

PRAGMATISM TODAY

ISSN 1338-2799

The Journal of the Central-European Pragmatist Forum



Power: Theory and Praxis

Volume 13, Issue 2, Winter 2022





**INDEXED BY: The Philosopher's Index
Scopus**

J.Serrano.Zamora@uma.es

EDITORIAL & ADVISORY BOARDS

GUEST EDITOR

Rebecca L Farinas

Loyola University New Orleans

RebeccaFar38@aol.com

EDITOR IN CHIEF

Alexander Kremer

University of Szeged, Hungary

alexanderkremer2000@yahoo.com

Donald J Morse

Webster University, USA

dmorse@webster.edu

ASSOCIATE EDITORS

Philipp Dorstewitz

American University of Ras-al-Khaimah, UAE

philipp.dorstewitz@aurak.ae

Lubomir Dunaj

University of Vienna

lubomir.dunaj@univie.ac.at

Rebecca Farinas

Loyola University New Orleans, USA

rlfarina@loyno.edu

Dorota Koczanowicz

University of Wrocław, Poland

dorota.koczanowicz@uwr.edu.pl

Randall E. Auxier

Southern Illinois University Carbondale

personalist61@gmail.com

Justo S. Zamora

University of Málaga

ADVISORY BOARD

Amrita Banerjee

Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay, India

Lyuba Bugaeva

Saint Petersburg State University, Russia

Gideon Calder

University of Wales, United Kingdom

James Campbell

University of Toledo, USA

Ramón del Castillo

Universidad Nacional Educación a Distancia, Spain

Vincent Colapietro

Pennsylvania State University, USA

Roberta Dreon

Venice University, Cà Foscari

Michael G. Festl

University of St. Gallen, Switzerland

Roberto Frega

National Centre for Scientific Research, France

Richard Hart

Bloomfield College, USA

Larry Hickman

Southern Illinois University, USA

Leszek Koczanowicz

University of Social Sciences and Humanities,

Poland

Lee A. McBride III

College of Wooster, USA

Alan Malachowski

University of Stellenbosch, South Africa

Armen Marsoobian

Southern Connecticut State University, USA

Kurt C. M. Mertel

American University of Sharjah

Carlos Mougán

University of Cadiz, Spain



Miklos Nyiro

University of Miskolc, Hungary

Gregory Pappas

Texas A&M University, USA

Sami Pihlstrom

University of Helsinki

Soctt L. Pratt

University of Oregon

Henrik Rydenfelt

University of Helsinki, Finland

John Ryder

Széchenyi István University, Hungary

Herman Saatkamp

*Institute for American Thought, Indiana University
Indianapolis*

Richard Shusterman

Florida Atlantic University, USA

Radim Šíp

Masaryk University, Czech Republic

Charlene Haddock Seigfried

Purdue University, USA

Paul Thompson

Michigan State University, USA

Emil Višňovský

Comenius University & Slovak Academy of Sciences

Christopher Voparil

Union Institute and University, USA

Kathleen Wallace

Hofstra University, USA

Sandra Zakutna

University of Prešov

*This project would not have been possible without the
generous support of SAAP.*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION: POWER: THEORY AND PRACTICE

<i>Rebecca L Farinas</i>	7
--------------------------------	---

CHAPTERS

PRACTICES OF FREEDOM: PRAGMATIC REFLECTIONS ON A FOUCAULTIAN THEME

<i>Vincent M. Colapietro</i>	10
------------------------------------	----

ABOLISHING TRUTH, ACHIEVING DEMOCRACY? RORTY'S PRAGMATIST CRITIQUE OF POWER

<i>Hans-Herbert Kögler</i>	28
----------------------------------	----

EMERSON AS SOCIAL REFORMER

<i>James Campbell</i>	47
-----------------------------	----

ANALYZING TRUTHFUL EXPERIENCES: FEELING-OUT TRANSGENDER VALUES AND TRANSVALUATION

<i>Rebecca L Farinas</i>	59
--------------------------------	----

MORAL PROGRESS: CONVERSATION OR CONFLICT? ON PHILIP KITCHER, KENNETH ARROW, AND JOHN DEWEY

<i>Frederic R. Kellogg</i>	81
----------------------------------	----

WHY CONTROLLING THE HISTORICAL NARRATIVE MATTERS: A JAMESIAN RESPONSE

<i>Armen T. Marsoobian</i>	93
----------------------------------	----

DEFENDING THE TRUTH

<i>Jane Skinner</i>	108
---------------------------	-----

VARIABLE

LOVE AS BEING MOVED IN A CATEGORICAL SUBJUNCTIVE THAT IS OPENING A WORLD (WITH MAX SCHELER AND HELMUTH PLESSNER)

<i>Hans-Peter Krüger</i>	118
--------------------------------	-----

SUBJECT-CENTERED TRANSACTION VERSUS A-SUBJECTIVE MEDIAL PARTICIPATION: ON THE CONCEPTS OF EXPERIENCE IN PRAGMATIC NATURALISM AND HERMENEUTICS

<i>Miklós Nyírő</i>	126
---------------------------	-----

THE PRAGMATIST UNDERSTANDING OF THE DAO: THE ART OF LIVING AND THE WAY OF ART

Tanehisa Otabe 140

BOOK REVIEW

RECONSTRUCTING RORTY, ENHANCING PRAGMATISM

VOPARIL, CHRIS. RECONSTRUCTING PRAGMATISM: RICHARD RORTY AND THE CLASSICAL PRAGMATISTS. New York: Oxford University Press, 2022.

Emil Visnovsky 151

INTRODUCTION

Rebecca L Farinas

Loyola University New Orleans

RebeccaFar38@aol.com

Pragmatic thinkers, in general, are compelled to answer several central questions about our human experiences, such as how we can come to know the truth of our ever-changing world and how we expose false situations, which do not allow for further re-evaluation and inquiry. Both questions can be brought forward as we caution against the misuse of controlling and manipulating powers, i.e., those human behaviors by which our beliefs become absolute, statically normative, and untenable, regardless of changing conditions and our individual or collective creativity and expressiveness. Contemporarily people can conveniently access fouled wells of misconstrued human resources by positing solipsistic opinions, being irresponsible in terms of authority, or relying on static proxy laws, all of which can be used in terms of modes of control and domination. Pragmatists turn to methods of inquiry and analysis to counter vehicles of negative power such as biased politics or harmful mass media. A pragmatist questions and speculates about matters, planning to proceed with beneficial results while testing their analysis. So, pragmatists don't act without expectations, and just as being truthful requires an active audience, a community of inquirers should verify the results of their analysis. Hence, acting as participants in democratic processes by devising and employing methods of reasoned consensus disallows totalitarian power. As well, contemporary philosophical discussions are most truthful when one engages many methods, taking onboard a plurality of questions or problems. Such consensus building and pluralistic methods are discussed in this issue, "Power in Theory and Practice."

The Central European Pragmatist Forum's eleventh international conference was held by the Institute of Philosophy, University of Prešov, Slovakia, in 2022, and being devoted to this topic, many of the essays in this

issue were presented in some form at that meeting. The issue is divided into three sections.

Section one includes two papers by the conference's keynote speakers, who within have expanded and formalized their lectures. Vincent M. Colapietro marks an expansion of Dewey's thinking with respect to previously made critiques following "the lead of Michael Eldridge." Emphasizing Dewey's realism, in terms of pragmatic naturalism, as an experiential approach to understanding ourselves and our lives, by one's pragmatic intelligence, she can accept the truth of what is wrong with our world and the fact that people's attempts to deal with problems are fallible. The turn Colapietro takes is threefold, ontological, metaphysical, and ethical; accepting the role of experts as part of a democratic process, finding it important for people to accept an ontological condition of sinfulness or injustice, which is humbling, and the meaningfulness of the rituals of acknowledgment, gratitude, and commemoration. Foucaultian practices of freedom come into play as an aesthetic mode of such a democratic way of life.

Deflating antiquated correspondence theories of truth is an integral part of Rorty's critique of power and democratic project, according to Kögler. While critiquing Rorty's relative and somewhat ambivalent answer to a need to establish truth, Kögler finds that there are human resources at hand, mainly that we take on board more fully our basic humanity and how to be moral in those terms, thereby forming truth as more proactive, creative, and aesthetic, i.e., democratic approach.

Peer reviewed papers make up the second section, beginning with Campbell's discussion of Emerson as a pacifist yet activist, albeit a truth-teller. Campbell discloses how a deep and abiding belief in individual creativity is vital to collective social reform, especially in terms of power relations. Farinas hopes for a turn towards truthfulness as we begin to analyze our felt values in practical terms. Alain Locke's axiology forms her approach to fighting discrimination and oppression of people who are transgender.

In tune with a pluralistic spirit, we can move from value theory to policy-making to improve unjust power relations, satisfying for the time being our quest for truth. Kellogg's application of a pragmatic method of conflict resolution deflates authoritative power plays, not merely by a conversation that may resolve debates about ultimate truths but cannot always secure change. However, Kellogg finds answers by employing a pragmatic method by which we can make fair policies and laws to adjust our preferences and habits.

Moral progress was always on William James' mind, as for him, such personal and community improvements constitute truth. Aesthetic meanings and moral values are fore fronted in Marsoobian's essay, as he explains that combatting anti-democratic power narratives means allowing and engaging in an "open and honest examination of a nation's historical narrative." In the final essay, Skinner defends truth-telling and freedom of speech against the deceitfulness of human technologies which are fueled by power hungry people. Through conceptions of 'adaptive truth' by Peirce and Margolis, as well as ideas by Skinner, people can counter totalitarian regimes while defending democratic practices.

The Varia section is certainly not anecdotal, as Krüger, Nyírő, and Ottabe open all the discussions to pluralistic thinking, in terms of interpretations of versions of metaphysical, hermeneutic, and aesthetic philosophies. Krüger associates pragmatic value theories, which are inherent to experience, with how one anticipates actions. Nyírő takes seriously hermeneutic aspects of experiences in terms of pragmatic naturalism. Finally, Ottabe reflects on pragmatic and Dao aesthetics as interpretations and analyses of artful ways of life.

Marking the importance of Chris Voparil's book on Richard Rorty's pragmatic reconstruction, the issue is concluded by *Emil Višňovský's insightful review "Reconstructing Rorty, Enhancing Pragmatism."*

The editor would like to thank all the scholars who helped with peer reviews. I am also grateful to Alexander Kremer and Lubomir Dunaj for their kindness and careful oversight. Finally, all the authors deserve my gratitude and respect, in that because of their work the issue is insightful, revealing, proactive, and truthful.



CHAPTERS

"PRACTICES OF FREEDOM": PRAGMATIC REFLECTIONS ON A FOUCAULTIAN THEME [MICHAEL ELDRIDGE 2022 LECTURE]

Vincent M. Colapietro

Pennsylvania State University & University of Rhode Island
colapietrovm@gmail.com

ABSTRACT: The author follows the lead of Michael Eldridge in *Transforming Experience: John Dewey's Cultural Instrumentalism* (1998) in revisiting the debates of Dewey with Walter Lippman on the role of experts in a democracy, Reinhold Niebuhr on the alleged necessity of human beings to acknowledge our inescapable sinfulness, and, finally, John Herman Randall, Jr., John E. Smith, and others on the place of ritual in our lives. But he deviates sharply from Michael Eldridge on these topics. While Eldridge argues that there "is no need for distinctive rituals, revelations, or prayers or for churches, synagogues, temples, or shrines," he argues that at least regarding distinctive or identifiable rituals there is such a need. In urging Deweyans to make concessions to Lippmann, Niebuhr, Randall, and Smith, he however is offering what he takes to be friendly amendments. While he doubts that they will be received as such, he does not think that Dewey's pragmatic naturalism is in the least compromised or disfigured by these concessions. Much rather, he takes Dewey's cultural instrumentalism, pragmatic naturalism, or whatever other designation one selects as an appropriate name for this philosophical project to be enhanced by these concessions. Dewey can thereby be quickly extricated from fruitless controversies and, of greater importance, more deeply allied with the unblinking realism he so admired. In this context, realism does not designate a philosophical doctrine; rather, it signifies an indispensable quality of pragmatic intelligence, encompassing the courage to acknowledge unflattering truths and to accept human finitude. Finally, the author connects, as odd as it might seem, what Michel Foucault calls "practices of freedom" to such rituals as those of acknowledge, gratitude, and commemoration. In the interstices of everyday life, "our impatience for liberty" (as Foucault puts it) assumes "a patient labor" at least occasionally giving radiant form to our ceaseless striving. Among the forms of such labor, certain rituals ought not to be discounted.

Keywords: Expertise; fallenness (or sin); intelligence (pragmatic, communal, creative); Lippmann, Walter; Niebuhr, Reinhold; ritual

Introduction

It is appropriate to open my reflections by recalling that, in an exchange with Reinhold Niebuhr, John Dewey insisted, "we have said nothing so long as we have merely said

power" (LW 9, 109).¹ What we need first and foremost is "discrimination," specifically, the work of intelligence in discriminating the forms of power and the intersection of these forms.² We do not so much need a general theory of power as detailed descriptions of its operation (Foucault). *Describing* the actual operations and relationships of power is, from a Deweyan perspective, a truly critical task, for it takes seriously the tacit principles, norms, and ideals always already operative in a given form of human life.³ The normative is not brought in eventually: it is present from the outset and the painstaking description and discriminating analysis of the actual claims made by situated actors cannot be dismissed as *prima facie* rights in a weak sense. These claims must be taken with the utmost seriousness. These descriptions and analyses alone will provide us with what we most need: "knowledge of the distribution of power." For Dewey no less than Foucault, power is capillary. It does not flow from a single

¹ One reason for this is that Michael Eldridge took great care to show the importance of this "debate" for the purpose of understanding Dewey's instrumentalism. See Michael Eldridge, *Transforming Experience: John Dewey's Cultural Instrumentalism* (1998), pp. 52–61. Another reason is that the contemporary dialogue between naturalistic approaches and traditional religions needs to be conducted on a more informed, civil, and honest manner than it is unfolding at present.

² Fully considered, the work of intelligence is at least threefold: "Memory of the past, observation of the present, and foresight of the future are indispensable" (MW 14, 183). The work of intelligence is at once the work of recollection, observation, and forecast. The observation of the present however compels us, etc.

³ This is what I take to be the import of "Morals Is Social," the concluding chapter of *Human Nature and Conduct* (MW 14). Here he indeed stresses: "Morals are social. The question of ought, should be, is a question of better and worse in social affairs [including of course social relationships]. The extent to which the weight of theories has been thrown against the perception of the place of social ties and connections in moral action is a fair measure of the extent to which social forces work blindly and develop an accidental morality" (MW 14, 219), also the extent to which ethical ideals are removed from the actual working of everyday life. We are in effect caught in a circle, wherein ideals are effectively divorced from actuality and actualities are stripped of normativity. Social affairs in their brute actuality are presumed to be inherently devoid of a normative character, whereas principles, norms, and ideals are in effect conceived in an invincibly abstract manner (what is in truth their otherworldly character). "Thus we are invited into to enter again a circle in which the ideal has no force and social actualities [have] no ideal quality" (MW 14, 224). The only way to avoid this is to describe social affairs as inherently normative and norms as concretely embodied, however partially or imperfectly.

source, but it tends to gather, consolidate, and intensify in multiple loci. According to Foucault, "power is everywhere not because it embraces everything [though it might], but because it comes from everywhere" (*History of Sexuality* [1990], 93; quoted by Rouse 1994, 106). "Power is [for Foucault] not," as Joseph Rouse helpfully writes, "possessed by a dominant agent, [thus] not located in that agent's relations to those dominated, but is instead distributed throughout complex social networks" (1994, 106; cf., e.g., Dewey, MW 14, 224). Our preoccupation with juridical forms of power, univocally located in recognizable forms of sovereignty, needs to give way to analyses of the actual dynamics of power, ambiguously located in largely unrecognized forms of striving, struggle, and opposition. In other words, invoking the concept of power explains hardly anything at all (if indeed it does illuminate in the least what is presently at play in our lives) (again, Dewey LW 9, 109); only intelligently discriminating the fissures, fusions, ramifications, and intersections of irreducibly heterogeneous forms of power in their actual operation does much to grasp the sources of our frustrations, impasses, and confusion. "The bare force of circumstance forces us," Dewey suggests in *Reconstruction in Philosophy* (1920), "onwards in the daily detail of our beliefs and acts, but our deeper thoughts and desires turn us backwards" (Dewey MW 12, 201).

It is also illuminating to recall the context in which Dewey insists upon these points. "Intelligence and Power" opens with an observation indirectly signaling his desideratum. "Those who contend that intelligence is capable of exercising a significant role in social affairs and that it would be well if it had a much larger influence in directing social affairs can readily be made to appear ridiculous" (LW 9, 107). Considering human history, the role of intelligence in such affairs is anything but significant. What we observe is the "domination of the methods of institutional force, custom, and illusion," not the efficacy of methods of cooperative intelligence. While Dewey desires above all to make the case for such intelligence, he

realizes that he can only do so by *conceding* at the outset the historical failure of human intelligence to direct social affairs. It very well may be, as Dewey suggests in *Liberalism and Social Action* (1935), that "the measure of civilization is the degree to which the method of cooperative intelligence replaces the method of brute force" (LW 11, 57). But the desired replacement might never take place: enduring barbarity, a ceaseless reliance on brutal means, might never give way to social intelligence as anything more than a negligible force in human affairs.⁴ The practical task of making social intelligence into a significant power remains utopian as long as the means for *transforming* human intelligence in its historical forms are themselves seen as woefully inadequate. For example, the reliance on "education," however broadly conceived, can only seem, especially in the opening decades of the twenty-first century, wildly utopian.⁵

Greater concessions to "realism"⁶ are urgently need, for the Deweyan approach to become more broadly persuasive. Dewey fully appreciated the rhetorical aspects of the democratic project.⁷ The failure to persuade a critical mass of diverse individuals to one's side (in this case, the side of creative, cooperative intelligence) spelled failure *simpliciter*. Crafting effective means of rational persuasion was a necessary condition for the task of a people constituting itself into a public. The means of per-

⁴ What Walter Benjamin asserts – "There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism" – should be recalled here. The extent to which civilization and barbarity were interwoven needs to be squarely confronted and candidly probed.

⁵ See, e.g., Richard J. Bernstein, *Praxis and Action* (1971), pp. 220–29. More than fifty years ago, this sympathetic expositor of Dewey's pragmatic philosophy substantively conceded the charge levelled by Marxists and others against it: "Dewey was unrealistically optimistic about what could and would be achieved by social reform" (1971, p. 229).

⁶ This is of course a fraught term. Dewey was acutely aware how unrealistic his proposals and positions could be made to appear. He took himself to be unblinkingly realistic, but also realistically sensitive to how those who prided themselves on being realistic were all too often providing a disguise for cynicism and despair.

⁷ See, e.g., Robert Danisch, *Pragmatism, Democracy, and the Necessity of Rhetoric* (2007), Nathan Crick, *Democracy and Rhetoric: John Dewey and the Arts of Becoming* (2010), Scott Stroud, *John Dewey and the Artful Life* (2011). Jeremiah Dyehouse. Also see Larzer Ziff, *Literary Democracy* (1981).

suasion and dissemination cannot be severed from those of inquiry and critique.⁸

Dewey's defense of democracy, as a way of life,⁹ becomes effective only by being persuasive and, in turn, it becomes persuasive only by eradicating the doubts of those who can so easily caricature this defense as utopian or unrealistic. Concessions to such "realists" as Lippmann and Niebuhr need not spell defeat. Indeed, they might be crucial for any possibility of success.

On this occasion, I want to consider three critical concessions a Deweyan today might make more forthrightly than Dewey was disposed to make. They are to some extent in keeping with concessions he readily made but tended to rush by in his preoccupation with defending social intelligence as a potentially significant force in social affairs. One might even find texts in which he *made* these concessions, but they tend to be overlooked by his expositors and defenders.

These concessions are not all the same size. A fuller concession to Walter Lippmann regarding expertise is not as large as it is likely to appear to Dewey's champions, while one to Reinhold Niebuhr regarding fallenness (or sin) is as large as it seems. Finally, a concession to such friendly critics as John Herman Randall, Jr., and John E. Smith regarding ritual is middling.

Above all, my interest is in the substantive issues, not the historical debates (however much I find these debates to be inherently fascinating and uncannily pertinent to our present predicament). While I urge these three concessions as friendly amendments to the Deweyan approach to political life, I have no doubt that they will not be received as such by many, perhaps most, contemporary Deweyans. However friendly might be the intention prompting an amendment to the advocates of a position, its reception by those advocates ultimately determines whether it is – or is not – truly friendly.

First, the power of citizens to govern themselves depends to a great extent on the intelligent reliance on relevant expertise. Second, the intelligent deployment of political power depends on what might be called the "spiritual discipline" of human impulses.¹⁰ Individuals must, as John William Miller stresses, carry responsibility in their own person. "It is," he adds, "a great illusion to suppose that governments will protect rights when individuals display nothing but desires in their wills [i.e., little or no discipline over their desires], and nothing but opinions in their minds."¹¹ Finally, not all of the rites on which our lives depend are as individualized, varied, and undefinable as Dewey appears to think (see especially MW 14, 226-27). "Religion as a sense of the whole is the most individualized of all things, the most spontaneous, undefinable and varied" (MW 14, p. 226). "The life of the community in which we live and have our being is," he stresses, "the fit symbol of this relationship" to (MW 14, 227; cf. *A Common Faith*, LW 9, 56) the whole in which "the flickering inconsequential acts of separate selves" unfold. They partake of "a sense of the whole which claims and dignifies" them. "The acts in which we express our perception of the ties which bind us to others are the only rites and ceremonies" (MW 14, 227).¹² But the rituals communicating our consciousness of these ties and thereby deepening this consciousness are effective only insofar as some of them are broadly shared and deeply felt. A culture bereft of shared rituals is one deprived of the requisite means not only to express a common faith but also simply to cultivate a religious sense of the sustaining whole in and through which human lives attain

⁸ See especially *The Public and Its Problem* (LW 2).

⁹ See my piece in *The Kettering Review*, 24, 3 (Fall 2006), "Democracy as a Moral Ideal."

¹⁰ Reinhold Niebuhr, *Moral Man and Immoral Society*. See also Christopher Lasch, *The True and Only Heaven: Progress and Its Critics* (1991), Chapter 9 ("The Spiritual Discipline Against Resentment").

¹¹ Miller, *The Paradox of Cause and Other Essays* (1978), p. 73. Spiritually disciplined desires and rationally formed judgments – not capricious desires and irresponsible opinions – are requisite for individuals to be self-governed. Political self-governance depends in part on self-sovereign citizens.

