thought of Buchler in a seminar on metaphysics at Temple University, taught by his student Doug Greenlee. At the time I couldn't make heads nor tales of his metaphysics, however, a seed was planted. Later, Buchler's *Metaphysics of Natural Complexes* became one of two books that helped shape my philosophy, the other being Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit.*

I decided to take the train out to Stony Brook to hear Buchler lecture and there met John through our mutual friend Jim Campbell, whom I had met in our senior seminar at Temple University. What struck me about John was his brilliance and his passion for classical American Philosophy. He was and is an engaging personality, always with an inviting smile. His interest in Russian thought, as well as that of Eastern Europe, prepared him for his subsequent career. He has developed a robust political philosophy that challenges some of the reigning assumptions of the conservative movement, which has tragically come to haunt American life.

I wrote a book review on John's *The Things in Heaven and Earth: An Essay in Pragmatic Naturalism*, in the *American Journal of Theology and Philosophy* in the September 2014 issue, and I want to continue my engagement with his congenial perspective and frame an expanded view of naturalism to compare with his pragmatic naturalism. The issues around the much-discussed perspective of naturalism partly involve the scope, tenor, and basic assumptions presented in the respective views as to the nature of naturalism.

Can one develop a theory of nature and assign traits to 'it 'as if it is *an* order? Can nature be a super-order of all orders? Can nature be a genus with specific differences? Does the word "nature" have a referent? The ordinal perspective answers "no" to each of these questions. ~~Natur~~e, and we must cross out the word, cannot be an order or even the 'sum' of 'all' orders, nor can 'it' have specific differences. What would they be different from? One can use Buchler's terms here and say that nature is both providingness and the provided, *natura naturans* and *natura naturata*. In my language, this is a fissuring between nature's potencies, operating through archetypes, and the innumerable orders of the World. Rejecting theism, I maintain that nature perennially creates itself from itself alone, with fragile *teloi* in the human selving process, but no *telos* in 'itself.' Thus, there is no *Heilsgeschichte* (sacred history) or *Seinsgeschichte* (history of being).

I choose to delineate four types of naturalism and then find a place for John's *pragmatic naturalism*. For some, naturalism assumes that matter and energy are the beginning and end points of how we must view nature – a forced reductionism. The scope of this version of naturalism only extends to these two metaphysical traits, while the tenor is that of scientific encompass-

ment. I call this perspective *descriptive naturalism*, for its bare-bones approach to the innumerable complexes of nature. It is based on a one-sided view of science and a failure to recognize regnant traits that are not matter/energy. Santayana and Dewey unfolded a much richer account of the nature of naturalism and the nature of nature, but still within the descriptive vein. Santayana contrasts the dimension of matter (richly conceived) with spirit, which emerges out of the material conditions of psyche and is finite and fleeting. Dewey doesn't reduce nature to a mater/energy foundation, but has a proto-ordinal perspective, which is similar to that of William James, that recognizes that the stuff of nature can have many traits and lacks a single trait for everything.

A second form of naturalism is that of *process naturalism*, which posits pluralistic becomings that correlate to a di-polar deity, at once a vacuum cleaner (consequent nature) and a persuader (primordial nature). While this Whitheadian perspective has been embraced by many theologians, it remains in the genre of science fiction. A major problem is that, like the descriptive form, it wants to reduce nature to a small group of traits, e.g., feeling, experience, becoming, and a gentle deity that rejects omnipotence for a persuasive lure that slowly pulls actual occasions forward into eternal memory (objective, not subjective, immortality) of the results of superjection, which happens when an actual occasion has fully concresced and ceases to be a drop of experience. Further, process naturalism posits a universal form of internal relation in which each occasion is connected to *every* other through positive and negative prehensions (a feeling of feeling), each 'real' and pregnant with data. Nature is posited as being an organic super-order of all orders and subjective immortality for members of the human process is removed. When you are dead only god will know it, never you.

A third form of naturalism is what I call *honorific naturalism*, that selects a key trait manifest in one order of nature, and then lifts it up to an honorific status and stretches it to cover *all* orders. A great example is the early Emerson (before 1844) who argued in his *Nature* of 1836 that nature is best seen as Spirit, (note the capitalization) manifest through a numinous semiotics. Emerson has a different notion of Spirit from Santayana's. For Emerson, Sprit is not a mere product of the simian psyche, but the heartbeat of nature. Spirit turns all 'material' things into ciphers of itself. Thus, everything other to Spirit is less real. This form of naturalism honors one regnant trait over all others and argues that not-Spirit requires the enveloping of Spirit to idealize all its orders – endless idealizing. Honorific naturalism can't function without a scheme of ontological priority, which argues that there are degrees of being or of "reality" (a useless word in philosophy).

The fourth form of naturalism, *ecstatic naturalism*, affirms the opposite view; namely, that all orders in nature natured are equally real and that nature naturing is also equally real, but in different respects – the principle (and spiritual practice) of ontological parity. Ecstatic naturalism puts stress on *natura naturans*, which can go by other names: unruly ground, unconscious of nature, ground/abyss, Great Mother, firstness of firstness, and others. The unconscious of nature, which is deeper than the personal, cultural, and collective dimensions, is a fissuring and fusing hotbed of potencies and archetypes that spawn, destroy, and shape sequent orders. Archetypes are not Platonic forms, but gestalts of power that occur in nature, and that dimension of it called "psyche" – not in Santayana's sense, but in Jung's. Further stress is placed on the aesthetic dimension as the source for values, as recognized by Peirce, and differently by Dewey.

Ecstatic naturalism takes the notion of "ecstasy" from Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*, where ecstasy means the standing-outside-of-itself that makes, in my sense, the ejections and emanations of *natura naturans* possible. Naturalism is ecstatic when it rides on the self-othering of the unconscious of nature. In the dimension of World, ecstasy is found in sacred folds as they evoke transferences and numinosity. Note that ecstasy is not just simple joy, but also involves the overwhelming sublime as it breaks through the boundaries of the beautiful.

Ecstatic naturalism shares some traits with the descriptive, process, and honorific forms of naturalism. First, it asserts that nature is all there is, and a so-called supernatural dimension consists of traits embedded in the one nature that there is. But this is meant to reject a reductive materialism that puts the supernatural into the category of myth (with descriptive naturalism's superficial understanding of *mythos*). While descriptive naturalism ignores the numinous and the emotional transferences that animate it, it is committed to a roughly capacious view of 'all' of nature. It correlates dimensions that need to be better coordinated and enhances the scope and power of the sciences, no matter how truncated its view of science. Occam's razor must be used with precision and care, not as a blunt tool for violent incisions or unnecessary amputations.

Ecstatic naturalism shares process naturalism's rejection of *creatio ex nihilo* because there is no prior deity that could have caused the causeless and perennially self-renewing nature. God, goddesses, and gods are all projections of the archetypes embedded in the human psyche – sacred folds that are set alight by unconscious transferences. Further, the ecstatic variety affirms that the endless pulsations of nature naturing are different in kind from the process view of creativity as a ground of grounds. *Natura naturans* is the self-removing ground of the ejections of archetypes and the innumerable emanations that constitute World (*Weltheit* or *Welt*). The numinosity of sacred folds is part of nature, not a channel to an alleged supernatural world, even though it is usually experienced as such.

Honorific naturalism elevates Spirit to an ultimate status, whereas ecstatic naturalism pluralizes Spirit into finite spirits that emerge in the between spaces of the selving (individuation) process and transfigured orders into a unique kind of translucency. The Transcendentalists made a quantum leap in philosophy of religion. They rejected the alleged divinity of their founder, pushed the Christian notions of God into what I call a *deep* pantheism, and transferred liturgy into a poetic celebration of sacred folds throughout nature. Using Freud's discovery of the transference *(Übertragung*) they activated the unconscious of the self and of nature so that a depth-connection would burst-forth. The concept of the transference was originally applied to the analyst/analysand relationship, but ecstatic naturalism, taking cues from Heinz Kohut's notion of "self-object," pushes further to see transference powers between the self and many orders of the World.

The transference is unconscious. It is a directed field of special intensity that forms a tight, if precarious, bond between the self and its chosen object, whatever it might be. My relationship with an ancient oak tree can be as much of a transference connection as one directed to another self. I sometimes wonder if the object ignites the transference and, once received, compels the object to unfold a countertransference. What would such an extra-human countertransference look like? Here we vacillate between a category and a poetic metaphor.

Further, ecstatic naturalism uses a combination of an expanded and transformed psychoanalysis, and an ordinal phenomenology that goes beyond a transcendental ego and its intentional acts. Husserl's well-chosen method of bracketing (*epoché*), which liberates all 'objects' of intention to be subjects of phenomenological seeing, is changed into a phenomenological commitment to ontological parity. Every complex approached by ordinal phenomenology is taken to be fully real, but always in different respects. A thought of lasagna is no less real than a sinking aircraft carrier, but in vastly different respects. A logical conundrum is no less real than murky waters.

What happens to psychoanalysis? Robert Neville and I have had a long-running discussion about my efforts to reconstruct psychoanalysis into a method for doing metaphysics. He argues that I remain ensconced in anthropocentrism and anthropomorphism, whereas I argue that one must begin metaphysical query and construction from a potent starting point and expand and reconstruct from there. For my ecstatic naturalism, psychoanalysis is not only a theory of desires, repression, sublimation, dreams, complexes, archetypes and projection, but is also a framework deeply attuned to the

rhythms of the deepest layers or dimensions of the unconscious of the psyche as it emerges from the unruly ground of nature naturing. No other starting point can dig as far down as a reconstructed psychoanalysis as it probes into the pulsations *natura naturans* as the ungrounded source for the psychic transformations, or repetitions, within *natura naturata*. Jung created the term "transcendental psychoid" as the source for both the human psyche and the unruly ground of nature.

What are the specifics of my reconstruction of psychoanalysis? They are: 1) a combination of Freud's drive theory and later object relations theory, which emphasizes both subjective gestalts and object fields as they impinge and shape the former, 2) a more capacious understanding of the selving process (human individuation, 3) an analysis of the correlation of the determinations in nature with those that always impinge on the human process, 4) a stress on genius and creativity as they make a partial escape from determination possible, 5) tying the human will to Schopenhauer's understanding of the Will (*der Wille*) as the churning non-telic ground/abyss of the World, 6) a broad social (communal) psychology, and 7) the semiotic dimension of all explorations of the psyche.

Now we transition from *ecstatic naturalism* to Ryder's complex understanding of *pragmatic naturalism*. We both come from the lineage of classical pragmatism, not neo-pragmatism with its overstated constructivism. We appreciate the potency of the ordinal perspective that opens out the *way* of orders. Together we believe in the failures of postmodernism and its obsession with language as the sole means of semiosis (Glottocentrism). We have similar beliefs as to the best form of self-governance, partly based on Dewey's framework. Further, we both affirm the ubiquity of nature that has no 'outside.' Finally, our focus on deep reconstruction in philosophy aligns us with social movements that seek emancipation.

I see seven affirmations in John's pragmatic naturalism that guide and shape his views as to the nature of nature. Some have been adumbrated above, but more precision is called for. My list is as follows: 1) a consistent effort to overcome popular dualisms in philosophy, e.g., those of body/mind, nature/non-nature, sa-sacred/profane, neurology/experience, aesthetic/non-aesthetic and self/world, 2) a war against reductionism in naturalism, i.e., privileging matter and energy over other traits and orders, 3) metaphysical pluralism with a suspicion of the dangerous effects of monism, 4) a firm rejection of Rorty's neo-pragmatism in favor of paleo-pragmatism (the classical tradition), 5) a thoroughgoing relational ontology that also honors the relata, 6) never pushing Humpy-Dumpty off the wall which leaves us with non-collectable fragments, and 7) an acceptance of the foundation of ontology in human experience, not of sense-data but of independent objects.

Pragmatic naturalism shares traits with other forms of naturalism. With descriptive naturalism it seeks a unity (within a deeper pluralism) of science and human experience as assimilated and manipulated within the context of community. However, this perspective wants to make sure that scientific inquiry is correlated with query (inventive wonder), the latter downplayed by descriptive naturalism, which tends toward a privileging of one method (empirical science).

Ryder's pragmatic naturalism affirms some of process naturalism's commitments, e.g., relationality and becoming. Yet, the ordinal perspective firmly rejects the process view of internal relations; namely, the view that each relatum is internally connected to all relata. The relation is held to be internal because it isn't an external causal sequence, but a co-penetration of prehensions. Pragmatic naturalism acknowledges that there are breaks in nature than cannot be overcome by a verbal insistence on conjunction. For example, how do you connect the movement of a grain of sand at the bottom of the North Atlantic with current Chinese politics? Only a verbal sleight of hand can affirm such an absurd correlation.

Pragmatic naturalism has little in common with honorific naturalism, because of its serious commitment to ontology parity, again, the view that all items in nature are equally real, but *always* in different respects. Indeed,

Ryder's perspective has scant use for a pumped-up notion of Spirit. While he might affirm something like the spirit of a community, or the spirit of democracy, he never makes the honorific move to see Spirit as circulating in all orders. I think he might say that the honorific assertion of a Spirit, even Martin Luther's Pauline spirit-interpreter, smacks of supernaturalism.

Now is the tricky part; namely, the comparison of pragmatic naturalism with ecstatic naturalism. Both affirm pluralism and ordinality. Both have no truck with theism, or even panentheism (the view that deity is both in and beyond nature). Both naturalisms believe that religion is in essence a human projection of *imagos,* not a connection with an extra-natural God. For both, aesthetics has an important place in culminating experience into, in my words, a celebration of living gestalts. And both perspectives embed the human process 'within' the one nature that there is.

But these two perspectives part company in several ways. Ecstatic naturalism derives its categories, analogies, similes, and metaphors from riding on the pulsations and emanations of *natura naturans*, the unconscious of nature. It gyrates on a Windhorse of shifting currents, some beneficial and others not. It affirms that religion, Santayana's poetic, can integrate its demons by evolving into art and the primal aesthetic sphere of nature – genius over sainthood. In addition, the ecstatic perspective sees unconscious energies behind both the human process and the transit from nature naturing to nature natured. Its lineage is rooted in Plato, Plotinus, Emerson, Schopenhauer and of course, paleo-pragmatism. One could also say that ecstatic naturalism is a contemporary manifestation of Neo-Platonism.

So, in the end I am honored to share in the celebration of John's many achievements in a dynamic and international career; from publishing, to teaching, to administration. His perspective is global, anti-provincial, welcoming, but with a healthy critical common sense. Many philosophers and political activists look forward to the next iteration of John's journey. I have learned much from him and our discussions were a guidepost for the life of philosophy. John's life and work have advanced philosophy and made it more judicious, capacious, and engaged. In the best tradition of John Dewey, he is a public philosopher, working from within the academy and extended his vision into the strong currents of our political life.

ON RYDER'S NATURALISM[1]

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ABSTRACT: Naturalism and pragmatism have always been natural allies but are by no means identical. John Ryder shows in his work how they can productively be put together and form a philosophical conception that transcends the traditional dualisms of objective/subjective, mental/material, etc. He defends and develops pragmatic naturalism based on the concept of relationality with its broad applications from ontology to religion and to ethics and politics. He also provides an unparalleled and robust pragmatic naturalist concept of experience. The paper presents key features of Ryder's contribution to this key problem.

Keywords: naturalism, pragmatism, nonreductivism, pluralism, experience, John Ryder

Introduction

Naturalism has been an inherent characteristic of the philosophy of pragmatism since its inception. It is a philosophy that has no need of the "naturalistic turn" that some other currents (such as analytic philosophy or phenomenology) have recently reached (see Cahill and Raleigh, 2018). Peirce, James and Dewey have long been waiting at the crossroads now reached by contemporary naturalists.

American philosophy has a rich naturalist tradition. It developed within the context of the deistic and Enlightenment traditions epitomized in the works of Cadwallader Colden (1688–1776) and Benjamin Franklin (1706–1790). The key impulse was the "Darwinian turn" in the last third of the 19th century. Its first influential center was the so-called Columbia school of naturalism at Columbia University (or "New York naturalism"). Frederick J. E. Woodbridge (1867–1940) was its most active proponent, and his followers were Irwin Edman (1896–1954), Herbert Schneider (1892–1984), John Herman Randall Jr., (1899–1980) (Anton 1967). John Dewey was, of course, a leading figure in his own right.2 Naturalism would continue to develop at Stony Brook State University of New York, where Randall's student Justus Buchler (1914–1991) established his own original school of naturalism (Cahoone 2016) with a group of followers, although their influence has not been felt outside US academe for some time. Another school of naturalism, the "phenomenological naturalism" of Marvin Farber (1901–1980)3 was established at the State University of New York at Buffalo.

In addition to the naturalism of the classical pragmatists (Bagger 2018), there were post-analytic philosophers with various affinities to pragmatism and naturalism, such as Willard Van Orman Quine (1908–2000), his students Wilfrid Sellars (1912–1989) and Donald Davidson (1917– 2003), and even Thomas S. Kuhn (1922–1996) who carried on the American naturalistic legacy in the fields of epistemology, philosophy of language, philosophy of mind and philosophy of science (Burge 1992; Kitcher 1992). Of these the most radical was Quine's version which, alas, has been rejected by pragmatists as being both reductive and scientistic.

Most recently, new varieties of neopragmatist naturalism have appeared, inspired in particular by Wilfrid Sellars' normative turn (O'Shea 2007), such as Richard Rorty's metaphilosophical naturalism (Gronda 2020), John McDowell's liberal naturalism (Dimitrakos 2020), Robert Brandom's normative naturalism (2008), and Huw Price's object/subject naturalism (Knowles 2011). These, however, differ in many respects from those developed by the "new pragmatists" as represented by Cheryl Misak (2007) and drawing resolutely on Peirce. The disputes between both camps are ongoing (Bacon 2012).

From Naturalism to Pragmatism

To situate John Ryder in this rich context, one must return to Justus Buchler at Stony Brook, under whom he

[1] This work was supported by the Slovak Research and Development Agency under Contract no APVV-18-0178.

[2] His rival and perhaps the most renowned luminary of American naturalism outside the USA was George Santayana (1863–1952), James's student at Harvard.

[3] His heir was Paul Kurtz (1925–2012). See Shook and Kurtz 2009.

studied.[4] In his very first publication, Ryder wrote of Buchler's conception as follows:

> For Buchler, everything is a natural complex, including such things as material objects, fictional characters, ideas, relations and laws. To say that something is a natural complex is to say that it is not simple, that it consists of subaltern traits. A natural complex is an order of complexes; it locates (i.e., it is a sphere of relatedness for) its subaltern traits. Not only does a complex locate traits, but it is itself a trait located. Every complex is an order that locates traits and is itself located in an order, a context. That every complex is located in some order or orders is Buchler's principle of ordinality. When a complex maintains traits in a particular ordinal location, it is said to prevail, to be prevalent, in that order (Hare, Ryder 1980, 121).

This reflects the initial influence Buchler, his PhD supervisor, had on Ryder, which may have served as the "springboard" of his life-long interest in developing a version of naturalism that would unite ontology and theology, matter and spirit, nature and God, "Heaven and Earth" in a single coherent "broad picture" (incidentally these were the topics of both his dissertation defended in 1982 and one of his mature works published in 2013). Indeed, he has drawn on his Buchlerian inspirations ever since. In another of Ryder's early works, in which he joins the discussion about the relationships between Dewey and Marx (as well as the consequences of Rorty's pragmatism), he points out the similarities between Engels's (and Lenin's) and Buchler's (and Randall's) concepts of nature, which lie in their theories of constitutive relations. Ryder considers "Buchler's metaphysical work" to be "the best work to date on these questions", pointing out that "to talk about natural phenomena as inherently complex is to erase the distinction between internal and external relations"; hence Buchler "has developed the most detailed ontology of complexes and constitutive relations" (Ryder 1988a, 243, 244, 251). Even though Ryder sides with Dewey in many respects, he is not uncritical of him, for instance, pointing out that he "nowhere develops anything comparable to dialectical-materialist conception of contradiction," but then again neither did Randall or Buchler (Ryder 1988a, 251). At that time, Ryder was a metaphysician who seemingly aspired to synthesise nonreductive materialism with Buchler's "ordinal naturalism," and it is from this standpoint that he criticized pragmatism, "speculative or traditional", for being an "inadequate metaphysics" on the grounds that it misunderstood "the lawfulness and regularity of the processes which characterize reality". He sought "an objectivism which is naturalistic and materialist" (Ryder 1988b, 322). Nevertheless, as Ryder explains in some detail in his subsequent work, not all kinds of naturalism are identical to all kinds of materialism. It is crucial to differentiate between them since a naturalist is definitely a materialist, but not a reductive (mechanistic, pre-dialectical) type who either rejects mental phenomena or cannot explain how they are "natural" nor how they relate to physical events and structures. Ryder endorses Buchler's (his teacher) (and Randall's – Buchler's teacher) view that materialism is just a "narrow version of naturalism"; and thus requires a "critical naturalism" of a pluralist sort (Ryder 1991).

Naturalism (of a Buchlerian provenance), rather than pragmatism, became Ryder's first philosophical choice. He opted for a presentation of American naturalism as "a distinct school of thought, one that, despite its connection with other movements and ideas, has an identifiable history and its own special concerns" (Ryder 1994, 10). He produced a substantial anthology of resources and thereby established himself as the leading scholar in the area. Through naturalism he has offered a more substantial contribution that aligns him with those who advocate a more traditional approach to contemporary philosophy that preserves philosophical disciplines like metaphysics or ontology and epistemology, in contrast to the fashion for "antiphilosophic therapy" obtained by "dissolving rather than solving" philosophical problems such as logical positivism, the later Wittgenstein and the so called "postmodernists", including Rorty's neopragmatism, and their followers. According to the philosophy to which Ryder subscribed:

[4] Along with a group of other contemporary "neoclassical" pragmatists such as Armen Marsoobian, Kathleen Wallace, James Campbell, Richard Hart and Lawrence E. Cahoone (see Marsoobian, Wallace, Corrington 1991).

> Nothing […] is "outside nature"; that is, there is no supernatural realm, there are no supernatural beings, and nothing is "other than" natural […] There may indeed be many objects, ideas, events, or processes that in one way or another are unusual, irregular, undesirable, or even perverse, but all of them are fully natural in the sense that they are aspects of some processes; they are continuous with other natural objects and events […] Human life, including its purposes, goals, meaning, value, and ideals, is wholly natural (Ryder 1994, 13).

Therefore, philosophers as:

> Naturalists, perhaps not surprisingly, take the view that no philosophy worthy of the name is entitled to divorce itself from an understanding of any aspect of nature, least of all from natural processes and predicaments so central to a meaningful and valuable human life (Ryder 1994, 25).

The time has now come in Ryder's philosophic journey for a more explicit "reconciling" of naturalism and pragmatism. He has been here before, having clearly seen that both currents share common features (such as nonreductive materialism, pluralism, humanism, and the like), whilst exhibiting inconsistencies. For him this was part of reconciling modernism and postmodernism from a broader cultural point of view. Despite their closeness, pragmatism and naturalism are by no means identical:

> In a nutshell, for pragmatism experience subsumes nature, and for naturalism nature subsumes experience. These appear to be contradictory philosophical perspectives, so that pragmatic naturalism looks like an oxymoron (Ryder 2003, 62).

Another difference between the two consists in the fact that naturalism is realism whereas pragmatism is constructivism (Ryder 2003, 62–63). What Ryder does next is in fact a Rortyan redescription of the problem reached by posing four claims:

1. Natural phenomena have objectively determinate traits.
2. The traits of natural phenomena are knowable.
3. The process of inquiry is necessarily conditioned and perspectival.
4. Human interaction with the rest of nature, cognitive or otherwise, is active and creative (Ryder 2003, 64).

The first two claims are about nature and express naturalism; the second two are about experience and express pragmatism. But Ryder sees no problem in all four claims being plausible, acceptable and true under such a redescription (Ryder 2003, 69). How is this possible? According to Ryder, the possibility of their being reconciled – and hence the possibility of there being a Deweyan type of pragmatic naturalism – is enabled by "relationality", that is, by "thinking about things relationally" rather than as "unrelated to one another" (Ryder 2003, 73). There is no such thing as a completely unrelated or isolated entity.[5]

> A relational conception of nature invites us to abandon the Newtonian, atomistic conception of things in favor of a model expressed by an ecosystem […] I am suggesting that a philosophical naturalism, particularly one that may have a pragmatic, constructivist dimension, needs a relational view of nature (Ryder 2003, 75).

It is important to distinguish between the different kinds of relations. Even commonsense tells us that basically there are two kinds of relations of things: 1. those that we, humans, have not created, and that do not therefore depend on us, and 2. those that we have created, and that do therefore depend on us (to some extent at least). The "real reality" is a complex mixture of both and the distinction we draw between them, which is as relative as the relations themselves. This distinction concerns the "dialectic" of relations of a dependence/independence nature. Pragmatic naturalists do not think there are any absolute dependence/independence relations of any kind. All relations are "relative", even those we have not created and on which we depend (relatively), but which may be dependent on some other nonhuman factors, powers and interactions. These are called "objective" in the sense that they are "not determined by the purposes or interests" (Ryder 2003, 71) of humans. Thus, Ryder's distinctions between "the objective and the absolute" and "conditionality and objectivity" (Ryder 2003, 70) are very fitting. On the other hand, no

[5] This is reminiscent of Rorty's "panrelationalism" as revealed in Rorty 1999.

human intervention or creative construction can be absolutized either, which would mean humans "playing God". Ontologically, in the world there is always something we depend on as the "objective" (though not absolute) as well as something that depends on us as the "subjective" (and again not absolute). John Dewey knew this very well when he wrote about nature determining culture, and culture determining nature (Dewey 2012).

To put it in other words, Ryder stated that pragmatic naturalism

> […] is a relational philosophy; it is a philosophy for which nature is a category sufficient for all things; it holds that nature consists of more than material objects; it proceeds as if natural science is one of a larger number of sources of knowledge; and it is a philosophical perspective that expects to be evaluated by its usefulness and value in philosophical contexts (Ryder 2009, 102).

This philosophy has both virtues and values, as Ryder nicely delineates in several points: 1. It avoids the traditional dualisms in philosophy; 2. It accepts realism and objectivism as well as constructivism and perspectivalism; 3. It avoids reductionism of all kinds; 4. It suggests pluralism of human experience; 5. It avoids pretensions of logicism; and 6. It avoids ideology in social and political areas (Ryder 2009, 102–112). Therefore, it may be considered "a useful, indeed wise, philosophical direction for now and for the future" (Ryder 2009, 112).

Mature Pragmatic Naturalism

In his recent books, John Ryder offers what I would call his "mature" conception of pragmatic naturalism which he applies to all the philosophical issues with which he decides to engage (Ryder 2013; Ryder 2020). Pragmatic naturalism provides him with a metaphilosophical paradigm that calls for a new philosophy, or at least a "renewed" one (and here he is in line with all those pragmatists who advocate the "new" as opposed to the "old", including Rorty) that could become a pragmatist alternative to both the traditional analytic and continental schools, and yet be a sort of rapprochement of the three major approaches as advocated recently by e.g., Richard Bernstein, Joseph Margolis and Larry Hickman. It is a pluralistic philosophical *Weltanschauung* which, among other things, openly declares that "philosophy is not mathematics" and should not even be modelled on mathematics as its paradigm (Ryder 2013, 8, 43, 50–51, 291).

Philosophy is a human enterprise that should not play God from high above in the heavens in order to rule those miserable creatures down here on earth, since philosophy is just one of the tools, they have developed to enrich their transitory life and existence, even while looking to the heavens for such reasons as moral hope, aesthetic inspiration or political authority. But philosophers should not escape earth for the sake of the heavens, nor the Platonist cave for the sake of the realm of ideas. Philosophy is vital here on earth so the human world does not turn into hell, even if it cannot be made into heaven. This is the humanistic mission of Ryder's pragmatic naturalism.

Pragmatism may convey the idea that it is a philosophy that is in line with the Nietzschean vein of "human-all-too-human" perspectivalism, or that it is purely anthropocentric, owing primarily to the Jamesian/Rortyan interpretations of human experience and knowledge; in other words, pragmatism appears to be a "philosophy of human subjectivity". It is an impression that evidently needs correcting, and that is what Ryder is doing (Ryder 2013, 46–49). Rather than abandoning the concepts of subjectivity and objectivity, or emphasizing one at the expense of the other, they should be reconstructed in a pragmatic naturalist, relational way – neither is to be eliminated since neither is absolute. Experience is not only humanly subjective, but includes natural objectivity as well; nor is nature merely naturally objective, but includes human subjectivity as well. The "dialectics" of the complex relations (transactions) between experience and nature include the dialectics between subjectivity and objectivity.

The key idea that Ryder develops and defends is relationality. It seemed very "natural" to the human mind to assume that all "things in the heaven and earth," no matter whether given or created, live or inanimate,

nonhuman or human – including human beings – are "discrete individuals independent of all the others", that they are self-independent, autonomous or even isolated atoms "like balls on a billiard table". A mainstream intellectual tradition has been established that regards substances as ontologically primary and relations as secondary. There must be something that existed first (Peirce's Firstness) in order for it to interact with another thing (Peirce's Secondness), as the traditional ontological understanding would have us think, at least since the times of Plato and Aristotle. However, no such thing can have existed without it having a relation to some other thing because, as with any given thing, relations (Peirce's Thirdness) exist inherently as well. No such thing can have been constituted without it having a relation to some other thing. Thus, relations are ontologically constitutive, and pragmatic naturalism provides "a relational, ordinal ontology" (Ryder 2013, 54).

Based on this ontology, Ryder further develops his "relationalism" in his understanding of both the world and human being. Nature as a whole, a person or a society, or any kind of entity, is simply relational through and through, despite the fact that the standard or traditional ontology is non-relational. For Ryder, this is not the "only one and necessary truth". Instead it is a reasonable "attempt" and a "more modest claim". Thus, as a pragmatic naturalist he does not claim that all being is necessarily relational; he just claims that it is "at least possible" to understand it as relational and that whether this understanding "works" better or is more "useful" than the traditional one can only be decided by a "pragmatic test" (Ryder 2013, 43).

Such an understanding may be applied not just to the world as "given" and "found", but also to the world as "made" and "created" (or constructed). The ontology of "objective reality" is "naturally" supplemented by the ontology of "human artifacts", including the whole "nonmaterial world" of human concepts, theories, visions, images, ideas, ideals, values, meanings, beliefs, knowledge, judgments, truths, together comprising what is called "intellectual culture" (or "spiritual culture"). There is no "mystery" here, according to pragmatic naturalism – all of these are created by various kinds of human cultural practices, which are also relational, ordinal, contextual, historical etc. Cultural practices are creative. However, their cultural products do not represent a different kind of ontology, neither are they practiced arbitrarily. Rather they fit into the general ontology of natural complexes which are being thus transformed, but are by no means created *ex nihilo*. There is no tension between the ontology of (objective) nature and the ontology of (creative) human culture, provided we understand the constitutive relations within and between them.

If humans are not creators ex nihilo, then they are not Gods, despite playing God in many of their cultural practices. Pragmatic naturalist ontology also shows that the idea of God itself is one of the human cultural creations that was not (and could not have been) created ex nihilo. There are real and natural earthly grounds for such a creation. Religious belief and faith in God have a rich cultural meaning within a naturalist view, offering a host of important values such as humility, piety, trust, hope, and a sense of justice. These are the values that provide the relational "common ground" between pragmatic naturalism and a religious life of faith (Ryder 2013, 129, 136–140).

The sciences and the arts (besides religions) are another important human creation invented through and found in human cultural practices. Based on the philosophical concept of human creativity, which pragmatic naturalism fully endorses, the strict dividing line found in the old dualism of "science is cognitive" and "art is noncognitive" does not exist. To arrive at a truly novel conception of science and art, a much richer concept of knowledge is needed than that provided by the traditional propositional concepts of "knowledge that" or "knowledge how." Ryder invokes Buchler's original theory of judgment as the basis for the relational integration of science and art into one coherent pragmatist naturalist theory (Ryder 2013, 164–170).

Ryder consistently applies his pragmatic naturalism to the social and political arena in order to develop the

conceptions of democracy and international relations. These may be considered his most refreshing innovative contributions to some of the crucial contemporary issues of our social experience, and here it is Dewey rather than Buchler that is the main source.6

As for democracy, Ryder develops the pragmatic naturalist concept of "thick democracy" based on Dewey's conception of "creative democracy," distinguishing it very effectively from the concept of "thin" or "formal" democracy as a way of governing (mostly traditional liberal-constitutive). The latter should give way to the former wherever possible. His view is that grounding the kernel of democracy in such a floppy concept as "human nature" does not serve it well. An improved pragmatic naturalist attitude may be based on the concept of "common interests" both across and beyond any specific human community. The "pursuit of common (shared) interests" is the "most significant component" (Ryder 2013, 188–189). It is also a relational conception of democracy built on taking practical care of the shared ties that bind people together no matter how different their individual interests and ways of life. Where there is no common interest or search for a common interest, one can hardly have a thick democracy. Alternatively hope for a thick democracy may lie in the possibility that such participation, cooperation and communication in developing shared interests may "prevail by example" (Ryder 2013, 222).

One of the most dangerous deformations of democracy that one can identify today is its reduction to a "thin" democracy based on election procedures and traditional liberal-democratic government. This is really just a "mask" or, even worse, a caricature of democracy (especially when combined with corruption) as assessed from the standpoint of a Deweyan pragmatic naturalist conception. Things are even worse when democracy is simply identified with market mechanisms or "marketization," i.e. "the application of market principles and values to nearly all aspects of the society" (Ryder 2013, 227).7 A market society is just one component of a democratic society, whereas "democracy is characterized by ongoing pursuit of common interests, a democratic society requires that its citizens interact with one another in a spirit of mutual cooperation and collaborative pursuit of common ends" (Ryder 2013, 228).

As for the international situation and policy, Ryder calls for a substantial revision and reconstruction of the international order starting with a fundamental rethink of the concepts on which this order has traditionally been constructed. The relational paradigm is, of course, the clue here as well. The concepts that need to be revised for such a pragmatic naturalist relational reconstruction to be viable include the concepts of borders, national sovereignty, national interests, foreign policy, international cooperation, internationalization, pacifism, and militarism. And they require revision so that they accord with the declared democratic principles. What all this amounts to is a pragmatic naturalist conception of cosmopolitanism and humanism in which both are naturally the implications, or rather the inherent traits, of a thick democracy on the global level.

As it turns out, the concept of experience is central to pragmatic naturalism, particularly within the context of the contemporary controversies between various strands of pragmatism, in particular the neopragmatist one that treats language as central (see e.g., Koopman 2007) to experience. John Ryder's journey takes him through "an unabashed study of experience" within the pragmatic naturalist tradition and then on to ontology in his most recent work (Ryder 2020, 1–2). But, of course, a pragmatic naturalist cannot study experience without studying nature, and vice versa. He construes his naturalism from the relational and pluralistic ontological concept of nature rather than the epistemic concept of natural science. Buchler's ordinal ontology is incorporated into the ontology of pragmatic naturalism and not a stand-alone ontology. Buchler's principle of the "onto-

[6] I have provided more detailed interpretations of Ryder's political ideas in my review of his *The Things in Heaven and Earth,* see Visnovsky 2014.

[7] Such a reduced democracy became entrenched in post-communist countries, including Slovakia, after 1989.

logical parity" of orders in nature allows us to dissolve the traditional questions of whether and how God, mind, values, mathematics, culture etc. can exist within the naturalist framework (Ryder 2020, 20–21). This is another brick in the wall of nonreductive pragmatic naturalism. Pragmatic naturalism

> […] does not embrace the idea that whatever there is must be material or explainable in material terms. There is, in other words, no reason that we would need to concern ourselves with accounting for such phenomena as mind and consciousness, and the many products of mind and consciousness, as material entities or process. This does not mean that pragmatic naturalism is committed to dualism […] our naturalism is a pluralism in the sense that it acknowledges the plurality of what exists without the need to define any sort of complex in terms appropriate to another (Ryder 2020, 92–93).

Ryder sides with another relevant conception that was suggested by another of Buchler's heirs, Lawrence Cahoone, that of "emergent naturalism" (Ryder 2020, 93).

For the pragmatic naturalist, experience is transactional, "complex, relationally constituted, and constitutive of its environment and the self" (Ryder 2020, 138). Ryder's concept of experience is a hugely robust one, involving not only transactions between humans and nonhuman nature but also transactions among humans within society. Thus, nothing human stands apart from experience, not knowledge, judgment or communication, not art, ethics or religion, and not, of course, the "spheres of power" such as politics and economics. Experience involves all cultural dimensions – cognitive, ethical, religious, aesthetic, political, and even the philosophical. Together with the concept of nature, the concept of experience as the ontological concept grounding the concept of culture forms the "quintessence" of pragmatic naturalism. Ryder's conception is a grand synthesis of Dewey and Buchler (and others, including Merleau-Ponty and Gadamer).

Conclusion

To my understanding, what is most valuable in Ryder's pragmatic naturalism is his contribution to philosophical anthropology – the understanding that human beings are individuals and that a human being is a whole. His conception of experience integrates all the crucial dimensions of our existence that are traditionally taken either apart or even in contradistinction: body and mind, brain and soul, material and spiritual, cognitive and aesthetic, ethical and political, rational and emotional, deductive and imaginative, practical and religious, private and public, intellectual and institutional, etc. (Ryder 2020, 203–214). This philosophy constructs a solid bridge between classical pragmatism and its contemporary extensions, thus making it alive and worth studying and developing.

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PRAGMATISM AND THE NORMATIVE IN NATURALISM

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ABSTRACT: Situating norms within nature has been a prominent feature of pragmatic naturalism. Like similarly liberal and non-reductive naturalisms, pragmatism easily accommodates normativity, such as values and purposes. Just as importantly, this pragmatic naturalism, as the work of John Ryder rightly emphasizes, accounts for the normativity of human sociality and rationality. The philosophical alternatives to normless naturalism consist of more than just supernatural theism or social idealism. Pragmatism's "norming naturalism" is the best alternative, capable of grounding philosophical inquiries into society and culture.

Keywords: normativity, naturalism, pragmatism, reductionism, society, idealism, theism

Naturalism can be craftily defined to exclude norms from nature, including norms set by humanity. This *normless naturalism* would not be advanced without a purpose in mind. That plan may be mainly about excluding God's design, more than human craft. Perhaps hospitability to norms offered by naturalism concedes too much to supernaturalism. Still, there is a different naturalism accommodating norms without any wariness towards genesis. Nature's energetic ways can include replicative and generative organizing that conforms materiality into vitality. When this *norming naturalism* perceives norms at work in the world, would it be gazing at illusions? Deadlock ensues, with each naturalism convinced of the other's scientific inadequacy and philosophical negligence.

Life sciences get caught in the middle between competing naturalisms, accused of either fabrication or reduction, for daring to be normative or normless. Social sciences are hence pulled in opposite directions, to either unify with normative biology, or disdain normless biology and ally with a non-natural worldview. Pragmatism offers a norming naturalism conjoining normative biology and social theory, in opposition to anti-naturalistic idealism and theism. This pragmatic naturalism is exemplified, just as John Ryder tells us, by "the Columbia Naturalist tradition, primarily in its expression in Dewey, Randall and Buchler" (Ryder 2013, 6).

Naturalism, Theism, Idealism

Various kinds of naturalism have sought dominance since the eighteenth century, competing among each other as much as they have contested supernaturalism (Shook 2011; Shook 2017). This spectacle offers perennial comfort to anti-naturalist worldviews. Theology, ever alert to tendencies toward atheism, has always opposed the notion of self-sufficient and self-organizing nature, but disorganized nature arouses theism's sterner censures. Before the coining of "naturalism" in the mid-1700s, atomism and materialism were theology's prime targets. Without God, humanity is left normless and lost in nature's heartless nihilism. Expecting humanity to invent their norms from chaos, conflict, and competition asks too much, so that norming responsibility is safely assigned to God.

No naturalism needs a god, but naturalism must account for norms. Pointing to human creativity is only the beginning of a story. Humans do establish new norms to better organize their bonds and behaviors, but those efforts presume prior norms pursued along the way. Normless naturalism is barred from crediting human mentality, since it denies that anything normatively regulative can exist there, either. To think of a practical rule for re-organizing inconstant matters is an accomplishment that presumes normative constancies to thought. Normless naturalism must view anything normative as entirely ideational, not natural. We talk about ideas, and act on them, but in the end, they are just our ideas lacking reference or truth about anything real. Talk about norms is strictly convenient fiction, no matter how habitual. For normless naturalism, natural regularities about how a brain *does* think and how a person *has* acted cannot imply anything in general about how a human being *should* behave: no amount of fact can validate any norm (Skorupski 2000; Paakkunainen 2018).

Normless naturalism can at best suggest that the human mind is solely responsible for forming thoughts

of normativity. *Idealistic constructivism* entirely agrees on this point. Idealism attributes all normativity to our ideas, as ideas forge norms from pure mentality, conceived as normative by definition. As an "unmoved mover," mentality is taken to be inherently unnatural since it is utterly unlike materiality, and quite underdetermined by anything physical. Idealism repels both naturalisms, compelling them to settle their argument between themselves. No compromise seems in sight, however, because normless naturalism already sides with idealism's view of normativity as ideational and unnatural while materiality stays mindless. That concession to idealism means that normless naturalism is unable to explain the normativities of humanity, including norms of conduct, morality, logic, and methodical science. Norming naturalism by contrast concedes nothing to idealism, by situating our normativity within the self-organizing biological realm and hence the organized social world as life's human outgrowth.

Making concessions to idealism prior to debates about nature or science would be unwise for either kind of naturalism, especially about necessity. Idealism has a long history of equating normativity with necessity, or at least defining norms in terms of their necessary modality along with other content. The variable, the contingent, the optional, the vague, the erratic, the chancy, the irrational – idealism is reluctant to ascribe true normativity to such matters, for they lack that insistent "must" expected by idealism. Where that "must" is missing among nature's inconstant ways, a higher reality of the ideal and the rational is duly invoked. Many manifestations of idealism and rationalism stand at the ready where a "must" is at work (Hattiangadi 2007; Gert 2004; Gibbard 2013). One version enlivens ethics, attesting to rigid norms of morality such as duties and rights. Another complicates philosophy of language, where rule-following lies behind syntactics and semantics. Yet another version pervades philosophy of mind, where beliefs must answer to reasons. Still another burdens logic, as rationality and truth would seemingly dissolve without inferential necessity.

Asking naturalism to explain necessities just as idealism depicts them extends an invitation that both naturalisms should decline. Henceforth, the normativity sought in nature, if nature has norms, only needs to convey that pertinent "oughtness" to a norm, regardless of whether it conveys a "must" in some exceptionless and overriding sense (Finlay 2019). That stricture, while sensible as a minimal standard, will disappoint idealists as much as it dismays normless naturalists. Idealism refuses to find enough normativity in a merely optional "ought" to count as authentically normative. Normless naturalism refuses to even admit realistic "oughts" into its ontology in the first place. For example, the existence of values, which norming naturalism accommodates, is rejected by normless naturalism (for not counting as factual), and demoted by idealism (for not counting as necessary). Nevertheless, real "oughts" are forbidden by normless naturalism, so norming naturalism can reasonably begin its counter-argument there.

Norming naturalism can develop its alternative to idealism *after* sidelining normless naturalism. To do so, nothing essential should be initially conceded. Normless naturalism cannot beg the question about norms before an honest inquiry into all of nature has even begun. Idealism must not beg the question by demanding necessities where normalities suffice. In the next section, values will serve nicely to illustrate how norms really exist in nature right where they are at work. Normless naturalism does not have to bear any argumentative burden about first explaining how natural norms answer to the reductionism of normless naturalism or the rationalism of idealism.

We shall settle matters between the two naturalisms first. Normless naturalism offers a preemptive compromise over norms, such as values, by inviting reductionist strategies. Arranging some sort of second-class status for norms, such as claims that norms are emergent from, or supervenient upon, genuinely natural matters, are not what norming naturalism has in mind. Norming naturalism is not burdened with explaining supervenience or emergence since it already rejects the premised reductionism

(Brożek et al. 2017). No rationalist metaphysics is needed for a norming naturalism such as pragmatic naturalism, by attending first and foremost to empirical matters. Normless naturalism wants to pre-define "nature" as it likes, but this metaphysical maneuvering should be disallowed. Indeed, expecting philosophy to define "nature" first, and then sort out legitimate naturalisms while banishing idealisms, is a hopeless project. Surely nature itself should be consulted first, directly and empirically.

Why can't science be tasked with explaining what nature is, and consists of? Normless naturalism gains no high ground by making a great show of standing with science. Its claim that "genuine science discerns no norms" simply begs the whole question and ignores broad areas of the life sciences. The view that physics and chemistry outranks and overrules any other science about what ontologically exists is a controversial position premised upon a (dubious) normative claim about methodological preferentiality that exceeds science's factual knowledge. Pointing to one field's dramatic successes in one realm of nature only highlights that field's incompetence in other realms. The sciences grasp this well – that is why they proliferate into many distinct yet coordinated fields. A measure of theoretical reduction among neighboring subfields cannot license the false assumption that science as a whole endorses wholesale ontological reductivism for all nature. Molecules are made of atoms, but it takes hasty un-empirical metaphysics to claim that *only* atoms are "really" real. Pragmatism and norming naturalism prefers to let the separate sciences speak for themselves. Getting past scientism is not about simply ignoring science (De Caro 2011; Shook 2015).

The "natural" is a broad term that allows multiple meanings, depending upon the empirical perspective taken. That breadth of vision does not leave us sightless, without guides and markers towards the normative. On the definition of nature, Ryder writes, "We can contrast nature, in one sense, with the artificial, or in another we can contrast it with the statistically infrequent, unusual, or abnormal […]" (Ryder 2013, 40). As Ryder notes well, a norm can carry descriptive, explicative, and prescriptive meanings. A norm may involve a regularity, a preferentiality, or a conventionality, and sometimes two or all three meanings are invoked. Furthermore, they can go in different directions. A conventional rule within a subgroup might be highly irregular for the whole, as when one society's tradition of child marriage is an outlier across the globe. Tensions among those implications arouse philosophical as well as methodological issues, and they shall have to be disentangled as we proceed.

The artificial, the unusual, and the infrequent are candidates for abnormality and unnaturality. Strictly speaking of course, nothing unnatural really exists, according to the two rival naturalisms. Normless naturalism has particularly treated "unnaturality" and the normal/abnormal classification as something ideational, not real.

Normless naturalism unavoidably inspires interest in some sort of extra-natural category or reality, simply by refusing to admit that a "normality/abnormality" distinction has any basis in the natural realm. For normless naturalism, normality cannot exist, and anything about life or humanity that exemplifies "normality/abnormality" cannot be of this world. Idealism eagerly takes up the story of humanity from there, followed closely by theism. As for norming naturalism, it locates normativity within nature precisely where science examines it, without imposing metaphysical dichotomies dividing the normal or the mental apart from the natural.

Normalities are Natural

How could normal values be all-natural, yet normalities are not? If no normality is natural, then there are no norms in nature, and the normalness of a value remains illusory. For example, if butterflies normally emerge from butterfly cocoons, but there are no normalities in nature, then another butterfly emerging today from its cocoon has to be accidental or miraculous.

Despite such obvious and scientific illustrations, objections to the naturality of normalities are sustained by those wanting to keep the focus on humans. "Butterflies

come out of cocoons because of nature's ways, not some normality about what butterflies should do." Shall we judge that no normalities pertain to human too? That cannot follow at all. The objection effectively admits what it tries to deny, that normalities operate in nature. If a moth comes out of a butterfly cocoon, the observer infers an abnormality. Where there can rightly be abnormalities, there must be normalities. Still, we will be told, "No matter that normalities are found in nature, humans aren't so natural too." Really? What metaphysical dualism got introduced and demonstrated already, to divide humans apart from their organic bodies? Again, such demonstrations fallaciously presuppose what must be proven, that normalities pertaining to humans are due to inner unnaturality, not naturality.

Normalities exist precisely where organic beings live: in nature. Norms are all-natural. Satisfactory accounts of the patterned and regular behaviors of lifeforms taken individually and collectively must appeal to norms. Norms exist where patterned habits to life persist. Persistence refers to continuities in existence across the past, present, and future: their actuality doesn't halt at the "now" and the "now" isn't when they start. However, norms are labeled – as natural "ways" or "regularities" – their nature lies in their generality. Generalities are about *genera*: matters inherent to the generation and perpetuation of organic life.

For a particular form of life, such as a bodily organ, a species, a symbiotic relationship, or an ecosystem, its generalities *are* its normalities. Life's normal generalities are where the "is" of fact and the "ought" of value are unified without distinction or tension. Form doesn't imply function; organic form *is* its function and its functioning lies *in* its formation and nowhere else. Only abstraction analyzes apart what nature keeps together. If something organic is examined without interest taken in its past or future, in its genesis or its maintenance, then its features can be statically taken for factual structures implying little about the functions it ought to be doing. Similarly, if something organic is envisioned only in terms of its capacity for prolonged persistence, then its features can be dynamically taken for valuable functions that imply little about the structures it has to have. The dictums that form cannot imply function, or that function cannot imply form, are fallacies proceeding from a one-sided and incomplete inquiry. Starting from a general description about its form, an organism's specific activities cannot be derived, but details about structural formation renders its behavioral ways understandable. Similarly, starting from a general account about its activity, an organism's specific features cannot be derived, but details about its behavioral functioning make its physiological design comprehensible.

Physiology – the study of organic design above the level of organic chemistry – is the arena where form equals function, where performativity *is* normativity. Physiology's explanatory robustness depends on biology, and biology became a genuine science with the Darwinian theory for the evolution of speciation by reproduction and selection, through mechanisms of genetic alteration such as mutation, gene drift and flow, conspecific reproductive choice, artificial breeding, and so on. Nothing about scientific biology forbids design or purpose in nature. No providential designer is implied at all. There is no need of that hypothesis, because of scientific cosmology. The cosmological principle that greater complexity can emerge from simpler order, given ample entropic energies and enough time, means that the resulting design and design's functioning is entirely natural. Life applies its structured capabilities to pursue environing conditions needed for its own perpetuation. Cosmology (what is) and Orthology (what ought) are correlative not by chance but by intertwined fate where there is life. Cosmological complexity implies orthological propensity: the naturalities of organic life exhibit the normativities of organic living. Exceptions to normalities are expected and help confirm norming naturalism; it is rather normless naturalism which is unable to account for either the cases of normal valuation or the cases of abnormal valuation.

In case this demonstration of the natural reality of valuing norms fails to impress normless naturalism, perhaps to its proximity to mere perception instead of

higher cognitive achievements, we can proceed to build our case. Tasting is one thing while cooking meals is another, we can imagine a critic pointing out. Norming naturalism can easily account for complex human practices, once the naturality of our values has been established.

Observing the normativity to human activity is impossible if observation is taken to be merely a descriptive or explanatory matter. To say, "People are normally eating cooked food," has described a statistical pattern to current conduct, but the genuine normativity has gone missing. Why should they cook food? To instead say, "People generally follow rules about cooking food because they respect a norm," has captured goal-directed conduct, but only arouses the next question, "But why should people respect that norm about cooking?" Indeed, people could simply respect cooking rules without also having to think about respecting an additional norm in the process. But that is precisely the stance towards norms recommended here: the way that people believe that they *should* cook their food *is* the normativity to watch out for. People not only value their cooked food – they value how they prepare their food through their cooking practice. In other words, the steps of food preparation get conducted so that the entire production of cooked food serves the meal's overall purposes.

To normatively cook food is not merely to happen to render up cooked food on the occasion of one meal. Rather, any obstacles to fully cooking all of the meal (perhaps due to low fire fuel) are overcome by modifying the stages of food processing (less meat, finer-chopped vegetables, grilling rather than boiling, and so on) so that a differently cooked meal still serves its nutritional ends. We can observe a two-level co-adaptive process to normative activity: the components internal to meal-preparation (recipes, etc.) are adaptable to better serve the goal of the whole practice of meal-serving for its consumers. That accomplishment is the demonstration of the normativities to cooking: again, the performativity *is* the normativity. People are following norms in their persistent adaptable practices – they are not persisting in their activities for the sake of following norms. Looking for norms outside of our creative relations must be a fruitless search for meaning prior to experiencing our human worlds. That relationality has priority, in Ryder's view:

> The worlds we inhabit, so to speak – or better, the worlds of our experience—are suffused with meaning, and they are worlds of our making. There is nothing mysterious or incongruous about this. The creative construction of meaning is a moment, admittedly a critical moment for human life, of the creative dimension of a relational, ordinal nature. From the point of view of a relational ontology, both objectivity and creativity have a central role to play in nature, and in our understanding of human interaction with other complexes of nature (Ryder 2013, 118–119).

Norms are already inherent to human practices, or else they are nowhere at all. Norming naturalism takes the first option. Normless naturalism picks the second option: there cannot be anything actually normative to the practices of people. Any sufficiently accurate descriptions of patterns to human behaviors can let the "normative" drop out entirely without losing any truthful accuracy or explanatory power. For normless naturalism, talk about norms to conduct is either embellished narration for our emotional life, or shorthand fiction when the full materialistic description is too clumsy.

Humanity and Naturalism

The claim is oft-heard that society transcends biology, so anything distinctively human is a free variable to be decided by mental choice rather than determined from material compulsion. Norms from the biological realm have nothing to do, we are told, with what should be normal for humans to be doing. Natural norms are properly for unfree and sub-rational animals, not freely rational humans. What good is naturalism if it eliminates what is most precious, our genuine humanity?

The proper target for this worry is normless naturalism, which made its peace with physicalist determinism and illusory free will. However, this challenge can also be thrown at norming naturalism: "If there are natural norms, human liberty should instead follow non-natural norms." Motivating this challenge is an appreciation for

culture so that humanity no longer is valuing what used to be valuable for our more animal-like distant ancestors. However, the lesson from that long course of cultural development cannot be that *unnaturality* is essential to humanity. The consequences to ignoring the natural sociality to humanity are grave, undermining the philosophical opportunity for understanding human normativity. If any naturality to humanity has to be subsumed under, and submerged into, the normal naturality of nature, few dialectical options seem evident.

Consider the prime argumentative schema that appears to reduce humanity to nature's ways:

A. Everything in nature has norms.
B. Humanity is entirely natural.
So, C. Humanity entirely relies on nature's norms.

This argument threatens the reduction of humanity to animality, and the next two forms do so as well:

A. Everything in nature has norms.
C. Humanity relies on norms.
So, B. Humanity is entirely natural.

B. Humanity is entirely natural.
C. Humanity relies on norms.
So, A. There are norms in nature.

Norming naturalism might appear to reduce humanity to animality, except for its hospitality to the normativity of humanity's sociality. Humanity remains entirely natural (B) because human sociality never departs from naturality (A) in its normativity (C). This position explains why norming naturalism does not have to depict humanity as either normless or unnatural, along the lines of this argument form:

A. Everything in nature has norms.
not-C. Humanity does not rely on norms.
So, not-B. Humanity is not entirely natural.

Norming naturalism can reject this argument because humanity's rationally social norms are all-natural. How does normless naturalism fare? Its basic schema starts from a denial of norms in nature:

not-A. There are no norms in nature.
B. Humanity is entirely natural.
So, not-C. Humanity does not rely on any norms.

This dim conclusion encounters the paradox presented by normless naturalism: either it finds that humans only have the natural and sub-rational mentality of animals, or it invites an unnatural basis to human normativity. The express admission of that unnatural dimension of humanity takes this form:

not-A. There are no norms in nature.
C. Humanity relies on norms.
So, not-B. Humanity is not entirely natural.

This argument opens the door to idealism with a dualistic admission about humanity's nature. If normless naturalism re-asserts the naturality of humanity, it must deny norms to humanity in order to ensure that nature is normless. That denial takes this form:

B. Humanity is entirely natural.
not-C. Humanity does not rely on norms.
So, not-A. There are no norms in nature.

Again, normless naturalism must find that human mentality nowhere exceeds the level of sub-rational animality, falling short of normativity. If normless naturalism dares to suggest that humans and their activities somehow attain a degree of normativity while remaining just animals, it only confesses its ontological inadequacy. That inadequacy in turn suggests alternative ontologies. Norming naturalism is the obvious alternative, but other worldviews await.

The ontology taking up a diametrically opposed stance to normless naturalism is the worldview of transcendental idealism. Proceeding from dualism and human normativity, all normativity gets credited to humanity alone:

not-B. Humanity is not entirely natural.
C. Humanity relies on norms.
So, not-A. There are no norms in nature.

On this view, anything that might seem to be rational and normative to the non-human world has to be actually due to humanity's mentality, since the world apart from humanity must be inchoate and formless. A milder mode of dualism attributes human normativity to just humanity:

A. Everything in nature has norms.
not-B. Humanity is not entirely natural.
So, not-C. Humanity does not rely entirely on natural norms.

This position is not far from norming naturalism, but it credits idealistic constructivism for much human norma-

tivity. This idealism claims the advantage over both naturalisms once again, promising the rescue of free rational mentality and depicting it as the explanation for all normativity.

However, this freedom to mentality may be indistinguishable from anarchy or totalitarianism. If individual minds freely set all norms, norms needn't coincide and anarchy would reign, unless norms are marshalled into order by something beyond individual minds, such as the normativity of our common natural needs (we *ought* to form social contracts, for example) or the normativity of a powerful society (that *must* impose its norms on members). Appealing to natural needs obviates the point of idealism and concedes everything to norming naturalism. As for totalitarianism, idealism defends itself by responding that only *reasonable* norms should be socially imposed. This is a poor defense, since this view of mental freedom allows any society to determine what shall count as reasonable in the first place. Idealism cannot appeal to some sort of society-transcendent standard of reasonableness without advancing to metaphysical Absolutism or supernatural theism (so God is the totalitarian), or else idealism has to concede the whole debate to norming naturalism.

Sociality and Nature

Idealism cannot be entrusted with reasonableness. All the same, norming naturalism's vindication still appears to be a surrender of humanity to natural necessity and mere animality. Our design by a providential deity might be less fatalistic. A deity could at least install free will, or so the story goes. What good is freedom, supposing that free will fits with norming naturalism, if nature's norms dictate human normality? A re-match with normless naturalism might defeat norming naturalism on the grounds that human sociality and social pluralism make far more sense in the absence of biological norms.

This split decision, awarding one round to each contestant, was a feature of the Enlightenment, a time when feudal tradition was challenged by human naturality at the same time that individual freedom was upheld over that same naturality. The resolution, to view liberty as grounded in natural reason, made tradition look unreasonable while at same time making free reason seem natural (Gay 1969; Israel 2006). This third round breaks the tie. Normless naturalism cannot accommodate any natural norms of reasonableness, but norming naturalism can, including the normativity of rationality itself.

Norming naturalism accommodates normativity reasonableness in its human forms of social mentality and individual preferentiality. Averting animalism, anarchism, and totalitarianism follows from that three-fold balancing among naturality, sociality, and individuality. Explaining how sociality, rationality, and individuality arose from nature was extremely difficult until the biological theory of evolution and the anthropological theory of bio-cultural co-evolution (Heinrich 2016; Shook 2022).

Norming naturalism has no need for hypothesizing that humanity does, or should, transcend natural animality and physiology. All we do depends on bodies with brains, and our evolved brains provided for humanity's specialties with social mentality and individual rationality (Davies 2003; Okrent 2017; De Caro and Macarthur 2010). Social conventionality treats values endowed from co-evolved human nature more like variables than fixed constants. However, not everything about humans is a variable. In order to inculcate conventional values, other endowed values are taken for granted. The operant conditioning needed for youth training, for example, has to take advantage of endowed values to motivate behavior modification and skill acquisition.

Could all endowed values be targeted by a society for conventional overrides? Presumably not – one convention could not be instilled through specific values while another convention is busily devaluing those same values. A society has to maintain compromises, treating some set of endowed values inherent to humans as privileged and protected so that numerous conventions can be established upon them. For example, virtues of childhood such as compliance, obedience, cooperativeness, curiosity, persistence, ambition, practice, and

praise-seeking must not be repressed. Societies naturally and normally respect and protect these privileged values. Any other endowed values conflicting with these useful values are deemed inappropriate and wrong for childhood (and probably adulthood too).

Social conventionality cannot accept an automatic inference from "original naturality" to "social normality". The "Originality Fallacy" mistakenly infers that something should be normal simply by being naturally endowed. A paired fallacy, the "Conventionality Fallacy," mistakenly assumes that social conventions can override anything originally natural. Idealistic Constructivism commits this conventionality fallacy while treating natural matters as powerless to resist the formative capabilities of intellect. There is no fallacy for any society that regards its own conventionalities as normal for its internal members. Social normalities are supposed to be regarded as binding norms by members due to their internalization. That is why much of normativity is not regarded as arbitrary or conventional by those already socialized. However, outside of that society, its normalcies do not follow. The Originality Fallacy and the Conventionality Fallacy make it easier to commit a third fallacy: the "Ideological Fallacy" is the mistaken inference by one society that other societies can be just as "normal" by following its conventions.

Individual preferentiality can also treat endowed values as variables, although with less flexibility than social conventionality. One's society inculcates conventionalities so thoroughly that an adult takes them for originalities, or practically as fixed as anything original. Nevertheless, individual rationality may be able to regard a convention as somewhat contingent and optional when different values beckon. Opposition to social conventionalities would not be undertaken lightly, since they enjoy a presumptive reasonableness within society. Are conventions worthy of an unchallengeable status? The "Tradition Fallacy" mistakenly regards a long-standing convention as finally and infallibly justified, immune from criticism and adjustment. Nevertheless, deviations cannot be grounded in naturality alone, for that commits the Originality Fallacy.

Rejecting a social norm for mere personal preference amounts to selfishness, prejudice, or rebelliousness. Reasonable grounds for modifying or abandoning a convention should be based upon the opportunities presented by other conventions. Has one convention proven to be less protective of privileged values, obstructing other important conventions? Have wider social conditions or challenges diminished one convention's merits in comparison with other worthy conventions? Further questions proliferate. Asking and answering such questions enters the arenas of morality, social ethics, and politics (Copp 2001).

Whatever the salient considerations, there is no question that whether a society is overriding an original value, or an individual is repressing a typical valuation, only our norms are involved, and nothing is transcending human capacities for social mentality and individual rationality. Those capabilities for comparing and reevaluating values do deem certain values as "abnormal" while promoting others as normal, but only rhetorical flourishes or logical fallacies ensue by labelling any values as intrinsically "natural" or "unnatural". Normative values exist here in this world with us, or nowhere.

The claim that "Humans create and depend on their own norms, so those norms are not natural" is a grand fallacy. Its unstated second premise is "What gets created in the world after nature already exists cannot be natural" but that premise cannot be right. More clearly stated, the missing premise would be "What humans create is artificial, rather than natural." However, the "artificial vs. natural" meaning in that second premise is different from the "unnatural vs natural" meaning to the first premise, and the conclusion cannot follow. What we freely cognize, create, and craft remains in and of this natural world, since nothing humans accomplish could be ontologically unnatural.

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INTERSECTIONALITY AND ORDINAL ONTOLOGY[1]

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ABSTRACT: This paper explores two different approaches to social groups, Katherine Ritchie's and Brian Epstein's and then uses Justus Buchler's ordinal ontology to reframe the metaphysics of social groups, and in particular intersectional social groups. The paper suggests that the Buchlerian category of coalescence helps to conceptualize what intersectional groups are. The paper also proposes that ordinal ontology provides an account for relatedness between and among groups and thus for a way of avoiding splintering and what some have called the regress to individuals problem of increasing specification of intersectional identities.

Keywords: intersectionality, regress, ordinal ontology, Ritchie, Epstein, Buchler

The purpose of the paper is to explore ways in which intersectionality can be understood as a metaphysical category by introducing Justus Buchler's ordinal ontology to reframe the notion of an intersectional social group. Much of the work on intersectionality has been done in race and gender studies and more recently in social ontology. I will briefly review some of the latter and then in somewhat more detail two theories of social groups in the work of Katherine Ritchie (2013, 2015, 2020) and Brian Epstein (2015, 2019). I will then turn to the ordinal ontology of Justus Buchler and his concepts of "natural complex," "ordinality" and what he calls coalescence to analyze the metaphysics of intersectionality and of intersectional groups.

One approach, taken by Ritchie, is to identify kinds of social groups and their distinguishing characteristics, and to locate intersectional groups within that taxonomy. Another taken by Epstein would be to use general metaphysical tools and concepts to explain social kinds, including social groups for which he also has a taxonomy. I am sympathetic to this approach, but one of the limitations in the particular metaphysical apparatus that Epstein uses is that it would have a hard time accounting for the relations between groups and avoiding the fragmentation or regress problem (which I will identify below). I suggest that the ordinal ontology of Justus Buchler can provide a way of framing the notion of social groups and their relations and avoid the regress and fragmentation problem. Buchler himself was not concerned with social ontology or the ontology of groups per se, but I suggest that his ordinal ontology is helpful for conceptualizing groups and for avoiding some of the problems in the approaches taken by Ritchie and Epstein that I will identify in discussion of their theories.

Introduction: Intersectionality, Fragmentation and the Regress Problem

Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989, 1991) introduced the term intersectionality to identify a class of persons – Black Women – for whom the law did not adequately recognize the ways in which members of that class experienced unique, "multi-axis" discrimination in virtue of the "intersection" of being Black and being Woman. The idea was that "Black Women" defined a class, a group, that was not just a subgroup of women who happened to be black, or of black persons who happened to be women. Rather, "Black Women" defined a group for which being black and being woman were mutually informing, that was distinct as a group from Blacks, from Women, and that experienced a distinct form of discrimination.

The term 'intersectionality' has since been extended to identify many different instances of discrimination, disempowerment or marginalization that results from multiple, complex intersecting identities, for instance, marginalization that a Chicana lesbian or a Sikh immigrant might experience. (Some of these moves have also led to thinking of intersectionality as a way of identifying an individual's particular lived experience of complex, marginalized and sometimes conflicting identities.) Increasing specification of intersectional groups is helpful for recognizing particular kinds of discrimination and marginalization. However, it seems to raise what I have initially thought of as a fragmentation problem, meaning splintering of groups such as to undermine solidarity and communication across difference and thus weaken the

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bases for social and political action to effectively address discrimination. But it is also a metaphysical question about whether specification leads to fragmentation of groups such that relations between or among groups are hard to explain or even to a regress such that groups devolve into particularized individuals. This issue has come up in the field of social ontology.

There has been interesting work in the field of social ontology done on how to conceptualize intersectional categories. Do intersectional categories identify distinct properties that just happen to occur together in an individual (or in a set of individuals), or are they mutually determining or constituting of one another such that, for instance, "Black Woman" is a distinct property from "Black" and from "Woman"? Most intersectionality theorists argue for the latter mutual constitution thesis. But this can also mean a number of things. Jorba (2020) argues that categories should be seen as properties of individuals, rather than as modifying one another; that is, they are mutually constituting of a person, but do not necessarily form a distinct property ("Black Woman"). On Jorba's account, then it would seem that intersectionality doesn't identify groups at all, but only individuals.

Gasdaglis and Madva (2020) specifically raise the regress issue. They argue that if categories define distinct social kinds – such as Black Women – of increasing specification – such as Black Heterosexual Women, this leads to a regress. If there is no limit to specification, social kinds become more and more specific until there are no social kinds any more, but just unique individuals.[2] Gasdaglis and Madva then argue that intersectionality should be thought of not as a social category but as a regulative ideal in explanation.

The regulative ideal approach may have some merit for research methodology. And the notion of a person having a lived intersectional identity may be illuminating of both personal identity and lived experience. However, in this paper I want to focus on how intersectionality is metaphysical category, that it appropriately identifies some kinds of groups, and then consider whether it leads to a fragmentation of groups or to the regress problem.

Intersectionality and Ritchie's Social Ontology of Groups

Ritchie (2013) distinguishes two broad kinds of social groups, organized and feature social groups. A group is the realization of a structure; groups are not merely pluralities, fusions, aggregates, or sets, but are structures in which individual members occupy (functional) nodes. Organized groups such as teams or corporate entities have internally defined relations and functions among the members of the group; for example, the pitcher on a baseball team has a specific role and function in the structure of the game. Feature groups (that rely on apparent attribute sharing [Ritchie, 2015]) are externally structured; for example, the middle-class might be a feature group structured by economic features and relations that are external to the members and do not necessarily define member functions in relation to one another. Ritchie argues that organized groups are "structured wholes," while feature groups are "social kinds." Organized social groups, typically have some kind of collective intentionality, for example, a corporate board of directors to fulfill a fiduciary oversight role or a baseball team to play baseball with the aim of winning a league pennant or other championship, or to inspire loyalty among fans. Feature groups, on the other hand, may not be voluntarily chosen by members, do not require intentionality and role fulfillment among members, and are formed by apparently shared attributes as defined by social norms, categories, practices and so on (Ritchie 2015). Membership need not involve any cooperation or role fulfillment, and members may even personally disavow inclusion in a feature group (social kind).

Commenting on intersectional groups, Ritchie suggests that if oppression is a defining feature of social

[2] The regress problem is different from the overgeneration problem that some social group theorists have worried about, namely, that some definition of social group is too vague or too broad and thus overgenerates things that would count as groups. Effingham (2010) and Thomasson (2016) criticize a constitution view of groups, such as Epstein's, for this; Epstein (2019) rebuts and also argues that undergeneration is a more pressing problem.

groups then intersectionality should be taken seriously by a metaphysics of social groups (Ritchie 2020, 418, n.31). She suggests that intersectionality might require a more fine-grained way of specifying intersectional (feature) groups (Ritchie 2015, 319, n. 14). Groups themselves might be specified as having mutually constituted features such that the group Black Straight Women would be distinct from the group Black Straight Men, and each is distinct from the group Black Persons (Ritchie 2020, 418). The group Black Persons does not include being "Straight" as a "node" in its set of features.

Whether the group Black Straight Women includes as a "node" in the set of features simply being "Black" depends on how features are defined. If they are properties as suggested, for example by Jorba, then being "Black" could be a node since on Jorba's view mutual constitution applies to how otherwise distinct properties are manifested in individuals rather than groups. But, on a mutual constitution view of properties (features), the argument is that "Black" and "Woman" mutually constitute a new property "Black Woman" had by Black Women, and not shared by Black Men. One can see that this latter view raises the worry about regress identified by Gasdaglis and Madva, as intersectional groups could become more and more specified, each as utterly distinct from every other in virtue of its unique mutually constituted features. There would also be interesting issues to address about the constitution of individuals (having multiple properties, e.g., "Black," "Black Woman," and so on) and thus having multiple group memberships while the groups themselves are distinct and not members of one another (By itself, I'm not sure that's a problem; just noting that there is an account to be provided, which I won't have space for here.)

There would also be a question about how to account for similarity, which the mutual constitution thesis, if it requires absolute distinctness and particularity, would seem to rule out and further aggravate or be another dimension of the fragmentation and regress problems. I note these issues here and will return to them when I discuss Buchler. For the moment, I just point out that these issues are important to address since at least on the face of it, it seems that social groups can be similar in some respect(s) even when they are distinct and that that similarity may be significant to being able to form solidarity across distinct groups. Such solidarity is different from allyship, which does not seem to rely on similarity, or at least not in the same way or to the same degree.

Ritchie's acknowledgment of intersectionality appears to be predicated on oppression being a defining feature of intersectional groups. It is true that intersectionality arose out of the ways in which groups of people are oppressed or marginalized in society, and we may want to reserve the term to identify just those kinds of groups. At the same time, I think it is an open question whether intersectionality is a broader category, among which there are some groups that are oppressed and marginalized. As a broader category, it might include many plurally constituted groups (e.g., White Straight NY Upper-eastside Men), not all of whom are oppressed, and some of which may be dominant or privileged groups. But this is an aside that I will not pursue in this paper. I will stick with examples of intersectional groups that are more typically found in the literature.