¹² This is in fact the concluding sentence of *Human Nature and Conduct* (MW 14). It anticipates the concluding paragraph of *A Common Faith* (LW 9, 56-58).

their recognizable forms.¹³ In brief, we need rituals no less than stories, effective forms of communal expression no less than efficacious instruments of communal inquiry. We are as irrepressibly gestural as we are storytelling animals.¹⁴

Concessions to Walter Lippman

Even as careful an expositor as Michael Eldridge can be tempted to identify the conflict between Lippmann and Dewey in a distorted manner. "Challenging Lippmann's thesis that democracy must rely," he wrote, "on experts and insiders because the omniscience of the citizen was an illusion, Dewey proposed an alternative."¹⁵ This is not quite right. Not only did Dewey concede that the "public" was at present a phantom, but he also granted that citizens could not dispense with discriminating reliance on relevant experts. Reliance on experts does not in itself constitute rule by experts. Even more to the point, Dewey never doubted the importance or salience of expertise. He was as much as any other intellectual appalled by the arrogance¹⁶ of "know nothings" who prided themselves on their ignorance and took their admitted lack of formal knowledge to provide them with a unique qualification for making intelligent decisions. The ideal of intelligence championed by Dewey was after all social: the isolated citizen was incompetent, the communal intelligence of a critical mass of widely scattered, but pub-

licly integrated individuals¹⁷ alone provides a rough approximation of the requisite competence for democratic governance. Even individuals thinking in concert with one another fall far short of omniscience, but only such individuals approximate the competence requisite for political self-rule.

Citizens cannot govern themselves without having recourse to information and insight only obtainable from experts (e.g., climate, disease, and population scientists). To repeat, reliance on such expertise does not entail rule by the experts. They are being enlisted by citizens as consultants and practices of consultations call for more critical attention than they have tended to garner in either Dewey's day or our own. At the risk of stepping too quickly into the next two sections, such practices might involve an unrecognized spiritual discipline¹⁸ and, no less, a ritual character. "Rule by the experts" is a red herring. Reliance on experts helps to define the terms within which any intelligent debate about our inescapable dependence on relevant expertise must be carried out.

The distinctively democratic character of Lippmann's approach begins to come into focus when we recall his principled opposition to uninformed populism. Arguably, what was dangerous in his own day is even more so in our time. Thus, our own trepidation about such populism ought to be no less than his. If anything, it ought to be greater.

In Lippmann's judgment, the expert "is there to represent the unseen [and the unheard]. He represents people who are not voters, functions of voters that are not evident [likely to these voters themselves or anyone else], events that are out of sight, mute people, unborn

¹³ "The evils of the church that now is are," R. W. Emerson asserted in his Divinity School Address, "manifest. What shall we do, I confess, all attempts to establish a Cultus with new rites and forms, seem to me vain. Faith makes us, and not we it, and faith makes its own forms" (1982, p. 126).

¹⁴ Dewey, *A Common Faith* (LW 9, 40). Cf. Giovanni Maddalena.

¹⁵ Eldridge, *Transforming Experience*, p. 77.

¹⁶ "Where Dewey was worried," as Eldridge perceptively notes, "about despair, Niebuhr was worried about arrogance" (1998, p. 53). He is endorsing here an interpretation put forth by Robert Westbrook. See Robert B. Westbrook, *Dewey and American Democracy* (1991), p. 530. Of course, Dewey was also worried about arrogance. On his own terms, he arguably should have been as concerned with arrogance as despair, possibly more appreciative of the forms of arrogance bound up with the rapid ascendancy of American power.

¹⁷ That is, individuals who by virtue of their practical consciousness of shared problems constitute themselves as a public, by seeing their lives, actions, and concerns being intertwined with those of their "neighbors," no matter how far-flung or distant these neighbors might geographically be. Geographical distance does not entail either ethical indifference or political irrelevance.

¹⁸ Cf. Reinhold Niebuhr, *Major Works on Religion and Politics* (2015), 329. The text to which I am referring here is specifically found in *Moral Man and Immoral Society*.

people, relations between things and persons [cf. Bruno Latour's *The Politics of Nature: How to Bring the Sciences into Democracy*]. He [the expert] has a constituency of intangibles."¹⁹ Lippmann does not intend the authority of the expert to replace that of the citizen. He rather wants voices other than a minority to be heard in the rough-and-tumble debates regarding contemporary issues. Who, if anyone, speaks for generations yet to be born? Who, if anyone, speaks for those so systematically disenfranchised as to be thoroughly disaffected? At every critical juncture, the voice of the people is hardly anything more than that of an effectively organized, very well-funded minority committed to advancing its interests at the expense of the interests of other groups. In the U.S., for instance, less than 25% of eligible voters can impose its will on the nation and the presidential candidate without a majority of the popular vote, with (to repeat) a comparatively small percent of the endorsement of eligible voters, can proclaim an incontestable mandate to drive the nation in the direction of policies rejected in some instances by roughly 75 percent of the eligible voters and far more or those who are citizens but not yet eligible to vote.²⁰

If anything is a false dichotomy, it is the disjunction between rule by the people and rule by experts. People are in countless instances themselves expert in some fields, whereas however effective populist demagogues might be in marshalling resentment and anger toward the elite, they themselves both rely on experts and are themselves in most cases examples of individuals who have gone to elite institutions and, as a result, enjoy an

elite status in American culture. An elitist in populist's clothing is simply the contemporary (dis)guise of a wolf in sheep's clothing.

We as citizens desperately need expertise from a wide range of disciplines, covering an even broader spectrum of complex issues (in no small part, complex because they are intertwined, also – as Lippmann emphasized – complex because they are in a sense "invisible"²¹). In "The Social Value of the College Bred," William James argued, "the narrowest trade or professional training does something more for a man than to make a skillful practical tool of him – it makes him also a judge of other men's skills." It helps individuals acquire "a critical sense," one enabling them to discern "the difference [in general] between second-rate and first-rate work," and not only in their specific branch of employment. For James, then, "even the humblest manual trade may beget in one a certain small degree of power to judge of good work generally." After making this point, James poses the question at the heart of his address²²: How can you know a good man when you see him?²³ Citizens need to be able to distinguish charlatans from persons of integrity, quacks from experts. In the opening decade of the last century, James noted: the critics of democracy stress that "its preference are inveterately for the inferior." "Vulgarity enthroned and institutionalized" is what he observed, "elbowing everything superior from the highway."²⁴ "Nothing future is quite secure ... and democracy as a whole may undergo self-poisoning," most effectively when the poison is taken to be the medicine

¹⁹ Lippmann, *Public Opinion* (1977 [1922]), 241. Quoted by Michael Schudson, "The public, media, and the limits of democracy: Re-examining the Lippmann-Dewey 'debate'" (2019). See Dewey's favorable review of this book. MW 13, 337-44. First published in *New Republic*, 30 (1922), 286-88. Also, see "Practical Democracy. Review of Walter Lippmann's *The Phantom Public*" in LW 2, 213-20. First published in *New Republic*, 45 (2 December 1925), 52-54.

²⁰ While it is parochial of me to focus on the U.S., the structural flaws of our institutional arrangement have, I suspect, their counterpart in the flaws observable in other institutional frameworks (i.e., in the U.K., France, Germany, Russia, Japan, and China).

²¹ See, e.g., Lippman, *Public Opinion*, p. 11.

²² "The Social Value of the College-Bred" was originally given as an address to the Quarter-Centennial Meeting of the Association of Collegiate Alumnae (what is now called the American Association of University Women) at Radcliffe College (November 7, 1907) and shortly thereafter published in *McClure's Magazine* (#30, February 1908), 419-22. It is ironic that James concludes this address by pointing to "McClure's Magazine, the American Magazine, Collier's Weekly, and, its fashion, the World's Work" as "a popular university" (1987, 111-12), being nothing less than "formidable competitors outside" the formal institutions of higher education in the U.S.

²³ "The Social Value of the College-Bred," 106, 108.

²⁴ Op. cit., 109.

of "freedom" in one of its spurious forms. A good woman or man is good in no small part in the ability of that individual to recognize the relevant goodness of other human beings, including the virtue, intelligence, and indeed expertise of those others (cf. Jefferson).

What Dewey appreciated appears to be ignored by Deweyans today, the detail into which Lippmann goes in both analyzing the roots of the problems confronting a practical approximation of representative democracy and offering possible remedies to these deeply rooted problems.

What Deweyans must do today is simply begin to match Lippmann's detailed analyses and recommendations about the specific roles of varied experts in governmental deliberations. What Dewey himself did was admire just how detailed and, for the most part, constructive were Lippmann's analyses and recommendations.²⁵ His misgivings about the possible implications of Lippmann's deeply informed position were possibly surpassed by his appreciation of the detail with which this position was articulated.

Concessions to Reinhold Niebuhr

The previous section was the easy part – now for the hard one. It is one thing to make the case for Dewey conceding more ground to Lippmann, while it is quite another trying to do this regarding Niebuhr. Admitting experts into a democratic polity should not be controversial; acknowledging anything approximate to the innate fallenness of the human animal cannot appear to Deweyans today as anything but highly contentious. What benefit for Dewey could there be in taking seriously what traditional theology in certain dominant Western traditions has stressed as much as divine goodness, "original sin" or human fallenness?

Indeed, Dewey's *Human Nature and Conduct* invites us to read it as a thoroughgoing repudiation of this tra-

ditional notion. It opens with a proverb: "Give a dog a bad name and hang him" (MW 14, 4).²⁶ Human nature has been the proverbial dog, and "consequences accord with the proverb." In the same Introduction which opens with this saying, we encounter the arresting expression "a pathology of goodness" (Dewey MW 14, 6; Dewey cf. LW 2, 341). We might act morally for admirable reasons, but we might also do so for not only ignoble but also sick reasons (such is the force of pathology in this context).²⁷ Indeed, conventional morality might be a pathological affair to a far greater extent than even skeptical observers of the human scene are disposed to admit. Friedrich Nietzsche stands out because he proved the exception to this tendency. But Dewey no less than Nietzsche and Freud appreciated the extent to which conventional morality is a pathological affair. Like Freud, but arguably unlike Nietzsche, Dewey also appreciated that the difference between customary and reflective morality can never be more than relative; it is never absolute (LW 9, 162).²⁸ "Some degree of reflection must," Dewey observes, "have entered occasionally into systems which in the main were founded on social wont and use, while in contemporary morals, even when the need of critical judgment is most recognized, there is an immense amount of conduct that is merely accommodated to social usage" (LW 9, 162).

As Michael Eldridge so helpfully notes, Dewey insisted

²⁶ An earlier invocation of this British proverb can be found in the writings of Cadwallader Colden. See *American Philosophers: An Anthology*, edited by Harris, Pratt, and Waters (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002), 180. This selection is taken from Joseph L. Blau, *American Philosophic Addresses 1700-1900* (NY: Columbia University Press, 1946).

²⁷ Dewey contends that not only individuals but also societies or cultures – indeed nothing less than the human world – can be sick. See, e.g., "A Sick World" (MW 15, 42-46). Originally published in *New Republic*, 33 (1923), 217-18. "The world has always been," Dewey alleges, "more or less a sick world. The isles of harmony and health with which we dot the map of human history are largely constructions of the imagination, cities of refuge against present ills. ... But it may be doubted if the consciousness of sickness was ever so widespread as it is today. Our optimism of the cheery word, of sunshine and prosperity is a little too assertive; the lady protests too much. Our recourse to enjoyment is a little too fevered and noisy" (MW 15, 42-43 ; cf. LW)

²⁸ See my "Customary Reflection and Innovative Habits" in *JSP* (Colapietro 2011).

²⁵ See, e.g., his review of *Public Opinion*. MW 13, 337-44.

that as philosophers we must begin with "the daily detail, making is meaning 'clear and coherent'" (1998, 62). He stresses this point in the context of contrasting Dewey's approach with Niebuhr's. I am dubious Michael is entirely fair to Niebuhr.²⁹ It would certainly have been odd for Niebuhr to have separated completely the sacred and the secular,³⁰ as Dewey allegedly did, rather than sharply distinguishing them and, furthermore, insisting that the secular world cannot be made into a sacred sphere in which conflicts are eliminated and the destructive tendencies of the human animal are eradicated. The important point however is the characteristic Deweyan emphasis on the apparently small and insignificant details of everyday life. He hardly ignored the global context in which everyday life must be situated to be understood, but he took the quotidian strivings, struggles, defeats, and triumphs to be the principal stuff of human existence.

Charles S. Peirce was much closer to traditional Christianity than either James or Dewey. He did not hesitate to say such things as this: such is the depravity of the human heart that it tends to distort what is manifest, to deny any power to ideals, and to usurp in its egoism what is sacred.³¹ On this occasion, however, I will appeal to Re-

inhold Niebuhr rather than Charles Peirce to press this point. The point is this: we are finite, fallible, and arguably fallen beings whose infinite perfectibility is only the other side of our infinite corruptibility.

Without question, corruptibility is one thing, corruption quite another. Niebuhr is committed to making the stronger case (we are not merely corruptible: we are inescapably fallen). Given the depth and ease with which we acquire the pathologies of our time and place (see, e.g., Dewey's "A Sick World"),³² however, this neat distinction is arguably not as clear and stable as the previous sentence implies. For example, we are born into a world in which visceral – hence unconscious – racism is one of the most salient features of our cultural inheritance. Our habits are the bearers of histories about which we are largely, if not entirely, unaware. It could not be otherwise.³³ Our natural impulses are variously inordinate, not least of all because they are not harmoniously integrated, also because the very meaning of our most intimate impulses – thus, our somatic self-legibility – incorporates within these very impulses the responses of others to our enactment of them (see especially Dewey's *Human Nature and Conduct* [MW 14]). The relationship of the self to itself is mediated, indelibly, by the responses of others to our spontaneous enactment of our natural impulses (grasping for food, suckling at the breast, etc.). Given the actual character of the human world, given the inescap-

²⁹ "Judaism is," Abraham Joshua Heschel insisted, "a theology of the common deed, of the trivialities of life, dealing not so much with the training for the exceptional as with the management of the trivial. The predominant feature in the Jewish pattern of life is unassuming, inconspicuous piety rather than extravagance, mortification, asceticism. Thus, the purpose seems to be to enable the common" (2021, 77-78). I suspect his dear friend Reinhold Niebuhr would unhesitatingly concur with this and take it to be description of Christianity as well as Judaism.

³⁰ "Niebuhr was, from Dewey's point of view," as Eldridge rightly notes, "a dualist, separating the mundane (or secular) from the sacred. But Niebuhr was complicated than this. What made him interesting and appealing was his ability to speak in both sacred and secular terms" (1998, 62). On this point, Michael was unquestionably right: Niebuhr did not separate the secular and the sacred. He feared certain attempts to sacralize the secular order at least as much as he dreaded various endeavors to treat the secular world as a fully intelligible sphere apart from the always timely perspective offered by sacred traditions.

³¹ *The Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1931), 2.149 (i.e., volume 2, paragraph #149); cf. 2.151. This way of stating the matter can be misleading: Peirce was closer to traditional Christianity because he was a Christian (if occasionally his qualified his position as "Buddhisto-Christian" [see, e.g., 1.673]). See Donna M. Orange, *Peirce's Conception of God: Developmental Study* (Lubbock, TX: Texas Tech Press, 1984); also, Roger Ward,

Peirce and Religion (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2018). Also, see John E. Smith's *Purpose and Thought* (1978), 166-82.

³² The word "perversity" might be more palatable to naturalists than fallenness, sin, or even pathology, but substantively the same point is made by, say, Joseph Esposito when he uses this term as Niebuhr when he writes of sinfulness. See Joseph L. Esposito, *Pragmatism, Politics, and Perversity: Democracy and the American Party Battle* (2012). He is especially good on showing in detail how power concentrated in the hands of parties is both a sign and an occasion of corruption or perversity.

³³ There are occasions when Dewey himself makes just this point. He does so nowhere more dramatically than in "A Sick World" (1913; MW 15, 42-46). It begins to look as though he was more concerned with the historical abuses manifest in the way the traditional concept of human fallenness has been used than with the straightforward acknowledgment of human corruptibility in its Protean forms. Niebuhr would of course note that these abuses are themselves evidence of just what needs to be acknowledged.

able sickness of virtually any cultural inheritance, the formation of bad habits is unavoidable; the reformation of deeply ingrained tendencies is very often extremely difficult. Naturalists have no need to deny this. In truth, their naturalism should encourage them to countenance even the most unflattering facts about human beings as natural creatures of an incredibly complex constitution, making them susceptible to the disfigurements of prejudice, insensitivity, indifference, and a wide range of unquestionable pathologies.

The orthodox (or traditional) doctrine of "original sin" is, Niebuhr slyly observed, the only such doctrine for which there is overwhelming empirical evidence. Just look at human history. He tended to define such sin in terms of the inordinate egoism to which human beings are ineluctably prone. Such egoism works, in subtle and obvious ways, to make others negligible or unreal, even in situations when they are manifestly present and unarguably real.³⁴

Please note this is an attempt by Niebuhr to make our inescapable fallenness, to some extent, into an explanatory category.³⁵ If we proceed cautiously, however, there is, first of all, a descriptive claim (we are corrupt beings, however such a condition is to be explained) and a purported explanation or least, the implied demand for the beginning of an adequate explanation. My aim is to consider, however provisionally, only the descriptive claim,

not to insist upon the explanation advanced by Niebuhr or anyone else.

Our corruptibility is such that given the world into which we are born we are to some extent corrupted (or fallen). At times, Dewey pits the method of intelligence against the "method" of such things as "institutional force, custom, and illusion" ("Intelligence & Power": *Later Works*, volume 9, 107) or the "method" of tradition, institution, and superstition. At other times, however, he readily grants that intelligence operates in and through traditions or institutions or customs. Let's push illusion and superstition to the side. Intelligence is not necessarily anything to be pitted against traditions, institutions, and customs. Quite the contrary. In *The Public & Its Problems*, for example, Dewey asserts: "The level of action fixed by embodied intelligence is always the important thing" (LW 2, 366). Experimental intelligence as it is embodied in the intergenerational community of experimental inquirers is indeed "the important thing." Though at times Dewey pitted intelligence against tradition, his considered view is, in my judgment, that "experimental science" is itself an evolved and evolving tradition (LW 11, 117). Apart from the embodiment of intelligence in our habits and artifacts, as these are conserved and refined in our traditions and institutions, human intelligence is an altogether ephemeral and ineffective affair (see, e.g., *Human Nature and Conduct*: MW 14, 19).³⁶

A sense of piety underlies Dewey's commitment to intelligence. This is his word, not an imposition by me. Allow me to quote in full the passage in which he forcefully expresses this sense.

³⁴ In "Experience," Emerson urges: "Let us be poised, and wise, and our own, *to-day*. Let us treat the men and women well; treat them as if they were real, perhaps they are real" (1982; Ziff [ed.], 295; emphasis added). This is integral to his emphasis on "the present hour," the need to "set up the strong present tense" (297).

³⁵ "The sinfulness of man, the corruption of his heart, his self-love and love of power, when referred to as causes," are Dewey notes in *A Common Faith*, "precisely of the same nature as was the appeal to abstract powers (which in fact only reduplicated under a general name a multitude of particular effects) that once prevailed in physical 'science'" (LW 9, 51). "Religion is [however]," as Randall stresses, "no more a way of explaining things than is art or political activity: explanation is not the function of these [cultural] enterprises" (1968, 104). Regarding art and religion, I would say (and I take myself to be in accord with Randall and Smith in doing so) that one of their functions is to illuminate, broaden, and deepen our understanding. While they are cognitive endeavors in this sense, they are fundamentally different from those aiming at causal explanation.

³⁶ "Goods are," he readily acknowledged in *Experience and Nature*, "of grace not of ourselves. He is a dangerous churl who will not gratefully acknowledge ... the help that sustains him" (LW 1, 44; cf. 90). While it might seem as though Dewey is only reporting on a central feature of classical Greek culture, I read him as doing more than this: he is, endorsing such "piety." Even earlier, he in *Human Nature and Conduct*, fully admitted: "It is of grace not of ourselves that we live civilized [or intelligence] lives. There is a sound sense in the old pagan notion that gratitude is the root of all virtue" (MW 14, 19).

The essentially irreligious attitude is that which attributes human achievement and purpose to man in isolation from the world of physical nature and his fellows. Our successes are dependent upon the co-operation of nature [just as our "individual" ones are dependent on the co-operation of others]. The sense of the dignity of human nature is as religious as is the sense of awe and reverence when it rests upon a sense of human nature as a cooperating part of a larger whole. Natural piety is not of necessity either a fatalistic acquiescence in natural happenings or a romantic idealization of the world. ... Such piety is an inherent constituent of a just perspective in life. (LW 9, 18).³⁷

Elsewhere Dewey made a case for historical (or cultural) piety, not simply natural piety, as he did in the passage from *A Common Faith* just quoted (see, e.g., MW 14, 19; LW 1, 44, 90). Moreover, he rejects "militant atheism" because it lacks "natural piety" (LW 9, 36). Finally, despite this, he argued there, "Any determinate religion as a separate institution is one thing, the religious as a pervasive quality of human experience is quite another" (see especially LW 9, 8).³⁸ Dewey anticipated being charged with trying himself to institute a religion, so he was quick to insist: "I am not proposing a religion, rather the emancipation of elements and outlooks that may be called religious" (LW 9, 8). He desired to provide "an opportunity [for the religious] to express itself free from all historic encumbrances" (6).

In "The Religion of Shared Experience" (1940), John Herman Randall, Jr., whom Eldridge identified as "the most significant of Dewey's religious naturalist critics," was pointed in his critique of his teacher on this point (Eldridge 1998, 175). "To free the religious attitude from institutional embodiment in any religion sounds like freeing art from embodiment in any particular work of art; and the religious man who never goes near a religious institution suggests the musical person who never touches

a musical instrument."³⁹ John E. Smith however insists, against Dewey: "It is absurd to suppose that religious institutions can be discarded as though they performed no distinctive function of their own."⁴⁰ Whether it is a religious institution or some other influential institution, rituals of diverse forms and focus are needed to encourage religious attitudes in precisely Dewey's sense. Our sense of awe, reverence, mystery, humility, gratitude, and solidarity cutting across deep divisions and seemingly intractable estrangements – this sense – needs to be nurtured. Such feelings and attitudes certainly might arise willy-nilly, but for them to guide our conduct in the manner Dewey envisions we arguably need to fall back on rituals or something akin to them. For instance, to cultivate a sense of gratitude – put negatively, to avoid being "dangerous churl[s]" (LW 1, 44) – saying "grace" before partaking of a meal might prove effective.

"Since the religious [in contrast to religions] is," Eldridge asserts, "a broadening and deepening of one's life-transforming interests, there are no special, set-apart interests. There is no need for distinctive rituals, revelations, or prayers or for churches, synagogues, temples, or shrines. The religious occurs in the heightened, widened way one goes about living. There is no justification for nonsecular [i.e., institutionally religious] pursuits or [expressly religious] institutions" (1998 153).

Perhaps we can split the difference here between a religious institution and a religious practice (to be sure, typically an historically instituted practice, but one possibly having a life beyond the context of its origin, i.e., beyond the framework of a religion). There might truly be a need for "distinctive rituals," but these might operate independently from traditional religions.

As Dewey himself notes in *A Common Faith*, there are, in most religions, "rites [or rituals] of communion" along-

³⁷ Cf. Santayana, Chapter 10 of *Reason in Religion*, volume 3 of *The Life of Reason*.

³⁸ "This [distinction] is so sharply drawn," Dewey's friend Max Otto noted in a review of *A Common Faith*, "that it almost seems as if Mr. Dewey were saying that every activity in the world may take on a religious character, excepting religion" (Otto 1935, 496)

³⁹ Randall, "The Religion of Shared Experience" (1940), 137; quoted in Eldridge 1998, 176.

⁴⁰ Smith, *Purpose and Thought* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), 184; quoted in Eldridge 1998, 176.

side "those of expiation and propitiation."⁴¹ Consider this example. In *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, James recounts Thomas Carlyle's response to Margaret Fuller's enthusiasm for the universe. Upon hearing that the transcendentalist Fuller was disposed to exclaim, "I accept the universe!" Carlyle is reported to have said "By gad, she'd better!" As a matter of fact, accepting the universe, as it is disclosed in our experience, is no mean feat or easy task. Much of traditional philosophy, not only traditional religion, has in effect been a refusal to accept the conditions of finitude, fallibility, uncertainty, mortality, and much else – that is, an unwillingness to accept the exacting terms imposed by the actual universe into which we have been thrown.⁴² The work of coming to terms with the conditions of our existence and endeavors is indeed a work and one of its forms is the re-enactment of those rituals by which those terms are expressly acknowledged. Optimally, this is ongoing, transfigurative work.

Culture in the anthropological, rather than the honorific, sense (culture in the sense in which Dewey was committed to using the word) is, as far as anthropologists are concerned, an affair shot through with rituals.⁴³ To use culture in their sense and not accord rituals their due seems to miss a significant part of this anthropological meaning. Whether communities of worship or some

other institutions provide us with the means of formally and repeatedly acknowledging, say, our gratitude or our sense of reverence for the matrix (the womb) whence we sprang is far less important than the acknowledgment of the need for rituals serving the indispensable function of nurturing religious attitudes. Is the distinction between the religious, as an adjective, and religions, as a noun, not in danger of hardening into a dualism, moreover, is it not the exaltation of such attitudes conjoined to the means by which they are inculcated an instance of separating ends (or ideals) from means (or instrumentalities)?

As we have already seen, Michael Eldridge is emphatic. There are, he insists, "no special, set-apart interests. There is no need for distinctive rituals, revelations, or prayers or for churches, synagogues, temples, or shrines. The religious occurs in the heightened, widened way one goes about living. There is no justification for nonsecular [i.e., institutionally religious] pursuits or [expressly religious] institutions" (Eldridge 1998, 153). Dewey might have actually been more conciliatory or at least equivocal on the possibly continuing relevance of traditional religions. But Mike was taking no prisoner. His brief for secularity, however endangered, perhaps a stronger case can be made for distinctive rituals in and outside the context of temples, mosques, churches, and other designated place of traditional worship. "Whatever Dewey's thought was," Eldridge was convinced, "'religious' does not capture it except in a very restrictive sense.' Indeed, "once one makes the necessary qualifications there does not seem to be much point in calling Dewey religious" (1998, 167). Perhaps. There however still might be point and purpose in recognizing the felt need for an explicit acknowledgment of dimensions or qualities of experience traditionally associated with, and, however corruptly, formally cultivated by some religious institutions. On this occasion, I only want to focus on the indispensability of rituals. As Randall suggests, "religious practices [and the emphasis must fall on practices] are a lens rather than a mirror, bringing men's feelings and desires into

⁴¹ Dewey, LW 9, 18; cf. LW 4, Chapter 1 ("Escape from Evil"), wherein Dewey set in sharp contrast "the arts of propitiation" and those of control. Here and elsewhere, we see the justification for a charge brought against Dewey by Edward L. Schaub and in effect by others: "Dewey has at no time, apparently, given serious attention to empirical investigations of the history of religion or of the varieties of religious experience" (1939, 406). Had Dewey, he would have attended to the significant details of religious *practice* and, thus, have been saved from drawing such crude distinctions as the arts of propitiation and those of control. The range of rituals is far more extensive than propitiation, expiation, mortification, and communion (LW 9, 18). They would include rituals of gratitude, acknowledgment, reconciliation, and much else.

⁴² Cf. Sabina Lovibond, *Realism and Imagination in Ethics* (1983), 206-209. As she makes clear, the complete acceptance (or acknowledgment) of our embodied condition is an arduous and reversible achievement. Also, see of course Stanley Cavell.

⁴³ See, e.g., Catherine Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions* (1997); also, the work of the anthropologist E. Valentine Daniel, who was profoundly influenced by Peirce (see especially *Charred Lullabies: Chapters in an Anthropology of Violence* (1996).

sharper focus (1968, 22; emphasis added), also helping to provide a more expansive and just perspective on the natural world as a human abode. Let's use practices of ritual as such a lens.

Concession to Randall and Smith

Dewey is curious in having so decisively taken what might be called an anthropological turn without having attended with sufficient care to the anthropological details of everyday life.⁴⁴ He was unquestionably a philosopher of the quotidian, even if he typically did not give sufficient weight to such anthropological details of daily existence as storytelling and ritual. Like most pragmatists, he had a somewhat impoverished view of human practices.⁴⁵ Of course, storytelling can itself be a ritual and, in turn, rituals often possess their full significance only in the narrative context in which they have taken shape and continue to evoke (e.g., the context of being led out of captivity of that of having survived a catastrophe). In any event, everyday life offers countless examples of our "irrepressible" tendency to cast actions and events in the form of a story (LW 9, 40) and, no less, our deeply rooted propensity to avail ourselves of significant forms allied to such crucial functions as recollection, acknowledgment, and gratitude. Significant events, including horrific ones, demand to be remembered,⁴⁶ just as they deserve to be communally marked in an appropriate and subtle manner.

As a first step, but only as such, "the key to understanding the holy [or sacred] is," as Smith notes in *Experience and God*, "is to be found in the contrast between the ordinary [or profane] activities of human life – waking, nourishing ourselves, working, replenishing our energy through taking rest and recreation – and those special times or junctures that are set apart from the ordinary

course of events and 'celebrated' as having some meaning and seriousness about them" (1995, 57). Virtually all human cultures somehow set about these extraordinary times from the rest of life. This is especially so since they convey "a sense of awe and mystery" (60). Think a new life being welcomed by a family or a death mourned by those who loved the deceased. The very marking of this distinction can however work to blur and perhaps even erase it. For even the simple act of taking nourishment can, for instance, be celebrated in a manner appropriate to it.

Accordingly, beyond communally marking extraordinary events by ritual celebrations, rituals might serve a seemingly far humbler yet truly critical function. If Hegel could discern in the act of a modern person reading the newspaper an instance of prayer, we ought to be able to discern in any number of acts a variety of rituals. The origin of many, perhaps most, of these rituals can be traced to one or another religion, though their function can in some instances, at least, transcend the context of their origin. Rituals of gratitude, acknowledgment, and recollection might function, especially at this point in our history, more effectively apart from those contexts.

For example, the Buddhist practices of mindfulness cannot be completely assimilated to the Deweyan vision of inquiry. But everyday efforts to quiet oneself, to extract oneself from the frenzied distractions so characteristic of contemporary life, are needed as much as intelligent discrimination of the cultural factors (LW 2, 321). Taking time each day simply to breathe slowly, to empty one's mind of anxieties and dreads, to work toward acquiring a sense that everything that's here is here and what is needed can be crafted out of what is ready to hand (Eastman 1959, 257), can assume the efficacious form of a daily ritual of immense importance. Our impatience for liberty can find more than expression in the barely recognized rituals of everyday life. It can find nothing less than the quite real if necessarily slight free-

⁴⁴ Amartya Sen, *Home in the World* (2021), 351.

⁴⁵ See my "Toward a Pragmatist Account of Human Practices." *Nóema: Rivista online di filosofia*, 30 (Colapietro 2022).

⁴⁶ See, e.g., Edith Wyschogrod, *An Ethics of Remembering: History, Heterology, and the Nameless Ones* (1998); also, Brad Vivian.

dom attainable by the human animal.⁴⁷ Distinctive rituals, symbols, and narratives might assist us in attaining such freedom and exercising it properly.⁴⁸

Taking Stock

To repeat, what I have been proposing here are what I take to be friendly amendments. Of course, I realize that they are likely not going to be received as such by most contemporary defenders of Deweyan pragmatism. Even so, nothing in pragmatic naturalism necessitates an immediate dismissal of these proposed concessions.⁴⁹ As I see it, much should prompt thoughtful advocates to a serious consideration of the substantive issues. Allied with this, much should invite us to re-read or, in some instances, simply to read the relevant texts (at the very least, e.g., Lippmann's *The Phantom Public* and *Public Opinion*, Niebuhr's *Moral Man and Immoral Society: A Study in Ethics and Politics* and *The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness: A Vindication of Democracy and a Critique of Its Traditional Defense*, some of the anthropological literature on the most ubiquitous forms of ritual practice). Offering an uncompromising critique of the traditional defense of American democracy does not make one an enemy of democracy, at least when that critique is framed as Lippman and Niebuhr. Their critiques of the traditional defenses of democratic practice are offered in the hope of a fuller realization of a democratic ethos, one realistically attuned to the finitude and corruptibility of human beings. They are not enemies of democracy (to charge them of this is slanderous) but uncompromising contributors to the immanent critique of American democracy.

⁴⁷ In *Human Nature and Conduct*, Dewey in effect describes human conduct as "the flickering acts of separate selves" (MW 14, 227) and, even when conjoined with those of other selves, are mostly slight affairs in the cosmic scheme.

⁴⁸ See John E. Smith's treatment of autonomy in the context of his explication of secularization (1995, 183-87).

⁴⁹ See John Ryder, *The Things in Heaven and Earth: An Essay in Pragmatic Naturalism* (2013); also, John J. Stuhr, *Pragmatic Fashions* (2016).

One of the threads connecting the three main sections of this essay is the need for a more realistic reckoning with the human condition. What Lippmann in one context, Niebuhr in another, and Randall, Smith, and others in a third press upon the Deweyan pragmatist are concessions to be made in the name of realism. To be sure, Dewey was no utopian. He was moreover less sanguine in his private reflections than his public personae. But he could not avoid sounding naïve or unrealistic in the ears of thinkers such as Lippman, Niebuhr, and others. His critics judged his anti-utopian meliorism to have itself made too many concessions to the very traditions, structures, and regimes from which his progressivism ought to have helped us extricate ourselves. From the viewpoint of those on the left, his hasty, if not entirely consistent, rejection of "violent" revolution made Dewey appear to commit what he himself condemned, willing the end without willing the means for its attainment. From that of those on his right, he seemed to be largely oblivious to the actual workings of political power. While he was better than either side claimed, he opened himself to such critiques not only because of somewhat fuzzy formulations of his basic position⁵⁰ but also because of an unwillingness to grant the legitimacy or force of some of the criticisms pressed by Lippmann, Niebuhr, and even friendlier interlocutors. I can quote chapter and verse to show the many places where Dewey breaks a lance for a realistic reckoning with the human condition. But the problem does not fall entirely with the failure of Dewey's critics; he is to some extent at fault. The manifold abuses of the of concept human nature despite entitling one of his major works *Human Nature and Conduct*, it is impossible not to discern a deep ambivalence on Dewey's part toward human nature (cf. Midgley). He was too honest a thinker simply to jettison this concept, but too

⁵⁰ On countless occasions, his formulations could be precise, rigorous, and even eloquent. But too often his later writings especially fell short of the requisite precision, detail, and depth needed to be persuasive to those not already sympathetic to his position.

much of a historicist and pluralistic to posit a static, immutable essence underlying the manifest, variable forms of recognizably human lives.⁵¹ But he never doubted that however mutability might be the native tendencies or impulses of the human animal, they are ineradicable. Dewey acknowledged that "there are always intrinsic forces of a common human nature at work; forces which are sometimes stifled by the encompassing social medium but which also in the long course of history are always striving to liberate themselves and to make over social institutions so that the latter [these institutions] may form a freer, more transparent and more congenial medium for their operation" (MW 14, 230).⁵²

Whatever else is true of our *Lebensform*, it is plural (even a single form of life has within itself a plurality of forms, never completely integrated or harmonized). Lebensformen are ordinarily recognizable across deep and multifarious differences. Whatever else might be true

of the dramatically different forms of human life, an uncanny mixture of strangeness and familiarity (frequently familiarity to the point of kinship) confronts us whenever we encounter ones different from our own (even ones only slightly different).

Nothing is lost by conceding to Walter Lippmann a robust role for diverse experts in any democratic polity, including American democracy (granting them such a role does not entail relinquishing authority to them).⁵³ It rather secures for the ordinary citizen the experiential basis for a legitimate claim to political sovereignty, that is, the sovereignty of the individual. No commitment is deeper than Dewey's adherence to the view that "common experience is capable of developing within itself methods which will secure direction for itself and will create inherent standards of judgment and value" (LW 1, 41). But common experience is no insular affair, for it is nourished and animated by a variety of sources, not least of all by information, illimitation, and insights obtainable only from experts.

Equally, nothing is arguably lost by conceding less begrudgingly to Reinhold Niebuhr the destructive tendencies of the human animal. Dewey is certainly right when he insists on the ways in which despair of this world has

⁵¹ In "Does Human Nature Change?" (1938), Dewey readily admits, "to put this question in its proper perspective, we have first to recognize the sense in which human nature does not change. I do not think it can be shown that the innate needs of men have changed since man became man or that there is any evidence that they will change so long as man is on the earth." "By 'needs,'" he goes on to explain, "I mean the inherent demands that men make because of their constitution. Needs for food and drink and for moving about" are examples of such demands. But there are also "other things no so directly [or obviously] physical," "equally engrained in human nature": "the need for some kind of companionship; the need for exhibiting energy [or displaying vitality]; for bringing one's power to bear upon surrounding conditions; the need for both cooperation with and emulation of one's fellows for mutual aid and combat alike; the need for some sort of aesthetic expression or satisfaction; the need to lead and to follow, etc." (LW 13, 286). One might quarrel with this or that item of this list, but Dewey makes here a compelling case for what he in another context identifies as "a common human nature" (MW 14, 230). But he stresses the mutable and diverse ways in which these constitutional needs are fulfilled; and, at least by implication, also the fact that what constitutes the "nature" of the human animal is only identifiable in reference to human history. Hence, Dewey emphasizes mutability and historicity, not the immutable character of our constitutional needs. Moreover, he was acutely aware how invocations of the concept of human nature have been used to thwart efforts at reform, also to condemn practices running counter to the consolidated force of customary morality (practices significantly bound up with emancipatory movements – to name but three examples, the abolition of chattel slavery, the recognition of homosexual love, and the enfranchisement of female citizens). See, e.g., "Contrary to Human Nature" (1940), LW 14, 258–61.

⁵² This passage is found in the Foreword to the 1930 Modern Library Edition of *Human Nature and Conduct* (MW 14, 228–30).

⁵³ "Of course, the expert organization for which Mr. Lippmann calls is," Dewey grants, "inherently desirable. There is no questioning that fact. But his argument seems to me to exaggerate the importance of politics and political action, and also to evade the problem of how the latter is to be effectively directed by organized intelligence unless there is an accompanying enlightenment of popular opinion, as well as an ex post facto indirect instruction" (Dewey MW 13, 344). But Lippmann in fact devoted a significant part of his professional life to educating public opinion. As his biographer notes in a Foreword to the republication of *Public Opinion*, on completing *Public Opinion*, Lippmann "became editorial director of the *World*, the New York daily that was the leading liberal journal of its time. There, for nine years until the paper's demise, he wrote an editorial nearly every day for the man on the street. In 1931 he became a syndicated newspaper columnist, appearing in hundreds of newspapers until his retirement thirty-six years later. Virtually inventing the serious newspaper column, he exerted an immense influence on the millions of readers who relied on him to explain and interpret the great issues of the day. This was not the mark of a man who disdained the public or the average reader" (Steele 1997, xvi). Is it unfair to suggest what Dewey clumsily tried to achieve with "Thought News" Lippman so dramatically achieved in his professional career as newspaper writer? (See Jeremiah Dyehouse on Dewey and "Thought News").

conspired to make the world an even more uninhabitable place than it might have been. But at times he makes the very point which he at other times he so strenuously resists: "The position of natural intelligence is that there exists a mixture of good and evil, and that reconstruction in the direction of the good ... must take place ... through continued cooperative effort" (LW 9, 32). At every turn, such intelligence is forced to recognize that which must be shunned or circumvented or neutralized or, if possible, eradicated. In this regard, the position of natural intelligence is no different from that of the traditional wisdom of some historical religions.

Finally, nothing is lost by conceding to such thinkers as John Herman Randall, Jr., and John E. Smith that barely perceptible rituals are significant features of everyday life. Dewey himself advocated the need to cultivate feelings of gratitude (see especially LW 1, 44, 90). Naturalistic piety no less than religious piety of a traditional form requires appropriate rituals. Deprived of culturally appropriate rites of passage, adolescents will haphazardly and unconsciously devise reckless and ineffective ones.

Indeed, much is, in my judgment, gained by a deeper reckoning with the abiding need for ordinary persons to confess their ignorance and consult in a critical manner those who by the most reliable methods have obtained pertinent information; with the manifest tendency of the human animal to destroy itself as consistently as its enemy; and, finally, with repetitions rising above the level of habits, assuming the status of nothing less than rituals. Such concessions do not compromise or disfigure Dewey's naturalism. Rather they aid in the growth of an orientation rooted, more deeply than anything else, in an appreciation of growth. It would certainly be ironic if Dewey's own philosophy proved resistant to growth along lines commensurate with his deepest commitments.

The acknowledgment of something analogous to fallenness does not resurrect "the great drama of human sin and final judgment in redemption or condemnation"

(Dewey, LW 9, 71)⁵⁴ It simply forces us to confront our arrogance and inhumanity. Such acknowledgment need not lead to despair. The failures resulting from our unwillingness or inability to confront squarely our arrogance and inhumanity, our destructiveness and capriciousness, are much more likely to lead to despair than what courage and resolve reveal about the darker impulses of the human psyche. We carry chaos within ourselves. Niebuhr's quip has not only point but punch – original sin is the only religious dogma for which there is overwhelming empirical evidence. Do we Deweyans not prove ourselves to be dogmatists by our unwillingness to consider,⁵⁵ even provisionally, the possibility that our psyches are marred by tendencies for which our explanations seem anything but adequate?⁵⁶ Does not Dewey himself at least occasionally force us to confront deeply rooted pathologies? Indeed, does not he press the point in "A Sick World," stressing "all cheap short cuts which avoid recognition of basic causes have to be paid for at a great price" (MW 15, 44)? Lest we fail to see why this is so, he spells it out for us: "The greatest cost is that palliative and remedial measures put off the day in which fundamental causal factors are faced and constructive action undertaken. They perpetuate the domination of life by reverie,

⁵⁴ This sentence is found in "Unity and Progress" (1933), an essay in which Dewey is directly reply to criticisms levelled against him by Niebuhr.

⁵⁵ "The only thing ruled out is," Dewey insisted in "The Case for Bertrand Russell" (1940), "the dogmatism and intolerance that would forbid discussion" (LW 14, 234).

⁵⁶ There is an important and illuminating literature on evil – e.g., Mary Midgley's *Wickedness* (1984), Alain Badiou's *Ethics: An Essay on Understanding Evil* (2001 [original French text 1993]), Richard J. Bernstein's *Radical Evil* (2002), Terry Eagleton's *On Evil* (2010), and Claudia Card's *The Atrocity Paradigm* (2002) and *Confronting Evil: Terrorism, Torture, Genocide* (2010). Intersecting with this, there is of course a significant and indispensable literature on the Holocaust and other instances of genocide. It is instructive that Bernstein in *Radical Evil* devotes chapters to Kant, Hegel, Schelling, Nietzsche, Freud, Levinas, Jonas, and Arendt, but none to Peirce, James, Dewey, or Mead. But see Bruce Wilshire's *Get 'Em All! Skill 'Em All!: Genocide, Terrorism, Righteous Communities* (2005). It is equally instructive that most "Americanists" are unfamiliar with the literature on evil; at least, essays on evil rarely appear in such journals as *The Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* and *The Pluralist*, though they do appear in *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*. It is only appropriate for me to disclose that I am still formally associated with *JSP*, though no longer co-editor.

magic, superficiality and evasion; they perpetuate, that is, the sickness of the world" (MW 15, 44). In order to be faced, the causes of our sicknesses and pathologies need first to be identified. And in this we are, as Dewey does to hesitate to assert, still children. The immaturity of our self-understanding can hardly be exaggerated.

There are depths and dimensions to our lives which we have not yet fathomed. Accordingly, let us in humility⁵⁷ acknowledge this and not reject out of hand what this or that traditional understanding, stripped of its excesses and otherworldliness, might enable us to see more clearly.

What each of these concessions makes available to the Deweyan pragmatist might be subsumed under what Michel Foucault called "practices of freedom." Regular consultation with experts, forthright confrontation with the possibility of fallenness or brokenness, and, finally, reliance on rituals to articulate the deeper significance of our everyday lives are means by which our more or less freed self takes more secure ownership of our defining engagements.⁵⁸

"The only freedom that is of enduring importance is," according to John Dewey, "freedom of intelligence, that is to say, freedom of observation and of judgment in behalf of purposes that are intrinsically worth while" (LW 13, 39; emphasis added). The practices of freedom

are the means by which freedom of intelligence is cultivated. They are however not mere means: their exercise in the very context of cultivation ensures the growth of such freedom only if this exercise is inherently delightful and fulfilling. That is, practices of freedom are means to the cultivation of intellectual freedom only by being themselves ends, by being activities undertaken for their own sake. If the exercise of intellectual freedom does not contribute to its open-ended enhancement, to its own self-affirming significance, it is not truly an exercise of freedom.⁵⁹ Consulting experts in a critical manner, confronting our destructiveness in a candid way, and enacting rituals with an unabashed spontaneity might prove nothing less than "a patient labor giving form to our impatience for liberty" (Foucault 1997, 319).

John Dewey appreciated as well as Michel Foucault the abiding need for such patient labor and, moreover, for efficacious forms in and through which our ceaseless striving secures, in a given context, opportune expression, the felt enhancement of the significance of present experience.⁶⁰ The seemingly insignificant "daily detail[s]" of our quotidian existence can be inherently

⁵⁷ Dewey could not hear in Niebuhr's repeated insistence on human fallenness anything but the arrogance of traditional dogmatism, while Niebuhr could not hear in Dewey's countless appeals to communal intelligence anything but the arrogance of the insular secularist (insular becomes not in truth receptive to the possibility of wisdom being available in poetic form in tradition religions). Niebuhr's understanding of religion was actually very close to George Santayana's view of religion as a form of poetry in which profound truths are articulated in anything but a literal or straightforward manner. See especially George Santayana, "The Poetry of Christian Dogma" and "A Religion of Disillusion" in *Interpretations of Poetry and Religion* (1957). Cf. Dewey's *A Common Faith* (LW 9, 13). For example, Christian scripture confronts us stories of betrayals and seemingly impossible reconciliations as well as enduring ruptures or alienation. To understand our lives, we need to confront squarely just how treacherous and unreliable is the human animal, also how available are resources for conciliation and *rapprochement*.