I have some additional reservations about Ritchie's feature approach because in so far as features are static, then groups would be, too. Yet, it seems that even feature groups can be somewhat fluid in their constitution and boundaries. In addition, if I have understood Ritchie correctly, then groups themselves would seem to become quite splintered and adumbrate the regress problem. Thus, while Ritchie's general taxonomy of organized and feature groups makes some intuitive sense, and may be useful as way of carving up the terrain of social groups on a first pass, we will need another approach to avoid the regress problem.

Intersectionality and Epstein's Social Ontology of Groups

Epstein (2019) is critical of Ritchie's taxonomy, arguing that members of organized groups also have features

and thus that the distinction between organized and feature groups breaks down. I'm not sure that is a fatal criticism. It depends on what the taxonomy is meant to do. If it is meant to define mutually exclusive kinds of groups, then that might be a problem. But another alternative would be to say that all social groups are feature groups and that organized groups are a specialized subset of social groups. So, I'm not sure if a lot turns on this particular criticism.

Epstein also argues that the identity conditions for the two kinds of groups theorized by Ritchie are both too weak in one respect (ignoring, for instance, that at least for some groups, origin is essential) and too strong in another (for instance, groups that have their members essentially would be excluded on Ritchie's criterion of groups allowing for change of membership). Epstein is arguing that a more precise set of categories is needed and his approach would be able to address both these limitations.

Epstein's framework – what he calls a constitution framework – analyzes social groups in terms of four "profiles" (think of these as dimensions): construction, extra essentials, anchor and accident profiles. A construction profile gives the constitution, existence, persistence and identity conditions; the extra essentials profile gives the abilities, rights, responsibilities and norms of a group; an anchor profile explains why the construction conditions are what they are (e.g., created by law, social convention or agreement, and so on); and the accident profile can include a variety of properties (such as size, actual membership) and causal properties or conditions.

Epstein introduces a taxonomy of kinds of groups (although these four kinds are not necessarily exhaustive of all possible kinds, if I understand Epstein correctly):

> K1: people doing something together with a relevant collective intention at a time, e.g., a group of street musicians;
>
> K2: a "legislated" (rule governed and organized) group, e.g., a faculty committee;
>
> K3: a collection of people performing a functional role for some period of time, e.g., the bourgeoisie, a social class;
>
> K4: a collection of people having a property, e.g., middle-income people, adults; these are all Epstein's examples; Epstein calls these "discontinuous intensionally-individuated constitution-dominated" (DICD) group (Epstein 2019, 4906–4907).[3]

The construction profile identifies how groups come into and continue in existence, how they are constituted, and their identity conditions. K1 and K2 groups are constituted in part by structure and function, and roles played by members; sometimes diachronic conditions (e.g., a valid election) are constitutive. K3 groups are also defined by structure, but by systemic structures and functions that generate and sustain the group. K4 groups are constituted as a collection of people having a particular property (e.g., being "middle-income", or being an adult, which could be defined socially, legally and/or biologically).

An anchoring profile provides an explanation of why a group is constructed in the way that it is. Properties of a group like the faculty committee are anchored in virtue of agreements, institutional rules, and enactment of those. Social structures and functions create distinct social positions or niches that anchor the properties of groups such as social classes (K3 groups); practices and regularities anchor the properties of racial, sexual and gender groups (K4 groups). This aspect of the distinction between K3 and K4 groups seems murky to me as an argument could be made that properties of K4 groups are also anchored by larger social structures and functions that create roles, positions or niches defined by for instance, race, sex and gender.

[3] K4, DICD groups are ones where the group can persist even though no one (currently) exemplifies the property. Epstein uses the example of people with the top 1% of wealth. If for a period of time there were an equal economic system, then no one would instantiate that property, but Epstein suggests the group would still persist and be the same group when occupied by the wealthy 1% before and after the egalitarian period. This would seem to imply that groups can be abstract. I can see why Epstein would want to allow for possible discontinuity in the sense of null members, and for the possibility of a complete change of individual members. But, in the instance he describes, I am not sure what it means to say that the group persists if the very conditions that would constitute the existence of the group (unequal distribution of wealth in an economic system) do not exist.

An accident profile can include almost anything, causal factors, some functions of a group, size, who the particular members are at a given time, historical properties, the group's locations, and so on (Epstein 2019, 4926). Some properties might be "accidental" in so far as they are a function of interest or particular empirical conditions at a time. For example, during the COVID pandemic, a faculty committee may take on responsibilities that it wouldn't normally have in the interest of making decisions expeditiously.

By an "extra essentials profile" Epstein means that groups also have a range of powers, abilities, rights, responsibilities, norms that are not (although some may be) included in their construction profile. As an example of the latter, on Haslanger's account of women, a (negative) norm – oppression – is a condition for being a member of the group, women, and is thus included in the construction profile of that group (Haslanger 2000; cited by Epstein 2019, 4917). In contrast, the powers of a faculty committee would be part of an extra essentials profile. The conditions for constituting the faculty committee may not include all its powers and responsibilities, which could be changed, enhanced or diminished at different times or under varying conditions or institutional development.

Epstein suggests that K4 groups have no extra essentials (Epstein 2020, 4919); any powers, norms, abilities, and so on that they may have, if they do, would be included in the construction profile. Thus, the group Black Women might be normatively constituted, recall Crenshaw and Haslanger, in virtue of a negative norm, namely, experiencing a unique, intersectional oppression or discrimination, but they wouldn't have additional powers, rights, responsibilities, abilities in virtue of group membership. I don't see the logic of this claim, and it doesn't seem right to me, but exploring it further here would be a digression from the subject of this paper. So, I just tag it as a subject worth further examination.

While I have some questions about and criticisms of some of the details of Epstein's theory, I don't want to belabor those here, as they would really be the subject of another paper. As a conceptual framework, Epstein has articulated some important ways of understanding social groups as distinct kinds of things in the world with their own ontological status. I agree with his rejection of ontological individualism and its reductive implications for understanding the ontology of social groups. And I also appreciate Epstein's framework for making precise distinctions between both kinds of groups and particular groups. His framework, though, doesn't necessarily avoid the fragmentation and regress problem for K4, that is, intersectional groups, which he defines as feature or property sharing groups, as Ritchie did.

A different categorial framework would be helpful. I don't think that necessarily entails rejecting the work that Ritchie and Epstein have done (although some of it might be modified or refined). I want to consider a different general ontological framework that would allow for conceptualizing intersectional social groups without running into the fragmentation and regress problems. So, I turn now to the ordinal metaphysics of Justus Buchler, which I think provides a helpful reorientation for how to frame social groups, and specifically intersectional groups.

Intersectionality and Buchler's Ordinal Ontology

First an introductory framing of Buchler's general ontology. In Buchler's ordinal ontology whatever is is a *natural complex*. This is a generic term of identification: atoms, mountains, human beings, ecosystems, works of fiction, statues, social groups are all, at their most general level of being, natural complexes. Now most of the time we want to know something more specific about what a being – a natural complex – is. But, as a generic identifier, *natural complex* signifies that it's "complexity all the way down (and up)"; there are no ontological simples.

In addition to complexity, Buchler's ontology is committed to ontological parity, that is, that no complex is any more real or fundamental than any other. (This does *not* imply that there isn't causal, or many other kinds of priority.) Buchler articulates this by developing the notion of

ordinality, that is, that every complex is located in *orders*; any complex is as real as any other, but complexes are not all located in the same order(s). For example, a work of fiction is located in the order of human (typically, but not exclusively) written products while a mountain is located in an order of geological formations. Each complex is located in multiple orders – that is what it means to be complex. Thus, a fictional work is located, for example, in an order of detective fiction, and in an order of a reading group devoted to crime novels, and in an order of a class on detective fiction, and in an order of crime novels turned into screenplays; a mountain is located in a geological formation order, and in an order of an ecosystem, in an order of peaks climbed by mountaineers, in an order of political or national boundaries, and so on. Social groups are natural complexes and are ordinally located, in social, political, institutional, personal, interpersonal orders. Complexes have traits in virtue of their ordinal locations – thus a social group such as a faculty committee is located in the order of the institutional structure of a university and its membership defined by that order; at the same time, other traits of the committee may be due to how the committee is also located in each of its members and thus how their particular personalities and abilities contribute to the group functioning.

Buchler also introduces the terms prevalence and alescence to categorize that and how a complex is – thus, to now put in these terms what we previously articulated, a complex prevails in orders (has traits and excludes other traits in virtue of that prevalence). The term "alescence" is introduced to capture the being of change, variation, becoming, deterioration, combinatorial emergence and so on.

Alescence has four basic forms: a complex alesces (in an order[s]) when it is acquiring or losing traits in virtue of moving into or out of an order [*augmentative or spoliative alescence*, respectively], or as a deviating *of* or within an order [*vagrant alescence*], or by deviating *from* or forming a new complex and order [*coalescence*]). Deviation doesn't mean deviance or deviant, in the sense of abnormal or associated with truancy. It simply means variation or varying of/from. For example, the faculty committee that prevails in the order of a university institutional structure – suppose that committee is given a new charge, that would be the committee acquiring a new trait in virtue of a deviation in its ordinal location (*vagrant alescence)*. Or, suppose the committee were a sub-committee of a larger committee, but it were redefined to be its own standing committee, that would be both *spoliative* (losing trait of being sub-committee) and *augmentative* (acquiring trait of being standing committee) in virtue of ordinal relocation.

That is a lot of new, unfamiliar terminology, but we needed to introduce it to get to what I think will be helpful, namely, the category of *coalescence* for conceptualizing intersectionality and intersectional groups. Let's take the intersectional group Black Women. The argument has been that this is a distinct group from the group Black Persons and from the group Women, that it is not merely a subgroup of either group and it is not a mere additive collection of traits. How shall we understand this intersectional group? Buchler's category of *coalescence* is helpful here. Buchler defines *coalescence* as,

> In [...] *coalescence,* a complex arises from a junction or intersection [sic] or novel configuration of complexes: there is variation in the world without deviation from any prevalent complex in particular, and without any particular complex having to be augmented or despoiled (Buchler 1990, 57).

The group Black Women is an intersection of complexes, the traits "Black" and "Woman," to define a group of persons who are Black and who are also Women, who *qua* members of the group Black Women experience a particular discrimination and marginalization that neither Black Persons *qua* Black nor Women *qua* Women experience. The intersectional group is neither an addition to (augmentation of) one or the other group, Black Persons or Women, nor a subtraction from or subset of (spoliation of) either group. It does not disrupt the integrity, so to speak, of either other group (complex). As Buchler puts it,

> […] it adds to the configurations of the world without directly augmenting or despoiling any-

> thing in particular. If there is a deviation of any kind in a coalescence, it is collective deviation from complexes which retain their general character (Buchler 1990, 65).

The *coalescence*, the intersectional group Black Women has its own integrity, without detracting from other groups (such as Black Persons and Women). At the same time, in virtue of the trait, "Black", the group Black Women is related to the groups, Black Men and to the group Black Persons. By the same token, the group Black Women is also related to the groups Women and White Women, in virtue of the trait "Woman."

Figure 1. is an attempt to show the idea and how each group is both distinct from and not reducible to, but is also related to some other groups.

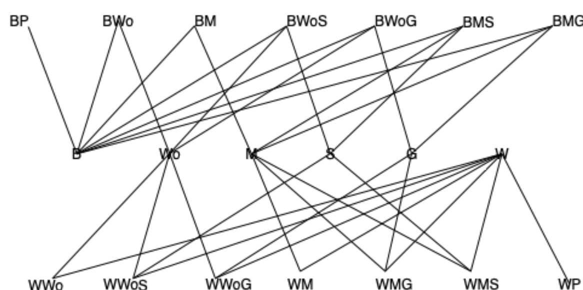

Figure 1. Intersectional groups (coalescences) are identified in the top and bottom rows of letters. The middle row of letters are the traits that intersect in various ways to generate distinct coalescences or intersectional groups. Abbreviations: B=Black, W=White, Wo=Woman, M=Man, G=Gay, S=Straight; BP=Black persons, BWo=Black Women, WWo=White Women, and so on. In this way of grouping, it looks like race is the dominant trait, but it need not be so. See Figure 2.

What trait and what group membership matters will depend on context (context is itself an order, in Buchlerian ordinal ontology). The intersectional trait and group membership can be the most salient – for example, as in the employment context (in the order of employment) that Crenshaw identified for Black Women. But there can be other contexts in which race or gender or sexual orientation might be the salient trait, and common cause made with one or the other group – for example, maybe in some context (order), being Black is the strongest identifier and most salient trait; in another context (order), being Gay is salient more than having one or another racial identity. Sexual orientation or some other trait, e.g., gender, or something else entirely could be the more prominent trait. See Figure 2.

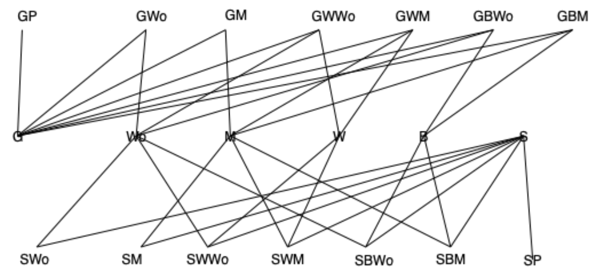

Figure 2. Intersectional groups (coalescences) are identified in the top and bottom rows of letters. The middle row of letters are the traits that intersect in various ways to generate distinct coalescences or intersectional groups. Abbreviations: B=Black, W=White, Wo=Woman, M=Man, G=Gay, S=Straight; SP=Straight Persons, SWo=Straight Women, SWWo=Straight White Women, and so on. In this way of grouping, it looks like sexual orientation is the dominant trait, but it need not be so. Contrast with Figure 1.

Among groups similar to one another in virtue of some trait, there are commensurate paths, so to speak, that forestall mere degeneration into a regress of particularity (and which could also be the basis for the possibility of solidarity and common purpose). This is because there is always a path to a different and/or more inclusive location, as both Figures 1 & 2 suggest. These figures also show that an intersectional group is not merely a subgroup of a larger group, but has its own unique constellation of traits and set of relations to multiple other groups. Black Women is not merely a subset of Black Persons, but its own unique set of traits. Some of the discrimination that Black Women experience does not derive solely from being Black, but from being Black *Women*, and similarly, does not derive solely from being Women, but from being *Black* Women. Therefore, the defining set of traits of the intersectional group Black Women is such that the intersectional group cannot be merely a subset of one of the other groups.

Buchler's approach may make things less tidy in so far as social groups, particularly what Ritchie calls feature groups, and what Epstein calls K4 groups, are not neat, self-contained, precise "containers." But, trading tidiness for complexity forestalls fragmentation and the regress to particularity whereby there are no groups left at all, or

whereby the theory is inadequate for giving an account of relations between similar groups. Conceptualizing an intersectional group as a coalescence means that greater specification of an intersectional group can't result in or be constituted as a single complex or individual, by definition. As already noted, paths and relations between and among groups helps to avoid being stuck in particularity.

Intersectionality: Similarity, Solidarity Rather than Fragmentation

I said earlier that on a mutual constitution view of properties (features), "Black" and "Woman" mutually constitute a new property "Black Woman" had by Black Women, and not by Black Men. I pointed out that this raises the worry, identified by Gasdaglis and Madva, that as intersectional groups become more and more specified, each as utterly distinct from every other in virtue of its unique mutually constituted features there is a regress in particularity to individuals. I also mentioned that there could be an issue with how to account for similarity, which the mutual constitution thesis if it requires absolute distinctness seems to rule out, or at least have difficulty accounting for. But social groups seem to be similar in some respect(s) even when they are distinct and that similarity may be significant to forming solidarity (distinct from allyship) across distinct groups.

On the ordinal ontology view, an intersectional group has its own mutually constituted integrity which distinguishes it from other intersectional groups. However, the intersectional group defining trait, e.g., "Black Woman," is complex and thus relationally constituted. That means that an aspect of "Black Woman" is, in respect to race, similar to other complexes that also exhibit that trait in that (racial) respect. Thus, in respect to race[4], there is an actual similarity between Black Persons, Black Women, Black Men, Black Straight Women, Black Straight Men, Black Gay Women and Black Gay Men. By the same token, in respect to sexual orientation there is an actual similarity between Gay White Women, Gay Black Women, Gay Black Men, Gay White Men and between Straight White Women, Straight Black Women, Straight Black Men, Straight White Men. Thus, because according to ordinal ontology every complex (noun) *is* complex (adjective), its integrity bears different relations to different other complexes in different ways, without undermining its own integrity. These paths of relatedness or locatedness in multiple orders means that difference is not absolute or fragmented off from other distinct "things" in a regress of particularity. Rather, one might on the Buchlerian approach worry about a regress of relatedness. But I don't think that is a problem, because relatedness is always *in a respect*, is *ordinal*, and thus, *that* relatedness does not go on indefinitely.[5]

Similarity may also be a basis for the possibility of solidarity. Interrelatedness in whatever the relevant or salient respect, does not diminish the distinctiveness of what the particular intersectional group experiences. The discrimination and marginalization experienced by Black Women may still be distinct from the discrimination or marginalization experienced by Black Gay Men, even if each *also* in virtue of the respect in which they are similar, i.e., being "Black," have other similar experiences of discrimination or marginalization. I'm not saying that similarity means shared, partaken in together, or exactly the same, but similarity is at least a start as a basis for the possibility of solidarity. To use a term that I introduced in a previous paper on intersectionality and that also borrows from Buchler, similarity is a kind of *experiential parallelism* (Wallace 2020). Parallelism builds in the implicit recognition that there is also difference and thus that communication recognizes and is across difference.

In conclusion, then I have explored a problem in understanding intersectionality as a metaphysical category: increasing specification of intersectional groups via mutual constitution of intersectional traits leads to a potential problem fragmentation and a regress problem that could end in individuals, eliminate groups altogeth-

[4] In Buchlerian language, one could also say, "in the order of race."

[5] There might be *other* relations in some other respect that are actualized.

er, or undermine the bases for solidarity. I introduced Buchler's ordinal ontology to reframe the understanding of intersectional categories and groups and to avoid the regress and fragmentation problem. Buchler's category of *coalescence* nicely captures at a general ontological level what intersectional groups are and ordinality shows how distinct groups retain their integrity and specificity, while at the same time being related to other distinct and superordinate groups, and thus avoiding the regress problem. I suggest that this framework would provide a metaphysical basis for conceptualizing the possibility of solidarity and communication across difference.

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PRAGMATISM, EXPERIENCE AND JUDGMENT

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ABSTRACT: John Ryder (2020) has recently provided an outline of a pragmatist account of experience and judgment as they are manifested in art and aesthetics, practice and politics, and the scientific enterprise. The main thrust of this project can be seen as an attempt to reduce the contrast modern philosophers have instituted between these human practices, their issue and their starting points, and realign them by drawing from broad notions of experience, judgment and inquiry. While this project is perfectly pragmatist in spirit, it also appears conflicted between two key lines of argument, resulting, in some cases, in conclusions that many pragmatists are inclined to avoid. Drawing from Charles S. Peirce's views of experience, semiotics, and judgment, and Dewey's views of politics and democracy, I attempt to shed further light on how these distinctions could be made without placing central pragmatist contentions in jeopardy.

Keywords: pragmatism, judgment, experience, semiotics, aesthetics

Introduction

Pragmatists have long resisted received philosophical dichotomies between the practical and the theoretical, ethics and science, politics and inquiry, mind and body, objectivity and interpretation, and aesthetic and everyday experience. Mere resistance is, however, futile: as these dichotomies are deeply entrenched in contemporary philosophical views and our views of the world at large, the onus lies with the pragmatists to show how and why these views are mistaken, and how distinctions made in terms of such dichotomies may nevertheless find their place in their philosophical vision. John Ryder's recent book, *Knowledge, Art, and Power: An Outline of a Theory of Experience* (2020), provides an excellent opportunity to reflect on how these dichotomies may be overcome. Ryder provides both an account of experience inspired by his reading of John Dewey and an account of judgment, drawn largely from Justus Buchler's work. This combination serves as a source of rich reflections on how experience and judgment are manifested in three central human practices: arts, politics, and science. The thrust of Ryder's project could be encapsulated as the attempt to reduce the contrasts modern philosophers have instituted among these practices, their issue and their starting points, and realign them by drawing from broad notions of experience, judgment and inquiry.

Ryder's discussion advances by triadic distinctions. The first is between the aesthetic, political, and cognitive dimensions that characterize experience, or, perhaps a bit more precisely, are such characters that any experience may acquire. What exactly constitutes these dimensions is largely left for the reader's imagination. However, these dimensions become more tangible in light of the second, if somewhat peculiar division between exhibitive, active, and assertive judgments drawn from Buchler; each type of judgment is predominantly associated with a dimension of experience. Judgment, Ryder maintains, "is the mutually constitutive process that constitutes an individual's experience in so far as it issues in products" (Ryder 2020, 70). Exhibitive judgments "show" or "reveal" something to us, as exemplified by works of art, manifesting the aesthetic dimension of experience. Active judgments are actions that select from alternatives and generate products; these judgments Ryder connects with power and the political dimension of experience. Finally, assertive judgments make claims with propositional content, and are associated with science and the cognitive dimension of experience. Ryder's discussions focus on examples drawn from the three human enterprises – art, politics, and science – which exemplify, manifest or are closely connected with these types of judgments and dimensions of experience. Each of these enterprises, judgments and dimensions are further associated with a distinctive form of "query" or methodical exploration. Exhibitive query attempts to "make a point in some methodic way", active query "is the sustained and deliberative effort to produce an end in action", and, finally, inquiry "involves the drawing of rational inferences, experimentation, the creation of theories and hypotheses, and the gathering of empirical data in relation to a specific topic or question" (ibid., 108).

A central aspiration of Ryder's outline is to de-emphasize the inflated (by modern philosophy) role of the cognitive dimension of experience and the correlated

type of judgment, assertive judgment, in order to highlight the relevance (including cognitive relevance) and role of art and politics. This effort is, it seems to me, utterly pragmatist in spirit. However, it also leads to numerous difficulties in tracking both the differences and the interconnections of these dimensions of experience, judgments and practices. The paramount reason for these difficulties is wavering between two lines that the main argument against contrast might take – enticing as they both are. Sometimes the dimensions of experience are connected with the relevant *practices* (art, politics, science); in each, all "dimensions" and judgments are involved as, for example, assertive judgments are made in politics and in art. Along these lines, Ryder argues that our cognitive engagement with the world should not be identified solely with assertive judgment (ibid., 71), but that knowledge is "available" in exhibitive and active judgment (ibid., 89) and that the cognitive dimension of experience is also present in politics and in works of art (ibid., 170). But when the dimensions of experience are identified by the related type of *judgment*, the distinctions become more restrictive. Ryder considers it a mistake to take all experience to involve a cognitive dimension. The forms of query typical of arts and politics do not aspire to produce knowledge that is at all inferential and argumentative. It is even proposed (albeit rather briefly) that truth comes in three shapes: "correspondence with independent facts, working, and deep meaning" (ibid., 105). This suggests that exhibitive and active judgments are "true" in a sense that is distinct from the truth of assertive judgments (cf. Ryder 2013, 156–159).

The blurring of these distinctions is intentional. It is motivated by the goal of deflating the overblown contrast between these human projects and practices, the associated dimensions of experience and forms of "query". Indeed, objections to the details of such a broad outline, as the account is subtitled, might appear purely verbal, were it not for the fact that the melding of these various facets of judgments and experience has consequences that one easily finds objectionable. Some of these consequences – the ones I will largely focus on here – are made explicit in the outline itself. To begin with, resisting the omnipresence of the cognitive dimension of experience, Ryder argues against Dewey's contention that all conscious experience is "full of inference" (Ryder 2020, 84, 87, 108). This is related to another view of Dewey's that Ryder rejects, the notion that the "manipulative dimension of experience", that of action and power, is characterized by inquiry and inference (ibid., 84). To buttress this point, Ryder provides the example of "a driver or a chauffeur explor[ing] the best way to reach point B from point A" as an example of a query undertaken in the "active mode" that is fully separated from scientific inquiry (ibid., 75). The resulting view appears decidedly anti-pragmatist. For what is pragmatism if not the view that theoretical judgments are practical, as is the judgment over the best route from one point to another? Finally, the distinction between query in the active mode, reflected in the political and in power, and inference and argument typical of scientific inquiry, results in Ryder's view of politics, including democratic politics, as the interplay and combination of various interests, those of the individual and of the community (e.g., Ryder 2020, 173–174). Such a view of politics and of democracy is far from outrageous, of course, but it seems equally far from commensurate with the promise of pragmatism as a political philosophy. That promise entails that our actions are connected to judgments that are the issue of science in such a way that inquiry may provide us with a revised, tested and articulated view of what we are to do and, indeed, of what we *should* be interested in.

These consequences are avoidable, in my view. Indeed, they should be avoided, in order to retain a clearer picture of the cognitive, practical, political, and the aesthetic, their connections with the human practices of arts, politics and science, and the proper role of various types of judgments in those practices. When contrast is diminished, brightness must sometimes be increased; otherwise, important detail is lost. Attempting to shed light on how these distinctions could operate in a pragmatist vision, it is my task to provide a slightly more refined outline, drawing from Charles S.

Peirce's views of experience, semiotics, and judgment, and Dewey's views of politics and democracy, as I have developed them in my previous work.[1] In the interest of brevity, the next section provides the backbones of this outline in a condensed and admittedly brief format. The following sections will then apply these ideas regarding the domains of art and aesthetics, and practice and politics, respectively, including their relations with the cognitive and the scientific enterprise. They will, I hope, prove the initial exercise worthwhile.

Experience, interpretation, and judgment

Peirce distinguished between emotional, energetic, and logical interpretants. They are feelings, actions, and thoughts, respectively – reactions, or perhaps better, responses that may be elicited in us when faced with signs. Despite the "emotional" label, feeling is to be understood broadly as qualities of feeling, encompassing much or all of that which Dewey called the qualities of experience. Logical interpretants include questions, problems, creative ideas, and fancies, but also judgments, such thoughts that we assent to. The distinction between the three types of interpretants is not Peirce's phaneroscopic (phenomenological) nor his metaphysical account of the categories of experience, which I will not discuss here. One difference between the categories and these interpretants, arduous to overstate, is that interpretation occurs against some purpose or end. Such ends we may again divide into three broad types. Feelings, actions and thoughts are often sought for their own sake: we go to see a film to experience the feelings and emotions it conveys, and we engage in fantasy in our thinking.[2] Responses of all kinds may serve our various practical ends. Finally, interpretants may be elicited for cognitive ends, including truth.

Interpretants may be more or less adequate to the purpose of interpretation. Whether they are depends, in addition to the purpose, on the object of the sign interpreted. An action or a thought may achieve the end sought for, or fall short of doing so. My running down the stairs of the building is an energetic interpretant actually formed that interprets the smoke as a sign of fire. It fails its purpose of saving my life, if the staircase is already engulfed in flames. My judgment, "There's a fire", elicited for the cognitive purpose of truth, interprets the going of the fire alarm as a sign of fire. If there is no fire, it fails its purpose.[3] A feeling, too, can be more or less adequate as an interpretive response. Feelings of embarrassment upon listening to the finale of Sibelius's second symphony mistake its triumphant progression for pretentiousness in achievement. The *type* of adequacy of each type of interpretant is different. Thoughts may be formed for practical ends, such as when one calculates when one needs to go to bed to catch enough sleep before the next morning's engagements; in the end, however, it is only the action itself that may achieve the purpose. Many of the actions of scientists in their laboratories are designed to serve cognitive ends. Nevertheless, it is only thoughts that can be true or false. While feelings may serve various practical and cognitive ends (a point that will be presently discussed in more detail), the adequacy of emotional interpretants is a kind of fittingness that does not immediately serve any such purpose.

Within the realm of thought, a distinction can be drawn between three types of judgments: aesthetic, practical, and theoretical. The grounds of this distinction

[1] I will build upon my earlier work on feelings, emotional interpretants and their connection to the development of purposes and ethical inquiry (Rydenfelt 2015a; 2017), aesthetic, practical and theoretical judgments (Rydenfelt 2019a), the scientific method (Rydenfelt 2021a; 2015b) and democracy as social inquiry (Rydenfelt 2019b; 2019c; 2021b). Much of this work is deeply indebted to T. L. Short's (2007; 2000) rearticulation and refinement of Peirce's central notions, further developed and discussed especially in Rydenfelt (2015a; 2017; 2019b).

[2] To be more specific, we often take delight in engaging in such interpretation that is itself interpreted in a feeling.

[3] The "error" in these two cases is different. In the first, my running, the actually formed interpretant – in Peirce's terms, the dynamical interpretant – is not a *final* interpretant, "the interpretant ideally adequate to the purpose for which the sign is being interpreted" (Short 2007, 190). In the second, the dynamical interpretant that is the judgment takes the sign to be a sign that it is not (cf. Short 2007, 188–189). The dynamical interpretant fails to capture the immediate interpretant of the sign, the range of possible interpretations determined by its relation to its object. In doing so, it also falls short of the final interpretant.

is the role these judgments have in deliberative action. While theoretical judgments are typically expressible in the indicative mood, Peirce maintained that their meaning resides in practical maxims expressible as a conditional sentence concluding with an imperative. "If the glass is to be scratched, use a diamond" is a practical maxim enforced (among others) by the theoretical judgment, "Diamonds are hard". This is due to the pragmatist contention that a theoretical judgment, when assented to, enforces a habit of action: in Peirce's terms, the "ultimate" logical interpretants are habits. For this reason, we may test and revise those judgments in practice. This process, in its organized, deliberate form, is scientific experimentation.[4] By contrast, aesthetic judgments do not recommend courses of action based on ends already adopted. They occupy a different role in deliberative action. At least some of these judgments – in particular those that concern what is desirable, admirable, or undesirable or deplorable – provide deliberative actions with purposes.

Perception is a source for judgments. But it is not the only one. We are taught that the earth is round; before a concert, our enlightened companions may convince us that the finale of Sibelius's second symphony is triumphant in hesitant anticipation. In perception, however, we are directly acquainted or confronted with the subject-matters of our judgments. The three types of responses are all present: feelings are elicited, countering the object produces an effort of interpretation, and a perceptual judgment is produced.[5] While perceptual judgments are not infallible, they are imposed on us, and can only be criticized by further, subsequent judgments. Such judgments are informed by what we have learned: already aware of how light refracts, we will not mistake the stick in water for bent. *Aesthetic* judgments, when perceptual in this fashion, are the interpretations, in thought, of qualities of feeling, of which an exhaustive list can hardly be provided – in particular, qualities that we may describe as irritating, dull, elevating, fascinating, cheerful, sad, admirable, repugnant, and so on.[6]

The account of feelings as interpretants that may be more or less appropriate as responses to signs, depending on the sign's object, opens up the possibility of truth and falsity of aesthetic judgments. Such judgments, interpreting these feelings further in thought, may be more or less adequate to their subject-matter. Peirce proposed that there is such a thing as normative science, an inquiry into what is right and what is wrong. He divided this inquiry into three branches: esthetics, ethics and logic. Esthetics, in Peirce's vision, is the study of "objects considered simply in their presentation" (Peirce 1903a, 143).[7] Some of our aesthetic judgments suggest novel purposes: they pertain to what is admirable without reference to the ends we already have. For this reason, esthetics can inform ethics, the science of the review of the means and ends of deliberate conduct, by providing potential purposes and ideals of such conduct. Logic is the normative science of deliberate thought, or reasoning; truth is one (if not the only) end against which this science reviews reasoning and inference.

[4] This is not the only conception of truth as the aim of revising and fixing belief available. I will return to this issue in section 4 below.

[5] For our purposes here, it suffices to consider the perceptual judgment as an interpretant of the object ("itself") as perceived. This, however, is not entirely faithful to Peirce's rich account of perception and perceptual judgment that developed gradually along with his other semiotic advances (Bergman 2007). In Peirce's view, the perceptual judgment is an interpretation of the *percept*, something that appears to us or we are faced with in perception. The judgment, in its turn, is an indexical sign of the percept. This refinement, however, invites the question of the relation between the percept and object.

[6] Aesthetic judgments, when perceptual in this fashion, could be understood as a particular class of observations. Alternatively, we may wish to reserve the word "observation" for *theoretical* perceptual judgments.

[7] Despite its centrality to Peirce's normative sciences, the role and scope of esthetics remains underdeveloped in his writings. Peirce advanced the view that there is no pure esthetic goodness and badness but innumerable varieties of esthetic quality: he was, as he wrote, "seriously inclined to doubt there being any distinction of pure esthetic betterness and worseness" (Peirce 1903b, 202). This appears to be for the reason that such assessment of esthetic qualities would require the introduction of an aim or end. However, esthetics is the line of inquiry that may provide us with a notion of what has the quality of being admirable in itself, suggesting an ultimate aim of conduct. Whether such an aim can indeed be adopted is a question that falls within the scope of ethics. Peirce's realism in aesthetics is, obviously, not something that all pragmatists are prepared to accept (for a discussion of various alternatives, see Kraut *forthcoming*). However, it is not presupposed by the account of the aesthetic "dimension" of experience and judgment presently explored.

Art and the aesthetic dimension of experience

In Ryder's view, experience has an aesthetic dimension. We are now, I think, better positioned to account for that dimension. Feelings, as we have seen, can serve various purposes, including practical and cognitive ones. We may resist identifying the aesthetic dimension with feelings. Instead, we may consider the various practices that build up this dimension, and their connection to qualities of feeling. We engage with signs in order to elicit qualities of feeling for their own sake. We engage in practices where it is our aim to produce signs that embody and accentuate such qualities of feeling by eliciting them in interpretation. Such qualities of feeling are interpreted in thought by way of actions and aesthetic judgments. Aside from their role in these practices, aesthetic judgments enable us to deploy qualities of feeling for various practical and cognitive ends. Moreover, they permit the articulation, revision and criticism of our feeling-laden responses. All of this belongs to the aesthetic "dimension" of experience and judgment.

Art, we are told, resists definition. None will be attempted here. However, artistic processes often, if not always, aim at producing a work or process that embodies certain qualities of feeling.[8] Ryder provides a helpful account of the aim of an artistic practice as productive of what he calls "exhibitive judgments", such judgments that organize material so as to show something about the world (Ryder 2020, 72). Moreover, he notes that such judgments are connected with the qualities of unity, harmony, and dissonance (ibid., 72, 78). However, focusing on the *products* of artistic practice, identified with the relevant type of "judgment", obscures the manifold role of *interpretation* in that practice. This is the reason, it seems, why Ryder maintains that the artistic process is not one of inference and reasoning, but a form of "query" distinct from the cognitive mode (e.g., Ryder 2020, 87). But it seems abundantly clear that artistic practice involves all kinds of judgments and inference.

Consider a dancer who lifts her arm. A feeling ensues. That feeling is interpreted in action by the next movement. The aim of the course of action is to produce, or perform, a work of art that embodies certain qualities. In the span of the rehearsals, the process is guided by judgments. Some of these judgments are theoretical and practical. (The dancer hits her hand: "Keep farther from the wall there!".) Some of them are aesthetic judgments. The feelings resulting from the action are interpreted in thoughts. ("This is exciting but irritating!") Once a pattern of action – a choreography, or its interpretation in a context – has been decided upon, actions follow one another closely, often without the mediation of judgments. By way of repetition and reiteration, the sequence of actions may become a routine, losing the interposition of feelings and judgments, while retaining its general aim. This artistic practice is laden with inference and reasoning; it distinguishes itself from our other practical and cognitive endeavours by its aim rather than by a lack of judgments and inferences.

Engagement with, or the consumption of, works of art is similarly laden with judgments. We often engage with art to experience the feelings they convey. It is likely for this reason that we think of art as being something for its own sake. However, these practices also involve aesthetic judgments that are deployed to discuss, review, criticize, and refine such responses. These judgments are often informed by theoretical judgments that help us to identify novel aspects and features of works of art. Aesthetic judgments apprise our views of art and artists that go beyond the purely aesthetic assessment of them. We may evaluate artists and their works with respect to different aesthetically assessable aims of action presupposed or expected.

Aesthetic judgments may also serve a variety of practical ends, and their deployment is not limited to practices that we conventionally consider artistic. Perhaps one's purpose is to appear attractive on a date, or come across as compelling in a business meeting. One's image in the

[8] This view is reflected in Peirce's account of the esthetic "goodness" of objects: "In the light of the doctrine of categories I should say that an object, to be esthetically good, must have a multitude of parts so related to one another as to impart a positive simple immediate quality to their totality; and whatever does this is, in so far, esthetically good, no matter what the particular quality of the total may be" (Peirce 1903b, 201).

mirror is interpreted in feeling, leading to judgments concerning the qualities of one's appearance, further interpreted in subsequent actions – changing garments, applying makeup, and so on – in light of the ends pursued. (It can be debated whether or not dressing up should be considered art, and whether that would require the removal of the presence of the kind of ulterior practical ends that these examples involve.) Finally, aesthetic judgments may serve cognitive purposes. When deploying such judgments in conversation and criticism of art, it is often our aim to find out the true aesthetic quality of artistic works. This amounts to an aesthetic inquiry, one that we may further refine and that may go on to inform and influence our feeling-laden responses themselves.

In this way, the artistic process and our engagement with art are at once more and less "cognitive" than in Ryder's picture. If we consider the practices of producing art as a separate form of "query", as Ryder does, that query is shot through with judgments and inferences. However, from this fact it does not follow that producing art or engaging with it need to have particularly cognitive aims. (Conversely, the pursuit of truth may be rather oblivious to aesthetic aspirations; we unfortunately seldom have the opportunity to read scientific articles just for the sake of the feelings that they elicit.) The aesthetic judgments formed as part of those practices enable aesthetic inquiry in the form of revision and reflective self-control of such judgments. Moreover, aesthetic judgments may inform other branches of science, including ethical inquiry, as in Peirce's view, by providing a view of what is admirable without any ulterior ends. However, aesthetic inquiry is by no means limited to this question but retains a broad variety of qualities of feeling in its scope.

The practical and the political

In Ryder's outline, the political dimension of experience is identified with action and manipulation of our environment, as well as with problem-solving, all connected with the notion of power. Broadly speaking, this accords nicely with a Deweyan pragmatist vision. However, again, Ryder's outline appears conflicted between two alternative ways of making these connections more specific. According to the first, power and the exercise of power is at "the heart of the cognitive process", and ideas, inquiry and knowledge are understood "as elements not so much in describing the world as in solving the problems that our engagement with it engenders" (Ryder 2020, 197). Truth and knowledge are integral to the pursuit of power. By contrast, according to the second alternative, it is active judgments that are identified with such a pursuit, a query that produces a kind of knowledge that is "not a matter of propositions or beliefs, it is not expressed in propositions, and it is not acquired through propositions or beliefs" (ibid., 198).[9] The query is not a cognitive pursuit, or is one of a particular kind, separated from inquiry and science that appear to have little bearing on it. Ryder maintains that knowledge is power – but in which way?

The answer, again, might be both. But the problem remains, for neither alternative seems particularly attractive. The first veers dangerously close to the crude interpretation of pragmatism as the view that seeking truth and knowledge is the quest for whatever it is that helps us to achieve our practical ends or serves our interests. Applied in the sphere of the "political", arguments of this kind have given credibility to the even more questionable view that all claims to truth are, at bottom, claims to power, and the notion of truth indicates little more than power over opinion. The second alternative, by contrast, provides us with a view of power and manipulation as a project quite distinct from the pursuit of truth and knowledge involved in scientific

[9] As examples of such knowledge, Ryder (2020, 198) presents cases of what we might call "know-how", such as being able to swim, or to play an instrument. Such cases involve habits that are not easily expressible in terms of theoretical judgments. However, this should not be counted as a counter-example to Peirce's pragmatist contention that beliefs are habits of action; it was never implied that the converse holds, as not all habits of action are beliefs. (The beating of a heart is such a habit.) Moreover, such habits (or routines) develop in practices of rehearsal that are, contrary to Ryder's claim, informed by theoretical and aesthetic judgments, such as the dancer's artistic practice.

inquiry. Such a view, however, is an uneasy fit with the pragmatist contention that there is an intimate connection between practice and inquiry, practical maxims and theoretical judgments, belief and action.

A Peircean view of judgments as interpretants provides a way out of this conundrum. Firstly, it provides us with a distinction between the *type* of judgment and the *aim* of interpretation. Theoretical judgments and practical maxims are elicited in us for both cognitive purposes and various practical ends of other sorts. Many judgments are formed without any particularly cognitive ends, while some are. Accordingly, the pursuit of truth and other cognitive ends is not subsumed under the quest for influence or power, while acknowledging the fact that not all problem-solving counts as inquiry, if by inquiry we mean the seeking of truth.[10] Secondly, the Peircean view yields a compelling view of how truth and knowledge are connected to our practical pursuits, and belief to action, in terms of the central pragmatist contention that theoretical judgments find their meaning in practical maxims. It is in this way that scientific inquiry, revising our beliefs with the aim of truth, can inform us concerning what to do.

In Ryder's view, the practical is connected with the political, including the interaction of the individual and community in the pursuit of different interests, as well as public and state power and authority. Ryder identifies democracy with the pursuit of common interests, or "interests in common", as opposed to pursuing interests "at each other's expense" (Ryder 2020, 173). Perceptively, Ryder argues that the pragmatist view of democracy is to be distinguished from consensus-oriented views of deliberative democracy (ibid., 182).[11] However, the view of democracy offered downplays the potential of pragmatism as a social and political philosophy. As opposed to the attempt to figure out how common interests could be pursued, or how we might reach a "deliberative" consensus over what those interests are, pragmatists have an alternative vision to offer: that of a scientific pursuit, an inquiry that strives to provide us with a revised, tested and articulated view of what we are to do. From the pragmatist perspective, democracy could be viewed as an experimental process of revision of social and societal policies viewed as hypotheses put into social practice along the lines of what Dewey called *social inquiry*. Such inquiry is not just the search for efficacy in reaching antecedent ends, or the revision of our *theoretical* judgments that, via practical maxims, inform us how to reach the ends that we already have as a public or as individuals. Experimental revision extends to those ends themselves, linking social inquiry with Peirce's notion of normative science – including the role of aesthetic judgments in such inquiry.

Ryder distinguishes different societal arrangements based on whose interests those arrangements (are expected to) advance. The pragmatist idea of social inquiry provides us with another, more fine-grained notion of the differences between the shapes and forms that a society and its public may take. It was previously noted that the fact that theoretical judgments can be spelled out as practical maxims enables the revision of such judgments as hypotheses tested and experimented on based on their consequences in practice. However, that we *should* revise, test and experiment, in this fashion, in order to discover the truth, is by no means evident. Rather, the notion of such experimentation has developed only gradually in the course of modern science, and still continues to develop in parallel with its advances. At present, the scientific method informs, even covers, many of our individual and shared enterprises. However, this is not the case with all social and societal issues and political arrangements, where the notion of social inquiry is not yet sufficiently articulated. Accordingly, the differences between various political arrangements can be put in terms not only of interests but of differing visions of how those interests, or pur-

[10] Peirce's view also steers clear of the intellectualist assumption that actions always emerge from thoughts and thinking. Energetic interpretants, in Peirce's account, do not always flow from logical interpretants. In many cases the action interprets signs directly and without reflection, as in Peirce's example of a soldier trained to follow a military command (Short 2007, 204).

[11] I have argued for a similar distinction at length elsewhere (Rydenfelt 2019b; 2019c; 2021b).

poses, are revised. The basis of a society may be the realization, by individuals, that cooperation and collaboration is conducive to the attainment of their particular interests. Alternatively, we may attempt to align our views – our purposes and ends, in particular – to conform with the dictates of an authority, as in many totalitarian regimes and theocracies. In other societies, we expect a free, public debate to yield a rational consensus that secures acceptability and epistemic validity of the resulting policies. The notion of democracy as a kind of social inquiry into policy differs from each of these alternatives: it is the experimental revision of our social and societal arrangements in light of the issues we face as individuals, groups, and societies.

Conclusion

Another outline, it could fairly be countered. But we are in need of one – or several. Although Peirce's writings include extensive discussions on art, politics and normative science, his central concern was with the scientific project, and he offered no extended political philosophy or a full-blown account of aesthetics. Dewey's vision is protractedly scattered over his verbose corpus. John Ryder has done pragmatists a great favor by providing an encompassing outline of various dimensions within experience, judgment, inquiry, and so on. As I hope to have shown, some central pieces of this overall pragmatist view may still be pulled apart in order to piece them back together in a productive fashion.[12]

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THE THINGS IN HEAVEN AND EARTH: A THEORY OF EVERYTHING?

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ABSTRACT: In this paper, I analyze John Ryder's account of pragmatic naturalism explicated in his 2013 book *The Things in Heaven and Earth.* In the introduction I look at Ryder's assertion that "nature is all that exists, and everything that exists is natural," and unpack his pluralistic monism, with his understanding of the relationality of all that exists. I then consider Ryder's account of artificial dualism and the limited use of deductive proofs in philosophy. Ryder's pragmatic naturalism accepts that both the material and non-material exist and I look playfully at how he might account for Harry Potter, God, and the fairies. In what ways do these non-material things exist? Pragmatic naturalism also explores social and political relationships. In this, Ryder follows Dewey in seeing democracy as a way – while perhaps not the best and clearly not a perfect system – to provide well for the development of citizens. Ryder redefined democracy as something more than a way of making political decisions and borrows Dewey's notion of thick democracy. I conclude that Ryder has provided a coherent and compelling version of pragmatic naturalism.

Keywords: naturalism, pragmatism, democracy, Dewey, nature, relational ontology, thick democracy, natural religion, God and pragmatism

Introduction

In his important 2013 monograph, *The Things in Heaven and Earth: An Essay in Pragmatic Naturalism*, John Ryder offers an expansive philosophy that seeks to make an account of everything. The type of pragmatic naturalism Ryder advances is a large piece of the puzzle that characterizes his impressive body of work. Building on the work of Buchler, Dewey and Santayana, among others, Ryder lays before his reader a philosophy so broad in its implications that it accounts for everything in human experience. In other words, all that is known to human being (Ryder's preferred way to speak of humanity without either definite or indefinite article) can be explained by his creative explication of pragmatic naturalism. In saying so I do not wish to imply that Ryder gives us a monism into which everything must be squeezed regardless of whether it is a good fit or not; nor is the type of monism that works simply by excluding that which does not sit well with the theory. Ryder's monism is itself diverse (what James called a "pluralistic monism") (James 1987, 492); that is, his explanatory framework allows for every conceivable experience and every human narrative and accounts for being, knowledge and social experience. As such, Ryder's philosophical project is not so much a philosophical system, but rather "a general perspective or frame of mind" (Ryder 2013, 41). In broad brush strokes, Ryder's "naturalism" gives an account of ontology, epistemology, aesthetics, and ethics (though the latter is undeveloped) while "pragmatism" accounts for human relationships (social and political, and perhaps ethical) in a form of Deweyan Democracy. How well does Ryder succeed in providing a theory of everything?

His philosophy begins with a working assumption – acknowledging we do not have the Cartesian possibility of beginning at the beginning – that "nature is broadly and richly conceived that there is no philosophical need to posit anything outside nature" (Ryder 2013, 37). Nature is all there is, and everything that exists is natural; "nature is 'whatever there is'" (ibid., 40). He suggests:

> [N]ature consists, among other sorts of things, of material objects, time, mathematical entities, fictional characters, histories, ethical principles, mind, consciousness, mental events of all kinds, illusions, delusions, natural laws, logic, language, science, art, selves, processes, God and gods, meanings, purposes, individuals, societies, institutions, relations, particulars, universals, atomic particles, ecosystems, life, death, actualities, possibilities, sadness, and joy (Ryder 2013, 141).

For Ryder, there is no need to posit the supernatural, or the unnatural. That this challenges a traditional theistic worldview – where God is conceived as a supernatural being and creator of the natural universe – is clear; though Ryder's all-encompassing view makes room for a modified form of theism, which I consider below. Even so, this understanding of nature does not force Ryder into a materialistic reductivism. He is quite clear that it is unnecessary and unhelpful to reduce nature to that which can be studied by the natural sciences. He states, "Pragmatic naturalism is not reductively materialistic"

(ibid., 38). If nature is all that exists, then nature includes those non-material aspects of human being such as consciousness, thought, feeling, and imagination. Further:

> [T]here is no good reason to insist that only material objects and processes exist, and that anything else in our experience – for example, such phenomena as consciousness – must be explained in terms of material objects and their processes (Ryder 2013, 21).

If nature is "anything at all" then nature includes that which is material and that which is non-material, that which is actual as well as that which is possible, and that which is general as well as that which is particular (ibid., 33). What is clear is that Ryder's non-reductive view of nature requires modes of inquiry other than that of the natural sciences. He says:

> Science, to use a pragmatic metaphor, is one tool in the pursuit of knowledge. It is a critically important tool, but it is not the only one, nor is it, in all respects and situations the most important, valuable, or useful one. Not all aspects of nature are amenable to the methods of science. Some require the poet, the composer, the painter, or the philosopher (Ryder 2013, 39).

Naturalism, then, ought to embrace the social sciences, humanities and fine arts as well as the natural sciences.

Further, "anything at all" exists relationally rather than atomistically. This again cuts across much thinking which insists that to understand something – to get to that thing's essence – we must reduce the thing to its constituent parts. To understand the human body is to reduce it to cells; to understand a table is to look to the tiniest of particles; such that the body is nothing but cells and cell division, and the table nothing but atoms. Such was Dawkins mistake in *The Selfish Gene,* and Margaret Thatcher's assertion that "there is no such thing as society." To uncover the smallest constituent is not to understand the complex whole.

Ryder is not, then, a fan of philosophical reductionism, but wants to hold all aspects of human experience equally, with no ontological priority.

> [A] relational ontology suggests there is no good reason – in fact, it is meaningless – to hold that some complexes or kind of complexes are more real than others. Similarly, there is no good reason to assert that some identifying traits of human being are "really" something else: The menmental really the physical, or the ethical really the behavioral, or the behavioral really the neurochemical (Ryder 2013, 70).

Further, "We need […] conceptual categories that allow us to demonstrate that complexes are no less real than their constituents, and constituents no less real than the complexes they constitute" (ibid., 75).

As an example, Ryder does not reduce the human person to either mind or body, but to accept the person as complex constituted by its traits. Some of those traits the person shares with other animals but some are distinctive to the person: chiefly cumulative experience and judgement. He concludes, "[P]ersons understood relationally are in full possession of all the traits they exhibit or exercise" (Ryder 2013, 73). And, "The person is what he is by virtue of his relations, or to put it another way, a person's relations constitute his being" (ibid., 113). This is not unlike the communitarianism of Daniel Bell who suggests that people are constituted by their relation to a community of significance (Bell 1993).

Pragmatic Naturalism, Artificial Dualisms, and Deductive Proofs

As a way of framing reality, pragmatic naturalism avoids artificial dualisms, or at least the collapse of one aspect of a pair into the other: say, mind into brain, or society into the individual. Pragmatic naturalism accepts both mind and brain without either causing a problem to the other. It also refuses the false dichotomy, too often found in academic departments of philosophy, between the modernists and the postmodernists (using the terms loosely); between the objectivists and the subjectivists. In two sentences Ryder puts to rest the "nature versus nurture" quandary commenting:

> The pragmatist side of pragmatic naturalism would endorse the claim that knowledge and inquiry are always perspectival because they are accomplished from some angle or point of view and they are always undertaken for a reason, i.e., to do something; knowledge is therefore never absolute. Similarly, the naturalistic side of

> pragmatic naturalism is likely to acknowledge that whatever place human beings and our experience has in nature, there remains aspects or traits of nature that are what they are, entirely independent of human interaction with them (Ryder 2013, 47).

Thus, pragmatic naturalism builds a much-needed bridge between objectivism and constructivism, and can shed light on many intractable contemporary social issues. Currently, one of the most intensely debated areas is sex, gender and trans-rights – more particularly, the rights of trans-women. To over-simplify the issue, in order to accept trans-women as truly women, scholars and activists have changed the meanings of sex and gender. Traditionally, gender was a function of biological sex. In recent history a distinction was made between sex (objectively determined by physiology) and gender (a socially constructed understanding of the way that masculine and feminine were developed in different cultures and subcultures). More recently, in some accounts, the notion of sex has been subsumed under an understanding of gender to the point that biological sex no longer objectively exists. In this telling, sex is no longer understood as biologically determined but is rather a construction "assigned at birth." The biological objectivism of sex and gender, as the same, changed to an understanding of sex as biologically objective and gender as socially constructed, and on to the notion that both sex and gender are social constructions. Thus, sex is no longer objectively or biologically real. Some feminists (J. K. Rowling being perhaps the most visible) have reacted negatively to this move. To them, to deny the reality of sex – specifically the biological female, uterus and vagina, menstruation and lactation – is to minimize the historical and lived reality of women and all they experience positively and negatively as biological females. For Rowling and her ilk, such is to erase women's history, and is in danger of undermining hard-fought for women's rights. The debate is intense and such is the contemporary social context that bridges across the divide are not easy to build. Here, Ryder's pragmatic naturalism would help greatly. Pragmatic naturalism would acknowledge both the objectivism of sex – humans are after all animals, and no one disputes that an animal's sex is determined by biology – and the constructivism of gender, that socially constructed gender roles are more fluid than fixed. In Ryder's terms both sex and gender are real complexes we need to make an account of. The complex that is sex and/or gender is constituted relationally by its traits and is not absolute. That biology objectively determines sex and that a trans-woman is truly a woman are both accounted for in pragmatic naturalism.

Pragmatic naturalism is also useful in that it avoids the philosophical chimera of the need to prove things deductively. Despite likely three thousand years of careful thought, philosophers have proved little to the satisfaction of each other. Philosophy is not mathematics but rather a set of tools necessary to create consistent positions with a degree of plausibility. In the same way, Ryder's claim is that pragmatic naturalism avoids ideology that amounts to "a tenacious commitment of one's concepts, perspectives, and ideas regardless of evidence and experience" (Ryder 2013, 51).

Ryder's pragmatic naturalism rejects the notion that knowledge is justified true belief. Instead, knowledge has to do with the generation of possibilities and pragmatic implications. One mode of knowing may be more important than another given different contexts. A medical doctor may have knowledge of the physical aspects of a patient and hence be able to diagnose physical conditions that require surgery or medication, but a knowledge of the patient's lifestyle, worries and challenges may be more pertinent in terms of preventative care and developing the patient's sense of self. In the first, knowledge is received from a physical examination; in the second knowledge is derived from listening to the patient's story. Thus, the importance of knowledge is contextual and has meaning only in respect to some purpose (ibid., 107).

Pragmatic Naturalism and the Non-Material

How then does Ryder deal with the non-material? His relational ontology gives a clue to the answer:

> The idea, again, is that everything, by which we mean material objects, ideal entities, histories, ideas, dreams, fictional characters, logical principles, actualities, possibilities, God, human being, and anything else one can mention, point to, or create, whether a human product or not, is constituted by its traits and the relations among them (Ryder 2013, 59).

Ryder rejects the notion that some things are more real than other things; there is no ontological hierarchy. All complexes are as real as each other. But complexes can be more relevant in different situations. This frees Ryder from the philosophical task of determining whether reality is physical or spiritual and question such as whether fictional characters exist. The point is not whether something exists but how it exists, in other words, what is its sphere of relatedness. How, then, would Ryder's pragmatic naturalism account for Harry Potter, God as creator, or a belief in fairies?

For Ryder, the question is not whether Harry Potter (or God, or the fairies) are real but in what way do they exist? What are their spheres of relatedness? What are the traits that constitute them? Here is a partial list of the spheres and traits of Harry Potter: J. K. Rowling who first imagined him and created his story; the character himself as he develops in that story and all his relationships with other characters; the magical world in which Harry lives; the imagination of the millions of children and adults who have engaged with the story, dreamt and day-dreamed about Harry Potter; the global capitalistic development of Harry Potter including not least the movie franchise; the actor Daniel Radcliffe who played Harry in eight movies and who for many people embodies the way Harry looks and speaks; and the philosophy of life that emerges as Harry grows to maturity that includes the values of loving relationships, friendship, courage, and faithfulness. All of these traits, and likely more besides, constitute the complex that is Harry Potter. Whether I could find "Platform Nine and Three-Quarters" at King's Cross Station in London and board a train to Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry is irrelevant to the existence of Harry Potter. The physical railway station that may be visited is not one of the traits that constitute Harry Potter, whereas the fictional railway station with its magical platform is. The two King's Cross stations exist in different orders. If I want to catch a train to Edinburgh to attend a conference, I will buy a ticket and board a train. If I want to be whisked away to an imagined world, enjoy my time there, and think with Harry about life's ups and downs I re-read a book, or watch a movie, or simply think about Harry Potter.

What about God? Ryder makes what seems like an uncharacteristically confident and ontologically intolerant assertion: "the God of monotheism does not exist" (Ryder 2013, 66), which would amount to the same type of claim that "Harry Potter does not exist." We know, from his earlier comments, that whether God exists or not is of no concern to the pragmatic naturalist, who seeks rather to answer the question: in what ways does God exist? Ryder admits as much soon after the first claim with a further claim that "God in some relevant sense does exist" (ibid., 67). How do we square the circle of the counter claims?

It is clear that traditional theistic notions of God – God as a singular, monistic being separate from and creator of all other beings – is incompatible with pragmatic naturalism. God as "supernatural" cannot fit within a framework that begins with the assumption "nature is all there is, and all there is is natural." Further, if all that exists is constituted relationally then God too must be constituted relationally. However, traditionally God exists alone and without need and is utterly "self-contained." God creates the world (nature) simply because God chose to without any compulsion. The created world exists apart from God, though God is in some sense the sustainer of the world, though still apart from the world. Clearly, this conception of God is not compatible with pragmatic naturalism. Ryder says:

> Pragmatic naturalism must recognize religious faith as a natural phenomenon, but religious faith, by virtue of some of its content, is inconsistent with the naturalism that wants to acknowledge it (Ryder 2013, 135).

If God does not exist in the way traditional theism suggests, in what ways does God exist? How is God constituted relationally? By what traits? Ryder leaves the

answer to others, as, for him, the existence of God does not work and has no "cash-value." Even so, Ryder suggests there are ways of understanding God and religious experience in pragmatic naturalist terms. For instance:

> In Dewey's hands God comes to represent the unification of the ideals that we hold in highest esteem: justice, truth, beauty, wisdom and benevolence. Randall took a still different approach, wherein both religion and God are understood through the function they serve to provide coherence, meaning and direction for people's lives (Ryder 2013, 129).

Though beyond the scope of this brief treatment, here are a few other provisional answers. A pantheist understanding of God might be compatible with pragmatic naturalism. Panentheism suggests that God, in some way, exists in all that is and is constituted relationally with all that is. In other words, God has no separate existence and is an aspect of nature rather than the creator of nature. William James says as much:

> [Some] kind of immanent or pantheistic deity working *in* things rather than above them is, if any, the kind recommended to our contemporary imagination. Aspirants to a philosophic religion turn, as a rule, more hopefully nowadays toward idealistic pantheism than towards the older dualistic theism […] (James 1987, 517)

For James, the "cash-value" of religious ideas was their ability to bring comfort and to "carry you somewhere" (ibid., 518). In other words, religion performs a concrete function in leading toward good outcomes.

Tillich's God – as not "a being" but rather "the ground of all being" – could also be understood in pragmatic naturalistic terms. Whatever that "something" is, common to all being, is what we might term God. Even so, Tillich's understanding is far from traditional understandings of God as a personal supernatural being, somewhat like a human being but more so and perfect. Neither would account for traditional understandings of God as a person to whom one prays. Tillich's solution of "God beyond God" leaves room for metaphorical, psychological and ritualistic accounts of God; each of those ways of thinking about God constituted in terms more like poetry, symbol and metaphor than, say, natural science and matter. Other contenders for a pragmatic naturalist explication of God would include something like Mary Midgley's (2014) and Thomas Nagel's (2012) teleological understanding of nature; that nature is not merely random but has within it a principle, not unlike consciousness (perhaps Adam Smith's "invisible hand") guiding it toward an end. Nagel states:

> [N]atural teleology would mean that the universe is rationally governed in more than one way – not only through the universal quantitative laws of physics that underlie efficient causation but also through principles which imply that things happen because they are on a path that leads toward certain outcomes – notably, the existence of living, and ultimately conscious organisms (Nagel 2012, 67).

In a natural theology perhaps those guiding principles are what believers call God.

Even so, this still leaves unanswered the question of the traits that constitute God. Ryder suggests that the nature (character) of a complex is defined by its relations. God exists (prevails) but in what way does God exist; in which orders of relations? Ryder comments:

> [I]f God, like everything else, is a natural complex, then by definition God is not simple or indivisible. God like every other complex, is composed of constituent complexes; it is itself an order of relations (Ryder 2013, 125).

Among God's relations are: the varying traditions that speak of God; meaningful rituals and symbols that convey a sense of the divine; the myths and narratives of those who have "known" and experienced God; the sincere worshipper who contemplates God; the multiple cultures that have been shaped by those who believe in God; the invocation of God in social rituals such as "God bless America" at the end of every presidential speech; the institutions and organizations arranged around belief in God; and more besides. For the pragmatic naturalist God exists in these ways.

But how do the fairies exist? Certainly not in the empirical world of experimentation, nor in the world of ordinary senses. The fairies do exist, though in folklore, in fables, moral tales and imagination. For a young child the tooth fairy exists as comforter in a rapidly changing world of loss and renewal.

Though Ryder eschews an ontological hierarchy (which is more real: Harry Potter, God or the fairies?) it seems prudent to recognize that the existence of God in all God's relations has had more effect in the world than the existence of the fairies in all their relations. Harry Potter presents an interesting case. It may well be that Harry Potter – for many millions of children and adults – has more "cash value" than God.

Pragmatic Naturalism and Social and Political Relations

After his initial exploration of the pragmatic naturalism in *The Things in Heaven and Earth*, Ryder divides his book equally in an exploration of naturalism (ontology, epistemology, and aesthetics) and a consideration of social experience. Does naturalism, as Ryder understands it, work in helping us understand experience as consistent and meaningful, and not just some experience but all experiences? In the words of James what is the "cash value" of naturalism? In other words, how useful is pragmatic naturalism? To answer the question, and to complete the landscape of his "theory of everything" Ryder conjoins his version of naturalism with the American pragmatist tradition, especially Dewey. Following Dewey, Ryder suggests that democracy "is a desirable way of life that is conducive to the development in all relevant respects of those who live in it" (Ryder 2013, 181).

As he unpacks his meaning, two issues are prominent. First, the kinds of claim he is making for democracy, and second what he means by "democracy." Ryder's claim is not an absolute claim for democracy and he readily acknowledges that other social arrangements might well (equally well?) provide for the development of their citizens (or subjects). Though democracy might not be a perfect system, or even the best system, Ryder claims that it works at least as well as other social arrangements in the contemporary world. In other words, Ryder's claim is pragmatically modest.

Like other philosophers Ryder pays careful attention to words and stipulates what he means and does not mean when he speaks of "democracy." The first thing to note is that democracy is not merely a political way of making decisions. It is, rather, a "way of life" and he quotes Dewey favorably as stating, "Democracy is a way of life controlled by a working faith in the possibilities of human nature" (ibid., 183). This Ryder terms "thick democracy" and is rooted in a particular view of human nature:

> Our nature is such, or so the democrat believes, that we are able to develop our emotional, perceptual, and intellectual powers to the point that it is possible for us to perceive our situations and our problems, to understand how we might address them, and to care enough to act (Ryder 2013, 184).

Further:

> Democracy, in other words, rests not on blind custom, nor on dogma, nor on rigid ideology, nor on clichés and slogans, but on the exercise of our collective capacity to study ourselves and our world, to perceive its problems, and to apply in our lives a mode of interaction that opens the possibility of new and creative solutions (ibid., 185).

Besides this the democratic individual looks beyond their own community to other communities, to share common interests and to work for the common good, such that a "democratic individual is knowledgeable, thoughtful, critical, experimental, and ethically sensitive" (ibid., 189). The democratic individual is cosmopolitan in outlook and practice. This is a high ideal, and if such is used as a yard-stick to measure democracy, say, in the United States then in its most recent history the United States is hardly democratic in this sense. Ryder wrote *The Things in Heaven and Earth* during the Obama presidency, when the world had optimism that the United States would finally live up to its foundational promises (ibid., 204–205). The Trump years, and aftermath, have cast a dark shadow over the realization on a large scale of Ryder's democracy as a way of life. Given voting patterns it would seem that at least half of the citizenry of the United States is not at all keen on Ryder's deep conception of the democratic individual. Similarly, Ryder wrote optimistically of the European Union as a forerunner of the eventual, and necessary demise of the nation state (ibid., 198–199, 207–208). Three years after the publica-

tion of Ryder's book saw the Brexit referendum, the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the European Union, with the possible further fracturing to include Polexit, Italexit and who knows what else under the twin pressures of nationalism and popularism. Ryder's optimism of 2013 looks gloomier in 2021.

Though Ryder remains faithful to Dewey's use of democracy in its "thick" sense, given the current lack of understanding of democracy, and for many around the world the conjoining of democracy with the neoliberal project and American aggression, might a better word be found? Ryder admits, "the term 'democracy' has been so badly abused in recent years that in some parts of the world it will take a long time for it even to be meaningfully legitimate again" (Ryder 2013, 201). His analysis suggests that as pluralism and cosmopolitanism are so essential to thick democracy either word might work as a replacement. For Ryder, democracy, at its best, ought to include pluralism and cosmopolitanism. Might it not also be said that pluralism, at its best, ought to include democracy and cosmopolitanism; and cosmopolitanism, at its best, ought to be democratic and pluralistic? In other words, so much is packed into "thick democracy" that the meaning of "democracy" has moved far from its commonplace use.

This is not the only problem Ryder's understanding faces, and he is quite open about the difficulties. The pragmatist uses ideas as a working hypothesis, will experiment with the idea and if found wanting will abandon it and see something else that works. This is in stark contrast to ideological approaches to social conditions. The ideologist is less willing to abandon an approach to social change, often believing that the ideology is itself justifiable and an end-in-itself. Pragmatism's open, experimentalism, with a modest willingness to fail and try again, faces the the problem of political culture. In politics "it might work but we're not sure" does not win elections; certainty does, however absurd the certainty. Ryder admits that Dewey's pragmatic thick democracy faces a dearth of quality and reasonable debate, and a political culture that runs on slogans and ideological certainties. Can that situation be changed? Ryder's answer is not an optimistic one, "I am afraid that I have no answer to the question of how that might be accomplished" (Ryder 2013, 215).

A further problem lies in thick (and thin) democracy's embracing of a pluralistic social and political framework. The problem for thin democracy is what happens when a citizenry chooses to elect a government that runs on a ticket to undermine the democracy that elected it? Ryder speaks proleptically when he asks:

> How, we might ask, do we handle an occasion in which a majority of voters use the polls to elect leaders or endorse policies that are hostile to the very democracy that provides the election? (Ryder 2013, 219)

In 2013, it was difficult to imagine (at least for this writer) that in 2016 the United States could elect a President hostile to democratic values and that more than half the nation would rejoice in his election. Since President Biden was elected in 2020, at the time of writing still contested by the former President and his supporters, undemocratic state processes of Gerrymandering have continued to undermine the thin, and apparently fragile, democracy of the United States. It seems likely that in 2022 and 2024 democratically elected legislators will further undermine democracy.

The problem is compounded for thick democracy if the citizenry simply refuses to engage in the democratic processes of emotional, perceptual and intellectual growth and is quite happy to hand responsibility to others. Ryder comments, "It appears that pragmatic naturalist values cannot survive large-scale dissent, not can they repress it. Therein lies the problem" (Ryder 2013, 218).

Even so, Ryder reluctantly suggests that in extreme cases non-democratic means might be used to further democracy's goals. A tolerant pluralism social arrangement has always faced the issue of those who refuse to be either tolerant or pluralistic. Can the tolerant allow the intolerant to hold sway? Intolerance undermines a central value of tolerant pluralism. For Ryder, a central problem is that undemocratic means undermine democracy itself. At what point does the democrat resort to

undemocratic means? Ryder hints that undemocratic means might be justified when the greater values of democracy are threatened. He states (undemocratically) that in some situations "only violence can constitute a solution" (Ryder 2013, 224). Those situations are rare and only the "extreme" cases. But what does that mean? In a recent poll, widely reported, 30 percent of Republicans said that "true American patriots may need to resort to violence in order to save the US" (Sharp 2021). The resort to violence "in extreme cases" can be claimed by any side of an ideological divide. Dewey's, and hence Ryder's, thick democracy, with its claim not to be an ideology, seems to undermine itself when promoting the use of violence. This chapter is a celebration of Ryder's philosophy and not my own, but I wrestled with these issues in two recent books (Fitz-Gibbon 2017, Fitz-Gibbon 2021). My own conclusion is that the resort to violence always undermines the tolerant, pluralistic, and democratic impulse. Even so, either conclusion is an uncomfortable one for pragmatic naturalism.

Conclusion

John Ryder seeks to construct a coherent, plausible and pragmatic philosophy that takes account of everything. How well does he do? Much depends on his opening assertion that nature is all there is and everything that exists exists in nature. For those who cling to a belief in the supernatural – in a divine Being that exists outside of nature – Ryder's account will always fail. Even so, pragmatic naturalism is not a denial or rejection of the spiritual or religious. Rather, it accounts for such human experiences as natural rather than supernatural. But having accepted his assertion Ryder's account of the interconnection of all complexes, that everything that exists exists relationally, coupled with a refusal to reduce or collapse nature to its smallest components – hence to deny large swathes of human experience – is compelling. Ryder carefully shows how pragmatic naturalism offers coherent accounts of ontology, epistemology and aesthetics. Though Ryder asserts pragmatic naturalism accounts for ethics – how could it not? – this writer, as an ethicist, would like a more thorough and systematic treatment of the subject. When Ryder turns to social relationships, he is again persuasive sticking close to Dewey's embracing of thick democracy. If Dewey stands, then so does Ryder. Yet, perhaps more so now than in Dewey's time "democracy" seems too misused a term to be helpful. To be used relevantly "democracy" requires so many qualifications that the "democracy" of "thick democracy" seems too different to be helpful. But what other word would suffice? Such is Ryder's dilemma, and he sticks to Dewey with admirable tenacity. This, with relentless experimentalism and modest fallibilism, allows John Ryder to explicate a complex and expansive "theory of everything."

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REFLECTIONS ON PHILOSOPHY

PRAGMATISM IN A POST-TRUTH ERA

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ABSTRACT: The term *post-truth* is a recent coinage that designates an era of apparent decline in popular support for and confidence in the inferential norms that have contributed to the rise of modern science and, in some perspectives, liberal democracy. Recent theorists of post-truth have suggested the pluralist falliblism of pragmatist epistemology as the appropriate response, while also advocating an emphasis on realism. Here, the tension between pluralism and realism is discussed in light of work on ontological parity in the thought of Justus Buchler and John Ryder. Buchler's notion of ordinality offers a strategy for reconciling the authority of appeals to "the real world" with an epistemology that recognizes the potential for a plurality of legitimate conceptual schemes. The key epistemic norm shifts toward a socially institutionalized capability for learning, as developed in recent work by Rahel Jaeggi. However, although this approach offers powerful arguments against authoritarian use of post-truth, it creates a quandary when institutional reform calls for recognition of voices that also appear to reject the legitimacy of science on the ground of alleged histories of oppression by scientific elites.