⁵⁸ Sethe, one of the characters in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, observes: "Freeing yourself was one thing; claiming ownership of that freed self was another" (1987, 95).

⁵⁹ This is another way of asserting what Dewey himself affirmed in *Reconstruction in Philosophy*: "the process of growth, of improvement and progress, rather than the static outcome and result, becomes the significant thing. Not [for example] health as an end fixed once and for all, but the needed improvement in health—a continuous process is the end and good. The end is no longer a terminus or limit to be reached. It is the active process of transforming the existent situation. Not perfection as a final goal, but the ever-enduring process of perfecting, maturing, refining is the aim in living. Honesty, industry, temperance, justice, like health, wealth, and learning. ... are directions of change in the quality of experience. *Growth itself is the only moral 'end'*" (MW 12, 181; emphasis added). Or, as e. e. cummings wrote, "in the time of daffodils(who know/the goal of living id to grow),/ forgetting why, remember how" (688). Or, finally, as Nietzsche has Zarathustra proclaim: "And life confided this secret to me: 'Behold,' it said, 'I am *that which must always overcome itself*. Indeed, you will call it a will to procreate or a drive to an end, to something higher, farther, more manifold: but all this is one, and one secret" (115). It is the secret of ceaseless self-overcoming (in other words, *growth* in the Deweyan sense).

⁶⁰ "If history shows progress," Dewey stressed, "it can hardly be found elsewhere than in this complication and extension of the significance found *within* experience. It is clear that such progress brings no surcease, no immunity from perplexity and trouble. If we wished to transmute this generalization into a categorical imperative we should say: 'So act as to increase the meaning of present experience'" (MW 12, 196).

fulfilling but are for the most part largely opaque; they need to be set in a context far more encompassing than the immediate circumstances of everyday life. "The bare force" of such circumstances drives us to take into account what these details do not clearly indicate or immediately disclose, above all, the operations of power structuring the contours of these very circumstances. But the "invisible world" to which Lippman refers or the wider context apart from which any immediate circumstance (or situation) is an incomprehensible affair are to some extent uninhabitable. We must time and again return to the "rough ground,"⁶¹ to everyday situations in their deepest significance (a significance better comprehended for having been envisioned in light of factors and forces beyond those situations I their immediacy). While the force of these very circumstances "compels us onwards," in many instances, farther outwards than these circumstances themselves, "our deeper thoughts and desires return us backwards," that is, return us to the immediate situations of everyday life.⁶² "When philosophy shall have cooperated with the course of events and made clear and coherent the meaning of the daily detail," by situating the immediate situation in a larger context, "science and emotion will," Dewey suggests in *Reconstruction*, "interpenetrate, practice and imagination will embrace" (Dewey MW 12, 201).

The patient labor required to give effective form to our impatience for liberty returns us to the here and now (cf. Dewey MW 3, 189-90),⁶³ though a present potentially

more fulfilling because it has been more deeply comprehended. It is in this connection, then, that we are in a position to see just how seriously Dewey intended in *Experience and Nature* (1925) his suggestion, "a first-rate test of the value of any philosophy ... [is]: Does it end in conclusions which, when they are referred back to ordinary life-experiences and their predicaments, render them more significant, more luminous to us, and make our dealings with them more fruitful?" Asked from the opposite angle, does that philosophy under consideration render "the things of ordinary experience more opaque than they were before, and in depriving them of having in 'reality' even the significance they seemed to have before?" (LW 1, 18). "The most serious indictment to be brought against non-empirical philosophies is that they have cast a cloud over the things of ordinary experience" (LW 1, 40), so much so that the height of sophistication is taken to be the renunciation of life as "a fountain of cheer and happiness." To look beyond everyday life for one's sustaining significance and existential fulfillment is in effect to confess one's despair, specifically that despair of "bodies and pleasures" being sufficient unto the day and the day after tomorrow (Foucault 1990, 157; cf. Nietzsche 1966, 13, also 31). Even the highest flights of our symbolic imagination are tethered to the sensuality and eros of our bodies. The throughgoing rejection of Cartesian dualism demands nothing less than an insistence on a vital link between the symbolic and the sensual, the

⁶¹ This is of course an allusion to a famous passage in Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Investigations* (#107).

⁶² "Philosophy, like all forms of reflective analysis, takes us away, for the time being," Dewey in *Experience and Nature* notes, "from the things had in primary experience as they directly act and are acted upon, used and enjoyed. Now the standing temptation of philosophy, as its course abundantly demonstrates, is to regard the results of reflection as having, in and of themselves, a reality superior to that of the material of any other ode of experience" (LW 1, 26). Dewey's empirical naturalism gathers around the resolute resistance to this standing temptation. For this and other reasons, he needs to be seen as a philosopher of the quotidian (see, again Eldridge 1998, 62, 199).

⁶³ In his centennial celebration of R. W. Emerson's birth, "Emerson – The Philosopher of Democracy," Dewey stresses the difference between Emerson and what is connoted by the term

transcendentalist (also, what was exemplified by those who tended to fly under this banner). "Emerson's philosophy has this in common with that of the transcendentalists; he prefers to borrow from them rather than from others certain pigments and delineations. But he finds truth in the highway, in the untaught endeavor, the unexpected idea, and this removes him from their remoteness. His ideas are not fixed on any Reality that is beyond or behind or in any way apart, and hence they do not have to be bent. They are versions of the Here and Now, and flow freely. The reputed transcendental worth of an overweening Beyond and Away, Emerson, jealous of spiritual democracy, finds to be the possession of the unquestionable Present" (MW 3, 189-90). "Men live, 'as Emerson himself puts it,' in their fancy, like drunkards whose hands are too soft and tremulous for successful labor. It is a tempest of fancies, and the only ballast I know is a respect for the present hour" (295). "We must accordingly," he asserts later in this essay, "set up the strong present tense against all the rumors of wrath, past or to come" (297).

severe discipline of intellectual engagement and the irrepressible impulses of our erotic psyches.

Conclusion

No expositor or champion of Dewey appreciated this abiding need for patient labor, also the equally pressing exigency to embrace the implications of overcoming Cartesian dualism, more fully than Michael Eldridge. Such is at least what I have tried to render plausible in this essay. I know no better way to honor the memory of my dear friend and cherished interlocutor Mike Eldridge.⁶⁴ In pressing for concessions to Lippmann, Niebuhr, Randall, and others, I would no doubt have raised his hackles. But, in doing so, I intend to honor, however obliquely, his unpretentious expertise, his own humble sense of our inescapable fallibility, and, finally, his likely unrecognized rituals of affirmation, acknowledgment, and critical, civil engagement with especially rival positions or insistent critics, friendly and otherwise. We indeed cannot get along very well without such expertise,⁶⁵ humility, and barely perceptible rituals of everyday life as he so singularly exemplified. No concessions to Lippman, Niebuhr, and others are needed simply to recognize this; only the exemplary lives of those who both can distinguish first-rate from second-rate work and, moreover, who show us in their own endeavors what the master strokes of human execution look and indeed smell like.⁶⁶ For the

⁶⁴ Upon its publication, he sent me an inscribed copy of *Transforming Experience: John Dewey's Cultural Instrumentalism*. In part his inscription read: "Here is something else to have a go at"! But Mike understood as well as any philosopher with whom I have been acquainted the wisdom in John E. Smith's claim, "what better tribute to a distinguished philosopher can one offer than the attempt to think their thoughts after him and thus become engaged in a critical way with the problems he has faced? We respect most those philosophers we take seriously enough to criticize" (1968, 114).

⁶⁵ It is crucial to recall that this expertise extended to social activism, not only historical erudition, hermeneutic skills, or philosophical creativity. He could quote from memory Saul Alinsky as well as he could cite John Dewey.

⁶⁶ "We ought to smell, as it were, the difference in quality in men and their proposals when we enter the world of affairs. The best claim we can make for the higher education [promised by colleges and universities] ... is, then, exactly what I said: it

purpose of transforming experience, not simply offering a better theoretical account of experience but providing practical resources for such transformation,⁶⁷ however, such concessions might be necessary.⁶⁸

References

- Avineri, Shlomo. 1972. *Hegel's Theory of the Modern State*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Bell, Catherine. 1997. *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions*. Oxford: University Press.
- Bernstein, Richard J. 1971. *Praxis and Action*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Carey, James. 1995. "The Press, Public Opinion, and Public Discourse." In *Public Opinion and the Communication of Consent*, edited by Theodore L. Glasser and Charles T. Salmon (New York: Guilford Publications) 1995, pp. 373-402.
- Cavell, Stanley. 1999. *The Claim of Reason* [New Edition]. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Colapietro, Vincent. 2006. "Democracy as a Moral Ideal." *Kettering Review*, 24, 3 (Fall).
- _____. 2008. "Experience Ceded and Negated." *JSP*, 22, 2, 118-26.
- _____. "Customary Reflection and Innovative Habits." 2011. *Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, 25, 2, 161-73.
- _____. 2022. "Toward a Pragmatist Account of Human Practices." *Nóema: Rivista online di filosofia*, 30.
- Crick, Nathan. 2010. *Democracy and Rhetoric: John Dewey and the Arts of Becoming*
- cummings, e. e. 1994. *Complete Poems 190-1962*, edited by George J. Firmage. NY: Liveright.
- Danisch, Robert. 2007. *Pragmatism, Democracy, and the Necessity of Rhetoric*
- Dewey, John. 1922. *Human Nature and Conduct*. Middle Works of John Dewey, volume 14. Carbondale, IL: SIU Press.
- _____. 1925. *Experience and Nature*. The Later Works of John Dewey, volume 1. Carbondale, IL: SIU Press. Cited as LW 1.
- _____. Review of Walter Lippmann's *The Phantom Public*. The Later Works of John Dewey, volume 2, 213-20. Cited as LW 2.
- _____. 1929 [1984]. *The Quest for Certainty*. The Later Works of John Dewey, volume 4. Carbondale, IL: SIU Press. Cited as LW 4.
- _____. 1932. *Ethics*. The Later Works of John Dewey,

should enable us to *know a good man when we see him*" ("The Social Value of the College-Bred": James 1987, 108). We however should not overlook the sexism inherent in this proposal. After all, James is speaking to female graduates of colleges and universities, at Radcliffe College.

⁶⁷ See my "Experience Ceded and Negated" (Colapietro 2008).

⁶⁸ Here I am of course playing on the title of Michael Eldridge's exquisite book, *Transforming Experience*, and honoring the aim of that work.

- volume 7. Carbondale, IL: SIU Press. Cited as LW 7.
- 1935. *Liberalism and Social Action*. The Later Works of John Dewey, volume 11.
- 1934 [1989]. *A Common Faith*. The Later Works of John Dewey (Carbondale, IL: SIU Press, 1989), volume 9. Cited as LW 9.
- 1938 [1991]. *Experience and Education*. In *The Later Works of John Dewey*, volume 13 (Carbondale, IL: SIU Press, 1991). Cited as LW 13.
- 1939 [1991]. "Creative Democracy – The Task Before Us." *The Later Works of John Dewey* (Carbondale, IL: SIU Press, 1991), volume 14, 224-30. Cited as LW 14.
- Eastman, Max. 1959. *Great Companions: Critical Memoirs of Some Eminent Friends*. NY: Farrar, Strauss and Cudahy.
- Eldridge, Michael. 1998. *Transforming Experience: John Dewey's Cultural Instrumentalism*. Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press.
- Emerson, R. W. 1982. *Ralph Waldo Emerson: Selected Essays*, edited by Larzer Ziff. NY: Penguin Books.
- Esposito, Joseph L. 2012. *Pragmatism, Power, and Perversity: Democracy and the American Party Battle*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.
- Foucault, Michel. 1997 [original French edition]. 1976. *Ethics, Subjectivity, and Truth*, volume 1 of *Essential Works of Michel Foucault*, edited by Paul Rabinow. NY: The New Press.
- 1990. *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, volume 1, translated by Robert Hurley. NY: Vintage Books
- Hegel, G. W. F. *The Philosophy of Right*, translated by T. M. Knox. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Heschel, Abraham Joshua. *Thunder in the Soul: To Be Known by God*, edited by Robert Erlewine. Walden, NY: Plough Publishing Co.
- James, William. 1987. *Essays, Comments, and Reviews*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Latour, Bruno. 2004. *Politics of Nature: How to Bring Science into Democracy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Lippmann, Walter. 1922. *Public Opinion*. NY: Macmillan Co.
- 2017 [1927]. *The Phantom Public*. NY: Routledge.
- Lovibond, Sabina. 1983. *Realism and Imagination in Ethics*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Luttwak, Edward. 1994. *The Endangered American Dream*. NY: Simon and Schuster.
- Manicas, Peter T. 2008. *Rescuing Dewey: Essays in Pragmatic Naturalism*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.
- Midgley, Mary. 1995. *Man and Beast: The Roots of Human Nature* [Revised Edition]. NY: Routledge.
- Miller, John William. 1978. *The Paradox of Cause & Other Essays*. NY: W. W. Norton & Co.
- Morrison, Toni. 1987. *Beloved*. NY: The New American Library.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. 1966. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, translated by Walter Kaufmann. NY: Viking.
- Niebuhr, Reinhold. 2015. *Reinhold Niebuhr: Major Works on Religion and Politics*. NY: Library of America.
- Randall, Jr., John Herman. 1940. "The Religion of Shared Experience," in *The Philosopher of the Common Man: Essays in Honor of John Dewey to Celebrate His Eightieth Birthday*, edited by Sidney Ratner (NY: G. P. Putnam's Sons), 106-45.
- 1968. *The Meaning of Religion for Man*. NY: Harper Torchbooks.
- Rorty, Richard. 1998. *Achieving Our Country*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Rouse, Joseph. "Power/Knowledge" in *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault*, edited by Gary Gutting (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 92-114.
- Ryder, John. 2013. *The Things in Heaven and Earth: An Essay in Pragmatic Naturalism*. NY: Fordham University Press.
- Santayana, George. 1957. *Interpretations of Poetry and Religion*. NY: Harper and Brothers.
- 1962. *Reason in Religion*, volume 3 of *The Life of Reason*. NY: Collier Books.
- Schaub, Edward L. "Dewey's Interpretation of Religion," in *The Philosophy of John Dewey*, Paul Arthur Schilpp (NY: Tudor Publishing Co.), 393-416.
- Schudson, Michael. 2019. "The public, media, and the limits of democracy: Re-examining the Lippmann-Dewey 'debate.'" *ABC: Religion and Ethics* (posted 19 June 2019). Online. <https://www.abc.net.au/religion/public-media-and-limits-of-democracy-the-lippmann-dewey-debate/11228168>
- Sen, Amartya. 2021. *Home in the World: A Memoir*. NY: Allen Lane.
- Smith, John E. 1968. *Reason and God*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- 1978. *Purpose and Thought: The Meaning of Pragmatism*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- 1995. *Experience and God*. NY: Fordham University Press.
- 2009. "Niebuhr's Prophetic Voice." In *Reinhold Niebuhr Revisited: Engagements with an American Original*, edited by Martin E. Marty (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans), 39-54.
- Steele, Ronald. 1970. *Walter Lippman and the American Century*. NY: Routledge.
- 1997. *Foreword to Public Opinion* (NY: Free Press), xi-xvi.
- Stroud, Scott. 2011. *John Dewey and the Artful Life*. University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Stuhr, John J. 2016. *Pragmatic Fashions: Pluralism, Democracy, Relativism, and the Absurd*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Westbrook, Robert B. 1991. *John Dewey and American Democracy*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Wilshire, Bruce. 2005. *Get 'Em All! Skill 'Em All!: Genocide, Terrorism, Righteous Communities*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.
- Ziff, Larzer. 1981. *Literary Democracy: The Declaration of Cultural Independence in America*. Independence. NY: Viking Press.

ABOLISHING TRUTH, ACHIEVING DEMOCRACY? RORTY'S PRAGMATIST CRITIQUE OF POWER

Hans-Herbert Kögler

University of North Florida & Alpen-Adria University
hkoegler@unf.edu

ABSTRACT: The essay engages Rorty's rejection of metaphysical as well as analytic conceptions of truth in its consequence for a critique of power. If truth cannot be philosophically established, can a critique of power and domination still be justified and effective? The analysis proceeds by reconstructing the undeniable value of Rorty's deconstruction of the correspondence theory of truth. Yet it challenges Rorty's inference that truth becomes obsolete for democratic politics by showing how resisting power and domination necessarily involves truthful accounts. Engaging Rorty's most political text *Achieving Our Country* suggests a more nuanced assessment of critical theory and cultural studies than Rorty's liberal pragmatism allows for. By distinguishing between metaphysical and post-metaphysical deployments of truth, the insights of Rorty's fallibilist, reformist, and forward-looking stance in politics can be reconciled with a philosophical reconstruction of existential and hermeneutic truth claims and moral recognition.

Keywords: Truth, power, liberal pragmatism, moral respect, reflexive agency, Habermas, Foucault

My first encounter with Rorty was as an undergraduate in Frankfurt. In 1987, Rorty had come to give a lecture on Schiller's "Letters on Aesthetic Education" which expressed his turn to aesthetic and ethical concerns. My second encounter with Rorty was as an exchange graduate visitor at Northwestern in 1989, where Rorty argued explicitly that truth and reference are of no purpose, having no meaning in the context of a dialogic philosophy. Against his argument, I held, in good Gadamerian spirit, that a true dialogue is always about something, is necessarily oriented toward a subject matter and thus entails a relation to something shared beyond the immediate viewpoints. My third encounter was as an invitee by Bert Dreyfus to an NEH seminar in 1990 in Santa Cruz. After a great lunch, (organized by Doug Follesdal with whom I discovered a shared interest in issues of meaning in Gadamer, and sense in Frege), I took the opportunity to bombard Rorty with ideas about how to synthesize her-

meneutic understanding with a critique of power. 'Dick' shrugged and agreed, suggesting one *could* go this way, no doubt an expression of Rorty's overall fallibilistic and open-minded pragmatism, for which the very idea of an ultimate Truth was as such *taboo*. Ever since then I continued this dialogue with Rorty by reading and writing, making me understand how his important critiques of traditional and analytic correspondence conceptions of truth led to his rejection of any other possible path to truth. What is at stake are the consequences that we should draw from our post-Hegelian, hermeneutic and pragmatic insights into our insurmountable embeddedness in a never fully transparent, never fully controllable social and cultural background. Yet this *inescapable situatedness*, which undercuts any traditional metaphysical essentialism, may either lead to a total abandonment of 'classic' philosophical concepts like truth, universality, reason, or reality as such; or it may inspire one to find hermeneutic or pragmatic reformulations, to retain their critical function *without* the dogmatic and essentialist self-understandings of their usual employment within the tradition.

With this distinction, the difference between Rorty's neo-pragmatism and the critical hermeneutics I favor is marked.¹ One set of questions addresses the relation of truth and power, i.e., the possible or even necessary function and need of truth for a critique of power. Should we retain an orientation toward truth or truth claims, or should we entirely abandon their role as, at best, superfluous compliments of our existing practices, or, at worst, ideological bulwarks boosting authoritarian claims and aspirations? Is a relation to truth needed to criticize and

¹ Ironically, the hermeneutic approach to reform these concepts instead of deleting them from our vocabulary seems more pragmatic and modest than Rorty's own full-scale rejection, his attempted revolution at overthrowing our allegedly Cartesian-contaminated ways of thinking, speaking, and perceiving. Rorty often sounds quite binaristic, as when he opposes truth to solidarity, epistemology to hermeneutics, normal to revolutionary science, etc. In fact, the hermeneutic criticism at Rorty's deflationary rejection of truth draws itself on the very life-worldly role that truth-claims play in our everyday communications and elevated discourses.

challenge practices of power and domination, which may after all depend on ideological and deceptive practices? And finally: is a reformulation of how claims to truth function within critical discourses possible and helpful in fostering the pragmatic urge to a fallible, open-ended, and open-minded attitude towards Others within communicative practices?

To tackle these issues, I will engage the most central ideas Rorty expressed, both toward truth and power, since he aims to overcome power by achieving our democracy without any reliance on truth. We will first address how truth may be functional within discourse even after the demise of reference and correspondence as viable accounts. While addressing the relevant exchange between Habermas and Rorty on this issue; (I), I introduce a critical-hermeneutic conception of power and domination that displays its dependency on reflexive human agency which in turn entails a competence to address issues of truth (II), reconstruct and criticize how Rorty aims to rejuvenate a democratic politics without any reliance on critical theory, rejecting Marxism and Cultural Studies as irrelevant (III), and finally address the important lessons that Rorty's deconstruction of metaphysical truth and his turn to an ethico-political approach entailing a truth-oriented conception of critical dialogue.

Truth as Correspondence or Regulative Ideal in Discourse?

Rorty's deconstruction of truth as an essential concept within philosophy presents itself as a rejection of the project to define *philosophy as epistemology*. (Rorty 1979). The aim is to show how the *epistemological* project of philosophy as providing the "universal neutral matrix" for all of culture has also shaped, to its detriment, many of the discussions defining the *linguistic turn*, even though this turn, if only rightly understood, is filled with means to undermine its very *raison d'être*. Rorty opens up a philosophical escape route by introducing Donald Davidson's approach as a linguistic philosophy unen-

cumbered by the traditional epistemological questions. (Rorty 1979; Davidson 1984a) This analytic bridging argument is to serve as a promising ally in redefining philosophy as a conversational mediator, an edifying force on the conversation of humankind. *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* thus introduces the distinction between a "pure" *philosophy of language*, envisioned by Frege, Tarski, and Davidson, and an "impure" one, most prominently represented by Dummett and Putnam (Rorty 1979, 259–263). The former thinkers concern themselves with language as a social practice, dealing with meanings, sentence-structure, and otherwise language-internal features. This is where Rorty sees the future and much promise. The latter thinkers, however, engage in the project of fulfilling the hopes of epistemology as foundationalism via the route of truth-semantic analyses. The latter project exemplifies precisely those features of philosophy that Rorty aims to leave behind; To provide all culture with a secure, objective, and neutral foundation, and to re-solve all those issues that were previously unsolvable, like truth, reference, meaning change, relativism, and the idealism/realism divide.

Rorty introduces the "impure", epistemologically driven approach as an immanent answer to philosophical developments by philosophers who define themselves as guardians of truth. In their eyes, developments in the philosophy of science (Kuhn, Feyerabend) and the analysis of meaning and language (Wittgenstein, Sellars, Quine) set the stage for *the need to reground truth*. Their relativism and contextualism calls for action, demands that true philosophers show how science can be understood as progress vis-a-vis representing reality, how we can defeat global skepticism, and how we thus can be assured of our truth-full contact with the world. These re-building movements are thus presented as a response to the internal deconstruction of the initial program of the analytic philosophy of language, which consisted in the development of an ideal framework capable of representing the objective structure of the world. This program,

paradigmatically expressed in Russell, Carnap, and the early Wittgenstein, promised to deliver a *universal matrix of truth in the public medium of an objective language*. It was based on the distinction between *analytic meanings and empirical facts*, as well as on the distinction between *conceptual schemes and basic observation*.²

Rorty's strategy to displace the truth concept is to adopt the analytic arguments that undermine the meaning/fact and the scheme/content distinction. Here Quine has firstly shown that the distinction between analytic meanings and synthetic (or empirical) facts is untenable, a move by which we are forced to 'ground' all meanings in holistic webs of beliefs. Those holistic belief-systems can then be understood as being situated in Wittgensteinian social practices as language games. And secondly, Davidson completes the task of disrupting a reference-based account of truth by disrupting the scheme/content distinction. There is thus no room left for any meaningful access (or 'reference') to *uninterpreted content*. Rorty ingeniously appropriates these moves, arguing that now 'holism goes all the way down.' From now on, *meanings* must be understood as generated within social practices. These practices produce *justifications* of what counts as real, or not, which replaces any need for free-standing truth values. Justifications have to be understood relative to social practices and are guided by nothing but their own internal standards. Any attempt to *transcend* those practices considering some truth standard or ideal concept of reason can be unmasked as misguided as much as it is bound to fail, since any justification of any such standard can but rely on the very practices of the day whose

legitimacy the philosophical discourse is first supposed to ground. Since there are neither 'a priori meanings' nor 'direct references' available, *all justifications*—and thus truth-claims, intended references, and conceptual meanings—dependent on the practices of the day.

To understand both the value of Rorty's own deconstruction of truth as well as its limits, it is important to emphasize that he aims at the linguistic-analytic continuation of a metaphysical understanding of Truth—truth with a capital T. This is relevant for a challenge of existing practices of power and domination regarding *ideological worldviews*.³ The process to (allegedly) abstract and distance oneself from one's existing discursive practices to establish a purely objective, neutral 'view-from-nowhere' to justify what's going on, is a classic move to legitimize who is already in charge (Vattimo/Rorty 2007; Kögler 2020). The classical religious and metaphysical systems often fulfilled this function. An analysis of the dogmatization of the early progressive axial age breakthroughs in subsequently established world religions and political philosophies tells an illuminating story about how critical motives may get succumbed and transformed within the process of their attempted institutionalizing (Jaspers 1953; Assmann 1997; Bellah 2003).

Importantly, it makes a difference whether an analysis of truth is undertaken to establish an unshakable foundation, as it were from a 3. person-perspective, or whether the role of truth-claims is reconstructed from within existing justificatory practices, i.e., from a 1. and 2. person perspective. Here an overarching scheme of grounding beliefs and assumptions, there the internal

² Rorty acknowledges that we *may want* to make sure that we are talking about the same things when reconstructing previous philosophical ideas and perspectives. To understand 'what our ancestors talked about' (Rorty 1979, 266-273) seems to ask both for an objective reference as well as for the assignment of truth values. Regarding science, we are inclined to say "there jolly well is something out there—motion and its law, for instance—which people meant to refer to, or at least were referring to without realizing it (Rorty 1979, 288). The *shared reference* would then allow us to determine 'what they were really talking about,' which thus calls for the *philosophical project to establish a universal matrix of reference and truth that is neutral, objective, and trans-contextual*.

³ Rorty's specific target, the recent analytic sequel to philosophical metaphysics and epistemology, may seem off target here, but a closer look reveals that a narrow *scientistic conception of truth and reality* was indeed authoritatively installed. Both in mainstream positivism as well as in pre-pragmatic challengers like Quine and Sellars, an exclusivist focus on the truth value of the natural sciences prevails. It is not the least this ideological target, for which scientific truths consists in the natural-scientific construction of theories based on stimuli or, more old-fashioned, sense data, that Rorty's deconstruction of reference and correspondence has in mind. Scientism is the ideological world-view *per se* of our time.

acts of challenging certain beliefs and assumptions. Here the aim to find an irreversible foundation, there the desire to allow for challenges, reversals, transformations. Indeed, if one descends from the height of philosophical abstraction and truthfully engages in a hermeneutic reconstruction of how agents understand themselves within the very justificatory practices Rorty invokes, one can hardly do without a reference to some truth-oriented self-conception. Discursive practices of critique entail that there is a difference—however immanent, context-dependent, and culturally biased the ultimate critical challenge may be—between the beliefs to be had and the beliefs that ought to be stated, between social and epistemic validity. To deny the phenomenological reality of this immanent self-understanding of agents a ‘hearing’ at the court of ‘higher philosophical discourse,’ to lump it together with any distorted metaphysical conception of the past, seems as illegitimate and over-hasty. The implied assumption within the criticism of *a belief as false* is that there is another option of disclosure, one that is in some respect more adequate, captures the experience better, makes more sense. Rorty can convincingly argue that any such challenge can only proceed from within one’s existing practices, that there is no recourse to an unencumbered, un-mediated reality itself. But to go from here to the denial of truth as such, i.e., to the claim that truth plays no critical role within our discursive practices simply does not follow. There is, after all, the internal orientation at truth claims within our discursive practices, and the role they play must better be analyzed.

Such an internal analysis of the truth- or validity-orientation is at the core of the Habermasian conception of communicative action (Habermas 1983; 1993). What interests here is the always inherent potential for criticism vis-à-vis uttered speech acts failing to fulfill their implicitly assumed status of *rationaly acceptable beliefs*. Any speech act I utter may be rejected by another speaker as failing to convince, as lacking sufficient backing, as missing its warrant. I ignore here the several validity claims

related to several world concepts. What is crucial is that the dimension of a potential rejection or challenge—as Habermas says, the ever-present reality of being able to say no—reveals an implicit validity dimension of speech. Regarding the (objective) world, this would be called a truth claim in the narrower sense. In place of the impossible un-mediated check of ‘reality,’ which Habermas denies as much as Rorty, evidence has now to come in to play the role of a warrant. The crucial point is that any such evidence will be mobilized and relevant only *within a game that assumes that there is a better, more adequate, more fitting account vis-à-vis what’s at stake*. In other words, the very meaning—and meaningfulness—of presenting a criticism requires assuming the distinction between a belief, a view, a mediation, and that which is believed to be such-and-such. This subject matter is disclosed, it exists *as that which is mediated*. It is in this *gap* within which criticism of any sort resides, and which is opened, or kept alive, by the concept of truth. The truth claim is oriented vis-à-vis a truth that would consist in a more adequate disclosure of reality, all the while there may not be just one privileged disclosure, and there may never be a way to experience reality in and for itself.

However, the *critical function vis-à-vis the disclosure of something as something* is itself undertheorized in Habermas’s approach, who focuses on the idealized and universalized aspects as presuppositions that speakers allegedly must make. Habermas assumes that speakers who make truth claims (which they must if they speak at all, as we saw) assume an ‘ideal speech situation,’ i.e., implicitly presuppose that they are in possession of all the relevant information, that all relevant information has been vetted, that all speakers with relevant information are given access, and that no one is hindered to participate and contribute to this regard. This furthermore means that the discourse is guided by an ultimate consensus toward which it would proceed under ideal conditions. Habermas takes the truth- or validity claims to entail these assumptions.

Rorty challenges both the effectiveness and necessity that this 'idealization' of intersubjective 'discourse conditions' implies. For Habermas, the idealization entails that any exclusion or rejection of participants with relevant information can now be normatively criticized as illegitimate. Accordingly, *to deny* access and participation entails a *self-contradiction* because the speaker has, merely by being a participant in the discourse, somewhat 'accepted' the ideal discourse conditions which entail openness and universality. The '*performative self-contradiction*' provides the philosopher (and any self-conscious speaker) with a necessary argument against power-based discrimination, rejection, and elimination of subjects from the shared discourse.

Rorty questions whether this argument works *in practice*:

The big question is whether anybody has ever been convinced by the charge of performative self-contradiction . . . If you tell the *bigot* . . . that he is committed to making *context-surpassing validity claims*, to aiming at truth, he will probably agree that that is exactly what he is doing. If you tell him that he cannot make such claims and still balk at the paradoxes or the people at whom he balks, he will probably not get the point (Rorty 2000, 8).

For Rorty, a *formal* presupposition of aiming at truth under ideal conditions is neither necessary nor sufficient to challenge *substantive* prejudices that seem grounded in the target's nature or essence: "He will say that people who advance such paradoxes are too crazy to argue with or about, that women have a distorted view of reality, and the like. He will think it is irrational or immoral, or both, to take such paradoxes and people seriously. "(*ibid.*). If someone is wholly convinced that certain groups, world-views, or subjects do not deserve to participate in public discourse, the alleged *universal* presupposition that all rational subjects deserve to be heard rings empty. To be sure, all *relevant information* is supposed to be admitted, but subjects who are incapable of providing such knowledge are naturally not included in the bigot's view; they can't possibly be meant by 'universal inclusion.'

Still, for Habermas the implied truth claims require the speaker to assume a *stance toward universality*: Any rationally justified belief is to hold up—as far we know now—under strictly universal conditions, in any possible context. Rorty objects again:

Habermas' doctrine of a transcendent moment seems to me to run together a commendable willingness to try something new with an empty boast. To say, I'll try to defend this against all comers' is often, depending upon the circumstances, a commendable attitude. But to say, I can successfully defend this against all comers' is silly ... (Rorty 2000, 6)

Of course, one may for now be convinced about one's beliefs and assumptions, and of course this implies that one is ready to defend one's beliefs with arguments and evidence. But to demand the *additional* conviction that one will succeed *under all possible circumstances* is neither needed nor justified:

For assertions such as 'Clinton is the better candidate, Alexander came before Caesar, Gold is insoluble in hydrochloric acid,' it is hard to see why I should ask myself, is my claim context-dependent or universal?' No difference to practice is made by coming down in favor of one alternative rather than the other. (Rorty 2000, 6)

To be sure, whether I hold a philosophical meta-position regarding context-dependency or universalism may be irrelevant for my concrete beliefs. But what makes a difference, of course, is whether they are justified *within* the contexts in which they are uttered and, if criticized, defended. It is here that the debate whether Clinton is better than Bush, whether Alexander preceded Caesar, or whether certain acids dissolve gold or not *necessarily relies* on a difference between the mediating assertion, and that which is mediated or disclosed. We may reject the force and even reality of presuppositions entailing universality or necessity, but we cannot deny that *relative to a debated subject matter*, the *adequacy of beliefs* is what is at stake. Accepting Rorty's challenge to the Habermasian idealizations, the question is not whether we must presuppose universally acceptable idealizations, but under *what concrete conditions here and now*

we may *rationaly justify* or *rationaly reject* a belief. How can we justify—or challenge—that one set of beliefs and assumptions is cognitively superior, or as we would say, more adequate to the subject matter (and in that regard closer to the truth) than alternative interpretations? How can we, after the irrevocable demise of any metaphysical, i.e., unmediated access to reality, *justify and defend, or criticize and reject*, the ‘truth’ of certain statements and beliefs *in our contexts of justification*?⁴ The answer to these questions, which will be given in good pragmatic spirit, will bring us back to the relevance of truth for a critique of power.

Power Practices, Reflexive Agency, and Truth-Oriented Discourse

Indeed: even if we grant that we should acknowledge the truth-oriented self-understanding of agents, and understand that this must not entail a ‘metaphysical realism’ *per se*: what is it that proves that such a situated, internal, critically oriented *truth conception* is *needed* for a critique of power? What makes truth-telling or truth-demanding practices so essential, or at least significantly important, for a discursive stance against power?

The affirmative answer to these questions, i.e., reasons for asserting the need for a truth-oriented critique of power, follows from a closer look at how power functions. At stake is the rejection of power-induced types of self-understanding, understanding others, and being in the world. And the function of truth-claims has been established as opening the space of alternative, challenging interpretations. In a first type of power, associated with the work of Foucault, social power establishes its

hold over agents not only or mainly by explicit threats, legal prohibitions, and institutional separations. It much rather establishes, via a complex web of symbolic networks and background practices, a certain *sense of self* (Foucault 1984; 1993) Subjects become types of agents, social institutions, defined by a host of external and imposed assumptions and value-orientations that they have never had the chance to reflectively accept, but that were always already involved in the contexts of their self-formation. These identity-types tie subjects to status function via internal schemes of self-understanding, including bodily habits and feeling, social and cultural aspirations, and their general sense of self-esteem (Bourdieu 2000). Subjective identities are thus formed in a socio-cultural contexts which, in turn, is reproduced by their establishment, all the while the social relations between such types, i.e., the actual situation of agents in such settings, may be harmed and denigrated by their specific constitution. Power relations remain established and unchallenged precisely because subjects understand themselves according to the respective social practices and expectations.

Yet what could possibly challenge such relations, what could interrupt the smooth flow of hierarchical exchanges? One needs to reinterpret the situation such that the power-ingrained harmful dimensions as well as the possibility of a reflexive transformation become visible. And such a reinterpretation must proceed to claim its superior truth vis-à-vis the phenomenon, the adequacy of what it reconstructs as an unacceptable power practice. Take, for example, the challenging effect that the invention of the term ‘sexual harassment’ has for challenging sexist workplace practices. As Miranda Fricker reconstructs, women situated in their taken-for-granted professional roles ‘accepted’ micro-practices of bodily and verbally expressed objectifications as part of a less-than-perfect gendered reality (Fricker 2007). To transform these practices, their social ubiquity had to become visible, which became possible through separate spaces of reflexive

⁴ Merely to assume, as Rorty does, that the standards of one’s own culture or ‘justificatory practices’ pre-define *any* experience and understanding of the world seems to repeat the error of conceptual scheme relativism. It now appears that subjects are somewhat imprisoned in their particular practices, which pre-structure whatever one may think, feel, or do. This ignores the internal perspective of agents in which one encounters a social and symbolically interpreted world ready to be defended or challenged, conserved or transformed, dogmatically legitimized or creatively redefined.

deliberation. It took the discursive articulation of those 'micro-aggressions' as 'sexual harassment,' however, to be able to fully thematize and articulate the phenomenon. Yet its articulation, and the associated possibility to situate oneself vis-à-vis the power practices to challenge and transform them, was no aesthetic or merely ethical affair, but asserted the existential truth of an embodied, objectified experience. Without the claim to get it right, to truly understand one's own situation in this way, the term would be politically useless.

In a second type of power, subjects are the target of a symbolico-practical objectification, which reduces their human agency to certain determining factors. In this other-directed mode, features of one's objective existence function as bodily signs, as embodied markers of a pre-determined essence. The function of this attribution of objectifying factors is the integration of the individual members of a group or class into ontological status functions that justify their usually inferior or subordinate social and political position. Edward Said's analysis of "Orientalism" remains a paradigmatic study to show how the categorization of the 'Oriental' defined by such-and-such attributes, in the end, legitimized, even requiring the colonial rule in the respective countries (Said 1979). Any type of predicate categorization, which undertakes to define the underlying 'essence' of the respective agents, fulfills this role of integration into a power-defined, hierarchical system of domination. Yet how can we reject such an objectification of turning the 'who' of individual agents into a 'what' that essentializes their agency? How can we guard ourselves from types of objectification that diminish human agency by reducing it to external factors and determinants? One general, typically philosophical strategy consists in a universal account of human agency that rejects such attributions as ontologically misguided and problematic. Any thorough critique of the persistent objectification of human agents as members of social, cultural, gendered, etc. groups ultimately relies on the ontological preunderstanding

that human agents are reflexively situated in their own social-cultural lifeworlds such that a purely external definition and determination of their agency is simply incomplete. Yet the challenge of concretely existing and prevailing types of objectification, as we saw in Rorty's rejection of Habermas' formalism, requires a more concrete critique of the respective types of interpretation. The orientalist interpretive scheme that subordinates the Other as a subject such that colonial rule is necessary and legitimate needs to be specifically analyzed and deconstructed. The necessary task to reconstruct the involvement of objectifying schemes with power practices needs then to be complemented by the positive practice of interpretation. *The Other needs to become visible and understandable as a human agent in her concrete setting to overcome the colonial mindset.* Yet such a hermeneutic approach to do justice to the Other cannot but claim to get it right, to more adequately understand the Other. This is what it means to overcome the distorting, prejudiced, limited and ethnocentric schemes that the West applied 'to make sense' of the Other. What's at stake is the articulation of the Other's cultural situatedness in her hermeneutic truth, i.e., to address the Other's context's self-understanding such that the objectifying distortions of a power-impregnated view can truly be overcome.

In a third type of power, the self is *symbolically* integrated into a whole, a collective identity which provides self-worth and a sense of belonging. The function of this holistic mode is to create an elevated sense of self that derives its value from being part of a larger context. It is typical of nationalist and, of course, fascist ideologies, as it explicitly constructs encompassing worldviews and master-narratives that aim to legitimize the existing essential order. These narratives are thus legitimated by conceptions of Truth that undergird the political and social powers in place. The identification is thus explicitly enhancing one's individual identity, which at the same time is diminished and reduced to a part of the whole, without ultimate worth as such. The symbolic construction of a

shared collective identity functions as structural domination by covering up different power positions within the social field. Subjects are either led to ignore or justify those differences in terms of their shared belonging; or they are led to blame themselves for any inferior or subordinate role based on individual deficiencies. The acceptance of non-equality, the target of the first type of interiorizing a subordinate sense of self, is the function of this line of domination; similarly, the second line of power as objectifying certain groups as essentially defined is integrated via the in-group/out-group distinction, by projecting Jews, Westerners, Muslims, Intellectuals, etc. as 'enemies of the people,' as opposed to the true German nation, the Russian soul, American values, or average American citizens.

The third type of power functions by means of creating a superior Truth of one's nation, people, or society, and thus can be seen as the target of Rorty's criticism of authoritarian worldviews and ideologies. Yet rejecting this type of cover-up without analyzing the function it has vis-à-vis the structural inequality and domination that persists under its cover is a task half-completed. If ideological and discursive schemes establish themselves as overarching frameworks of meaning—when they come to define worldhood (a holistic, meaning conferring background for situated agents (Heidegger 1999)—it seems crucial to unmask their function, to challenge them precisely by pointing out what they leave unsaid, what they cover up. But a critical practice of unmasking cannot operate without the assumption that it reconstructs what *actually operates in the background*, under the umbrella of the national order, whether it is defined in a fascist or even in a liberal sense. In the critique of this type of power as well, the orientation toward a more adequate and truth-based account of the forces and structures that define the current social order seems to be without alternative. The crucial task for critical theorists entails to deconstruct what the current ideology suggests as legitimate so that agents can distance themselves from it

by comparing it with misrecognized social practices. Yet the reconstruction should be undertaken in a way that agents do not lose hope and trust in their reflexive agency to engage and ameliorate the social conditions.

To be sure, reflexive agency does not exist in a cultural or social vacuum but is embedded in a vast network of symbolic and social practices, which entail power and domination. In fact, to *understand* an agent, what we disclose as an *expression* of human agency are the symbolic and cultural articulations of the self, always *mediated and structured* by the shared languages and power practices of the respective background. Yet such socially situated *linguistic mediation* does not undercut the intentional understanding, but rather enables and articulates it. As Gadamer has shown vis-à-vis the path toward appropriating tradition, to be able to understand at all, we must let ourselves be addressed by its claim: "I must allow tradition's claim to validity... in such a way that it has something to say to me... historically effected consciousness [is] letting itself experience tradition ... by keeping itself open to the truth claim encountered in it." (Gadamer 1989, 361,362). The linguistic *understanding* of an expression of the tradition is only possible by *grasping* the sense, i.e., substantive content of what it aims to say. This intertwinement between meaning and content, however, ties the understanding of agency—precisely insofar as it can be reconstructed as a meaningful expression—to the articulation of truth. It is, as we saw, also functionally involved in analyzing and challenging power practices. Agents assert their own agency as autonomous and reflexive selves precisely by challenging certain power-ingrained modes of self-understanding, projections vis-à-vis others, and discursive understandings of their society based on more truthful accounts.⁵

⁵ Rorty could have seen this inevitable truth-dimension in the *intersubjective* disclosure of another human agent's meaningful expression by attending more closely to Davidson's 'principle of charity.' In this theorem, the necessary orientation toward truth vis-à-vis the intersubjective understanding of another agent's expression is emphasized. Rorty mobilizes, as we saw, Davidson's account to show that global skepticism regarding all our

But what does it mean to attribute to the other subject the capacity to express truth-based statements which, as we saw, entail resources to challenge relations of power and domination? It is not enough, as Gadamer, Davidson and Habermas suggest, that the default disclosure entails a *shared agreement* of a largely true corpus of beliefs and assumptions, or that we project an *idealized consensus* as a presupposition. Rather, we must assign to her *the cognitive competence of understanding truth, of being able to reflexively grasp and interpret her situation*. Understanding truth entails understanding the difference between truth and falsehood. Even the radical social constructivist, for whom 'truth' consists in shared rules of justification, must accept some distinction between right and wrong. Knowing how to follow a rule means understanding how to follow the rule rightly or wrongly. To *know how* to follow a rule is to know how to follow it *correctly*, to be able to distinguish right from wrong interpretations or courses of action (Winch 1998). This difference is rendered within a truth-oriented approach as the difference between what is understood (counts as; is accepted as) as truth (i.e., as a truth-bearing statement), and what is not. Even if the universalist's claim rings empty, as Rorty argues, and fallibilism needs to be preserved, as Rorty agrees, it still makes sense to reconstruct the truth-relation regarding the evidence and warrant that can rationally be mobilized *within a set of discursive practices*, and against which the symbolic and conceptual claims can be measured. To understand how such evidence and warrants would be mobilized and presented within a community of interpreters, we must include a rational and reflexive agent *capable of representing such resources*, i.e., capable of orienting herself toward a more truthful account of what exists. It is in the

beliefs all at once is misguided; the intertwinement of meaning and truth shows that we are always already in the world; the world as a skeptical concept is well lost. But the principle of charity, which is similar in kind to Gadamer's interpretive projection of completeness, brings out that *we must attribute at least some degree of truth-based statements to the Other to make sense of her beliefs (and relatedly feelings and actions) at all*.

cognitive attribution of this truth-telling capacity to each agent that grounds her rational respect, as she is capable of rejecting and resisting power and domination which in turn aim to undermine or eliminate reflexive agency.⁶

From Metaphysical Groundlessness to Achieving Democracy: Liberal Pragmatism versus Cultural Studies

Yet even if we grant that truth-oriented discourse plays a role in challenging power and domination, it could still be argued what really counts is the moral and democratic advancement of humanity. Can power and domination not be challenged and overcome by other, perhaps more effective practices, i.e., techniques of self-invention, political mobilization, social empathy, aesthetic creativity? Perhaps we should be focusing on the ethico-political constitution of our democratic practices, how we treat one another, how we care about other subjects? Should we focus on making sure liberal democracy is established, based on empathy and care, and 'truth will take care of itself'? Thereby, we make sure that the political culture, in John Rawls' sense, is up and well, and the traditional role of philosophy as a provider of metaphysical foundations becomes obsolete. The goal of our activities would thus not be the philosophical elaboration of the role of truth, or a theory of power, but the *practical concern* to improve the human condition. For Rorty, this ethico-political re-orientation entails anti-authoritarianism supported by anti-essentialism. The grounding function of philosophy is passé, its days as a discipline provid-

⁶ Human agency is furthermore defined by the capacity to distinguish between one's own beliefs and actions and those of the environment. It entails that this distinction is conscious, i.e., cognitively available to the agent herself (Mead 1934; Kögler 2012). At the same time, one's own actions must be understood to have a real impact in the world. As an *agent*, I must be able to (intentionally) cause something to be. I am also a product of the environment, I understand that I act, feel, and think based on innumerable cultural and social influences: I can only 'be' as an agent against the holistic symbolico-practical background of my context (Heidegger 1999; Searle 1985; 2012). But this does not diminish my agency, as I am capable—per definition—to consciously begin an action or entertain a thought. Full social agency then requires us to have—or to assume to have—an impact in the world, and to distinguish one's own from the influence and causation of others or external factors.

ing 'foundations' and 'legitimations' are gone; yet we do not abandon our shared (Western, liberal, democratic) values defined by "the Socratic dialogue, the Christian community, and the Enlightenment science." (Rorty 1989). What must go overboard is merely the urge to justify these values via metaphysical arguments.⁷ Yet is it possible to endorse the democratic values of 'Socratic dialogue, Christian communitarianism, and Enlightenment science' without any recourse to truth, or at least a conception of reflexive agency with an orientation toward truth? Or positively put, if the philosophical grounding of these dialogic, communitarian, and scientific values in a *metaphysical* conception of truth is no longer needed—indeed, if it may even be harmful—what takes its place? How could we *achieve and realize* these values—the most pertinent *pragmatic* question—after the irrevocable demise of their epistemic and metaphysical grounding?