Keywords: American pragmatism, Charles Sanders Peirce, post-truth, ontological parity, liberal democracy, liberty

Introduction

This paper reexamines some longstanding epistemic and ontological concerns of pragmatist philosophy in light of recent developments within academic philosophy and throughout Western culture. By *pragmatism* I mean the philosophical school inaugurated in the late 19th century by Charles Sanders Peirce and William James. I will not engage detailed questions about the defining characteristics of this school, its history or lineage, though I will discuss recent developments that I take to be consistent with the intellectual tradition of pragmatist philosophy, broadly construed. By *post-truth* I indicate a vaguely defined political and cultural phenomenon, rather than a specific philosophical doctrine. In the post-truth era, significant numbers of people appear to act as if evidence is irrelevant to the formation of their opinions or to the evaluation and revision of their cognitive commitments. It is a time in which polling reveals significant populations who continue to report agreement with false statements made in social media and by public figures.[1]

As epistemic fallibilists, pragmatist philosophers must remain open to the possibility that future inquiry will demonstrate the truth of statements currently held to be false. I will presume, based on exhaustive argumentation in the pragmatist tradition, that this implies neither philosophical skepticism nor an inability to judge the false statements indicative of post-truth phenomena *as* false. Re-engagement with past philosophical battles is not what interests me about post-truth phenomena. Rather, my focus is on the normative position that pragmatists should take in response to claims that contradict or deny truths, especially when more comprehensive issues of incompatibility between the experience base or cognitive commitments of speakers appears to be at stake. In particular, I will examine the potential of ontological parity as a framework for negotiating this problem.

Post-Truth

Lee McIntyre begins his analysis of post-truth by noting that the term was the 2016 word of the year for Oxford Dictionaries. He quotes their definition: "relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief" (McIntyre 2018, 5). McIntyre argues that that the Oxford Dictionaries definition is too broad to distinguish between the many historical instances in which public opinion has been swayed by

[1] For example, despite widespread reporting on the effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines in the scientific literature, government information sources and the mainstream media, Reno and coauthors (2021) report that vaccine hesitancy is correlated with frequent use of social media. Christenson and coauthors (2021) report that Republicans believe widely discredited claims about election fraud in the 2020 United States Presidential election. Gaps between public opinion and scientific literature on climate change persist (Dietz 2020). Campaigns on the safety of genetically engineered food crops and the risks of infantile exposure to autism remain effective despite widespread scientific consensus to the contrary (Bird 2020). I will not review evidence contrary to or supporting any of these claims. As a pragmatist, I remain committed to the possibility that skeptics could be right. My point is only to exhibitively clarify my understanding of the post-truth phenomenon, and to do so apart from explicitly epistemic criteria or doctrine.

emotion or personal belief and the novel circumstances giving rise to the coinage of post-truth in the 21st century. He proposes an explanation that emphasizes the emergence of social media, social science research on cognitive bias and the popularization of relativist epistemology (McIntyre 2018). These elements of McIntyre's approach are also taken up by other scholars. The influence of electronic media and the emergence of platforms such as Facebook and Twitter is, I think, a fairly obvious factor, especially in conjunction with the decline of traditional newspapers and their capacity for fact checking and objective reporting. All of the theorists I will discuss here note this, but I will be focused on other factors in the balance of this study.

McIntyre cites work by Jason Stanley in his analysis of post-truth, though post-truth is not a term of art in Stanley's philosophy. Stanley focuses on propaganda, which he understands as messaging that promotes anti-democratic ideology, whether intentionally or not. Like McIntyre, Stanley sees the cluster of inferential processes licensed by cognitive bias as creating opportunity for propagandistic discourse to distort communication, creating reservoirs of ideology (e.g., belief systems) that are resistant to fact-based reasoning. Among the key forms of propaganda, Stanley notes speech that asserts questionable claims indirectly as a component of background, not-at-issue components of a communicative exchange (e.g., pragmatics). Anti-democratic ideology can flourish even in cultures that explicitly express liberal democratic values because these key forms of propaganda are functioning implicitly within the pragmatics that establish context for propositions that are the putative at-issue content of a linguistic exchange (Stanley 2015).

Jonathan Rauch also discusses recent studies by psychologists who have demonstrated robust tendencies toward favoring dramatic information that inflames the emotion (availability bias), overestimating the chance of success (optimism bias), and giving too much weight to the first piece of information presented (anchoring bias), among others. Rauch explains that this new research has at least two implications for the present day. It serves as a toolkit for anyone who wants to manipulate public opinion, and, more pertinent to my interests here, it reorients the task of epistemology as a theory that should explain why these cognitive tendencies are taken to produce error, and why they persist, nonetheless. Rauch proposes an extended metaphor as the response to problems of post-truth: a constitution of knowledge complete with implicit norms that function analogously to the democratic cultural institutions without which the United States Constitution would cease to function as an effective organ of government (Rauch 2021).

Significantly Rauch, who does not describe himself as a philosopher, relies heavily on the work of Charles S. Peirce in establishing the principles for his constitution of knowledge. Peirce's community of inquirers is the model for Rauch, who stresses a network of people who tend to correct for both cognitive bias and more conventional types of personal bias by checking up on one another's assertions. Rauch draws on the philosophy of Karl Popper to argue that attempts at falsification should rank higher than verification, but Rauch also qualifies his endorsement by noting that Popper himself goes too far (Rauch 2021, 94). A better statement of the norm is that liberal science conjoins Peirce's fallibilism with "orderly, decentralized and impersonal social adjudication" (ibid., 99). Rauch's characterization of the constitution of knowledge provides a reasonable and widely accessible introduction to pragmatist epistemology. Rauch also characterizes this Peircean community of inquiry as a "reality-based network." His repeated use of this phrase is apparently intended to counter any suggestion that the constitution of knowledge could incorporate a relativist epistemology. This usage introduces some tension with pragmatist metaphysics that stress ontological parity.

Post Truth as an Epistemic Problem: Ontological Parity

Justus Buchler advanced the principle of ontological parity in his book *The Metaphysics of Natural Complexes*. Buchler defines natural complex as the most general and comprehensive category of existence (e.g., whatever is,

in any way, is a natural complex) and the principle of ontological parity stipulates that "no complex is more 'real', more 'natural,' more 'genuine,' or more 'ultimate' than any other" (Buchler 1989, 31). As stated by Sidney Gelber and Kathleen Wallace, "Ontological parity is not only a rejection of the notion of discontinuous realms or kinds of being – some more real than others; it is a commitment to the equal reality of all beings" (Gelber and Wallace 1991, 52). Buchler's work is complex (pun intended), and even a superficial treatment is out of place in the present context. The significance of ontological parity within pragmatism and its relevance to Rauch's reality-based network can be illustrated in reference to the work of C. I. Lewis.

In *Mind and the World Order,* Lewis grapples with an epiphany that pervaded early 20th century epistemology. Given Albert Einstein's utilization of Riemannian geometry in physics, philosophers were forced to contend with the potential for shifts in the meaning of basic categories like space and time, even (indeed especially) among the Peircean community of inquiry comprised by theoretical physicists. Lewis advanced a pragmatist solution by treating competing conceptual schemes such as Euclidean and Riemannian geometries as having meaning in so far as their internal logic (e.g., their axioms and the theorems that can be derived from them) predicts phenomena that can be tested empirically. Lewis acknowledges the possibility that alternative conceptual schemes (Stanley would call them ideologies) could have internal coherence. Lewis understands science as a conceptual scheme that generates testable hypotheses, and consists of constructs supported by inductive logic. Reality is indicated by the elements of science that survive experimental falsification (O'Shea 2018).

Lewis is articulating a view that is widely held among scientists and philosophers alike. The view has problems, and is subject to seemingly innumerable nuances and modifications, as well as multiple names, monikers and slogans. Consistent with Rauch's notion of a reality-based network and Hilary Putnam's later work, we might call it *scientific realism* (see Pihlström 2018). It is, in one sense, the aspirational hope that our percepts and beliefs (which clearly depend on our own existence) accord with something that exists independently. From this, Lewis classifies anything which depends solely on our subjective experience (dreams, illusions) as not real. The further stipulation of Peircean inquiry as the method for operationalizing this aspiration makes this form of realism scientific for Lewis, and arguably for Putnam and many others.

On the face of it, ontological parity contradicts Lewis's view, and by implication, scientific realism. However, Lewis also states, "the distinction of real from unreal is a classification, […] what is designated as "unreal" as well as the "real" is given in experience" (Lewis 1929, 435–436). As James O'Shea shows, this remark precipitates Wilfrid Sellars' critique of experiential givenness (O'Shea 2018), but ontological parity might be understood as an alternative to Sellars' approach. For Buchler, dreams, illusions, firetrucks and quarks are all natural complexes, and ontological parity rules out the possibility that we distinguish them by classifying some as real and some as unreal. Rather, the classification that Lewis notes is made by judgments that locate complexes in different orders. Even given radical change in its categories and methods over time, the Peircean community of inquiry creates an order that functionally distinguishes quarks and firetrucks from dreams and illusions, and does so without appealing to a given or a division between the real and the unreal (see Bernstein 1967).

This solution might not satisfy someone like Rauch, however, because it seems to undercut the work that the notion of a reality-based network is doing in his attack on post-truth. The words *real* and *reality* are not the exclusive property of philosophy professors, and Rauch might voice an objection on Wittgensteinian (and at least quasi-pragmatist) grounds: If the meaning of the word *reality* resides in its common use, then Lewis is surely closer to that than Buchler. Distinguishing illusions from firetrucks is certainly one of the tasks speakers of English perform when they use words like *real* and *unreal.* John Ryder's development of ontological parity in *The*

Things in Heaven and Earth: An Essay in Pragmatic Naturalism provides an important response to this problem. On Ryder's view, a robust scientific realism is not only compatible with ontological parity; Buchler's ontology unleashes the reality-based network to do its work in multiple orders, some of which are imminently practical.

Ryder's discussion aims to show how Buchler's approach is compatible with a number of different isms, while at the same time expositing Ryder's own preferred version of naturalism. In this connection, Ryder argues that ontological parity is compatible with materialism, what many would take to be an extreme version of scientific realism. On many readings, materialists give ontological priority to physical matter, going on to claim that *only* material entities are real. Quoting Buchler, Ryder argues that this overstates the claim of contemporary materialists, who mean to say only that a non-material entity's ability to prevail within a given order depends upon material complexes, in some sense. *Prevalence* is indicative of being ordinally located as, for example, in mathematics, in fiction, in imagination or in family relations. The materialist holds that prevalence in any order depends upon complexes in the physical order or, better, the order of nature. But this does not imply that π, Harry Potter, my sexual fantasies and William and Henry James relationship as brothers do not exist. It is perfectly obvious that not only do they exist, these non-material complexes are efficacious within the world. They have consequences that meet the tests of a Peircean community of inquiry. Ryder argues that ontological parity presses us to articulate relationships of dependency and possibility with greater clarity, but it in no sense rules out the central claim of the materialist (Ryder 1991).

Ryder carries the argument over into *The Things in Heaven and Earth,* defending his own materialist version of naturalism, but leaving open the possibility of alternative conceptual schemes. In this, Ryder remains open to alternative philosophies as well as to the type of conceptual change that Lewis had identified as part of the scientific enterprise. This is the type of change that Einstein effected in his application of Riemannian geometry. Ryder then goes on to discuss how some non-material complexes are amenable to scientific inquiry, the system of judgment that Rauch associates with the constitution of knowledge. Here it is important to recognize that just because a scientific inquiry invalidates the biophysical basis for racial classifications, for example, this does not imply that racial classifications do not exist, nor that they cannot be studied scientifically. Racial identities are natural complexes that prevail in orders of mutually maintained expectations, legal codes and practices of discriminative favoritism and oppression. They are as real as firetrucks, and not *only* in the Buchlerian sense that every natural complex is equally real. They are real in precisely the sense that Rauch intends with his notion of reality-based networks. Although he would probably be cautious about Rauch's terminology, Ryder would have no trouble acknowledging an order constituted by the practice of people following the regulative principles of science (see Ryder 2013). I do not see how laying stress our ordinary use of words like *real* and *realism* would make Ryder object to calling this view (possibly his own view) *scientific realism.*

Post-Truth as a Political Problem

Given the discussion thus far, the problem of post-truth can be recapitulated in light of a pragmatist epistemology that is importantly more sophisticated than the version offered by Rauch.[2] Given what we have learned about cognitive biases, philosophers should be appreciative of the fact that relatively few readers will have the patience required to follow a detailed philosophical argument. *The Constitution of Knowledge* paints a Peircean community of inquiry in broad strokes and does not take on questions such as its compatibility with materialist philosophies that have proven attractive to many natural scientists. Neither does it discuss how a reality-based network could address issues that Rauch

[2] This is not a criticism of Rauch. The accessibility of Rauch's treatment is an important and epistemically valuable contribution.

identifies as dear to his personal interests, such as the legal recognition of gay marriage.[3] As Rauch, McIntyre and Stanley explain it, post-truth is a phenomenon comprising a neurological vulnerability to patterned biases, changes in the technological infrastructure for communication as evidenced in the rise of social media and a weakening of the publics commitment to an epistemology characterized by ten regulative principles that Rauch summarizes over the course of a few pages (Rauch 2021, 103–108). Even in Rauch's summary, the epistemology is recognizably pragmatist.

Ryder's adaptation of ontological parity illustrates how a community committed to Rauch's ten commandments can reconcile pluralism regarding the *way* that objects of scientific inquiry exist (e.g., prevail), with the notion that their diverse approaches to inquiry are governed by a unified understanding of assertive or truth-apt judgment. There are, in fact, multiple ways that inquirers can study the diverse array of complexes (entities, relations, processes) that are mutually open to fact-checking, hypothesis testing, data sharing and logical rigor. In these respects (and given ordinary parlance) we can characterize physicists, biologists, psychologists, economists, historians, journalists and philosophers as adhering to forms of scientific realism, and constituting a reality-based network. While some philosophers have viewed these epistemological problems as non-political, McIntyre, Stanley, Rauch and Ryder do not.

I forego an extended discussion of political implications, for I expect that most readers are capable of making the connections themselves. McIntyre and Rauch are focused primarily on the United States, and both see Donald Trump's ability to attain political influence despite the irrelevance of truth and falsity to his public statements as indicative of post-truth's threat to democratic values. McIntyre lays blame on the teaching of postmodernism in American universities, quoting from conservative radio personalities who say as much (McIntyre 2018, 148–150). Rauch is careful to cite examples where progressives have also abandoned the reality-based network, with an extended discussion of "cancel culture," the phenomenon of silencing contrary voices on grounds that their words cause harm to vulnerable groups (Rauch 2021, 209–220).

Although Stanley also discusses Trump, he situates his critique of recent conservative propaganda within the larger context of fascist ideology. His examples draw from histories of Jim Crow in the American South and Germany's Nazi Party. He also notes tactics in current use by Victor Orbán and Recep Tayip Erdoğan (Stanley 2020). Stanley's primary concern is to show how discursive communications that express overtly liberal democratic values can nonetheless subvert a democratic polity's ability to act upon a regulative principle that is crucial for its own ideology, as well as Rauch's constitution of knowledge. A reality-based network must have both an organized capacity to examine elements of its own belief system, and the will to exercise that capacity. Stanley is interested in both willfully deployed propaganda and in cases where linguistic practice undercuts social learning without implying the intent to do so (Stanley 2015). This emphasis on social learning connects to Ryder's study of education as a medium for transforming experience (Ryder 2020), as well as Rahel Jaeggi's *Critique of Forms of Life* (2018), discussed later. The present format does not permit me to explore the overlaps and inconsistencies among these works. Hopefully readers will recognize the sense in which these authors, like Lewis in the 1920s, are groping toward a model of social learning that is responsive to the commitments of Rauch's reality-based network, and why they see this as a critical element of liberal democratic culture.

Each of these theorists provide entrée to the phenomenon of post-truth, and offer a normative account of why it is a problem for liberal democracies. To varying degrees, each of them see threats to the *efficacy* of scientific inquiry as the source of threats to the *authority* of scientifically grounded expert knowledge. Lacking any sense of authoritative, fact-based claims, a society enters a post-truth epistemic zone in which it is deprived of

[3] Rauch may have addressed this in other writings. Several passages in *The Constitution of Knowledge* make suggestive reference to an earlier book (Rauch 2014).

both the knowledge base and the political capability for social learning. As such, it is unable to undertake a social process that is analogous to the theory change that interested C. I. Lewis; it is unable to discard concepts or regulative principles contrary to its own normative commitments. While any pragmatist will say that there is no way to be *sure* when or whether such a change is truly progressive, it is something else again to find one-self in a situation where one's practices undercut the very possibility of change. That is why post-truth is both an epistemic and a political problem.

Post Truth as an Epistemic Problem Redux

Of the theorists discussed so far, McIntyre seems most content with the thought that we (by which he and I both mean the polity of which we are citizens) must simply double down on Rauch's constitution of knowledge. We should stick to the rules and fight back against post-truth. Although Ryder, Stanley and (as I will show) Jaeggi have more nuanced positions, I will complicate the problem by introducing epistemic considerations that are not covered in the preceding discussion. The German social theorist Ulrich Beck is still little read by philosophers, but his theory of "reflexive modernization" provides a useful starting point for understanding the post-truth era. Modernization is understood in the sense of Max Weber or Talcott Parsons where social relations are mapped onto a trajectory of technological advancement and economic growth. Modernization implies progressive development of a social epistemology that could aptly be mapped through Peirce's four methods for fixing belief. The method of tenacity is followed by the socially more complex method of authority. As individuals or semi-autonomous groups develop internal epistemic capacities, the method of taste displaces the appeal to authority. The sequence ends with the method of science, where organized methods for testing beliefs are pursued by a community of inquiry. Beck's contribution was to argue that as science came to reflect the dominant social epistemology in the late modernism of the 20th century, the ability to suspend belief implied by hypothesis testing became widespread. Disseminated beyond the scientific elites enrolled in the Peircean community of inquirers, this epistemic capacity has produced a rebound effect. Skeptical people have less confidence in science as an institution. Beck's modernization theory was reflexive in the sense of a reflex that ironically undercut scientific elites' ability to fuel the socioeconomic drivers of modernization with a continuous stream of technological innovations[4] (Beck 1992).

Beck's focus was on the rising importance of environmental and public safety concerns. By the 1980s, scares over thalidomide, DDT, the cancer risk of artificial sweeteners and radioactive waste had permeated the public consciousness. One might contest Beck's thesis by noting that these events did not require coupling with a reflexive social epistemology in order to spark controversy and political action. However, in the present context my interest in the ontology and epistemology of the post-truth phenomenon overrides the otherwise legitimate need to consider alternative social explanations. Social theorists noted that, unlike the class-based labor movement, environmental causes cut across social lines and motivated people to political action by highlighting the risky nature of industrial technology. The social epistemology of reflexive modernization was thus accompanied by a shift in political identity formation (Habermas 1981).

Beck argued that group identification was increasingly being influenced by a person's risk position: the various intersecting factors that pose threats to health, welfare and status. Both rich and poor perceived themselves to be at risk from the airborne radioactive isotopes following the nuclear accident at Chernobyl, as well as from the food grown on land contaminated by their fallout. They could share this risk position and be

[4] A more progressivist version of reflexive modernization emerged in British sociology. Here, reflexivity meant a maturation of the scientific outlook in which analytic tools anticipate disruptive outcomes, and scientific elites become more reflective about the implications of their elite status. See Beck, Giddens and Lash 1994. I have explained why I favor Beck in Thompson 2017, 120–121.

politically active in response to it. However, as class identity became less salient, other risk positions were opening. The civil rights and women's movements also broke across class lines, while empowerment of ethnicities and women may have threatened the solidarity of status positions defined along class lines. Viewed in epistemic terms, these fractionated identities turn upon an ability to hypothesize potential hazards and respond to them based on their likelihood. This is significant move beyond Peirce's method of taste, where a political subject simply asks, "What's in it for me?" As thoroughly social, these risk positions involve rational methods for sharing information about risks, as well as discursive strategies to mitigate them.

Beck's thesis states that a growing capacity for collective knowledge production undermines the standing of 20th century knowledge elites, but this is not necessarily a bad thing. Indeed, reflexive modernization may have undergone a further rebound effect in the first decades of the 21st century. The scientific community of inquiry discovers that its methods are neither unique nor necessarily progressive. Other communities of inquiry are adept at identifying hazards overlooked by the sciences, and have the competence to develop a dispositive standpoint with respect to them. Indeed, continuing to insist upon the findings of a Peircean community of inquiry commits what Kristie Dotson calls a contributory epistemic injustice: using a biased or inappropriate hermeneutics to make sense of, and by doing so reorient, another agent's claim to know something (Dotson 2014). This type of concern is frequently raised when Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) held by indigenous cultures conflict with the concepts, findings or ontological commitments of the biophysical sciences (see Sinclair 2020; Meissner 2020). In a similar manner, Stanley cites Dotson's work as informing his account of when a statement counts as propaganda (Stanley 2015, 237–239).

Post-truth is readily associated with skepticism toward immunology, climatology, and molecular genetics, but a more prosaic example might serve to illustrate contributory injustice. A. Breeze Harper's *Sistah Vegan* collects testimony on food, health, and identity from twenty-four black female vegans. While there is quite a bit of diversity in their respective accounts, resistance to the authority of nutritional science, toxicology, and epidemiological risk assessments is prominent in many of them. For example, Adama Maweja became disenchanted by nutrition scientists' disrespect for more spiritual and harmonious worldviews. She describes the teachings of scientists, physicians, pharmacists and researchers as errors and lies. She views the food industry and intellectual culture as partners in the oppression of Black Americans that continues into the present (Maweja 2010). Other contributors to Harper's collection also recount personal dissatisfaction with mainstream medical or nutritional recommendations. Contributors to *Sistah Vegan* appeal to traditional or indigenous knowledge systems and woman-centered healing practices and products, such as those marketed by Queen Afua, a holistic health coach residing in New York City (Harper 2010).

Writing as a pragmatist who takes Dotson's position seriously, I do not mean to impugn the testimony of these women or to suggest that they are wrong. There are important points on which they certainly are not wrong. For example, several authors in Harper's anthology note racially based health disparities, especially for diabetes and heart disease, which are diet-related. They argue that diets typical in black families are descended from intentionally oppressive diets foisted upon slaves, and that diet-based health risks are a continuing example of white oppression (see Danielle 2010, Lloyd-Paige 2010). While the scientific literature displays much greater caution in linking health-disparities to oppression, there is widespread agreement that black Americans suffer from key diet-related diseases more than other ethnic groups. As Sean Valles has argued, "social determinants of health" has emerged as a public health paradigm that validates these concerns within the biomedical sciences (Valles 2018). Importantly, however, for me to claim that these women *need* the support of a

community that adheres to Peircean norms would constitute a contributory injustice.

In fact, the contributors to *Sistah Vegan* describe a form of hypothesis testing with respect to their own experience that is consistent with John Dewey's method of intelligence, even if it lacks the replication and testing required by Peirce. However, they reject the social institutionalization of reflective practice, at least in so far as it requires or involves the participation of dominant groups. They actively resist controlled experiment and scientific peer review. They imply that the social habits of pragmatic knowledge formation have been co-opted by elites, if they were not intentionally established to perpetuate negative outcomes for black women. Not only do none of the contributors to *Sistah Vegan* make reference to easily obtainable scientific studies that would support their claims, they write as if the scientific establishment is against them from the outset. A few disparage formalized inquiry as unreliable and inherently racist. All of the contributors are articulate and formally educated. Many have advanced degrees. *Sistah Vegan* is illustrative of the post-truth era because these authors go out of their way to dissociate themselves from the socially institutionalized knowledge practices endorsed by first generation pragmatist philosophers.

Responses to a Reflexive Modernization form of Post-Truth

I presented similar remarks on *Sistah Vegan* in a comment on Rahel Jaeggi's *Critique of Forms of Life* at the North American Society for Social Philosophy in 2019 (see Thompson 2020). Jaeggi's book draws upon Ludwig Wittgenstein's later philosophy to describe how normativity emerges out of a form of life, what Dewey (who is cited frequently) would have called culture. The first two-thirds of Jaeggi's *Critique* provide a sophisticated approach that emphasizes contingent but socially effective ways in which patterns in speech and practice interact to form shared expectations that function as institutions, as rules. Consistent with Dewey (and with pragmatism generally) she argues that norms emerging from a form of life are both warranted and binding, but only insofar as the form of life retains a capacity for social learning, for reflective practice (Jaeggi 2018). Jaeggi's critical theory could be integrated with Stanley's discussion of propaganda.

My comment on Jaeggi was to suggest that the reflexive modernization theorized by Beck and exemplified in the contributors to *Sistah Vegan* presents a paradox. To the extent that liberal democracies have embraced the norms of reflective social learning, they find themselves in the position of needing to respect communities that reject those very norms. In fact, these communities have good reasons for rejecting those norms, given failures in both American democracy's past form of life and in the implementation of commitments within that form of life that might have curbed oppression and silenced the voices of marginalized groups. Learning in the present requires respect for those reasons, and restraint on further pursuit of contributory injustices. The paradox is that in positioning themselves outside Rauch's reality-based network, the contributors to *Sistah Vegan* have certainly created problems for any philosopher who thinks liberal democratic forms of life should just double down on their commitment to truth, at least as truth is understood to be constituted by the practices of a Peircean community of inquiry. Even worse, genuine respect for the perspective taken by these women deprives one of the resources that Rauch's reality-based network makes available for combating post-truth practice.

The liberal democratic form of life is obligated to recognize the sovereignty of these communities' epistemic orientation precisely *because* their resistance to contributory injustice is a crucial element of social learning among the knowledge elites that they challenge. To be clear, recognizing the epistemic sovereignty of oppressed groups presents no challenge to the pragmatist commitments that bind the beloved community. It is a critical aspect of their edification. The problems arise for the liberal democratic form of life. First there is the old problem of internal contradiction: the liberal grounds for tolerating anti-liberalism, though in this case the stakes may be

raised because the challenge strikes to the heart of liberal democracy's ability to fix belief (i.e., to achieve even minimal solidarity). Even more problematically, resistance to science seems to close all doors to a broader and more widely inclusive reflective inquiry because the very attempt to initiate such threatens to reinterpret and displace the epistemic commitments of the Sistah Vegans.

This antinomy reflects Jaeggi's distinction between immanent and internal critique. She argues that deep learning requires responsiveness (response-ability) to criticisms that expose contradictions embedded within a form of life. This must go beyond internal critiques that use the normative resources that habits and institutions – the form of life – make available. So, for example, when Martin Luther King calls out racial inequalities circa 1963 by referencing Thomas Jefferson's words in the *Declaration of Independence* about the self-evident truth "all men are created equal" (King 1963), he is appealing to the internal values of liberal democracy. Immanent critiques that point beyond Jefferson's conception of liberal democracy note the resilience of structural racism within a form of life that maintains a commitment to equality before the law (see Adkins 2020). However, Jaeggi's response to my comment went as follows:

> But then, Thompson's concern is actually […] about the contemporary tendency to deny scientific facts. This issue has become even more important in the face of its deadly consequences. In the U.S., the denial of the existence of the current coronavirus outbreak and its consequences has cost hundreds of thousands of lives already. […] To critically challenge the certainties of science has been one of the starting points for social movements against nuclear energy, climate change, the ecological disaster. This critical attitude should not be conflated with the profound and dangerous state of denial the people Thompson has in mind are in. In terms of my approach, this is not reflexivity but a blockage of experiences. This is where a crisis occurs that cannot be seen as such where reality hits – and can only be made unseen by mechanisms of denial. It is an unwillingness to confront reality – a blocked learning process. Unfortunately, we will have to pay the price for this denial unless we figure out how to stop it (Jaeggi 2020, 228–229).

Jaeggi's references to reality here should be understood in light of Ryder's reconciliation of such talk with the principle of ontological parity. This puts her in line with Rauch's reality-based network. Yet even though my analysis of reflexive modernization can be disputed, Jaeggi seems not to have grasped the seriousness with which theorists like Dotson and Stanley think we should take the Sistah Vegans. If Dotson and Stanley are right, it is the dismissal of the Sistah Vegans' voice that blocks the learning process, rather than the denial of science.

A Little Pragmatism

Truth and reality exhibit affinities in many orders. Rauch's reality-based network testifies to the practical necessity engendered by the mobilization of collective action. The epistemic ideology (I am using Stanley's terminology) of the Sistah Vegans places pressure on Rauch's network by giving priority to what Peirce might have classified as the method of taste for fixing beliefs about diet (a delicious irony, I think). It is important to see how this differs from some of the most pernicious forms of post-truth. The Sistah Vegans are not challenging the category of reality, and they are presuming that the statements they make about the truth and falsity of various nutritional dicta are themselves true in a conventional sense. They are not intentionally exploiting cognitive bias in their audience to provoke a specific political result, as is the case for Trump, Orbán or Erdoğan.

Contrary to Jaeggi's assessment, respecting the Sistah Vegans requires us to understand their claims as, in her words, critically challenging the certainties of science. This interpretation converts their claims into counterhypotheses that are understandable within the framework of Peirce's method of science. Following Rauch, we pragmatists expect that this challenge will be adjudicated through an orderly, decentralized and impersonal social process. I will examine some of the food-specific considerations of that adjudication in the concluding section, but I will first probe the abstract philosophical dimensions a little further. An ordinal metaphysics suggests that the concerns of the Sistah Vegans converge with those of the scientific community in certain respects (e.g., in some orders) while diverging from

them in others. However, it would be a mistake to infer that on such grounds, the circumstances driving the Sistah Vegans are less real.

Nutritionists and food scientists share an interest in the material, bodily effects of diet with the Sistah Vegans. Harper's contributors believe that the scientific consensus is mistaken on several crucial points, but there are members of the reality-based network that agree with them (Wolk 2017). Here, scientific realism functions as a warranted approach to fixation of belief. However, the Sistah Vegans are also calling out a history of inattention to the testimony of black women. The function of their critique goes well beyond a call to reexamine the evidence that links diet and health. It suggests that the ordered, decentralized and impersonal process for adjudicating knowledge claims should not be so impersonal that it dismisses evidence white male scientists would be inclined to overlook in virtue of their positionality.

James Campbell argues that a similar concern is what lies behind William James' essay "The Will to Believe." James was responding to William Clifford's claim that a scientistic form of reason should govern all aspects of life. If we take James at his word, he is every bit as committed to the reality-based network as Clifford. Yet he is sensitive to the way that Peircean science constructs an epistemic position that cannot recognize a warrant derived from unique aspects of an individual's standpoint and experience. As Campbell sees it, James was attempting to open up space for anyone disinclined to place every bet with the reality-based network (Campbell 2017). There are orders in which belief cannot be fixed by the method of science. Both politics and common polity demand an epistemology that respects them, that acknowledges their reality.

While it appears that ontological parity delivers this epistemology, I am not fully satisfied. I am concerned that what I have just done is what Dotson tells us that we must not do. I have reconciled the tension between nutrition and food science and the testimony of the Sistah Vegans, but I have done so by reinterpreting that testimony. Although pragmatism is more open to taking their standpoint seriously than other philosophies, I am not clear that the position I have sketched escapes the trap of contributory injustice.

Implications and Conclusions (?)

In earlier work I have noted how liberalism creates a tension in dietary ethics. "On the one hand, people are free to accept or reject science in a liberal society, at least in so far as doing so affects only themselves. On the other hand, a restaurateur is *not* at liberty to apply idiosyncratic theories of sanitation or food safety to kitchen hygiene precisely because such practices could harm others" (Thompson 2015, 48). On the first hand, standards of scientific objectivity have been used to dismiss testimony of the oppressed. By these means, knowledge elites cultivated selective ignorance, rather than truth (Tuana 2006). People should have the liberty to think from their own standpoint when it comes to what they eat. The history of oppression arguably makes the science denial of the Sistah Vegans as different from that of vaccine hesitant white suburbanites as it is from the manipulative propaganda of Trump, Orbán or Erdoğan.

Yet there still is that second hand. Public health authorities need some sort of epistemic warrant to apply coercive measures, and we must ask whether Dotson's characterization of contributory injustice has taken that away. Queen Afua is out there selling food and health products, and she is making health claims to do it. Feminist epistemology is not viewed as exculpatory by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). If the doubts I ended the previous section with are borne out, a hermeneutic reinterpretation of the Sistah Vegans that reconciles their thinking with the reality-based network of the FDA has been ruled out of court by Dotson's account of contributory justice. As I read this account, no one is allowed to dismiss the Sistah Vegans simply because they do not follow the ten rules that Rauch lists in his account of the constitution of knowledge. Indeed, it appears that proper respect for their contribution re-

quires us to eschew any attempt at reinterpretation whatsoever.

Of course, I might be wrong about all of this. It might be possible to ameliorate the tensions I have noted without committing a contributory injustice. Dotson might not mean her analysis to go beyond the claim that previously oppressed voices deserve to be heard – a claim that can be easily reconciled with liberal democracy. Alternatively, one might argue that extending even that to the science-denying claims of the Sistah Vegans goes too far. His identity as a gay man notwithstanding, Rauch takes pains to chastise the left for its blanket endorsement of claims made by or on behalf of oppressed voices, arguing that "cancelling" becomes anti-democratic when it stifles debate over the at-issue content of these claims.

And finally, there is no sense in which I feel that I have proposed a response to the tensions I have noted, even if I am not wrong on some of these disputable points. I do not know how to respond. Rauch's comments on canceling to the contrary, I suspect my position as a white male representative of the knowledge establishment bars me from thinking that I *could* know how to respond. If I have helped to further the diagnosis of this problem, if I have exposed a tension – possibly even an antinomy – that is enough.

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READING RYDER THROUGH OPEN-MINDEDNESS

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ABSTRACT: Considered by epistemologists of virtue as an agent's disposition that leads us to true knowledge, open-mindedness can also be understood as a virtue linked to an ontological and epistemological interpretation as well as an ethical and political normative proposal. Analyzing Ryder's work through its relationship with open-mindedness allows us to enrich a theory that considers this virtue as a core philosophical concept. Furthermore, it elucidates Ryder's philosophy by showing some of its implications. This paper details relevant aspects of the relation between open-mindedness as virtue and Ryder's pragmatic naturalism.

Keywords: Open-mindedness, relational ontology, fallibilism, liberalism, democracy

Characterization of Open-mindedness as a Virtue

In the framework of a theory that looks to increase the philosophical relevance of open-mindedness as a virtue,[1] we need a precise characterization of what open-mindedness means. In order to obtain a characterization, instead of a definition, we have selected from the academic literature various, although complementary, traits.

 # 1. Impartiality and alterity.[2] A first approach to open-mindedness is close to the way it is usually used in colloquial language. According to this, as an adjective it applies to those who are able to put aside their own points of view and to attend to others' perspectives in the most impartial way possible. In Hare's definition, it "is widely held that open-mindedness involves a willingness to form and review one's views as impartially and as objectively as possible in the light of available evidence and argument" (Hare 1985, 3). An example would be the case of the scientist who, starting from certain beliefs, faces facts or theories that put them into question.

 # 2. Tenacity and experimentality. A different nuance would be one in which the person is "neutral" to different elements to be valued. This is the case of an impartial judge who, because he lacks interests or previous judgments, does not need to set aside his own opinions in order to be able to attend to different arguments. In this case, having an open mind "is manifested instead in something like a willingness to hear both sides of an issue, to follow the relevant arguments where they lead, and to refrain from making hasty or premature judgments" (Baehr 2011, 144). In # 1 the opposite of being open is being closed-minded, dogmatic, biased, or prejudiced. In the case of # 2, the vices are being impatient, lazy, not taking different perspectives seriously or drawing premature conclusions.

 # 3. Creativity. Intellectual activity is not always related to evaluation in case of conflict or disagreement. A person is also open-minded when she tries to understand a strange matter or a problem about which she lacks a position. In this sort of case, being open-minded has to do with imagining new scenarios, new answers or explanations, being original and creative. In this sense, Baehr draws attention to the ability to transcend a predetermined cognitive point of view (Baehr 2011, 152)

 # 4. Fallibilism. Adler, and then Riggs, have emphasized that being open-minded does not have so much to do with the value of beliefs (justified, true) as with the attitude (fallibilist) that the subject maintains towards their own beliefs. For Adler it is clear that being open-minded does not imply having little or weak conviction towards one's own beliefs (Adler 2004, 30). Open-mindedness means that, although I firmly believe in a position, at the same time I consider myself fallible. So, although I do not see that I may be wrong, I recognize that it cannot be entirely ruled out that I may be wrong, or at least be wrong in some part of my reasoning or convictions. In this way, Adler lays the foundations of one of the most defining features of our interpretation of open-mindedness as a virtue. This is its intrinsic link with fallibilist theses. It is the recognition of the possibility, however remote, of human error that makes it necessary to pay attention to other positions. Riggs supports this thesis: "To be open-minded is to be aware of one's fallibility as a believer, and to be willing to acknowledge the possibility that anytime one believes something, it is possible that one is wrong (Riggs 2010, 180).

[1] Some hints about this theory are in Mougan 2022.
[2] I will represent each trait by its reference, in this case #1.

5. Engagement**.** A critical aspect of the epistemic value of open-mindedness lies in having the proper moral concern. Our beliefs are strongly influenced by the concerns that guide us. That what we pay attention to, the skills we use, the reasoning we make, and the conclusions we draw, depend largely on the concerns from which we start. To be closed-minded is not a voluntary decision (generally no one considers themselves closed-minded). Rather, narrow-mindedness is the consequence of concerns and interests that are at stake, and of influences in a way that blinds us to evidence or reasoning. For Arpaly (2011, 80–82), cases such as Semmelweis' colleagues, who did not accept the evidence in favor of the relevance of handwashing to prevent infection, or permissive parents who do not accept their child's guilty behavior, or a bad driver who ignores the evidence that shows that he is a threat to other drivers, are examples that show the bias that influence cognitive processes and thereby determine their working. Then, according to Arpaly, the open-minded person "is the person whose moral concern insulates her from the pull of other concerns that would otherwise render her unresponsive to evidence, in contexts in which something morally significant might be at stake" (Arpaly 2011, 81). Arpaly stresses that open-mindedness is related to convictions being the result of moral concern. As Kwong points out, "a person is open-minded when she is willing to engage with a viewpoint that is novel to her" (Kwong 2016, 12). The absence of moral concern, the lack of moral sensitivity, blinds understanding and judgment. In this way, this epistemic virtue is intertwined and preceded by its moral consideration.

Open-mindedness and Relational Ontology

As a consequence of the above characterization, open-mindedness requires a degree of subject receptivity to the world with which it interacts. It is the objectivity factor, the constraints that the independent world of our subjective will imposes on us (# 1, # 2). But in addition to this factor there is another related to the contribution of the subject to interaction through his creativity (# 3). Both factors depend on a fallibilist attitude in a world open for human action (# 4). Objectivity and creativity are two defining elements of open-mindedness that require an interpretive framework to show their compatibility. This compatibility has been often considered impossible because it was part of the mainstream of a philosophical tradition which is based on dualisms.

The interpretation of experience that we find in Ryder's relational ontology provides a framework for open-mindedness overcoming this traditional philosophical dualism. Ryder's analysis allows us to see how open-mindedness has been trapped under paradigms dependent on modern or postmodern conceptions of experience. From a modernist perspective, open-mindedness can be interpreted in line with the concept of objectivity linked to the experimental or natural sciences. To be open-minded means to eliminate the subjectivist biases that blind the exercise of reason, the elimination of the subjective component that "closes" the mind and prevents it from seeing reality as it is (#1, # 2). In this case, we refer to the fact that we discover new features of logical principles, or natural laws, "In fact, we discover them; we do not simply invent them" (Ryder 2013, 27). But, as Ryder points out, this image of experience is simplistic and partial. Besides the element of receptivity, experience also has a creative component. This is exhibited in the arts, literature, philosophy, and is emphasized in the postmodern vision that enhances the constructive capacity of the subject. Open-mindedness is, in this postmodern perspective, linked to the creative capacity of human subjectivity and the rejection of constraints of any kind (#3). It involves stating the unlimited and unrestricted creative capacity of subjectivity, and at the same time its lack of cognitive pretensions in relation to an independent reality.

Ryder's interpretation allows us to think of open-mindedness as a way to reconcile both former interpretations. It requires overcoming the dichotomies of fact / value, natural / social science, objectivity / constructivism, all of which are characteristics of the philosophical tradi-

tion. He shows that natural science has a component of social and subjective construction, and social sciences, arts and humanities have "certain traits and not others, and so our creative interactions with them are limited by the constraints imposed by their objectively determined properties" (Ryder, 2013, 111). Ryder understands that the problem comes to us, to a large extent, because the objective has been identified with the absolute. This identification is a consequence of an ontological framework according to which the world is made up of completed and independent entities. This Newtonian model has been extended from the natural sciences to the social sciences, and to political theory. Against this he opposes his relational ontology in which what is constitutive are not the units but the relationships. For Ryder our knowledge is always contextual and conditioned, and therefore it makes no sense to speak of absolute features. "That is to say that for the traits to be determined objectively is not equivalent to traits being determined unconditionally. Objectivity in this sense means, simply, not determined by the purposes or interests of the inquirer" (Ryder 2013, 31). It follows from a relational ontology that conditionality and objectivity are not antithetical terms. Fallibility, temporality and contextuality are characteristics of our being situated in an intrinsically relational world. Consequently, for Ryder creativity and objectivity maintain a symbiotic relationship. "Objectivity provides the framework in which the creativity occurs, and creativity is the developmental process of the world, and the generation of whatever meaning and value objectively determined aspects of nature might have. Objectivity and creativity are each senseless without the other" (Ryder 2013, 111)

Ryder's ideas about subjectivity and creativity connect with our characterization of the open mind. His philosophical position reinforces open-mindedness as a virtue by understanding it not as a mere exercise of putting yourself in someone else's shoes, but as an openness to realistic recognition of the world. Open-mindedness has to do both with the ability to see and imagine new possibilities and with the recognition of the results of one's own experience. It has an aspect of creativity and another of receptivity and recognition. Open-mindedness as a virtue requires making objectivity and constructivism compatible, which in Ryder's eyes appears as one of the virtues of naturalist pragmatism: "it allows us to maintain both a defensible sense of objectivity in our understanding of nature and a satisfactory understanding of the constructivist dimension of experience and inquiry" (Ryder 2013, 76).

Ultimately, our characterization of open-mindedness finds support in Ryder's relational ontology and the appropriate framework for an interpretation of open-mindedness that goes beyond old dualisms.

The Question of Truth and Open-mindedness

A decisive and clarifying aspect about the status of open-mindedness, its meaning and limits as a virtue, lies in its relationship with truth. Some authors have questioned the need of this relationship, and have relativized the epistemological role of open-mindedness. Thus, they understand that the connection between open-mindedness and truth is accidental or, at best, conditional. From this perspective, if you have true beliefs, then there is no advantage to being open-minded over being dogmatic, since the latter would allow you to be more resistant to false opinions or arguments. It can, according to Baehr, depending on circumstances, even be a vice or a weakness (Baehr 2011, 158). Other authors try to answer this objection by showing how open-mindedness contributes, in any case, to the achievement of true beliefs. So, for example, for Kwong, "In the long run, the open-minded person will possess more true beliefs than the uncritically credulous" (Kwong 2017, 1622). In this sense, Mill's argumentative strategy is well known. For him, even being in possession of the truth, the contrast and consideration with erroneous ideas strengthens one's own points of view, making us aware of their adequacy and exercising the mind in the defense and justification of true beliefs (Mill 1977, ch. 2).

Now, this debate on open-mindedness and its relationship with truth starts from the assumption that all

knowledge is a form of belief, and assumes that there is an independent reality, a state of things, to which our beliefs and propositions refer. A new understanding of open-mindedness is possible if we adopt a different interpretation of knowledge and, consequently, of truth, linking it with the idea of inquiry. In the interpretation offered by pragmatism, the knower is seen as an active agent who is a part of the interaction or transaction between the subject and the world in which knowledge consists. In Peirce's approach, truth is understood in terms of the processes of inquiry, and beliefs are interpreted as habits. Research activities are those that arise from problems or difficulties posed by experience and are directed towards their resolution. For pragmatists, inquiry is, rather than a theoretical procedure, a mode of human behavior destined "for the controlled or directed transformation of an indeterminate situation" (Dewey 1991, 108). This is how Ryder's position can be framed. He also understands that "knowledge is not to be understood merely as justified true belief, indeed it is not to be understood as a matter of belief at all, at least not in all cases" (Ryder 2013, 107). Ryder continues the line opened by Dewey who established the continuity of art and science on the grounds that both are forms of inquiry in response to the uncertainties posed by experience. It is an aspect of Ryder's relational ontology to defend the intertwining of the different dimensions of experience and, therefore, of the cognitive and the aesthetic. As Ryder points out, the truth can be told in many ways. It may be that truth means an adequate, precise representation of an object or event, but also an idea that allows us to achieve something, to carry a business to a good purpose, or to engender an idea bringing new possibilities. The question of the truth, and consequently of open-mindedness, is not only a problem related to the natural sciences, but it is also a problem for the social sciences and the arts. In this way, Ryder understands that art has a cognitive dimension as well. This dimension cannot be reduced to the class of judgments that have an assertive content (those that establish a declarative sentence) and are propositional or representative. Aesthetic judgments often have to be evaluated in other terms. Thus, for example, might be considered as expressive judgments or those which expand our possibility of appreciating an experience by giving it a new or deeper meaning. In any case, science and art "taken together [...] enable a broader understanding of knowledge and they reflect the richness of our experience, aesthetic and otherwise" (Ryder 2013, 164).

Ryder continues the pragmatist and naturalistic tradition of knowledge as the kind of judgment that moves us forward: "If knowledge is understood as judgement that enables us to move forward, rather than as accurate reflection of reality, then our conceptions of belief and truth, and their relation to knowledge, must be correspondingly revised" (Ryder 2013, 171). In the case of the art, Ryder emphasizes, following Vattimo, the idea that truth changes us insofar as it supposes an experience with a deep meaning: "All of these and no doubt other senses of truth have in common the fact that they enable us to carry on, to move on to the next proposition, belief, insight, or experience. Until, that is, we find our way blocked. In that case our understanding or direction requires revision. In that way knowledge and understanding continually unfold, often in unanticipated ways. And in that process art no less than science is a meaningful dimension of our experience" (Ryder 2013, 176).

This characterization of knowledge agrees with a defense of the centrality of open-mindedness in relation to the truth. If the very point of open-mindedness is to open horizons, to transcend the already established (# 3), then the description of truth as provisional and linked to the forward movement makes being open-minded a significant requirement of truth. What paralyzes us, stops us from our search, blocks our ability to continue expanding our giving meaning to our experience, cannot be knowledge or truth.

Once we ignore the reduction that a certain kind of naturalism has made of the truth and we understand it as part of the human process of searching and increasing the meaning of human experience, being open-minded becomes a central disposition, not an instrumental or auxiliary one, for truth and knowledge. It is the consequence of

thinking the truth in terms not only of theory but also of action, not only of receptivity of a reality already finished but of an experience in a continuous process of re-elaboration. In a closed world, and whose meanings may simply be revealed to the human being, open-mindedness would have little relevance, a merely passive role.

Pappas (1996) within the pragmatism way of thinking reminds us of the importance of open-mindedness as a virtue, and of how it requires a conception of the world and knowledge. Virtues are habits that result of the individual's interaction with the world. Open-mindedness alludes to, on the subject's side, the development of a disposition that has to do with flexibility, plasticity, the ability to establish new adjustments, and a new harmonic relationship with the environment. “Openness makes a character flexible and readaptable when a change of direction or modification in our beliefs and habits is needed” (Pappas 1996, 327). On the other hand, open-mindedness manifests, and it is a consequence of, a world that is dynamic, evolutionary, plural, characterized by the emergence of novelties, marked by contingency. In short, the open mind shows us the precarious and open nature of the experience in which it acquires its full meaning.

The Political Dimension of Open-mindedness

One of the implications of Ryder’s relational ontology is that the individual is made up of relations and relationships. Discussing the ontological priority of the individual or society is meaningless because it ignores that one and the other constitute each other. So, “persons, like other living beings, are embedded in and constituted by their surroundings” (Ryder 2022, 194[3]). As far as this perspective is concerned, the consequence is that an individual cannot be open-minded by himself alone. The individual of whom the open mind is preached is part of a community in which there are social practices that condition our way of thinking and knowing the world. For Kawall (2002, 259), virtue epistemologists have focused their attention on the analysis of the knowledge of individuals, showing how to overcome skeptical arguments, but leaving aside the fact that knowledge is produced in a context situated socially and within an epistemic community. Once we take this dimension into account, we can affirm that having an open mind is, consequently, both individual and collective work, both the result of a personal moral concern and of a collective and educational process that tries to avoid the presence of prejudices, biases particularistic or partial or selfish interests.

A social and political reading of open-mindedness features, complements and supports Ryder’s political philosophy. He thinks that one of the virtues of his pragmatic naturalism is that it “enables us to avoid ideology.” For Ryder ideology means “a tenacious commitment to one’s concepts, perspectives, and ideas regardless of evidence and experience. Ideologies, both religious and political, have been responsible for more suffering and evil than can be noted here” (Ryder 2013, 51). Bernstein (2013), within the pragmatist tradition, emphasized in the same sense that it is the absence of an experimental and fallibilist mentality (# 2, # 4) that leads us to evil, to the dangers of totalitarianism and imperialism. The imposition of one's own points of view, no matter how valid they seem to us, as a political practice in international relations, especially by the US and the colonizing western countries, is repeatedly criticized by Ryder. We can say, in the terminology of this perspective, that for Ryder open-mindedness is a corrective to ideology. He stands against those who cling to values and principles in international relations that become ideological elements: “One of the shortcomings of all traditional approaches is that they are conducive to the development of an ideological commitment to whichever values they endorse” (Ryder 2013, 52).

This idea becomes even clearer if we look at international relations from Ryder's interpretation of democracy. Ryder refers to Dewey’s *Democracy and Education* to point out that democracy involves the cultivation of common interests with members of the community itself, but

[3] This is the reference for Ryder’s forthcoming book that will be published as *Philosophy of Education: Thinking and Learning through History and Practice* by Rowman & Littlefield in 2022. All page references are to the manuscript pages.

also beyond its limits and borders. The most determining component of the definition of democracy offered by Dewey/Ryder is that it consists of "the pursuit of common interests." More than institutions or principles, what democracy needs is individuals with the capacity to pursue such interests. "A democratic individual in this sense is someone who is inclined to look beyond his community to seek common ground, common interests, with members of other communities; a democratic society is one that is characterized by public policies and social habits that promote the pursuit of shared interests within and across its many internal boundaries and beyond its national borders" (Ryder 2013, 188). If finding common interests is a distinctive trait of democracy, then the cultivation of an open-mind is central in democracy. And it is because democracy, and open-mindedness, demand of us that we not allow ourselves to be locked up by our own interests, but to transcend the limits of our own world (# 1, # 3, #5).

Again, it is the relational conception, as opposed to modernist atomism, which lays the foundations for the new way of understanding international relations and which endows open-mindedness with a broader dimension. The characterization of democracy as a way of life reinforces the relevance of open-mindedness. Following Dewey, it is said that democracy does not imply rejecting the importance of institutions, of the mechanisms of election and selection of power, but it does emphasize that without citizenship that incorporates democratic habits, spirit and talent, democracy cannot exist. Or, to put the point another way, that the former is a necessary but not sufficient condition for there to be true democracy. What allows us to justify the claim that open-mindedness is a democratic virtue in Ryder's philosophy is that according to him, it is important not so much to adhere to the ideological principles of democracy as it is to behave democratically (Ryder 2013, 182). Evidence of this argument can be found in his separation of himself from those who affirm the superiority of the democratic way of life. In fact, Ryder claims "there are millions of intelligent and morally trustworthy people who prefer other political arrangements" (Ryder 2020, 21). He points out that also in democracy we can find situations that hinder the development of people's potentialities. Hence, he wants to be attentive to the recognition of other socio-political realities in order to avoid dogmatic bias. We may, he says, be content with the claim that "democracy is a desirable way of life that is conducive to the development in all relevant respects of those who live in it, and leave open the possibility that other people may do just as well in other situations" (Ryder 2013, 181).

For Ryder democracy requires, first, open-mindedness, sensitivity to experience, consideration of alternative possibilities, and creative solutions (# 1 – # 5): "Democracy, in other words, rests not on blind custom, nor on dogma, nor on rigid ideology, nor on clichés and slogans, but on the exercise of our collective capacity to study ourselves and our world, to perceive its problems, and to apply in our lives a mode of interaction that opens to the possibility of new and creative solutions. That is the exercise of intelligence, and it is a necessary feature of democracy" (Ryder 2013, 185). Sharing the same Deweyan idea of democracy as a way of life, Pappas has shown how open-mindedness can only really exist in an experimental and democratic community. "But we do not form our habits in a vacuum; certain social conditions and environmental and communal activities makes possible certain dispositions. For example, open- mindedness requires engaging in activities where there is open communication" (Pappas 2016, 329)

In short, open-mindedness allows us to see the continuity between epistemic and political problems and it becomes a determining virtue in Ryder's political philosophy. It is a consequence of adopting a relational ontology, a fallibilist conception of knowledge and of interpreting democracy as a way of life that seeks the pursuit of common interests.

Relational Ontology, Open-mindedness and Philosophy of Education

If there has been an area in which the reference to open-mindedness as virtue has had any resonance, it has been

in education.[4] Two aspects of Ryder's contributions to our analysis of open-mindedness are remarkable in this context. On the one hand are the implications of his relational ontology and epistemology in the curricular areas of education. On the other hand, there is his understanding of the nature and objectives of education and, consequently, of civic and democratic education.

In relation to the first, Ryder's relational ontology affirms that it makes no sense to think of reality, as modern philosophy did, as individual atomic entities which are independently constituted, and then come to be related to one another. A relational ontology applies to every existing thing, and to each and every one of the classes (Ryder 2013, 186). The consequences of this approach lead Ryder to consider how wrong it is to think about the different disciplines that are studied in the curricula separately or in isolation. "It is not so much that the disciplines are constitutively related to one another, though they are, but that the aspects of the world that they study are constitutively related to one another, and if we treat them in isolation, we will never understand them well" (Ryder 2022,189). Moreover, for Ryder if all entities do not maintain a hierarchical relationship with each other, but are in a relationship of parity, it makes no sense to point out that one prevails over another. "Existential parity, we might say, implies parity in intellectual value among subjects of study" (ibid.,192). Hence it makes no sense to think that, for example, the natural sciences study a more real object than theater or painting. They are all important in some sense or in some context. A better understanding of the world requires integrating diverse perspectives, not neglecting any of them: "But if we have good reason to hold that because nothing is more real than anything else, from which it would follow that a literary or theatrical construct is no less real than a non-fictional person, then all this changes" (ibid.,188).

Furthermore, and digging deeper into the relational nature of experience, Ryder articulates his interpretation through the cognitive, aesthetic and political dimensions of experience. These dimensions do not exist separately from each other but rather are intertwined. This means that the aesthetic is as constitutive a dimension of our experience as the propositionally cognitive and, consequently, it cannot be considered a marginal or decorative element of the curriculum. On the other hand, if a dimension of power exists alongside the cognitive, then education cannot be a passive learning process, but it must involve an active commitment of the student in the educational process so that he experiences the influence of his action in the world (Ryder 2022, 197).

These considerations help us to specify the meaning and importance of educating in open-mindedness. Educating in open-mindedness requires paying attention to relationships, seeing things in their interrelations, and understanding them in their complexity (# 1 – # 5). "The education we provide our students will be enriched to the extent that we can embed the information we wish to teach, in principle in any subject, in the arts and in creative activity" (Ryder 2022, 209). Ryder himself provides us with examples to illustrate how considering the relationship between the different dimensions of experience enrich our knowledge. Thus, if we want to understand the impact of war on civil life, literature or painting can be more illustrative than knowledge of data (see the case of Picasso's Guernica): "There are ways that painting, music, literature, and all the arts capture and exhibit aspects of the world and of our experience that are not available through any other medium" (ibid., 210). The importance of disciplines thus becomes a contextual issue. In each situation, and based on the complexity and relationality of what exists, one element or a set of relationships can be emphasized over others. Consequently, educating in open-mindedness means promoting the disposition to see things in their complexity, paying more attention to relationships than to disciplines, and recognizing that we find in each experience the integration of its different components, the cognitive, the aesthetic or the political (#1, #4).

Finally, there is nothing more appropriate to our interest in highlighting the relevance of open-mindedness

[4] Keep in mind Hare 1983.

than the very definition that Ryder, following Dewey, offers of the objectives of education: “the nature of education is to enhance experience.” So, “to enhance experience is to contribute to the capacity each of us has to master the conditions of our lives, to construct their meaning according to our own lights, and to guide the course of our lives in ways that are consistent with our own ends and purposes” (Ryder 2022, 206). If the objective of intelligence is to expand the meaning of experience and to enrich it, then open-mindedness, as we have characterized it, is the central virtue that make it possible. All institutions, and especially the educative, must be judged by the way in which their practices contribute to cultivation of open-mindedness.

Now, this is precisely the way in which the objectives of liberal education have been characterized: the development of the personality itself.[5] A liberal education, and consequently a liberal society, is one that encourages individuals not to be locked up and trapped in the community, in the traditions, ideas, opinions and interests of the community itself, but cultivates the arts and science in a way that enables the forging of more generic interests. Nussbaum (1998) considers three skills to define liberal education, and two of them coincide with our characterization of the open-mind: ability of critical examination of oneself and one’s own tradition (#1, #4), and “narrative imagination” (#3). Hence, according to our proposal, the civic cultivation of open-mindedness would then be one of the characteristics of a liberal education. Ryder also agrees with this characterization of the liberal spirit: “For example, among the meanings we would ascribe to ‘liberal’ as a moral or value concept is flexibility and expansiveness of outlook” (Ryder 2020, 24). Furthermore, as we have noted, Ryder has emphasized that the foundation of democracy lies in the construction of common interests with members of other communities. For this reason, a democratic policy will have to be internationalist in its orientation and, consequently, so should an education in accordance with the democratic spirit: “A democratic society is, to put it differently, necessarily internationalist in its orientation. It promotes international understanding, competence in foreign languages, cosmopolitan values, international cooperation, and diplomacy; in short, it pursues common interests with those beyond its borders. This is not easy to do, especially in a somewhat hostile environment […] Nonetheless, this is what is required” (Ryder 2013, 189). Therefore, the civic cultivation of open-mindedness, according to Ryder´s position, would be one of the central characteristics of a liberal and democratic education.

This raises the problem of how to approach conflict with those who reject cultivating open-mindedness because they consider it to be a way to weaken the truth. We have already mentioned that Ryder wants to solve the problem with non-democratic communities by considering the spirit of open-mindedness, the construction of common interests, to be more important than the attachment to ideologies and principles. The rejection by certain groups and parents of civic, liberal and democratic education is based on the idea that it is a type of education that weakens true beliefs and the access to the truth. Thus, they defend a kind of dogmatic education. Naturally, the concrete response to this problem cannot be but strategic and contextual, abandoning the dispute in terms of principles. This strategy does not avoid the problem that education for citizenship raises for a democratic society. Cultivating open-mindedness is something intrinsically desirable for democratic citizens, in formal, non-formal or informal education, in its mandatory and its optional stages. In order to be coherent, the only available possibility is the promotion and defense of educating in open-mindedness, and accepting that doing so entails a conflict with dogmatism and censorship. This is even a more important issue in case of minors to whom liberal society has a commitment and a responsibility. This idea seems, initially, to contradict Ryder's defense, considered earlier, that we should be respectful to those who reject the democratic way of life, who believe that cultivating open-minded-

[5] For an explanation of this sentence and its roots see Mougan 2016.

ness is a mistake. However, despite the ambiguity in his texts on the matter, it is possible to read Ryder as a defender of the primacy of public responsibility of cultivating open-mindedness over the will of dogmatic parents. The following texts from Ryder comes to our aid: "The default position, therefore, should be clear, and that is that an educational institution has a responsibility to expose students to the range of ideas and behavior that human beings have devised, even ideas and behavior that students and their teachers may be convinced is mistaken or even immoral. Educators do not hide from mistakes and immorality. Rather we have a social responsibility to engage and correct them, and to enable our students to do the same" (Ryder 2022, 250–251). As a consequence, we must be as open-minded as circumstances allow, but also defend the liberal cultivation of the mind. "Those of us who identify with moral liberalism and the possibilities it engenders should be expected to apply its flexibility and broad-mindedness sufficiently to be able to respect and acknowledge the wishes of those who prefer otherwise. But that fact does not preclude us from exerting the efforts required to defend liberalism when it is threatened" (Ryder 2020, 21). This responsibility with open-mindedness has to be extended to those groups that want to avoid considering different perspectives and, therefore, want to educate in dogmatism. This proposal is effective not only for religious or private education, but also, as Ryder himself indicates, for those states that want to instill in students certain visions of community or history as occurs in some authoritarian or nationalist societies. Likewise, we could consider that education for exclusively commercial and labor purposes is nothing more than a new type of dogmatic education which closes minds. These considerations have been extended by Ryder to the realm of the university, freeing it both from the rhetoric of the ivory tower and also from its subordination to private or mercantile interests (Ryder 2013, 231–238).

The goal of education, according to Ryder, should be to empower people with the necessary knowledge and skills to control their own living conditions in the pursuit of having a richer and more meaningful experience. Furthermore, we have already seen that an open mind requires a type of commitment to the world (# 5). Consequently, the defense of its cultivation is not a morally neutral education but rather one committed to the development of intelligence and the growth of the meaning of experience.

Conclusion

Open-mindedness is not just a requirement for the advancement of knowledge. It is also a way to understand our experience, our relationship with the world, and a transformation of reality to make it more enriching and democratic. Considering open-mindedness as a philosophically relevant virtue, beyond its strictly epistemological value, requires an interpretive framework. Ryder's relational ontology and a fallibilist interpretation of knowledge, which recognizes both the constraints of reality and the active role of the agent, provide this framework. In addition, the characterization of open-mindedness as a virtuous habit is consistent with Ryder's defense of democracy as a way of life and the search for common interests. Educating in open-mindedness, the cultivation of this virtue, becomes the axis of a normative proposal for a society that wants to be liberal and democratic. Ryder's work is a support for those of us who want to defend the centrality of this virtue, and it is as well an example of a philosophy built with an open-minded spirit.

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DEVELOPING A PRAGMATIST PHILOSOPHY OF THE HUMANITIES

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ABSTRACT: It is widely maintained that the ontological status of the research objects of the humanities is unclear in comparison to the ontology of the natural sciences. In what sense is humanistic research "about" elements of reality, such as the meanings of texts and other documents, or historical facts and events? This paper proposes, at a general and programmatic level, that a comprehensive pragmatist philosophy of the humanities should be developed. In addition to clarifying the question of realism regarding the ontology and epistemology of the humanities, such a pragmatist philosophy of the humanities could also significantly contribute to the on-going debates on the value and impact of the humanities. Some specific issues concerning exemplary sub-disciplines within the philosophy of the humanities, such as the philosophy of literary theory, the philosophy of historiography, and the philosophy of religious studies, will also be raised.

Keywords: pragmatism, realism, pragmatic realism, humanities, philosophy of humanities, ontology, inquiry

Introduction

In this essay, I sketch a program for a *pragmatist philosophy of the humanities*, i.e., a philosophical account of the basic character, research objects, and general ontology of humanistic inquiry from the perspective of pragmatism. Such a position cannot be formulated in a single paper, but I will offer a brief prolegomenon.[1] My topic is wide-ranging, as I am proposing to examine the humanities in general, yet specific, because my articulation of the nature of the humanities is based on pragmatism. More precisely, a pragmatist philosophy of the humanities should, I believe, build upon a specific "Kantian" version of pragmatism.

As a concept naming a field of study, "philosophy of the humanities" is rarely encountered – at least in comparison to expressions such as "philosophy of physics", "philosophy of biology", or "philosophy of economics". "Philosophy of social science" is, of course, a well-established field, while "philosophy of the humanities" can hardly be regarded as such.[2] As a first approximation, we may understand by "the philosophy of the humanities" the application of the problems, ideas, and arguments originally developed in general philosophy of science and theory of inquiry to humanistic inquiry in particular.[3]

Moreover, insofar as the humanities must be defended in global academia today, as many scholars seem to think,[4] it may be argued that we need a philosophy of the humanities in order to ground and systematize our attempts to articulate and defend the nature and value of the humanities also in more practical contexts of academic life. Therefore, explorations in the philosophy of the humanities may serve "political" goals, too, though that is not an aim of this essay. My chief intention here is to sketch a philosophical approach for understanding more deeply what the humanities are about. Yet, it should be acknowledged that the humanities may indeed seem to be in the need of a defense protecting them from both "external" and "internal" threats, including *technocratic instrumentalism* viewing all research in terms of practical utility, *reductionist scientism* considering only the fundamental physical sciences to be able to "limn the true and ultimate structure of reality" (quoting a phrase by W.V.O. Quine), and *radical postmodern relativism*, which might collapse the

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[1] I am particularly delighted to be able to honor John Ryder's philosophical career and many achievements with this modest contribution, as the topic of my paper touches (at least) two among his many interests: the tradition of pragmatism and pragmatic naturalism, as well as the development of academia and higher education. Pragmatist philosophy of the humanities might be articulated, in general terms, as an investigation of the relation between pragmatism (or pragmatic naturalism) and humanism; on this complex relation, see Ryder 2013, 287–295.

[2] Faye (2012) defends a "naturalistic reconstruction" of the humanities. Leiden University hosts an MA program in the philosophy of the humanities: https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/en/education/study-programmes/master/philosophy-120ec/philosophy-of-humanities.

[3] I am not providing any explicit definition of "the humanities" here; the boundary between the humanities and the social sciences (and other fields of inquiry) may be fuzzy, but this does not prevent academics from understanding very well what we mean by the humanities. Ostensively, we may characterize the humanities as whatever it is that people affiliated at faculties of arts as well as other relevant faculties, including law and theology, are typically engaged in at universities all over the world.

[4] For a comprehensive report on the global status of humanities, see Holm et al. 2015. While Holm and his colleagues discuss the nature and value of the humanities, their approach is not particularly philosophical. See also online resources on the humanities, such as the HERA (Humanities in the European Research Area) website: http://heranet.info/.

humanities "from within" by suggesting that there is no room for rational and critical scholarly discussion as everything – including the fundamental criteria of rational thought – is relative to interpretation, discourse, or historical circumstances. Pragmatism is, I argue, able to offer such a balanced defense, especially by taking seriously the *ontology* of humanistic scholarship. While my version of pragmatism does not explicitly follow John Ryder's (2013) pragmatic naturalism, I see his project and mine in many ways congenial.

The philosopher of the humanities need not directly engage in, say, the philosophy of art (or philosophy of literature), the philosophy of history, or the philosophy of religion. In relation to such sub-disciplines of philosophy, the philosophy of the humanities adopts a meta-level standpoint that is simultaneously more abstract and more concrete. It is *more abstract* in the sense that it does not directly ask what, e.g., literature, history, or religion are but more indirectly what, e.g., literary theorists, historians, and scholars of religion (*qua* humanistic scholars) are or ought to be doing when investigating the "reality" studied in their fields. Thus, philosophy of the humanities is concerned with the nature of literature, history, and religion *qua* objects of humanistic inquiry. It is also *more concrete* in the sense that it may examine the *practices* of humanistic disciplines themselves instead of abstract philosophical predefinitions of what such disciplines are "about", aiming at an increased pragmatist understanding of the activities of the humanistic inquiries focusing on, say, literature, history, and religion.

Thus, while the philosopher of art and literature may ask interesting questions about the nature of literary works, the philosopher of the humanities asks questions about the nature of the scholarship in literary theory and criticism that studies literary works. While the philosopher of history may inquire into, say, historical progress and teleology (or the lack thereof) in the development of civilizations, philosophy of the humanities asks questions about the nature and object of historiography; the goal is not the interpretation of history but a philosophical interpretation of what is, or should be, going on in scholarly interpretations of history. Furthermore, instead of contributing to the philosophy of religion characterized by questions concerning, say, the nature of religious language or the relation between faith and reason, the philosopher of the humanities seeks to enhance our understanding of theology and religious studies as fields of inquiry into religion.

Why Study the Philosophy of the Humanities?

It is widely felt by scholars across the humanities that the humanistic disciplines constantly need to define and redefine themselves in the contemporary academy. Some fear that they may face the danger of being reduced to other (more obviously "relevant") fields or narrowed down in the interest of practical applications and "useful knowledge", and in many countries the resources of the humanities have been cut down. A major worry, in brief, is that the humanities may be losing their own "voice" in the academy, at least in comparison to their central position in traditional Humboldtian universities. The *impact* of the humanities – in its different meanings and across different time scales – is thus constantly discussed, for good reasons. A pragmatist analysis of the status, objects, aims, and value of the humanities may crucially enlighten these discussions and offer a novel way of accounting for the distinctive impact potential of the humanities. It is, moreover, important to study the humanities in general, as many of the problems concerning the humanistic disciplines are common to most or all of these fields, though we may also illustrate the pragmatist approach with reference to the three traditional areas of scholarship mentioned above, i.e., literary theory and criticism, history, and theology or religious studies.

One source for the worry – perhaps primarily among humanistic scholars themselves – that the humanities are not taken sufficiently seriously as "sciences" might be the idea that the *ontological* status of the objects of research in the humanities is less clear than the ontological status of natural-scientific objects. The meanings of texts, for

instance, are (presumably) ontologically more obscure entities than electrons or genes. Therefore, a philosophical question concerning the existence of cultural entities as objects of inquiry needs to be posed. The philosophy of the humanities should focus on fundamental ontological and epistemic issues about the humanities, and I am suggesting that it should do so in a pragmatist context defined by the understanding of ontology itself as ineliminably pragmatic (cf. Pihlström 2009).

The pragmatic frameworks of humanistic inquiry manifest remarkable differences in the ontological status of the objects of study within different fields of the humanities. Literary theorists are concerned with works of literature and their meaningful structures, as well as, e.g., the representational relations they bear on historical and/or contemporary social and political issues, while historians examine what happened in the past, why it happened, and why something else did not happen. Theologians and religious studies scholars may investigate the meanings and representations present in religious documents, practices, and institutions from a variety of historical, textual, and systematic points of view. It is not clear that the ontological questions concerning the existence of these different types of entities – i.e., meanings in works of art, past events, and religious representations – are the same.[5] Pragmatism proves useful in its ability to acknowledge not only the methodological but also the ontological *pluralism* of the research fields considered. Insofar as we have good philosophical reasons to believe in the reality of, say, literary meanings, historical events, or interpretive possibilities, our world is considerably *richer* than the world as seen from the perspective of the natural sciences merely. On the other hand, humanistic inquiry ought to be compatible with a reasonably comprehensive natural-scientific picture of the world (cf. Faye 2012; Ryder 2013). For example, the scholar of theology can by no means presuppose the existence of God or other religious "realities" that their objects of study – e.g., religious documents, dogmas, individual believers, or social groups – may postulate but must critically examine those postulations. Indeed, ontological postulations of various kinds – ways of thinking about the existence (or non-existence, as the case might be) of various types of entities – may themselves be among the objects of inquiry in the humanities.

In a comprehensive philosophy of the humanities, the relations between humanistic scholarship and the "world" that scholarship aims at representing, understanding, and explaining are therefore complex, because this "world" also contains human beings' (e.g., literary or religious) attempts to "know" something about the reality they (we) live in, and those cognitive pursuits themselves also need to be critically explored, in relation to the very attempt to study the philosophical foundations of humanistic scholarship generally. This *reflexive* structure is nicely manifested in historiography, in particular: the writing of history is itself a historically evolving element of the historicity of human beings. What we need, then, is a philosophy of the humanities investigating the nature of our scholarly endeavors seeking to understand (e.g.) the literary, historical, and religious aspects of human beings' "being-in-the-world" (to adopt a Heideggerian expression out of context) in their reflexive complexity. Humanistic scholars seek to understand human practices that are themselves (purportedly) *about* the world, and the philosophical assessment of those practices necessarily includes an assessment of their successes and failures in this "aboutness".

Why Pragmatism?

In comparison to the plethora of scholarship available on, e.g., the philosophy of historiography in general, specifically pragmatist contributions have been few and

[5] Religious studies and theology are typically *not* directly concerned with questions about the existence of supernatural or transcendent beings (which are, rather, a concern of religion itself); these fields need to operate within an ontology that may resemble both literary studies (meaningful textual structures) and history (past events), a cultural ontology, in short. A naturalist account of religion – based on, e.g., John Dewey's non-reductive pragmatic naturalism (cf. also Ryder 2013; Pihlström 2013) – should critically investigate how exactly scholarly perspectives on religious practices and their practitioners' experiences are related to religious worldviews themselves (see also several essays in Bagger 2018, especially Proudfoot 2018 and Davis 2018).

far between. In the philosophy of historiography, Morton White (2002) invokes what he labels holistic pragmatism, and Joseph Margolis has written extensively on the "flux" of history.[6] Furthermore, while Giles Gunn (2014, 2017) proposes a pragmatist approach to the study of literature, probably the best-known pragmatist philosopher of literary theory, and of the humanities generally, is Richard Rorty. His antirepresentationalist neopragmatism famously emphasizes the utter contingency of our historicity, especially the ways we speak about and conceptualize reality – in a sense extending a broadly "Kuhnian" understanding of the historicity of the development of the sciences (cf. Kuhn 1970 [1962]) to philosophy and human culture generally, proposing an "ironist" attitude to the contingency of even our most fundamental "final vocabularies" – while also creatively engaging with some of the most profound literary works of modern times (see Rorty 1989). However, whereas Rorty's radical pragmatism certainly needs to be taken seriously by the pragmatist philosopher of the humanities, it is not easy to find any systematic account of the humanities in his work. Furthermore, although there is also a lot of discussion available on pragmatism as applied to religion, in most cases this is primarily pragmatist philosophy of religion rather than pragmatist philosophy of theology and religious studies (see, however, Bagger 2018).

However, pragmatism is considerably better suited to the task of philosophically understanding the nature and value of the humanities than, e.g., "pure" analytic philosophy, hermeneutics, or phenomenology, because the pragmatist tradition has developed a *general theory of inquiry* not restricted to either the natural sciences or the humanities (or any other specific field of inquiry). The concept of inquiry, as articulated by pragmatists, is extremely broad yet distinctive. Pragmatism provides philosophical tools for developing a general conception of rational inquiry applicable to humanistic inquiry in particular, and to investigating what is characteristic of such inquiry, without sacrificing the claims to objectivity and truth (pragmatically and humanly speaking) that must characterize any rational inquiry.

Pragmatists, early and late, have formulated sophisticated approaches to general epistemology and philosophy of science integrating insights from both *realism*, affirming the mind- and theory-independence of reality as an object of research, and what we may call *constructivism*, emphasizing the constitutive contribution of human practices of inquiry to the emergence of the objects of investigation.[7] We may ask to what extent a *pragmatic realism* offering a middle path between strong realism and radical constructivism is available in the philosophy of the humanities. This basic issue entangling pragmatism and realism can be tackled in a number of specific dimensions, potentially also leading to a careful critical re-evaluation of the ways we think about, e.g., rationality, progress, and impact in the context of humanistic inquiries.[8]

Precisely in its attempt to integrate realism with constructivism, pragmatism is an inherently pluralistic philosophy and therefore well equipped to take up the task of systematizing the structure of humanistic scholarship in a thoroughly anti-foundationalist framework recognizing the irreducible historicity of human culture, including our inquiries into that historicity. It is, we may argue, only within an overall pragmatist framework that we can avoid the opposite challenges of reductive naturalism or

[6] Special issues of *European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy* and *Journal of the Philosophy of History* have recently been devoted to pragmatism in historiography, offering perspectives on both pragmatist classics' views on history and the ways in which the methods of historiography might be developed along pragmatist lines (Gronda and Viola 2016; Kuukkanen et al. 2019). Margolis is among the contributors of the latter collection.

[7] See, e.g., several articles collected in Shook 2003; Frega 2011; Knowles and Rydenfelt 2011; Westphal 2014; and Pihlström 2017.

[8] It is one of the virtues of the pragmatist approach that the systematic entanglements of realism with other philosophical problems across the humanities (and other fields) can also be made explicit. Regarding scientific realism, I mostly rely on Niiniluoto 1999; for a pragmatistically informed account of scientific realism, see, however, Kitcher 2012. General discussions of realism rarely specifically comment on the realism issue in the humanities. Realism has of course been intensively debated in the philosophy of social science and its sub-fields, including philosophy of economics (see, e.g., Bhaskar 1979; Mäki 2005, 2007), but again pragmatism is usually not acknowledged in those debates.

scientism (culminating in the view that cultural phenomena are in the end "nothing over and above" natural or even physical phenomena, based on biological or eventually just physical contingencies and laws of nature)[9] and radical relativism or historicism (claiming that the humanities can reach no objectivity, or no realistic truth about their objects of study, because they are always open to multiple historically developing interpretive traditions).[10] A pragmatist philosophy of the humanities should secure a critical middle path between these – and many other – implausible extremes. In this respect, my favorite brand of pragmatism, or pragmatic realism, shares, for example, Paisley Livingston's (1988) project of defending (moderate) realism about literary theory – analogous to non-reductive scientific realism – though unfortunately Livingston makes no reference whatsoever to pragmatism. Pragmatism could even emerge as a *sine qua non* of a successful account of realism in the philosophy of the humanities, insofar as a plausible form of realism avoiding the pitfalls of both reductionism and radical relativism can, arguably, in the end be developed *only* on pragmatist grounds.[11]

Furthermore, the pragmatist philosopher of the humanities focusing on the ontology and epistemology of the humanities – and the realism issue largely defining that focus – can suggest, in striking contrast to many neopragmatists' (e.g., Rorty's) anti-metaphysical characterizations of pragmatism, that pragmatism ought to be developed in the philosophy of the humanities in an *ontologically serious* manner (cf. Pihlström 2009). Ontology is relevant here not despite pragmatism but because of it – and this insight is crucial for developing an understanding of pragmatism itself that avoids the naïve conception of pragmatism as a merely instrumental philosophy of "useful consequences".

One of the main reasons why we need a unified philosophy of the humanities is, indeed, that the ontological status of the objects of inquiry in the humanities remains unclear. My pragmatist proposal here emphasizes the role played by the *valuational* activities of humanistic inquirers in the constitution of their objects of study. Pragmatist metaphysics generally takes very seriously the valuational perspectives from which ontologies are constituted. We human beings – in particular, in our role as inquirers, both in the humanities and more generally – "select" the objects we focus our attention on, and this purposive selection is ontologically relevant. No object of study comes "ready-made" to us; the inquirer needs to be active in *constituting* the object of inquiry in order for that inquiry to be so much as *possible*. This is particularly clear in the philosophy of history, for example, where it can be argued that the historian selects past events that are worth examining on the basis of her/his scholarly interests and values.[12] But the same holds for any inquiry, even to the extent that all fields of inquiry can be regarded as "human sciences" in the sense of being based on values (cf., e.g., Putnam 1981, 2002; Margolis 1995).

However, it is a fundamental insight of pragmatic *realism* that this value-embeddedness of our inquiries does not entail that, say, historiography could be reduced to writing something like imaginative literary narratives (cf. Hayden White 1973). We cannot deny the dimension of realistic objectivity to our inquiries that are themselves value-laden and interest-driven processes but nevertheless aim at humanly speaking objective knowledge about elements of the real world that we

[9] In the critique of scientism and reductionism, pragmatism may of course find allies from philosophical approaches not based on pragmatism. For insightful critical examinations of the problems of scientism and for defenses of a more pluralistic understanding of humanity, see, e.g., Sorell 1991 and Dupré 2001.

[10] The concept of *relativism* itself needs to be specified from a pragmatist point of view. There are very different relativisms – e.g., conceptual and epistemic – available, and for the pragmatist philosophy of the humanities it is vital to study in detail which of them may be benign and which ones need to be firmly abandoned.

[11] Properly arguing for this strong claim would only be possible as a result of a far more comprehensive undertaking, though; as noted earlier, here I can only provide a prolegomenon to a properly pragmatist philosophy of the humanities.

[12] When speaking of values, I intend that notion to be taken in a broad sense, in principle including not only ethical but also epistemic and aesthetic values. Pragmatist theory of values and valuation is an important field in its own right, but cannot be engaged in here in any detail. White's (2002) holistic pragmatism applies this valuational view to the constitution of historical facts.

may (within our valuational practices themselves) regard as existing independently of the inquirers' minds and theories. Pragmatism, in short, is the only philosophy of inquiry that is able to maintain sufficiently robust realism and objectivity while acknowledging the irreducibly valuational nature of inquiry. Moreover, pragmatists have from early on insisted on the need to investigate values rationally, critically, and objectively; values are not to be reduced to mere subjective preferences but are themselves subject to pragmatically conducted rational inquiry (see, e.g., Putnam 2002, 2016). Values, in short, are among the objects to be rationally investigated within the humanities.

Pragmatism, by offering us a plausible general philosophy of inquiry – not only of scientific inquiry but inquiry as an element of human life and societies in general – with smooth transitions between the philosophy of science, ethics, metaphysics, the philosophy of religion, and other fields, differs from, say, phenomenology or hermeneutics in *not* being restricted to analyzing human experience and humanistic understanding. Pragmatism, rather, synthesizes, unites, and integrates realism with relativism and constructivism, explanation with understanding, and natural causes with normative reasons and values – thus overcoming dichotomies that have been taken to be fundamental to the distinction between the sciences and the humanities, viz., dichotomies that other philosophical accounts of science and the humanities usually rely on instead of transcending. Furthermore, pragmatism is able to appreciate both the relative autonomy of philosophy itself (i.e., its irreducibility to any special humanistic disciplines) and the continuity between philosophy and the special disciplines, both natural and human sciences.

As the pragmatist typically understands ontology generally in relation to human practices structured by their interests and goals, guiding the relevance criteria needed for anything whatsoever to be capable of being regarded as real, we may say that to be real is to be practice-embeddedly considered real for definite pragmatic purposes within normatively guided practices of inquiry. The relation between natural (material) reality and humanly created cultural reality can, then, be plausibly examined within the pragmatist framework that recognizes the plurality of human interests and practices – much more plausibly than within monistic philosophies privileging some particular viewpoint (e.g., narrowly conceived analytic philosophy, phenomenology, or hermeneutics).[13] Pragmatism, therefore, also provides us with a uniquely plausible account of why and how we need to be (ethically, valuationally) committed to the *pursuit of truth* also in the humanities, in which pursuing the truth may be much more deeply controversial than, e.g., the truth-seeking methods of the natural sciences are. This controversiality is not a sign of the "immaturity" of the humanities as "sciences" but follows from their character as precisely the kind of value-laden practices they are. Pragmatism can make sense of this value-ladenness in the pursuit of truth, because it starts from an understanding of any human activity as a value-driven practice.

I have referred to pragmatism in an extremely general manner, without specifying the kind of pragmatism I am proposing for the philosophy of the humanities. The pragmatist philosophy of the humanities need not be firmly based on any single pragmatist classic's views. The historical canon of the tradition, running from the late 19th and early 20th century founding figures Peirce, James, and Dewey via mediating thinkers such as Jane Addams, C. I. Lewis, and Sidney Hook to later pragmatists including Putnam, Rorty, White, Margolis, Hans Joas, and Susan Haack, and all the way to contemporary pragmatism scholarship in its multidisciplinary variety, not only provides ample resources for philosophical explorations of the humanities but is full of tensions. I will next very briefly explicate my own commitment to pragmatism in this context by outlining just one major aspect of the pragmatist philosophy of the humanities I am proposing: "Kantian" (transcendental) pragmatism, yielding a specific view on the relation between pragmatism and realism.

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[13] However, I am not proposing pragmatism as a *rival* to these philosophies. Rather, a critical dialogue on the abilities of all these approaches to sustain a critical philosophy of the humanities ought to be encouraged.

"Kantian Pragmatism" and Pragmatic Realism

Particularly in the interest of articulating the value-ladenness of the ontologies of humanistic inquiry, we should, I believe, develop a "Kantian" version of pragmatism, locating the roots of pragmatism – both historically and in a more systematic-argumentative sense – in Kantian critical philosophy. According to such a transcendental pragmatism, our purpose-driven human practices provide contextually necessary (transcendental) conditions for the possibility of the kinds of entities postulated within them.[14] Roughly, our participation in shared practices – or what Ludwig Wittgenstein called the human "form of life" – takes the role of the Kantian transcendental self in the process of world-constitution. The objects of inquiry, including humanistic inquiry, are only *possible* within value-laden practices of inquiry, analogously to the way in which the objects of cognition are, according to Kant, necessarily constituted by the transcendental features of our cognitive faculty (i.e., space and time as forms of pure intuition, and the categories, or the pure concepts of the understanding).

This is not to suggest that a quasi-Kantian transcendental articulation of pragmatism could be uncritically assumed when developing a pragmatist philosophy of the humanities. On the contrary, it is important to critically examine how far this form of pragmatism is able to function as a comprehensive philosophy of the humanities. The choice to integrate Kantian critical philosophy with pragmatism should itself be regarded as a controversial hypothesis to be tested by its success in formulating a plausible overall philosophy of the humanities. *If* a comprehensive philosophical account of the humanities can be based on transcendental pragmatism, this will yield an important meta-level (pragmatic) argument for the plausibility of such pragmatism.[15]

No matter how the (transcendental) pragmatist develops the ontology of human history and culture in more detail, the key idea in this kind of pragmatism is that the historical and/or interpretive existence (reality) of cultural entities and structures, including meanings and meaningful human actions, is only *possible* within our historicized, always already interpretively structured contexts of practices of inquiry. For example, past objects and events are not ("for us") "there" in a "ready-made" form independently of our historically developing practices, but they are possible for us as objects of historical and interpretive study only in such contexts. A crucial pragmatist insight now is that those contexts themselves, *qua* historical, also *point toward the future*, manifesting our purposive habits of action and their interests, values, and goals. For the pragmatist, then, even historical truth is not merely "backward-looking" but "forward-looking", as we have to evaluate all our commitments to historical interpretation in terms of their potentially serving human interests and values (very broadly conceived) whose ultimate aim always lies in ameliorating our future actions and practices. The objectivity of historical and cultural phenomena is not reducible to the paradigm of objectivity drawn from the natural sciences and the objects they deal with (e.g., natural laws and mind-independent theoretical entities).

Examining history as "transcendental", in a pragmatic and historicized sense, we may also ask whether history – our historicized human condition – "makes us" or whether we "make" (or "make up") history. Are we ourselves, as historical beings, possible only within a transcendental context of history, or is the pragmatist equivalent of the transcendental subject not only an

[14] Obviously, the term "transcendental" must be understood in its strictly Kantian meaning here. Many pragmatists – including classics like James and Dewey – have notoriously confused the transcendental with the transcendent. In brief, a *transcendental* investigation inquires into the necessary conditions for the possibility of something that we take for granted within our practices (e.g., linguistic meaning or cognitive experience); *transcendent* speculation goes beyond the limits set by such conditions. For a pragmatist who in a general naturalistic spirit avoids any commitment to the transcendent, it is perfectly fine to engage in transcendental argumentation concerning such conditions and limits. See further Pihlström 2020, 2021.

[15] The two pragmatists whose work is particularly relevant to the philosophy of the humanities, Morton White and Joseph Margolis, cannot be regarded as "Kantian" pragmatists in my sense. Yet, both White's holistic pragmatism and Margolis's historicism can, suitably interpreted, be accommodated within a broadly conceived transcendental pragmatism.

actor in history but the metaphysical "maker" of history? We need to be able to answer, "both".[16] History is transcendental in the sense that historicity is a necessary condition for the possibility of any human relationship to the world – epistemic, ethical, political, educational, or whatever. For us, there is no way of being outside history (see Olsen 2013). Yet, *we* are the agents of our history, not only in the sense that history is the history of human beings but also in the transcendental sense that there can be no historical truths or facts independently of our interest- and value-relative pragmatic choices directing the focus of historical inquiries into such truths and facts.

Only a transcendental pragmatism can, I believe, secure such an interplay of robustly transcendental and pragmatically naturalized and historicized stances. However, this pragmatic account of history does not entail, say, Paul A. Roth's (2020) "irrealism" or constructivism, according to which historical facts are "made" by historians' imaginative theorization and constructive activities, just as Putnam's (1981) pragmatic realism (or what he used to call "internal realism" in the 1980s) does not entail Nelson Goodman's (1978) irrealist, radically pluralistic theory of "worldmaking", according to which we "make" a plurality of (actual) worlds by using our symbol systems.

Accordingly, no sane pragmatist will deny realism altogether – either in the sciences or in the humanities. A reasonable form of *pragmatic realism* needs to be distinguished *both* from strong realism committed to a "ready-made" world existing with its own pre-categorized ontological structure *and* from radical antirealisms, such as thoroughgoing relativism and/or constructivism denying the theory-independent reality of any objects of study (in their radical form even in the natural sciences). On the other hand, whether these notions characterizing the discourse on scientific realism are as appropriate in the humanistic context as in general philosophy of science also needs to be investigated further; it can be expected that a pragmatist perspective yields a balanced assessment of the relevance of whatever is the analogy of scientific realism to be developed to account for the humanities. As pragmatists have been able to defend plausible and sophisticated accounts of pragmatic realism in general epistemology and philosophy of science, it is a major future task for pragmatist philosophers of the humanities to investigate how far these conceptions may be applied to the philosophy of the humanities.

How should we, then, characterize the ontological status of the objects postulated in humanistic research? While the natural sciences study (according to scientific realism) objects, processes, and laws existing and obtaining in the natural world, independently of the human mind and of scientific concepts and theories, and while the social sciences seek to explain and understand humanly created social reality, such as social structures and institutions, it may be suggested that the humanities primarily examine humanly created *meaningful* and *representational* objects (e.g., texts and historical documents) and their historically contextual meanings. However, as already indicated, scholarship in the humanities also in a sense focuses on other portions of reality, viz., things and events that those documents themselves may represent, such as historical events. Thus, for example, a historian may examine archival documents and by using them ask (and answer) questions about the historical events those documents represent. Accordingly, the "object" of research is not simply the document, nor simply the event the document may be thought to (accurately or non-accurately) represent, but this representational relation itself, including its purported accuracy. The question concerning what the humanities are actually "about" is therefore complex: humanistic inquiry may be "about" historical and meaningful objects and events, but also "about" (the meanings of) documents that

[16] In Putnam's (1981) phrase, "the mind and the world jointly make up the mind and the world". Something similar, yet slightly more specific, is the main content of my claim about our practices of humanistic inquiry "making" their objects possible. Nelson Goodman's (1978) constructivist (arguably implicitly neopragmatist) theory of "worldmaking" is also relevant here, though it goes too far into the constructivist direction, giving up even moderate realism (even about the natural world).

purportedly themselves refer to such objects and events, and those representational links. The challenge is to develop a pragmatic realism finding that representationality itself as a real object of study in the humanities.

To provide another example, literary criticism may focus on the way a historical novel represents both historical reality and fictional characters, which makes the ontological status of the objects of interpretation rather complex. The question about the objects of humanistic inquiry is intrinsically related to the question about realism and truth: in what sense exactly are these objects, including literary meanings, or events and actions in our human past, or religious doctrines manifested in institutionalized practices, "real" – and thus potentially available for true or false scholarly representation? My general proposal is that the pragmatist about humanities should take a basically realistic attitude to the ontological postulations of humanistic theorization, in the same spirit of pragmatic realism in which s/he approaches the realism issue in general philosophy of science.

A pragmatic realism about the humanities accommodates the mind-dependent yet qualified theory-independent existence of theoretical objects and the truth-aptness of the relevant theoretical discourses within the overall context of the value-ladenness of all inquiry and ontology. Realism prevails – but this is *not*, for the pragmatist, any metaphysical realism committed to the task of uncovering the privileged ("ready-made") ontological structure of the world as it is in itself, but a form of realism that pragmatically conceptualizes any ontological commitments made within human practices of inquiry as based on valuational constitutive activities of inquiry. A plausible pragmatic realism takes seriously the ontological autonomy and irreducibility of human culture as an objectively existing, albeit never "ready-made", reality to be investigated in the humanities.

We may argue for pragmatic realism about the humanities *by elimination*: both overly strong metaphysical realism (assuming a "ready-made world") and radical relativism (constructivism, irrealism) lead to implausible or absurd conceptions of the humanities. *Either* the (human) world becomes ultimately inaccessible due to its being ready-made and hence completed and "closed" in its fundamental non-perspectival ontological structure (metaphysical realism), *or* it becomes both ontologically and epistemically unstructured and arbitrary, with no rational criteria constraining the diverse shapes it may take from a potentially unlimited number of perspectives (irrealism). This eliminative argument for the plausible middle ground position has its roots in the tradition of pragmatism itself, because pragmatism has at least since James's *Pragmatism* (1907) been regarded as a critical middle path between various extreme options (not only realism and antirealism but also, say, empiricism and rationalism), and in the Kantian tradition, because the argument can also be considered *transcendental*: pragmatism emerges as a necessary condition for the possibility of achieving knowledge about the human world by means of humanistic practices of inquiry.[17]

Conclusion

I have merely sketched a *program* of developing a pragmatist philosophy of the humanities. Far more detailed

[17] My own version of pragmatic realism (cf. also Pihlström 2020, 2021) is presumably most deeply indebted, in addition to James and the other classical pragmatists, to Putnam's (e.g., 1981, 1990, 2016) struggles with realism over the decades. Putnam, however, never seems to have explicitly (apart from scattered remarks here and there) applied either his "internal realism" (his view in the 1980s) or his later versions of pragmatic realism to the humanities. Yet, a "Putnamian" conception of pragmatic realism in the philosophy of the humanities acknowledges that scholarly fields like literary theory and criticism, historiography, and theology and religious studies may postulate – as real objects of inquiry – such things as, say, interpretive possibilities and potential meanings of texts. Putnam's internal realism (pragmatic realism) emphasizes pluralism in ontology by admitting even objects like texts and their meanings among the "real things" there are in the world, as objects of inquiry. Indeed, Putnam (2004, 82–84) argues that there is "something *mad*" in the scientistic view that things like "passages which are difficult to interpret" do not exist. However, I have suggested that we need, *pace* Putnam, a Kantian-inspired transcendental account for such realism: pragmatic constructivism (emphasizing the human-made world) functions at the transcendental level, enabling "first-order" realism about the objects whose postulation is made possible by our engagement in practices of inquiry. Mere pluralism in ontology, however pragmatic, is insufficient without a transcendental account of how the plurality of our ontological postulations is possible within our goal-directed practices of inquiry. The fundamental pragmatic question is always how ontological postulations serve our human needs and interests.

pragmatist work on the sub-disciplines of this field – e.g., pragmatist philosophy of literary theory, of historiography, and of theology and religious studies – is needed, and various topics not discussed in this paper, such as questions concerning the criteria of rationality and the problem of relativism in interpretation, must be explored. I have only generally suggested that there are resources in the pragmatist tradition to be utilized in a project like this. The only problem I have focused on in some detail, albeit at a general level, is the one concerning realism and the ontology of humanistic inquiry.

The pragmatist philosopher of the humanities should appreciate the diversity of the issues of realism in the different fields of philosophy, while insisting on the need to systematically investigate the realism question in the humanities. The particular aspects of realism and its alternatives to be examined include, e.g., realism as applied to interpretive possibilities and problems as real objects of humanistic inquiry, with a variety of more specific articulations in the philosophy of literary theory and criticism, of historiography, and of theology and religious studies. The pragmatist should propose specifically pragmatist ways of dealing with such realism issues. My version of pragmatist philosophy of the humanities suggests that it is precisely this kind of pragmatic realism that needs to be given a Kantian-like transcendental articulation. Pragmatic constructivism insisting on the human-made character of the world of objects studied by our humanistic inquiries thus operates at the transcendental level enabling us to maintain realism about the "first-order" level of inquiry.[18]

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CONVENTIONS, INSTITUTIONS, AND COMMITMENTS: COMING TOGETHER ANEW

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ABSTRACT: My aim in this essay is to honor John Ryder in several distinct but related ways. First, I have conceived this piece as a way of honoring his deep engagement with intellectual history. Second, I want in this essay to honor John Ryder's thoroughgoing commitment to pragmatic naturalism and to do so specifically by simply highlighting the imperative need for a naturalistic account of one of the most pervasive features of social life, the innumerable and interwoven conventions of our everyday and professional lives. "Conventions are," as Andrei Marmor notes, "one of the most ubiquitous phenomena of our social life. They are constitutive of numerous practices we engage in, like the speaking of a language or playing a game; numerous conventions constitute and regulate the ways in which people engage in certain activities." Third and finally, I want to honor John Ryder by complementing his pragmatic naturalism with a more explicit account of human conventions than either anything found anywhere in his writings or, for that matter, anything quite tailored to the specific tasks to which this pragmatic naturalist is committed, including the immensely suggestive work of Justus Buchler. Elijah Jordan, and his student Max Fisch, and *his* (i.e., Fisch's student) Darnell Rucker, along with Denton Jacques Synder and others (including of course Dewey and Tufts in their *Ethics*) in various traditions of philosophical thought, have made institutions a focus of their concern. It seems opportune to take this occasion to pick up this task and try to carry it forward, especially in light of Buchler's neglected contribution to this important query.

Keywords: Justus Buchler, compulsion, convention, Max Fisch, institution, William James, Bertrand Russell, tone

Introduction

My aim in this essay is to honor John Ryder in several distinct but related ways. The opportunity to do so is one of the most welcome tasks I have ever been invited in my professional life to undertake, not least of all because it provides the occasion to return to his writings and, in effect, to join him, once again, in endeavoring to think through several issues of mutual concern (cf. Isabelle Stengers). Given the contentious manners celebrated among professional philosophers, including William James in *A Pluralistic Universe* (Smith 1983, 223), but, at bottom, given simply the very nature of thought, thinking *with* another theorist tends to be, in some respects, thinking *against* that person. My hope is that my admiration for John Ryder's achievements is, at least, as manifest in even my few critical remarks as in unabashed praise. In fact, there is hardly a critical word.

First, I have conceived this piece as a way of honoring his deep engagement with intellectual history, by turning to important figures in the philosophical traditions which this erudite scholar and I share (above all, listed in the order of my engagement with them here, the figures of George Santayana, John Dewey, Justus Buchler, Max Fisch, and, finally, William James and, once again, Buchler). Though only one example among many, I take his erudite engagement with Cadwallader Colden to be exemplary (yes, Cadwallader Colden!) (Ryder 1996). Given his interest in naturalism, materialism, and other philosophical positions, he finds in Colden someone whose writings it would be profitable to revisit. "The history of a tradition is," as John E. Smith observed, "an indispensable resource for philosophical thinking" (Smith 1992, 86; cf. Randall 1963). John Ryder dramatically illustrates this point here (in his essay on Colden, Johnson, and materialism) as well as elsewhere. On this occasion, I want to foreground an episode in the history of naturalism as a way of illustrating this point in my own way. Please note: John's engagement with Colden is not primarily animated by an antiquarian purpose, but rather is directed by a truly philosophical impulse. He is interested in understanding the nature of matter and turns to the tradition of materialism as "an indispensable resource" for doing just that, that is, for "philosophical thinking."

Second, I want in this essay to honor John Ryder's thoroughgoing commitment to pragmatic naturalism and to do so specifically by simply highlighting the imperative need for a naturalistic account of one of the most pervasive features of social life (Marmor 1996), the innumerable and interwoven conventions of our everyday and professional lives. "Conventions are," as Andrei Marmor notes, "one of the most ubiquitous phenomena of our social life. They are constitutive of numerous

practices we engage in, like the speaking of a language or playing a game; numerous conventions constitute and regulate the ways in which people engage in certain activities" (Marmor 1996, 350).

Third, I want to honor John Ryder by complementing his pragmatic naturalism with a more explicit account of human conventions than either anything found anywhere in his writings or, for that matter, anything quite tailored to the *specific* tasks to which this pragmatic naturalist is committed, including the immensely suggestive work of Justus Buchler. Elijah Jordan, and his student Max Fisch, and *his* (i.e., Fisch's student) Darnell Rucker, along with Denton Jacques Synder and others (including of course Dewey and Tufts in their *Ethics*) in various traditions of philosophical thought, have made institutions a focus of their concern. This emphasis deserves to be made even more central to the various traditions of American thought, also more central to traditions other than, say, American pragmatism, idealism, realism, and naturalism. It is no exaggeration to say this topic is of abiding concern but also of urgently contemporary relevance (our time is rightly identified as one in which the dramatic collapse of our defining institutions is one of the hallmarks of this moment). To select but one example of how an author of particular relevance to the present essay has addressed this topic, Dewey's *Freedom and Culture* shows a nuanced sensitivity to the ineradicable significance of historically instituted procedures, practices, and protocols. A firmer conceptual grasp of the nature and importance of institutions, conventions, and traditions might assist us in recovering a thicker historical sense, including a more urgent contemporary appreciation, of the what is required to maintain, restore, and modify institutions, conventions, and traditions. Such a grasp also might assist us in coming together anew, in the name of an inclusive democratic ideal (a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural meshwork of vibrant solidarity).

φύσις and νόμος

No simple, especially no crude, distinction between φύσις and νόμος (*nomos;* law, convention, custom) can do justice to the intricate, intimate, deep, and pervasive ways in which natural and conventional factors conspire to give shape, direction, and solidity of so many (all?) of the recognizable forms of human conduct (cf. Putnam 1981, 1–6). The dualism implied in so many questions concerning nature *versus* nurture is indicative of not only an extremely superficial understanding of the relation between φύσις and νόμος, but also a fundamentally distorted conception of how nature gives itself to cultivation and the most seemingly artificial forms of human conventionality are made possible by the functional coordination of natural forces. "Every genuine ideal has", George Santayana insists, "a natural basis; anyone may understand and safely interpret it who is attentive to the life from which it springs" (Santayana 1998*,* 7), a life itself springing from the matrix of nature. In turn, natural processes tend to lend themselves to being transfigured into idealized forms. As Santayana so eloquently puts it, "everything ideal has a natural basis and everything natural an ideal development" (ibid.*,* 11). The cultivation of nature is, at once, a natural development (the process is manifestly rooted in natural processes and mechanisms) and a decisive step in an open-ended series of artful innovations (thus, in a sense an impetus toward ever greater "artificiality"). Our incomplete natures call for enculturation, while human cultures in their irreducible diversity are so many ways in which ingenious animals (purely natural actors) have availed themselves of natural resources to satisfy the most imperative human needs and, in turn, to generate the most extravagant impulses. Culture is a part of nature; nature is, in some contexts, an opportunity for cultivation.

After attending to a pivotal point in the critical exchange between two philosophical naturalists (Santayana's "Dewey's Naturalistic Metaphysics" and Dewey's "'Half-Hearted Naturalism'"), I will, drawing heavily upon Justus Buchler's writings, sketch a naturalistic account of human conventions. Fourth, I want, if only in passing, to honor John Ryder's passionate commitment to democratic socialism. Fifth, and finally, this essay pays homage to his efforts to bring into fruitful union the ordinal

ontology of Justus Buchler, on the one hand, and the empirical naturalism of Dewey, the historical naturalism of John Herman Randall, Jr., and other distinctively American versions of nonreductive naturalism, on the other hand.

However odd it might sound, I will conclude by reflecting on a topic rarely discussed by philosophers, that of tone. In this regard, William James and Justus Buchler serve as precedents. Closely allied to this, there is the attention which Stanley Cavell has paid to the *sound* of philosophy, the way the words even simply on the page, not necessarily those emanating from the audible utterances of an embodied voice, resound in the ears of a philosopher's readers. The mind's ear very often discerns subtleties and nuances of intonation no less keenly than the mind's eye detects the hues and textures of what that capacity confronts in the shifting fields of the visible world. The musical dimension of philosophical utterances is one of the guises of their exhibitive character (see, e.g., Dewey's essay on "Philosophy" for the *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* where he points to the aesthetic aspect of composing and reading philosophical texts), especially when that the qualitative immediacy of that exhibitive character is felt by the sensitive reader. "Buchler often uses language," wrote Sidney Gelber and Kathleen Wallace, the co-authors of "Nature, Power, and Prospect," "to evoke a rich texture of meaning, rather than to offer a single precise definition for any concept or idea" (Gelber and Wallace 1991, 61). They go on to note that, with regard to Buchler's style of writing, "clarity or precision of statement is embedded, so to speak, in a dramatic structure" (ibid., 63, note 16). This is also true of John Ryder's style of writing, though his is obviously less sparse, controlled, and "formal" than Buchler's. The differences therein are akin to those between Wallace Stevens and Robert Frost. The human depth of such an exacting stylist as Stevens however ought not to be overlooked, just as the extremely sophisticated craftsmanship of such a plain-spoken stylist as Frost ought not to be discounted. If I am taken to be implying that Ryder as a prose stylist plays Frost to Buchler's Stevens (and I *am* doing just that), that ought not to be taken, in the least, as a disparagement.

SANTAYANA AND DEWEY: A PUNCH-AND-JUDY SHOW?

As a distinct genre of philosophical literature, most "dialogues" are, C. S. Peirce claims, combinations of a catechism and a Punch-and-Judy show. This is all too often also true of the actual exchanges between (or among) professional philosophers. They tend to be caricatures rather than realizations, at least approximations, of fruitful dialogue. The exchange between George Santayana and John Dewey barely escapes being such a caricature. It however does escape this fate, because there is far more to this exchange than the memorable insults these rival naturalists level at each other – in Santayana's judgment, Dewey's is a "half-winded naturalism," while Dewey returns the compliment by characterizing Santayana's naturalism "as broken-backed" (with Tilly at another point jumping into the controversy and saying of Dewey's position, "half-hearted naturalism" is "*too* whole-hearted"!). At the conclusion of his essay, Santayana asserts, "the remedy for idolatry is not iconoclasm, because the senses, too, or the heart of the pragmatic intellect [i.e., practical intelligence] can breed only symbols" (Santayana 1977, 358). And any act or process of hypostatizing symbols, however they are bred, is in Santayana's judgment the essence of idolatry. What, then, is the remedy? It is "rather to employ the symbols [we use] pragmatically, with detachment and humor, trusting to the steady dispensations of the substance beyond" (ibid.), allegedly beyond our comprehension though not our acknowledgment. It appears as though Dewey took part of this sentence as an invitation to tell a joke, employing his words with humor if not detachment. Dewey concludes his own essay by trying to explain "the fact that while I find myself in so much agreement with him he is in such profound disagreement with me" (Dewey 1977, 366). He does so by recalling a joke, though it is clear from this example why Dewey made sparring use of humor: finding himself in

agreement with someone committed to disagreeing with him, Dewey takes the case here "to resemble that of the Irishman who said the two men look very much alike, especially one of them" (ibid.)! The serious point is that, in this exchange, we witness both the frank acknowledgment of irreconcilable differences between two thoroughgoing naturalists *and* what Sigmund Freud calls "the narcissism of small differences."

For our purpose, however, there is a very significant philosophical issue at stake in the exchange between Santayana and Dewey on this occasion. It concerns conventions and more broadly institutions. In his reply to Santayana's critique, Dewey makes an extremely important point: "'convention' is not [itself] conventional, or specious" (Dewey 1977, 364). Its reality cannot be gainsaid. Moreover, that reality is intrinsically connected to its efficacy, also to its rootedness in nature. Conventions are in some deep sense "natural," though this highly ambiguous term can be used so loosely that it seems to warrant anything. Here, however, there is a point in insisting upon nature making conventionality possible. Any convention involves, Dewey suggests, "the interaction of natural things when that interaction becomes communication" (ibid.). [1] Of course, Dewey readily admits the obvious: "A 'sign' may be conventional, as when a sound or a mark on a piece of paper – themselves physical existences – symbolize other things" (ibid.). But this is hardly the whole story even regarding conventional signs. For "*being* a sign, the sign-function [in its manifest efficacy], has its roots in natural existence" (ibid., 364; emphasis in the original). Please note: Dewey is calling attention here to nothing less than the *ontology of signs* (the *being* of the sign-function as a natural process involving emergent – thus, additive – functions quite distinct from those of the natural conditions making this emergent function possible). The conventionality, hence the contingency of, say, linguistic signs (though English speakers use *dog* to designate a certain type of animal, the existence of other languages in which quite different sounds are used to designate at least roughly the same animal underscores the conventional and contingent nature of human language and indeed many other forms of symbolic communication). While the conventional points toward a certain latitude granted to human agents, this hardly disposes of the compulsory. Regarding human judgment, the conventional and the compulsory are intricately woven together (Buchler 1979). So, while the conventionality and contingency of some facets of our modes of symbolization certainly need to be acknowledged, both their ultimate rootedness in nature and their ineluctable cooperation with forces other than the merely conventional need no less to be given their due. The rootedness of conventions *in* nature must not be overlooked or slighted. This is the force of Dewey's assertion that convention is not itself conventional and specious, but rather deep and efficacious in a world of natural objects and events. This rootedness has to be seen alongside its fecundity ("human association is," as Dewey observes, "the fruit of those roots"). While Santayana in effect drives a wedge between the natural and the conventional, Dewey discerns a continuity between (to anticipate Buchler's emphasis) human convention and natural compulsion (but also other forms of compulsion, e.g., logical compulsion).

The charge of idolatry is at the center of not only Santayana's critique of Dewey's naturalism but also *Dewey's* own critique of Santayana's naturalism. From Santayana's perspective, the residual transcendentalism woven into the very fabric of Dewey's pragmatic naturalism entails hypostatizing symbols: such hypostatizing is, for Santayana, an instance of idolatry. "For a naturalist [a thoroughgoing and consistent one, at least] nothing can be substantial or efficacious in thought except its [physical or material] organs and instruments, such as brains, training, words, and books" (Santayana 1977, 346). Dewey is understandably perplexed by Santayana taking away with one hand what he has given with the other – the demonstrable efficacy of physically embodied and contextually embedded signs (including of course words

[1] In turn, such interaction often grounds the possibility of *convening*, of coming together in novel and potentially transformative ways. See Beth J. Singer's "Dewey's Concept of Community: A Critique."

and books). In Dewey's judgment, Santayana is excessively preoccupied with labels: "he has a number of pigeonholes into which every philosophy must go with its appropriate, fixed, and absolute tag attached: – his own philosophy when it becomes self-conscious as well as those of others" (Dewey 1977, 366). "When he [Santayana] lets himself go in any body of subject-matter, free from the influence of traditional and professional labels," however, Dewey adds, "I not only learn much from him, but I flatter myself that I am for the most part in agreement with him" (ibid.).

But when he is held in the grip of these labels, Santayana (Dewey charges) in effect lapses into idolatry. Though the charge is implicit, it is hard to miss. This is at any rate how I read this sentence in Dewey's essay: When Santayana "deals with a system of thought and finds it necessary to differentiate his own system from it, his naturalism reduces itself to *a vague gesture of adoring faith* in some all-comprehensive unknowable in contrast to which all human life – barring this one [adorational] gesture – is species and illusory" (ibid., 366; emphasis added). Does not the expression "a vague gesture of adoring faith" carry implicitly the charge of idolatry? Against his rival in this instance, Dewey insists, "we do not merely fall back on an 'animal faith' that there is some adorable substance behind" human experience. We do not do so because human experience "may afford dependable indications of the nature of things that underlie it" (ibid., 361). As he so pointedly asserts in *Experience and Nature*, our experience actually affords countless instances of such reliable indications. It is not a specious foreground, but to some extent a reliable medium in and through which the traits of nature are made available to human judgment. Experience, "controlled in specifiable ways is," Dewey insists, "the avenue that leads to the facts and laws of nature" (Dewey, LW 1, 11). We encounter in experience (or, to use Buchler's neologism *proception*) a world not of our own making (Dewey, MW 10, 18). So, on Dewey's account, "experience "reaches down into nature, it has depth. It also has breadth and to an indefinitely elastic extent. It stretches. That stretch is inference" (Dewey, LW 1, 13), more fully, experimentally grounded inferences making use of natural and humanly instituted signs (Dewey, MW 10, 32–35), a process in which the latitude provided by conventions is effectively (or can be effectively) conjoined to the force of compulsion (e.g., the perceptual judgment regarding a specific color in a given setting, a judgment involving at once physiological compulsion and linguistic conventions) (Buchler 1979). Whatever else our knowledge is, it is "a cognitive gain," that is, an augmentation of our power in such activities as identifying, naming, describing, interpreting, explaining, or some other strictly cognitive way dealing with the constitutive traits of innumerable natural phenomena (or complexes).

Dewey neither removes the ground underneath culture nor makes the foreground of human experience so dominant as to occlude entirely the background of the natural world. Rather he accepts signs as they disclose *themselves* in our experience, not shying away from recognizing an ontology of signs: the sign-function is an emergent function in which the dramatic arenas of human engagement are increasingly transformed and transfigured, so much so that the hardly articulate vocalizations of our remote ancestors have evolved into the intricate and reflexive articulations of a Dante or Chaucer, a William Shakespeare or a John Milton, a Virginia Woolf or a James Joyce, a Toni Morrison or a Salman Rushdie.

Compulsion, Conventionality, and Normativity

It is one thing to argue for acknowledging the reality of our conventions. It is however quite another to provide an illuminating analysis of what (even given the focused attention of very probing theorists (e.g., Anthony Giddens, Hilary Putnam, Vincent Descombes) remains a somewhat elusive concept. For the purpose of illuminating our understanding of conventionality, I now turn to the writings of Justus Buchler, above all, several central chapters in *Toward a General Theory of Human Judgment.*

The social world is to a great extent a conventional world. This does not make it specious or unreal (think here of Buchler's principle of ontological parity). Though conventional, it is shot through with compulsion, not

least of all forms of compulsion made possible by the operation of conventions. From the critical perspective of ordinal pluralism, indeed, no world is more real than any other (in particular, the biological world is not more real than the social world of human beings). Buchler appears to have been inspired by a claim made by John Herman Randall, Jr.:

> 'Reality' means either whatever exists. or else that a distinction of relative importance has been introduced. In any other than an evaluative sense [one deviating from a strict ontological sense], to say that only the Good is 'real,' only Matter is 'real,' only Mind is 'real,' only Energy is 'real,' is to express a prejudice refuted by a child's first thought or by every smallest grain of sand. No, everything encountered in any way is somehow real. The significant question is, not whether anything is 'real' or not, but how and in what sense it is real, and how it is related to and functions among other reals [or what Buchler would come to call 'natural complexes' or simply 'complexes'] (Randall 1958, 131; quoted by Buchler 1967, 162)

Nature is not the really real, over against which culture and conventions are comparatively unreal or specious.

The social world is an historically evolved affair in which constitutive conventions are, at bottom, contingent, mutable, and arbitrary, in senses of these troublesome words to be clarified eventually. Conventions are historically instituted practices, while institutions are themselves conventionally sustained arrangements of an intergenerational character. Humans are by nature not only political but also cultural animals. This implies that we are by nature conventional, constitutionally given to convening in such ways as to craft convenient means of carrying out and continually modifying our characteristic activities. These means are in many instances more than facilitative; they can be constitutive. Moreover, they enable us to imagine and hence pursue ends or objectives otherwise unimaginable. That is, they are not merely means crafted for the realization of antecedently set goals; they can be the indispensable allies of our expansive capacities for projecting novel goals. A strong sense of emergence is here linked to a radical sense of novelty. Even so, the human animal is at every turn subjected to the compulsory operations of countless factors, though its ingenious reliance on inherited conventions allows this animal to hover to some extent "among what the nature of things offers" (Buchler 1979, 58). Through compulsion humans conform to what the nature of things imposes, while through convention they select from an array of possibilities made available by the nature of things (ibid.). The complex interplay between these complementary dimensions of human utterance becomes incomprehensible if we are fixated by the dualism of the natural versus the conventional or, indeed, any number of other such dualisms (especially when they are superimposed on one another). This interplay becomes comprehensible when we have clarified our understanding of these concepts to the point where the dynamic union of natural compulsion (among other forms of compulsion) and human convention is accorded in our theory the place and importance that union has in our lives. No one has done more to show in detail how this is possible than Buchler.

Buchler on Compulsion, Convention, and Justification

In *Toward a General Theory of Human Judgement*, the chapters on "Compulsion" and "Convention" are arguably the heart of the book, if only in the sense that they are preceded by two chapters ("Proception" and "Communication") and followed by two ("Perspective" and "Validation").[2] Of the six chapters making up this book, exclusive of a very substantial Introduction, they are precisely the middle ones. The chapter on communication, the one immediately preceding the chapter on compulsion, concludes with the author insisting, in opposition to especially some of the most representative figures in modern philosophy: "A world which creates and destroys men [and women], and amidst the indifferent circumstances of which communication is born and is permitted, can hardly be so distant as their epistemologies would believe" (Buchler 1979, 57). In these accounts of knowledge, we

[2] In "Toward a Deeper Appreciation of Inherited Conventions" (2021), I have written fuller explication of Buchler's views regarding compulsion and convention. The scope of this essay for *Pragmatism Today* however does not allow me to go into as much detail and depth as I have done in this companion piece.

presumably "communicate about our own products and about the world only remotely" (ibid., 56). That is, we operate at one remove from the world in which we live. "Not that anyone who suffers and aspires in this life can take such an implication and such a position seriously in his waking moments" (ibid., 56–57). We are directly entangled in a world not of our own making and, moreover, we are as directly, if not more directly, conversant with some of its traits as we are directly conversant with the contents of our own minds. No adequate account of human knowledge is possible if we fail to do justice to one of the most salient features of human utterance: however fallibly, perspectivally, and provisionally, we directly communicate about the world in which we suffer and aspire. Epistemology fails when it does not deal with our entanglement in a world in which suffering and aspiration are such prominent features.

"There are," Buchler suggests, "two principal modes in which the proceiver [or individual human being] judges relative to the world and [also to the products of communication]" (Buchler 1979, 58). One mode is compulsion, the other is convention. As conceived by Buchler, these factors are not exclusive. They act in concert or conjunction, so that in virtually any actual instance of human utterance what we observe is, as noted before, the interplay of compulsion and conventionality. Take a simple example of this complex interplay – a perceptual judgment such as "This chair is yellow."

Basic judgments or protocol sentences (Buchler 1939), also what logical positivists referred to as "observation statements," are ones in which there is marked compulsion. But the element of conventionality cannot be removed without the intelligibility of the utterance being destroyed. Historically *instituted* forms of judgment, far beyond innately inherited propensities, are manifestly conventional, and they not only bear witness to the presence of compulsion but also widen the spheres in which diverse forms of compulsory experience operate (e.g., armed with high-powered telescopes and even higher-powered mathematics, we are able to frame our judgments about far distant bodies on the basis of observational compulsion). Among other factors, historically instituted signs make this possible. Convention can dramatically expand the theatre of compulsion, while unforeseen compulsions can intensity the dramas played out therein.

Fisch on Institutions

In his Presidential Address to what was then identified as the Western Division of the APA (May 1956), Max H. Fisch presented a paper entitled "The Critic of Institutions." For the title of this address, he is explicit in acknowledging his debt to ANW. In fact, he quotes at length a passage from his predecessor's *Science and the Modern World*, the one I am now going to quote exactly as Fisch did:

> I hold that philosophy is the critic of abstractions. Its function is the double one, first of harmonizing them by assigning to their right relative status as abstractions, and secondly of completing them by direct comparison with more concrete intuitions of the universe, and thereby promoting the formation of more complete schemes of thought. […] Philosophy is not one among sciences with its own little scheme of abstractions which it works away at perfecting and improving. It is the survey of sciences, with the special objects of their harmony, and of their completion (Fisch 1975, 137).

Fisch however takes issue with Whitehead's definition of philosophy. It is in his judgment impossibly burdensome and unduly narrow. It is an "*impossible* burden for the reason that we are asked to unify the indefinite plurality of the sciences, no one of which is a unified whole in the first place, or has any prospect or [even] need of becoming so" (Fisch 1975, 137; emphasis added). At the same time, it entails an "undue *restriction*, all the sciences together are only one set of institutions, and philosophy has no reason to confine itself to this one set and ignore others, or even to give pre-eminence to this set" (ibid.). As a result, Fisch proposes "to describe *philosophy as the critic*, not of abstractions, but *of institutions* in general, of which the sciences and their abstractions are a quite special kind" (ibid., 137–138; emphasis added).

This proposed description is not offered as a radical innovation. Quite the contrary, he has crafted it to con-

serve the history of the enterprise and to include all of the warring bands of his contemporary colleagues. That is, it is meant to be both conservative and inclusive. Nodding toward William James, Fisch takes himself to be proposing a new name ("the critic of institutions") for old ways of thinking. Despite the upheavals and revolutions, the dismissals and the excommunications, so loudly championed by one or another sect of his colleagues, Fisch desires to be congenial and conciliatory. He remains confident: "in spite of all changes of fashion, [philosophy] still survives in our midst" (Fisch 1975, 136).

After defining or at least describing philosophy in this manner, Fisch is obliged to explain what he means by *institution*. He self-consciously clarifies his usage by several approximations, beginning with a rough, inaugural approximation, then moving to a more refined, nuanced articulation. For our purpose, Fisch's understanding of institutions helps us to understand how certain conventions underwrite the process of instituting certain procedures, policies, or protocols. An institution in his sense is both the *result* of an act or process of instituting (though this might be done in an unconscious, unintentional manner, e.g., the manner in which the replication of a sound used to warn one's conspecifics evolves into something at least approximate to a word) and a *resource* for countless successive acts or processes of instituting (see Colapietro 1990). To relate this to Buchler's account of convention, this means that the convention itself is indicative of having come together in a more or less determinate fashion or form, but also of rendering *convenient* possibilities for doing so again, not least of all in novel and innovative ways.

As a first, rough approximation, then, Fisch suggests: An institution is "any provision or arrangement of means or conditions for subsequent activity, in addition to or in modification of the means or conditions prior to the institution." He is quick to point out that these *prior* means or conditions might be "present in nature prior to all institutions [e.g., the instinctual or innate disposition of a species to vocalization in a variety of circumstances] or present in nature only as modified by previous institutions [e.g., the institution of a system of visual signs correlative to the prior system of aural signs]" (Fisch 1975, 138). "When instituted signs have been added to natural signs, we can speak and write, read and think" (ibid., 139). But Fisch offers a "closer approximation," one "involving purpose and choice, will and decision." He does not recoil from the implication of this more exact articulation of the meaning of human institutions; rather he embraces it. Insofar as our institutions are an affair of "purpose and choice, will and decision" – resolve and commitment or deep antipathy driving toward the annihilation of an inherited institution – this involves "the arbitrary." What Fisch means by this is very close to one of the facets of convention highlighted by Buchler, since he stresses that the notion of institution is "the notion of what would or might have been otherwise if the purpose had been different, but of what might also have been otherwise to the same purpose" (ibid., 138).

Variability of means to the same end *and* variability of the end itself are both defining features of human institutions. The ends might have been otherwise than they are; so, too, the means to those ends might themselves have been otherwise. The very notion of institution is, on this account, that of "what is subject to critique in light of the original purpose if this can be found [or recovered], or in the light of any purpose that may have taken its place; and of what is alterable by subsequent decisions, but never so alterable as to cease to be arbitrary" in the relevant sense. What sense is this? By this word, Fisch does not mean 'unreasonable' [or that which is utterly without reason] but [as the root of the word suggests] 'dependent on the will'; more exactly," he means "'residually arbitrary in the sense that, when reason has done what it can, discretion remains and commitment is still required" (Fisch 1975, 139, note 1). He is confident that allowing for such arbitrariness as a feature of our institutions does not impair "the objectivity of value." Properly understood, the "arbitrariness" of our institutions and the objectivity of *some* of our valuations are not inherently opposed to each other. Ordinal naturalism and objective relativism are far from being contradictory: there is indeed an elective affinity between these two

positions. Relations are no less real than relata (cf. Ryder 2005, 2013, 2015). Moreover, the relation of valuing subjects to cherished objects is no more subjective than that of perceiving subjects to perceived objects. In particular, that anything is dependent to some extent on our wills – our resolve and commitment, our abiding faith and invested energy – does not make what is so dependent anything "specious" or ephemeral or illusory.

Our institutions are thus arbitrary in the sense that they are to some extent dependent on our wills, our resolve and morale (Hocking), our commitments and "faiths" (those beliefs for which we are willing to make immense sacrifices, which we are unwilling to see routed). They are sets of conventions in Buchler's sense, both *facilitating* certain modes of activity and making possible forms of *convening*, both familiar forms and innovative ones (herein we see the double emphasis on conventions as convenient or facilitative and as bound up with coming together, i.e., convening). Such conventions hold the promise of inviting or at least allowing us to come together anew, in ways in which this time we might embody more inclusively and radiantly the ideals in whose name we are summoned together.

When we turn to the realm of morals and politics, however, what seems utterly ephemeral and unsubstantial (not least of all moods and tone) occupies not only a central place but also a justifiable role (the tone in which values are defended is no peripheral or negligible matter, at least if William James and Justus Buchler are to be taken at their word). The political mood in the U.S. and indeed elsewhere at this time is one of anger, resentment, frustration, and outrage. It tends to be expressed in harsh and shrill tones. Allow me briefly to argue this point but only with respect to tone.[3]

By Their Tone Are All Our Utterances Lost or Saved

On November 7th, 1907, William James presented a paper at Radcliff College entitled "The Social Value of the College Bred." It was then published in *McClure's Magazine*, a far from insignificant fact about this occasional piece. Less than fifty years later, Buchler contributed a piece to the volume on Bertrand Russell in the Library of Living Philosophers, one focused on "Russell and the Principles of Ethics." James's text and Buchler's would seem to have very little, indeed, hardly anything in common. This however turns out to be far from true. Both authors in an arresting manner, at a climactic moment in in their apparently disparate endeavors, thematize *tone*. They make it an explicit and truly central theme of their discourse. And they do so in ways that both significantly overlap and mutually support each other. Especially in my effort to honor an intellectual friend, there is possibly no more fitting note to end on than the one sounded by James and Buchler in their surprising attention to this an admittedly vague topic, though arguably a topic as humanly significant cannot avoid words which are terribly vague. Since James's essay turns out to be, in his own words, a meditation on tone, but one linked to his "religious" adherence to American democracy, it is all the more apt to recall that this essay is an attempt to honor the work of John Ryder, a passionate champion of democratic socialism.

"A socialist is," Terry Eagleton suggests in *Ideology*, "just someone who is unable to get over his or her astonishment that most people who have lived and died have spent lives of wretched, fruitless, unremitting toil. Arrest history at any point whatsoever, and this is what we will find" (Eagleton 1991, 82). What we will inevitably find, more fully articulated, is this: "The sheer struggle for material survival and reproduction, in conditions of real or artificially induced scarcity, has tied up such enormous resources of human energy that we would surely expect to find its traces inscribed in the rest of what we do" (ibid., 82–83). To date, material production constitutes nothing less than "the major narrative" of human history (ibid., 83).

One can imagine someone with invincible indifference or, worse, casual cruelty saying, "It is what it is, honeybunch" (as Mary Trump reports members of her family, including her Uncle Donald, were wont to say).

[3] In an attempt to come to terms with mood *and* tone, I have written "Emersonian Moods, Peircean Sentiments, and Ellingtonian Tones" (Colapietro 2019).

But viscerally recoiling from the slaughter bench of human history, when the slaughter involves nothing more (!) than the wretched toil of the overwhelming mass of human beings, we spontaneously ask, what, if anything, justifies this sacrifice? As Hegel astutely observes, we cannot help but recoil from looking at "the slaughter-bench of human history" but also cannot help asking, "What, if anything, has been won by these struggles and strivings, these sacrifices and indeed this slaughter." James exhibited a certain blindness in his own generally generous humanity when he took the ordinary laborer to be consoled or, at least, sustained by the most trivial compensations ("a quid of tobacco, a glass of beer, a cup of coffee, a meal, and a bed"), for they are not, James surprisingly claims, moved or held upright by any "ideal inner spring" (James 1978, 656). But is this true? My grandparents, immigrants from southern Italy, were unquestionably animated by what Erik Erikson identified as *generativity,* not any trivial compensation. I am certain those of countless other children and grandchildren of immigrants were animated by such a commitment as well.

In any event, James argues in "The Social Value of College-Bred" for a college education in which "the masterpieces in almost any field of human endeavor" are central (James 1987, 107). He identifies this with the "humanities." "The sifting of human creations! – nothing less than this is what we ought to mean by the humanities" (ibid., 107–108). Such sifting enables us to "learn what types of activity have stood the test of time"; moreover, to appreciate "standards of the excellent and [simply the] durable" (ibid., 108). He links this explicitly to institutions: "All of our arts and sciences and *institutions* are so many quests for perfection on the part of men" and women (emphasis added). "Our critical sensibilities grow," as a result of such engagement, "more acute and less fanatical" (ibid.). We to learn to "sympathize with men's mistakes even in the act of penetrating them [in that of coming to see them unequivocally as mistakes]" (ibid.). Such an education extends far beyond the appraisal of technical achievements; ideally, it extends to an assessment of human character. Such an education in the humanities ought to light up in us "a lasting relish for the better kind of man, a loss of appetite for mediocrities, and a disgust for cheapjacks"; it ought to equip us with the capacity "to smell […] the difference of quality in men [and women] and their proposals when we enter the world of affairs about us" (ibid.). In sum, such an education "should enable us to *know a good man when we see him*" (ibid.). Given that James is making this pitch at Vassar, we today are likely to cringe, at least a bit. There is reason to do so. But there is also truth, even wisdom, in what he proposes, however chauvinistically expressed.

At the time of this talk, James was passionately caught up in the anti-imperialist movement and had been for more than a decade (cf. Susan Harris). In his judgment, imperialism and other notable features about our political ethos (e.g., corruption, lynching [Perry 1935, 317], the undue influence of Andrew Carnegie, Cornelius Vanderbilt, John D. Rockefeller, J. P. Morgan, et al.) threatened the very reality of democracy. James is emphatic about this: "Democracy is on trial, and no one knows how it will stand the ordeal" (James 1987, 109). He does not dismiss the commonplace criticism of American democracy – the preferences of this country "are inveterately for the inferior" (ibid.); the critics insist, "So it was in the beginning […] and so it will be world without end" (ibid.). "Vulgarity enthroned and institutionalized [even if it disguises itself as anti-institutionalism], elbowing everything superior from the highway," the critics shout, "is our irremediable destiny" (ibid.). James is disposed to grant much of the criticism but to resist the conclusion (in his day, as in ours, vulgarity has been, please note the word, *enthroned*). He is not at all an optimist, however much of a meliorist he is: "Nothing future is quite secure": nation-states with deeper traditions and stronger institutions than ours have imploded. One must confront, squarely and unblinkingly, the possibility that "democracy as a whole may undergo self-poisoning" (ibid.). For us, however, "democracy is a kind of religion, and we are bound not to admit its failure." By this, James means not that we are to close our

eyes to the failures of our ethos and polity – far from it; but he *does* mean that we are committed to fighting to ensure the success of our democratic ideals. "The ceaseless whisper of the more permanent ideals [those of equality and fraternity or solidarity, not just that of freedom in abstraction from our democratic ideals] […] must warp the world in their direction" (James 1987, 110).

We are committed to making this come true: our democratic faith is predicated on Jamesian courage: faith in the fact can, in some circumstances, create the fact and we take our social and political situation to be one such circumstance. Our faith in democracy is such that we will not "sit down fatalistically before the croaker's picture" (ibid., 109). Rather we have an invincible faith in "the contrary vision of a democracy stumbling through every error till its institutions glow with justice and its customs shine with beauty" (ibid.).[4] The "living drama works itself out between us" (ibid., 110); and there are those of us who simply refuse to allow our institutions and traditions to rot to the point that democracy has failed, *simplicter*. "Real culture lives," James stresses, "by sympathies and admirations"; it does not live for long, at least, by smug dismissals and mocking denunciations (ibid., 111). The tone of ridicule is one sound, that of reverence another. And the only culture worth defending is one in which the *tone* of affirmation and even reverence is audible.

"'Tone,' to be sure, is," James is quick to admit, "a terribly vague word, but there is no other, and this whole meditation [on education *and* democracy] is over questions of tone" (James 1987, 111). He is convinced: "By their tone all things human [including our democratic institutions and traditions] are lost or saved." The survival, not just the flourishing, of democracy depends upon catching "the higher, healthier tone" (ibid.).[5]

When we turn from this talk to Justus Buchler's "Russell and the Principles of Ethics," his contribution to *The Philosophy of Bertrand Russell* (Library of Living Philosophers), we encounter something remarkable. Buchler is no less emphatic than James in making tone central to his understanding of the moral life. "Every moral choice," Buchler suggests, "is inescapably the expression of a guiding moral tone. This guiding moral tone is the fundamental directed sensibility of an individual with respect to moral situations" (Buchler 1989, 530). I find this emphasis in Buchler's account of ethics, a branch of philosophy to which he contributed much less than, say, ontology or the metaphysics of utterance, remarkable. "The guiding tone and the guiding principles embedded in an individual's conduct are," Buchler insists, "closely related" (ibid., 531). Russell was "quite at a loss to understand why any one should be surprised at my expressing vehement ethical judgments" (Russell 1989, 722). More generally, he appears to be quite at a loss to comprehend what Buchler proposes in his contribution to this volume, including his critic's effort to thematize tone. Russell simply passes over this theme in silence. On the one hand, Russell's ethics is, from Buchler's perspective, too abstract, focused on principles in abstraction from the tone in which they are defended. On the other, it is too subjectivist, not paying sufficient heed to the actual conditions in which moral sensibility is forged and reformed. While Russell contends (at least on Buchler's account) that "impulses and desires emanate from a principle prior to them in some sense" (Buchler 1989, 523), this critic himself is disposed to "substitute compulsion and imagination" for "impulse and desire" (ibid.). We cannot go into the details of this disa-

[4] James was acutely aware that human institutions betray their overarching purposes: "when a living want of mankind has got itself officially protected and organized in an institution, one of the things which the institution most surely tends to do is stand in the way of the natural gratification of the want itself. We see this in laws and courts of justice; we see it in ecclesiasticisms; we see it in the academies of the fine arts, in the medical and other professions, and we even see it in the universities themselves" ("Human "Immortality"). This is not a warrant for despair; it is rather a goad to institute procedures of reform in every one of our institutions. These of course will eventually, perhaps quickly, be seized by the "schemers" (Perry 1935, 289). The ground however simply cannot be ceded to their villainy.

[5] In James' judgment, "the strongest force in politics is human scheming, and the schemers will capture every machinery that you can set up against them" (Perry, II, 289). Consequently, the cultivation of moral character, not the perfection of institutional machinery, in the end secures the possibility of a democratic ethos (an ethos inclusive of, but not reducible to, polity). Insofar as the appeal to what Lincoln called "our higher angels" is ineffective, democracy in the vital sense is absent.

greement. The important point for our immediate purpose is that imagination, properly understood, is a "spring" of conduct. "The movement of imagination [here]. […] encompasses the tentative, groping, indecisive aspect of activity and purpose; the course of random experiment; the almost subconscious search for possibilities" (ibid.). As far as ethics goes, however, this movement is yoked to a wide array of human *compulsions*. By our constitution and circumstances, we are compelled, for instance, to eat and work and commingle with our conspecifics and other animals. What Russell cannot provide, Buchler alleges, is a convincing account of "individual approval" in the moral sphere. A naturalistic account in which the complex interplay of compulsion and imagination operates to generate, sustain, and prompt the alterations of an individual moral sensibility can, however, provide just this. But it leads to an understanding of such a sensibility in which the theme of tone is unquestionably salient: to repeat, the "guiding tone *is* the fundamental directed sensibility of an individual with respect to moral situations" (Buchler 1989, 530). By their tone are all things human lost or saved; but, then, by their tone so too is our sensibility disclosed, it being a fruit of the interplay between compulsion and imagination. As much as it would be instructive to delve more deeply into this topic, I must break off this discussion here.

Conclusion

John Ryder and I (and also of course countless others) owe more than we can measure to James, Dewey, Santayana, Woodbridge, Sellars, Cohen, Randall, Buchler, and other naturalists, pragmatists, and representatives of other traditions, including idealism (Royce, Hocking, and Blanshard) and personalism (Howison, Bowne, and Bertocci). As great as our natural debt is (see the opening of Buchler's *Nature and Judgment*), our historical debt is equally incalculable. By John Ryder's probing engagement with diverse intellectual traditions, he has lived a life of query, one in which reason in Buchler' sense is unquestionably manifest. His speculative audacity has been matched by his moral passion for a more just arrangement for ordinary human beings in the only context that ultimately matters, the everyday contexts of their *workaday* lives, including of course the working hours of daily life. In writing this essay, I have tried to honor his audacity, passion, and commitments. I hope in this endeavor I have hit upon the right tone. The sound of his own words and of course their substance have aided me immensely in thinking through a host of issues. Thinking *with* him in his efforts to think *through* these issues has been immensely pleasurable and profitable. But, then, thinking alongside of him, then veering off into directions he has not – at least not yet – explored in much detail has, in a different way, been heartening and rewarding. If on this occasion I have opted to think alongside him, veering off into a discussion of topics germane to his inquiries but rarely at the center of his concern, I hope that my adherence to the principle of complementarity will itself be greeted as a compliment.

The prospects for *convening anew* as citizens of both a particular place (see, e.g., Ryder 2004) and a global community (see, e.g., Ryder 2007) have been greatly enhanced by the various facets of John Ryder's intellectual life, above all, by his historically rich and contemporaneously focused writings. His resolute commitment to the transformation of a plutocratic culture into a truly democratic *ethos* is everywhere audible in his impressive oeuvre. It is articulated in an unfailingly humane, nuanced, historically acute, and naturalistically frank tone. Just listen. Read with your mind's ear open. John Ryder's writings invite us *to come together anew* in the name of all that is – ought to be – inviolable. The things we encounter in our experience are sufficient unto the day and the day after tomorrow – *and* the day after that. They are, as William Stafford (manifestly a "child" of Frost) stresses in "Allegiances," the common things (the commonplace bonds), securing for sentient beings a shared perspective, a minimal community of truly indefinite inclusiveness[6] and thus political salience (cf. Singer):

[6] "The course of history is nothing but," James suggests, "the story of man's struggles from generation to generation to find [or institute] the more and more inclusive order. *Invent some manner* of realizing your own ideals and which will also satisfy the alien demands – that and that only is the path of peace!" (James 1978, 623).

Suppose an insane wind holds all the hills
while strange beliefs whine at the traveler's ears,
we ordinary beings can cling to the earth and love
where we are, sturdy for common things (Stafford 1998, 128).[7]

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[7] Given Buchler's magnificent work on poetry, *The Main of Light*, also John Ryder's deep interest in, and important contributions to, the functions of art more generally, it seems especially apposite to conclude this essay with several lines of poetry.

A NOTE ON RYDER, LITERARY MODERNISM, AND PHILOSOPHICAL PRAGMATISM

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ABSTRACT: This “Note” comments on John Ryder’s view that similarities or “family resemblances” exist between literary modernism and American pragmatism. Ryder’s emphasis on relationality and experience builds on John Dewey and Justus Buchler, and grounds his own version of pragmatic naturalism. They also provide a basis for the similarities he draws. I offer a few select examples of modernist literature and painting to buttress and extend, through application, Ryder’s views.

Keywords: philosophical pragmatism, literary modernism and realism, aesthetic valuation, relationality and experience, Sherwood Anderson, Justus Buchler, John Dewey, Edward Hopper, John Ryder, John Steinbeck, Wallace Stevens.

> “[…] the approaches to literature among the modernist writers have a fair bit in common with pragmatist philosophy […] In the case of literary modernism, it turns out that there is an affinity between the sense of experience at work in modernist literature and my own theory of experience [pragmatic naturalism]” (John Ryder 2020, 128, 139)

To read the works of John Ryder is to be cast into the myriad subject areas, problems, branches and traditions of the world of philosophy, both West and East. Even a partial list of his publications, organized by general themes, spans the philosophical universe from metaphysics, epistemology and experience to classical and contemporary American philosophy, from Soviet studies to social and political philosophy, from philosophy of education and universities to art and aesthetics, to philosophical theology. His articles and books address fundamental questions concerning general ontology, systematic metaphysics, society and culture, social theory, the multiple dimensions of experience, naturalism and religion, reflection on Santa Claus, and much more. His philosophical mind runs wide and deep, systematic and experiential, theoretical amidst vivid particularity. One day perhaps an ambitious scholar will put it all together and write a much-welcomed book on the philosophy of John Ryder.

In contrast to the aforesaid, my purpose here is limited and specific. This “Note” will not delve into Ryder’s general aesthetics, though concepts and principles I treat surely help provide a foundation for his general aesthetic views and values. I will not attempt to articulate his overall philosophy of literature or his critical tastes as reflected in works of literary art he believes carry philosophical significance. My focus is rather narrow as indicated in my title. I wish simply to briefly reflect on Ryder’s observations concerning the relation between literary modernism and philosophical pragmatism, or as he might prefer, pragmatic naturalism. He claims to find similarities, or at least “family resemblance” relations, between these literary and philosophical approaches. I briefly consider Ryder’s sense of such relations while indicating my basic agreement with him. His philosophers are widely drawn from the American tradition, but he gives particular emphasis to the insights of John Dewey and Justus Buchler, two prime figures in Ryder’s understanding of pragmatic naturalism. He employs to good effect several European writers and painters to illustrate the similarities he identifies between modernity in literature (and the arts generally) and American pragmatism. I will in turn offer support for his views by offering examples of modernist literary figures and one visual artist from the American context who I believe further illustrate his leading ideas.

My primary source is a section from the chapter, “The Aesthetic Dimension of Experience” in Ryder’s book, *Knowledge, Art, and Power: An Outline of a Theory of Experience* (2020). The section is drawn from a 2015 article, “Literary Modernism and Philosophical Pragmatism: Convergence and Divergence.” I employ this section insofar as it’s embedded within a book-length enquiry into experience, with experience being a focus of my attention here. Though I do not directly cite additional published work from Ryder, in the background of my reading and understanding of his position is his 2013 book, *The Things in Heaven and Earth: An Essay in Pragmatic Naturalism*, especially the chapter, “Art and Knowledge.” Additional general background arises from his 2015 *Pragmatism Today* article, “Judgment and Art.”

Undoubtedly, these sources have aided, perhaps unconsciously, in shaping my comments as they are here expressed. Full citation data for all these sources is to be found in my references at the end.

I should at least mention other more informal influences. I have known and worked with John Ryder for nearly a half century, and during that span have attended numerous of his conference paper readings and discussions. In all this, I have learned a great deal from him in connection with the present topic and much more, including the history of pragmatism, pragmatic naturalism, and literature and the arts. Over the many years we have engaged in private discussions on the relations between philosophy and literature, and I have long been grateful for his many suggestions as to literary works and theories of philosophical significance. All of this – reading, listening, and discussion – have shaped what I, at least, think I understand about his views.

Lastly, something of a mild qualification is surely in order. While I have long-standing interests in the philosophy *of* and *in* literature, and have taught, spoken and written steadily on such matters, I am not the expert Ryder is on philosophical pragmatism or literary modernism. A fair bit of what I think I know on such subjects has derived from Ryder. So, whatever summaries or assessments I here make are offered in a modest spirit and with due regard for possible flaws in my understanding.

I begin with a cursory overview of what I take to be the philosophical foundation from which Ryder's views on literary modernity and pragmatism emerge. Ryder's general ontology, which he has expounded in numerous places, is that of "ordinal naturalism" or "pragmatic naturalism," and is impacted heavily by the views of Dewey, Buchler and John McDermott, among others in the American tradition. For my purposes here, "relationality" and "experience" are indispensable notions, inasmuch as the metaphysics of Dewey, Buchler, McDermott and Ryder features an infinite number and variety of forever variable constitutive relations. This is one way of saying that anything (a physical object, a dream, a literary theory, an emotion, etc.) is what Buchler terms a "natural complex" and every complex resides within a particular context or environment of relatedness. Any complex has an integrity that is constituted by its relations with other complexes within its environment, whether large or small, complicated or simple. Relations between things (complexes) are both specific, in a particular order or setting, and open-ended regarding other possible orders and different sets of relations. In other words, a different context yields a different set of constitutive relations. Thus, "relations" or "relationality" is the first crucial notion in exploring similarities between modernity and pragmatism. "Experience" is the second. While such notions may seem abstract and difficult to grasp, I trust that the examples of literature and painting to come will make clear what I am suggesting.