In *Achieving our Country* (1998), Rorty sets out to answer these questions by defining a pragmatic outlook situating itself within a 'reformist' Left, juxtaposed against the previous 'Marxist' Left and a contemporary postmodern 'cultural' Left. The claim is that both the older 'Marxist' and the current Cultural Left stick, in different forms, to a *theoretical mode of critique*, whereas the 'reformist' Left operated from within *concrete political challenges*. On the one side we have a *deterministic, knowledge-based faith in progress* or a *spectatorial attitude toward all things social and cultural*, i.e., theoretically defined attitudes aimed at truth; on the other side, we have instead an agent-based, practice-oriented, and policy-focused *participation in democratic and socio-economic struggles*.

Rorty recalls the neglected, indeed forgotten memo-

ry of a (genuinely American) social-democratic reformism (roughly 1910-1960), the Whitman-Dewey legacy, in hopes to rebalance the relation between critique and hope, between the rejection of immoral and unjust conditions and a sense of pride and faith in one's country and nation. For Rorty, postmodernism and its associated academic trends (like post-structuralism, cultural studies, literary theory, academic feminism, post-colonial studies, etc.) led, despite certain achievements, to a dangerous demise of the Left's political force. His by now unsurprising charge is that their political and cultural weakness is due to an over-reliance on *theory*. The contemporary academic Left is held captive by the 'spectatorial' analysis of a mysteriously opaque and yet ubiquitous 'power'. Marxism relied on a 'philosophy of history' projecting a secure victory for emancipation. Its postmodernist successors preserve the faith in theory, yet now without hope, creating a political and practical vacuum *de facto* benefiting powerful Elites.

One especially dangerous effect of this development is the neglect of the issue of socio-economic justice, which is part of the decline of socially reformist self-understanding in general. Rorty's famous prediction suggests that this will ultimately lead to a collapse of the system toward the other extreme. He foresees a Trump-like uprising of the people against the 'overclass.' This populist autocratic turn of disappointed working Americans not only undermines most likely procedural democracy, but also the moral achievements of the Cultural Left such as a higher sensitivity toward otherness, difference, and excluded voices:

[the people]... will decide that the system has failed and start looking around for a strongman to vote for—someone willing to assure them that, once elected, the smug bureaucrats, tricky lawyers, overpaid bond salesmen, and postmodernist professors will no longer be calling the shots.... One thing that is very likely to happen is that the gains made in the past forty years by black and brown Americans, and by homosexuals, will be wiped out. Jocular contempt for women will come back into fashion. (Rorty 1998,)

Yet despite Rorty's commendable turn to a more prac-

⁷ In contrast to the use of philosophical arguments against the correspondence theory of truth, Rorty now abandons all efforts to justify those values philosophically; the mere endorsement of liberal values is no longer presented as the claim that facts do not entail value-orientations, or the lack of a universal moral intuition, or the semantic thesis that all truth depends on justification. (Rorty 1988, 31–32). It is merely asserted, somewhat dogmatically, as one's chosen value-orientation.

tice-oriented, politically relevant, and efficacious perspective, his largely dismissive assessment of the current Cultural Left, his almost caricaturesque and at times superficial treatment of their perspectives and contributions, diminish the value of his greatest points. Addressing his fellow American liberals, Rorty plausibly emphasizes that 'our country' cannot just hate itself, be consumed in disgust or self-mockery, but requires an engaged identification with its fate:

Insufficient national pride makes energetic and effective debate about national policy unlikely. Emotional involvement with one's country - feelings of intense shame or of glowing pride aroused by various parts of its history and by various present-day national policies - is necessary if political deliberation is to be imaginative and productive." (Rorty 1998, 3).

Instead, the wrong lessons from the Vietnam disaster, coupled with the now prevalent sense of the need for 'spectatorial' analysis of power à la Foucault and Heidegger, convinced the new Left that nothing good is left of 'our' country.

When young intellectuals watch John Wayne war movies after reading Heidegger, Foucault, Stephenson, or Silko, they often become convinced that they live in a violent, inhuman, corrupt country ... this insight does not move them to formulate a legislative program, to join a political movement, or to share in a national hope. (Rorty 1998, 7)

Such self-hate or self-detachment can only lead to political paralysis, besides alienating large parts of the population still captured by the narrative of 'our' nation's greatness.⁸

No doubt an emotionally attached *mode of normative self-identification and care* vis-à-vis one's own national context is conducive to stimulating political agency. But while it is true that an *analysis* of power, deception, and

violence needs to be mediated with a constructive, identifying, and forward-looking perspective, Rorty leaves this mediation undeveloped. It is as if the plea for national pride speaks for itself once it's understood. Whence should such pride come from, and on what should it be based? For Rorty's 'virtue liberalism,' the values of tolerance, openness, self-criticism, individual self-realization, etc. are without alternative, at least for us. As he rejects any meta-justification as philosophically illegitimate, all he can put in place is the somewhat nostalgic remembrance of an old 'reformist' Left actively fighting for them. According to this hopeful narrative, the 'good old' Left operated within the democratic-legal framework to advance progress in a piecemeal fashion: campaigns instead of movements, policies instead of cultural politics, legal reform instead of deconstruction and power analysis. Rorty sees the big advantage of the pragmatist perspective in its *radical abstinence* from any *abstract theorizing*, and in turn in their concrete emphasis on ameliorating conditions grounded in the here and now: "'Democracy' is a great word, whose history ... remains unwritten, because that history has yet to be enacted.... The Left, by definition, is the party of hope. It insists our nation remains unachieved." (Rorty 1998, 8)⁹

One senses that the real task is to integrate the power-critical insights of the contemporary academic Left more productively into our democratic self-understanding. Rorty rightly emphasizes that the Cultural Left's has undeniable accomplishments, such as the decrease and elimination of what he calls 'sadism,' i.e., the socially

⁸ Rorty also traces this discourse of lost hope within contemporary American literature: "Novels like Stephenson's, Condon's *The Manchurian Candidate*, and Pynchon's *Vineland* are novels not of social protest but rather of rueful acquiescence in the end of American hopes." (Rorty 1998, 6) In contrast and on the constructive and socially progressive side, Rorty mentions socialist novels like *The Jungle*, *An American Tragedy*, *The Grapes of Wrath*.

⁹ One may wonder whether the difference between an autocratic rulership and a liberal democracy—which Rorty prophetically envisioned—may not be better helped if the latter orients the critique of its actual practices more explicitly *in terms of* (its) articulated values and normative principles. To orient oneself at this gap between existing practices and regulative ideals would also fit perfectly with the endorsed *forward-looking* viewpoint, instead of merely clapping oneself on one's shoulder as democratic superiors. The 'pride' one may feel would come less from what one 'is,' from a stale and shallow 'greatness' discourse, but from a reflexive commitment to an ever-better realization of a yet-imperfect democratic state, just as Rorty intends to. For further discussion of how populism and autocratic tendencies may affect our hopes in deliberative democratic practices and be responded to, see Outhwaite 2022 and Kögler 2022.

acceptable mockery and symbolic debunking of individuals targeted as members of marginal groups, such as 'black and brown Americans, homosexuals ... women.' He grants that this whole complex was invisible to the 'reformist' Left that he nostalgically invokes as a backdrop to revive our national pride.¹⁰ Yet what he misses is that the moral accomplishments against sexism, racism, homophobia, and cultural chauvinism were possible only because the narrow national-legalistic framework of the old Left (including the Marxist/Hegelian tradition) was overcome. This in turn was possible due to *the new theoretical resources* that critical theory, Cultural Studies, and Continental philosophy provided. To be sure, the lack of mediation vis-à-vis praxis and theory which he decries in contemporary leftist academics isn't even in its original sources.¹¹ Nonetheless, Rorty conceives the epistemic profile of the new critical and cultural approaches in terms of a 'spectatorial' episteme, while what's at stake here is a rather subtle mediation of *the use of theory* and the *practical side* of an engaged, power-critical, and resisting agency.

Critical cultural studies conceive of agency as radically situated. This social situatedness entails a set of background factors and structures as co-determining how agency conceives of itself, the world, and others. It is one of the achievements of the diverse field of 'the

Studies' (Vandenberghe 2022) to have wriggled those social and cultural background factors out of the grip of an all-encompassing Marxist master-narrative, to open it up to a truly empirical yet engaged analysis of specific contexts, phenomena, and cases. The 'democratic self' of Rorty's virtue liberalism is here both deconstructed and reconstructed, now understood to be 'factioned,' multiply 'defined' and situated, located at the intersection of a variety of influential forces and factors of its 'social construction'—a theorem that Rorty himself endorses. Rorty's own approach to such situatedness remains entirely moral, in the mode of humanistic care ethics, trying to enhance and advance our sensibility toward concrete situations via an empathetic reconstruction of their plight. Cultural Studies, instead, takes the social and cultural situatedness social-scientifically seriously, yet without reducing the self to these factors. The unmediated duality between a liberal self that Rorty normatively endorses and his theoretical commitment to 'social constructionism' is here overcome via a hermeneutic attitude to understand and reconstruct reflexive agency as situated and shaped by objective factors, while never reducible to them. This requires a move beyond a care ethics toward *social analysis*—and here the demonized French (Foucault, Derrida, etc.) and German (Nietzsche, Heidegger, Benjamin, etc.) theorists come in.

Accordingly, in Cultural Studies, these 'theories'—or the respective 'tool kits' of analytical concepts—are explicitly employed to reconstruct the background of the acting, feeling, and desiring agents (Hall 1992; Winter 2001, Kögler 2018). Agency, and thus the connection to the liberal self as realizing herself within a social order, is not lost, but better understood. The 'theoretical,' rather theoretically induced re-construction of the Background factors, now leads to a mapping, a discursive articulation of those 'systems,' 'fields,' 'power practices,' disciplinary matrices,' etc. that can only in the superficial reader trigger 'representationalism.' It is as if Rorty reacts negatively to any 'objective' stimulus, rejects any descriptive

¹⁰ He also grants the new Left for the much-needed moral turn against the Vietnam war.

¹¹ The post-structuralist and Neo-Marxist perspectives had already undertaken a reflexive transformation from classic structuralism and traditional Hegel-Marxism that pushed precisely in the direction of a pragmatic and agent-oriented perspective. What those theoretical shifts, say at the hands of Foucault, Habermas, and many others amount to, was a more subtle and complex integration of 'theory' into the practical demands of a liberal and transformative ethico-political vision. The overcoming of a holistic 'revolutionary' left toward a 'reformist' Left is indeed accomplished here, albeit not in these terms, and perhaps not fully appreciated and understood by those who read them in the American context. The analysis of power in Foucault, and the thematization of functional systems like a bureaucratic administration and late capitalistic economy in Habermas, to name prominent examples, are practically and theoretically integrated into an "agent-based point of view" (Rorty), i.e., a view that Rorty preserves for his preferred versions of pragmatism. For Foucault's agent-based perspective, see Kögler 2004; 2017; Schubert 2019; for Habermas and his tradition, see Honneth's theory of recognition, Honneth 1995.

account of reality not immediately and solely 'located' in an agent's emotional and intersubjective situation. Yet the social-scientific articulations of these wider networks and practices *within which agents find themselves* are not *ontologically detached*. They are descriptively developed to allow for a more radical *reflexive distancing* to better grasp their own situatedness. This ultimately leads to the multiplication of the analytical contexts. The diversification which Rorty—almost mockingly—invokes into Latin, Gay, African/American, Gender, Post-Colonial, Holocaust (and so on) Studies thus reflect the hermeneutic sensitivity to *truthfully reconstruct the concrete objective and experiential contexts vis-à-vis* each specific cultural constellation. It is precisely in the name of an irrevocable agency of the situated subjects that no broad brush is used here, but that the specific contexts belonging to unique groups of experiences—and thus to specific groups experiencing them—are put into focus. *Pace* Rorty's claim that they are 'spectatorial,' this diversification is no academic fluke, but emerged from the social and cultural struggles of the sixties and seventies, in which specific groups began to reject the stereotypical denigration and dehumanization experienced in the wider liberal democratic society.¹² The ethico-epistemic care 'to get it right,' to *truly* understand how concrete subjects are situated, both as reflexive and self-defining agents and as vulnerable selves situated in matrices of power and domination, marks the normative superiority of this mode of cultural analysis over previous moral and social-scientific approaches. The multiplication into so many diverse studies thus reflects first and foremost their cultural and historical uniqueness, and as such entails both a moral and hermeneutic recognition vis-à-vis the agents as situated in concrete contexts defined by power and self-expression.

To be sure, the entailed diversification entails a whole new set of dangers. The first is potential fragmentation, because it could seem that a shared and over-arching vision is now out of reach. If the focus on some commonly endorsed values is lost, the cultural recognition is in danger of declining into particularistic struggles for self-assertion and self-expression. While the modified success of legal reforms, say of the gay and feminist movements, may speak against this, a second problematic issue emerges with the concentration on group-based experiences as part of addressing specific cultural phenomena. What is often rendered as 'identity-politics,' however, becomes problematic only if the cultural and social situatedness of certain groups and agents is *reified* into a quasi-inescapable 'prison house of language' (Jameson). Here the lack of hermeneutic and epistemic reflexivity reduces the reconstruction of the experiential, culturally defined life-worlds of agents into determining symbolic orders that make a dialogic understanding, and thus shared political self-determination, inconceivable. To avoid this reification of one's identity, the critical reconstruction of objectifying stereotypes and discursive categorizations must be paired with the cultural and social resources of situated subjects as both limiting and enabling resources to understand oneself as well as others, and all of us within a shared world.

Perhaps the biggest problem of the new Cultural Left lies in its apparent neglect of the traditional socio-economic problematics. Rorty's favored social reformism rejected the master-narrative of Hegelian Marxism as much as it opposed the Soviet cooptation of all things socialist. Yet it retained a deep concern for the *real economic plight of the working class*. Rorty puts the finger on the wound when he charges the Cultural Left's blind spot here. In its theoretical master narratives, the 'economic base' cedes into the theoretical background since hitherto neglected spheres of disciplinary and bio-power (Foucault) or the lifeworld-system difference (Habermas) or the ubiquity of technology (Heidegger) now take center

¹² Already Dilthey noted that 'understanding emerges from the context of life itself.' It is the same with Cultural Studies which emerge from the resistance, reflexivity, and need for recognition of ever more marginalized and hitherto denigrated groups and subjects (Dilthey 1998; Winter 2001).

stage. To be sure, these approaches retain a subtle and important relation to the economic sphere—factories are sites of disciplinary power, the functional economic sub-system needs to be checked for a colonization of the life-world, technology is tied to industrialization. But no doubt the focus is now, especially after their productive application within Cultural Studies, on the multiple socio-cultural contexts, and here on how subjects, discourses, and power-practices intertwine. Furthermore, the bulk of Leftist energy became focused on overcoming practices of sexism, racism, colonialism, and imperialism by means of avoiding the narrow focus on just one type of oppression via intersectionality. Then there is the aim to transform the narrow national focus into a global one, with a major theme becoming ‘globalization,’ via cosmopolitanism. The heightened and growing awareness of global warming added to the ecological fight as a major Leftist cause. All the while, the ‘working class’ as a political ally, and respectively on the socio-economic conditions of ‘our fellow citizens,’ cedes into the background. Sophisticated leftists lost interest and hope in *politically aligning* with ‘average white workers’ whose level of understanding in issues like feminism, sexism, and racism left much to be desired. Precisely this neglect opened the space for autocratic strongmen whose ascendance Rorty predicted. ‘Postmodern professors’ prefer Balinese cockfights to suburban country fairs, Madonna’s culture industry to Woody Guthrie’s protest songs, Black Lives Matter to union strikes. Paradoxically enabling a truly global ‘neoliberal’ super-class to hide behind a screen of ‘officially’ democratic politics, party officials like Hillary Clinton add insult to injury by decrying ‘the deplorables’ for whom liberal values seem out of reach.

Yet if we recall the actual ethico-epistemic profile of Cultural Studies, a necessary divide between cultural and a socio-economical leftism is far from evident. Understanding agency as situated within a network of practices and institutions defined by power and domination suggests *equally* an orientation toward the so-

cio-economic resources of agency and those that derive from more ‘cultural’ or symbolic background conditions. We argued that the self is formed via social conditions, which define a habitual-cognitive background constituting the specific profile of skills, capacities, learned contents, and traditions. Those conditions play a constitutive role in creating a self, as its background predefines both formal and content-conditions of understanding as such. In these background conditions, as Pierre Bourdieu and his school have shown, so-called economic *and* cultural factors intertwine to constitute a socio-cognitive habitus (Bourdieu 2000). Avoiding a theoretical reification by understanding ‘habitus,’ reconstructing it with Dewey as inculcated habits and assumptions that are pre-reflectively and intuitively guiding an agent’s self-understanding, allows us to see how the ‘economic’ (material and social living and working conditions) and the ‘cultural’ (symbolically articulated and representable contents and perspectives) are two sides of the same coin of a *socially induced self-formation* (Burkitt 2002).

Politically, this means that the struggle against forms of oppression, exclusion, domination, and denigration, which are on the agenda for Cultural Studies as much as Rorty’s reformist pragmatism, does not have to choose between cultural and economic types, but rather attends to all of them. Precisely this is how British Cultural Studies, for example in Stuart Hall (1992) and Bryan Williams (1977), employ tool kits from French post-structuralist and German neo-Marxist and critical theory to analyze how working-class society and working-class youth acquire their *socially defined yet resisting cultural* identities (Winter 2001). Didier Eribon (2019) and Édouard Louis (2018) reconstruct in their class-conscious autobiographies their ‘ascendence’ from the working-class poor to the elevated echelons of high academic society. The mediation of a class-based background, broadly construed as entailing economic, social, cultural, attitudinal dimensions, and the reflexive yet individually situated agency of self-understanding, is here reflexively performed.

Economic background factors become both acknowledged as influential and yet obsolete as the only defining factor; similarly, the 'high-cultural' legacy of the Cultural Left—which indeed lives on in Jameson and Adorno in their focus on products of cultural consumption—is overcome by situating the liberal (reflexive, individual, and open-minded) self thoroughly within its *socio-economic status condition*. Such a broad theoretical basis is inclusive of a variety of background factors shaping a value-oriented and reflexive self. It thus points to a both economically and culturally situated self which can orient itself normatively within a democratic society, and thus to a way out of the impasse that Rorty pointed out as a potential predicament of the Cultural Left.

True Openness, Moral Respect, and Critical Reflexivity: Rorty's Presence within Truth-Oriented Dialogue

Rorty's approach probed us to ask whether the 'values' entailed in 'Socratic dialogue, Christian communitarianism, and Enlightenment science' can be adhered to, preserved, and defended within his postmodern liberal pragmatism. His anti-essentialist and post-metaphysical stance can make us see how the taken-for-granted answers and self-understandings of philosophical discourse do not suffice to address the inherent value-dimensions posed by these traditions. Rorty rightly refuses a metaphysical grounding function of truth, as well as its contemporary successor disciplines, aiming toward a set of infallible eternal statements. But we saw that he does not sufficiently make space for a new reflexive thematization of dialogic presuppositions, including our truth- or validity-orientation, which are as such contributing to a fallible, open-ended, and inclusive discourse. The distinction between *metaphysical truth* that aims to legitimize the substantive worldview of one's culture, and a *post-metaphysical orientation at truth* that allow for an openness toward other worldviews and cultural backgrounds, and thus enables cross- and inter-cultural dialogue, escapes Rorty's thinking. He maintains that *any*

discourse is embedded in and defined by concrete 'contexts of justification.' These contexts allegedly *pre-define* what agents hold to be of value, to be 'true.' Any alleged 'universalization' would be bound by those origins.¹³ But as we saw, reflexive truth-orientation allows for, rather than forecloses, an understanding of other views and assumptions, and proves effective in challenging power and domination. Since for Rorty a *foundational* truth-orientation would epistemically entail cultural ethnocentrism and parochialism, he endorses cultural novelty, creativity, irony, empathy, etc., but excludes 'truth, as a path to escape one's parochial origins.' Yet despite these criticisms, his challenges are important for the development of an anti-authoritarian critique of power, even or especially if it takes its normative cues from a reconstruction of premises of truth-oriented dialogue.

Rorty's rigid rejection of metaphysical truth serves us well as a reminder to avoid any kind of worldview-dogmatism or *Letztbegründung* within any level of dialogue, whether it is about 'getting it right' about what the Other means, or whether it is about the grounds of dialogue as such. To understand another, as Gadamer has shown, requires an orientation toward the subject matter as it is disclosed in the symbolic articulation (text, artwork, action, social practice, etc.). Yet to avoid assimilation, we must reflexively hold at bay the substantive premises paired with evaluative preferences to judge what makes sense. A projecting judgmentalism in which we only accept as meaningful what makes sense based on our substantive beliefs and assumptions, must give way for a stance of true openness. The orientation toward shared concepts of experience serves as a regulative ideal to

¹³ Mysteriously, this eagle's eye meta-view assumes to escape one's own scheme to make the assessment that *all* practices as thusly *contextually bound*. If this is assumed to hold, then, granted, a *truth-orientation within any one's cultural context* would have to result in the projection and assimilation of the Other to one's own standards. Insisting on truth would thus exclude true openness for otherness. Therefore Rorty's (however short-lived) appropriation of hermeneutics had to leave out the truth- and validity-orientation and focused entirely on its creative and aesthetic aspects (Rorty 1979).

take seriously how the Other understands world, self, and others. Yet the specific conceptions, the concrete beliefs and assumptions, must be reconstructed through radical perspective-taking via bridgeheads of common understanding (Kögler 1999; 2011). The back-and-forth between self and Other requires an open reconstruction of the Other's background based on a both other-immersed and self-distancing process. The claim to encounter one another in a truly open and mutually recognizing process can so be sustained.