Dewey argued (and Ryder agrees) that human experience grows out of the interaction between a person and her environment. This presumes that specific relations, between the individual and a particular setting, are what produce experience that can be simple or often wide-open with possibilities. Experience always has a perspectival, multi-relational nature such that, for instance, an outer world of so-called "objective" things and an inner world of "subjective" consciousness are always generated or constituted from interaction with an environment. They are never pre-given in a presumably fixed world of outer objects and inner feelings.

Added to the relational nature of experience must be the role of imagination and creativity, particularly so in the case of the arts but also in philosophy generally. Imagination has the capacity to transcend any and all pre-established boundaries of the outer world of material things or the inner realm of so-called "mental states" or sensory impressions. Creativity employs the stuff of reality (objects, feelings, reveries, concepts, etc.) and blends them together in completely unique and emergent patterns and configurations to produce, for example, a scientific discovery, a painting, a short story, a new political theory, basically an infinite variety of possibilities in every arena of thought and practice. My focus here on the dual factors of relationality and experience,

while far too condensed, provide an explanation for Ryder's rejection of a certain strain of limited, traditional realism or naturalism inasmuch as they are incomplete and miss the mark in relation to both literature and philosophy. In philosophy generally, as with pragmatism specifically, Ryder seeks to overcome the traditional, modernist realist or naturalist constraints of empiricist metaphysical and epistemological theories. In other words, nature is never simply the woods or the fishes, just as the "real" is not simply material facts of natural science. Likewise, with the limitations of traditional rationalist theories of reality and knowledge. Such rejections, which lead him to an emphasis on relations and experience, allow us to better comprehend his claim of "family resemblances" between literary modernism and philosophical pragmatism.

Ryder cites examples of chiefly European writers and artists (Joyce, Proust, Picasso, Gertrude Stein) to persuasively illustrate his ideas concerning similarities. With a focus on variable relationality and modified experience through art, conditioned by expansive imagination, unique perspective, and refined skill, I offer below some American examples of writers and one painter who each, in their own way, I believe confirm through further illustration Ryder's sense of similarities. This is perhaps another way of agreeing with Ryder's position while seeking to "ramify" (to use a Buchlerian term) and extend his notions into additional settings and aesthetics environments. My remarks on each artist will be relatively brief.

I begin with a quick glance at a much-celebrated American poet who has recently come back into my purview, Wallace Stevens. While recently reading through a collection of historical essays on the art and culture of Hartford, Connecticut, I was struck by a characterization of Stevens as a man who lived his life in his mind. Even though he enjoyed nature walks in neighborhood parks, often on his way to and from work at the Hartford Insurance Company, and found considerable pleasure in tending to his robust garden of flowers and assorted plants, he was typically seen by others as always tightly wound up in his thoughts and imaginings, and particularly so when creating some of the most beloved poetry of the twentieth century. His largely non-social behavior in the world and utter preoccupation with the operations and phenomena of his mind suggest that he was a modernist writer who forever explored the contours and fullest reaches of his imagination, even when writing about ice cream. His modernist poetry would seem to contrast rather dramatically with what could be loosely termed a pragmatist inclination at this day job. He was by all accounts an excellent problem solver in the context of surety property insurance, a successful man in the world of business who made it to the rank of vice-president. Was he a modernist poet with, in his case, as little connection to an outside world as possible, or an astute, practical day-by-day man of business, husband, father, regular vacationer in Key West, or it would seem both? It appears he somehow managed to live parallel lives, not always comfortably, and can be seen as something of a bridge between modernist aesthetic traits and the pragmatist's concern with solving problems and going with that which works.

Realism and naturalism in literature (and the arts generally) is sometimes thought to be represented in the work of writers who accurately reflect in their fictions the outside world of nature or the social and historical situation of their time. Sherwood Anderson's best known story collection, *Winesburg, Ohio,* on the surface might appear to be something of a literal description of the people and doings of a small, Midwestern town at the turn of the twentieth century. Even though the central character around whom virtually all the action revolves, George Willard, is a local newspaper reporter, the stories as gathered by Anderson, turn out to be far more than a journalist's description of town residents and their actions. In simple stories of everyday life, Anderson manages to delve probingly into the inner lives of the people – their secrets, emotions, longings, frustrations and despair – while rendering in print what life in a small, rural village "actually" looks and feels like. The book, in its totality, creates something of a psychologi-

cal, spiritual and moral profile of possibly any American town. As a realist he succeeds in producing a memorable portrait of the town and its occupants. As an early modernist writer of the rural American experience, he imaginatively, creatively probes the inner psyches of the book's characters as well as himself, in order to flesh out the town's emotional and moral underbelly, every bit a "truth" of the town as are the facts of population, jobs, freezing winter nights and the sermons of Reverend Hartman.

Anderson's multiple accounts of his own subconscious mind revealed "dreams" in which the faces of inarticulate townspeople would appear before him, pleading with him to tell their stories. A given story would sometimes grow in his subconscious and he would end up telling it differently in other writings. As one trait of modernism that Ryder alludes to, time and logical sequence would often become scrambled in Anderson's work. Past, present and future blended together and he often could not sort them out. In that he had no interest in telling conventional folk tales, he placed achieving a quality of emotional truth over factual accuracy. He sought to realize through his fictional stories a single moment of aliveness, what Joyce called an epiphany, in which inarticulate and closed off characters reached beyond their confusion and misunderstanding to realize a moment of clarity and unity with others. Critic Malcolm Cowley writes that "Anderson had that gift for summing up, for pouring a lifetime into a moment" (Cowley 1960, 8). Given all this, it's fair to read Anderson as a hybrid of sorts, in some measure a realist, a naturalist and for sure a modernist.

Ryder identifies William Faulkner as a modernist writer who at times used multiple narratives, often ambiguous and inconsistent, as well as multi-perspectival approaches to persons and events, to show that *experience* and *time* can never be captured in a single formula. Ryder writes that the modernist art of people like Faulkner "[…] famously set about to fracture the presentation of reality and experience, […] on the assumption that reality and experience are too rich and complex to capture in a single narrative or from a single perspective, in which process we see the general breakdown of linear perspective" (Ryder 2020, 135). And further, "[…] the relationality of pragmatism is of a piece with the multiple perspectives of modernist art and of the multiple narratives of modernist literature" (ibid., 137). It's worth noting that Faulkner and Sherwood Anderson, following their initial meeting in 1925, were for some time nearly inseparable companions. Legend has it that Anderson was the one who convinced Faulkner to give up poetry and write novels. Cowley helpfully reminds us that Anderson was regarded as a "[…] writer's writer, the only story teller of his generation who left his mark on the generation that followed. Hemingway, Faulkner, Wolfe, Steinbeck, Caldwell, Saroyan, Henry Miller […] each of these owes an unmistakable debt to Anderson" (Cowley 1960, 1).

Of this group of writers, I am partial to Steinbeck. It comes to mind that much of what has been said here about Anderson, literary modernity and pragmatism could well apply to stories such as *Of Mice and Men, The Grapes of Wrath, Cannery Row, The Winter of Our Discontent* among others. A significant dimension of Steinbeck's genius was his nearly unparalleled ability to beautifully, movingly render a "natural" setting – a riverbank, a town, a sardine factory – while transforming it into an imaginative and spiritual space, a cauldron of moral turmoil, a moment of extreme pathos and love of community, a movement for realization of human possibility. A case could be made that Steinbeck was, in particular respects, a realist, modernist and pragmatist of social and individual action – all of them and none of them exclusively.

One last example, this from the visual arts, will assist in the understanding of modernity (in the arts) and further instantiate Ryder's views on relations between ideas and practices of modernity and pragmatic naturalism, particularly as contrasted with traditions of realism and nature in American painting. We know the Hudson River School painters produced aesthetically pleasing images of unspoiled nature scenes along the valleys, hills

and banks of the historic Hudson. Their pictorial renditions of what they observed, nearly photographic in nature, were measured by both technical skill and faithful, realistic reproduction on canvas of stirringly beautiful nature outside the observer. One aspect in portraiture seems to share similar goals.

Even a brief consideration of American painter and illustrator, Edward Hopper, who is sometimes thought to be a realist, reveals, in addition, a modernist strain in which our fundamental themes of expansive relationality and experience apply along with creative imagination, multi-perspectival approaches and powerful inner struggles of the psyche. I offer his painting, *Hotel Lobby*, as a typical example. First some general comments about Hopper's aesthetics followed by remarks on *Hotel Lobby*.

Harriet G. Warkel, curator of American painting and sculpture at the Indianapolis Museum of Art (which has *Hotel Lobby* in its collection) characterizes Hopper's art as,

> […] highly provocative […] often disturbing. His contemplative figures appear to be alienated from society and to occupy a world devoid of interaction and communication. They never smile or frown, and their attitudes and expressions suggest unapproachableness. These introspective figures convey inner turmoil that can provoke questions about relationships, the roles people play in society and the meaning of life (Warkel 2008, 11).

She further describes how Hopper, while painting seemingly "realistic" images of gas stations, diners, lighthouses, or his wife in a variety of settings, always wanted to "do himself." Given his self-involvement, she observes that some art historians,

> […] categorized Hopper as a modernist, focusing on the abstract qualities of his compositions, such as his emphasis on geometry, his tendency to pose figures for compositional rather than realistic purposes, and his oddly rectangular areas of light, some of which appear in places where no light source can be identified. Throughout all the debate about meaning and category, Hopper's compositions seem to hold profound secrets waiting to be revealed, secrets that entice us, even dare us, to decipher them" (Warkel 2008, 19).

Hopper scholar, Rolf G. Renner, adds to Warkel's analysis in his piece, "Transformations of the Real: Hopper as Modernist," in which he points out that a "[…] characteristic Hopper composition is not first and foremost an image of visible fact but rather a *gestalt* created out of breakdown and fracture in the process of perception and indeed the capacity to perceive" and "has its centre of gravity in what is not actually visible in the paintings. Hopper's art enacts ways of seeing and understanding that anchor superficial situations in profound depths" (Renner 1997, 85). In effect, a tension between realistic representation and Hopper's transformative performance on canvas can be traced to the very smallest of details, as he re-makes immediately perceived reality into aesthetic ideas and concepts that precede the perceptual act. To pick up on Ryder's point about modernity and pragmatism, Hopper achieves, according to Renner, a "[…] psychological and epistemological rupture between experience and idea, collective myth and social fact. The perceptions adumbrated in his paintings are modified by our own perceiving eyes" (ibid., 91). In Renner's account Hopper was simply not interested in mimetic representation as such. "Rather, image and imagination, and representation and aesthetic construction, were interdependent in his work." The reality of Hopper's art, thus, emerges from "the ludic interplay between images of the real and the viewer's gaze decoding the real" (ibid., 93).

All this can be experienced in *Hotel Lobby*. The setting is a typical hotel lobby, circa 1943. There are four persons, two a well-dressed older couple, a shadowy, mysterious hotel clerk behind the lobby desk, and an alluring young blond woman sitting across the lobby with bare outstretched legs while intently reading a book. None of them seem to pay the least attention to the others. They appear completely within their own worlds. Simple enough it would seem, but not so simple upon a moment's examination. Warkel considers *Hotel Lobby* "[…] one of Hopper's most dramatic and intriguing paintings." It addresses "[…] themes of waiting, transience, age and voyeurism in its arrangement of [the] four figures […] The composition is painstakingly designed with carefully selected characters organized to convey

an intensely personal expression of the artist's internal conflicts and view of the world" (Warkel 2008, 11). Renner points out an odd tension that arises from the attractive blond-haired woman whose body is presented in sensual terms "[…] yet she is concentrating on her reading […] the old-aged couple in the background, ready to go out, look as dead as tailor's dummies by comparison" (Renner 1997, 71). But are they really that oblivious, and is it possible the young, male clerk, whose partial head is the only thing we see of him, is perhaps surveying the situation while pondering human nature?

Reflecting on my own experience of *Hotel Lobby*, it strikes me that keys to the work are, as Ryder highlights, the varied relations that exist between persons, objects, strong colors and visual spaces as they are constituted and perceived. Undeniable is the role of creative imagination, the exploration of multiple perspectives on sensory perceptions and impulses, the vitality of the conscious and subconscious mind and the manner in which the interaction between the picture's subjects and their environment, and the viewer's interaction with the painting (their environment) engenders a mysterious, vexing, provocative yet unresolved experience. Beyond technical proficiency, all this I believe to be integral to Hopper's brilliance as a visual artist.

In my view the above examples reflect essential traits of modernism, philosophical pragmatism, and their similarities, that Ryder has treated philosophically in writings I have here made use of. Throughout I have found myself in basic agreement with his analysis of similarities or "family resemblances." Of particular importance for me is the extent to which Ryder's work has prompted extended reflection on his themes or, if you will, new perspectives, a realization of new relations between what I think I know of pragmatism in philosophy and modernity in the arts. Such is the proper role of a true philosopher.

I have intended by using the examples of writers Stevens, Anderson, and Steinbeck and painter Hopper to amplify and extend Ryder's views through applications to new artistic examples. I take one of the key pragmatic tests of any idea, contention or theory is whether it relates effectively and revealingly to examples and aids in the understanding of them. I believe that scholars of American pragmatism, as well as theorists and critics of modernity in literature and the arts, would do well to pay careful attention to Ryder's work on this and related topics. His persistent efforts over decades at bridging gaps, of reconciling seeming opposites, of developing new ways of experiencing literature, should be thoughtfully studied and ramified in numerous additional settings.

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ORDINALITY AND FILM IMAGE

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ABSTRACT: The paper follows John Ryder's thinking in that he was the first to apply Buchler's categories to film analysis, and it considers a metaphysics of natural complexes in its application to cinematic expressions of contextual relations. On one hand, an analysis of cinematic images as objects of perception in terms of natural complexes contributes to the applicability of Buchler's categories of complex, ordinality, and relation. On the other hand, Buchler's metaphysics provides the frame of interpretation and the language of description for the art of metamodernism, most relevantly for metamodern cinema, but also for the theory of metamodernism itself. On the example Charlie Kaufman's "I'm Thinking of Ending Things" (2020), the paper examines film images as natural complexes using the categories of prevalence, alescence, and the notion of contour.

Keywords: John Ryder, Justus Buchler, Charlie Kaufman, cinema, film image, dreams, mental states, natural complex, ordinality, contour, prevalence, alescence

John Ryder was the first to apply Buchler's categories to film analysis. In his article "The Ontology of Santa Claus: 'Miracle on 34th Street'," he examined the case that the 1947 film makes for the reality of Santa Claus through the perspective of ordinal metaphysics. In the story, Macy's Department store hires a man, Kris Kringle, to play the role of Santa Claus in its annual Thanksgiving Day parade. Kris not only plays Santa but claims to be Santa Claus in fact, a later claim that is later adjudicated in court. Ryder suggests that the film does not just follow the path of William James's "will to believe", providing "some vague rationale for belief or faith, but it advances the even more challenging claim that Santa Claus in fact exists" (Ryder 2012, 51). Thus, the film makes an ordinal argument for the existence of Santa Claus in four orders of relations, i.e., family, politics, represented by the judge who presides over the "Santa Claus case", commerce (Mr. Macy), and the State exemplified by the US Postal Service, which delivers to the courtroom letters addressed to Santa. The characters have to acknowledge the reality of Santa Claus in all these four spheres, or "order of relations", since Christmas plays a vital role in each of them. Ryder asks, "what it might mean to say that Santa Claus exists", (ibid.) and arrives at the conclusion that it means "to locate Santa Claus in those orders", and that an ordinal ontology helps one to understand the impossibility in an American cultural context of denying Santa Claus's existence (ibid., 53–54).

John Ryder's article is a convincing argument in favor of applying an ordinal ontology to interpretation of ontological issues that the story may invoke. Let me take another step in the same direction and examine possibilities of applying an ordinal ontology to categories of film images and to the image itself. I will take as an example the 2020 psychological thriller "I'm Thinking of Ending Things" directed by Charlie Kaufman (b. 1958), who is, like John Ryder, a New York native and raised on Long Island.

The film starts as a story narrated by a young woman Lucy (Jessie Buckley) who is, together with her boyfriend Jake (Jesse Plemons), on the road in Upstate New York to visit his parents (Toni Collette and David Thewlis). During the journey, Lucy and Jake are engaged in a strange conversation, in which Jake reacts to Lucy's words, though they are not pronounced audibly, and he seems be able to know what she thinks. The title of the film is in fact one of Lucy's thoughts. The journey brings the two to an eerie dinner at Jake's parents' house, in the course of which the eeriness accelerates. The age of Jake's parents keeps changing, Lucy's occupation vacillates from a physics student to a gerontologist, a painter, and a waitress, as well as does the timing and location of Lucy and Jake's first encounter. At some point, Lucy even assumes the name Louisa. There is a telling moment when she looks into the car mirror; the mirror is broken, as is, it seems, her identity. Eventually, the viewer realizes that Lucy's voice narration and the Jake-Lucy storyline develop in the mind of an old janitor (Guy Boyd), the footage of whom occasionally interrupts the film sequences. The metamorphosis of Jake's parents and other inconsistences revealingly underscore his search for the ideal place and time for events that never happened. Reality and Jake's fantasies continue to mingle until the very end of the movie.

Hallucinations or Not?

"I'm Thinking of Ending Things", complexity of which is thought-provoking from a cinematic point of view, also poses other challenges. It raises ontological, epistemological and film theory issues that can be considered within Justus Buchler and John Ryder's categorial framework of an ordinal metaphysics. The first issue is, as in Ryder's analysis of "Miracle on 34th Street", connected to the status of film characters in relation to their environment, i.e., to the consensus reality on screen. Jake's girlfriend Lucy, that is the first-person narrator in the first half of the film, turns out to be Jake's thought, a fantasy or a dream, a girlfriend he has never had. Jake, though he is not a thought, never gets the chance to voice his thoughts in a verbal narration. Moreover, Lucy seems so real that many film critics still continue to interpret the film as a drama of Jake and Lucy's relationship.

Charlie Kaufman once admitted in an interview that "Jake has built her [Lucy] out of the books, movies, and passing encounters that have shaped his isolated worldview". But the film director's answer to the question, "So Lucy's the main character and she also doesn't exist?", was surprisingly vague – "yes and no". Kaufman's explanation for the ambiguity of his answer was "She is a device, but I wanted her to be able to separate herself from that […] I didn't want it to be a twist. I felt like that would not work in a movie at this point in history […] To my mind, it would have been a misuse of any actress not to give them something to play that was real […] I needed her to have agency" (Kohn; Kaufman 2020). The script for the film supports this claim; its non-dialogue parts describe Lucy as a subject with a consciousness of her own: "Suddenly, she feels self-conscious, glances around to see if she is being watched, peering into dark apartment windows" (Kaufman 2019, 10).

At the same time, Charlie Kaufman's movie is overloaded with quotations, allusions, and intertextual references. Thus, there are several episodes that allude to the musical "Oklahoma!" (1943), written by Rodgers and Hammerstein. At the end of the movie Jake sings the "Lonely Room" song from "Oklahoma!". Jake indeed bears some resemblance to Jud from the musical; but one of the most remarkable allusions to "Oklahoma!" is the "Dream Ballet" sequence. A dream ballet in musical theater is an all-dance *mise en abyme* that explains and clarifies the main plot. A dream ballet in the movie nods to the dream character of the world on screen.

So, Lucy is a thought, a dream, a hallucination and so on, and concurrently she does exist as a human being in the consensus reality created in the film. The curious twist here is that the realization that the girl is no more than a projection of the older Jake's imagination, as well as the young Jake himself, does not undermine the close relations that those "projections" have to the consensus reality and does not move them to the category of hallucinations. "I'm Thinking of Ending Things" evokes "A Beautiful Mind" (2001, Ron Howard): in the final scenes, Kaufman imitates the Nobel Prize speech episode from Howard's Oscar winning film. In "A Beautiful Mind", John Nash's schizophrenic mind also produces images, i.e., of the mysterious agent William Parcher, and of his former roommate from Princeton and his niece. However, the status of those cinematic representations of hallucinations is quite different from the "dreams" that Jake has. The agency capacity of hallucinatory images of Howard's movie is extremely limited; their mental states are never revealed or even suggested, and there is no space for sympathy or empathy. This is not the case in "I'm Thinking of Ending Things." Kaufman tried to share Jake's "experience of absorbing things […] and how they become part of his psyche" (Kohn; Kaufman 2020). As a result, he created characters that seem to have experiences of their own, independent of what the older Jake experienced or may plan for them. Lucy has a representative power; she is the fantasy that "fights back". Kaufman explained that he needed her to have agency: "I really liked the idea that even within his [Jake's] fantasy, he cannot have what he wants. He's going to imagine this thing, but then he's going to also imagine how it won't work, how she's going to be bored with him, how she's going to not think he's smart enough or interesting enough" (Kohn; Kaufman

2020). If Lucy and the young Jake are not hallucinations, then what kind of cinematic images are they?

In film theory, e.g., in Gilles Deleuze, perception has a double reference and can be objective or subjective. While the subjective image is "the thing seen by someone 'qualified', or the set as it is seen by someone who forms part of that set", the objective image is the thing or the set "seen from the viewpoint of someone who remains external to that set" (Deleuze 1986: 71). The cinematographic perception-image, which is a type of movement-image[1], continuously balances between subjectivity and objectivity as the camera moves from the point of view through the eyes of the character to a position outside or even "with" the character, and that allows Deleuze to define the perception-image as semi-subjective (ibid., 72–73). The distinction between hallucinations and 'real' objects in cinematic spaces described by Deleuze is often conveyed by, though not limited to, the interplay of subjective and objective camera. Thus, in "A Beautiful Mind", the hallucinations that John Nash sees are what the subjective camera portrays through the eyes of a character. The camera discriminates them from the non-hallucinatory characters, as well as Nash himself does later in the movie. However, in *Cinema I: The Movement-Image* Deleuze does not a provide an adequate framework for such hallucinatory images as are produced by Jake's mind in Kaufman's movie, since the subjective/objective camera does not contribute to the differentiation of hallucinations and reality in "I'm Thinking of Ending Things."

In *Cinema I* Deleuze singles out Italian neo-realism as opposite to the realism of place and spatial coordinates. The destruction caused by World War Two created a great variety of any-space-whatever. It changed the nature of movement in films as characters barely undertake common trips in non-complicated sensory-motor situations, but are likely to drift in any-space-whatever. Deleuze thought that this indicated a crisis of the action-image that failed to motivate walking in determinate places (Deleuze 1986: 109, 122). A simple sensory-motor formula does not work in such cinema of behavior; what does work are the internal factors: "only the inner counts, but this inner is not beyond or hidden, it is not the same as the genetic element of behaviour, which must be shown […] not a perfecting of action; it is the absolutely necessary condition of the development of the action-image" (ibid., 158). If one compares "any-space-whatever" and other types of environments that awaken an affective memory to spaces and environments in Kaufman's movie, and there are many of them shaping an emotional line of narration, there is a difference. A simple sensory-motor formula does not work in "I'm Thinking of Ending Things," and no space could be named "any-space-whatever", even the Tusley Town Ice Cream, a non-existent ice cream shop that Jake and Lucy encounter in the middle of a snowstorm. (In the book the film is based on, it is a Dairy Queen, but Kaufman did not get permission to film there.)

Patricia Pisters, a follower of Gilles Deleuze, in her attempt to combine philosophy, modern cinema, and the "mysteries of the brain," sees the brain as a screen, and even as a neuro-screen. She insists that contemporary cinema seeks not only to depict the world seen through the character's eyes, but also to show what is going on in his or her consciousness, to capture his or her mental landscape, that is, to move from cinema as an "illusion of reality" to the image as the "reality of illusion". The visualization of images of consciousness and subconsciousness on the movie screen is the creation of a neuro-image: "We no longer see through characters' eyes, as in the movement-image and the time-image;[2] we are most often instead in their mental worlds" (Pisters 2012, 14). Pisters

[1] Deleuze identifies four types of cinematic movement-images: perception-images (what is seen), affection-images (what is emotionally expressed), action-images (what is performed), and mental-images (what is recollected).

[2] In *Cinema II: The Time-Image*, Deleuze, who thought that Hitchcock caused dwarfing of the movement-image and led to the emergence and expansion of time-image, defines and discriminates such types of time-images as a recollection-image and a dream-image. He contrasts them with a perception-image as the virtual to the actual; for him, recollection- and dream-images are not actual, they are "on the way to actualization" (Deleuze 1989, 130). I claim that Kaufman does not create time-images in Deleuzean sense, such as a recollection-image and a dream-image.

introduces the new category of "the neuro-image" (new, that is, relative to the movement-image and time-image), which she connects (dubiously) to the activity of the brain. Though there is a temptation to identify the film narrative in "I'm Thinking of Ending Things" as a mental space, there is a number of factors that prevent it. Kaufman does not seek to establish a correlation between the mental state of the character and the environment; the characters of the film that emerge in Jake's mind could not be reduced to his recollections and dreams for the reasons mentioned earlier, i.e., their "representative power", independence, and potential ability to cause sympathy or empathy. The neuro-image conception, like Deleuze's theory, fails to conceptualize the cinematic images in Kaufman's movie. My claim is that the ordinal ontology does.

According to Buchler, perception is a relational complex; therefore, a film image, for example a mirror, a tree or a candle, can be interpreted as mirror-in-perceptual-relation-to-observer where the observer is a film character or a camera eye, on one hand, or a film viewer, on the other hand. The observer is both internal and external. The cinematographic image is also a complex of relations, possibilities, and actualities. According to Kathleen Wallace, "perceptions, illusions, and hallucinations may share some locations (e.g., location in the order of the sensory apparatus) but not all", as a result, "we might not be able to tell the difference between perception, hallucination, and illusion solely on the basis of the sense experiences (from within the order of the sensory apparatus), or from the first person perspective alone" (Wallace 2004, 276). However, "perceptual validation is possible through intersubjective duplication and confirmation or through reiterated perceptions and actions by the perceiver", while a hallucination "is not located in an order which is plurally accessible and, hence, would not be able to be validated as a perception" (ibid.). In ordinal terminology, John Nash is a natural complex that belongs to the order of characters that are presented as 'real people,' while, say, William Parcher from the US Department of Defense belongs to the order of hallucinations. The claim is checkable through "perceptual validation", since Nash is the only one in his circle of people who sees Parcher. As for "I'm Thinking of Ending Things," in ordinal terminology, Lucy or the young Jake are natural complexes, the ordinal location of which are not as easily determined as in "A Beautiful Mind." What seems to be objective turns out to be subjective. Both, Lucy and Jake, turn out to be as it were projections of the janitor who is, supposedly, the older Jake. Thus, the janitor is not somebody registered by the camera-eye, and Lucy is not the ultimate narrator of the story, but the voice of somebody's dream.

Within the Contour of Complexes

In the opening scenes of Kaufman's movie (but not in the script), Lucy reiterates what, as she claims, Jake once said: "Sometimes the thought is closer to the truth, to reality, than an action. You can say anything, you can do anything, but you can't fake a thought." Kaufman, while constructing the opposition of true and false, problematizes here, to use Buchler's terminology, the prevailing traits of natural complexes located in the order of consensus reality. So, we have, one might say, two Lucies, one, which is in the order of hallucinations and dreams, and a second, which is in the order of real-life characters in the consensus reality. However, we do not talk of Lucy as two different natural complexes alternating in different situations and film sequences. We deal with the same complex in two quite different ordinal locations.

In the "Reply to Anton: Against 'Proper' Ontology," Buchler clarifies the term "natural definition" of a complex: "It is the kind of definition in which any natural complex sets limits to another, inherently demarcates the boundaries between it and another" (Buchler 1990, 206). Hallucinations and dreams as complexes have their limits that demarcate them from real-life characters. What then makes it possible for the natural complex "Lucy" to belong to both of them? In this case, the notions of the complex's integrity and of its contour, categories that Buchler introduced, become relevant:

> A complex has an *integrity* for each of its ordinal locations. The continuity and totality of its locations, the interrelation of its integrities, is the *contour* of the complex. The contour is itself an integrity, the gross integrity of that which is plurally located, whether successively or simultaneously. A contour is the integrity of a complex not in so far as the complex transcends all orders but in so far as it belongs to many orders. The *identity* of a complex is the continuous relation that obtains between the contour of a complex and any of its integrities (ibid., 22).

Ryder also raises "the question of the sameness of the complex across its ordinal locations", and he states,

> The identity of a complex is not a function of this or that integrity. If it were, then we would be forced to say that a complex in one of its ordinal locations is not the same one as complex considered in another of its locations. Since identity is a function of the relation between the contour, or gross integrity, of a complex and any of its integrities, the possibility of speaking of the "same" complex across ordinal locations is assured (Ryder 1980, 125).

In "I'm Thinking of Ending Things," Lucy is the same Lucy in all the ordinal locations in which she is located. More importantly, such traits as 'hallucinatory' or 'real' do not prevail in the identity of the complex "Lucy". The character's identity is not broken, as seems to be the case in the broken car-mirror scene, but it is fragmented. Buchler indicates that "the identity of a complex depends upon a relation of each integrity to the contour, not upon a relation of each integrity to every other" (Buchler 1990, 221–222). If the contour of a natural complex is "the continuity and totality of its locations, the interrelation of its integrities", then "the possibilities of a natural complex are those traits which define its contour (or any of its integrities) in so far as this contour is to continue or to be extended", "every trait defines, and a possibility is one kind of defining" (ibid., 161–162). Buchler also uses the term "prefinition" to embrace "both extension or continuation" of a natural complex, "a possibility *is* an extension of a complex – an extension prefined" (ibid., 165).[3] The contour of the natural complex "Lucy" includes traits that could have brought her to the order of hallucinations as well as traits that are constituent of the complexes of 'real-life characters' and 'real people'. How is this possible?

"Christina's World" Gives the Clue

In Kaufman's movie, during a weird conversation at the dinner table at Jake's parents' house, Lucy makes a reference to the famous painting "Christina's World" (1948) by Andrew Wyeth:

> YOUNG WOMAN
> I try to imbue my work with a kind of interiority.
> FATHER
> Interiority. So you paint insides? I thought…
> YOUNG WOMAN
> Inside my head. So a landscape would attempt to express how I'm feeling at the time: lonely, joyous, worried, sad.
> MOTHER
> That sounds very interesting. Like that painting of that girl sitting in a field looking at a house.
> YOUNG WOMAN
> Christina's world. Wyeth. Yes. Exactly […] (Kaufman 2019, 46–47).

The visual illusion that the painting by Andrew Wyeth creates, as well as the story of its creation, contributes to the understanding of the nature of the natural complex that the character Lucy exemplifies in the movie and that is a distinctive type of cinematic image that film theories to date cannot embrace and explain. "Christina's World," a tempera work that is part of New York MOMA's permanent collection, depicts a woman in the field looking up at a farmhouse on the horizon. The woman, Anna Christina Olson, suffered from a degenerative muscular disorder and used to crawl in the grounds around her house instead of using a wheelchair. Wyeth, who had a summer home in the area, saw Christina crawling and, inspired, created the painting. The impression that the female figure produces is dubious; at first it seems that the woman is young and then the viewer realizes that the situation is, in fact, the opposite. In

[3] It seems that Deleuze was thinking if not within the same lines then at least in a similar direction, when he argued that "The cinema does not just present images, it surrounds them with a world. This is why, very early on, it looked for bigger and bigger circuits which would unite an actual image with recollection-images, dream-images and world-images" (Deleuze 1989, 68).

1948, Olson was 55. However, the visual illusion has a basis: Wyeth used two models, Christina Olsen and his wife Betsy, who was then 25. While the distorted limbs and pink dress belong to Christina, the head and the torso belong to Betsy.

The ambiguity is built into the Kaufman's movie. The natural complex "Lucy" does not change its ordinal locations – it does not move from the order of hallucinations and dreams to the order of real-life characters in the consensus reality. Its contour and its integrity allow the simultaneous existence of both of them since the ambiguity is the prevailing trait in the natural complex "Lucy," thus allowing it. And this is not an ambiguity caused by an uncertainty over which interpretation to choose. It is, on the contrary, an ambiguity that arises from the clearness of its nature. Other natural complexes in Kaufman's film that undergo transformations in the curse of the movie - Jake, Lucy, Jake's parents, their house where Jake spent his young years - do not just experience change. They presuppose a continuous fluctuation and alteration of their traits, in the first place the traits that are connected to the complex's position on the time-line in Jake's fantasies, and to their status in relation to the viewer's perception. They balance between complexes that belong to the order of consensus realty and those that belong to the order of mental construction. Their 'agency' status also balances between complexes that belong to the order of agents and manipulators and the order of manipulated objects. Thus, the ambiguous status of these complexes becomes their intrinsic attribute, a trait. So, Kaufman made a film that is filled with cinematic images of a puzzling nature that the film theories of Gilles Deleuze and his follower Patricia Pisters cannot explain, while Justus Buchler's theory, supported by John Ryder's insights, can.

In "I'm Thinking of Ending Things," the characters, the space, and the time are controversial at various stages of their metamorphoses. According to Buchler, "contradiction is always ordinal, located by the orders of the complex as much as by the order of logic" (Wallace 2004, 277). I would say that contradiction, as well as ambiguity, is built into Kaufman's cinematography in general, and "I'm Thinking of Ending Things" is one of the examples. I would also say that these traits are markers of a new kind of cinematic image that comes to replace dream-images and neuro-images. Buchler uses the category of alescence to express "the idea that a complex is altering its location in (or to or from) an order" (Wallace 2004, 275). It is possible to say that in the midst of the given prevalence of cinematic images linked to mental states, there is an alescence that Kaufman's cinematic images reflect. For an alescence to be regarded as "complete", it needs to "be regarded as prevalence in some order" (Buchler 1990, 59). What, then, is that order?

Ordinality and Metamodernism

My claim is that that order is metamodernism. "I'm Thinking of Ending Things" presents such an attractive case for discussion because Charlie Kaufman is in the midst of artistic efforts shaping what is called metamodern art. The attempts to formulate a theory that explains contemporary culture, which is often awkwardly called 'post-postmodernism,' led to the emergence a the term 'metamodernism'. Metamodernism is understood in the first place as "a structure of feeling that emerges from, and reacts to, the postmodern as much as it is a cultural logic that corresponds to today's stage of global capitalism," and it is "developed through a systematic reading of dominant tendencies in contemporary artistic and cultural production rather than isolated or dated phenomena" (Akker; Gibbons; Vermeulen 2017, 5). Metamodernism is characterized by such traits as oscillation, "meta", with or among, between, after, super-hybridity, historicity, affect, structure of feeling, depth, new sincerity, postirony, post-truth. For my argument, probably, the most important is oscillation, which is the most crucial characteristic of the contemporary 'structure of feeling.' Oscillation is understood as "betweenness," it is "an oscillating in-betweenness or, rather, a dialectical movement that identifies with and negates – and hence, overcomes and undermines – conflicting positions, while

being never congruent with these positions (keeping being with or among in check)" (ibid., 10). The prefix 'meta' in the term 'metamodernism' originates from the Platonic notion of metaxy in the *Symposium*, which he used to describe a sense of in-betweenness (ibid.).

Charlie Kaufman, when he creates the types of cinematic images that have been discussed, images that as natural complexes have ambiguity in their structure (not just in their perception) in fact creates *oscillation*. And oscillation as a trait prevails in his cinema and in cinema of metamodernism in general. The discussion of the Andrew Wyeth's painting ends with the following exchange between the characters:

> YOUNG WOMAN
> Christina's world. Wyeth. Yes. Exactly. But without people.
> FATHER
> How can a picture of a field be sad without a sad person looking sad in the field? (Kaufman 2019, 46–47).

Lucy's idea is not absurd. Neither is Jake's father question. It is known that,

> Wyeth felt that the painting would have been more successful without the figure in the field. He remarked to an interviewer, "When I was painting 'Christina's World' I would sit there by the hours working on the grass, and I began to feel I was really out in the field. I got lost in the texture of the thing. I remember going down into the field and grabbing up a section of earth and setting it on the base of my easel. It wasn't a painting I was working on. I was actually working on the ground itself.[4]

Kaufman thus links Lucy to Wyeth in her desire to paint this painting without a human figure. By doing this he queries the forms of artistic expressions in the art of metamodernism. And Justus Buchler and John Ryder provide a framework for these queries.

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ON THE NATURAL ROOTS OF THE "AESTHETIC" IN JOHN DEWEY AND WILLIAM JAMES

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ABSTRACT: This paper focuses on the peculiar meanings of the word "aesthetic" or "esthetic" in Dewey and James, highlighting the continuity between Dewey's interpretation of the "esthetic" and James's uses of the term. More importantly, the paper defends the claim that both philosophers attributed a basically naturalistic meaning to "aesthetic/esthetic": Dewey saw experience as basically esthetically or qualitatively characterized, insofar it is connected to the biological conditions of life in an environment that directly affects the very existence of organisms. James primarily used the term "aesthetic" in connection to pain and pleasure, i.e., to refer to a living being's physiological predisposition to feel and select certain features of the surrounding world, by assuming specific attitudes toward given situations. Moreover, both authors conceived of the aesthetic in a narrower sense, i.e., in relation to the arts, as the development, enhancement or refinement of the naturally aesthetic features of human experience, denying any a priori distinction between the two spheres.

After clarifying the meanings of the word "esthetic" in Dewey's work in relation to his theory of experience and aesthetic qualities, the paper explores the uses of the word "aesthetic" in James's texts, particularly with reference to his theory of temperament and his conception of emotions. The last section focuses on the influence exercised on James's vocabulary by the work of Alexander Bain and suggests the risky yet plausible hypothesis that Edmund Burke's physiological aesthetics may have played a role in the way James approached the word, although the term "aesthetic" is missing in Burke's text.

Keywords: aesthetic (the meaning of), aesthetic qualities, temperament, physiological aesthetics, John Dewey, William James

A Prologue (of Sorts)

Throughout his philosophical career, John Ryder has been strongly committed to a form of pragmatic naturalism, whose centrality in his work can hardly be overestimated. In his book *The Things in Heaven and Earth*, he summarizes the main traits of the kind of naturalism he endorses as a pragmatist. Two of these aspects and one related specification are particularly relevant to the issue I am about to deal with in this paper, that is the natural roots of Dewey's and James's conception of the "aesthetic" in experience.

According to Ryder, one initial characterizing feature of pragmatic naturalism is its assumption that nature is rich and broad enough to include "whatever there is." Therefore, "there is no philosophical need to posit anything outside nature" (Ryder 2013, 37), i.e., there is no need to presuppose any supernatural cause, substance, or philosophical entity whatsoever to explain natural things and events. Considering the consequences of treating nature as a comprehensive category, Ryder emphasizes that pragmatic naturalists are not materialists, in the sense that they do not consider nature to be "equivalent to the material word" (Ryder 2013, 38): emotions, meanings, and thoughts are naturally as much part of our world as rocks and tables. Nonetheless, Ryder points out that, if pressed, he would explain his preference for a form of (more liberal) materialism, involving the claim that "matter is the ontological *sine qua non* of everything else, but matter is not for that any 'more real' than other existences, and certainly not exclusively real" (Ryder 2013, 38). Therefore, a second characteristic feature of pragmatic naturalism is that it is non-reductionist: it assumes that whatever entities humans encounter in their experience are part of nature – not only physical events, but also events, relations, and their qualities.

My purpose in this paper is to pay tribute to John Ryder's philosophical career by showing to what extent all of these traits where already part of the Classical Pragmatists' conception of the "aesthetic," or the "esthetic" to quote Dewey's preferred term.[1] In the first section, I will clarify the meanings of the word "esthetic" in Dewey's work. I will claim that the very idea of "esthetic qualities" – developed within Dewey's theory of experience (Dewey 1981) and further defined in *Art as Experience* (Dewey 1989) – is crucial even beyond the two meanings of "aesthetic" famously emphasized by Dewey himself in response to Romanell (Romanell 1949), namely as a primary trait in experience – the consumma-

[1] Dewey preferred the American English term "esthetic" both in *Experience and Nature* and in *Art as Experience*. In his reply to Romanell in 1950, he used the word "aesthetic," probably to conform his lexicon to that used in the philosophical debate on this issue.

tory phase – and as a derived feature of artistic practice (Dewey 1950).

Considering that Dewey's use of the term "esthetic" largely relies on James's psychology, in the second section I will go back to William James and the uses he made of the word "aesthetic," partly on the basis of the previous inquiries by Francesca Bordogna (Bordogna 2001) and Richard Shusterman (Shusterman 2011).

The third section will focus on the influence exercised on James's vocabulary by the work of Alexander Bain, who explicitly connected the aesthetic with pleasure and pain. In this section, I will also suggest the risky yet plausible hypothesis that Edmund Burke's physiological aesthetics may have played a role in the way James approached the word, although the term "aesthetic" is missing in Burke's text (Burke 1823). In conclusion, my claim will be that Dewey's grounding of "esthetic" qualities in living beings' dependence on their environment and James's attempt to connect the "aesthetic" features of experience with the physiology of pain and pleasure, and with emotions, already corresponded to the picture of pragmatic naturalism traced by John Ryder, and involving the kind of non-reductive materialism mentioned above.

The Meanings of "Esthetic" in Dewey's Theory of Experience and Philosophy of the Arts

In a well-known article written in 1950 and responding to the objections raised by Patrick Romanell the previous year, Dewey uses the word "aesthetic" both as a character of primary experience and as a specific phase or development of experience, i.e., to explain the peculiarity of artistic practices – activities related to both the production and the fruition of art (Dewey 1950).[2] In this paper, I will not focus on Dewey's strategy in his response to Romanell's criticism, because this is not the main aim of my essay. Instead, the basic feature I wish to highlight is the fact that both meanings of the word are grounded in Dewey's theory of experience as consisting in the co-constitutive interactions taking place between humans, conceived as living organisms, and their natural and naturally social environment (Alexander 1987, 135). Insofar as life is radically embedded in an environment, the connection with the biology of living beings is central for understanding the use of the word "aesthetic/esthetic" in Dewey and the Classical Pragmatists. It has been emphasized that, according to Dewey, an experience is esthetic "when the material experienced runs its course to fulfillment" (Dewey 1989, 42), i.e., when it comes to the consummatory phase within an organic-environmental interaction. This is the phase in which a rhythmical equilibrium is restored and can be enjoyed as such, consummation occurs, and the dynamic processes of mutual constitution between living beings and their environment undergo a transition from tension to satisfaction.[3] The arts, in Dewey's view, are clearly an enhancement of these dynamics, as they re-establish a new equilibrium after a phase of tension. His emphasis on the importance of obstacles as a way to make artistic expression and aesthetic enjoyment more complete confirms this claim. This kind of interpretation is right, of course. However, I think it is somewhat partial and must be integrated by considering the conception of "esthetic qualities" that Dewey explicitly formulated in *Experience and Nature* and later developed in *Art as Experience*.[4]

[2] A similar distinction is pivotal in John Ryder's account of the aesthetic. See Ryder 2020, 117, where he claims that "the aesthetic is a definitive feature of the very fabric of experience" and that, following Dewey, we should approach art as an enhancement of aesthetic features that are already present within experience.

[3] For example, Gotshalk remarked (in a critical vein) that for Dewey "the aesthetic exists whenever wholeness enters into experience." Thus, "scientific and intellectual activities, political ventures and moral actions all attain aesthetic stature when they are brought to successful completeness, and achieve an integration of means and ends, parts and whole, in a well-articulated organic unity" (Gotshalk 1964, 131). See Ryder, who affirms that "Because experience consists of an endless process of such assimilation and manipulation, of feeling and responding to imbalance and dissonance in our environment, the creation of harmony and unity is an inherent feature of experience and the root of the aesthetic" (Ryder 2020, 119).

[4] For a similar emphasis on the aesthetic, qualitative, or affective characterization of experience, see Tiles 1988: 49 and ff., Eames 2003, 29 and ff., Johnson 2007, Dreon 2012, Dreon 2013, and Garrison 2015.

There is no doubt, according to Dewey, that things, persons, and events are first of all experienced as sweet or bitter, charming, awful, dangerous, beautiful, comfortable or menacing: in other words, they are primarily experienced in terms of how they directly affect one's own life (Dewey 1981, 82). Their meanings are "esthetic" in the sense that things, events, and other people are primarily perceived in terms of the impact they have on one's own life – Dewey says that they are felt or had, rather than known, in order to emphasize the primacy of life over cognition (Dewey 1981, 28). He uses the term "esthetic qualities" – but he also speaks of the "qualitative" or "affective" background of experience and thought (Dewey 1984 and Dewey 1988), from which reflective inquiring processes emerge. Incidentally, a brief yet important clarification must be added concerning the use of the word "quality," even if this is not the main topic of the present section. It is clear that, in speaking of "esthetic qualities," Dewey did not wish to introduce a special kind of entity, whose status would have been ambiguous; rather, he sought to focus on interactions as qualitatively characterized. So quality is to be understood as an adverb, characterizing the way in which organic-environmental interactions occur.[5] To return now to the meaning of the adjective "esthetic" within the expression "esthetic qualities," Dewey emphasizes that, when experienced pre-reflectively, things tend to be overwhelming and to absorb our attention, as opposed to being assumed as instrumental to further experiences. In the case of humans, who are both moving and linguistic animals (Dewey 1988, 82), experience can become reflective because, through movement and language, humans can postpone suffering and enjoyment and consider things not in their immediate esthetic scope, but rather as functional to achieve a further goal. This happens when something does not work within one's primarily aesthetic, qualitative, or affective experience – that is, when obstacles hinder immediate pleasure or one is trying to avoid pain. Indeed, impediments play a crucial role in letting reflective cognition rise from animals' primarily qualitative, esthetic, or affective experience of a precarious environment. Obstacles are also essential to enhance the consummatory phases of experience, because they elicit consciously controlled interactions – i.e., the arts in the broad sense of the term – to re-establish new forms of organic-environmental equilibrium that can be enjoyed as such.

In a nutshell, experience for Dewey amounts to a vital praxis and a function of life, rather than to mere recording cognition. Organic life is always biased and at stake, which is to say that it always unfolds through the process of making or destroying itself because of its dependence from an environment whose materials and energies are what constitute the living organism. Consequently, things and other individuals are primarily felt as welcoming or hostile, sweet or harsh, i.e., their primary perception is "esthetic," qualitative, or affectively shaped because perception has to do with the impact of the environment on living organisms, rather with the mere recording of sensorial data or grasping of internal states of the mind.

This is a particularly important point, considering its consequences for the history of aesthetics. The "esthetic," in Dewey's sense, is poles apart from disinterested contemplation; it has to do with sensibility, understood not as the pure perception of form independently of any praxis or concern for life, but rather as a process that involves feeling and being affected by the environmental circumstances one is embedded in (Dreon 2022, 62). Dewey (and James) could never concede that there is an *essential* distinction between the beautiful as grounded in allegedly pure, disinterested pleasure and the agreeable as something involving empirical pleasure – although, of course, other forms of discrimination between different pleasures and different sorts of interest could and should be considered.

Consequently, it becomes evident that Dewey uses the word "esthetic" in ways that are very different from the German tradition, especially the Kantian one, where

[5] I have clarified this important point in Dreon 2013, as well as in Dreon 2012.

pure aesthetic judgment is taken to be grounded in a disinterested form of pleasure (see Johnson 2015 and Matteucci 2019).[6]

For sure, Darwin's theories played a decisive role in leading Dewey to consider the "esthetic" primarily from the point of view of living organisms in a hostile or favorable environment: given the biological commonplace (Dewey 1989, 20) that "life goes on in an environment; not merely in it, but because of it, through interaction with it" (Dewey 1989, 19), there cannot be any detached pleasure and aesthetic disinterestedness, because life is always radically embedded in an environment. Organic life is constituted through and through by the organism's continuous, active effort to maintain favorable relationships with surrounding circumstances and a dynamic equilibrium with a precarious world which is always in the making, through alternate phases of tension and fulfillment.

However, I would argue, there is also a continuity with the meanings that William James assigns to the word "aesthetic." James used this term to characterizing a component of experience strictly connected with the emotions, pleasure and pain, as well as with reference to artistic practices and the fruition of the arts.[7] Richard Shusterman has claimed that *The Principles of Psychology* "contains all the essential themes of pragmatist aesthetics that Dewey will later formulate which much greater detail and argumentation in *Art as Experience*" (Shusterman 2011, 347). In this essay, my purpose is more specific, namely to suggest that Dewey's uses of the word "esthetic" and his conception of "esthetic qualities" are largely based on James's thought, particularly his psychology, theory of the emotions, and theory of temperaments and passions – which are all understood as being strictly rooted in "the physiological and organic constitution of the individual" (Bordogna 2001, 3).

In what follows, I will explore James's understanding of the word "aesthetic" in light of his texts; then I will briefly consider the possible influence exercised on his thought by previous physiological theories about human passions – those developed by Alexander Bain, on the one hand, and by Edmund Burke, on the other hand.

James's Uses of the Word "Aesthetic"

In James's writing the word "aesthetic" is basically connected with two semantic fields: on the one hand, it is related to the arts; on the other, it is associated with the field of passions, desires and refusals, the emotions, temperament, and selective interest in perception, which in turn are conceived as grounded in the physiology of the nervous system and the whole human body. As in Dewey's thought, these two fields are considered continuous: both James and Dewey are very far from Kant's idea of the need to introduce a gap between the beautiful and the agreeable, between allegedly pure pleasure and empirical likes and dislikes – ultimately, between the physiological constitution of human beings and the most refined cultural developments. Incidentally, I believe that James' rejection of any transcendental strategy in favor of a strong naturalistic and continuistic stance toward the aesthetic is why he so bluntly criticized Kant's aesthetics (Shusterman 2011, 350).[8] I will return to this point in the next section. For the moment, some references to James's texts are needed within a general reading that sees his work as assuming a basic

[6] Of course, there could be different readings of Kant's idea of the "feeling of pleasure," emphasizing that beauty has a revitalizing effect on the faculties of the soul (cf. Desideri 2013). However, here I am considering the main legacy of Kant's aesthetic thought. More precisely, I believe that more naturalistically oriented interpretations of Kant's feeling of pleasure tend to neglect his strongly transcendental strategy of stressing the difference between the beautiful and the agreeable as a matter of principle. On Dewey's criticism of Kantian aesthetics see Stroud 2020.

[7] To be as clearer as possible, here I am claiming that James was the main influence on Dewey when it comes to the uses the latter made of the word "esthetic." However, I am not arguing that James was the *only* influence on Dewey in *Art as Experience*: his aesthetic naturalism owes a lot not only to James's psychology but also to Darwin's thought. An important role in the complex web of references shaping Dewey's aesthetics is also played by his original appropriation of Hegel's legacy in this field, as I have argued in Dreon 2020. The challenge is to explain how he was able to combine such different influences.

[8] By contrast, Shusterman suggests that Kant's exclusion of any practical value from aesthetics might explain James's antipathy toward Kantian aesthetics (Shusterman 2011, 350).

continuity between his psychology, his later pragmatism, and his radically empiricist position (Siegfried 1990, Bordogna 2001).

Let's begin with James's theory of temperament, which runs through all his works, from *The Sentiment of Rationality*, first published in 1879 and then re-published in 1896, to *Pragmatism* and finally *A Pluralistic Universe*, his last published work, dating back to 1909. In *The Sentiment* James uses the word "aesthetic" to characterize two opposite passions that, according to him, constitute the criteria for selecting "the facts of the world" that are considered relevant in view of developing a philosophical conception of the world. The term "aesthetic" is clearly connected to the sphere of passions and the emotions and is already associated with a selective capacity grounded in feelings and orienting not only one's own common experience but even cognition and philosophical theorizing (see also Trigoni 2015). In the second edition, as noted by Bordogna (Bordogna 2001, 8), "aesthetic passions" become the "emotional constitution," which makes the connection between the aesthetic and the field of affective sensibility even more evident. Famously, an aesthetic passion for unity and simplicity will become the temperament of the tender-minded in *Pragmatism*, while the kind of emotional constitution pursuing distinction and clarity will become the tough-minded temperament. More importantly, as clearly stated by Francesca Bordogna, James's conception of temperament must be understood within the context of coeval physiological studies, which is to say that it is strictly connected to the organic structure of the body and the functioning of the nervous system. James, for example, emphasizes the continuity between unity and harmony in thought after the irritation of doubt and the easy flow of nervous energies following a period of tension and effort. Against this naturalistic background, temperament is claimed to operate as a kind of selective filter between sensory perception, on the one hand, and action and cognition, on the other. So, in James's case it becomes clear that this organic filter is considered to be aesthetic, i.e., based on a feeling attitude or an emotional constitution. More particularly, James conceived of "aesthetic passions" against contemporary attempts to associate them with specific areas in the nervous system. In his view, temperament, namely "a congeries of emotional and aesthetic tendencies" (Bordogna 2001, 15) or, let's say, a kind of affect-based selectivity, cannot be grounded in the nervous activity occurring in fixed parts of the brain, because it is connected with processes that are diffused throughout the nervous system and tend to make the whole body resonate. Furthermore, I would add, James's theory of habits as nervous paths traced in the nervous system via interactions with the world during early infancy blurred the limits between temperament, conceived of as an innate endowment, and character, understood as set of habits acquired through will and education – an opposition that was dominant in his day.

Some of these points are confirmed by James's notes for a psychological seminar on "Aesthetics," held in 1891–1892 (James 1988). If only in their very concision, these notes support the interpretation I am endorsing here in at least three ways. First, the many names mentioned in the notes reflect James's attention toward and preference for the physiological aesthetics of his time, "which he regarded as incomparably preferable to philosophical esthetics" (Bordogna 2001, 19), especially the German tradition from Baumgarten to Kant. Second, James lists common pleasures and pains – mostly involving strongly organic reactions – such as "hunger and thirst," "colic," "nausea," alongside more culturally laden states of tension and ease, such as "apprehension," "bad success," and "the morbid fascination of the horrible" (James 1988, 206–207), as well as with the effects of music on the listener. Given James's general approach, it may be argued that his aim in this seminar was not to espouse a form of reductive materialism, but rather to endorse a continuity-approach between bodily based pleasures and pains, on the one hand, and their artistic development, on the other. As Shusterman claims, James was already supporting a form of somatic naturalism, according to which "[o]ur highest artistic expressions and most sublime aesthetic experiences, no matter how cultur-

ally mediated, are ultimately grounded (like our culture itself) on underlying aesthetic dispositions that have evolved in conjunction with the biological and experiential development of our bodies and our brains (which, of course, are part of our bodies)" (Shusterman 2011, 351–352). Third, James criticized neurological approaches to pleasure and pain involving "specific-nerve theories." Again, he considered common pains and pleasures entailing a strong bodily involvement – "the pain of craving or inhibition, and the pleasure of release" – alongside more properly artistic pleasures – "the pleasure of a gradual crescendo, say of sound," "the pleasure of regular rhythms" (James 1988, 209). His point here is that in all of these cases the champion of the thesis according to which specific nerves account for specific pleasures or pains would be compelled to demand "an overflow, from the nerves immediately involved" (James 1988, 209) to other nerves, from the closer to the more distant. Instead, James was already supporting the view that the physiology of pains, pleasures, and the emotions involve "diffused processes of some sort" (James 1988, 209), because they are felt through the whole nervous system and involve the entire body as a "sounding board" (James 1981, 1066, 1085).

With this last quote, the reader has been referred to James's *Principles of Psychology*, particularly to the famous chapter devoted to the emotions, derived from his article *What is an Emotion?*, published in 1884. Precisely in the first paragraph of this essay – which is not included in the book chapter – James employs the word "aesthetic" to characterize a dimension of life rather than a trait of specifically artistic practices and experiences. He refers to "the aesthetic sphere of the mind," once again associating it with "its longings, its pleasures and pains, and its emotions" (James 1884, 188). James complains that physiologists of the brain and empirical psychologists have failed to consider aesthetic/affective sensibility and propensities, by focusing exclusively on the perceptual, cognitive, and volitional parts of the mind. The implicit suggestion is that their search for the simplest elements – their passion for clarity and distinction, according to *The Sentiment of Rationality* – has prevented them from seeing the aesthetic/affective temperament as the filter orienting human perception, volition, and cognition. In other words, this idea evokes James's emphasis on the emotional constitution of individuals as a means of selection in relation to the facts of the world. When speaking of the aesthetic sphere of the mind, James does not assign it a separate place and function (see Shusterman 2011, 357); on the contrary, he stresses that emotional and aesthetic tendencies play a crucial role within the unity of mental life. Immediately after this paragraph, James criticizes the search for special and separate centers in the brain for the emotions and introduces his idea that nervous processes are spread throughout the brain and resonate throughout the whole body.

The word "aesthetic" also appears in the chapter on emotions with reference to the arts, when James deals with so-called "subtler emotions," such as "moral, intellectual, and aesthetic feelings" (James 1981, 1082), which do not appear to entail strong bodily changes. James's conclusion, as is well known, is that "bodily reverberations" are always involved and that "[t]he bodily sounding-board is at work" even when we enjoy works of art (James 1981, 1085). Very briefly, in his treatment of the emotions James again uses the word "aesthetic" both in a broader sense, as an organically based selective tendency in human experience, and in a more limited sense, as related to the arts. Far from involving an opposition or a tension, these two uses of the words suggest a basic continuity between the aesthetic as a constitutive feature of life and the aesthetic feelings involved in experiencing works of art and in practicing music, painting, and the like.

To conclude this section, a final reference can be made to James's *Essays on Radical Empiricism*, particularly his article "The Place of Affectional Facts in a World of Pure Experience." Here James criticizes the dualistic view of experience, grounded in the assumption of two distinct realms of being or substances – thoughts, on the one hand, and things, on the other. Against this conception of experience inherited from modern philosophy and still

common in popular psychology, James makes the case for so-called "affectional facts" – for example anger, love, and fear – that can be characterized either as affections of the mind or as neurophysiological processes located in the nervous system, depending on the context, relations, and functions at stake in each specific case. A similar ambiguity – James argues quoting Santayana (James 1976, 72) – is represented by beauty, which can be considered either an inner quality of subjective feelings or an outer property of things. Again, my aim is not to test the strength of James's claim. What is important for the purpose of this paper is that "affectional facts" is used as a synonym of "the aesthetic realm of the mind," consisting in "pleasures and pains, loves and fears and angers, in the beauty, comicality, importance or preciousness of certain objects and situations" (James 1976, 69–70).

This brief survey of the meanings of "aesthetics" in James's works clearly reveals its connection with Dewey's interpretation of experience as primarily aesthetically, qualitatively, or affectively characterized. The two philosophers also shared the idea of a basic continuity between the aesthetic/affective quality of ordinary organic-environmental interactions and their enhancement made possible in the arts by overcoming an obstacle and recovering a new dynamic equilibrium and rhythm.

James and Physiological Aesthetics

Given the divergence of James's conception of the "aesthetic" in both everyday experience and the arts from the Kantian tradition, what could be the source of his view? While James's irritation at Kant's aesthetics has long been known, Francesca Bordogna has clarified James's connection with the physiological aesthetics of his time (Bordogna 2001, 20). She has highlighted James's reading of Grant Allen's *Physiological Aesthetics* (1877), as well as Henry Rutgers Marshall's *Pain, Pleasure and Aesthetics* (1894), supporting a view of artistic creation and the experience of the arts as related to physiological and evolutionary factors. Pains and pleasures are seen as forerunners of more refined aesthetic feelings; and although James criticized these researchers' associationist and brain-centered approaches, their views may have reinforced his idea of a basic continuity between the aesthetic features of ordinary experience and the experience of the arts. An exhaustive inquiry into James's connection with the field of late nineteenth-century physiological aesthetics lies beyond the scope of this paper. However, I wish to stress two sources of influence that, in my view, were important for James – or may have been important, as far as the second one is concerned. The first source of inspiration is represented by the work of the Scottish philosopher and pioneering psychologist Alexander Bain, particularly his volume *The Emotions and the Will*, published in 1865.[9] The second likely source of influence is Edmund Burke, the author of *An Inquiry into the Origins of the Beautiful and the Sublime*, dating back to 1757, which is to say to the origins of philosophical aesthetics, although Burke himself never uses this word. The whole volume can be read as a treatise about the passions, based on a strong proto-physiological perspective. Burke's work contains a significant passage on Campanella that is quoted by William James within the chapter on the emotions in *Principles of Psychology* – a quotation that has been completely overlooked by scholars, at least to my knowledge, but which is worthy of attention.

As regards Alexander Bain, whose name is mentioned several times in the *Principles* as well as in James's aesthetic seminar,[10] it is interesting to note, very briefly, a few ideas that may have influenced James with reference to the topic under discussion – considering that the two authors share a form of "somatic naturalism" (Shusterman 2011, 351), as well as the notion of a basic continuity between the "affectional facts" that are pervasive in our

[9] I owe this idea to Francesca Bordogna, who pointed out this possible influence to me at a conference we both participated in Rome (however, she does not mention Alexander Bain in her article on temperament and its relationships with the aesthetic).
[10] The Classical Pragmatists' interest in Bain is already well known, particularly when it comes to his influence on Peirce's idea of belief as habit within the pragmatic maxim. Cf. Fisch 1954, Engel 2005.

experience and more specifically aesthetic emotions. First of all, in *The Emotions and the Will*, Bain considers feelings to be grounded in the body: "no feeling, however tranquil, is possible without the full participation of the physical system" (Bain 1865, 5). Bain's approach to affective life is strongly embodied from the very beginning, even though he does not discuss the idea of the pre-existence of feelings with respect to their manifestation through the body, as instead James famously does in his treatment of the emotions (James 1884 and James 1981). Immediately after the words I have just quoted, Bain notes that in speaking of the embodiment of feelings he does not mean only the brain, but also the muscles and the viscera, because mental life – he contends – cannot be restricted to the brain. This is another point that may have significantly impressed James, as Bain was opposing a form of brain-centrism that was widespread among physiologists in his time – and which is still detectable in contemporary neuroaesthetic debate (cf. Zeki and Lamb 1994). More precisely, according to Bain pain and pleasure constitute the basic bodily components of feelings: their degree, continuance, and intensity make each feeling different. Moreover, Bain argues that feelings exercise an intellectual function in selecting and orienting human attention and cognition and he devotes many pages to intellectual emotions.[11] Both these points may have been significant for James, who was articulating his own theory of temperament as an implicit physiological and affective-based criterion of discrimination in relation to the chaos of experience, as already stated in the previous section.[12]

Second, Bain explicitly assumes a continuity between more bodily feelings of pleasure and pain and "aesthetic emotions," understood as emotions that are connected with the creation and the experience of the arts. This was certainly an important point for James. However, he could not accept Bain's empiricist view of the emotions as secondary feelings – which is to say as complex feelings constituted through the association of primary feelings and resulting from the comparison of a present impression with previous ones (Bain 1865, 35) – given his criticism of the empiricists' tendency "to be acquainted with the parts rather than to comprehend the whole" (James 1879, 322). Furthermore, it must be said that Bain's treatment of aesthetic emotions remained basically tied to a Kantian framework, as can be seen from his treatment of the "Beautiful" (with a capital B), as opposed to the useful and the sensual (Bain 1865, 210), as well as from his insistence on disinterest that remained a core aspect for him (Bain 1865, 211). I cannot enter the details of Bain's treatment of aesthetic emotions here. I will only emphasize that characterizing allegedly pure aesthetic judgment as grounded in a disinterested form of pleasure was part of Kant's main strategy to make an essential distinction between the sensually agreeable and the beautiful. Disinterestedness, in other words, is the main tool adopted by Kant to introduce a sharp divide between sensual pleasures and pure pleasures, i.e., to break the continuity between empirical and transcendental treatments of beauty (Vandenabeele 2012).

I do not know to what extent James was conscious of this point when he strongly rejected Kant's aesthetics – for sure, James had little time for any form of *apriorism*. In any case, two important elements must be taken into account: on the one hand, James's belief in a basic continuity between the aesthetic as a pervasive feature in experience and the aesthetic as a character connected to artistic practices; on the other, his radically contingent approach to the human mind as rooted in the physiology of the body and its evolutionary history. Both of these aspects bring James close to Burke's aesthetic approach, even though James refers to his work through only one quotation in the *Principles.* The important aspect, from

[11] Bain's idea that emotions and feelings play an essential role with respect to knowledge clearly emerges from the very epigraph of the volume, where he quotes Alexander Pope's words "reason the card, but passion is the gale" (Bain 1865, 2). This view was very much in line with the spirit of the Classical Pragmatists (see Calcaterra 2003) – let us think not only of James's *The Sentiment of Rationality* but also of Dewey's essays on *Affective Thought* and *Qualitative Thought* (Dewey 1984 and Dewey 1988). Bain's interest in "intellectual emotions" could also be seen as anticipating the current debate on so-called "epistemic emotions" (Candiotto 2019).

[12] "[…] it is a property of feeling to attract and detain the observation upon certain objects by preference, the effects of which is to possess the mind with those objects, or to give them a prominent place among our acquisition" (Bain 1865, 23).

the point of view of philosophical aesthetics as a rising discipline in the Eighteenth Century, is that Kant's introduction of the notion of pure or disinterested pleasure can be considered a reaction to Burke's incapacity – obviously from Kant's own *aprioristic* perspective – to clearly distinguish between sensual pleasures and pains, on the one hand, and the beautiful as the pure feeling of pleasure one can legitimately expect from any subject, on the other hand (Vandenabeele 2012). Further important aspects characterizing Burke's approach appear consonant with James's conception of the aesthetic both within ordinary experience and in the arts: from the very first pages of his research, Burke endorsed a naturalistic conception of taste, i.e., an understanding of taste as grounded in human nature. Moreover, even though Burke did not use the words aesthetic/aesthetics, he set up his inquiry into the beautiful and the sublime as a treatise about the passions, which he regarded as being basically grounded in pleasures (both positive pleasures and delights deriving from the termination of previous suffering) and pains. All passions for him are clearly vital passions, connected as they are either with self-preservation or with the maintenance and reinforcement of society – as in the case of love, which is elicited in humans by certain bodily qualities (i.e., beautiful qualities).

Undoubtedly, the idea that James had an interest in Burke's approach is highly hypothetical, given that we only find one quotation from *An Inquiry into the Origins of Our Ideas of the Beautiful and the Sublime* in the *Principles*. Besides, in a note here James states that he drew the quotation from Dugald Stewart – the Scottish philosopher quoted, in turn, by Alexander Bain in the epigraph of his volume on the emotions, along with the verse by Alexander Pope. In any case, even this single quotation is very significant within James's treatment of the emotions. The context of James's quotation from Burke's treatise (James 1981, 1078–1079) is his defense of the thesis that an emotion is basically the feeling of a bodily change and hence that it does not consist in a mental state preceding its exterior manifestation through the body. In his treatise, Burke tells a story drawn from Jacques Spon about Campanella, who was able to feel his interlocutors' passions through the imitation of their gestures and actions: Campanella did not focused on the alleged mental states of others, but rather on their bodily gestures; by acting them out, he was able to experience the same passions as his interlocutors. Consequently, James claims that it is bodily changes that elicit feelings, not the other way round; and he quotes Burke to support his effort to overturn the traditional view of bodily changes as an external consequence of previous mental states. James's quotation from Burke ends here, but in the *Inquiry* Burke concludes his argument as follows: "Our minds and bodies are so closely and intimately connected that one is incapable of pain and pleasure without the other" (Burke 1823, 192). This sentence could not sound any more Jamesian – or any less Kantian – to our contemporary ears.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have tried to show that there is a continuity between James's uses of the term "aesthetic" in his works and Dewey's conception of the "esthetic," particularly in his discussion of aesthetic qualities in experience. The two philosophers shared a basically naturalistic view of the aesthetic that set them poles apart from the Kantian tradition. In his theory of experience, Dewey understood the aesthetic as basically connected to the biological conditions of life in an environment that directly affects and concerns the very existence of an organism and its quality. The "esthetic" does not only refer to the consummatory phases of experience, when an organic-environmental interaction is realized and a new dynamic equilibrium is enjoyed, but also to the primarily affective or qualitative characterization of experience. In his theory of temperament, James used the word "aesthetic" in connection with pains, pleasures, and passions, insofar they are rooted in the physiology of the body, to refer to a living being's predisposetion to select and prefer some features of the surrounding world and discard others, to privilege a specific attitude toward given situations over other ways of relating to them. Both authors conceived of

the aesthetic in the narrower sense, i.e., in relation to the arts, as the development, enhancement or refinement of the naturally aesthetic features of human experience, thereby denying – as I have argued – any a priori distinction à la Kant. Dewey was inspired by James's naturalistic view of the aesthetic in experience and, I believe, pushed to the extreme James's vague use of the term – freely oscillating between a broader meaning and a narrower one – by explicitly theorizing a basic continuity between the two meanings. On his part, James was influenced by the merging physiological aesthetics of his time and by Bain's theory of emotions, while rejecting the Kantian tradition in aesthetics. Certainly, James' radical empiricism contributed to his tendency to blur the distinctions between different forms of pleasure and to emphasize the role of the body as a constant component of human preferences and dislikes, wherever they occur – a tendency he shared with Edmund Burke's physiological theory of beauty and the passions, although it is unknown to what extent he was aware of this. One might say that it was James's own philosophical temperament that played a role in his choice to reject any transcendental option in aesthetics, i.e., to deny any *de jure* distinction between common bodily pleasures and artistic ones. Maybe, this choice was due to a sort of "emotional constitution" that can be (at least partly) perceived even today in John Ryder's pragmatic naturalism.

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THE LOGIC OF GARDENS: THE DYNAMIC ENTANGLEMENT OF SPACE AND TIME

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ABSTRACT: Professor Ryder's work offers an articulate theory of experience, where the theme of art, its making and its enjoyment, occupy a continual space alongside the themes of knowledge and politics. One of his most important and productive intentions is to enlighten and justify the "complexity and relationality of experience" that emerges from the pragmatist perspective. In this light, he theorizes pragmatic naturalism, namely an antireductionist form of naturalism that avoids the several dichotomies implied in our philosophical tradition as mind-body, natural-cultural, subjective- objective. Following such a perspective, this paper proposes some remarks about the relationality of time and space. More specifically, I will argue that the aesthetic experience of gardens – as spaces constituted by their furnishings, both natural and constructed by human artistic invention – implies a phenomenological priority of space, which nourishes the experience of the dynamic entanglement of space and time.

Keywords: aesthetic experience, garden's experience, space and time, memory, Peirce's and Rilke's externalism

> Wir kennen den Kontur
> Des Fühlens nicht: nur, wa ihn formt von außen
> (Rilke, *Duineser Elegien*, 1923)

Among the numerous philosophical topics that Professor John Ryder accurately addresses in his research work, aesthetic experience is one to which he has dedicated important writings. In particular, his reflections and accounts of aesthetic experience is an integral part of the book *Knowledge, Art, and Power. An Outline of a Theory of Experience Professor Ryder* (Brill/Rodopi, 2019), written as a continuation of *The Things in Heaven and Earth*, his 2013 volume (Fordham University Press). The *fil rouge* of both these works, as many other essays and articles, is a theoretical articulation of the distinctive form of naturalism that the pragmatist point of view provides. Within this framework, Professor Ryder offers an articulate theory of experience, where the theme of art, its making and its enjoyment, occupy a continual space alongside the themes of knowledge and politics. In my opinion, one of his most important and productive intentions is to elucidate and justify the "complexity and relationality of experience" that emerges from the pragmatist perspective. Indeed one could say that relationality is what makes human experience extremely complex, since our relations with others – with their physical and cultural constitution – as well as with our own bodily and cultural makeup, and with the natural environment in which we are located, are potentially infinite or infinitely productive of new possible experiences. This is the case, for instance, of the role of time and memory in human experience that professor Ryder's account considers as emblematic of Dewey's conception of experience and of pragmatic naturalism in general. Let me quote a remarkable passage of his most recent book:

> Experience for Dewey, and for pragmatic naturalism generally, is complex, relationally constituted, and constitutive of its environment and of the self. In experience so understood, memory is not just a record, more or less accurate, of past events, but a constituent element in the construction of ongoing experience. Similarly, time does not simply pass, but is or can be very much a constituent of present experience and future possibilities. Thus time, memory, and all other potential constituents in experience, contribute to the complex interaction that is experience (Ryder 2020, 138).

Alongside time or memory, space is certainly one of the constituents in experience, and I would try to propose some remarks about the relationality of time and space, taking advantage of professor Ryder's pragmatic naturalism. To be more precise, I will try to consider the specific dynamism of the entanglement of space and time that, in my opinion, emerges within the aesthetic experience of gardens as spaces constituted by their furnishings, both natural and constructed by human artistic invention. Thus I hope to continue the philosophical conversation with Professor Ryder, which has been very rich and promising on many occasions.

In recent decades, a vast philosophical literature has shown the topic of the garden to be a fertile ground for questions and theoretical suggestions, making it a sort of crossroads not only for the various branches of philosophical research, but also for a number of disciplines that establish the history of Western culture. Of course, the former is well entitled to test its own tools on the topic of the garden, which actually involves very closely some

categories that constitute the framework of investigations and discourses that provide the path of philosophy its rhythm: first and foremost, the categories of space and time, which the garden exhibits in their most concrete depth.

In the following, I would point out some theoretical implications of the specific value of the garden as an emblematic indicator of the spatio-temporal connotation of human feeling and thinking. In particular, I will try to defend the idea that the reality of gardens helps to resize the broad tendency of modern and contemporary thought to assign time a logical-constitutive priority over space. More precisely, I would like to show how spatiality constitutes the phenomenological region in which time and history come together and are projected into a multiplicity of meanings that link past, present and future, subjectivity and objectivity, culture and nature, according to a game that is made up of inclusions and exclusions, of welcome and extraneousness. In other words, my claim is that gardens show space as the original condition of the elaboration of individual and collective experiences that mark the course of our temporality.

It is worth remembering that the garden, as a place in space, is closely linked to the birth of philosophy as a discipline of Western thought. Plato and his school chose to practice philosophy in the proximity of the grove dedicated to the hero Akademos, while Aristotle's famous Lyceum was located near the enclosure dedicated to Apollo, and Epicurus hosted his school in the garden of his house, as if to say that the philosophical path required shelter from the pressures of political life. We can thus see a double meaning of the garden in philosophical antiquity. On the one hand, its reference to a dimension that, because of the garden's nearness to divinity, exceeds the human reality and yet permeates its activities; on the other hand, the garden represents a metaphor for intimacy as the proper terrain and condition of the potentialities of thought and the free pursuit of happiness.

One can find both these aspects, for example, in the particular insistence on gardens, parks and the world of nature in general that characterizes Denise Levertov's poetic work. As Cristina Giorcelli has pointed out, this insistence reflects the author's maternal training in the love for nature, so that the garden is presented as a "gymnasium of inspiration, of promise, of mysterious possibilities, of creativity." At the same time, Levertov's attention to gardens and parks expresses her typical intent to 'celebrate the sacred in the temporal, transcendence in immanence, perceived and exalted in its tangible physicality' (Giorcelli 2007, 226–229, my translation). Moreover, literary criticism has widely emphasized how gardens are often represented as emblems of the logical-ontological link between the categories of time and space and the concept of infinity. In fact, in literary and poetic works, the concept of infinity is a sign of the potentially unlimited nature of both thought and being, a sign that refers to all that inevitably flows from concrete experiences.

As well known, infinity, as a logical and ontological category, found support in traditional physics through the notions of absolute space and time, notions that were later decisively bracketed by the physical theories of relativity. However, the link between space, time and infinity continues to fuel many artistic representations and philosophical analyses of human reality, and I believe that the reality of gardens is an expression of human culture exquisitely linked to the existential burden of the concept of infinity. In other words, one of the several 'truths' of the gardens consists, in my opinion, precisely in their function of domesticating the infinity of time through the domestication of the infinity of space.

Many authors have shown how the spatiality of the garden realizes the dialectic of the finite and the infinite – which also qualifies temporality in general – in finding, however, a very appropriate expression through the tangibility of natural and non-natural objects, of plants and artefacts, of spontaneous or constructed architecture that make up garden spaces. From this point of view, it is interesting to note how several artists and poets draw attention to the value of the concrete experience of seeing, pointing out its positive function both

as a means for understanding reality and as a tool for the existential management of its most disturbing aspects. This is, for example, the case in the work of James Thompson, who insists on privileging the sense of sight, also emphasizing the contradictory nature of the facts manifested in gardens. Thus, he suggests that gardens help acceptance of the negative aspects through the existential function of the poetic gaze. In particular, echoing one of the ancient meanings of the garden, Thompson contrasts the model of a space intended as a 'truly happy life,' a philosophical retreat for people of taste, with the description of the playful activities that human beings carry out to the detriment of wild animals in natural environments of great beauty. Above all, he is part of a literary and philosophical movement that values the sense of sight as the most important one, citing considerations that highlight both the direct impact of sight on common sense and its phenomenological function in relation to the elaboration of ideas to which visual perception gives rise (Marchetti 2007, 147–158, my translation). Regarding sight, one cannot help but noting the long wave of the First Book of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*' initial lines:

> All men by nature are actuated with the desire of knowledge, and an indication of this is the love of the senses; for even, irrespective of their utility, are they loved for their own sakes; and preeminently above the rest, the sense of sight. For not only for practical purposes, but also when not intent on doing anything, we choose the power of vision in preference, so to say, to all the rest of the senses. And a cause of this is the following – that this one of the senses particularly enables to apprehend whatever knowledge it is the inlet of, and that it makes many distinctive qualities manifest (Aristotle 2013, 1).

Perhaps it is superfluous to underline how seeing – a faculty by its very nature exclusively linked to the spatial dimension – has quickly become an excellent metaphor for all forms of knowledge, including the most abstract and, indeed, precisely those forms of knowledge and experience that we tend to inscribe in regions completely different or distant from the physicality of sight. In fact, in our cultural tradition, there is a strong tendency to place the obvious reality of a bodily eye alongside the intangible yet powerful presence of an "eye of the mind," whose function would dominate both horizontally and vertically any datum of physical-spatial seeing. Nor is it necessary here to go back to the many philosophical lines that, from Middle Age to modernity, have used the metaphor of seeing to indicate the power of the human mind to grasp directly ideas or truths. Just as it happens in the ordinary exercise of bodily sight, the mind could 'see' objects of knowledge that escape bodily capabilities and yet are considered no less consistent or real than what bodily sight can contemplate. For this argument, suffice here to mention René Descartes, rightly labeled as the 'founding father' of the modern metaphysics of the subject, i.e., of the philosophical tradition of modern rationalism that focuses on the analysis of the logical-conceptual structures and potentialities of the knowing subject.

It is well known that Descartes is responsible for the idea that the human mind is ontologically heterogeneous to the materiality that pertains to the dimension of space and, consequently, requires an analysis and understanding based on epistemic criteria that are quite different from those applicable to the physical-material world. Paradoxically, however, it is precisely in Descartes that the metaphor of the "mind's eye" finds its paradigmatic definition through the criterion of immediate intuition of primary truths, which he suggests as the pivotal point of the entire process of our cognitive activities. Regardless of the interpretative controversies that the Cartesian work still provokes precisely with regard to the concept of immediate intuition, the fact remains that the current use of the wording "mind's eye" indicates the inevitability of reference to the spatial-corporal reality in discourse that intends to put aside such a reality or, at least, to contrast it with mental space. It is precisely against this logical-semantic backdrop that, in my opinion, the topic of the garden can be grasped as an object of philosophical reflection that refers first and foremost to the category of space but nonetheless to that of time, which has always accompanied the category of space closely in our traditional thought. To be sure, this combination is declined in differ-

ent ways – of ontological disjunction or of constitutive-logical priority or, again, of functional interconnection – which concern from time to time metaphysics, theories of logic, philosophy of mathematics, and such specific philosophical perspectives as Husserl's phenomenology or hermeneutics.

A decisive step in the elaboration of the relationship between space and time is clearly represented by the "Transcendental Aesthetics" of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, where both dimensions are defined as the two pure *a priori* forms of sensibility, operating in parallel. By way of indication only, it is worth remembering that Kant, unlike both Leibniz and Newton, does not attribute a metaphysical-ontological reality to space and time, considering them as categories or *a priori* concepts of the sensory side of human subjectivity, of whose empirical cognitive experience they constitute the conditions of possibility. In other words, space is, for Kant, real on the empirical level, but it is not a determining factor of the objects themselves. In a few words, space represents the *a priori* form within which the phenomena of the so-called external world are grasped, in the same way that time is the *a priori* form through which we grasp the modifications of consciousness, and this is why time can be defined as the a priori form of the "internal sense." However, the functional symmetry of space and time stops here, since Kant points out that every process of knowledge is such only insofar as it is conscious, i.e. accompanied by the awareness of the modifications of consciousness that this process produces and, therefore, by that "internal sense" that he himself posited as the *a priori* function of temporality. To be more precise, for the philosopher from Konigsberg, all phenomena that fall within the range of our actual or possible experiences are conditioned by the category of time, which thus assumes a logical priority over the category of space. The complex examination of concepts proposed in the "Analytic of Principles" confirms this priority, which, moreover, is an integral part of Kant's notion of transcendental subjectivity.

There is, however, an important counterpoint to this hierarchical definition of the function of the categories of time and space, which contributes to our considerations of the relationship between these two dimensions within the phenomenology of the garden. In fact, Kant argues that subjectivity itself arises in relation to the idea that there are objects external to it, the essential characteristic of which is that they persist independently of changes in the subjective consciousness. Thus, he states his rejection of idealistic perspectives that tend to reduce objective reality to the operations of consciousness. In fact, according to him, we would not be able to reach the awareness of our own existence if we could not assume the permanence of objects placed in space as an essential point of reference to grasp the specificity of our being. Above all, and this is the point that we have to stress here, Kant argues that time could not even be conceived if we did not rely on the spatial images with which we actually represent it: first, the image of the line through which we configure temporal succession.

In this light, one can say that the reality of gardens renders, in the material space of its natural and artistic furnishings, the dual form in which temporality presents itself to human consciousness. On the one hand, gardens are nothing but a specific space in the objective world – the physical-natural environment – in which we are immersed and, at the same time, from which we draw, through continuity and difference, the awareness of our own being. On the other hand, gardens incorporate temporality as the history of human feeling and knowing, which can be represented precisely in the physical permanence of artistic products, thus making available the rhythms and past events of supra-individual history, for a virtually unlimited future. In brief, in the spatial materiality of the garden, we find a particular point of departure and, at the same time, a point of arrival for the temporal quality of human consciousness: both its individual dimension and its collective functioning.

All that does not contradict the indissoluble interpenetration of space and time advocated by relativistic physics, which makes it one of its strong points and, in any case, tends to consider such interlinking as one of its most incontrovertible accomplishments. To be sure, this

principle of the physical theory of relativity marked the great turning point of scientific knowledge in the 20th century, a turning point whose irreversible importance Albert Einstein sanctioned as follows:

> From now on, space per se and time per se are condemned to vanish into pure shadows, and only a kind of union between the two concepts will preserve an independent reality (Einstein et al., 1923, 75).

Many years later, the physicist and systems theorist Fritjof Capra, known to the public at large also for his attention to oriental mysticism, pointed out: "[...] the space-time of relativistic physics is a similar timeless space of a higher dimension. All events in it are interconnected, but the connections are not causal" (Capra 1975, 206).

In other words, the inseparable link between space and time represents a dimension that exceeds both time and space as analytically conceived, or it is sort of physical and at the same time conceptual 'super-dimension', in which what ordinarily constitutes scientific knowledge, i.e. the definition of the phenomena of reality exclusively in terms of causal relations, is lacking. Far from claiming to set aside the principle of the inseparable interpenetration of space and time, underwritten by relativistic physics, the philosophical perspective I am trying to support appeals to the kind of analysis of the space-time relationship that one can describe as phenomenological. According to such description, it is more than legitimate to seek the concrete ways and possibilities in which this relationship acquires functional validity in the course of human experience. As an example of this, a brief reference to the position developed by Michel Foucault, especially in the first phase of his work, may be useful. In fact, he initially conceived spatial exteriority as a factor of human reality far deeper than the temporal dimension, which however, in his later writings, he defined as the condition of possibility to consider and understand "the outside."

The point that is most interesting to note here is that, for Foucault, time does not belong to the subject, in the sense that the subject cannot manage, construct or direct it, while space is what he can concretely dispose of and, indeed, constitutes the most proper object of his multiple potentialities and cultural expressions. And in this framework, gardens appear to us as a "delimitation" of that vague and precarious space – "voluminous" and "multidimensional" – that Foucault defines as "neutral" space: that space, we could say, completely undefined, in which the subject finds no possibility of locating himself because there is no language or any sense. This is, of course, Kantian space understood as an empirical-transcendental condition in which the absoluteness of the "outside of oneself" is the only one in force and which, precisely for this reason, constitutes for the subject the dimension that allows recognition of oneself as subjective individuality as well as cultural subjectivity.

Besides, the "outside" corresponds to the heterogeneity of life, to everything that is not thought by the subject or the socio-cultural context to which he/she belongs. More precisely, it corresponds to the restlessness of otherness and extraneousness that punctuate the unfolding of human life and thought but, at the same time, make knowledge possible in its dual form of speaking and seeing. On this level, a double use of the category of space emerges. The French philosopher, in fact, relates this category to the definition of the relationship between knowledge and power; at the same time, he considers space as an object to examine in the context of its specific application – in urban planning, and in the architecture of clinical and prison facilities, but we could certainly add gardens. In both meanings, Foucault's concept of "heterotopia" is crucial: unlike utopias, heterotopias are the realization of a project in the here and now, through the exercise of disciplinary activities ranging from human sciences to philosophy and architecture (Foucault 1994a, Foucault 1994b). Hence, Foucault's suggestion to use spatial metaphors and constructions of space for deciphering temporality or tracing a geography of thought that provides a diagrammatic display of inter- and infra-subjective power relations (Foucault 1994b, 63–77).

The relationship between the "outside" and the human experience of otherness/extraneousness recalls the so-called "heterogeneous gardens," i.e. made up of elements of various origins, which characterize many

private gardens in the post-modern environment. Indeed, precisely because they are "gardens-not-gardens," they exhibit and, at the same time, generate diversity within and beyond themselves, thus showing the intimate character of otherness that apparently is a feature of the very reality of all garden. Andrea Mariani explains:

> An extreme form of alterity of the garden consists in its inexhaustible, protean capacity to become "other," through time and history, when times seem to be on the verge of the "end" of history. "Other" not only with respect to what surrounds the garden and from which by statute it distinguishes itself, but also with respect to itself, thus becoming the chronotope of an implicit questioning of time, through the cycle of the seasons, and of its existential implications (Mariani 2007, 17–18, my translation).

The descriptions of gardens in Russian literature between the 17th and 18th centuries are also in line with an essential motif of Foucault's perspective, precisely insofar as they exemplify, first and foremost, the relationship between garden form and power, a relationship that is also expressed in the varied choice of symbols and mythological-religious, geographical and historical-literary citations. In this way, the garden becomes "a 'paradise of memory' and a 'memory of paradise,' revealing its function as a 'bridge' between reality and the ideal, the latter no longer situated in the sphere of supreme religious values but in the realization of a systematically pursued project." In particular, one can trace an expression of the link between garden form and power in the pedagogical intention that characterizes Peter I's gardens, in his conviction "of the modelling influence of space on the behavior, values and mentality of the elite that he aspires to partly replace and partly 're-educate'." This tendency was consolidated during the governments of Elizabeth I and Catherine II, a period in which "the association of the garden with the semantics of power and empire was fully expressed" (Solivetti 2007, 187 ff, my translation).

The philosophical question of the representation of space is certainly a crucial knot in the phenomenological tradition of Husserl's matrix, from which Foucault himself takes his cue, mainly drawing on Merleau-Ponty's teachings. The need to understand the constitution of the subjective intuition of space was imposed on Husserl from the very beginning of his speculation, precisely in the 1890s. At this stage of his reflections, his primary objective was to go beyond the level of mere philosophical abstractions, seeking first of all to clarify the different meanings of the term "space." Therefore, he immediately distinguishes "the space of everyday life" from the space of pure geometry and the natural sciences, and from the "metaphysical" or transcendental definition of space. For the purposes of our discussion, it is particularly interesting to note the characteristic of foundational primacy assigned to the everyday experience of space and the inseparable link between this experience and the sensible qualities of spatial objects, which Husserl thus establishes in the following passage:

> The term 'representation of space' can be understood primarily as the space of intuition, i.e. the space of extra-scientific consciousness, the space as everyone finds it – be they children or adults, educated or incompetent people – in living perception and fantasy, in inseparable connection or, better, interpenetration with the various sensory qualities. [...] From this space of intuition one must distinguish the space of scientific thought, the geometric space, that conceptual formation that derives from the logical elaboration of the representation of space proper to extra-scientific consciousness (Husserl 1983, 67, my translation).

Taking into account the different forms of the representtation of space – 'extrascientific,' scientific and metaphysical-transcendental – philosophical analysis should have the task, according to Husserl, of describing the constituent factors of each level as well as the ways in which the transit from one level to the other is accomplished. Therefore, psychological, logical and metaphysical analyses will be necessary to clarify the objects that from time to time constitute the representations of space. Most importantly, the philosopher has to keep these different forms of analysis in such a connection that allows the exhibition of the foundational links that rule the passage from the ordinary experience of space to the more sophisticated forms of its representation in geometric and scientific research. And it is precisely for this reason that Husserl

does not hesitate to say that psychological analyses form the necessary ground on which to implant logical research and consequently metaphysical research, so that "psychology must be granted the function of helping metaphysics" (Husserl 1983, 61).

The differentiated yet joint multilevel approach to the forms of experience and representation of space, as well as to the types of analysis it requires (psychological, logical, metaphysical), entails the notion of 'totality' that marks the entire phenomenological tradition of Husserlian inspiration. This philosophical perspective, in fact, holds firm to the idea that every singular entity, every individuality – both material and concepttual/ideal/conscious – can only exist insofar as it is inserted in a network of connections, in a totality, a whole from which and within which objective differences stand out. This network of connections is not something already necessarily given, it is not a predefined 'fact' of the natural world nor of the world of human consciousness, of its multiple and different experiences. Rather, it is something indeterminate, which contains within itself the very consistency of human consciousness, of its living and operating, that is, contains the infinity which – according to Husserl – pertains to acts of consciousness, or rather their necessary inscription in a "whole horizon of nonactive and yet cofunctioning manners of appearance and syntheses of validity" (Husserl 1983, 159). More generally, in the phenomenological view, consciousness is an opening to the world that configures a living and operating totality, a totality that always eludes exact definition but without which we could only have fragmentary, discontinuous, if not merely chaotic perceptions or thoughts. Above all, this conceivable possibility does not correspond to our normal, ordinary, everyday experience.

Applying this way of conceiving subjectivity to the topic of the garden means, above all, recognizing that the so-called sensory data that this or that garden can refer to are never individual objects or contents of our concrete experience. On the contrary, they lend themselves to human experience as elements or, better, concretely active factors of a "world" of senses and meanings that pertains to us as human subjects and that precisely constitutes the unitary background from which every sensory data emerges as the mesh of a network of connections and differences. To use Patočka's words, "every perceptible presence is already inscribed in a totality" and "every singularity comes to us from this totality, every singularity is in some way an explication, an expressed representation of what was contained in it, enclosed in an unopened manner" (Patočka 1976, 4).

In these assertions of Husserl's brilliant Czech disciple, it is possible to detect a close assonance with the well-known and controversial Husserlian thesis according to which 'pure' consciousness should be considered as "a connection of being closed in on itself, a connection of absolute being, into which nothing can penetrate and from which nothing can escape." Indeed, it can be argued that the sense of this thesis would be that whatever comes to be concretely manifested in human experience is already 'given' "in the horizon of a world as its latent possibility." This is tantamount to saying – against Cartesianism – that the notion of 'world' does not allude to the synthesis of sensible data or the set of their representations that subjective consciousness comes to produce. Rather, the 'world' of which phenomenological philosophy talks about is the horizon of possibility that gives rise to the unities of meaning in which every sensory datum will consist, and it is therefore something more original than the 'data' of our very sensibility (Costa 2009, 24–25, my translation).

It is not of interest here engaging a discussion about the interpretation of Husserl's thesis, which indeed allows too many misunderstandings and, above all, an interpretation in a rationalist or idealist sense that would even go beyond the intentions of the modern forerunners of rationalism and idealism – Descartes and Hegel. Rather, it is important to point out that the transcendental concept of 'world' to which Husserl's phenomenology refers does not at all imply the logical-ontological devaluation of what manifests itself to consciousness, in our concrete experience, as a 'sensible datum'. On the contrary, it is a matter of making explicit the structural link with that network of

'latent possibilities' that, as noted above, form the horizon of the world in which consciousness and experience acquire consistency.

Moreover, insisting on the concept of possibility is essential for freeing subjectivity from the difficulties of classical idealism and physicalist naturalism, for which the entire human reality – both bodily and mental/intellectual – is subject to the biunivocal law of cause-effect. In a nutshell, to consider and understand the human subject in the light of the category of possibility means to affirm, with Husserl, that human subject is both conditioned and conditioning, i.e. inserted in a set of constraints that actually operate, but also capable of establishing these possibilities through his/her own actions. In this framework a notion of subjectivity comes into play that includes the dimension of history as an integral part of the 'world' that constitutes the original background, the global horizon of the human subject's ways of relating to things and understanding them according an ordering of meaning. To be more precise, it is necessary to recognise, as Patočka suggests, that the whole course of our experience unfolds in a continuous dialectic between the transcendental dimension of openness to the world and the temporal, historical dimension in which this openness is realized, or between 'the world' as a peculiarly human possibility of configuring a set of possibilities of senses and meanings and the actual 'worlds' where the human subject is both user and actor. To put it differently, only in a purely formal sense can one speak of invariable elements of human experience, since the latter is in fact the ever-in-progress fabric of temporality, i.e. it includes everything that in a given "epoch," can be revealed as an entity (Patočka 1975, 8 ff).

The philosophical suggestion of these words is powerful: we have no immediate grasp on what we identify from time to time as a sensation, a feeling or an emotion. We cannot define the precise boundaries of the objects of our feeling nor their presumed autonomy and inseity, that is, there can be no secure knowledge of our so-called 'internal world' – the one to which we usually ascribe all the modulations of feeling. The only access we have to know feelings resides – in an apparent paradox – in exteriority, in "that which forms them from the outside," Rilke tells us, namely in that which brings them into being and yet goes beyond their phenomenological status: their constituting themselves as 'interior' experiences, precisely, that is to say their belonging to the subjective 'interiority'. In a nutshell, we are faced with a stance that fully falls within that 'externalist' attitude that contemporary philosophy has variously theorized as a counterpoint, indeed as an antidote to the claims of certainty implicit in the so-called 'metaphysics of the subject' of Cartesian origin.

Perhaps Rilke's 'externalism' intends to deny any possible logical understanding of our feeling, abandoning it to a presumed elusiveness on the part of thought and speech? Would this philosophical choice be coherent for a poet who makes feeling the primary matter of his thinking and saying? For a poet who has entrusted the inseparable link between feeling and thinking precisely to the reality of gardens, indicating them as the places where human feelings and thoughts offer themselves to the subject to whom they belong, or rather 'objectify' themselves to his gaze?

> Schau, wie die Zypressen schwarzer werden
> In den Wiesengrunden, und auf wen
> In den unbetretbare Alleen
> Die Gestalten mit Steingebärden
> Weinterwarten, die uns übersehn (Rilke 1987, 162).

These verses confirm Rilke's assertion that we can only know of our feeling "that which forms it from the outside." In fact, what is placed in the foreground here is the experience of spatial objects – statues – as the starting point of a reflexive process that channels feeling and thinking towards the construction of increasingly consistent semantic-conceptual figures. More specifically, we can say that it is just by virtue of the concrete presence of external objects that feeling and thinking acquire – one from the other – the possibility of presenting themselves as functions and, at the same time, as objects of the dynamism of interiority: of the complex and incessant unfolding of subjective experiences. But, then, what is being pointed out is not the unknowability of feeling, but the need to leave behind the claim to obtain

an absolute knowledge of the so-called 'inner world' of the human being, to possess a self-sufficient way of accessing it, i.e. free from the contribution of any other factor of human experience.

In other words, it is simply a matter of accepting that knowledge of our 'inner world', like any other kind of knowledge, is always conditioned by the limits of our cognitive faculties and, specifically, by the lack of an immediate capacity to envisage the truth of phenomena that offer themselves to our consideration. But this is not to say that the exigencies of understanding our own feelings are, in principle, doomed to failure. Rather, Rilke's externalism shows a strong assonance with that elaborated by Charles Sander Peirce through his cognitive semiotics. Similarly to Peirce, Rilke's confidence in the importance of 'external word' suggests the distrust in the presumed capacity of immediate intuition to which so much traditional philosophy assigns the epistemic management of subjectivity. In parallel, Peirce and Rilke share the claim of an inextricable interweaving between the aesthetic dimension and the logical dimension, between the subjective nature of the one and the intersubjective nature of the other.[1]

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[1] On Peirce's externalism let me mention Calcaterra 2003, chapters 1–4; 2006, 30–43; 2010: 1–12.

SOCIETY AND POLITICS

HIGHER EDUCATION: THE CHALLENGES AND JOHN RYDER'S RESPONSE

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ABSTRACT: Higher education is facing a difficult future with many challenges. Some believe it is becoming lower education by focusing on professional training rather than on understanding the development of human cultures that highlight the centrality of student learning and foster autonomy and social responsibilities. John Ryder believes that the foundational principles of education offer a base for responding to our contemporary challenges. His views are enhanced by his background as a scholar, a naturalist, and his experience in international education and administration. He analyzes education as a confluence of academic, social and economic values. Developing an historical perspective through his accounts of Plato, Rousseau, Dewey, and Freire, he tackles the problems facing higher education in the U.S. as well as internationally. He provides hope that understanding the central roles of education in our societies will bring about not only better universities but also better individuals and citizens.

Keywords: education, higher education, Dewey, Plato, Rousseau, Freire, Santayana, naturalism, philosophy of education, pragmatism, education and its problems, reconstructing experience.

Higher education is at a pivotal point that will shape its future in the United States and many other countries. The challenges are serious and many. No simple account can provide the crucial aspects that will determine the ensuing vitality and character of universities or perhaps lead to their decline or demise. Some believe higher education is becoming lower education, substituting tests for learning, details for understanding, job preparation for education, and building a technological society that increasingly focuses on vocational training without an understanding of the historical and cultural development of human knowledge and development. Who is to blame if even a portion of this is true? Fingers point in many directions including the leadership of higher education, faculty governance, societal pressure, governmental funding, cultural changes and even scientific discoveries that impact and disclose the way we learn, plan, and cope with problems.

Of course, problems in higher education are not new. Often these difficulties seem to rest on the shoulders of administrators, especially presidents, who must weave their way through the conflicting currents of interests that are a part of each day of their work. Perhaps one example will provide a simple but punctuated account of difficulties with and for administrators. The well-known philosopher and best-selling writer, George Santayana, retired early from Harvard University in 1912 at the age of forty-eight citing as the cause the university's push for professional development and leadership while limiting intellectual inquiry. Few of his colleagues understood his reservations about continuing to work at Harvard University which, even then, was considered one of America's top ranked institutions. In fact, various false stories were circulated about his leaving that appear to be efforts to downgrade his stature and his integrity. However, he captures some of his concerns in his book, *Character and Opinion in the United States: With Reminiscences of William James and Josiah Royce and Academic Life in America* (1920). The conflicting perspective of presidents and faculty are highlighted in a somewhat humorous and accidental meeting in the Harvard Yard between George Santayana and President Eliot in the latter part of the 19th century. Eliot asked Santayana how his classes were going. When Santayana began to detail how his students were progressing in their understanding of Plato and Aristotle, Eliot interrupted, "No, no, Santayana, what I mean by my enquiry is, how many students have enrolled for your lectures?" (Santayana 1920, 186). Too often the administrative approach to higher education focuses on numbers and return on investment, rather than on student learning and individual development.

Even though academic issues and struggles are not new, the present circumstances seem increasingly difficult. Santayana never had to wrestle with the possibility that his department would disappear, or that significantly more part-time faculty as well as those on annual contracts would outnumber tenure-track faculty, nor face the economic challenges caused by the coronavirus pandemic and its ongoing consequences. In the U.S.

cultural changes are leading to significant shifts in those attending universities, resulting in financial and social differences between those with higher education degrees and those without. Often overlooked is the change in the number of women now achieving college degrees and its positive impact on their roles in American society. In 1970, roughly 60% of higher education students were male and 40% were female. By 2020, that number is reversed with roughly 60% of university students being female and 40% male. This change has several effects. Having a university degree is a significant factor leading to higher economic standing and greater self-determination throughout one's life. As a result, in the U.S. more women are now in leadership positions in corporations, businesses, government, education, and more. Not only is this finally opening doors to women and their careers, but it is also delaying the timing and occurrences of marriages and families accompanied by related issues of day care, primary education, the roles of mothers and fathers, and more.

The positive societal impact of higher education is clear in many ways, but there are also negative impacts leading to political, economic and social divisions. For example, among developed nations the U.S. is known for its significant inequality and the percentage of those who live a marginalized life. Higher education degrees, their costs, and the selectivity of universities play an obvious role in this inequality. And now there appear to be major shifts among national and state leaders regarding support for higher education, leading to declines in funding for universities as well as for scientific and social research. These are new and challenging times that few anticipated.

Since no easy account will suffice in describing higher education's current plight nor provide a simple and straightforward strategy for the future health of higher education, where does that leave us? Perhaps we are in a hopeless situation, leaving each university to face the future on its own, working with individual administrators, faculty, staff, students, governmental leaders, and wading through funding limitations and the rising tide of difficulties. If so, then we are in very serious trouble and the prospects of higher education may not be promising.

Nevertheless, John Ryder does not think our future is determined only by these increasing limitations. Instead, he finds a commonality of characteristics and values in higher education that may be the basis for maintaining and fostering the vitality of higher education in the U.S. and elsewhere. His background places him in a unique position to provide a description of the foundational values of higher education as well as suggest some general principles to guide our steps in the face of the challenges. Will we ever not be wading through difficulties? No, but perhaps we may reach a better place where the character and future of higher education are better understood, and the risks are less because of the commonality of values and the importance of universities in human development.

Ryder is imminently qualified to pursue an understanding of higher education. His background provides a basis for a clear and impactful account of higher education and its challenges. Most leaders in American higher education have a career that includes scholarship, research, and progressive administrative responsibilities. Ryder has these plus an unusual background in international administrative leadership. The global feature of his background is rare in American higher education and provides a distinct perspective guiding us through the understandings and misunderstandings of the role of higher education.

Here is a brief account of his career. He began his American career as a lecturer after completing his Ph.D. in 1982. Then he became a professor (1985–2002), chair of a philosophy department (1991–1996), dean of a school of arts and sciences (1996–2002), and the director of the joint SUNY–Moscow State University Center on Russia and the United States (2002–2010). In 2002 he became the director of the SUNY Office of International Programs. In 2010 he was appointed the Rector of Khazar University for a two-year term. Following that he was chosen as the Provost and Deputy Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs at the American University of Ras Al Khaimah (United Arab Emirates) in 2012. Then in 2016

he became the head of the American University of Malta and retired in 2019.

Professional and personal experience is valuable in assessing the future of higher education, and Ryder has firsthand experience. He knows what it is like to address faculty concerns, budgeting issues, and relationships with staff, students, governing boards, governmental officials, as well as cultural shifts in views of higher education, and economic downturns that require cutbacks as well as foresight and planning. Those outside of higher education often think of university life as an ivory tower in which one rarely enters the real world. This view is reminiscent of the German fairy tale of Rapunzel who lives in a tower until her long hair enables a prince to rescue her. It is true that some male and female faculty are known for their long hair, and many people outside the academic world do not think academic hair (or interests) are long enough to reach the ground of everyday concerns facing people without a higher education degree. But, in fact, it is quite the opposite in our contemporary world. Universities are integral parts of societies and play important and often leading roles in their communities and beyond, and they face many of the same challenges found in other parts of our communities. Describing these relational roles and the difficulties academics face is not always simple or easy. University personnel often discuss how difficult it is to describe the struggles of faculty, staff and administrators in ways that are believable to those who think of the academic life as an idyllic island removed from every day and long-term concerns that shape the world of business, government, and health care, as well as the world of employees in factories, merchandise stores, and more. But now the commonality of concerns is clearer as universities like many other institutions are faced with critical decisions shaped by the culture, economic factors, governmental goals and political outlooks. All this provides a commonality of concerns with other institutions while making the role of a scholar/administrator in higher education more complex in maintaining the value of student learning in the face common difficulties within the major elements of our society. In this article, I address several of these issues, and explicate Ryder's response to them and, in some cases, project how his approach may or may not be able to respond to current and critical challenges.

In his book, *The Things in Heaven and Earth: An Essay in Pragmatic Naturalism*, there is a section on "The University" in which Ryder discusses the challenges of higher education as grounded in a confluence of values, specifically of academic, social and economic values (Ryder 2013, 229–239). All social institutions are relational and involve values that may be harmonious or conflicting. For higher education, academic values are the distinctive feature. If harmonious and balanced, all these values may lead to the healthy development of education and student learning, but this trinitarian conjunction of values may also turn on each other. In such conflicts, one value may claim a priority that minimizes the others or removes other values from vital considerations. Such an imbalance may be the outcome of many factors, includeing poor planning or leadership, a serious economic downturn, or even the result of new evidence regarding human development and understanding. The causes of such imbalances are numerous and rarely is there a single cause or remedy for these difficulties. For example, struggles and conflicts arise when social or political power supersedes the integrity of an academic or research discipline by prescribing what can and cannot be taught or supports a limited area of scholarly research. Or when economic concerns take priority because the fiscal stability of the university is at stake, resulting in elimination of programs, faculty and staff, and even eventually the demise of the university or a dramatic change in the character of the university. Likewise academic values may take precedent over economic and social structures in an unhealthy way, leading to limitless expansion of programs or faculty interests without regard for the costs or social implications.

There is complexity in both a healthy, harmonious approach and one of conflicting values. The complexity depends on the specific relational aspects of the university. For example, is the university public or private, what

are its financial bases, its governance system and the role of faculty and staff and students, the foresight of administrative leadership, and the priorities established by state and national agencies and persons. The specific situation of the university makes all these relational characteristics essential to decisions in higher education, and it is this situational circumstance that makes it difficult to develop principles and strategies that can be applied to all institutions of higher education. Without even general principles and strategies, higher education may be rudderless, turning in one direction then another without clear goals and strategies for achieving them. Ryder suggests a pathway through this.

Higher education is constituted by a unique set of values that may provide the basis for a general strategic approach to the challenges facing higher education (Ryder 2013, 232). However, academic, social and economic values are broad terms and may be interpreted to cover wide areas of influences in higher education. If these values set universities apart from other social institutions such as hospitals, banks, art museums, and more, how do they do so? In my reading of Ryder, academic values make higher education unique since most if not all other institutions have social and economic values. Even so, academic values may be found in all of education, K-12, commercial training programs, and business internships and mentoring. What makes higher education's academic values unique? Ryder suggests that it is the relation to the student that is part of the difference. The student does not receive a product or a service; rather the student "receives an opportunity and assumes certain responsebilities" (Ryder 2013, 234). Higher education's responsebilities for a liberal arts education are signifycantly different from consumer-oriented education and have a higher standard than K-12. Advanced courses in geology (as Ryder notes) and in many academic fields may have few students in them and economically are not profitable, but these advanced courses are essential to student learning. Likewise, a faculty member in any field who spends an hour or more with one student who has special interests or needs may not be maximizing the economic use of the professor's time, but since the focus is on the student and academic values, the economic ones take a backseat to student needs.

An understanding of the relational values of higher education may be the basis for developing specific approaches to a university's challenges if one is also familiar with the setting, obligations and expectations of the university. For example, one may be in a university that is focused principally on the natural sciences and engineering with the social sciences and the liberal arts as important supporting parts of the curriculum. When economic difficulties arise, one knows that the priorities will be placed on maintaining the integrity of the natural sciences and engineering while supporting as best one can the other programs integral to the mission of the university. But can one develop a larger, more comprehensive set of strategies that may be relevant to all higher education? If we cannot develop a comprehend-sive strategy for higher education to follow, what pathways are open that may provide guidance and understanding for fostering a better system of higher education in our location, city, state, nation or even internationally?

Ryder provides hope in his forthcoming book, *Philosophy of Education: Thinking and Learning through History and Practice*.[1] This volume is focused on the philosophy of education and intended for upper division undergraduate and graduate level courses. Studies in philosophy of education are normative, suggesting ways of proceeding that benefit students and faculty. Often, they begin with a set of definitions and principles, and their conclusions are directly related to the initial premises of their work. Ryder takes a strikingly different approach, more like a reporter asking questions of who, what, when, where, why and how. This approach is refreshing in that it provides the clear opportunities for discussion and disagreements without presupposing the

[1] John Ryder sent me a copy of his manuscript that will be published as *Philosophy of Education: Thinking and Learning through History and Practice* by Rowman & Littlefield. All page references are to the manuscript pages.

outcome. Even so, it is also different from a normal reporter's effort to report on events.

> I have said, though, that we will ask these questions of education, but with a twist, and the twist is this. When the journalist asks who, what, when, where, why, and how, she is doing so descriptively; she wishes to describe an event so that we understand well what has happened. In our case, however, we will ask these questions not descriptively but prescriptively. This means that our interest here is not to understand what education is like so that we can answer the several journalistic questions. Our interest rather is asking what education ought to be like, or how we should think about it, and we are pursuing that normative goal by wondering the following: who should educate, and whom should be educated; what should be taught; why should people be educated and why should they be taught what they are; when should or can education take place; where should or can education take place; and how should people be educated (Ryder 2022, 5).

He suggests that we should begin with an understanding of the historical development of higher education, first asking who did what, when, where, why and how. After that, perhaps discern general principles and approaches that may serve as guidelines for all higher education. This is no small task, but it is a promising approach even if the principles and approaches are more general in nature without indicating specific actions for a university, state, or nation.

His first four chapters are on Plato, Rousseau, Dewey and Freire. Later in the volume he notes the importance of studying history before one proceeds to the underlying principles of higher education. He quotes Cicero: "To be ignorant of what happened before you were born, is to remain a child forever"[2] (Ryder 2022, 258). And he carefully notes that to think through the issues we need a language and a point of departure. In exploring these historical figures, he has the springboard for his later explorations and analysis of the philosophical principles of higher education. He provides a careful explication of each historical view, including their strengths and weaknesses. He acknowledges that all are from Western cultures, perhaps limiting the impact of his account. Someone studying China may well undertake a careful account of Confucius' thought and its impact on contemporary higher education as well as that of contemporary thinkers. The rise in China internationally also has a dramatic effect on its institutions of higher education and research. And one may begin to wonder whether the Chinese centralized governmental structure will eventually outpace more democratic forms and place higher education in a more central position than the U.S. and other developed nations. But China is not Ryder's specialty, and he hopes others will undertake that task. He also notes there are likely to be both agreement and disagreement regarding his approach and that is welcomed. Without going into the details of his analysis, I will note that his springboard is Plato's *Republic*, and one soon discovers that his principal outlook and focus is based on John Dewey's *Democracy and Education*.

He begins his book by noting that Plato in Book IV of the *Republic* referred to education as "the one great thing" (Ryder 2022, 18). Today Plato's account of education would be called tracking. Because of Plato's theory of knowledge and his view of the significant social differences between workers, guardians, and rulers, each was to receive an education appropriate to their nature and place in society. Rulers had the highest education and were able to discern the forms of the good that are requisite for governing a society and fostering the education appropriate for each segment of society.

> Plato was, in other words, a strong proponent of what we would call tracking in education. Because of their social roles, the children of craftspeople, farmers, and merchants require only the training necessary for them to fulfill their functions. They need nothing else, and in any case because of their natures, which he described in the myth of the metals as bronze rather than silver or gold, they would not be able to comprehend or make use of any other sort of education. The guardians and rulers, as we know, have different natures and are educated differently. It is important also to keep in mind why Plato had the view he had about gender and education, in part because it seems somewhat progressive to us. He knew of course that there are many differences between boys and girls, and between men and women, but he was convinced that they were irrelevant to

[2] "nescire quid antequam natus sis acciderit, id est semper esse puerum" (Cicero 1914, 120).

> whether and how children should be educated, and the goals of the education they receive. Throughout the society, from workers to guardians to rulers, and from childhood through adulthood, boys and girls, and women and men, had the same roles to fill and therefore required the same education (Ryder 2022, 44).

Once adulthood arrives, there is a significant difference in education for the differing classes. Workers are taught only what their crafts require of them. Guardians have more complex requirements focused on their social roles, military functions and the need to be sensitive, harmonious and moderate. For workers and guardians, their education is limited and censorship regarding what is presented is integral to Plato's view of the one great thing. Rulers, above all, need the highest of education because of their societal responsibilities to govern and to maintain the good of society. Today, we may find this ranking and censorship out of date and unappealing, but Ryder notes we need think about this.

> In some ways, many of Plato's ideas have little resonance for us, which may not be surprising given his distance in time and culture. But having said that, it is worth noticing that we may not be able to dismiss his thinking as irrelevant to us. On the one hand, those of us in modern liberal societies are not likely to give much credence to his arguments for censorship, although censorship plays a much larger role in our thinking than we may realize. We do in fact make judgments about what our children are exposed to, and often for reasons similar to Plato's. There are also societies around the world today in which a broad censorship, for various reasons, remains a feature. Along similar lines, Plato's idea that individuals are suited to very different tasks by their natures, and therefore should be steered in their education and social expectations accordingly, is quite different from our more commonly held view that individuals should be presented with options so that they might then choose lives for themselves. Nevertheless, we continue to track students in schools, and we continue to tolerate, even exacerbate, the differences in opportunities that are offered to our children as a consequence of the economic circumstances into which they were born. In some ways we are willing to accept Plato's class distinctions and the educational tracking they imply more readily than we may wish to acknowledge (Ryder 2022, 48–49).

In opposition to Plato's class-oriented education, Rousseau focuses on a child-centered education that progresses in harmony with the development of the child's inquiries and discovery of autonomy. His approach is captured in his book, *Emile*. Principally, Rousseau avoids the domination and subordination of societal influence and focuses on the child being as free as possible and with each developmental stage of the child the advisor focuses on the child's questions and responds to the child's development. Rather than a classroom with a teacher determining what is taught, an advisor permits the child to learn at her own rate and from her own experiences. The advisor eventually becomes the trusted consultant of the adult child. Without going into the details of Ryder's careful account of Rousseau, it is important to see that Rousseau has a strikingly different approach to education than Plato's tracking system. Rousseau sees education as a result of perpetual inquiry of the child who is clearly the originator of what is to be learned rather than the recipient of what a teacher thinks should be taught. Of course, there are many issues regarding this child-centered approach and not the least of which is how this education leads individuals to be responsible citizens as well as autonomous adults.

Freire also provides a dramatically different approach to education. He worked principally with illiterate adults in South America who were economically poor. As a result, his approach was to liberate from oppression. Using their own experiences and language his learners would surmount both external and internal oppression by creating culture circles. In those circles an interactive education took place involving posing problems, engaging in critical dialogue, suggesting solutions and plans of action. His approach is often called liberation pedagogy. Even the Brazilian government has recognized the importance of Freire's approaches for combating illiteracy in their country and has supported their use. Like Rousseau, Freire's approach focuses on the learner whose own discoveries through dialogue and inquiry advance their autonomy and prospects for living better lives. And once again, many questions arise regarding how a pedagogical approach focusing on individual and group liberation leads to responsible citizenship.

Ryder's philosophical indebtedness is apparent in his explication of Dewey's approach to higher education. Indeed, Dewey holds that all philosophical inquiries are anchored in the philosophy of education. In American thought, Dewey has a prominent role in all discussions of education and particularly higher education. Throughout his life, Dewey devoted himself to promoting student learning and equal access to educational opportunities. Like Rousseau and Freire, Dewey is focused on the student and on the levels of maturity and the developing interests of the student. But unlike Rousseau and Freire, focusing on student development and initiative is not enough for Dewey. The importance of the social setting and cultural impact on student learning is highly important. Hence, in his major work, *Democracy and Education*, Dewey emphasizes the importance of education for a democratic society. A democratic society is not merely the governmental form of democracies, but it is the cultural setting that provides equality for all, an openness to educational opportunities not limited by background or economic status and fosters both the autonomy of the individual and social responsibilities. A democratic society is founded on the common interests of its citizens and its interactions with other societies. This interaction leads not only to the importance of understanding one's own culture but also that of other societies. Indeed, at its best a democratic society has global interests and communications making education central to the development of individuals as responsible citizens in an international community.

Without going into details, Dewey's approach is founded on his naturalism and his notion that human life is best understood as experience, and the constant reconstruction of experience is the general character of education. Rather than education being about information conveyed by a teacher to a receptive student, it is "about the guiding of experience toward intelligent self-control and the ongoing growth of experience in its richness and efficacy" (Ryder 2022, 112). Overcoming class distinctions is the first step in this process. And unfortunately, it is rarely, if ever, fully achieved. Another important step and difficult to achieve is the relational aspect of knowledge. Since experience is not exclusive but integrated in a person's life and culture, education is not isolated to specific subject matter since all knowledge is relational. Hence, even though much of higher education is focused on disciplines in the natural and social sciences, liberal arts, and professional studies, the task of education is not simply to master one discipline but to explore the interrelationships between the disciplines. In so doing, a student may become self-governing while playing a responsible and understanding role in one's community, nation, and even internationally. Of course, so much of this is dependent on teacher education which not only must focus on individual student development but a clear understanding of the social responsibilities of one's culture. Education is not isolated to the classroom. Experience beyond the classroom in communities, in service, and in practices are all essential to the success of education in a democratic society.

Following in the footsteps of Dewey while developing his own careful analysis, Ryder explores in his remaining chapters "Education and Its Problems," "Education in Context: Nature, Knowledge, and Experience," and "Education in Context: Society and the State." Each of these chapters provide a distinct and clear account of Ryder's philosophy of education. I leave to the delight of students and faculty to read these chapters and gather a clearer vision of an approach to education that informs and highlights important contemporary issues while reflecting on the historical backgrounds and considering future developments. I am confident this book will play a central role in courses on the philosophy of education. His concluding chapter focuses on the account of experience as having three dimensions: political, cognitive and aesthetic. Ryder again highlights the centrality of equality and autonomy implicit in all experience:

> There is no justification, in light of our philosophical anthropology and social theory, for allowing one set of individuals to have greater access to educational opportunities than another. Neither class, nor family income, nor race, nor ethnicity, nor any other trait of an individual or group of individuals justifies inequality in educational opportunity (Ryder 2022, 262).

Pedagogical methods for teachers must be flexible allowing teachers to determine how best to teach their students. He emphasizes again that

> Education is not process of filling students with information. It is a process whereby they learn to control and direct their experience, and as a general principle, the best way for them to learn to control and direct their experience is through controlling and directing their experience. As educators we of course need to organize that process for them and to guide them through it. One would hope that the knowledge and skills necessary to aid students in this regard would be the primary focus of teacher education programs (Ryder 2022, 264).

And he ends with a charge to educators:

> To us falls the charge to organize and implement the systematic process whereby children and students develop the capacity to understand and command their own lives. That is a great challenge, and a great responsibility, but when we achieve it, or even come close to achieving it, we make as important a contribution to our children and our communities as anyone might hope (Ryder 2022, 264).

Conclusion

One may ask if general principles, even Ryder's carefully developed ones, are enough? Are they clear and robust enough to deal with the rising tide washing against higher education in the United States? To be honest, I am not sure. The obstacles seem to grow each day and include the rise of individualism and authoritarian approaches coupled with significant oversight, even censorship, and reduced funding, the decline of students getting degrees in education coupled with the short-term tenure of many first-year teachers. Whether philosophy of education will remain a central part of the curriculum is even in question. So, if one focuses on the challenges, the future does not look bright. However, there are bright spots that may provide some hope.

One feature that Ryder highlights is that talent is universal and not dependent on one's sex, race, culture, or governmental structure. Hence, if we move toward achieving equal educational opportunities, then education may move forward in a more positive way and be the basis not only for the enrichment of individuals and our society but also the basis for an international understanding of the role of higher education. But in the face of increasing opposition, what should be our response?

Neither Ryder nor Dewey are revolutionaries in the sense of encouraging violence to overcome opposition, but both believe that social involvement in democratic societies will advance the importance of education as well as the best of social responsibility. Fostering the fundamental principles of education will lead to societies that promote individual autonomy while increasing opportunities and advancement in as many areas as possible. Some may wish to criticize the general concept of relational, reconstructing experience as the foundation for education, suggesting that this is too broad or that it leaves out significant elements focusing on our commonality with other animal cultures or does not consider some contemporary developments in technology and in a more scientific understanding of how we learn. Some international commentators have highlighted Dewey's American heritage and how the notion of experience as transactional and relational stem from a pragmatic view rooted in the American soil of business and capitalism. Others in the social and biological sciences suggest a more descriptive approach to higher education, noting the elements that are central to different animal cultures. There are both limitations and possibilities in the way we describe different animal cultures and the upbringing of the young resulting in the development or sometimes demise of that form of life.

In human cultures economically developed nations may cultivate an educational system that is certainly different from those nations with fewer resources. These differences in cultures may describe what possibilities exist in human cultures, and one may argue that it is the culture that provides the parameters for all of education. If one lives in a society where food and shelter are not widely available, the educational goals of that society will be quite different from one with an abundance of food and shelter and where the arts as well as business, science, and education have high priorities. This approach would give a more descriptive account than a

normative one, and the criticism of Ryder's approach would be that he is emphasizing a philosophy of education driven by his cultural background that is not applicable to many other human cultures. Even in developed nations, there are growing differences in the approach to higher education. China only a few decades ago was far behind the U.S. in economic development and in educational attainment. But now it's more centralized government is achieving significant economic gains as well as educational achievements. In the U.S. the funding for education and scientific research has seen a leveling or decline. While in China, funding as well as societal priorities have been placed on the classroom, teaching, research, and the advancement of individual achievements that coincide with the advancements of the nation. Is this more centralized approach more likely to succeed than the more open, democratic approach fostered by the United States? We should know in another decade or so, if not sooner.

These different approaches, even if well founded and successful, may miss the point of the centrality of education and teacher education for all societies and the importance of fostering the best for future generations. Perhaps whether the form of government is democratic, socialistic, authoritarian, or whatever, is not the issue at hand. Ryder's point is that education at its best fosters the autonomy of the individual as well the sense of shared community and governance, regardless of the culture and specific governing structure. Even in societies where there is a scarcity of food and shelter, education will prioritize the steps for building a better society relative to that environment. Whether higher education is becoming lower education or not, this does not remove the centrality of education for all cultures both human and animal. Let us move forward as best we can. With the guidance of John Ryder, we are likely to have greater success.

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REALIZING DEWEY'S DREAM OF DEMOCRACY: REFLECTIONS, EXTENSIONS, AND SOME THOUGHTS REGARDING JOHN RYDER'S ASSESMENTS

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ABSTRACT: A brief consideration of Dewey's outline for democracy in broad scope is undertaken, considering liberalism, communication, community, education and widespread critical dialogue as its touchstones. Taking into account the adaptive dimensions of a reconstructive idealism, and reflecting on John Ryder's analyses and critiques involving the distinction between thin and thick democracy, the attempt is made to further consider ways in which Dewey's vision might be more durably brought to life in the contemporary world.

Keywords: John Dewey, John Ryder, democracy; liberalism, education, reconstruction, communication, dialogue, community.

Introduction

Were it the case that democracies thrived and endured, there would be no particular need to speak about them as dreams or visions. The fact is that democracies largely exist in partiality. Frequently, what goes by the name of democracy is a foreshortened or hampered version of it. If a state holds elections and there is some degree of fairness to the process, that state might be, benevolently, dubbed a democracy. The degree to which such fairness predominates varies considerably, however. And what constitutes fairness in elections remains an open question.

A question of a more substantial and less accessible nature concerns what, in the fullest sense, in addition to the existence of free and open elections, should be considered as constitutive of the pervasive texture of a democratic society. From this perspective, representtative electoral politics signifies a surface manifestation of complex social processes within a democracy. Though one might certainly argue that the support of fair elections is necessary to a democratic republic, that is not a sufficient condition for the description of democracy in this more pervasive sense. By trying to clarify what this more thoroughgoing description might entail, we can begin to assess the nature of processes that could help to realize it.

This sticky and deep question reflects what is most challenging in John Dewey's analysis and sketch of democracy. Dewey is a philosopher of vast scope and interests, whose power to reach into a variety of different realms is noteworthy, and whose capacity to tie some of those together in a theoretical sense is admirable. His assessments of liberalism, of education, of psychology, and of language and communication, figure into his embracing concerns with envisioning democracy in an expansive and compelling way. Dewey's vision of the possibilities of democratic society involves so much besides free and open elections that one must clearly distinguish the use of *democracy* Dewey puts forth from what frequently goes by the name of *democracy* in public parlance and international discourse. Though Dewey does not debunk the significance of representative government and electoral politics, his vision of democracy extends significantly beyond them (Dewey 1927, 83)[1].

How much of Dewey's vision of democracy, though evocative, is principally speculative, and how much is realizable is a large and challenging question. Dewey himself was clearly a philosopher who chose to roll up his sleeves and to immerse himself in the civic problems of his day in an immediate and engaged way. Seventy years after his death, his example of the drive to realize democracy – not merely to describe it – and his commitment to the idea that philosophy has an important role to play in the process – remain vividly alive.

Given Dewey's own example of social and political engagement, and his vast and detailed outline of a democratic vision, it is incumbent upon us to consider how best to make use of both his intellectual and reformist legacies. Though articulating, analyzing and conveying the dimensions of the Deweyan vision remain a respect-

[1] Dewey here stresses the importance of not "derogating" political democracy (i.e., electoral politics) while thinking about democracy as a political and social ideal.

able task and a formidable challenge, it is also our task to think, as did Dewey in down-to-earth ways, about how best to go about realizing his vision in the contemporary world.

Dewey's Dream

It does not take a long time to try to articulate a summary of Dewey's democratic vision, though Dewey himself takes a long time to elaborate on its many detailed implications. Dewey is, after all, primarily a philosopher, and the ramifications of his notion about what democracy might and should be are justifiably detailed and many-splendored. In short, however, we might simply say that Dewey's vision of democracy involves free expression, widespread and open communication, and the cultivation of an educated populace. The function of an effective and responsive representative government follows from these, with the presumption that an educated populace is capable of wise choices in that arena.

Because Dewey is a philosopher and does elaborate at length on these various strands of the vision, it can take some considerable work to weave them together and get a sense of how they all form components of a coherent outlook. Dewey, as an early devotee of Hegel and then one who rebelled against his own early Hegelianism, fights tooth and nail to resist the kind of systematization characteristic of Hegel. Dewey's response is extreme, and though he resists Hegelian systematization for perfectly understandable reasons, it makes cohering some of his ideas more difficult. Dewey's writing style, though richly appealing and in the vernacular, tends towards endless rhetorical detours and, though they are usually fascinating, they serve to lead one off the main theoretical trail.

Dewey's melioristic earnestness is frequently so potent and omnipresent that one must sometimes separate his sheer enthusiasm for the vision he espouses from the articulation of that vision. This Deweyan passion falls well within the range of American humanistic enthusiasts such as Whitman and Emerson who use language as much to rouse and inspire as to describe or depict. There is something infectious and utterly moving in this rhetorical tradition, and one would hope that enthusiasm for the possibilities of free, open and thoughtful culture would catch on widely by virtue of the sheer energy of the rhetoric. Though the earnest energy of such rhetoric is important to inspiring such vision, one requires, in other detailed and practical ways, an outline of its proposed methods and a program to implement it and to make it pervasive.

Before taking a look at some of the specific aspects of the Deweyan democratic vision, let us reflect for a moment on how anything visionary or ideal operates in the Deweyan philosophical universe. Dewey spends a great deal of time elaborating on a vision of democracy, but takes considerable pains to point out that a critical awareness of the distinction of the ideal from the actual must enter into it. The depictions, the theories, the ideals of democracy which Dewey paints with an elaborate set of analyses, must be taken as sketches, road maps, outlines for further review and consideration. In short, Dewey regards all these ideal visions as ends-in-view rather than as ends-in-themselves, aiming to ensure that a pragmatist envelope surrounds these words of aspiration and of hope. Ideals still must function as ideas in that pragmatist sense, as "regulative means […] employed as plans within the state of affairs" rather than as pristinely separated and distinct from them (Dewey 1958, 102)

A corollary to this observation is the Deweyan emphasis on reconstruction as central to the process of realizing any such vision. Reconstruction in a general sense is a Deweyan method for calling into question the reification of any ideal that has served to transfix rather than to enlighten. The vision which Dewey constructs, then, is indeed ideal but which, by this rubric, challenges its own ideality. In keeping with contemporary philosophical terminology of a certain sort, Dewey's ideal vision is one that seeks to *deconstruct* itself from the outset, but which provides, in the sequelae, an adaptive alternative. By offering *reconstruction* as an alternative to nihilistic evaporation through purely deconstructive

analysis, Dewey offers a sense of provisional reliability characteristic of a pragmatist stance, thus enabling adaptive ideals to continue to function as ends-in-view (Dewey 1948, 103)

Bearing in mind the importance of Darwinian adaptation for Dewey's mature philosophy, the notion of reconstruction thus represents a continuing process of engagement, revisioning, reframing and reapplication of ideas, not merely a single enactment of a program (Dewey 1997, 6).[2] Whatever Dewey's vision of democracy is, it involves the awareness that no ideal should be hypostasized and that realization of any ideal should involve process both reconstructive and adaptive. How all of this might operate within the political sphere according to Dewey's vision is a complex affair. Reconstruction, as Dewey sees it, involves a constancy of effort. Any vision can only be provisional, but the question remains how a philosophical visionary can best describe it to help it preserve its fluidity and dynamism and to set the course for its actualization. One might well argue that the shortcoming of politically rigid narratives is their linearity, their incapacity to preserve this sense of the provisional. Any vision of democracy that we attribute to Dewey must, by its very nature, conform to this guideline – that, even in describing itself, the tentative and experimental spirit must prevail. The liability of "blueprint" notions of political programs is that they easily morph into unappealing dualisms; the ideal, as blueprint, remains an icon, while the society it is meant to shape suffers a stunted version of the vision. When realization fails, the blueprint remains, held up as an object of authority and veneration, but which, in fact, represents only what might have been.

Now that we have set the groundwork for understanding that any Deweyan vision is provisional and adaptive, let us, with that general understanding, turn to several constitutive elements of Dewey's vision of democracy.

At the core of the Deweyan political model is strong advocacy for openness of expression; it is in this sense in which we consider Dewey's notion of liberalism. Common parlance in the United States associates *liberalism* with a moderate but progressive political stance; though some aspects of moderation go along with Dewey's notion of liberalism, this association with the term should be regarded as distinct. The term *liberalism* has also been used pejoratively by some groups, particularly in the United States, to designate a hypocritical political stance which superficially indicates professed sympathy with the downtrodden but which in practice carries an unwillingness to dispense with one's own privileges to benefit them. This, as well, should be distinguished from the Deweyan usage.

Within the Deweyan scheme, *liberalism* signifies the basic tenets of freedom, but with a cautionary note. Though such freedom of movement is, according to Dewey, exhibitive of the sorts of adaptability that a constantly evolving society requires, he acknowledges the extremes to which emphasis on utter freedom can be pressed. Such rigid insistence on so-called "individual freedoms" is frequently blind to the collective requirements of social need, so central to Dewey's understanding of the contexts within which freedom operates.[3] Certainly, freedom of expression is central to Dewey's vision of democracy; advocates of a more extreme form of individual rights argue that a broad array of activities fall under protections freedom of expression, including the bearing of concealed weapons, again, a non-Deweyan extension of the notion.[4]

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[2] In "The Influence of Darwinism on Philosophy," Dewey makes one of his highly cogent but profound statements in seeming vernacular, describing the alternatives of "finding the objects and organs of knowledge in the mutual interactions of changing things," or "in some transcendent and supernal region" (Dewey 1997, 6–7).

[3] In the second year of the COVID-19 pandemic, exponents of this sort of extreme of individual freedom in the United States argue strongly against vaccination mandates as though they were inimical to individual choice. This kind of argument, without consideration of the public good, Is not what Dewey advocates.

[4] At the time of this writing, the United States Supreme Court is about to consider a case against the State of New York by guns rights advocates who argue that the right to bear arms is intimately connected with freedom of expression under the First Amendment. Interestingly, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) has filed a brief in support of New York's rights to curb the

Though, indeed, there are many justifications for regarding non-verbal forms as expressive, and thereby subject to the sorts of freedoms Dewey advocates, the use of any expressive form within Dewey's vision of democracy involves willingness to engage, interact, exchange, and perhaps even to reconcile; forms of expression that invite collective pursuit in an open way are to be considered especially protected by this kind of Deweyan liberalism. Modes of expression tending towards threat, manipulation or intimidation would be outside this realm. This is not to say that forms of expression less open and inviting to inquiry and contested consideration would be outlawed within a Deweyan social universe. Certainly, great tests of free expression have involved allowances for forms that are clearly more provocative than inviting.[5]

As Dewey paints it, the rugged individualism that characterized American Colonialism and the early United States is often so closely associated with its essence that the idea of unrestraint is frequently confused with the notion of freedom. That promise of the New World gave both hope and illusion to the American democratic prospect. On the one hand, it set the stage for the Bill of Rights, and, on the other, for the kind of rebellious anarchy exhibited in the US Capitol on January 6, 2021 by those who refused to accept the verified results of the 2020 presidential election.

The misconception underlying that insurrection at the Capitol is that any chosen form of regulation or governmental constraint may be seen as an unjustified limitation of one's exercise of freedom. That rigid view of individual rights now extends further to an insistence that, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, demands for mask-wearing and vaccination are inhibitions of freedom rather than reasonable social expectations for protection of the public at large. Much of this rebelliousness in the United States can be understood through Dewey's recognition of the prevalent and ongoing confusion between appropriate freedom of movement within a complex society, and the notion of rugged individualism seeded in the Colonial mind (Dewey 1962, 80–81).

In delineating this distinction, Dewey gives more of a sense, rather than a blueprint, for how a democracy should evolve its attendant sense of freedom. Of necessity, freedom alters with growing cultural complexity; movement by any individual automatically, within the frame of a social context, engenders response from other individuals. The governing scheme of culture and tradition – involving law, habit, regulation, expectation – naturally pattern the activities of any individual. How exactly that changes over the course of developments in culture is not always known. But it is known that liberality and constraint operate conjointly in any culture to enable safe, regular and fruitful operation, while hopefully also enabling expressive and spontaneous movement (Dewey 1963, 141–142).

The Deweyan democratic vision requires participation, and participation of a particular sort. Within all types of societies, people participate, but not freely, nor with a sense of communicative engagement with one another of the kind Dewey advocates. One could easily paint the counterexamples for which people in an authoritarian society "communicate" with one another and "participate" in collective ventures. It would be easy to debunk the Deweyan use of this terminology by providing those counterexamples; nonetheless, in articulating and extending the Deweyan vision, retaining some positive sense of what those kinds of engagements mean in an open society, and how those differ from those in a closely regulated one, is necessary (Dewey 1935, 71–73).

Though representative government, is certainly in keeping with the Deweyan vision of democracy, it does not suffice to describe its full extent. The practice of advocating for candidacies and platforms is certainly an aspect of democratic interchange, but, on its own, does not realize interactivity and participatory discussion in the way that Dewey envisions as crucial. He poses the model of scientific method as one for social engagement; how this operates in society at large remains more

bearing of such arms (https://www.aclu.org/news/civil-liberties/conceal-and-carry-restrictions-can-help-protect-freedom-of-expression).

[5] Consider the case of the Nazi march in the largely Jewish suburb of Chicago, Skokie, IL, in 1978.

of a hope than a program in Dewey's vision, but centers around a belief that the cultivation of social intelligence can be developed through broad public education. Though the educational mission he envisions is far broader, schools became, for Dewey, primary instruments for educational reform, with the hope that alteration of schools would help to improve social intelligence overall. In a wide variety of works, Dewey outlines his vision of educational reform, offering crucial insights into what constitutes open inquiry and the cultivation of intellectual autonomy. By providing an outline of the development of integrated experience that evolves from successful educational processes, Dewey gives a model for the ways in which reconstructed classrooms can alter the evolving shape of society at large.

Arguing against uniformity in education which defeats originality and is a bane to scientific creativity (Dewey 1944, 303), Dewey envisions a form of reconstructed education which enables students to think for themselves. Though Dewey calls "thinking for oneself" a pleonasm[6], it is, like so many of Dewey's vernacular declarations, potent with implication. Similarly, in an offhand way, Dewey notes the germ of thinking in experience, the individualistic form in which ideas begin to take shape. As Dewey potently observes, so often the notion of thinking is divorced from that individualized sense, demoting it to an arbitrary status that has little to do with the attainment of knowledge (Dewey 1944, 153).

Though couched in the camouflage of Dewey's vernacular, the derivation of thinking in experience is significant, especially when one connects it with Dewey's insistence that thinking, to be considered vital, is autonomous. The social implications of these seemingly simple observations are profound; the world of individuals in society, whether schooled or not, become candidates for individualized thinking from the groundwork of their own individualized experiences. Extrapolating from the reconstructed school where students learn to inquire based on their own experiences and interests, the wider social model becomes evident. The capacity to sort through, reflect, compare, communicate about one's experiences exists potentially within all individuals. So, when at the end of *Democracy and Education*, Dewey claims that learning be continuous between school and world, he actually is saying quite a bit more than seems apparent (Dewey 1944, 358).

At the outset of *Democracy and Education*, Dewey makes an important statement about the conceptual and communicative function of language. It comes as a prefatory note to his very general discourse on education, but two elements of this observation, which he pursues in greater detail elsewhere, stand out. One is that language functions as a communicative tool – a seemingly obvious statement – but also that it has conceptual content, and therefore provides the possibility for mutual understanding (Dewey 1944, 14–15).

Put this together with Dewey's more austere interchange with C. L. Stevenson about the difference between his own conceptual view of language and Stevenson's emotive view, one gains a significant sense of what Dewey sees as the possibilities of linguistic communication. Not only do conversation partners make known what their own viewpoints are, but the conceptual content of language enables them to communicate the genesis of and justification for their views. Linguistic expression, for Dewey, involves more than simply saying "I believe such and such […]", but entails, as well, a sharing of common meanings. That sense of linguistic exchange as more than a reporting of a viewpoint has potent implications within the Deweyan universe. If one regards individualized experience as a crucial element, along with the notion of thinking as autonomous and individualistic, members in a society can do far more than just express their individual viewpoints. By virtue of language as a conceptual tool, communication has the capacity to stimulate thinking and convey its results, and to receive those in turn (Dewey 1945).

Crucial to envisioning such communication is the notion of social malleability, the conviction that society is not innately formed in a given way nor need be rigidly structured. Unlike models which characterize human

[6] An unnecessarily redundant phrase.

nature as instinctual and essentially unreformable, Dewey's model, psychological and political, is based on habit rather than instinct. Instincts must be manageable by overarching authority, but habits are reformable through reconstructive practices (Dewey 1957 79–80). Writ large, as Alan Ryan puts it, Dewey's ideal of democracy is "to transform the great society into the great community" (Ryan 1995, 219). The basic material foundations of a good life in society need to be followed by connection and integrated participation among the members of that society, undertaken by collective alteration of habit, not by management of collective instinct.

John Ryder: Skepticism and Idealism, Cautionary Liberalism, Thick and Thin Democracy, Shared Interests

Though a student and proponent of American pragmatism and the kind of democratic vision that John Dewey describes, John Ryder has also been critical of romanticizing forms of democracy that fall short of that goal. The problem with democracies of a limited sort, according to Ryder, is not only with the limitations in implementation, but the frequently concomitant insistence, especially in international discourse, of glorifying them despite their shortcomings. Ryder's critique of the rhetoric of democracy on the world stage focuses initially on critiquing instances of such unjustified ideological sanctimoniousness. (Ryder 2013, 182).

Ryder's suggests, alternatively, a pluralist and ecumenical internationalist approach. and the pursuit of what he calls "common interests." Though a strong advocate of Deweyan-style democratic vision, Ryder values the desirability of international engagement over ideological confrontation; seeking international relationship above self-justification, he prescribes common pursuits as a primary vehicle. This primacy of political engagement over defensive ideologizing is, in Ryder's view, an important way to set the stage for longer-term realization of the Deweyan vision without imposing an unfortunate bulwark against the sort of developing relations that might support that (Ryder 2021).

Ryder's skepticism about the self-promotion of limited democracies extends to the compromises evidenced in the use of military and economic means in the name of promoting freedom. Though Ryder understands the realities of self- justified international realpolitik, he also casts a skeptical eye on its misuse. He regards the bearing of the emblem "democratic" bordering on the hypocritical for a country like the United States which frequently supports non-democratic regimes as a means to maintain and disseminate its power; with extensive military presence around the world, the United States has, nonetheless, justified itself as a defender of freedom and democracy. As Ryder argues, the unacknowledged preservation of its own economic and military power is the more frequently plausible justification (Ryder 2013, 224).

To walk the narrow theoretical line between espousing an idealistic appreciation for Dewey's vision of democracy, while being highly critical of the actual form it takes in the United States, Ryder draws a distinction between what he calls "thin" and "thick" democracy. This useful distinction is modeled, at least linguistically, after the distinction made by the British ethicist Bernard Williams between "thin" and "thick" ethical descriptions. In Williams' view, a term like "good" is thin because it gives no richer sense, other than adulation and approval, for what it signifies. A term like "honest," however, in addition to indicating approval, also indicates a particular semantic richness to the idea of what fills out or signifies that virtuous character.

Ryder's use of "thin" and "thick" vis a vis democracy functions slightly differently. In Ryder's view, a "thin" democracy is one in which certain aspects of public choice and expression prevail while surviving on the surface of a uniformed, easily swayed, and not particularly thoughtful public. A "thick" democracy, on the other hand, is one that, at least in theory, adheres to the Deweyan prescription for a developed educational system, far more extensive than what is at present available in the schools, and which reaches a far greater public. A "thick" democracy underscores Dewey's requirement for an educated populace. "Educated," in Dewey's sense, represents something con-

siderably more as supports for widespread critical thinking than what institutionalized educational systems, in Dewey's time as well in our own, have offered (Ryder 2008).

Though Ryder is a defender of the sort of liberalism that Dewey espouses, he recognizes the ease with which that notion can be subverted, and identifies the susceptible ambiguity of the term, used, on the one hand, to identify estimable rights and freedoms notably that of free expression, and on the other, a variety of positions within a political landscape. To distinguish the first sense, Ryder applies the designation of "moral liberalism." His associated critique of liberalism does not refute its ideal form but the myriad ways in which espousal of freedom has moved its significance from the moral sphere to opportunistic ones (Ryder 2020, 14–15).