Rorty's critique of the all-too-dogmatic assertion of one's own convictions is helpful and operative within such post-metaphysical conception of truth-oriented dialogue. It entails that something must be presupposed and yet cannot be prejudged considering just one of the interlocutors. Rorty's deconstruction of any naïve conception of correspondence or reference raises the reflexive awareness that an ever so well-established social practice is still but one of the possible mediations, or interpretations, of how the world works, or what it 'really' is. Our embeddedness in a holistic set of beliefs and practices, as Quine and Davidson would concur, prevents us from ever reaching a final bedrock of analysis. True with Rorty, the philosophical dream of an ultimate foundation may be over; yet against Rorty, this must not mean that the philosophical discourse cannot redefine itself as a reflexive reconstruction of basic premises of our and any practices in an irrevocably fallibilistic spirit. Yet the same caution vis-à-vis *Letztbegründung* holds true also for the very discourse that aims to reconstruct what underlies such a dialogue. Rorty's own conception of a language-as-coping based on contextually defined practices seems under-complex, as it *simply disregards* the truth-oriented *self-understanding of agents* who take themselves to have true and justified beliefs.

Rorty's ethical orientation can be helpful in ameliorating our moral self-understanding. What John Capps has nicely rendered his 'political fallibilism' suggests that a major lesson to be drawn from Rorty is an appreciation

of our moral imperfection, of the existential fact of our inevitable ethical failings. How should we respond to these failings? There exist, says Rorty, "some acts we believe we ought to rather die than commit..." but since "to be a moral agent is to be unable to imagine living with oneself after committing these acts," we must take a stand (Capps 2020). Ruling out suicide and a 'life of bottomless self-disgust,' Rorty suggests a third option: "an attempt to live so as never to do such a thing again." Such a stance will allow us to retain self-respect—a crucial condition for moral agency—just as much as it enables us to enact moral commitments within social reality: "moral commitments become real at the point of action" (Capps 2020)

Such a forward-looking stance at self-betterment, based on self-critical remembrance of past evils, can now be put into practice in several ways. First, we shouldn't only be focusing on the most severe moral evils we've committed but try to apply this attitude to a wide range of our everyday practices and contexts. We should also apply this stance to the moral recognition of others, leading to a more modest, less judgmental, more open and 'forgiving' attitude: "When others fall short in [moral] ways, it may sometimes be tempting to wish them 'a life of bottomless disgust' or even some kind of social death." To overcome this moral radicalism is practically needed to build alliances in democratic cultures: "An 'urge for purity' is something we are 'better off without' because 'in democratic countries you get things done by ... forming alliances with groups about whom you have grave doubts.'"¹⁴ But finally, we should realize that we might even be wrong about what we consider 'grave moral failings.' We need to keep an *open mind* also vis-à-vis what we consider our most deeply held moral convictions. Capps illustrates this point with the example of former Christian fundamentalist Megan Phelps-Roper who

¹⁴ Capps supports this claim with José Medina's remark that "becoming aware of the interdependences that compose our life is crucial for maintaining an epistemically and politically responsible agency in the multicultural societies and the globalized world of the twenty-first century."

came to realize 'that not every mortal sin is a sin,' that, "in fact, God does not hate gays, lesbians, Jews, veterans, famous celebrities, and many politicians." Heroically she risked alienating herself from her community for the sake of her newly found moral truth, reminding Capps "... that a main reason colleges need to foster 'safe enough spaces' is so that people can actually change their minds." (Capps 2020)¹⁵

It's revealing that the openness called for by Capps and Rorty is defined solely in terms of values based on a tolerant and inclusive liberal democracy. Capps acknowledges that value-assumptions are at work here ("we don't want to be so open-minded that our brains fall out"). But in Rorty's approach, these value-orientations can only be dogmatically invoked as one's *cultural* ethos, rather than offered as *justifiable premises or pre-assumptions* of moral dialogue as such.¹⁶ Yet the Other receives moral respect when I acknowledge not only her vulnerable self, but also her *capacity* to resist her situation, to challenge her environment, and even to reflexively reject the empathy I am willing to offer. Empathy can be a very patronizing affair. The emphasis on concrete care, empathetic identification, abolishment of the suffering of others falls short of granting moral respect if it is not mediated with

a recognition of the rational and reflexive capabilities of the Other. I may feel to understand the Other based on my own beliefs and assumptions, yet miss entirely what her own concerns, assumptions, and practices amount to. To prevent empathy from being a mere imposition of my own standards, and to prevent it from being trapped in the (however sympathetic, engaged, feeling) victimization of the Other, I need to orient myself toward *how she discloses the world, herself, and others*. But to do so I must truthfully engage her self-understanding, aim to get it right, which entails the projection of her as a reflexive agent interpreting her situation. True, there is no context-free or preunderstanding-independent disclosure of her self-understanding, but this does not release me from my commitment to do her justice by understanding her as best as possible. We are thus oriented toward a truthful self-understanding as a regulative ideal, which, albeit in practice always mediated, is enabled through imaginative perspective-taking.

Similarly, our discussion of the true force of Cultural Studies revealed yet another important dimension of truth in interpretation. The holistic situatedness of the reflexive agent within a context of background assumptions and practices entails that forms of power and domination lurk as meaning-constituting factors in an agent's preunderstanding (Searle 2012; Kögler 1999). Rorty's plea for including socio-economic factors as much as cultural dimensions is well taken. It can be addressed, without losing a connection to the liberal self, by understanding agency as multiply co-defined by economic, religious, social, etc. sources. Individual agency is conceived as both situated and yet capable of reflexive distanciation. But such distanciation is epistemically most rewarding and politically effective when it abstracts from the immediate phenomenological self-understandings and develops theoretical accounts of power and domination, including the macro-forces and structures that operate *a tergo*. To construct such meta-narratives—narratives that lack a unique individual agent as they rather name or

¹⁵ 'Safe spaces' are thus not zones of protection vis-à-vis fragile, easily offended, and denigrated minorities, but better understood as *spaces of dialogic engagement* in which subjects are probing their views in a *mutually respectful and truth-conducive* manner. Safe spaces, if needed and justified at all, should be defined by a *dialogic ethic of recognition*, the lack of which should not be accepted in other social and cultural domains either. They are thus not defined by a value-vacuum, or by some empty potential for 'radical reflexivity' (that is anyhow hypocritically re-defined by liberal convictions,) but rather philosophically justified by adherence to the core ideals of moral respect, mutual perspective-taking, and radical openness in order to question and challenge beliefs and assumptions.

¹⁶ We could ask: is there anything that prevents a 'safe space' defined and defended à la Rorty from opening up a radical reflexivity *vis-à-vis one's liberal views*, such that one comes to see—now that the *liberal straight jacket* is removed in this safe space!—, say, Jews, Blacks, and women as 'actually' inferior? Ultimately, Rorty's position has no real answer here, as truth—moral and epistemic—went out the window, and all we have left are our *actual* convictions and preferences. As we saw, Rorty doesn't allow for an idealized reconstruction of discursive presuppositions, thus a more general and formal justification of mutual human respect is out of reach for him.

'represent' transsubjective entities like practices, fields, relations—is a demanding affair. It aims to make cognitively accessible to the agents what is not immediately cognitively accessible. While the effects of power practices may be felt, their understanding requires a *theoretical abstraction* from the immediate contexts of justification. Humanist reform of punishment may only then appear as yet another type of power (Foucault 1979); providing social health care may be seen as intertwined with bio-politics (Foucault 1994); bringing reason and freedom to other 'underdeveloped' cultures may only then be understood as imperialist impositions of hypocritically employed value-schemes (Said 1979).

For such critically distancing practices of interpretation to be justified, they must claim that they get it right, that they capture the actual forces and systems that operate behind the backs of subjects without their understanding. Rorty's radical deconstruction of any metaphysical Truth, against any meta- or master-narrative in history—his plea for campaigns against movements, for piecemeal reform rather than wholesale revolution—can guard us against authoritarian identifications with alleged superior Truths or movements. It guards us against a facile trust in history if we deem them good, and against a wholesale nihilism and defeatism if we deem them bad—like disappointed leftists licking their wounds after the alleged total victory of neoliberalism. Yet objectifying narratives based on theoretical truths—i.e., social-scientific explanations of macro-structures within the realm of situated social agency—need to be part of a truly emancipatory academic practice. Importantly, they should never be reified as agent-independent super-agents, they always remain *background forces of situated agency*. But as such, truthfully describing such power practices must remain a constitutive part of any viable democratic politics. Democracy without critical reflexivity is blind; yet, as Rorty rightly understood, a democracy that does not understand itself emphatically in its own history of accomplishment remains abstract and empty.

References

- Assmann, Jan (1997) *Moses The Egyptian. The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Assmann, Jan (2018), *Achsenzeit. Eine Archäologie der Moderne*, München: C.H. Beck
- Bellah/ Robert/Joas, Hans (eds.) (2013), *The Axial Age Discourse and its Consequences*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Bhaskar, Roy, (1990). "Rorty, Realism and the Idea of Freedom." In *Reading Rorty*, Malachowski, A. (ed), 198-232, Oxford: Blackwell.
- Bourdieu, Pierre (1984) *Distinction*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press
- Burkitt, Ian (2002) "Technologies of the Self: Habitus and Capacities," in *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, 32/2, 219-237
- Capps, John, (2020), "Richard Rorty, Cancel Culture, Political Fallibilism, and Achieving Our Country," in *APA blog*, July 21, 2020
- Davidson, Donald. (1984a) *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation*. Oxford University Press
- Davidson, Donald (1984b) "On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme." In Davidson (1984a).
- Eribon, Didier (2019) *Returning to Reims*, New York: Penguin
- Dilthey, Wilhelm (2004) *The Construction of History in the Human Sciences*, Princeton: Princeton University Press
- Dunaj, L'ubomír/Mertel, Kurt (eds.), (2022), *Hans-Herbert Kögler's Critical Hermeneutics*, London: Bloomsbury
- Foucault, Michel (1979) *Discipline and Punish*, New York: Pantheon Books
- Foucault, Michel (1994) *History of Sexuality, Vol.1*, New York: Vintage Books
- Fricker, Miranda (2007) *Epistemic Injustice. Power and the Ethics of Knowing*, Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Gadamer, Hans-Georg (1989) *Truth and Method*, New York: Crossroad Publishers
- Habermas, Jürgen (1983), *Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. 1*, Boston: Beacon Press.
- Habermas, Jürgen (1987), *Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. 2*, Boston: Beacon Press.
- Habermas, Jürgen (2008a), *On the Logic of the Social Sciences*, Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Habermas, Jürgen (1993) *Postmetaphysical Thinking, Philosophical Essays*, Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Habermas, Jürgen (2017) *Postmetaphysical Thinking II: Essays and Replies*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 3-27.
- Hacking, Ian (2000) *The Social Construction of What?* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Hall, Stuart, (1992) "Cultural Studies and its Theoretical Legacies," in *Cultural Studies*, Grossberg, L., Nelson, C., Treichler, P. (eds), New York and London: Routledge, 277-294
- Heidegger, Martin (1999) *Ontology: Hermeneutics of Facticity*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press

- Honneth, Axel (1995), *The Struggle for Recognition*, London: Polity Press
- Jaspers, Karl (1953), *The Origin and Goal of History*, New Haven/London: Yale University Press.
- Kögler, Hans-Herbert (1999), *The Power of Dialogue. Critical Hermeneutics after Gadamer and Foucault*, Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Kögler, Hans-Herbert (2004), *Michel Foucault*, Stuttgart/Weimar: Metzler
- Kögler, Hans-Herbert (2011) "Being as Dialogue," in Malpas, J./Zabala, S. (eds.) *Consequences of Hermeneutics*, Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
- Kögler, Hans-Herbert (2012), „Interpretation als Prima Philosophia? Rorty und die normativen Wurzeln des Dialogs.“ In *Pragmatismus und Hermeneutik. Beiträge zu Richard Rortys Kulturpolitik*, Buschmeier, M./Hammer, E. (eds), 60-88, Hamburg: Meiner.
- Kögler, Hans-Herbert (2017), "A Discursive View from Somewhere: Foucault's Epistemic Position," in Janz, B. (ed.), *Place, Space and Hermeneutics*, Springer International Publishing, 239-260.
- Kögler, Hans-Herbert (2019), "Autonomie und Überschreitung. Bruchstücke einer hermeneutischen Theorie der Agency," in *Enigma Agency*, Kögler, H-H/Pechriggl, A./Winter, R. (eds), transcript: Bielefeld, 81-112.
- Kögler, Hans-Herbert (2020), "Tradition, Transcendence, and the Public Sphere: A Hermeneutic Critique of Religion." *Berlin Journal of Critical Theory* (BJCT), Vol. 4, n. 2, 107-146.
- Kögler, Hans-Herbert (2020, "Social Ontology, Dialogic Recognition, and Contemporary Challenges: A Reply," in Dunaj/Mertel (2022), 249-290.
- Kögler, Hans-Herbert (2022) „Rortys Herausforderung für die Hermeneutik," in *Richard Rorty Handbuch*, M. Müller (ed), Springer Publishing Company (forthcoming)
- Louis, Édouard (2018), *The End of Eddy*, London: Vintage
- Mead, George Herbert (1934), *Mind, Self, and Society*, Chicago: Chicago University Press
- Malachowski, Alan (ed.). 1990. *Reading Rorty*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Outhwaite, William, (2022), "Cherche pas à Comprendre: Cosmopolitan Hermeneutics in Difficult Times," in Dunaj/Mertel (2022), 195-213
- Rorty, Richard (1979/2018) *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Rorty, Richard (1982a) *Consequences of Pragmatism (Essays: 1972-1980)*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Rorty, Richard (1989) *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, Cambridge Mass: Cambridge University Press.
- Rorty, Richard (1998) *Achieving our Country*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press
- Rorty, Richard (2000) "Universality and Truth." In *Rorty and His Critics*, Brandom, R. (ed), 1-30, Malden/Oxford: Blackwell.
- Said, Edward (1979) *Orientalism*, New York: Random House
- Schubert, Karsten (2019), „Freiheit und Institution. Für eine anti-anarchistische Foucault Lektüre," in *Zeitschrift für Politische Theorie*, 10, 103-124
- Searle, John (1985), *Intentionality*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Searle, John (2012), *The Making of the Social World*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Malpas, Jeff/Zabala, Santiago. Hrsg. 2011. *Consequences of Hermeneutics*, Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
- Vandenbergh, Frédéric (2022), "The Ontology of the Present and the Tasks of a Future Sociology," in *Hans-Herbert Kögler's Critical Hermeneutics*, Dunaj, L./Mertel, K., London: Bloomsbury, 181-194
- Vattimo, Gianni/Rorty, Richard (2007), in Zabala, S. (ed), *The Future of Religion* (New York: Columbia University Press.
- Willis, Paul (1977) *Learning to Labour. How Working-Class Kids get Working-Class Jobs*, New York: Columbia University Press
- Winch, Peter (1998) *Philosophy and the Idea of a Social Science*, London: Routledge
- Winter, Rainer (2001) *Die Kunst des Eigensinns. Cultural Studies als Kritik der Macht*, Weilersvst: Velbrück

“EMERSON AS SOCIAL REFORMER”

James Campbell

The University of Toledo

james.campbell@utoledo.edu

ABSTRACT: This paper is an examination of some pragmatic themes in the thought of Ralph Waldo Emerson. In particular, it considers his view on the nature and importance of social reform, with an emphasis upon his discussions of the abolition of slavery and the elimination of war. There remains a tension between his individualist and Transcendentalist leanings and his call for social reforms, a tension that is lessened if his thought is understood as pragmatic.

“A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds, adored by little statesmen and philosophers and divines. . . . Speak what you think now in hard words, and to-morrow speak what to-morrow thinks in hard words again, though it contradict every thing you said to-day”¹

If we start with the positions that Ralph Waldo Emerson is an important figure in the history of Pragmatism, especially for his emphasis upon possibility and experience,² and that Pragmatism is fundamentally a social philosophy,³ it becomes necessary to consider Emerson’s role as a social reformer. It would also seem to be especially important to discuss his relationship with what is now seen as the primary social movement in America during his lifetime: the struggle to abolish slavery. We remember, of course, that Emerson as a young man was not above expressions of racism and that he was at best a reluctant abolitionist. We also know that he eventually became a strong opponent of slavery and supporter of the Civil War. In addition to abolitionism, Emerson’s anal-

ysis of the continuing problem of war indicates another aspect of his thought on social reform. In the course of this paper, I intend to return to these specific themes to demonstrate his view on the pragmatic power of ideas.

I

I will begin, however, by considering a number of values that Emerson articulated over the years. Doing so should help us to understand the breadth of his conception of social reform and the course of his development as a social reformer. While I do not believe that these values can be arranged to form a recognizably logical argument, nor that they constitute a fully consistent set, I do believe that Emerson’s values can be presented in a sequence that will function to help us understand his reform thought. In fact, rather than seeking logical rigor or ultimate consistency, it would be far more sensible to approach his diverse utterances as the free association of his mind on the many aspects of justice, utterances that will be seen to contain contradictory elements. His method was to articulate and catalogue his insights in his journals and notebooks, and to refine them over time in his sermons, lectures, and essays, all the while trying to figure out what these insights might ultimately mean. Similarly, it is our job to figure out what help Emerson can offer us at present. Essential to his position is the additional belief that individuals should be allowed to choose the focus of their reform activities. We find ourselves of late focusing upon such topics as race, gender, and the environment. Earlier pragmatists like John Dewey saw economic class as the key issue. Still earlier pragmatists like Emerson and William James focused on aspects of spiritual well-being; and, before them, pragmatists like Benjamin Franklin emphasized individual economic security and political independence. While we may be saddened by how little these pragmatists appreciated our later insights, we must hope that future pragmatists will be forgiving of what we have failed to see.

¹ Emerson, 1841d:265. Peter S. Field writes: “Always unsystematic, often aphoristic, and occasionally contradictory, Emerson evades easy categorization” (2002:168).

² In my essay, “Why Emerson?” (Campbell, 2020), I have considered the question of why later pragmatists were drawn to Emerson. In this essay, I consider aspects of the related question of Emerson’s continued value to us. This pragmatic approach to Emerson’s work can also be seen in Cornell West, who writes “Emerson viewed knowledge not as a set of representations to be justified, grounded, or privileged but rather as instrumental effects of human will as it is guided by human interests, which are in turn produced by transactions with other humans and nature” (1989:36).

³ I have considered the social aspects of pragmatism at earlier gatherings of the Central European Pragmatist Forum. See: Campbell, 2004a, 2004b, 2007, 2009, 2011.

In 1841, Emerson wonders, "[w]hat is a man born for but to be a Reformer, a Re-maker of what man has made; a renouncer of lies; a restorer of truth and good"? In this activity, the reformer is just "imitating that great Nature which embosoms us all, and which sleeps no moment on an old past, but every hour repairs herself, yielding us every morning a new day, and with every pulsation a new life . . ." (1841a:146). Three years later, he offered a number of specific points indicating how he believed we should regard the institutions of the state. Among these points are the following: "that its institutions are not aboriginal, though they existed before we were born," "that they are not superior to the citizen," "that every one of them was once the act of a single man: every law and usage was a man's expedient to meet a particular case," and "that all are imitable, all alterable; we may make as good; we may make better" (1844a:559). On a less positive note, Emerson continues that all of our institutions are touched by corruption. He writes that "there is no part of society or of life better than any other part. All our things are right and wrong together. The wave of evil washes all our institutions alike" (1844b:596). As a result, "[e]very actual State is corrupt"; and thus we "must not obey the laws too well" (1844a:563).⁴

"The history of reform is always identical," Emerson writes, "it is the comparison of the idea with the fact." We recognize that "[o]ur modes of living are not agreeable to our imagination," and we suspect that it is our modes of living, and not our ideas, that are "unworthy" (1841b:159-160). For someone who calls for the improvement of our shared lives, however, Emerson has a curious notion of social reform. He maintains, namely, that society itself never really improves—only individuals are capable of improvement—and thus that social reform is ultimately individual reform. He writes that "society gains nothing whilst a man, not himself renovated, attempts to renovate things around him." Such people "become tediously good in some particular, but negligent or narrow in the rest; and hypocrisy and vanity

are often the disgusting result." Emerson calls, rather, for "growing trust in the private, self-supplied powers of the individual" (1844b:596).⁵

While we know that our social problems draw many into reform activities, Emerson believed that far too often these erstwhile reformers have no faith in their individual powers. While "[t]he Reformers affirm the inward life . . . they do not trust it." Instead, they rely on the "outward and vulgar means" of power and politics and parties. They rely "on men, on multitudes, on circumstances, on money, on party; that is, on fear, on wrath, and pride," when they should rely on "love" and "principle" that represent "precisely that strength which wins me to their cause" (1841b:162). Thus, he writes, "to do battle against numbers, they armed themselves with numbers, and against concert, they relied on new concert" (1844b:597). In this approach, the reformers' misguided belief seems to be that while "I have failed, and you have failed, . . . perhaps together we shall not fail" (1844b:598). For these individuals, the support of increased numbers is the whole point; but, for Emerson, massing flawed individuals together will not create a saintly community. Our reformers "hope to raise man by improving his circumstances"; but, to him, this approach means that "by combination of that which is dead, they hope to make something alive" (1841b:164). He continues that "concert is neither better nor worse, neither more nor less potent than individual force," and he warns us in particular against "the concert of the false and the disunited." The struggle for true social reform "must

⁵ Len Gougeon notes that Emerson "felt, as most Unitarian moralists did, that the reform of society must always begin with the reform of individuals. Any effort to impose moral improvement on society through the passage of laws, restrictions, or prohibitions was doomed to failure because morality is a matter of the heart and all such impositions inevitably leave the heart untouched and unconverted" (1995:xi). In this belief, Emerson is following the Unitarian divine William Ellery Channing, who writes: "It is the voice of the individual giving utterance to the irrepressible convictions of his own thoroughly moved spirit, and not the shout of a crowd, which carries truth far into other souls, and insures it a stable empire on earth. . . . This moral independence is mightier, as well as holier, than the practice of getting warm in crowds, and of waiting for an impulse from multitudes. The moment a man parts with moral independence . . . he parts with his moral power. . . . He substitutes coarse weapons forged by man=s wisdom for celestial power" (1835:734-735).

⁴ Henry David Thoreau writes: "It is not desirable to cultivate a respect for the law, so much as for the right. The only obligation which I have a right to assume is to do at any time what I think right" (1849:669).

be inward, and not one of covenants"; and thus, this union must be "reached by a reverse of the methods they use" (1844b:598-599). Reform comes from spiritual insight.