Incorporated in Ryder's analysis is a cautionary note about the version of liberalism advocated by Dewey and more elitist versions, for which he suggests John Adams and Walter Lippmann as examples. Though Ryder would agree that Adams' and Lippmann's sympathies reside firmly within a democratic framework, he argues that their safeguarding a particular kind of authority for the intellectually elite is alien to the more broadly applied Deweyan version. Ryder recognizes the clear dangers of such well-intentioned though elitist forms of liberalism in the growing resentment that has in recent years manifested in so-called "populist" (an unfortunate misnomer) political movements. Without a foundation in what Ryder calls moral liberalism, democracy in the Deweyan vein would not be possible since it requires collective participation (Ryder 2020, 19–20).

Ryder's focus on "shared enterprise" is a crucial reminder of how individuals within a state can develop a sense of common purpose, and thereby a sense of themselves not just as ruggedly independent but also as parts of greater wholes. His emphasis on shared enterprise on the international scene builds on this in a trans-systemic way, so that, even between societies with very different political rubrics, common senses of purpose and endeavor can be established, thus overcoming an international state-based analogue of rugged individualism. (Ryder 2020, 23). Engaging as individual states in mutual enterprise, with a sense of participatory commitment, establishes an element of what one might consider the germ of international democratism. In Ryder's analysis, democratism, both inside states and between them, can be seen as emerging from this commitment to relatability and mutual purpose, with attention to the multiple spheres that encompass them (Ryder 2007).

Steps to Realizing Dewey's Dream of Democracy

Granted that focusing on practical common pursuits is a good way to build social connections amidst ideological differences, the emphasis on this as a solution to the problem of social disintegration does not answer the problem raised by Dewey's dream of democracy. That dream relies on ideological engagement, even though such engagement may result in continued disagreement. A central and important part of the Deweyan vision is the commitment to open expression and to understanding difference in outlook. Resolution of differences may not be apparent at the time of the airing of views, but sidestepping those differences is antithetical to Dewey's enterprise.

Ryder's emphasis on common shared pursuits does not necessarily involve a sidestepping of this sort; nonetheless, it is important to clearly assert that the pursuit of common practical interests be a complement, not an alternative, to other forms of engagement and discussion. Though Dewey's dream of an intelligent public participating consciously and freely in developing an understanding of mutual shared problems seems remote, it is central to the dream. Though not clear how Dewey intends this to come about, it remains an axiomatic feature of the dream.

The idea of developing intelligence at large in a society through openness of expression and free inquiry and the notion of widespread participatory democracy are significant developments beyond the idea of representative government. The notion of a society committed to reconstruction through collective inquiry, not

linear and formulaic, is a major contribution to a dynamic theory of social organization. Dewey's guidance on individualism and public involvement is an artful, if elusive, one, and is necessary to understand subtly in order to avoid misconstruing it (Dewey 1962, 167, 171).

Dewey's potent dream of democracy is worth refining theoretically on its own terms in philosophical contexts, but, as a social theory, also begs for implementation. The support for and further articulation of Dewey's dream and a critique of false simulacra by critics like Ryder are important steps on the way if one considers the dream at all viable and realizable. How then can one maintain a sense of its viability while maintaining a sense of realistic limitations about it?

A first step is to take to heart what Dewey says about widespread education and the cultivation of intelligence. Though Dewey made great strides in reforming educational theory and the schools, educational institutions have barely scratched the surface of what Dewey envisions. Certainly, in terms of developing basic skills and cultivating general knowledge, schools, at least in the United States and some parts of the world, have achieved considerable success. However, it has become clear that, despite Dewey's aspirations to have schools become the home of open and free reflection on issues of common import, it is predominantly the case that they have become more pervasively vehicles for vocational orientation and social sifting. As guidelines about curriculum have tightened in recent decades, opportunities for free inquiry have decreased. As well, schools by and large reach the young. Though there are forms of training for older adults, the scheme Dewey envisions to enable everyone to participate in open and collective inquiry is barely, if at all, realized through schools.

We do have advanced tools for public engagement, but frequently the populace tends to view proxy debate in the various media as a substitute for individualized inquiry and communicative reflection. One hears or sees the so-called "talking heads" express their points of view in the media and one often allows the awareness of that discourse to replace engaging in it. As well, what passes for discourse, via chat rooms and other forms of contact in the so-called "social media," is often a projection of individual viewpoint without much sense of dialogue – essentially a series of rants – with little attentiveness or coherent responsiveness to opposing viewpoints. Consequently, despite the activity of discourse and engagement in the media and on the internet, cogent ideological interaction seems minimal.

The levels of outrage regarding political stances run so high these days that, in more personal contexts, people frequently avoid political discussion entirely. There is a prevalent feeling that to engage in such discussion is an endangerment of personal relationship and that one best avoid it to maintain whatever social connections one has. If one does have social connections based on political agreement, then discussions do occur as reinforcements of a collective belief system. But where does this leave Dewey's dream of democracy?

If we adhere to prevailing prejudices against engaging with those on opposite sides of political issues, the dream will never get realized. Inquiry, as Dewey sees it, and the improved judgment that follows upon it, is dependent on challenging held-to beliefs in a way that will test them and help one to reformulate them. That, from the strictly personal point of view, is incumbent upon any individual who seeks to test their beliefs. From a collective and interactive angle, however, the sheer expression of viewpoint to one with a completely different point of view creates a communicative channel that has not existed before. That kind of intellectual expression and engagement which reaches out to the other is a small but important gesture in the development of social fabric. As Ryder points out, it is important to remember that non-conflictual, non-ideological forms of shared enterprise also build social fabric. Indeed, this is true, but it is important to remember that even peaceable dialogue that results in nothing more than attentive listening to the alternative, builds social fabric as well. In addition to that sheer building of social connection, engagement of this ideological sort on a widespread basis might help to push forward a collective form of education that will not result from

avoiding it. Discourse and dialogue that express and attend to difference are clear vehicles for cultivation of perspective and judgment in ways that few others are.

If one takes Dewey's thoughts about habit and reconstruction seriously, then our social habit of avoiding productive conflictual interchange can change. We have fallen into a communicative dualism that encourages corroborative engagement and conflictual disengagement. There is no reason, in principle, why this model must perpetuate. If, as Dewey's dream indicates, free and open communication can prevail. It is incumbent upon us, in practical terms, to figure out how to change our habits, learn to make such interchanges more malleable and acceptable, and learn to do this widely.

In addition to being a great philosopher, Dewey is a great rhapsodist, a painter of social visions, a poet of the morally possible. Dewey's depiction of the dream of democracy brings with it wonderful encouragement for communication and a delineation in the larger sense of what inquiry is about. But to realize Dewey's dream, to transform it into social practice, we need to get a better understanding of how to envision its dynamics and to teach its methods.

One lesson may be taken from the history of philosophy which has, in various contexts, modeled and implemented the method of dialogue. Though such dialogue oftentimes operates in a sphere of rarefied concepts, the model of interaction can be applied to dialogue about anything. Simply put, the model encourages saying what one thinks and listening to what one's interlocutor thinks. In such a context one theoretically responds to the interlocutor in a way that reinforces to them that one has understood their position even though one may not agree with it.

The other model for productive interactive dialogue is a therapeutic one. Instead of thinking of the dialogue strictly as the attempt to resolve a conceptual problem, one regards it as an equally important reassurance to the interlocutor that their points have been heard and understood, even if there is no conceptual agreement. Dialogue, especially between two people who ensure that they hear and have an understanding of what the other says is a practice that interestingly pays homage to both the kind of emotivism that Stevenson advocates and the conceptualism advocated by Dewey. Ensuring that has heard and understood what the other has said does not exactly measure up to Dewey's hope for conceptual reconciliation, but it is a small step along the way. Dewey's urgency about finding an analogue for scientific inquiry within human valuational communications suggests that the conceptual components of language make resolution something to expect. Enabling the sort of widespread interpersonal dialogue between ideological opponents might necessitate toning down some of those expectations of methodical conceptual reconciliation, allowing talking and attentive listening to evolve coherent responses over time.

Oddly and interestingly, we now have the tools, via the internet, to make such widespread communication possible and feasible. One can now call almost anywhere in the world and do so without exorbitant cost. The question now is not whether we can talk with one another about difficult issues, but whether we are willing to do it and to learn how to do it, whether we can alter our habits of non-engagement with ideological opponents. Dewey's dream remains alive, and the shared interest in realizing it – as John Ryder puts it in a slightly different context – is ours to make good on. Bringing to life the Deweyan vision of democracy is dependent on a public that thinks it possible and develops the habits required to begin to make it palpable. The challenge is to develop the forms of communication that can bring democracy to fruition one step at a time. As Ryder has pointed out, a thin democracy can get by with only electoral participation; but building a thick democracy, in which public education is expansive and thorough, though difficult, remains a live possibility. With the awareness that a good part of the world's public has access to the technological tools to make communication viable, we now need to develop and teach techniques of human communication to enable the best use of them, and to find willing participants to put them to the test.

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WHOLEHEARTED DEMOCRACY AND ITS RATIONAL COMMITMENTS, REVISITED

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ABSTRACT: In "Whole-Hearted Democracy and Its Commitment to Rationality" (*AUDEM*, vol. 1, 2010), I argued that citizens of a state whose democratic structures they support wholeheartedly are committed to the potential rational scrutiny of almost all aspects of their lives and society. I revisit that argument here. Its central reasoning remains defensible when properly developed. But this reasoning needs clarification. Its minimal characterization of democracy does not support the commitment of these citizens to any specific sort of substantive, radical change. It also does not show that these citizens are committed, by the very nature of their situation, to active readiness to support such change. Rather, it establishes that such citizens are, by that nature, committed to being in a vigilant, receptive state in which they are able to acknowledge and to act on information that implies the need for radical change. I examine further consequences of this result.

Keywords: wholehearted democracy, democracy, rational scrutiny, substantive change, commitment to radical change

I. Introduction

In "Whole-Hearted Democracy and Its Commitment to Rationality", I argued that citizens of a democracy whose democratic structures they support wholeheartedly are committed to the potential rational scrutiny of almost all aspects of their lives and society.[1] I noted that this situation may involve the loss of valued traditional forms of life as well as the sorts of gains in freedom, a voice in one's own affairs, and opportunities for human flourishing that are associated with societies that live by democratic norms. Here I reflect further on this argument. I believe that its core claims, when properly formulated, remain defensible. But the original argument needs clarification and qualification if its exact force is to be made evident. In §II I sketch the basic reasoning and note some of the radical conclusions that it may seem to support. In §III I then give a more detailed account of this reasoning, and there and in §IV I indicate what conclusions such reasoning really can establish.

II. The Argument in Brief

The position that I wish to defend requires appeal only to a minimal, value-neutral conception of democracy. On this conception, a form of democracy exists within a group when the members of this group participate in decisions binding on all the members of the group; and at one or more significant stages in the decision process these members have an equal voice (for example, an equal vote), in the outcome of that stage.[2] This definition allows for various forms of democratic organization, and it allows such forms to exist, to varying degrees, in many different sorts of organizations, informal as well as formal. Here I focus on democratically organized political states, but versions of the questions that I consider can arise for any sort of democratic organization that meets the conditions that I outline below.

Democratic forms of organization can be instituted within a group for many reasons—for instance, to maximize the well-being of society, but also to please a patron state or to provide a veneer of legitimacy to a venal oligarchy. Moreover, adopting and living by democratic norms requires education, lasting psychological adjustments, and a willingness to allow one's desires to be overridden by a disagreeing majority. The democratic process can be inefficient, and majority decisions can be foolish or vicious. Given geography, external threats, internal difficulties, and so on, it may not be reasonable to adopt democratic forms of government at various stages (or even at any stage) in a given nation's career. Such facts have often been ignored by state or private democracy-building projects, with the unhappy consequences that we periodically see.

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[1] See Howell 2010. This essay was part of a conference, organized by the Alliance of Universities for Democracy, in which John Ryder encouraged me to participate. I appreciated the opportunity then to reflect on this topic, and I am happy now to be able to continue my reflections in the present collection honoring his work.

[2] I adopt such a definition in Howell 2010, 81. It derives from the work of Thomas Christiano. See Christiano and Bajaj 2021 and, for background, the essays in Christiano 2003. The present definition could be sharpened in various ways, but the basic line of argument below is independent of such refinements.

I am interested, however, in those many cases in which the adoption of democracy by a state, or the democratic organization of that state, is, in fact, objectively justified, both politically and morally; and, overall, the citizens of that state sincerely and wholeheartedly accept and work to maintain the democratic form of government in that state. I take it that the world exhibits many such societies that are now at least approximately or aspirationally democratic in this way. I assume also that the presence of democratic structures in these states is justified in familiar ways – democratic structures provide for a maximum of individual autonomy and choice for each society member compatible with the autonomy of other members of the society; democratic decision-making is able to take into account, in a broad-based way, more sources of information about the decisions to be made than are, in general, other forms of decision making; democratic decision-making best respects the interests, values, and goals of the governed; and so on.[3]

I thus focus here on (i) such cases of wholehearted – and politically and morally legitimate – democracy, cases that satisfy the above definition. (ii) In these cases, (a) the citizens of the society do have a significant role in adopting laws and policies; and also (as in the usual modern democratic states) (b) these laws and policies affect a wide range of important aspects of the society – social, cultural, economic, political, and so on. In addition, (iii) these democratic states exist in a world like our own and so confront a constantly changing set of important decisions about many different issues that affect the aspects of life that were just noted. Finally, (iv) the satisfaction of standard sorts of cognitive and motivational conditions goes along with the citizens' wholehearted acceptance and maintenance of their form of democratic government: (a) the citizens understand the significance and scope of their decisions, (b) they understand and accept their responsibility for making those decisions, and (c) they are motivated to make the best decisions possible given their conception of their own and of their society's interests, values, and goals and of how best to satisfy those interests, respect those values, and attain those goals.[4] I call societies that satisfy (ii), *broadly focused*; societies that satisfy (iii), *dynamically situated*; and societies that satisfy (i) and (iv), *wholeheartedly democratic in a cognitively and motivationally conscious way*. (Below I often subsume the (iv)-style cognitive and motivational conditions within (i) and so speak simply, as above, of "wholeheartedly democratic societies").[5]

In actual practice no democracy meets these four conditions perfectly. In particular, (i), (ii) (a), and (iv) are often only partially realized, whether for innocent or culpable reasons. But these four conditions specify an ideal to which proponents of democracy point, and the following argument (a reformulation of the central part of my 2010 reasoning) is meant to show the sorts of commitments that are required of the members of any group that succeeds in meeting this ideal.

Here is the argument in brief. (In §III, I develop some important details further.) Suppose that we now have, or we propose to establish, the above sort of wholehearted, broadly focused, and dynamically situated democratic society. Members of this society will have to confront (and make the best decisions that they can about) a wide-ranging variety of changing issues that bear on their overall interests, values, and goals. In addition, what I call the *promiscuity of evidence* holds: almost any claim may turn out to bear, evidentially, on the truth of any other claim.[6] This point holds given the web

[3] For such justifications, see also Christiano and Bajaj 2021, §2, and the many discussions that they cite.

[4] Below I will not always distinguish between the interests (and so on) of the society members and the interests (and so on) of the society itself. This distinction is important, but it doesn't affect the points made in this essay.

[5] Conditions (i)–(iv) represent a slight rearrangement of, but no fundamental changes in, the conditions given in Howell 2010, 80–81.

[6] See Howell 2010, footnote 6. Epistemologists and philosophers of science often note this point. As long as the citizens live in, and have to decide about happenings in, a broadly focused, dynamically situated society, we do not need to appeal to evidential promiscuity in order to argue in roughly the present way for the results below. But evidential promiscuity makes it clear why such results will hold, in principle, for all (i)–(iv)-style democratic societies and not just for such societies as happen to be broadly focused and dynamically situated.

of fact, theory, and practice in which we are embedded in our ongoing cognitive, practical, and affective lives. Given that web, any claim *a* may turn out to be linked evidentially to some apparently wholly unrelated claim *b* through its relation to some third claim *c*, for instance through some well-supported theory that shows that, given *c*, the truth of *a* supports the truth of *b.* (Thus, for example, an archaeological fact about ancient Mimbres pottery – which turns out to depict an exceptionally bright star – provides evidence for a claim in astronomy that is seemingly remote from Native American ceramics: the date of the supernova explosion that produced the Crab Nebula).[7]

Given the preceding points – and noting evidential promiscuity and the dynamic situation of the wholeheartedly democratic society that we are considering – we can see that in evaluating the policies that they may have to decide about, members of this society may be called on to assess the truth of almost any claim that may arise in their society (including, of course, the truth of claims that, given such-and-such a claimed fact, policy so-and-so is the one to follow, given the relevant interests, values, and goals). Of course, the recondite or specialized character of many of these claims means that society members will not be in a position to assess all such claims directly. But points (i)–(iii) and especially the cognitive and motivational condition (iv) imply that, in the usual situations, the society members will be committed to arranging, as best they can, for such assessments, by bringing to bear what they count as the best experts and the best methods of assessment.

The fact that such people satisfy the cognitive and motivational condition (iv) thus means that we can draw a general conclusion about the members of any wholeheartedly democratic society that satisfies conditions (i)–(iv): (I) Just because of their membership in this society and their satisfaction of those conditions, these people are *rationally committed* to the real possibility that they will have to assess, directly or indirectly (by means of experts, and so on), the truth of almost any claim that may arise in their society. And a more specific conclusion follows as a corollary, if we note that among the claims that may arise here are all the claims about the proper structure and organization of that society, including claims about its economic, cultural, social, familial, and gender-related practices and beliefs: (II) Just because of their membership in this society and their satisfaction of conditions (i)–(iv), these society members are rationally committed to the real possibility that any such claim about the structure of their society is one that they must scrutinize and assess, directly or indirectly, in the light of their interests, values, and goals. Moreover, it is plausible that individual ones of these interests, values, and goals can themselves be rationally assessed given others of the society members' interests, values, and goals and facts about how such things manifest themselves within the life of the society. So those members are committed also to the possibility that their own interests, values, and goals (and those of their society) must be rationally scrutinized and assessed, directly or indirectly, and then perhaps maintained – or perhaps modified or abandoned.

Conclusion (I) can seem quite radical – is every sincere, deeply motivated member of a democratically organized society really committed, even in principle, to the possibility of such a thoroughgoing assessment of almost any sort of claimed truth about the world? Conclusion (II) may seem even more radical. Is every such person also committed, specifically and merely by virtue of her wholehearted participation in her democratic form of government, to the possibility of a thoroughgoing assessment and revision of the basic structure of society and of its and her own interests, values, and goals? Do we really suppose that the mere fact of such wholehearted participation carries with it what may seem to be an active, conscious commitment to the sorts of thorough societal and self-scrutiny that we associate with the eighteenth-century Enlightenment or comparable traditions?

[7] See https://www.messier.seds.org/more/m001_sn.html.

III. Is the Argument for These Conclusions Compelling?

We are thus led to ask whether the above §II argument really is compelling. Does it actually support radical conclusions of the sorts just noted? I argue below that, when it is clearly formulated and qualified and then properly developed, this argument establishes significant points about the commitments of members of a wholehearted democracy. But it is easy to misunderstand the force of the argument, for example by misunderstanding exactly which conclusions it does in fact support. Those conclusions are potentially radical, but they do not force us to see each society member as having the sort of active commitments to rational scrutiny that the rhetorical questions at the end of the previous paragraph suggest.

In Howell 2010, I considered objections to the above argument that turn on various confusions about what it aims to show. We need not revisit all these objections, but it will be useful to recall several of them here.[8] Thus (a) this argument does not hold that the sorts of radical scrutiny, noted above, by members of a wholehearted democratic society are historically inevitable or even likely to occur. The claim is simply that, under conditions (i)–(iv), such members are in fact committed to the possibility of such scrutiny.[9] (b) The argument does not claim that such scrutiny will lead to a large number of actual revisions of the basic structures of the society or of its values and interests – society member may decide that these structures are already perfectly in order. (c) The argument is not meant to show that the presence, in a society, of the above sort of wholehearted democratic organization is the only sort of situation that may commit members of a society to the general possibility of rational scrutiny. Rational clothing designers or woodworkers, deeply intent on doing good work, will be committed to the possibility of rational scrutiny of all those many aspects of their lives that bear on their ability to create excellent coats or cabinets. And a wholehearted, rational adviser of a despot will be committed to the possible scrutiny of all the many aspects of his society that bear on maintaining the despot's successful rule. The present argument simply takes the presence in a society of the above sort of democratic organization to give a sufficient condition for members of that society to be committed to the possibility of rational scrutiny. It does not deny that there may be many other such sufficient conditions.

Nevertheless, and even after we have set aside such confusions, this argument is likely to excite resistance. Much of this resistance focuses, I suspect, on the picture of the members of the wholeheartedly democratic society and their commitments that is suggested by my rhetorical questions above. As noted, that picture is of society members as being mini-*philosophes* who are deeply and consciously alert to the possibility of the above sorts of scrutiny and are always ready to engage in it.[10] Any reasoning that leads to such a picture is likely to raise suspicions. One may worry that if the above argument does yield this picture, then it builds such high standards into what is required for a given society to be wholeheartedly democratic that it has little bearing on the sorts of democratic societies that exist in the actual world. Or, alternatively, one may suppose that if we think that we can draw such a picture out of this argument, we are simply misunderstanding the strength of the conclusions that this kind of argument is able to support.

The latter alternative seems to me correct. The questions at the end of §II really are rhetorical. The above §II argument, when it is carefully set out, does not lead to the radical picture just noted, although, as I will urge, it

[8] The objections below derive from Howell 2001, §III, with emendations and additions. See also the further objections considered there.

[9] As noted in Howell 2010, 89–90, the argument does not take the presence of wholehearted democracy in a (i)–(iv)-style society to cause or even to make likely the actual operation of rational scrutiny. Rather, the argument takes that presence to 'empower' the possibility of rational scrutiny, in the sense that that presence will indeed commit society members to the possibility of such scrutiny in a way that they will not otherwise be committed. Changing conditions in the society then may trigger off that commitment and lead to actual such scrutiny.

[10] Thus, it is not a picture merely of the kind of society that civics classes in democracies traditionally try to foster – a society in which well-educated, alert citizens attach high value to democratic structures and support them as best they can.

does point to an important kind of commitment that is in fact made by members of wholeheartedly democratic societies.

There are many grounds for taking our §II argument not to lead to the radical picture in question. The central reason is that this argument does not demonstrate that each society member in a wholeheartedly democratic society must actively and consciously take on a commitment to scrutinize rationally every (or almost every) claim that comes to her attention about her society or about the relevant interests, values, and goals.

To see this point, focus again on a given society member who wholeheartedly accepts the (i)–(iv)-style democratic form of that society. When the above argument is carefully developed, it rightly holds that, given this person's satisfaction of the cognitive and motivational condition (iv), she is committed, as a citizen, to making the rationally best decisions that she can, in the light of the interests, values, and goals that she and her society accept. The argument also rightly holds that, as a wholehearted, motivated supporter of the democratic structure of her society and of her citizen's role in that structure, this person consciously and actively accepts this last point. And the argument will correctly infer that, as such a supporter, this person consciously and actively accepts her responsibility to assess rationally the truth of any claim that is shown to her to bear on the correctness of the decisions that she must make.

Given evidential promiscuity and the dynamical situation of this person's broadly focused society, it is now indeed possible, as our argument in §II notes, that almost any claim may bear on that correctness. Of course, this is a general, abstract point that many society members are unlikely to consider explicitly. But suppose that this point is brought to the attention of our present, highly motivated, and rational supporter of democratic structures. It seems clear that, given sufficient time for reflection, she will consciously agree that, first, she is indeed committed to the possibility that almost any claim may bear on the correctness of decisions that she must make and that, second, she must rationally assess any such claim that is shown to her to bear on these decisions. Moreover, because this person is the sort of society member whom we have described, she will also consciously agree that this possibility may involve claims about society and the interests, values, and goals that she and her society have. The argument that we gave in §II thus can correctly infer these last results.

Consider now, however, the exact nature of the conscious commitment that the §II argument shows this society member to have taken on. The discussion in the previous paragraph shows that this commitment is simply a commitment to the *general possibility* that almost any claim about the world, her society, and the relevant interests, values, and goals may be a claim that she will have to assess rationally. This is *not* a commitment, with respect to *any individual claim* that may happen to occur to this society member, to assess *that* individual claim in particular. And even if some individual claim that this society member notes does indeed bear on one of her decisions, the commitment here – and the overall line of argument that I have just spelled out – does *not* commit her to assess that individual claim rationally unless that individual claim actually is shown to her to bear on that decision. Nor, and unless we assume that this society member is given specific reasons to be concerned about, say, the validity of her or of her society's way of life, does the above argument commit her actively and consciously to maintaining any sort of rational vigilance regarding the possibility that various claims about her society and interests will need her assessment. Our above §II argument thus does not really support the picture of society members as mini-*philosophes* committed to a constant readiness to assess the possibilities for radical changes in their way of life.

However, and even given this result, I believe that the §II argument can be further developed so as to show something distinctive and potentially radical about the way in which a (i)–(iv)-style wholehearted democracy commits those who accept it to the possibility of a rational scrutiny of their world and lives. Consider again rational clothing designers, woodworkers, and advisers of a des-

pot. Suppose that these people are situated analogously to the members of the democratic societies that we have been discussing and are wholeheartedly committed to doing the best work that they can. Then both evidential promiscuity and the presence of a dynamic, changing environment will hold with respect to these people as much as such factors hold with respect to the members of those democratic societies. Moreover, these people will satisfy the same sorts of cognitive and motivational conditions for fulfilling their roles as do the members of such a society. So, we can apply our §II kind of argument (when it is properly understood, in the way just noted) to these people. Doing so, we can conclude that, like the members of a wholeheartedly democratic society, these people are committed to the general possibility that almost any claim about their society, and about their relevant interests, values, and goals, may be a claim that they will have to assess rationally.

We can, in fact, take this conclusion a bit further, both in the case of these people and in the case of the members of our wholeheartedly democratic society. When we do so, we will see that, in the case of the above sort of democratic societies – and simply because of the nature of those societies and of their satisfaction of (i)–(iv)-like conditions – a situation exists that is, for them, open in a certain way to radical change. This result will vindicate the idea that the §II argument, when it is properly understood, does establish something potentially radical about the way in which a (i)–(iv)-style wholehearted democracy commits those who accept it to the possibility of a rational scrutiny of their world and lives. The result also will allow us to note that there is something distinctive about that commitment in comparison with the related kind of commitment that one can argue to belong to the wholehearted adviser of a despot.

We can argue for this result (and for the distinctiveness in question) by continuing our comparison of the member of the wholehearted democratic society with the clothing designer, the woodworker, and the adviser to the despot. In all these cases, and given that the individuals involved live in a dynamically changing environment and are committed to their work, our §II argument, when properly understood, will in fact let us establish two points: (a) these individuals (these workers, advisers, or democratic citizens) are all committed to the general possibility that almost any claim about their world and society (and so on) may be a claim that they will have to assess rationally; and (b) there are no specific such claims that (give merely the above kind of argument) these individuals are committed to assessing. Moreover, and as indicated above, the above kind of argument, as we have so far developed it, does not by itself show that (c) these individuals are all committed to any special kind of rational vigilance as regards the possibility that such claims may arise and may need assessing (for instance, the claim that wool or cherry wood is in short supply or that the subjects of the despot are meeting secretly).

It nevertheless is clear that, in a dynamically changing world of the sort that exists now (and that has existed for tens of thousands of years), such claims, or the possibility that they may arise, are a constant feature of life. Rational, motivated people need to take conscious account of the presence of such claims (and the possibility that others will arise) if they are to fulfill their roles and do their work well. To the extent that they are rational and wholeheartedly motivated, private workers and politically engaged people in every kind of society, democratic or despotic, thus *are*, rationally, committed to a special, conscious vigilance about the possibility that these sorts of claims will arise. This special vigilance may of course vary in degree, but it goes well beyond the mere intellectual recognition of the general possibility (if it is brought to their attention) that such claims may arise.

However, the roles of private workers such as clothing designers or woodworkers are, in general, fairly narrow, as are the issues that, at any given time, are likely actually to arise and affect those roles.[11] So, simply

[11] Or at least (and even in the case of global corporations, at least insofar as they do not play quasi-governmental roles) these issues have a fairly narrow scope in comparison with the issues that, as noted below, may require political decisions by democratic citizens or by the despot's adviser.

insofar as these individuals are rational and motivated to fulfill these roles, the commitment (to the above sort of special, conscious vigilance) that these individuals will be rationally required to make will itself be fairly narrow. But individuals who occupy political roles are, in general, in a different situation. Given the actual nature of the dynamic changes in their environments, their wholehearted, rational commitment to fulfilling those roles requires them to be specially and consciously vigilant about the wide range of factors that may affect the healthy functioning of their society as a whole. Such factors will, after all, impinge on the democratic decisions that they must make and on the actions that they must advise the despot to take. Hence members of a wholehearted democracy – and also wholehearted advisers of despots – will, in fact, have rational commitments to an actual, special, conscious vigilance (and, of course, to an actual rational scrutiny and reflection) that concerns the possibility that claims may arise whose truth affects their societies and their wholehearted decisions about those societies. And they also will have a rational commitment to assess such claims – and to make possibly radical decisions, based on those assessments, about their society.

This commitment to a special, conscious vigilance thus puts both society members and advisers to a despot into a position in which they must be alert to the possibility that all manner of claims may arise that require reassessment of their societies, interests, values, and goals. Of course, this result does not imply that these people must consciously have in mind the idea of radical change and must be ready to consider making such changes. After all, their actual situation, while dynamically fluid, may change in regular ways – ways which, within their current societal structure, they have developed satisfactory general strategies for handling. (Members of a democratically organized hunting-and-gathering band who face recurring famines may be in this situation, as may the adviser to the despot in a city-state that is constantly beset by marauding raiders).[12] But this result does imply that their commitment to a special, conscious vigilance puts them into a situation that commits them to being in a cognitive and motivational state in which they will be able to appreciate – and if necessary to act on – information that implies the need for radical change, should their society or lives alter in unexpected or unmanageable ways. And their being in this kind of receptive, appreciative state goes beyond their merely recognizing intellectually the general possibility that claims may arise that will lead them to assess further various details of their lives and values. They are not required to become mini-*philosophes*, given their wholehearted acceptance of their political roles. And their receptive state here need not involve any conscious, active grasp of the idea of radical change. But they are definitely required to exercise a kind of conscious vigilance on which the possible need for radical change can register, a conscious vigilance that will not simply ignore such needs and their assessment and management.

By means of the above argument to the present result – the result that members of a (i)–(iv)-style, wholeheartedly democratic society have a commitment to a special, rational vigilance and to the receptive, cognitive-motivational state that this vigilance brings with it – we do thus vindicate the idea noted above: the idea that our §II argument, when it is properly understood and developed, establishes something potentially radical about the way in which wholehearted democracy commits those who accept it to the possibility of a rational scrutiny of their world and lives. As can be seen, the above kind of argument will establish a similar conclusion in the case of a wholehearted adviser to the despot and in the case of similar political figures (such as a wholehearted despot himself). But, as I have stressed, this argument

[12] However, and given the actual transformations of past human societies and the widely disseminated views of various political thinkers, people living now will certainly be familiar with the general idea of radical change in a political system. It seems likely that such familiarity will, in general, make it easier for such people to appreciate, in the way noted below, the significance and force of information that implies the need for radical change.

aims only to show that the existence of wholehearted democracy in the (i)–(iv) style is a sufficient condition for the commitment (in the above way) to the possibility for radical change. The argument does not deny that there may well be other such sufficient conditions.

Moreover, there is something distinctive about the way in which this commitment manifests itself in the case of wholehearted democracy in comparison with the case of the adviser to the despot or of the despot himself. Given our above reasoning, the citizens of a (i)–(iv)-style wholehearted democracy are each committed to the above sort of rational vigilance and to being in the relevant receptive, cognitive-motivational state; and each of these citizens is thereby concerned with general features of their society and its members. Their concern is not directly or primarily focused on the relation of society and its members to any particular individual or feature of the world. But in the case of the despot's adviser or in the case of the despot himself, the focus is indeed first, and directly, on the relation of the society and its members to the continuing success of the despot. Moreover, our above reasoning requires only that, within this society, it is simply the despot himself and the wholehearted members of his government, such as the adviser, who will have and act on this focus.

The requirement of vigilance and receptivity to change that applies in the wholehearted democracy is thus spread far wider among society members than is the analogous requirement that applies in a wholeheartedly despotic society. The fulfillment of that requirement within a wholehearted democracy also is likely to be able, in general, to draw on the rational resources and assessments of many more people than is the fulfillment of that requirement within the despotic state. And the mechanisms for fulfilling that requirement also will be more stable within the wholehearted democracy, to the extent that the despot and his advisers are more likely to be subject to change, deterioration, and irremediable failures of reasoning than is the totality of citizens in a well-functioning, wholeheartedly democratic society. I will not pursue this line of thought further, but it shows how one might incorporate the arguments in this essay into a more general case for favoring the institution of wholehearted democracy in a wide range of circumstances.[13]

IV. Conclusions. What the Argument Shows

Our above §II argument, when it is understood properly and then is extended in the above way, thus does succeed in showing that, simply in virtue of the nature of their roles and of their satisfaction of (i)–(iv)-like conditions, members of wholeheartedly democratic societies are committed to a kind of vigilance and receptivity that will allow for (and so in this way will make them open to) radical change in their society and in their interests, values, and goals.

However, it is important not to exaggerate the strength of this conclusion. As we have noted, this argument does not show that any radical change will actually occur (or will even actually be considered by members of the society). And the vigilance and receptivity in question are factors that simply help to prepare the ground for society members to consider the possibility of various sorts of radical change. By themselves, these factors do not require such members even to think consciously of the possibility for such change, that change being described as such.

There also is an important conceptual reason for not exaggerating the strength of the conclusion just noted. The minimal sort of democracy that we have considered in this essay is a kind of procedurally characterized democracy. Wholehearted commitment to democracy, so characterized, amounts to a wholehearted commitment to the existence and maintenance of a situation in which, as noted in §II, the members of the society participate in decisions binding on the members of the group;

[13] Of course, nothing in the above remarks shows that in various special circumstances – e.g., a national emergency or a situation in which the citizenry cannot internalize democratic constraints – wholehearted (and reasonably benevolent) despotism may not be justified And, in particular circumstances, even successful wholehearted democracies may break down. But such issues fall outside the purview of the present discussion.

and these members have an equal voice, in the way noted, in reaching those decisions. Our argument shows that when this situation meets conditions (i)–(iv), these members are committed to making the best possible decisions that they can, given their (and their society's) interests, values, and goals. They are also then committed to the sort of rational vigilance and receptivity that we have considered above.

However, nothing in this reasoning requires society members to have any specific sorts of substantive interests, values, or goals. Society members may hold altruistic values and act nobly. But, while sincerely and wholeheartedly accepting the above democratic procedures, society members may also act out of interests and values that are very different from those by which many of us live. They may attach exceptional value to the views of a charismatic charlatan and make their decisions in the light of those views. Or again (and to note another familiar source of concern about arguments of the sort that I have developed in this essay) they may reason in ways that most of us would consider deviant. They may, for example, make crucial decisions by studying the flights of birds or through trial by ordeal.

Formally, our above argument (with its supplementation by vigilance and receptivity considerations) still applies even in these latter cases. Given that argument, a (i)–(iv)-style wholeheartedly democratic society of such a sort does exhibit a situation that is open to radical change in the way that I have developed above, simply in virtue of its nature. But the radical change here might be simply to spend more time than before in the adulation of the charlatan or to increase the severity of the ordeals. Given the procedural, value-free nature of our above characterization of democracy, together with the abstract, value-neutral structure of our above reasoning, what counts as radical here is simply anything that considerably alters the conditions of the society (or of its interests, values, or goals) when those conditions are viewed in light of the particular interests, values, and goals (and current factual beliefs) that belong to members of the wholeheartedly democratic society in question.[14] Just as there are no specific, substantive values built into our above account of wholehearted democracy, so too there are no specific, substantive values built into the idea of radical change that our above argument considers.

As I see, it, this fact is not a defect of this argument but simply a fact about what such a kind of argument can, by itself, achieve. By appealing to a specific set of interests, values, and goals (or to a specific conception of rationality), we can then import substantive content into the commitment that we are here discussing to the possibility of change. But the argument itself does not appeal to any such content.

In Howell 2010, I suggested that we human beings, as members of our biological species, share certain high-level substantive values, however much we may disagree about how best to implement these values given our specific factual beliefs, desires, acculturation, and so on. (Such high-level values might include human life, dignity, and autonomy; the sustenance of one's family; and the protection of one's goods.) I suggested, also, that we human beings, as members of our biological species, share certain high-level, inbuilt standards of rationality and forms of reasoning.[15]

These suggestions, even if they are generally correct, raise complex questions and need detailed investigation. They are compatible with the possibility of ultimate disagreement about other values and modes of reasoning that we accept or about the exact implementation of whatever

[14] Here 'considerable' carries no substantive value implications; and in mentioning the interests, values, and goals (whatever they are) of such society members, we commit ourselves to no specific such implications.

[15] See Howell 2010, 83–84 on shared rationality and 91–92, 93–94 on shared values. Note Crain 2012's 'logical nativism'. I take the shared rationality, here, to be of the straightforward, value-neutral sort that is realized, worldwide, in ordinary deductive and inductive forms of reasoning, both theoretical and practical. The premises that such reasoning involves will sometimes include value and factual claims – among them deeply held ideological views – that are peculiar to a given group of reasoners. But the presence of such claims and views will not affect the logical validity or the nature of these forms of reasoning themselves, however well individual human beings may actually reason using these forms. And those claims and views will themselves be open to the sorts of rational and pragmatic evaluation and revision that I indicate below. (Thanks to Lyubov Bugaeva for a question that prompted these remarks.)

values and forms of reasoning turn out to be inbuilt. Moreover, the mere fact that certain values and forms of reasoning are inbuilt does not mean that these values and forms of reasoning must be treated as ultimate and not themselves open to revision. But if these suggestions are correct, then we can strengthen the above reasoning (with its vigilance and receptivity supplement). We can do so in a way that is broadly pragmatic.

Specifically, and accepting these suggestions, we can focus on (i)–(iv)-style, wholeheartedly democratic societies that, like all human communities, will then in fact share high-level substantive values and substantive, high-level standards of rationality. Taking these values and these standards as a starting point, we can argue that such societies, given their nature, are committed (in the vigilance-and-receptivity way that we have noted) to openness to radical change, where that change is evaluated in terms of such values and standards. This commitment will point to an openness to radical improvements (in substantive ways, given these values) in the society. And it will point to an openness to the loss of traditional ways of life (as I noted in 2010). As the argument proceeds, we will have to take into account the actual circumstances and the specific interests and goals of the societies and of their members. We also will need to note how all these things interact in practice so as to produce outcomes in which the societies can find satisfaction.[16] (Moreover, as we proceed, we may need to reconsider or refine various of the inbuilt values and standards of rationality with which we began.)

There is no guarantee that, in so proceeding, we will reach a unique set of proposals for change that everyone will accept. Nor is there any guarantee that such change will actually be implemented or even that the reasoning towards it will begin. We have only to look around us to see democratic forms of government undermined and ancient cruelties reinstated. But we also see moral and societal advances in how, for example, many societies consider it proper to conduct war, elicit testimony at trials, and organize and respect gender relations, even given how fraught and sometimes fragile these advances are. Such advances show that the possibilities for positive change are not chimerical. The present line of thought notes one further way in which our above argument (developed so as to reason to vigilance and receptivity and then to appeal to shared values and rational standards) may lead to significant results. I will not try to spell out these matters further. But they provide one reason why I believe that this argument deserves further consideration and elaboration.

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[16] At the level of explicit propositional discourse, the issues here may turn out to be too complex for us human beings fully and explicitly to reason through. We may have no alternative but to consider specific value choices as they operate in the actual world (or perhaps in computer simulations) and then to observe how these choices fare in yielding satisfactory outcomes. We may thus have to employ a kind of Deweyan experimentalism at this point.

COMMON GOODS OR COMMON INTERESTS: TWO VISIONS OF DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY[1]

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ABSTRACT: The purpose of this paper is to compare different conceptions of democracy in order to find an answer to the question of how the integrating force is defined in each of them. For liberal democracy, based on the description of the individual as an autonomous and independent entity, the question of the forces that allow the individual to harmonize his/her actions is crucial. One candidate for such a force is the common good, which, however, is conceptualized differently in liberal and communitarian conceptions of democracy. I contrast these concepts with the pragmatic notions of democracy developed by John Ryder, in which a democratic society is integrated by common interests.

Keywords: democracy, pragmatism, common good, common interest

Liberal democracy, the aftermath of modernity, has always strived to define the rules that can coordinate and harmonize the actions of citizens. This struggle arises in the very core of liberal philosophy with its emphasis on the freedom and autonomy of the individual. Liberalism put forward the concept of the autonomous and independent individual whose actions are guided by rational motives. This individual rationality, in turn, should translate into collective rationality, which must lead to the realization of compromise in the public sphere. I will not delve into the complicated interrelations among the varieties of liberalism, especially since there is extensive literature on this subject, but it is noteworthy that despite all the differences, the basic concept of human nature remains similar in them. These strands also reveal the basic hiatus, a breach in the transition from individual to collective rationality. In order to be able to act together, individuals must attune their views and coordinate individual actions. Such reconciliation, however, presupposes a limitation of the freedom and autonomy of the individual and, therefore, stands in opposition to the basic values of liberalism. This contradiction is described by Pierre Manent as the relationship between modern man and law which should be the cornerstone of political universality and common actions of citizens (Manent 1998, 204).

Obviously, this issue can be overcome, and there seem to be two ways to unravel the problem of how it is possible for free and autonomous individuals to work together. The first way is based on the assumption that even if the actions of individuals are motivated by selfish interests, there are mechanisms that facilitate harmony regardless of the will of particular individuals. A classic example of such reasoning is the emphasis on the role of the free market in Adam Smith's concept. The "invisible hand of the market" is supposed to work in this way. But obviously, for the actions of individuals to be harmonized, a higher instance, surpassing individual actions, is needed. For Smith this would be the economic universe.

The appeal of economics, however, is not convincing to the proponents of the second group of solutions, who accentuate the universal mechanisms of rationality which determine the actions of individuals in one way or another. In the background, obviously, stands Immanuel Kant with his concept of equality of rational individuals in the public sphere. This concept has appeared in numerous variations up to the present. Despite their many differences, the most influential theories of liberal policies developed by Jürgen Habermas and John Rawls share the assumption of the possibility and even the necessity of rational politics.

Nevertheless, it is worth noting right away that they are doubly exclusive. On the one hand, in such defined public sphere there are no persons who, for various reasons, are considered irrational. It is now known that European liberalism grew up on a colonial system, where the indigenous people were treated as people not fully aware of their goals, who must be directed by more developed individuals, i.e., European colonists.

On the other hand, the whole realm of emotions, interests or desires disappears from politics. Consequently, many of the demands made by people were treated as expressions of immature emotions. This tendency was

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enhanced by treating the crowd as completely irrational and dangerous to the rationality that democracy requires. The masses, therefore, are always dangerous, because they are not guided by reason, but only by their own interests, which rationality is supposed to surpass.

In this sense, this concept is a mirror image of the one I mentioned earlier. In the first of them we are dealing with a game of selfish interests, and in the second with rationality as mechanisms enabling the harmonization of the actions of the individual. Despite these differences, there are clear similarities here. In both cases, we are dealing with separate individuals aware of their goals, which they pursue with full consistency. In each of these concepts the principles of the economics of capitalism with its emphasis on competition, and the principles of abstract rationality, are the external framework that make it possible to build a society.

Building a community on individual selfishness or individual rationality could never fully succeed. As we know, at the same time as the emergence of liberalism and liberal democracy, there appeared an opposing trend of thought centered on the community. These two tendencies would determine the main axes of the political dispute throughout the period of modernity. On the one hand, the liberal side assumes the principle of a free and autonomous individual. Proponents of community, on the other hand, speak of man as an effect of cultural traditions. In the Enlightenment vision of society, universal values regulate the life of all societies, which is criticized by anti-Enlightenment thinkers who point to the role of community values in regulating social life. Therefore, they also contradict another dogma of liberalism, that is, the division into private and public spheres. Such a division is impossible if we are the result of tradition and our actions are determined by its norms. It is not the system of law that is the most important, but the rules enshrined in the values of the community. Liberal democracy presupposes conflict and constant tension between particular social groups, while the life of the community should proceed harmoniously according to a unified system of values. This idyllic vision of a communal society is tempting in every way, but reading the works of communitarians, we never know to what extent it is a presentation of a certain utopia, or to what extent it is a real description of the functioning of a society that has degenerated in modernity, but can still get back on the right path.

The leading representative of communitarianism, Charles Taylor, in his search of answers to these questions, turned, as is well known, to Hegel, finding in the German philosopher the first formulation of the dilemmas of modernity: "[...] Hegel's dilemma for modern democracy, put at its simplest, is this: the modern ideology of equality and of total participation leads to a homogenization of society. This shakes men loose from their traditional communities, but cannot replace them as a focus of identity. Or rather, it can only replace them as such a focus under the impetus of militant nationalism or some totalitarian ideology which would depreciate or even crush diversity and individuality. It would be a focus for some and would reduce the others to mute alienation" (Taylor 1979, 116). This dilemma, according to the Canadian philosopher, was also acknowledged by other thinkers of the period with the most characteristic example of Alexis de Tocqueville. However, as Taylor states: "But whether we take it in Hegel's reading or in de Tocqueville's, one of the great needs of the modern democratic polity is to recover a sense of significant differentiation, so that its partial communities, be they geographical, or cultural, or occupational, can become again important centers of concern and activity for their members in a way which connects them to the whole" (Taylor 1979, 118). The renewal of the community (or communities) and making them centers of identification is therefore a necessary condition for the creation of a democratic society. It cannot be a collection of individuals focused on their goals and needs, and connected only by formal relationships, primarily legal ones, or intimate relationships. There must be communities that give meaning to the lives of individuals and form the basis of their identity. Taylor's later works, including above all his *magnum opus, Sources of the Self,* are an attempt to

answer the question of how it is possible in the world of modernity to have a community which, while forming a bedrock of the individual's identity, would not at the same time jeopardize his individuality.

This question becomes even more urgent because the obvious form of community in modernity is the national community. As Terry Eagleton argues, the invention of the modern nation has solved the problem of binding the special, the individual with universality,

> There is a political correlative of the unity of individual and universal, known as the nation-state […] The nation is amorphous stuff, which needs to be shaped by the state into unity; its unruly elements will thus be reconciled under a single sovereignty. And since this sovereignty is an emanation of Reason itself, the local is thus raised to the universal. But since this process is happening all over the world, given that few movements are more international than nationalism, the nation is elevated to global status in this sense too (Eagleton 2000, 58).

The British philosopher rightly emphasizes that in the term nation-state the second part prevails over the first, which implies that the very idea of such a state allows a possibility of anti-democratic policies. It stems both from what Eagleton mentions and from the understanding of the community as a certain unity that actually excludes the disputes and conflicts that are inherent in democracy. The Israeli historian Zeev Strenhell draws attention to this aspect of the anti-Enlightenment community from which the modern nation-state emerged. "In Herder and among the Herderians, not only in Germany but also in France and Italy, there emerged cultural nationalism and its product, political nationalism, which, as one advanced into twentieth century, became more and more radical and more and more violent. Cultural nationalism very soon gave birth to the idea of nation state and its counterpart, the supremacy of the state and the idea that democracy is the enemy of the people" (Sternhell 2009, 101).

To sum up the prior reflections, it can be said that we are dealing with a dichotomous division into two theoretical, liberal and community approaches. Each of them presupposes a certain version of the harmonization of social activities through more or less *explicitly* expressed mechanisms which transcend the individual. These mechanisms also define certain areas of society about which, as it is agreed, are excluded from any conflictual behavior. They are referred to as the "common good". As B. J. Diggs notes, "[…] philosophers held quite particular views of what the common good consists in, and of what government should do to promote it, they nevertheless agreed that it is the end of government, that it is a good of all the citizens, and that no government should become the perverted servant of special interests, whether these special interests be conceived on the pattern of Aristotle's 'interest of the rulers,' or Locke's 'private good,' or Hume's and Madison's 'interested factions', or Rousseau's 'particular wills.' There is this much of a common-core meaning associated with the various traditional expressions and this much justification in tradition for two contemporaries having interpreted the statement 'government should promote the common good' as a way of saying 'government should be impartial'" (Diggs 1973, 283–284). The concept of the common good seems obvious in the model of liberal democracy, but it is nevertheless far from being clear.

Two different meanings of the concept of the common good can be distinguished. The first of these concerns solutions to social problems that are satisfying for all groups existing in a given society. They can be related either to goods that are shared and necessary for the whole community, an obvious example discussed recently are actions aimed at limiting climate catastrophe. In the second sense, it is about accepting certain formal rules governing political life, for example, the recognition of the results of elections or the system of legal and administrative institutions. The latter meaning also includes the ethical obligation to follow democratic rules and engage in political life, which is often referred to as republicanism.

It is noteworthy, however, that the communitarian tradition draws attention to another aspect of the common good, that is, the value of the community. On the one hand, it is right to draw attention to the role of the community and to oppose the formalistic and procedural

approach presented by significant strands of liberalism. Communitarianism accentuates areas that, although they do not have formalized rules, nevertheless have norms functioning on the principle of commonly accepted *knowledge (tacit knowledge),* which often play a key role in political decision- making. On the other hand, the values of the community, and especially of the national community, can lead to a significant reduction in the diversity of views or opinions that is necessary for the proper functioning of the democratic system. Therefore, the question of how much community democracy needs can turn into a question of how communities lead to the death of the democratic system.

I think that the ideas developed in American pragmatism will be helpful in answering these questions. Here I would like to refer to John Ryder's book *The Things in Heaven and Earth. An Essay in Pragmatic Naturalism* (Ryder 2013), in which a coherent system of pragmatic philosophy is outlined, inspired on the one hand, by the naturalism of Justus Buchler, and on the other by the social concepts of John Dewey. Already in the introductory parts of the monograph outlining the entire system we find an important statement: "Pragmatic naturalism enables us to avoid ideology" (Ryder 2009, 51). This thesis is developed in the next paragraph and illustrated by examples from the field of international relations:

> Pragmatic naturalism, by virtue of its experimentalism, is a corrective to ideology, and its intellectual tradition is sufficiently sophisticated and broad in application as to provide a rich source from which we can draw. In 1916, in *Democracy and Education,* Dewey gave an initial definition of 'democracy' that included the necessity of cultivating common interests with members of one's own community and with those across borders. This characteristic of a democratic society provides tools to reconceive international relations and foreign policy. If a democratic nation should be expected to pursue and cultivate interests with those abroad, then its foreign policy cannot be based solely, as foreign policy traditionally has been, on 'national interest', at least not as long as national interest is determined without a serious consideration of the interests of other nations (Ryder 2013, 51–52).

In the quoted passage, Ryder draws attention to two extremely important issues. First, the anti-ideological nature of the pragmatic approach to politics. This approach dictates that we should not give in to abstract constructions, but each time turn to specific social problems and their solutions. In other words, certain societies in a specific historical and cultural context must find solutions that are tailored to these contexts. In the following parts of the book, the author defines the specificity of the approach of pragmatic naturalism to social problems. "A pragmatist will treat the idea as a working hypothesis, to be accepted, revised, or abandoned according to the degree to which the results meet the desired ends" (Ryder 2013, 212). This approach seems particularly important now, when we witness a wave of social movements referred to by a vague but impressionistic term "populism". Ideological thinking leads us to consider populism in terms of deviation and a threat to liberal democracy. However, if we stick to an approach in which ideas are treated as working hypotheses, then we should consider what social problems underpin the emergence and popularity of populism. Only then will it be possible to assess to what extent populism is a threat to democracy and to what extent it is the necessary correction.

Secondly, he states, following John Dewey, that in a democratic society, the members of a given community should be guided not only by the interests of their community, but also by the interests of other communities. Ryder states explicitly in the latter parts of the book:

> The principle we have articulated as central to a healthy, democratic society, however, holds that we are to look for, and when necessary create, common interests among groups and communities within a society. The democratic response to the existence of diverse national, ethnic, racial, and religious groups is not the separation, absorption, or even tolerance. The democratic response is to interact with one another in the pursuit of shared, common interests (Ryder 2013, 194).

The two theses are the axes of Ryder's concept of democracy, which of course is strongly related to the John Dewey's concept, but he nevertheless organizes and develops his ideas in the context of contemporary discussions of democratic principles.

In the chapters devoted to social philosophy, the author paints a more detailed picture of a democratic

society, at the core of which are common interests. He emphasizes that his concept is a part of the current of thinking about democracy, which is described as romantic. Its specificity is defined as follows:

> It is the sense of democracy in which democracy is to be understood as a way of life, and not simply as a form of government or a mechanism for making political choices. In this sense, democracy, as Dewey might have said, reaches deep into a society and a culture. Its purposes and ideals structure, so to speak, the way people live, the way they interact with one another, their aspirations, and their activities. This is a much richer sense of democracy than the more common political one, but it is therefore also more complex and difficult to realize (Ryder 2013, 182).

In this perspective, politics is not merely autonomous and external to people's everyday life, but even shapes and organizes it. The implication of this approach is the conviction that there is no point in looking for some abstract essence of democracy, one final criterion, to distinguish a democratic society from one that is not. Democracy, in fact, is a living process that permeates and manifests itself in all areas of life. In this sense, democracy is an exercise in both intelligence and imagination:

> […] democracy is a way of living predicated on intelligence in experience and judgment. Democracy, in other words, rests not on blind custom, nor on dogma, nor on rigid ideology, nor on clichés and slogans, but on the exercise of our collective capacity to study ourselves and our world, to perceive its problems, and to apply in our lives a mode of interaction that opens to the possibility of new and creative solutions. It is an exercise in intelligence, and a necessary feature of democracy (Ryder 2013, 185).

In his analysis and interpretation of John Dewey's concept of democracy, Ryder points out that, thanks to its openness to the future, democracy is an inexhaustible source of development and enrichment of experience. Dewey expressed it by defining democracy as a context "in which experience grows in 'ordered richness'." Explaining this essential, though not very clear phrase, Ryder points out that "The idea is that the most fruitful, the most 'rich', and in the end the most satisfying experience is that which most enriches an individual's possibilities. Since we are all basically social in our lived context, our possibilities, in a whole range of aspects of our lives, are themselves engendered in social contexts and through social relations […] When we project our experience […] when we order it so that it opens to future enriching possibilities, we are living the most human of lives" (Ryder 2013, 185–186). The enrichment of experience is therefore another feature of democracy in pragmatic terms. Democracy is a special political system in this perspective, because it makes it possible to harmonize individual experience with the social, if only by allowing free communication among individuals, but also among different social groups. Education is therefore of particular importance, as it creates the basis for the development of such a personality, which could be called a democratic personality. Distinguishing these features allows Ryder to formulate an elaborate definition of democracy:

> [T]he most significant component of that definition is […] the pursuit of common interests with those outside one's immediate community. In the sense meant here, 'community' could be defined in terms of a wide range of criteria. It could be understood as a class, or race, or gender, or ethnicity, or neighborhood, or nationality, or any one of a number of other traits. A democratic individual in this sense is someone who is inclined to look beyond his community to seek common ground, common interests, with members of other communities; a democratic society is one that is characterized by public policies and social habits that promote the pursuit of shared interests within and across its many internal boundaries and beyond its national borders (Ryder 2013, 188).

In this definition of democracy, it is important to link democracy to community. However, unlike anti-enlightenment ideologues, and also to a large extent contemporary communitarians, it does not stipulate that the values of the community are the foundation that organizes social and political life, an absolute common good that cannot be rejected. Communities can differ, they can overlap and of course many of them can exist within one society.

Another essential feature of this definition is the figure of the democratic individual. Democracy, contrary to the position of some liberals, cannot be based only on formal ties, especially legal ones. Democracy can only

exist because specific people are involved in maintaining it and, if necessary, defending it. These people must have a specific socio-psychological profile, that is, above all, the ability to "take the role of the other", to use the concept introduced by Dewey's friend and collaborator George Herbert Mead. Obviously, we have here a certain feedback loop, which is formulated in the following definition of the characteristics of a democratic society:

> […] Dewey argues that a healthy community is one that fosters a proliferation of interests held in common, and that promotes ever-expanding and freer communication and interaction among groups and communities. A society characterized by those two traits is the ideal toward which we should strive (Ryder 2013, 191).

In such an ideal democratic society, undisturbed communication will foster attitudes of understanding the interests of other groups and a willingness to cooperate with them. Consequently, individuals formed in this way will be inclined to think in terms of cooperation and attuning the interests of their group with other groups. An important role in achieving such an ideal is played by education, to which Ryder devotes much space in his book. If we talk about education, we mean, of course, education, which can "[…] instill in young people appreciation for open-ended inquiry, for a hypothetical approach to problems, for a willingness, even an eagerness, to revise ideas in and through experience, and for the importance of the collective pursuit of solutions to shared problems" (Ryder 2013, 221). Such education is different from what often prevails in modern schools of various stages, where the emphasis is often placed on preparation for the profession or the ability to function in a market-oriented society. It is interesting that another confirmation of the importance of education for democracy was presented by a political psychologist Shawn Rosenberg, who recently put forward the thesis that the rise of populist sentiment is the result of the success of liberal democracy. It has over-developed procedures so that they have become unreadable for most citizens. As a consequence, the simple recipes of populists have become attractive because they make it easier for people to organize social reality. Rosenberg is quite pessimistic about the future of democracy, because it is almost impossible to reverse the complexity of modern democracy. The only way to combat the simplistic view of reality that has become the driving force of populism is to develop civic education (Rosenberg 2020).

Talking about populism, we return to the main motif of our considerations, i.e., the mechanisms that make a naturally pluralistic democratic society work together, so that the actions of free and autonomous individuals are harmonized. I would like to remind you that in explaining this phenomenon, one can refer to the concept of the common good, which may include certain areas of social life excluded from disputes, such as health care or defense, but also intangible goods such as the procedures of democratic elections. For communitarians, on the other hand, the common good will be predominantly the values of the community, which warrant the unity of society. If we confront these concepts with the idea of democracy inspired by pragmatic naturalism, it is clear that it distances itself from both trends. As Ryder argues:

> Insofar as these claims are reasonable and defensible, they offer […] an alternative, and a distinctly pragmatist alternative, to the prevalent liberal and communitarian approaches to social and political theory […] They avoid the inappropriately abstract character of the liberal understanding of the individual, and they avoid the undesirable overemphasis on the importance of own's own community. In their place the principle we have developed points to a kind of cosmopolitanism in which the richness and variety of individuals and communities flourishes only insofar as the interact with one another toward common ends (Ryder 2013, 200).

It should be added to that conclusion that, given the anti-ideological nature of democracy inspired by pragmatic naturalism, we must remember that the common goods are not defined abstractly either. They appear as a result of the play of common interests and, in their next reconfiguration, they can disappear, and in their stead new ones can appear.

In this sense, the pragmatic project of democracy will also be corrective to the antagonistic concepts of democratic society developed today in the circle of neo-Marxism. The leading representative of this trend is

Chantal Mouffe, who in her book *The Democratic Paradox* presented the concept of agonistic democracy, the core of which is the transformation of antagonism into agonism and the enemy into an adversary:

> Introducing the category of the 'adversary' requires complexifying the notion of antagonism and distinguishing two different forms in which it can emerge, *antagonism* properly speaking and *agonism*. *Antagonism* is struggle between enemies. while *agonism* is struggle between adversaries. We can therefore reformulate our problem by saying that envisaged from the perspective of 'agonistic pluralism' the aim of democratic politics is to transform *antagonism* into *agonism*. This requires providing channels through which collective passions will be given ways to express themselves over issues which, while allowing enough possibility for identification, will not construct the opponent as an enemy but as an adversary. An important difference from the model of 'deliberative democracy' is that for 'agonistic pluralism,' the prime task of democratic policy is not to eliminate passions from the sphere of the public, in order to render a rational consensus possible, but to mobilize those passions towards democratic designs (Mouffe 2000, 102–103)

In a democracy, therefore, there is no consensus of any kind, the only thing that can be achieved is respect for the formal democratic rules regarding elections and the seizure of power. Antagonism is indelible because in society there is always a clash of collective identities that are not rational. The obvious question that can be posed to this concept is whether such acceptance of the formal conditions of the democratic process is sufficient to recognize enemies as adversaries and to transform antagonism into agonism. I think a good answer to this problem is to realize that even in conditions of political conflict that cannot be reduced to rational solutions, there may be certain points of contact between warring groups that allow the conflict to be maintained within a democratic framework. Such a point of contact could be the common interest in maintaining the existence of a given society, or the belief that in the set of different interests of a given group, only a small part of them is conflictual and the majority is nevertheless common with other groups. I think that in this case too it is necessary to refer to the methodological principle that democracy in pragmatic terms is definitely anti-ideological and anti-dogmatic. There are many different ways in which the interests of groups in a given society are arranged, and some of them may conflict. According to education, it is necessary to prepare citizens so that they are able to see the decisive importance of what is common in the search for a solution to social problems. In a society composed of so prepared citizens, the commonality of interests of various social groups will mitigate the antagonistic potential, and prevent it from a transformation into an all-out conflict that could undermine the foundations of the democratic system.

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ON EDUCATION: JOHN RYDER'S RELENTLESS MIRROR

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ABSTRACT: This chapter focuses in the latest development of John Ryder's work, in which he offers himself as a philosopher of education. Ryder is seen as a political author, i.e., a thinker who moves mainly in the sphere of active judgment, in Buchlerian terms. His thinking is rooted in relational ontology. Therefore, in the initial parts of this paper the ontology is presented with the help of the relational concepts of Dewey and Buchler, who have influenced Ryder significantly. The final part deals with the Ryder's forthcoming monograph *Philosophy of Education: Thinking and Learning Through History and Practice*. It emphasizes the use of important figures in the philosophy of education (Plato, Rousseau, Dewey, Freire), who serve as a field of tension that supports the relational approach. The concluding segment of the text is devoted mainly to equality, which in Ryder's monograph is conceived as a relational matter of autonomy and community.

Keywords: active judgment, autonomy, community, inequality, philosophy of education, relational ontology

I consider John Ryder's last, not yet published monograph[1] to be the culmination of his work. A lifelong effort to present a comprehensive view of a relational ontology seems to be completed by the most recent contribution. One will find all the essential topics for Ryder there – pragmatic naturalism, relational ontology (conf. Ryder 2013), three basic constituents of human experience, i.e., the cognitive, aesthetic, and political (Ryder 2013, 197–206) (or in other texts, assertive, exhibitive, active, conf. e.g., Ryder 2014)), the influence of Justus Buchler and John Dewey, and the emphasis on sharing interests as the primary way how to reconcile different metaphysical attitudes (Ryder 2007; 2009).

Ryder is the heir to Buchler's and Dewey's positions in all their tension between traditional and alternative concepts. His knowledge comes from a good understanding of philosophical origins, e.g., Aristotle's conception of practical reason, but he constantly tries to keep in forefront the relational conception of the world. Thus, his thinking combines ancient concepts in their heart, such as realization (*Energeia* or *Entelecheia*) and potency (*Dynamis*). However, it dramatically emphasizes that everything around us results from the interrelatedness of forces. Therefore, all objects and their footings come from constantly evolving relations that create supposedly stable platforms undergoing constant major or minor changes. If we correctly understand the meaning of this relationality of the world, we should not be surprised that the main category of Ryder's work is the political sphere in the broadest sense. Relations and understanding and/or realization of their potency determine the level at which changes take place. In the case of human affairs, this level is political at its core.

Relational ontology

Dewey[2] and Buchler thought that metaphysics was not a worn-out idea of first philosophy but a fallible human attempt to frame "the most fundamental and general concepts of a given subject-matter" (cf. especially Buchler 1990, 207). They believed that such a complex reflection, in which human ideas are orchestrated, is a primary means of helping people to meet their needs and pursue their interests without reducing the fullness and richness of the world they live in and interact with.

Both believe that interactions with their surroundings structure the human experiences, and through these interactions humans act, thus making their lives significant. Meanings are tools helping to model interactions so that organisms (humans as one of many species) follow their needs and interests. Meanings are also a criterion of whether specific ways of life are worth repeating or changing. As a tool/criterion, meanings guide, elaborate, and appraise styles of structuring and its effects. Although language is crucial for determining and communicating the needs and interests with fellows, sharing starts long before people refine them using language. They arise from the interactions and have their roots in organisms' activity

[1] Manuscript that will be published as *Philosophy of Education: Thinking and Learning through History and Practice* by Rowman & Littlefield in 2022. All page references are to the manuscript pages.

[2] When referring to Dewey's *Collected Works,* I use the generally known system of reference where LW, MW, EW mean late, middle, early period; the digit determines the volume and the following numbers refer to the page range of a quotation or paraphrase.

– in grasping, throwing, eating, in gestures, bodily expressions, manners of movements, etc. Many interactions are therefore performed subconsciously, but they still carry their meanings.

This emphasis on the continuity of unconscious, subconscious and conscious parts of transactions enables Dewey and Buchler to avoid both a scientism that manifests itself in reductionism as well as an all-embracing mysticism. Experiences are a continuous ongoing mutual adaptation, change, and alteration without losing order. Although Dewey and Buchler are connoisseurs of Aristotle's work and were also significantly inspired by it (cf. e.g., Buchler's categories of assertive, active, exhibitive judgment), they defied the main Aristotelian assumption that the world is composed of items with immutable essences and that all changes take place only at the level of accidents, or that they are the realization of some set of possibilities. For Aristotle, immutable essences determine changes. For Dewey and Buchler, changes determine what we can hold as temporarily stable, desirable, or as what we can rely on during our judgments (for the significance of judgments see below). This shift radically departs from our Western metaphysical tradition because in taking this view, both Americans put aside the ideas of immutable, well-described, and well-defined items and relations among them. They see interactions (perhaps better to say transactions) as primal and "items" and "relations among them" as second-order, temporary constructs of organisms' adapting to a situation (Dewey) or as consequences of complex' intersections (Buchler).

Because both have renounced the classical equipment of Western thought and yet are forced to speak and write in a way that people shaped by this tradition understand, they have unique challenges in expressing their metaphysics. It was especially tough when they tried to transform Darwinian relational epistemology into full-fledged metaphysics. How to express the whole of everything that exists in a constant change and alteration, which nevertheless has its order or orders, so that it does not lack clarity and hierarchy of meanings? They either had to give up the ambition to articulate relational metaphysics and, like other heretics, stay with onto-epistemological revisions – such as Kurt Lewin (1951) with his field theory or Herbert Blumer (1969) with his interactionism – or to accept the fact that their metaphysics may be confusing. They chose the second option, and thus they accepted the fact that their metaphysics may be unstable in its key concepts. For Dewey, the concept was the situation, for Buchler, it was the concept of *natura naturans* or ordinality.

Dewey could never satisfactorily explain what he meant by the situation. Where one situation ends and the other begins, why there should not be just one hard-to-distinguish, all-encompassing situation, i.e., some version of Hegelian Absolute Spirit (remember Russell's critique). For Buchler, natural complex (see below) had become a central concept. To give a general idea of the interconnections and development of all complexes, of their always open possibility for rearrangement and re-genesis, Buchler had to distinguish the concept of Nature into two aspects. He expressed the aspects using Spinoza's terms *natura naturata* and *natura naturans*. The first sought to capture the orders of complexes that prevail here and now, which determine our current situation in all their possible actualizations. The latter aspect sought to capture what transcends here and now orders, what enables them to be determined, and anticipate entirely new future orders. Finally, Buchler called it "ordinality" (Buchler 1990, 276), which "permeates them all […] by which new orders are discriminable and explorable" (ibid., 100). However, Buchler's attempt ran into a predetermined mindset of readers. Western languages form us from within. They are based on nominals and therefore they are inherently deictic, atomistic, and linear. Once we try to express any such identity, it is not dynamic. Once we make it dynamic, it will fragment itself into a manifold of entities that allow dynamics to emerge among them; however, this move dissolves the whole. Thus, it is difficult for some to understand the identity of a whole, which is also dynamic and not predetermined by its already given possibilities. Perhaps these were the difficulties that led Heidegger to assert that the being encompassing all existing entities –

beings – is an "Abyss" (*Abgrund*), permeated by "nothingness", from which existing entities arise in the "event of appropriation" (*Ereignis*).

However, Dewey's alleged vagueness and Buchler's alleged inconsistency are not a mere sleight of hand but a pragmatic treatment of this astounding limitation of Western thinking. It is a clever move to radically depart from the Aristotelian (or generally Greek) frame of mind without losing readers. Moreover, because of this vague or inconsistent metaphysics, we understand that even though sciences are the most potent cognitive approach to the world, they are not exclusive for guiding our lives. Such understanding helps us to see that we cannot take this or that perspective of special sciences as a general interpretation of the world. Although we can feel, for example, the same urge for broad vision in Lewin's field theory (Lewin 1951), his effort is still the translation of ideas of quantum physics into the psychological or pedagogical domains.[3] Dewey's or Buchler's approach provides us with a feeling of the whole united in its richness, differences, and tensions.

Scope of Dewey's and Buchler's Natural Relationism

In his thoughtful essay "The Being of Nature", Thomas Alexander (2013, 103–131) combines Dewey's and Buchler's relational naturalism to show how both completed each other, and he thus creates a robust relational metaphysics and ontology. I owe much to Alexander's essay. Nonetheless, I am picking just four of its features – situation, organism-environment interactions (Dewey), natural complexes, and judgment (Buchler) – to sketch the scene for John Ryder's application of a relational ontology to education.

Dewey defined the concept of a situation as an existential quantum*.* The quantum "whole" of the situation is primary. Only in the next step do we develop the complexity into an abstraction that differentiates the subject of action, the objects of the situation, and relations among them. The subject, the objects and relations are the cognitive tools that we construct based on our needs and the inherent qualities of the whole situation. We can grasp it thanks to the insight or intuition that handles the *quality* permeating it and determining its character.[4] The uncertainty, which arose once the tension appears, was not the tension in the subject. Tension permeates the entire situation but manifests itself in the individual who reacted to the complex difficulty of the situation: "The habit of disposing of the doubtful as if it belonged only to us rather than to the existential situation in which we are caught and implicated is an inheritance from subjectivistic psychology" (Dewey LW 12: 110). Experience is a dynamic structure formed within the situation and by organism-environment interactivities. Their energies collide, entangle and transform one another. This structure permeates both the individual and the environment. These interactivities determine the limits and quality of a situation, the possibility of a problem, and the conditions of its solution (Dewey LW 14: 185).

For Buchler, to be is to be related: "Whatever is […] is in some relation" (Buchler 1990, 24). To exist means for him to be at the intersection of the natural complexes' relations. Being related also means being a part of nature. Even God, if it is anything, then it is, for Buchler, one of the complexes related to others (ibid., 21–22). Important for relational metaphysics is the idea of orders of complexes that permeate each other and into which no entity enters as an already unfolded atom. For example, humans are biological, social, spiritual complexes determined by their relations with other beings

[3] It is necessary to add here that, for example, from the text *The Conflict between Aristotelian and Galileian Modes of Thought in Contemporary Psychology* (Lewin 1935, 1–42), it is clear that behind its epistemological research lies an effort to encounter different non-Aristotelian ontology or metaphysics, but Lewin never fully came to these considerations.

[4] Today, we can better characterize this quality based on the latest research in cognitive sciences and the phenomenological study of human perception – e.g., the research in mirror neurons (Rizzolatti & Sinigaglia 2008; Iacoboni 2008), Damasio's research of emotions (Damasio 1994; 2010), research on sensorimotor coordination of perception and action (Johnson 2008, 117–134). All these and the other processes leave traces behind themselves. Their aesthetic structure influences organisms providing them with complex information that enables them to be cognitive and take an active stance toward situational complexity. After this grasping, organisms can start reacting to a situation or analyzing it.

and environments. They create social groups with their fellows and represent a part of various institutions; as such they become part of other institutional relations – family, work place institution, nation, member of the EU, the inhabitants of the planet Earth. Even the physical atoms of human body are no longer unrelated because the atoms properties are shaped by relations to other particles and their places in molecules, tissues, and organs. Relationality means, among other things, that each entity exists only through these relations, and if the quality, intensity, and duration of these relations change, so does the entity.

Buchler used new words (alescence, for example) or significantly expanded the meaning of those commonly used (judgment) in order to better grasp the relationality in which individuals constitute themselves, relate to the world and act in it. Since I focus on Ryder's use of Buchler's metaphysics here, I will now briefly look into the notion of judgment. The term does not only mean what is commonly meant by it – rational assertion or decision. This is just one of several types of judgment. Whatever activity a person carries out, they also carry out an appreciation of the situation. The appreciation always happens in relation to the goals to which the process leads. The result of their actions also concludes the whole process of judging. This result also ultimately determines the type of judgment.

> Thus, an artist's painting is a product or judgment; so, too, is a decorative arrangement of flowers. An economist's prediction of rising interest rates is a judgment, just as is a meteorologist's forecast and the taking of an umbrella on one's way out the door. The buying of a house is a judgment, as is the calculation of one's cash flow in light of a mortgage of a particular value (Wallace 2004, 280)

Thus, judgment expresses the active connection of the individual with the whole situation, the assessment of the case, the discrimination of needs and goals, and the attempt to subsequently achieve them. Suppose we understand human activity in such a complex of structured acts: in that case, we are better equipped not to succumb to our Western tendency to break down the complexes into atomic units and then look for simple causal chains among them. As a result, we can see rational behavior in acts that are not bound to true/false evaluations. For example, taking an umbrella could be adequate or inadequate to a situation. However, such judgment is not a proposition "It will rain" with possible true/false values. We are not talking about the truth of the proposition because the proposition has not yet been formulated, although there is a tendency to evaluate it. Such an approach equalizes all kinds of human behavior and does not restrict it only to assertive acts. This equality also makes it possible to reflect the world in its complexity. If the assertive type of acts were dominant, then its propositional nature and the associated nominal character of the language (see above) would cause us to break down natural complexes into separate units and perceive them as atomic facts.

Buchler recognizes three main types of judgments – assertive, active, and exhibitive. They correspond roughly to theoretical, practical, and productive reasons in the Aristotelian triad. These three significant types of judgment also define the three major areas in which human life is profiled – knowledge, politics (in the broader sense), and aesthetics (in the more general sense). Buchler, however, abolishes the Aristotelian hierarchy, in which the products of the theoretical realm of reason were most valuable. Each of these areas becomes equal.

John Ryder's Relentless Mirror

Ryder's main domain is where we apply practical judgments. In this sense, he is a political thinker. His predominant effort is to demonstrate how it is possible to reconcile the actions of many actors who have different views of the world and do not share the same metaphysical anchoring. Having in mind Buchler's ordinality of relational complexes, he uses Dewey's conceptual tools to conceive personal autonomy as an outcome of the balance between a person's interests and those of others. Such an approach is especially useful if we want to

understand the nature of educational institutions.

Dewey defined the quality of the relationship between individuals and the community in a purely functional way. The functional starting point was the only one that could succeed within an overall relational approach. In his time, it provoked surprise, and in the social sciences his approach remains underappreciated. At the heart of this approach is a control of the indirect consequences that individuals or institutions impose on others by pursuing their interests. Communities, states, and supranational entities arose thanks to the need for control of indirect consequences. Justice and the quality of a social order are determined by whether people can control the indirect consequences of the actions of others and to what extent (cf. Dewey LW 2. 234–373).

As an attentive follower of Dewey, Ryder puts the control of indirect consequences at the center of his thoughts. It is his constantly recurring theme with many different manifestations – international relations (Ryder 2009), structuring political and aesthetic experience (Ryder 2014), education as political technology (Ryder 2007), etc. However, in almost all his texts, he directly or indirectly touches the theme of education. It is the educational system in which the control of indirect consequences is in many variations focused, refined, and deepened, or, on the contrary, reduced, hampered, or even lost; it depends on how education is understood and organized. For this reason, it is no surprise that in his forthcoming book, *Philosophy of Education: Thinking and Learning Through History and Practice* (2022), this topic becomes central, concentrating on all the issues he has previously elaborated and amalgamating them.

The whole text is consistently based on a relational ontology, even in the way it is constructed. In the first four chapters, he presents four significant figures of pedagogical philosophy – Plato, Rousseau, Dewey, and Freire. Each represents a different view of the nature, form, and goal of education. Plato describes the elitist organicism that emphasizes the pre-allocated place of everyone in society (Ryder 2022, 18–49), Rousseau the mechanistic individualism of the Enlightenment (ibid., 50–81), Dewey the optimistic relationalism of the progressive era (ibid., 82–115), and Freire the overcoming of oppressive social relations by the radicalization of education (ibid., 116–149). The significance of these chapters does not lie in these analyses; they were presented in more detailed and precise variants by other authors. The importance lies in their interplay.

All four educational thinkers create a field of tension that prevents any attempt to think through the Aristotelian essentialist grid. No perspective, temperament, or attunement takes precedence over others; they are all forced to correct each other. In these pressures, what could turn into a simplified uncritical truth is constantly being returned to its source – to the relationships from which it arises. For example, Plato brings into this field society as a necessary condition for individual's development, but the other three approaches dissolve his innate elitism. Dewey, in turn, provides a system of progressive relational education, but Freire corrects his over-optimism by confronting him with a power dominance that already controls others at a subconscious level. Reciprocally, Dewey provides Freire with relational tools to avoid being tempted to perceive any manifestation of power as an unchanging entity that must be defeated primarily by resistance.

This mill systematically grinds our every attempt to get stuck in some convenient truth, and we must follow the chains of relationships and their ever-changing consequences. Thus, Ryder structurally prepares the field for the analysis of educational conditions in the following three chapters: Education and Its Problems (Ryder 2022, 153–176); Education in Context: Nature, Knowledge, and Experience (ibid., 177–212); Education in Context: Society and the State (ibid., 213–256). In particular, the last two chapters, in which the functional analysis based on the control of the indirect consequences of actions is applied most consistently, are among the book's highlights. Here the author hit the troubled heart of our current educational systems.

Educational institutions are constructed of three relational types – economic, political, and academic. This is

a tripod whose three legs must be the same length to maintain balance and function properly in today's society (Ryder 2022, 221–227). Any imbalance thereof destroys the primary goal of education: formation of a society which supports creation of such a personal autonomy that guarantees individuals the means to control their own development in a way not detrimental to the autonomy of others. This general rule has profound practical implications related to the question of reproducing inequality.

> Autonomy is important as an individual and social matter for two reasons. The first is that without it we are subject to the design and ends of others, and thus unable to exercise the self-control necessary for our own development [...] The inequality of wealth, power, and property becomes a problem when it interferes with the ability of some to exercise the autonomy that is the entitlement of each of us (Ryder 2022, 228).

This relational analysis of education shows that we should not look at equal rights in education from an essentialist human rights perspective. Human rights are not an external gift granted by God or received along with birth. Human rights are a relational product of a properly functioning society, which cares for the autonomy of persons that control their own interests while not compromising the interest of others. This is the reason education should not and must not reproduce or even deepen inequalities (ibid., cf. 230). I am afraid that today's research on this issue affirms that our societies and our educational systems (perhaps except for a few cases – for example, the Finnish or Ontario systems) are not doing well, and that we rest on the laurels of a meritocratic dream (See e.g., Savage 2021; Slee 2011; Brantlinger 2001). The essence of this dream lies in the idea that we are equal and it only depends on the personal interest and talent of each of us whether we will be successful or not. However, each of us is constructed by relations. Our talent, diligence, and effort are formed by relations and therefore our ability to control the consequences of other people's actions depends on openness and equality in any relations.

I am afraid that this presents us with an annoying fact. If we focus on how our educational institutions have historically formed (in Europe as well as in United States), we will find that they are based on the early modern idea of effectively controlling individuals, not allowing them to control direct or indirect consequences of actions (Foucault 1995; Green 2013). How they are organized, including the selection of teaching content and methods, how individuals are accepted, how hidden in/equalities in social and cultural capital are perpetuated and even deepened is controlled by this inherent goal. Our schools still reproduce inequality and favor only some of us. Thus, our educational institutions – from primary schools to universities, whether public or private – are failing systemically. But it is in such institutions that we must live and act.

Ryder's forthcoming book turns out to be a relentless mirror. As actors in the educational process, as learners and teachers, we have no choice but to stand in front of this mirror every day and ask ourselves: Do we really help reduce inequalities?

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SOME THOUGHTS ON DEWEY'S ETHICS AND RORTY'S LATE PHILOSOPHY

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ABSTRACT: In this paper, I am writing first about the pragmatist principle that the only moral purpose is growth. I had not initially understood this formula of pragmatist ethics, but some of my pragmatist colleagues tried to help me to change my mind. Second, I will show that this sort of ethics is also embedded in the philosophy of the late Richard Rorty. His educational theory makes his philosophy important since every significant educational theory has its philosophical basis. This is also the case both in Dewey and Rorty. Third, I go into the details of the late Rorty's educational theory.

Keywords: ethics, education, socialization and individualization, Dewey, Rorty

"The only moral purpose is growth"

Rorty several times quoted Dewey's famous definition: "Growth itself is the only moral end" (Rorty 1999, 8, 28, 125). At the time that I became familiar with pragmatism, I had not understood this definition. What did it mean? At first glance, it is totally meaningless since, for example, Russia and Germany were growing under Stalin and Hitler. At the same time, it is evident that we cannot speak about people's freedom or the dominance of morals in Russia or Germany during the dictatorship of Stalin and Hitler.

My pragmatist friends helped me to find the proper interpretation of the definition mentioned above. I am grateful for my "revelation," first of all, to John Ryder, who stayed with me at my place in Szeged for some days before the CEPF (Central European Pragmatist Forum) conference in 2006. We had several conversations about the themes of pragmatism, and especially about Dewey's ethics. John explained to me that we should not understand Dewey's thesis mentioned above merely in a quantitative sense since then it becomes impossible to refute Hitler's claim that Germany was growing under his power. This pragmatist ethical thesis, that both Dewey and Rorty accepted, we can understand rightly only in a qualitative sense. It means that we must interpret "growth" in the sense of the development of human freedom and human skills and abilities, as well. In this way, we can also understand why we do not need any absolute in ethics, neither in Dewey nor in Rorty.

After interpreting Dewey's famous thesis qualitatively, I could rightly understand many other pragmatist propositions. Moreover, it resulted in a better understanding of Dewey and a new interpretation of Rorty's neo-pragmatism. Finally, it became possible to write my habilitation about Richard Rorty's late philosophy in Hungarian.[1] Based on my Hungarian book, I will show in the following parts of my article, by analyzing Rorty's educational theory, that Rorty has remained a follower of Dewey in far more dimensions than many people realize. Nevertheless, we must first survey Rorty's philosophy in general since his educational theory cannot be understood otherwise.

On Rorty's Late Philosophy

Rorty, who began his career as an analytic philosopher, changed his mind in the 1970s and became a pragmatist thinker. It is beyond question that neo-pragmatism would not exist without his ideas and his activity in the APA, and his book of 1979 *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*. Rorty took the so-called linguistic turn (Russell, Moore, Wittgenstein) exceptionally seriously and replaced experience with language, focusing on the linguistic creation of our phenomenal world. He consciously gave up the opportunity of a unified philosophical theory and determined himself a liberal ironic thinker in his first main neo-pragmatist book *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* (1989).

The neo-pragmatist Rorty was an anti-metaphysical, anti-essentialist, and anti-foundationalist thinker. In his view, "everything is a social construction" and "all awareness is a linguistic affair" (Rorty 1999, 48), and the main columns of human life (language, self, and community) are contingent. We cannot recognize any final "Reality"

[1] Cf. Krémer, Sándor: *A késői Richard Rorty filozófiája*. Szeged, JATEPRESS, 2016.

and "Truth." Therefore, we can only describe our radically temporal and historical, permanently changing world. Every interpretation of our world is a narrative, which is general but never universal. Our narratives, or in Rorty's words "vocabularies", are very similar to Wittgenstein's language games. We use them on three different levels: a) as wordplay, b) as a form of life, or c) as culture. Rorty uses his expression "vocabulary" with these three meanings. He claims that we live in the epoch of narrative philosophy, where, describing our situation, plans, and actions, we create our conscious self and the understanding and interpretation of our society. Although our language, self, and community are contingent (cf. Ch. 1, 2, and 3 in Rorty 1989), it does not mean that our new vocabularies are absolutely arbitrary.

On the contrary, our new vocabularies must be in harmony with our own given vocabularies if we are not able to falsify them, and with the other essential vocabularies of our community and our world. Therefore, Rorty accepted Davidson's doctrine of triangulation, which tells us that our truths are always determined by the triangle of the "relating speaker, interpreter and the world" (Rorty 2004, 78). This triangulation is inevitable since our life could not function without the coherence of our essential vocabularies. It is also worth emphasizing that Rorty's vocabulary is not a dictionary but a language game, the linguistic dimension of our factual life.

In the dimension of intellectual history, Rorty had chosen from the historically given three options (conservativism, liberalism, socialism) Jeremy Bentham's and John S. Mill's liberalism, with some modification. He accepted the influence of the trade unions and the social-democratic American Left, and he strove to sketch a liberal democratic utopia in his *Contingency* book: "One of my aims in this book is to suggest the possibility of a liberal utopia: one in which ironism, in the relevant sense, is universal. A post-metaphysical culture seems to be no more impossible than a post-religious one and equally desirable" (Rorty 1989, xiv–xv). Rorty defined his standpoint in the dimension of political philosophy as a sort of middle ground between the views of Habermas and Foucault. He refused to accept Habermas' belief that democratic institutions need philosophical foundations. At the same time, in contradiction with Foucault, he believed in the possibility of some forms of ideal, democratic, social systems of institutions. At the same time, it means that not everything is contingent for Rorty. He applies irony to almost everything, except one thing: *democracy*.

Although the late Rorty did not create a separate political philosophy, his philosophy as a whole is still determined by political questions. He used his social-democratic liberalism intentionally in every part of his philosophy, from ethics, through the philosophy of art and educational theory, and more. Nevertheless, his most important goal was to support the realization of his liberal democratic utopia, for that he gave priority even against his own philosophy.

In the field of ethics, Rorty agreed basically with Dewey since he did not believe in any absolute "Good." Supporting his "philosophical hero," he emphasized many times that "Growth itself is the only moral end." Rorty *refused* not only the *foundationalist needs* (because – in his view – they are rationally impossible and morally unnecessary), but also *the Kantian priority of reason to emotions*. Rorty thinks of an authentic self with emotions and will as the agent of moral situations. According to his views, there is a self with a complex and changing personality, where "'selfhood' (except insofar as it has encased itself in a shell of routine) is in the process of making, and any self is capable of including within itself a number of inconsistent selves, of unharmonized dispositions."[2] Rorty prefers this kind of self to the Kantian "myth of the self as non-relational, as capable of existing independently of any concern for others, as a cold psychopath needing to be constrained to take account of other people's needs" (Rorty 1999, 77). In harmony with this idea, Rorty replaced the unconditional moral obligation of Kant with the concept of prudence. According to Rorty, "moral obligation does not have a

[2] Rorty is quoting Dewey here.

nature, or a source, different from tradition, habit, and custom. *Morality is simply a new controversial custom*" (ibid., 76). In his opinion, the concept of 'moral obligation' becomes "increasingly less appropriate to the degree to which we identify with those whom we help: the degree to which we mention them when telling ourselves stories about who we are, the degree to which their story is also our story" (ibid., 79). It is clear from the views mentioned earlier that Rorty has refused the priority of *reason* to emotions, as Kant had thought of it (see Kremer 2019, 235–250).

Late Rorty on Education and Teaching

Richard Rorty, who established an anti-metaphysical, anti-essential neo-pragmatism, also maintained remarkable views in education and teaching. He saw the educational process, stretching from elementary school to colleges and universities, as a unique union of socialization and individualization. It was evident that this process cannot be regarded as a homogeneous process of personhood development. He has refused both the rightist and radical leftist standpoints and offered a Deweyan approach to education.

We shall interpret Rorty's ideas on education within this horizon, the essence of which is the connection as mentioned earlier between *socialization* and *individualization*. Unlike Dewey, Rorty did not write any particular book on education, school, or pedagogy, but he composed, within the above-mentioned theoretical framework, several articles and essays on education, first of all, on higher education.[3]

I will show and analyze his thoughts on education on the basis of three of his articles: "Education as Socialization and as Individualization", "The Humanistic Intellectual: Eleven Theses", and "Democracy and Philosophy."[4] The title of the first article, "Education as Socialization and as Individualization", speaks for itself. Rorty intervened in the discussion the education with a position between the American political right and the radical left. However, I am convinced that we can generalize his standpoint, which fits nicely in the whole of his philosophy. Rorty refused both the rightist opinion oriented to metaphysical truth, and the leftist opinion based on the revolutionary improvement of society. Instead of these options, he offered a Deweyan approach. Dewey held education as the tool and significant embodiment of democracy, and Rorty developed it further in a neo-pragmatic way.

In Rorty's opinion, Dewey's "great contribution to the theory of education was to help us get rid of the idea that education is a matter of either inducing or educing truth" (Rorty 1999, 118). Both Dewey and Rorty rejected a final, metaphysical "truth" and humans' ultimate, metaphysical essence. Rorty claimed that "there is only the shaping of an animal into a human being by a process of socialization, followed (with luck) by the self-individualization and self-creation of that human being through his or her own later revolt against that very process" (ibid.).

In Rorty's approach, the main task of primary and secondary education is socialization, and that of higher education is individualization. In Rorty's words, "education up to the age of 18 or 19 is mostly a matter of socialization – of getting the students to take over the moral and political common sense of the society as it is" (Rorty 1999, 116). What is more, "primary and secondary education will always be a matter of familiarizing the young with what their elders take to be true, whether it is true or not. It is not, and never will be, the function of lower-level education to challenge the prevailing consensus about what is true. Socialization has to come before individuation, and education for freedom cannot begin before some constraints have been imposed" (ibid., 118 – my emphasis). To strengthen social cohe-

[3] Rorty was not only an unbelievably prolific reader, but also a prolific writer since he "in nearly five decades of writing penned three books, two essay collections, four volumes of 'philosophical papers,' an influential edited volume, and a co-authored book, plus scores of uncollected essays and reviews in academic journals, as well as numerous pieces in newspapers, magazines, and popular publications" (Rorty 2010, 3).

[4] The first two articles are to be found in Rorty 1999, and the third is in Rorty 2007.

sion, we need more intentional socialization since we should decrease the existing differences among generations, strengthening the generations' common denominator. Even the hardcore conservatives and ardent radicals agree on these questions. Radicals "do not really want the high schools to produce, every year, a graduating class of amateur Zarathustras" (ibid., 117). Conversely, conservatives do not want to fire every talented, experimenting high-school teacher.

On the other hand, those people who do not know their past do not even know themselves. Therefore, they cannot plan their future as well. If we want to learn from our past, we should know it. However, the good cannot be an obstacle to the better, and to make the students aware of this is higher education's task. In Rorty's opinion, it is one of the tasks of university professors, besides making the students appropriate well their vocation, to encourage their Socratic skepticism. Hopefully, Rorty says, these teachers "do their best to nudge each successive college generation a little more to the left, to make them a little more conscious of the cruelty built into our institutions, of the need for reform, of the need to be skeptical about the current consensus" (Rorty 1999, 116). The individualization is mainly the task of non-vocational higher-education: "the point of non-vocational higher education is, instead, to help students realize that they can reshape themselves – that they can rework the self-image foisted on them by their past, the self-image that makes them competent citizens, into a new self-image, one that they themselves have helped to create" (ibid., 118).

Obviously, Rorty recognized the actual obstacles which make it challenging to realize this dynamic of socialization and individualization. These are primarily American problems, but we in Central Europe, unfortunately, are also drifting in the same direction. Socialization should, namely, be ended in high school. Rorty notes,

> *But, in the real world, the 19-year-olds arrive at the doors of the colleges not knowing a lot of the words* […]. They still have to be taught a lot of memorizable conventional wisdom of the sort that gets dinned into the heads of their co-evals in other countries. So, the colleges have to serve as finishing schools, and the administrators sometimes have to dragoon the faculty into helping with this task. *As things, unfortunately – and with luck only temporarily – are, the colleges have to finish the job of socialization.* Worse yet, they have to do this when the students are already too old and too restless to put up with such a process. *It would be well for the colleges to remind us that 19 is an age when young people should have finished absorbing the best that has been thought and said and should have started becoming suspicious of it*" (Rorty 1999, 124 – my emphasis).

It also follows from the description of Rorty's educational theory that, in his opinion, education does not have the task or purpose of shedding light on some metaphysical "Truth" or creating some ultimate "Truth." He says that Dewey

> […] taught us to call 'true' whatever belief results from a free and open encounter of opinions, without asking whether this result agrees with something beyond that encounter. For Dewey, the sort of freedom that guarantees truth is not freedom from the passions of sin. Nor is it freedom from tradition or from what Foucault called 'power.' It is simply sociopolitical freedom, the sort of freedom found in bourgeois democracies" (Rorty 1999, 119 – my emphasis).

Rorty absolutely agreed with Dewey regarding the rejection of metaphysical "Truth" and of the correspondence theory of truth. Dewey and Rorty replaced the correspondence theory with the pragmatist theory of truth. In Rorty's view, Dewey took the socio-political freedom of bourgeois democracies as a starting point instead of justifying democratic freedoms by reference to an account of human nature or the nature of reason.

What is more, Rorty also agrees with Dewey that Dewey did not try to justify even democracy. Namely, democracy, in Dewey's opinion, is "a promising experiment engaged in by a particular herd of a particular species of animal – our species and our herd. He asks us to put our faith in ourselves – in the Utopian hope characteristic of a democratic community – rather than asking for reassurance or backup from outside" (Rorty 1999, 119–120). Rorty claims that we cannot theoretically create a foundation for democracy, and that it is

unnecessary. To justify the view that democracy is the best socio-political institution for humans, we need only historical examples and our experiences. Rorty says that these are the only things we need if we want to take the utopia of democracy as our aim and realize it in practice.

> 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" (Rorty 2007, 5, 8)

The Darwinist Dewey offered the statement with which we began, which is in absolute harmony with Rorty's opinion. Rorty quotes Dewey: "This notion of a species of animals gradually taking control of its own evolution by changing its environmental conditions leads Dewey to say, in good Darwinian language, *that 'growth itself is the moral end' and that to 'protect, sustain and direct growth is the chief ideal of education'"* (Rorty 1999, 120 – my emphasis). "Growth" must be understood exclusively in a qualitative sense, as I have learned it from my American pragmatist colleagues, first of all from John Ryder. It is the only way if we want to interpret rightly Dewey's and Rorty's standpoint: "growth" means blossom, flourishing, and evolving of something, which also includes freedom.

In harmony with his political testament, *Achieving Our Country*, Rorty refuses the revolutionary, radical, and new cultural left and supports the Deweyan reformist left in the U.S.A. (Rorty 1998, 39–107). In Rorty's opinion, we do not need irresponsible revolutions but permanent, evidence-based, and well-considered reforms if we would like to realize the new forms of social freedom in our practice. The past and the present are closed for the experience- and practice-oriented pragmatists, and only the future is open for our practice. That is why we should hope, in the light of pragmatist meliorism, that due to our melioristic actions the future will be much better than the present.

To form these sorts of intentions and actions, to create intensive individualization, we need the special, "erotic relationships," as Rorty describes them, which can be born exclusively in personal connections. For Rorty, "erotic" means that intersubjective spark, which cannot be theorized, but it expresses the real significance of the traditional lectures and seminars given by excellent professors:

> From an administrative point of view, the professors often seem self-indulgent and self-obsessed. They look like loose cannons, people whose habit of setting their own agendas needs to be curbed. But administrators sometimes forget that college students badly need to find themselves in a place in which people are not ordered to a purpose, in which loose cannons are free to roll about. *The only point in having real live professors around instead of just computer terminals, videotapes, and mimeoed lecture notes is that students need to have freedom enacted before their eyes by actual human beings.* That is why tenure and academic freedom are more than just trade union demands. Teachers setting their own agendas – putting their individual, lovingly prepared specialties on display in the curricular cafeteria, without regard to any larger end, much less any institutional plan – is what non-vocational higher education is all about (Rorty 1999, 125 – my emphasis).

Think of Mr. Keating, the literature teacher in "Dead Poets Society" (1989), played by Robin Williams! Think of Peter Singer, Michel Foucault, John Dewey or Richard Rorty, and other excellent professors! As Rorty wrote:

> […] *the sparks that leap back and forth between teacher and student, connecting them in a rela-*

> *tionship* that has little to do with socialization but much to do with self-creation, are the principal means by which the institutions of a liberal society get changed. *Unless some such relationships are formed, the students will never realize what democratic institutions are good for: namely, making possible the invention of new forms of human freedom, taking liberties never taken before* (Rorty 1999, 126 – my emphasis).

In his article "The Humanistic Intellectual: Eleven Theses", Rorty strengthens these thoughts by emphasizing the role of higher education:

> So the real social function of the humanistic intellectuals is to instill doubts in the students about the students' own self-images, and about the society to which they belong. These people are the teachers who help ensure that the moral consciousness of each new generation is slightly different from that of the previous generation" (Rorty 1999, 127 – my emphasis).

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TRUTHINESS VS. POST-TRUTH: THE ETHICS OF RESISTANCE AND COHESION FROM THOREAU TO KROPOTKIN[1]

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ABSTRACT: The article highlights the philosophical and moral issues of truth in the writings of two great philosophers, Henry Thoreau and Peter Kropotkin. For all the differences in the times and cultures to which both thinkers belonged, we can trace their similar attitude towards objective scientific truth, which opposes all kinds of forms and systems of false and mythological knowledge. The naturalistic study of nature served for both of them as the starting point in the construction of social theory based on 'truth'. Both thinkers were very distrustful of the institutions of the state as such and opposed them to the best of their ability.

Keywords: truth, truth vs. truthiness, post-truth, truth and nature, American Transcendentalism, Henry David Thoreau on the role of nature, nature as the source of truth, the state against the truth, Peter Kropotkin, mutual aid, struggle for truth against the state, anarchism of Thoreau and Kropotkin

> "Rather than love, than money, than fame, give me truth" (Henry David Thoreau, *Walden; or, Life in the Woods*, 1854)

> "[…] Since the brain is at ease among lies, we cheat ourselves with sophistry. Hypocrisy and sophistry became the second nature of the civilized man. But the society cannot live thus; it must return to truth, or cease to exist" (Peter Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution*, 1902)

Nature and Truth

In the history of philosophy, we find many attempts to substantiate the social meaning and significance of truth and falsehood. In the 17th century, Francis Bacon, considering the nature of man and society, proposed in his 1620 treatise, *The New Organon*, four metaphorical phenomena ("idols") of mind that make it difficult to comprehend and retain true knowledge. These are the idols of Tribe, Cave, Marketplace, and Theater. Taken together, these "idols" demonstrate the direct connection of consciousness with the social environment and the social conditioning of human thinking. On the path of knowledge, even for intelligent and enlightened people, there are many obstacles. Bacon called these obstacles *idols* or *ghosts* – from the Greek word *idolum*, meaning 'ghost' or 'vision.' This emphasizes that we are talking about illusions, lies, and falsehood – about what is not real, but either imaginary or at times intentionally manipulated. Perhaps this is one of but many more than striking philosophical admissions that true knowledge may be subject to distortion and conscious manipulation.

Empirical Realism of the Enlightenment: "Truthiness" of Nature

The philosophy of the Enlightenment of the 18th century largely inherited the Baconian empirical view of the origin of knowledge with a rationalistic conviction of the power and independence of reason. Hence, for example, the basic requirement of Voltaire is the following: everything that exists must be subjected to the merciless examination of reason, and only that which will be justified by this examination has the right to exist. The royal power, the Catholic Church, the system of estate privileges – all of these must be destroyed as unreasonable. And vice versa, what does not exist in reality, but what meets the requirements of reason, should be created: a republican form of government, a rational cult of man, and most importantly, a system should be established that ensures the freedom and equality of all people. Truth is an important tool of social transformations and, accordingly, all obsolete institutions of society use public deception and lies as a means of retaining their power. Here, the motives of the connection of public lies and deception with the institutions of the state are not based on the principles of reason.

American Transcendentalism: Correspondence of Nature, Truth, and Moral Values

The tradition of honoring "truthiness", surprisingly enough, was embraced by the American transcendental-

[1] This article is based on a revised text of a talk given at the American Philosophies Forum conference "Truth" (2019), Atlanta, Georgia.

ists – Emerson and Thoreau. On the one hand, they recognized the prevalence of high truths of moral ideals that go beyond the limits of the sensual world. On the other hand, the nature that surrounded them, including in Concord on the shores of Walden Pond, seemed to them to be a concentration of the natural ("true") empirical order. And this truth was also included by them in the construction of the universe. Thus, the sensual, or empirical part of the universe was recognized as equal in relation to the transcendental philosophical worldview.

The transcendentalists saw in the objects perceived by the senses a manifestation of a different – that is, spiritual – substance. They saw a strong connection between material and spiritual realities, a connection they referred to as "correspondence". Thus, knowledge was reduced by the transcendentalists to the search for "correspondences" and the disclosure of the symbolism of nature.

The individual was endowed with absolute and indisputable autonomy in relation to all external social and natural phenomena. Only the introduction to the "supersoul", and the knowledge of it, was considered by the transcendentalists to be what enables a person to break the chains of alienation and enter into genuine contact with other people.

The material (physical) world is real, but not essential to the extent that the metaphysical (transcendent) world is. However, according to Thoreau, it is impossible to ignore external empirical experience, because this alone makes possible a connection with genuine transcendental reality and truth. According to Thoreau, one needs to keep feelings sharply honed, and one's mind in a state of trembling readiness, so that in the end they would be able to understand the principles and ideas – the true reality, to which innumerable facts add. For the human mind, external reality is a construction created by classifying and synthesizing the chaotic experience of the external world. For the human mind, external reality is a construction created by classifying, synthesizing the chaotic experience of the external world. Consciousness organizes the world in its constant unsystematic formation. The insignificant facts of external experience are extremely valuable as manifestations of general ideas and truths.

The nature that surrounded Thoreau and served him as a source of creative inspiration did not yet bear the traces of an active invasion of civilization and was seen as endless, inexhaustible. Thoreau's worldview is a naturalist one, while also encompassing a romantic perception of nature. The universal principle of the movement of being (the "supreme law") for Thoreau was the law of the growth of the spiritual principle ("rebirth" and "renewal"). Everything that contributes to this increase is natural, "good" and "truthful"; all that hinders it must be overcome or abolished. Neither physiological needs, nor instincts, nor the unconscious, are inherently "negative." The question is what they bring to the individual on his/her path to understanding eternal truths.

As a result of combining the three elements of the worldview (striving for the ideal, awareness of human alienation from external being, and the method of dynamic unfolding of the process of self-knowledge), the main theme of the philosophy and literature of European and American Romanticism was formed – a reflective description of the process of isolation and alienation of the subjective Self, combined with an internal, and sometimes distinct and strong, desire to approach the Universal and to identify with it.

Communication of man with nature received in Emerson's philosophy a special name – "correspondence". This transcendentalist concept was interpreted by the philosopher quite broadly, as a substantial connection between the state of consciousness and external phenomena, which in their entirety create a vast world of "wordless language." Acknowledging the "secondary" nature of the natural landscape compared to transcendental reality, the philosopher saw in the natural world an area that could and should enlighten and elevate a person, giving him a charge of ethical and aesthetic spirituality, because man himself, according to Emerson, is a pitiful spectacle; he is a symbol of a degrading divine principle ("man is God in ruins").

Social Critique of Moral Reason

In his essay, *Slavery in Massachusetts* (1854), Thoreau also deals with the problem of Nature. After overthrowing the spiritual values of contemporary society, the author somewhat unexpectedly turns to the reader:

> I walk toward one of our ponds; but what signifies the beauty of nature when men are base? We walk to lakes to see our serenity reflected in them; when we are not serene, we go not to them. Who can be serene in a country where both the rulers and the ruled are without principle? The remembrance of my country spoils my walk. But it chanced the other day that I scented a white water-lily, and a season I had waited for had arrived. It is the emblem of purity. It bursts up so pure and fair to the eye, and so sweet to the scent, as if to show us what purity and sweetness reside in, and can be extracted from, the slime and muck of earth. I think I have plucked the first one that has opened for a mile. What confirmation of our hopes is in the fragrance of this flower! I shall not so soon despair of the world for it, notwithstanding slavery, and the cowardice and want of principle of Northern men. It suggests what kind of laws have prevailed longest and widest, and still prevail, and that the time may come when man's deeds will smell as sweet. Such is the odor which the plant emits. If Nature can compound this fragrance still annually, I shall believe her still young and full of vigor, her integrity and genius unimpaired, and that there is virtue even in man, too, who is fitted to perceive and love it…" (Thoreau 2008, 258–259).

The text contains two semantic series: the first is a series of natural phenomena, the second is a series of social phenomena. To each of them we apply the aesthetic criterion of harmony, that is, the correspondence of the inner content and the external form of the phenomenon, which Thoreau considered to be the most important and, perhaps, the only essential requirement imposed on reality. Beauty, proportionality, completeness of the semantic principle with the complete incompleteness of the perspective of the process of formation – this is the main thing that was put forward by the philosopher as a standard of harmony. It is not surprising that Thoreau, like other romantics, absolutized the "music of nature", seeing in it the transcendental prototype of any harmony and even to a certain extent the very substance of this harmony. "Nature makes no noise. The roar of the storm, the rustling leaf, the patter of rain – in all this there is an original and unexplored harmony. Why does the thought flow in such a deep and sparkling stream when the sounds of distant music reach the ear? (Thoreau 1962, 12). Harmony is inherent in man. It consists in an aesthetically proportional ratio of spiritual and material factors – the ratio of thought, intention, on the one hand, and the act – on the other. The harmony of nature is opposite to all forms of falsehood and lying, especially those which are generated by political and economic motivation.

The moral and aesthetic approach of Thoreau to nature comprises a number of important philosophical ideas:

– Nature is not only external objectified reality, but also a source of moral and ethical experiences;
– Engaging with nature requires a careful and even reverent attitude; violation of its harmony adversely affects the morality of people;
– Nature allows only contemplative mastering; man must neither subordinate nor change nature, but only be carefully introduced into its system, becoming a silent, thoughtful observer of its harmonic structure;
– Deception, lying, and falsehood run parallel to the negative phenomena in nature, *i.e.*, the struggle for survival, competition, death and dying.

The Truth About Lying: Critique of the Society

The main goal of Thoreau's essay "On the Duty of Civil Disobedience", was to answer the question: what should a person do if he has completely lost confidence in the political system in which he must live? As the author of *Walden,* Thoreau could, both in theory and in practice, give his personal example and thus answer the question, "what to do?", as follows: leave the society or remain in it, but, in either case, immerse yourself in spiritual solitude. However, Thoreau himself understood that this

path was more exclusive than typical, more utopian than real. For people who internally disagreed with the social order, but who did not want to turn into forest dwellers and downshifters, it was necessary to indicate a different way to achieve moral purification and rebirth from spiritual hibernation. This dilemma and the consequent answer to the question, "what to do?", under the unjust and immoral social regime was as timely then as it is today, in the 21st century. Thoreau gave his answer to this question and proclaimed the principle of open political protest.

The first chapter of *Walden*, "Household", and the first pages of the essay, "On the Duty of Civil Disobedience", are devoted to the same topic – a description of the complete moral and political disillusionment of the individual ("Household") and the moral and political aspects of urban life ("On the Duty ..."). In either case, the author brings the reader to the realization of the complete crisis of all ties that previously united a person and society. "Not till we are lost, in other words, not till we have lost the world, do we begin to find ourselves, and realize where we are and the infinite extent of our relations" (Thoreau 2008, 118). And from "Civil Disobedience", "I answer, that he [a person] cannot without disgrace be associated with it [the government]. I cannot for an instant recognize that political organization as my government which is the slave's government also" (ibid., 230). Today, perhaps, we can give a broader interpretation of the concept of "the state of slaves". It may be a society of formally free citizens, but internally enslaved within a system of mass propaganda and post-truths. Subordination to mass culture, consumerism, and propaganda turn people into a sort of "slave" when they have neither the power nor the desire to be independent and self-reliant.

The most important aspect of the non-violent revolution, as declared by Thoreau, was that mass political protest was to be preceded by an internal moral revolution in the minds of every person. This is what Sinclair Lewis called the "one-man revolution". In this sense, a revolution in consciousness is primary in relation to the advancement of non-violent protest, which politically reinforces what has already been achieved in the sphere of individual consciousness. It is necessary to assimilate the correct moral convictions, a process that almost completely assures the success of the struggle for a progressive social structure. Thus, the mass character of the protest campaign was understood by Thoreau exclusively as a "summary" of individual protests and moral convictions. Everything that could somehow violate the absolute inviolability of the rights of the individual was completely rejected. Therefore, the ultimate goal of a non-violent revolution was not to achieve social justice, but to guarantee the independence of the individual:

> There will never be a really free and enlightened State until the State comes to recognize the individual as a higher and independent power, from which all its own power and authority are derived, and treats him accordingly. I please myself with imagining a State at least which can afford to be just to all men, and to treat the individual with respect as a neighbor; which even would not think it inconsistent with its own repose if a few were to live aloof from it, not meddling with it, nor embraced by it, who fulfilled all the duties of neighbors and fellow-men. A State which bore this kind of fruit, and suffered it to drop off as fast as it ripened, would prepare the way for a still more perfect and glorious State, which also I have imagined, but not yet anywhere seen (Thoreau 2008, 246).

Peter Kropotkin, Mutual Aid

One of the most prominent Russian thinkers of the 19th through the beginning of the 20th Century, Peter Kropotkin (1824–1921) was a social philosopher, a noted critic of the state as such, and of state lies in particular. Kropotkin, like Thoreau, felt dislike for and distrust of state institutions and bureaucracies, seeing in them the main source of lies that acquire an institutional character. Although Kropotkin did not use the term "propaganda," he actually identified the bureaucracy with a system of constantly and purposefully reproducible deception aimed at strengthening the domination of the state. It is noteworthy that, again like Thoreau, Kropotkin linked truth with the study of nature, believing that the violation and distortion of the natural essence of man is connected with his alienation from

the natural world. However, as a prominent scientist, geographer, and biologist, Kropotkin's main emphasis was on a purely naturalistic and positivistic aspect of the world of nature.

Philosophical and sociological views carried the pronounced influence of naturalism, which recognized society as an organic part of the natural principle. On this occasion, in the well-known treatise, "Ethics," Kropotkin wrote:

> Reverting to the sound philosophy of Nature which remained in neglect from the time of Ancient Greece until Bacon woke scientific research from its long slumber, modern science has now worked out the elements of a philosophy of the universe, free of supernatural hypotheses and the metaphysical "mythology of ideas," and at the same time so grand, so poetical and inspiring, and so expressive of freedom, that it certainly is capable of calling into existence the new forces. Man no longer needs to clothe his ideals of more beauty, and of a society based on justice, with the garb of superstition: he does not have to wait for the Supreme Wisdom to remodel society. He can derive his ideals from Nature and he can draw the necessary strength from the study of its life" (Kropotkin 1924, 12).

The view of a scientist, and naturalist, surprisingly powerful and sound in nature, covered both natural and social phenomena. It should be borne in mind that all of this contrasted dramatically with the clerical ecology prevailing in Russia and Western Europe at the time. Still, Kropotkin did not take this into account and was not at all afraid to insult the religious feelings of believers. On the contrary, his voice sounded confident and loud. For example, in considering the law of conservation of energy, the Russian scientist saw it as a kind of generalized image of the world, the universe and humanity. According to Kropotkin,

> …[Nature] teaches a person to understand the life of the universe as a continuous, infinite chain of energy transformations; mechanical movement can turn into sound, into heat, into light, into electricity; and vice versa, each of these types of energy can be transformed into others. And among all these transformations, the birth of our planet, the gradual development of its life, its ultimate decomposition in the future and the transition back into the great cosmos, its absorption of the universe are only infinitely small phenomena – a simple moment in the life of stellar worlds (Kropotkin 1924, 13)

According to Kropotkin, science penetrates into all areas of the natural world and into all spheres of human activity; in this sense there are no restrictions or forbidden areas for it, there is no taboo. In the vast non-natural sphere of "human institutions, customs and laws, superstitions, beliefs and ideals," the light of science realizes itself, according to Kropotkin, in "anthropological schools of history, jurisprudence and political economy." And this scientific approach to society, in turn, shows that the desire for "the greatest happiness of the greatest number of people" is no longer a dream, not a utopia. It is possible; and it has also been proved that the welfare and happiness of neither a whole people nor a separate class can be based, even temporarily, on the oppression of other classes, nations and races.

At the same time, while discussing the fundamentals of social life, Kropotkin puts forward a kind of principle of ethical solidarity or consolidation of living beings, including man:

> If the study of nature has given us the basics of philosophy, embracing the life of the entire universe, the development of living beings on earth, the laws of mental life and the development of societies, then this same study should give us a natural explanation of the sources of moral feeling. And it should tell us where the forces lie, capable of raising the moral sense to greater and greater heights and purity (Kropotkin 1902).

In this sense, Kropotkin sees ethics, or the science of morality, as the main social science discipline organizing all knowledge about society, referring to the theory of "moral sense" proposed by the English philosopher of the Enlightenment Anthony Shaftesbury.

Kropotkin did not propose to draw a direct analogy between the natural world and society, but his constant balancing on the verge of the natural and social spheres not only did not weaken his theory, but gave it even greater persuasiveness. Moreover, Kropotkin urged us to learn from nature not its, so to speak, "immorality" and aggressiveness towards the weak, but rather its "morality" and support for its own kind of individuals.

Moreover, the Russian scientist believed that the highly moral principle (as a human instinct or intuitive motive) played a more significant role in history than the struggle for survival, as proclaimed by Charles Darwin. As Kropotkin put it,

> The number and importance of mutual-aid institutions which were developed by the creative genius of the savage and half-savage masses, during the earliest clan-period of mankind and still more during the next village-community period, and the immense influence which these early institutions have exercised upon the subsequent development of mankind, down to the present times, induced me to extend my researches to the later, historical periods as well; especially, to study that most interesting period – the free medieval city republics, of which the universality and influence upon our modern civilization have not yet been duly appreciated. And finally, I have tried to indicate in brief the immense importance which the mutual-support instincts, inherited by mankind from its extremely long evolution, play even now in our modern society, which is supposed to rest upon the principle: "every one for himself, and the State for all," but which it never has succeeded, nor will succeed in realizing (Kropotkin 1902).

With all the obvious moral idealism and uncritical humanism present in Kropotkin's allegations, we are finding more and more evidence today that this kind of philosophy does not disappear from history, rather it remains in it and, indeed, is strengthened. Perhaps it strengthens not directly and unequivocally, but gradually and in the historical rhythm of the progressive movement. The fact is that at longer historical distances, "naive" humanism and accentuation of cohesion, strangely enough, reveal in themselves a greater potential of rationality and long-term effectiveness than unequivocal pragmatism of immediate benefit, individualism and optimization of profit in the spirit of the "economic man" philosophy. All of these philosophical positions were implicitly contained in Kropotkin's social philosophy and confirmed by the practice of his social activities.

Propelled by the rejection of both Rousseau's idealism and Huxley's social Darwinism, Kropotkin based his famous thesis that, along with the struggle for survival and domination of the fittest ("survival of the fittest"), there is equal and no less strong mutual assistance, mutual support and elements of sacrifice not only within the communities of the same species, but in a number of cases in the interspecies field of evolution. Kropotkin shied away from assessing the relationship between the struggle for existence and mutual aid according to the principle of their evolutionary potential and domination. This ratio varies and dynamically changes in the course of evolution, but, nevertheless, mutual assistance is becoming increasingly important.

Specifically, Kropotkin observed and described in nature elements, manifestations of cohesion, solidarity, integration, cooperation, mutual aid, altruism, sacrifice in the name of the weak, self-sacrifice, etc., which, in his opinion, evolutionarily proved their non-randomness and effectiveness. He wrote,

> As soon as we study animals – not in laboratories and museums only, but in the forest and the prairie, in the steppe and the mountains – we at once perceive that though there is an immense amount of warfare and extermination going on amidst various species, and especially amidst various classes of animals, there is, at the same time, as much, or perhaps even more, of mutual support, mutual aid, and mutual defense amidst animals belonging to the same species or, at least, to the same society. Sociability is as much a law of nature as mutual struggle (Kropotkin 1902).

The above characteristics of intraspecies communities not only did not degrade in the course of evolution, did not disappear, but, on the contrary, strengthened and, moreover, consolidated at the level of homo sapiens. This opened the way to a completely new theory of society, which Kropotkin undertook to formulate.

A kind of mutual aid instinct, which initially had a natural, biological basis, is transformed into patterns of social behavior, modifying society itself, developing a kind of "chemical" reaction of rallying individuals. On the surface of social life, in culture, it is fixed in such forms as public morality, etiquette, and custom. As more and more profound introduction into the fabric of society, traditions are transformed into social institutions, which is fixed in the regulatory system. At the same time, as a result, the socio-biological instinct of mutual assistance, according to Kropotkin, develops into public perceptions

of justice. All this implies the strengthening of social cohesion, which is not only the background, but also the basis of social justice, which, in turn, forms the idea of equality. Kropotkin asserted that mutual aid, justice, and morality are the consecutive steps of a rising series of sentiments that we learn when studying the animal world and man. They represent an organic necessity, bearing in itself its own justification, confirmed by the whole development of the animal world, starting with the first (in the form of colonies of the simplest animals) and gradually rising to higher human societies.

Truthiness vs. Post-Truth or Propaganda

For both Thoreau and Kropotkin, all forms of state violence that distort genuine relations of solidarity and cohesion among people rely on social lies aimed at manipulating society and communities. In this sense, both thinkers saw the first step on the path of liberation from social evil in the purification of social consciousness from the phantoms of lies, or "post-truth" (in the modern interpretation).

Propaganda (lat. *propaganda* is literally – 'to be distributed (faith)', from lat. *propago* – 'spread') in modern political discourse is understood as an open dissemination of views, facts, arguments and other information in order to form public opinion or other goals pursued by the propagandists for manipulation of a society's mass consciousness. Propaganda is based on the modern concept of "*postpravda* politics" (English post-truth politics) – a type of political culture in which discourse is mainly formed through appeal to the emotions and personal convictions of the audience (the details of political reality are ignored), the repetition of the same arguments and persistent ignoring of objective facts that contradict a given concept. Currently, the post-truth policy is becoming prevalent in many social systems, where public discourse is shaped on a combination of the 24-hour news cycle, biased media and pervasive social networks. "Post-truth is an adjective defined as 'relating to or denoting circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief'."[2] Of course, in the days of Thoreau and Kropotkin it was difficult to foresee the coming of the era of post-truth. But many elements of this system already existed in the embryonic stage and were supported by state institutions.

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BILLIARD BALLS, ORDINAL RELATIONS, AND CHINA

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ABSTRACT: John Ryder mentioned the "baroque" metaphor of billiard balls in his work. In this article I pick up on the metaphor and discuss it in relation to the People's Republic of China. I then discuss the relations between Ryder's notion of ordinally located complexes and his commitment to Deweyan democracy. Noting that this view has difficulties in the present world, particularly in relation to China, I suggest a possible way of viewing contemporary international relations. The view I suggest holds some of the advantages of both Deweyan democracy and a metaphysics of ordinal relations, without going all the way (unfortunately). I utilize a set of metaphors deriving from the coupling and uncoupling of railroad cars to accomplish this.

Keywords: Billiard balls, ordinal relations, United States, foreign policy, urgency, Chinese Communist Party, People's Republic of China, railroads, railroad cars, coupling, uncoupling.

Accepting a "billiard Ball" metaphor for identity, extended to the identity of nations, means we accept that nations are separate atoms that roll around the universe bumping into one another. Balls on tables in the billiards metaphor behave in ways that conform to the laws of physics – but when we extended the metaphor to nations, we understand these entities to roll around the Earth in conformity to the laws of political action, as recognized and identified by political scientists. Specifically, according to theorists like Graham Allison, they are subject to the horror of the Thucydides trap: when a rising power approaches the strength of a dominant power, there are enormous forces pushing them to war. We are a dominant power. China is a rising power. There are, indeed, enormous tensions building and a very real danger of war in the offing. Can we avoid it? Realists say we need to understand our interests, the opposition of China's interests, and find ways to contain or control the rise of China so that we can continue the "peace" we have maintained through the order we have created and controlled since the end of WWII. We must contain China because of the fact that, according to Zeneli and Vann (2020), China is intending to be the rule maker for a new world order. Realism, liberalism, and Conservatism all suggest different approaches to pursuing our interests. But John Ryder has written about another way, a way he identifies as pragmatic naturalism – an approach to understanding international relations based on an appreciation of a relational ontology and informed by a democratic social commitment derived from a Deweyan understanding of democracy.

In his discussion of "The Democratic Challenge"[1] and its bearing on international relations, Ryder argues that there have been three assumptions that have been taken for granted and,

> used to frame our understanding of how nation states interact with one another. (1) The sphere of their interaction is a lawless state of nature; (2) nations are discrete entities that interact with one another harmoniously or chaotically, as the case may be, rather like billiard balls bouncing off one another, to use a common Baroque metaphor; and (3) each discrete entity, each nation state, has its character independently of the others, or more to the point, has its own set of interests that are determined independently of one another (Ryder 2013, 196–197).

I should like to examine Ryder's critique of the billiard ball metaphor, and also to show that a variant of it is entirely current – no longer "Baroque" – the metaphor of "decoupling." Both decoupling and "billiard balls" are metaphors that "frame our understanding" and prevent us from appreciating the nature of the crises we face: especially the current sense of crisis with the People's Republic of China. Looking first at the billiard balls' metaphor – let's understand what it leads us to expect if we are using it to understand international relations. It tempts us to think that, like the balls on a billiard table, in spite of racqueting around and bouncing off the cushions and one another, it is the pattern of strikes which counts – but all three of the balls in the game of billiards can be removed from the table unchanged, after the intensity of the game is over. In international relations, obviously, nations are not like billiard balls – after they have hit, ricocheted, hit again – they cannot be removed from the table as the same balls that began the contest.

[1] Ryder 2013. This is Chapter 8 of the work. All quotes from John Ryder in this paper are taken from this work, and the relevant page number is given after each quotation.

They have inevitably, irreversibly, changed.

Currently, while few folks talk about the United States or China as billiard balls, many news outlets and recent articles[2] have discussed the value (or, more often, disvalue) of decoupling as an existing description of our relationship, or as a strategic proposal to protect us in the future. According to Merriam-Webster's, decoupling is among the top 6% of words used in 2021. It first entered the dictionary in 1938. But it was used earlier. As billiard balls have their context in a Baroque game, decoupling has its context in the coupling and uncoupling of railroad cars. The railroad works using a locomotive to pull many cars, if and only if they are effectively coupled. But, arranging the trains, schedules, and stops requires that cars be able to be uncoupled from a train, as well as be coupled onto the correct locomotive. Decoupling is now a term which simply means to separate – but as is evident from its history, it refers to cars which, like the balls in Billiards, are fundamentally separate entities. They can be coupled or decoupled to produce advantages or reduce disadvantages, but each car is thought to remain what it is, regardless of the its place in the train, or the particular locomotive to which it is coupled. I will argue, with Ryder in his discussion of billiards, that nations are not like railroad cars and they cannot be 'coupled' or 'decoupled' without significantly changing who and what each nation is[3]. I agree with Ryder that a conception of ordinal relations is a more satisfactory and appropriate way of understanding nations as entities, though I will disagree with him a bit in terms of what this means for the relations between the United States and China.

We should note that while the conception of ordinal relations has many sources, Ryder is particularly drawing on Justus Buchler's ontology when he develops the notion. Although Ryder's conception is itself complex and significantly ramified (as is the conception on which he draws), it is always opposed to the contention that anything at all is an absolute simple, an absolute atom, a source of relations but not itself constituted by relations. There is much to be said in discussing identity and identities using this rich conception, but while contested by a variety of thinkers in some contexts, almost everyone, I think, accepts the notion that nations are complex, participate in, constitute, and indeed are constituted by a vast variety of relations. The significance of ordinal relations in this case is to look carefully at what Ryder develops of Buchler's ideas of ordinality and of weak and strong relevance. Quoting Buchler here: "What does it mean for two complexes to be related? It means that each is at least a condition of the scope of the other; that is, of the other's comprehensiveness or pervasiveness. Each is a determinant, a determining trait, of the other's scope" (Buchler 1990, 104). Any and every complex is an order: a sphere of or for relatedness. Complexes locate orders and are located in more inclusive orders. The United States of America is what it is because of the contour of integrities it exhibits – the way it is governed, the people who are citizens, the people who are non-citizen residents, the people who lived and died here, the people who are trying to come here, the geopolitical location on the North American Continent, with eastern and western borders formed by vast oceans, and with neighboring countries to our north and south. These are among the many determining traits of the scope of the United States. And the scope of the U.S. in an order of geopolitical relations, an order of economics, an order of military equipment and postures, an order of sport and celebrity culture, and many, many other orders as well, is related to the scope of other nation states – including, of course, The People's Republic of China. In some orders the United States. is strongly relevant to China (i.e., is a determinant of its scope in that order), and in other orders the reverse is true, and sometimes in the same orders both may be strongly relevant to each other.

[2] See, for example: AsiaSociety.org/policy-institute/to-decouple-or-not-to-decouple? Peterson Institute for International Economics: piie.com/blogs/china-economic=watch/china-us-people-excanges-no-decoupling-yet? The Diplomat: https://the-diplomat.com>2020/09>the-real-strategic-end-game-in-decoupling-from-china/

[3] Of course, neither Ryder, Buchler, nor I would accept the claim that even railroad cars or billiard balls can be adequately understood as somehow totally independent entities which can be "unrelated" to each other. But the metaphor posits such atomic entities linked in various, reversable ways.

The concept of scope, of comprehensiveness or pervasiveness, is important here. In the Twenty-First Century it is clear that both countries have enormous scope in our world. The very idea that one could be "lifted off the table" or "decoupled" from the other is both philosophically and politically absurd. What makes our current situation a crisis, however, is the view that as China continues to grow in the 21st century, it tends to limit the pervasiveness and comprehensiveness of the U.S. According to Graham Allison, the Thucydides trap is likely to ensnare us in a devastating battle (2019). So, an oft-reached set of alternatives says we must either withdraw into total separation from one another (decouple, take our "ball" out of play), or protect ourselves against the growth of the other – a growth which can only serve to diminish our scope: our comprehensiveness and pervasiveness. And the only way to do *that* is to up our defenses, draw our allies into closer ranks, speed our development of advanced weaponry, and be sure that we control the game on the board. But, of course, if we see China as needing to be "contained", China will see us as the enemy and there is naught but horror in that scenario. Can an ontology of ordinal relations have any bearing on the desperate situations which are developing internationally?

Yes, it can. If we recognize that both the United States and China are orders of and for relatedness, and are located in more comprehensive orders, we realize that we are not each simply a nexus of interest that is *ours*, but are rather both located in many orders in which our traits are shared. We breathe the same air, cope with the same limitations on water, are affected (and infected) by the same organisms, pathogens, and chemicals. This is hardly a profound or novel observation, but the recognition of the increasing ramification of relations between, among, beneath and above the orders in which we are located is rather different from the understanding of the sorts of connections which have been drawn on the basis of economic transactions in which we engage. They are, in fact, relations from which we cannot disengage. Of course, this is in some sense a truism – we indeed have areas of common interest. But the point is that they are more than simply "areas of common interest." These traits of the more comprehensive orders in which both the United States and China are located are strongly relevant to our location in the physical, geological, chemical, biological, and social worlds – these traits determine our integrities as huge communities of persons in an increasingly fragile ecosystem. More than common interests, these common traits are comprehensible as existentially shared orders.

As Ryder argued in *The Things in Heaven and Earth*, "a relational ontology undergirds John Dewey's thinking" (179). Ryder has spent many years arguing that the only way we can manage the fragility of the orders we share, as well as the tensions produced by challenges nations provide to one another by impinging on one another's scope, is through practicing Deweyan democracy. It is important to note, however, that Ryder is not arguing that therefore all countries or all societies must be democracies. Rather, he is arguing that WE Pragmatic Naturalists should practice the Deweyan democracy we believe in, both in our own *polis* and in the international relations in which we intentionally engage. This is a significant distinction. For Americans, even or especially pragmatic naturalists, the task is not to export democracy, but rather to practice it. The People's Republic of China has argued that it is indeed democratic.[4] In many ways, in the sense that it understands its system as the best way to serve the *demos*, the people, it is a democracy. But it is not a Deweyan democracy: not simply because the leadership of the government is not selected by vote of the people governed, nor simply because there is only one party with any power at all. The Deweyan conception is not an ideal nor an aim of the Chinese government, nor has it been an ideal of Chinese traditional culture. It is not a Deweyan democracy in that the individuality of each Chinese citizen is not understood as to be developed in and through their full participation in, articulation of, and determinations concern-

[4] See https://thediplomat.com/2021/12/why-is-china-insisting-it-is-a-democracy/

ing the common projects of the community. Of course, by this measure the United States is not a Deweyan democracy either. Nevertheless, for pragmatic naturalists (as indeed for many others) this does represent the democratic AIM, the democratic IDEAL, of our country.

This aim and ideal makes both assumptions and demands. It assumes that the "we" of our community are capable of learning, growing, and utilizing intelligent reflection and planning as we communicate with one another and contribute to the formulation and realization of our communal projects; and it demands that we utilize these abilities in our interactions with one another. Further, it demands that we recognize that we are "citizens" of many communities: citizens of both city and nation; citizens of both faith communities and vocational communities; citizens of neighborhoods and volunteer organizations. Further still, each of our communities is located in more comprehensive communities – communities in which common interests need to be communally determined, analyzed, worked through, and pursued. Whether or not China and the United States. are political democracies, we certainly are located in more comprehensive orders and, as human beings, either we citizens of both possess the capacities Deweyan democracy assumes, or none of us do. Such capacities include the ability to learn, to reason, to reflect, to imagine, and to plan on the basis of what is discovered and learned. Assuming we do share the capacities, we must recognize that our shared location in the more comprehensive orders of the earth means that the problems we face and must solve, as common projects, make similar demands on all of us. The differences emerge in the ways in which our countries are, at present, actually structured. In the United States the nature of our government demands that each of us struggle to participate effectively in the communities – from village to town to state to national – in which we are located. To make our ideals real, we must personally act to learn, to grow, to utilize intelligent reflection, and to respect the intelligence and reflection and voices of others in the community as we order the environments which make us each who we are. With respect to international relations, though we do not personally negotiate them, we are responsible for the decisions made by the leaders of our community who do negotiate them as our representatives. We pragmatic naturalists recognize these demands even though we do not live up to them, and even though so many of our fellow citizens ignore them. The citizens of the People's Republic of China do not face the same ubiquitous demands. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) takes the responsibility of interpreting the people's needs and issues. Leading Party members learn and grow and intelligently plan for the resolutions of problematic situations – ordinary citizens have very, very limited roles. With respect to international relations, the CCP is responsible for considering, negotiating, and solving the concerns that arise. This difference matters. Ryder claims that,

> Dewey argues that a healthy community is one that fosters a proliferation of interests held in common, and that promotes ever-expanding and freer communication and interaction among groups or communities. A society characterized by these two traits is the ideal toward which we should strive. It is, Dewey says, the 'democratic ideal' (191).

And Ryder adds, "The two traits that define the democratic ideal are also the two principles that we shall develop to describe desirable social and international relations" (191).

He carries this forward by making it clear that this democratic ideal "requires that nation states pursue, and when necessary, construct, common interests, and it requires that they coordinate their foreign policies to bring those common interests to fruition" (198). It is possible to understand such a move by understanding the ontology of ordinal relations, rather than being limited by the ontology of discrete entities, the image of billiard balls as it were. Following John Ryder and Justus Buchler, we pragmatic naturalists should have no trouble understanding this move. Problems occur, however, in the next move – the claim that such an ontology requires us to "overcome the assumption of national sovereignty that has been with us since the seventeenth century"

(198). There is no question that, as Ryder develops it, the ideal of working towards, in, and with a democratic world – in which communities communicate with many other communities and recognize the crucial necessity of working with others, in different and greater communities, to intelligently and reflectively determine ends-in-view in common and work through the most appropriate means to achieve those ends is, indeed, the ideal. But the demand to do this does not adequately account for the real, existing power relations and differences in systems and structures that affect the way existing nations deal with each other.

Here is the crux of the problem. Ryder goes to great lengths to provide an intelligent and intelligible explanation of the ways in which nation-states are not billiard balls. A nation state is *not*,

> A discrete entity, with its nature and interests internally determined and that just happens to interact with other nation states in a web of political, economic, social, and military relations. On the contrary, a nation state is the state that it is by virtue of the political, economic, social, military, and many other relations in which it participates […] taken together its relations *are* the state (244).

Yes, we can agree with him here. But he goes on to derive a consequence from this that does not adequately describe China. Ryder says,

> borders are loose, flexible, porous, and shifting […] the porous nature of our borders enables only limited control over immigration and emigration; our borders are also porous, perhaps even irrelevant, in relation to communication, particularly contemporary forms of electronic communication (244–245)

Of course, this is partly true – but China is doing everything it can, especially now during the Covid-19 pandemic, to see that its borders are as absolutely impermeable as is humanly possible. The Great Firewall, the literal wall just built to separate China from Myanmar, the increasing militarization of border areas, and the insistence that "not an inch"[5] of the Chinese map derived from their current vision of the China of the great Qing, will be changed, all are ways in which the Chinese government is insisting on the sanctity of the billiard-ball vision of China.

Ryder wants us to conceive of borders not in the fixed and firm sense of the atomic entities which were understood to interact in Newtonian images of the physical world, but rather in the biological sense of the semi-permeable membranes which demarcate elements of an ecosystem – cell "membranes which help to enable cellular interaction and growth" (245). This is an appropriate, intelligent, persuasive request. It leads in the direction of identifying the many elements in our shared ecosystem which impact both China and the United States. It suggests that we work on the areas of such shared impact to find ways to together, democratically, articulate and act upon solutions to our common problems in this ecosystem – and there are, of course, many such common problems: water, air, heat, climate, terrorism, current and future pandemics, even the effects of the development of Artificial Intelligence and other technological changes. But China wants to address these problems mostly on the model of a "billiard-ball" nation which develops its own interests and then pursues those interests in interacting with others. It has the advantage of its own intelligent long-term planning. It knows that its plans intersect with others' plans and interests, but it does not see its closed borders, its closed plans, as an obstacle to continued interaction – it has planned for that interaction. The semi-permeable membrane, the relational ontological point of view, requires us to be genuinely open to novelty, to *shared* planning, to shared growth, not just win/win growth (a characterization that simply confirms the pre-identified interests of each party – win/win means we each get what we want) but to *shared* growth, to shared experiment, to shared fallibility. It is not the case that the United States has been any more open in these regards than China has been, or is – but it is true that our ideals, the thread of Deweyan

[5] See Postcard Kashmir, September 5, 2020, for statement to Indian Defense Minister: "Not an inch of China's territory can be lost […] The Chinese military has the resolve, capability and confidence to safeguard national sovereignty and territorial integrity."

democratic commitment that is an element of our political discourse, at least recognizes this as a valued consequence of the pragmatic naturalism we are here praising. China does not have a similar thread in its cultural tapestry or its Party ideology.

China is not democratic in our sense, nor is it persuaded by pragmatic naturalism in our sense. Still, *we* can be moved by – can be persuaded by – this democratic naturalism which demands not that we make China into a democracy, but rather that we behave democratically in our policy toward and with China. As Ryder says, "the responsibility of the democrat is not to spread democracy but to behave democratically [...] The details of a foreign policy flow from this basic principle" (260). Certainly, there is much to be said of this ordinal pragmatic naturalistic approach to foreign problems. Such a policy is accords with our ethical standards. It is a policy we can respect. Practicing it would indeed bring us the self-respect our current and recent policies have painfully denied us. But there is more in heaven and earth than has been dreamt of in your philosophy, John Ryder! While we lobby hard for the policy of working with China to formulate and articulate and pursue common interests, in fact both nations are arming themselves to degrees never known before. Deep under the sea, on the sea, on the land, in the air, in space, and in cyber space weapons are being developed and deployed that, if used, will mean there is no future in which to develop our common interests. The dangers of small states triggering a crisis, or small accidents, or unintended consequences from moves in the field are too real, too immediate, and too horrifying to contemplate. We had a real chance to work with China, to join a developing nation and to share in the great democratic adventure of making a genuinely new world together. I believe we have blown that chance: events of the 90s and in the 2000s have bit- by-bit destroyed that possibility. Consideration of theory and the work to turn it into practice is extraordinarily important and valuable – but events are taking place with astonishing rapidity. William James and John Ryder agree that the world is in the making, but there is not enough time to remake the world. What do we do *now*?

Sunzi wrote, over 2,000 years ago: "supreme excellence consists in breaking the enemy's resistance without fighting." Chinese thinkers and emperors have read Sunzi for over 2,000 years. Current Chinese thinkers and especially Chinese leaders are still reading Sunzi. Xi Jinping, President of the People's Republic, General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party, and Commander-in-Chief of the People's Liberation Army does not want war. But because of our actions over the last 70 years, Xi Jinping, other leaders of China, and many of China's citizens do indeed think of the United States of America as the enemy.[6] President Joe Biden and most of the citizens of the United States do not want war, but many of us do feel threatened by the dramatic growth of the military, the buildup of the tension over Taiwan, the pressures exerted by the increasing outreach of the PRC through its Belt and Road Initiative, and China's increasing dominance of international organizations and areas that we once dominated. Each country builds its resistance to the perceived threat of the other, neither wants war, but it is a looming danger – along with the problems involved in the exacerbation of the "threat" mode that decreases the opportunity for genuinely, non-pre-programmed collaboration on the articulation of our other common interests: climate, disease, and non-state terrorism. When we do come together, we are jockeying for position, for relative advantage with respect to our "billiard ball" interests. Each country is trying to "break the enemy's resistance without fighting." We are ignoring the truly democratic thread that has been developing in the United States (*sub rosa* too often!), in the process of creating and responding to China as enemy. How can we strengthen the pragmatic naturalist democratic

[6] Both our popular press and our intellectual and foreign policy publications have frequently referred to the necessity of "containing China." Xi is not making this up! And we not only spend enormous amounts on our military, we have surrounded China with bases, installed THAAD in the ROK, bombed the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade, sent spy planes and spy submarines to prominently patrol their borders, and many other specific incidents..

thread in the fabric of United States foreign policy while dealing with a Chinese foreign policy that lacks that thread – that lacks the democratic tradition and pragmatic naturalist democratic values altogether?

Just because the situation is so threatening, and because realism, neoconservatism, and traditional liberalism have the problems that Ryder has so clearly enumerated, current literature loves to talk about "decoupling" – essentially, isolationism, at least with respect to relations between the United States and China. For example:

> The casual, increasingly nonchalant and, for some at least, apparently satisfying deployment of the term "decoupling" to describe the current trajectory of the U.S.–China relationship, reminds us of the classical wisdom that in foreign policy, words are bullets. Indeed, "decoupling" has become the "term du jour" of U.S.–China relations, reflecting for some of the unfolding reality of the relationship. For others, its desired destination (Rudd 2019).

But the same isolationists who want us to decouple from China tend to push for other methods – realism especially, to be pursued through the development of alliances and support groupings essentially trying to "couple" everyone else to either the United States train. or the China train. Both China and the United States have, to some extent, taken this tack. Perhaps we can find a way to rethink coupling and decoupling that takes some of the insights of pragmatic naturalism and uses them to deal intelligently, creatively, and experimentally with the urgent situations that confront us now.

The billiard ball metaphor reduced actors to atomic entities, existing with no context, subject only to the forces of action and reaction as they careen around the table. The coupling/decoupling metaphor retains much more of the "independent object" metaphysics than we would like to see, but at least it does recognize context: the car which is coupled to the other cars in a train bound from Grand Central Station to Albany is identified as a Hudson Line car on the Metro-North Railroad; it has its origin and direction and meaning as a car which aids travelers moving north and south along the Hudson River. But it may be decoupled from the north-bound train in Albany, and re-coupled to a train heading to Buffalo. Now it is part of the Niagara line, and it aids travelers moving east and west. The car has somewhat different meaning, somewhat different traits, as it is located in the order of longer-distance travelers instead of in the order of commuters. We might consider a passenger car in a commuter line, decouple it from the commuter line and recouple it to freight line – now it is an adjunct to a business outing, checking on the connections available to the freight route. Now we decouple it again, and recouple it to a super-posh luxury excursion train – now it is the location of the cheap seats. The Niagara line may have 100 cars on some days, and only 20 on others. The cars change and the lines change. The idea is that even though rail cars can decouple and recouple, they are not unchangeable atoms, like the billiard balls on the table. They are clearly located in more comprehensive orders, and locate other orders which are subaltern. Further, in the more comprehensive orders in which they are located, they share traits with other entities that they may not share traits with, in still other orders.

Let's take South Korea as an example of a railroad car – it can be hooked to the China train, or to the US train. Each takes its name from its path of origin and end. The China train describes an overall trajectory, but not a strictly fixed entity. The same is true of the United States train. The South Korean car may sometimes follow the trajectory of the China train, sometimes of the United States train, and sometimes it will sit on the siding, and sometimes it will couple onto the ASEAN train, and sometimes with Japan, and sometimes with Australia, and so forth. The idea I am trying clumsily to articulate is that the metaphor of coupling and decoupling is wonderfully flexible. There are two huge dangers, however. One, that we fail to realize that trains run on tracks – it is crucial not to do anything that would derail a train on a track. Two, if we do as many pundits are urging us to do now, and try to be sure that every car available is coupled to the United States train, while China is busy trying to couple as many of these countries

as possible to its train. Then, with only two trains, (or perhaps three if Europe does the same), rather than create a vast, ever-enlarging communications system we will narrow and constrain and impoverish the systems of communication we already have. The branching patterns of railroad maps suggest many broad areas of coverage and many nodes where communication is possible: where decoupling and recoupling, where changes of direction and ramifications of meaning can take place. The railroad image, I think, makes clear the immense dangers involved in simply separating and strengthening two trains. We must, now, pursue a varied map. We must refrain from trying to permanently couple any country to ours. We must refrain from seeing the Chinese train as somehow needing to be derailed. There are nodes, there are intersections, places we can make contact. We must make them. But it is crucial that we recognize that there are many and varied interests determining which cars make up a given train at any particular time.

One danger of the metaphor is that it appears to call for a single Logistics Engineer to decide who goes where, when. The version I am suggesting does not intend this logical implication. In a sense, trains (in this metaphorical construction) come together as physical, chemical, biological, social, and geopolitical orders change and their traits locate new integrities and shed old ones. Of course, this metaphor has problems – but taken loosely, it is meant to urge both flexibility and motion, within limits. It is meant to suggest that the "lines" of the trains are determined by many forces, located in many orders, and the make-up of the trains is determined by both the pressures each "car" faces and the needs and pressures experienced by the many, many trains.

Right now, we need to be open and flexible in recognizing the opportunities presented by every "hub", every intersection of lines. But, following the democratic ethics that Ryder so beautifully developed in his work, we need to recognize that we are not the appointed logistics manager. We need to be open to the varied pressures and the varied needs of the cars, the trains, and the passengers. We need to ramify the network, not just a particular node, as much as is in our power. We need to aim for reach, breadth, and responsiveness in our willingness to decouple, recouple, and engage with one another – we must, at all costs, avoid the end of the line.

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