Recognizing that "[t]he demon of reform has a secret door into the heart of every lawmaker, of every inhabitant of every city" (1841a:136), Emerson takes note of numerous reform movements in his day. These movements serve both to "check the special abuses" and to "educate the conscience and the intellect of the people" (1841b:158). While "the reforming movement is sacred in its origin," however, he writes that "in its management and details" it is "timid and profane" because it focuses on externals (1841b:164). Whether their initial intention was to improve our forms of marriage or our system of education, our religious practices or our inherited diet, our laws for acquiring and holding property or our schemes to elevate our literature, our organization of labor or the extent of suffrage, the role of the state in our lives or our methods of farming, or our attempts to abolish capital punishment and slavery,⁶ in the course of their activities, these reformers have lost sight of the ideal that once motivated them. Emerson also believed that as any reform movement grows in political power it becomes rigid. This is because such movements prosper through a kind of intentional myopia, over time allowing what were once "[p]arties of principle" to "degenerate into personalities" and to foster the "enthusiasm" (1844a:564) that was believed to be essential to practical politics. Reformers mistakenly organize their actions around "some low, inadequate form, and present no more poetic image to the mind, than the evil tradition which they reprobated." In this way, they dilute the fire of the moral sentiment with personal and party heats, with measureless exaggerations, and the blindness that prefers some darling measure to justice and truth" (1841b:162). Like rabid dogs, these reformers "bite us, and we run mad also."

⁶ For some of Emerson's listings of reforms, see: 1841a:135-136, 139-140; 1844b:591-593, 597-601. For an irreverent discussion of the extraordinary extent of these reforms in American society, see: Van Wyck Brooks, 1927:47-63.

In this rabid state, we engage in efforts that are done "profanely, not piously" (1841b:162). Regardless of the reformer's particular focus, "[e]ach 'Cause,' as it is called . . . becomes speedily a little shop, where the article, let it have been at first never so subtle and ethereal, is now made up into portable and convenient cakes, and re-tailed in small quantities to suit purchasers" (1842:203).

Effective reforms begin in individual insight. Emerson writes that we can trace "the steps of human progress" by studying "the rising of a thought in one man's mind, the communication of it to a few, to a small minority, its expansion and general reception, until it publishes itself to the world by destroying the existing laws and institutions" and results in "the generation of new" (1849:151).⁷ Drawing upon the diverse experiences of many individuals, he writes that there is "a perfect chain"—whether we "see it, or see it not"—"of reforms emerging from the surrounding darkness, each cherishing some part of the general idea, and all must be seen, in order to do justice to any one" (1841b:159).⁸ The means by which we overcome this partiality is the broad reach of the Over-Soul.

For Emerson, our lives display a pattern of superficiality with occasional moments of clearer insight into a higher spiritual life through our participation in the Over-Soul. "There is a difference between one and another hour of life, in their authority and subsequent effect," he notes; and we recognize "a depth in those brief moments which constrains us to ascribe more reality to them than to all other experiences." Unfortunately, the origin of these higher moments is shielded from us. "Man is a stream

⁷ For George Herbert Mead, "Progress . . . is the constant meeting of problems and solving them . . . we are solving problems, and those problems can appear only in the experience of the individual. It is that which gives the importance to the individual, gives him a value which cannot be stated. He has a certain preciousness which cannot be estimated" (1936:411; cf. 359).

⁸ Oscar W. Firkins addressed this problem of partiality as follows: "Emerson's sense of social evil was keen and multifarious; its multifariousness decreased its intensity. A humane man, hearing one cry of agony, rushes eagerly to the aid of the sufferer; hearing twelve cries at the same time, he is constrained by humanity itself to pause, to consider, to postpone, to put on a temporary stoicism. Emerson saw wrong in slavery, but he saw wrong in property, wrong in trade, wrong in drunkenness, wrong in household service" (1915:345).

whose source is hidden," he writes. "Our being is descending into us from we know not whence" (1841g:385). We do know, however, that this aspect of our lives is Divine, that "every man hath in him the divine Reason" (2010:1.368), because in our clearer moments we see "no screen or ceiling between our heads and the infinite heavens . . . no bar or wall in the soul where man, the effect, ceases, and God, the cause, begins" (1841g:387). In another formulation, he notes that "[w]e lie in the lap of immense intelligence, which makes us receivers of its truth and organs of its activity" (1841d:269). In yet another formulation, he emphasized the intuitive nature of these insights: "only by obedience to his genius . . . does an angel seem to arise before a man" (1844b:608). Conscious of the intermittent presence of the Over-Soul in our lives, we can attempt to view the course of our experience with these higher possibilities in mind. This means not seeing "the world piece by piece, as the sun, the moon, the animal, the tree," but rather as "the whole, of which these are the shining parts" (1841g:386). Emerson also believed that, if we can manage to remain open to "some visitations and holy-days of a diviner presence," we will not allow the rise of "a permanent class of skeptics, or a class of conservatives, or of malignants, or of materialists" (1844b:601). Further, he notes that maintaining the purity of the soul is more important than advancing successful actions. The young and dissatisfied find themselves tempted by "public movements" in the belief that as members of "a party" they will be able to bring about what they "cannot hope to effect alone." Emerson maintains, however, that the individual "must act with truth," even if that means never acting "with effect" (1841b:163m).⁹

⁹ Herbert Wallace Schneider speaks for many when he writes: "Perhaps the deepest antipathy of the transcendentalists was toward institutions. Organization was inherently a confession of dependence or of the pursuit of material power, both of which were foreign to the life of the spirit" (1963:244). Further, as Henry Nash Smith notes, "[r]eform, like religion, was inherently institutional. Emerson was committed to the aims of both, but the same lack of the talent for cooperation and social living which unfitted him for the pastorate made him chary of joining the new secular church of the philanthropists" (1939:57).

Behind Emerson's analysis of the Over-Soul is his belief that individual improvement means rising to a higher level of moral existence. This elevation, in a nutshell, is one clear characterization of the vague notion of "Transcendentalism."¹⁰ His presentation of Transcendentalism relies upon Samuel Taylor Coleridge's simplified version of the complex Kantian distinction between the Understanding and Reason which gives the latter primacy over the former. For Emerson, the Understanding contains the ability for scientific calculation, economic accounting, and other types of thinking aimed at practical utility. "The Understanding," he writes to his brother Edward in 1834, "toils all the time, compares, contrives, adds, argues, near sighted but strong-sighted, dwelling in the present[,] the expedient[,] the customary."¹¹ It is the means to money-making and material progress that sees Nature as a treasure chest or tool box of natural resources.¹² The Understanding is often associated with the pragmatic talents of someone like Benjamin Franklin.¹³ Reason, while not unpragmatic because it too ultimately functions to make life better, is for Emerson the higher form of thinking that makes possible mystery, imagination, and wonder. For him, "Reason is the highest faculty of the soul—what we mean often by the soul itself; it never reasons, never proves, it simply perceives; it is vision. . . . Religion[,] Poetry[,] Honor belong to the Reason; to the real[,] the absolute."¹⁴ For Reason, Nature is a shrine, or symbol, or cathedral.¹⁵ Given this invidious distinction, the Transcendentalists worked tirelessly to

¹⁰ James Elliot Cabot writes that "Transcendentalism was to him [Emerson] not a particular set of doctrines, but a state of mind" (1887: 2.421).

¹¹ Reprinted in R.L. Rusk, 1949:203.

¹² The Understanding is what James Marsh had called "a faculty of abstracting and generalizing, of contrivance and forecast," in his 1829 "Preliminary Essay" to the American edition of Coleridge's 1825 *Aids to Reflection* (1829:517).

¹³ In his journal for 28 September 1836, Emerson writes: the "World is . . . Utilitarian to Franklin" (2010:1.480).

¹⁴ Reprinted in R.L. Rusk, 1949:203-204.

¹⁵ James Marsh continues: "the distinguishing attributes of our humanity—that image of God in which man alone was created of all the dwellers upon the earth, and in virtue of which he was placed at the head of this lower world, was said to be founded in the reason and free-will" (1829:516).

transcend the practical approach of the Understanding and live by Reason.¹⁶

Emerson offers a more down-to-earth version of the Understanding-Reason distinction in *Nature*, where he speaks of Reason as "the integrity of impression made by manifold natural objects." Here he separates "the tree of the poet" from "the stick of timber of the wood-cutter," and "[t]he charming landscape which I saw this morning" from the "twenty or thirty farms" that constitute it. He continues that "Miller owns this field, Locke that, and Manning the woodland beyond. But none of them owns the landscape." Only the poet who can "integrate" all these parcels into a spiritual whole can truly grasp the horizon. This landscape is "the best part of these men's farms, yet to this their warranty-deeds give no title" (1836:9).¹⁷ One clear application of this distinction is in Emerson's concern that we not pursue material gain,¹⁸ but consider success within the confines of spiritual improvements. He believed that our whole society needs to rise above its current level, where we find ourselves "disheartened and sensualized by unbelief." For him, "[l]ife must be lived on a higher plane." From this "higher platform," we will see that "the whole

aspect of things changes." Once we have transcended to a more enlightened level, there will be only "the class of the good and the wise" (1844b:601).¹⁹

At the core of this emphasis upon pursuing a higher life is the notion that our participation in the Over-Soul represents our true selves and that by developing this connection we can fulfill our true purpose. This connection also makes it clear, Emerson continues, that humanity is moving forward. He writes that "there is a sublime and friendly Destiny by which the human race is guided,—the race never dying, the individual never spared." While disconnected individuals "are narrow and selfish, . . . the Genius or Destiny is not narrow, but beneficent" (1844d:217). He further believed that this ongoing struggle demonstrated "the opposition of Past and Future, of Memory and Hope, of the Understanding and the Reason" (1841c:173). That is, while we are ever conscious of the constraints of memory upon the openness to hope, of the restrictions that the past would impose on the unfolding future, our hopes for the future remain open.²⁰ For its part, conservatism champions the actual, not truth or right, whereas radicalism champions the better. Emerson writes that "[r]eform is affirmative, conservatism negative; conservatism goes for comfort, reform for truth" (1841c:174-175). He continues that "this bifold fact lies thus united in real nature, and so united that no man can continue to exist in whom both of these elements do not work." To live philosophically, we must incorporate both Past and Future, and integrate Memory and Hope. Yet we are for the most part "not philosophers, but are

¹⁶ John Dewey writes in Baldwin's Dictionary: "UNDERSTANDING AND REASON: . . . This pair of correlative terms is used to distinguish two forms of knowledge, one of which, UNDERSTANDING, is discursive, and hence based on premises and hypotheses themselves not subjected to reflection, while the other, REASON apprehends in one immediate act the whole system, both premise and inference, and thus has complete or unconditional validity. . . . Accordingly, to those who hold this distinction, the understanding is the instrument of scientific knowledge, the reason the instrument of philosophic" (1902:259-260).

¹⁷ Perhaps a more familiar version of this approach to the Transcendentalist distinction between the Understanding and Reason is found in Henry David Thoreau's *Walden*: "I have frequently seen a poet withdraw, having enjoyed the most valuable part of a farm, while the crusty farmer supposed that he had got a few wild apples only. Why, the owner does not know it for many years when a poet has put his farm in rime, the most admirable kind of invisible fence, has fairly impounded it, milked it, skimmed it, and got all the cream, and left the farmer only the skimmed milk" (1854a:78).

¹⁸ William Ellery Channing notes: "The first question to be proposed by a rational being is, not what is profitable, but what is right" (1835: 688). In a similar fashion, Thoreau writes: "The judges and lawyers . . . and all men of expediency, try this case by a very low and incompetent standard. They consider, not whether the Fugitive Slave Law is right, but whether it is what they call constitutional. . . . In important moral and vital questions, like this, it is just as impertinent to ask whether a law is constitutional or not, as to ask whether it is profitable or not" (1854b:708).

¹⁹ On occasion, however, we do find Emerson cheerleading for pure material success. Consider, for example, his essay "The Young American," which points with pride to the fact that vast areas of Nature in North America were being converted into natural resources: "Not only is distance annihilated, but when, as now, the locomotive and the steamboat, like enormous shuttles, shoot every day across the thousand various threads of national descent and employment, and bind them fast in one web, an hourly assimilation goes forward" (1844d:213).

²⁰ In another mood, Emerson emphasizes the dualism of compensation: "Every excess causes a defect; every defect an excess. . . . For every grain of wit there is a grain of folly. For every thing you have missed, you have gained something else; and for every thing you gain, you lose something" (1841e:287).

rather very foolish children" who, crippled by our partiality, "see everything in the most absurd manner, and are the victims at all times of the nearest object" (1841c:176). Humans tend not to grasp this complex philosophical truth, focusing instead on one side or the other; and especially in his desire for partial reform, "the partisan loses himself in driving to the utmost some speciality of right conduct, until his own nature and all nature resist him." The wise person, on the other hand, is more restrained and rejects those ideal goals that he "cannot perform or nearly perform" (1841c:177).

Emerson is consistent in his belief that we must not sacrifice our own tasks to try to advance social reforms suggested by others. Rather, we must be true to ourselves. "The one thing not to be forgiven to intellectual persons is not to know their own task, or to take their ideas from others and believe in the ideas of others" (1854:73). In 1841, he complains that others tell him of his "obligation to put all poor men in good situations." To this suggestion, he responds with the question: "Are they my poor?" (1841d:262). He continues in 1844 that "[w]e have our own affairs, our own genius, which chains us to our proper work." As a result, it would be wrong for us to "give our life to the cause of the debtor, of the slave, or the pauper, as another is doing" (1844d:227), if that work is not properly ours. For Emerson, "our own orbit is all our task, and we need not assist the administration of the universe" (1844b:608). Again, in 1854 he notes: "I have my own spirits in prison,—spirits in deeper prisons, whom no man visits, if I do not" (1854:73). At the same time, Emerson believed that we must not prevent other reformers from doing the work that they feel compelled to do. He writes: "to one thing we are bound, not to blaspheme the sentiment and the work of that man, not to throw stumbling-blocks in the way of the abolitionist, the philanthropist, as the organs of influence and opinion are swift to do" (1844d:227).²¹ Balancing these two compet-

ing aspects of faithfulness and non-interference is a large part of Emerson's ongoing secular ministry.

Before we consider two specific applications of Emerson's reform thought,²² it might be wise to review what we have seen so far. Although there remain a few loose ends in his position, its general pragmatic shape is clear. He believed that we must recognize our place within the processes of Nature as the grounding of human existence and the source of our attempts at betterment. He recognized that there will be a parade of reformers ready to change how we worship, educate and eat; but he maintained that the individual remains the moral arbiter and that reform activities must come from within. Only then can we advance to the higher life that reflects the Over-Soul, and live in accordance with Reason. Further, whatever the extent of social evils, our spiritual improvement is more important than any external success. Tempered by a recognition of the power of Destiny and the ongoing nature of compensation, we should work to accomplish our own tasks. As we continue on to consider a pair of applications, we will encounter one additional, largely contradictory, point of Emerson's reform thought: that in the course of human history we are agents rather than observers—engaged actors rather than disengaged observers of the flow of the social process—who at times must stand up and fight for reform.

eradication of any, even the most enormous wrong; he may still properly have other concerns to engage him; but it is his duty, at least, to wash his hands of it, and, if he gives it no thought longer, not to give it practically his support. If I devote myself to other pursuits and contemplations, I must first see, at least, that I do not pursue them sitting upon another man's shoulders. I must get off him first, that he may pursue his contemplations too" (1849: 674-675).

²² Charles William Eliot stresses the distance he perceives between thought and application when he writes: "Although a prophet and inspirer of reform, Emerson was not a reformer. He was but a halting supporter of the reforms of his day; and the eager experimenters and combatants in actual reforms found him a disappointing sort of sympathizer. His visions were far-reaching, his doctrines often radical, and his exhortations fervid; but when it came to action, particularly to habitual action, he was surprisingly conservative" (1906:78-79).

²¹ In "Civil Disobedience," Henry David Thoreau writes: "It is not a man's duty, as a matter of course, to devote himself to the

II

Emerson's evolution on the topics of race and slavery begins badly with instances of racism²³ and moments of parroting Anglo-Saxon superiority;²⁴ and his role within the Abolitionist movement grew only slowly over time.²⁵ In his earliest sermon, he mentions "the slave's misery" (1826:58) if only as an aside; but he occasionally loaned out his pulpit to ministers more committed to abolitionism than he was²⁶; and by 1835 he records in his journal: "I do not wish to live in a nation where slavery exists" (2010:1.398). By 1844,²⁷ Emerson was writing that slavery was a failed institution, and that under it "the planters . . . , as well as the negroes, were slaves." His point here was that, although the planters "paid no wages, they got very poor work; that their estates were ruining them, under the finest climate; and that they needed the severest

monopoly laws at home to keep them from bankruptcy." Further, he maintained that enslaving others left the planters "full of vices," and caused their children to become "lumps of pride, sloth, sensuality and rottenness" (1844c:21).²⁸ Emerson also questions the foundation of this enslavement in assumptions of racial superiority and inferiority. If, according to the planters' beliefs, "the black man is feeble, and not important to the existing races[,] not on a parity with the best race, the black man must serve, and be exterminated." If, however, as he believed, "the black man carries in his bosom an indispensable element of a new and coming civilization, for the sake of that element, no wrong, nor strength, nor circumstance, can hurt him: he will survive and play his part" (1844c:31).²⁹ For his part, Emerson believed that such speculations about racial equality were of secondary interest to the planters anyway. Their primary interest was in maintaining and improving their illegitimate lifestyle. He suggests that "the planter does not want slaves, he only wants the immunities and the luxuries which the slaves yield him. . . . He has no love of slavery, he wants luxury" (1844c:17).³⁰ To get this luxury, "he will pay even this price of crime and danger." If society were to guarantee the planter the comforts that slavery yields, perhaps by means of "a machine that will yield him as much money as the slaves," he continues, the planter "will thankfully let them go." Still, Emerson did recognize the ongoing, if secondary, interest that the planters had in domination over others, pointing to "the existence, beside the covetousness, of a bitter element, the love of power, the voluptuousness of

²³ At the age of 19, Emerson writes in his journal: "I believe that nobody now regards the maxim 'that all men are born equal,' as anything more than a convenient hypothesis or an extravagant declamation. For the reverse is true,—that all men are born unequal in personal powers and in those essential circumstances, of time, parentage, country, fortune. The least knowledge of the natural history of man adds another important particular to these; namely, what class of men he belongs to—European, Moor, Tartar, African? Because Nature has plainly assigned different degrees of intellect to these different races, and the barriers between are insurmountable. . . . This inequality is an indication of the design of Providence that some should lead, and some should serve" (2010:1.56; cf. 55-61, 756). For Cornell West, "Emerson indeed is no garden-variety racist or ranting xenophobe, yet he is a racist in the American grain in that his notion of human personality is, in part, dependent on and derived from his view of the races" (1989:28).

²⁴ For example, even when Emerson writes in opposition to slavery, he on occasion praises "[t]he genius of the Saxon race, friendly to liberty" (1844c:33).

²⁵ As Len Gougeon writes, "scholars have for the most part depended on Emerson's early writings . . . all readily accessible in the standard editions of Emerson's works, for establishing an understanding of his views on reform, particularly the antislavery movement. As a result, a distinctly conservative image of Emerson's attitude toward social reform has prevailed over the years. . . . [T]he image of Emerson as aloof philosopher and conservative social commentator will have to be reevaluated" (1995:liii, lvi; cf. Nicoloff, 1961:118-126, 142-157).

²⁶ See: Rusk, 1949:153; Field, 2002:176.

²⁷ Len Gougeon writes: "There can be little doubt that on 1 August 1844, Ralph Waldo Emerson made the transition from philosophical antislavery to active abolitionism" (1995:xxx). For Bliss Perry, Emerson "never joined the sect of the Abolitionists. . . . It was not until his Concord speech of 1844, to celebrate the tenth anniversary of Emancipation in the British West Indies, that he took an unequivocal stand" (1931:106-107).

²⁸ In 1751, Benjamin Franklin had written in a similar fashion: "The Whites who have Slaves, not labouring, are enfeebled. . . . Slaves also perjure the Families that use them; the white Children become proud, disgusted with Labour, and being educated in Idleness, are rendered unfit to get a Living by Industry" (Franklin, 1751:231). While Franklin had been an occasional slave-holder as a young man, he eventually became a leading abolitionist. See: Campbell, 1999:242-251.

²⁹ Here, Emerson seems more committed to pluralism than to full-blown equality.

³⁰ Oscar W. Firkins notes that Emerson "thought that the essence of slavery was reproduced wherever one man—an abolitionist very possibly—utilized the hard labor of another to secure leisure or luxury to himself" (1915:133).

holding a human being in his absolute control" (1844c:17; cf. 2010:2.236).

By 1851, after the Missouri Compromise of 1850 that included the new Fugitive Slave Law, Emerson's rejection of slavery led him to wonder about the proper response of the free states. He certainly did not believe that the institution of slavery would expire on its own. Personifying slavery, he writes, "[s]he is very industrious, gives herself no holidays. No proclamations will put her down. She got Texas, and now will have Cuba, and means to keep her majority" in the US Senate (1851:69; cf. Gougeon, 1995:xiv). Among the numerous schemes for the abolition of slavery in the air were plans for both adult and childhood manumission, some of which included the 'colonization' of the newly liberated outside the United States, and the Northern secession from the morally-bankrupt Union. Emerson recognized, as did others, that another potential road to the abolition of slavery might be the outright purchase of the enslaved. He asks at one point³¹: "Why not end this dangerous dispute on some ground of fair compensation on the one side, and satisfaction on the other to the conscience of the free states?"³² He saw in this approach the potential for a non-violent resolution to the slavery question. Emerson writes that it might "cost a thousand millions of dollars to buy the slaves," a sum that he admits "sounds like a fabulous price." When he considered this amount in the context of a complete end to slavery, however, he writes that "I do not think any amount

that figures could tell, founded on an estimate, would be quite unmanageable." To rid humanity of such an evil, he hoped that "[e]very man in the world might give a week's work to sweep this mountain of calamities out of the earth" (1851:69).³³ In any case, Emerson does not address directly here such fundamental practical questions as: who would actually pay for the manumissions, how the ultimate price would be determined, and to whom this amount would be paid. By 1863, he had at least decided the final point when he writes:

... Pay ransom to the owner,
And fill the bag to the brim.
Who is the owner? The slave is owner,
And ever was. Pay him ... (1863a:165).

In the wake of the Fugitive Slave Law, Emerson—whom we saw above rejecting blind obedience to the law—adopted the position that this was one law that people ought to break. "An immoral law makes it a man's duty to break it, at every hazard." He continues that it is "a principle of law, that an immoral contract is void, and that an immoral statute is void." What could be more invalid, he wonders, than "a statute which enacts the crime of kidnapping,—a crime on one footing with arson and murder"? The situation, as Emerson saw it, was that "laws do not make right, but are simply declaratory of a right which already existed," and that "[a] man's right to liberty is as inalienable as his right to life" (1851:57). As a result, he writes, "[i]f our resistance to this law is not right, there is no right." He is adamant that breaking the Fugitive Slave Law would not represent "meddling with other people's affairs." On the contrary, it would represent "hindering other people from meddling with us" (1851:57-58). Emerson was thus not advocating raids into Southern states to liberate slaves.³⁴ His position on the fugitive slaves is simply one of

³¹ This passage comes from an alternate version of Emerson's 1851 "Address to the Citizens of Concord on the Fugitive Slave Law," contained in Myerson, 1995:168.

³² In 1844, Emerson had written solicitously of the slave-holders: "We sympathize very tenderly here with the poor aggrieved planter, of whom so many unpleasant things are said" (1844c:9-10). Here Emerson is following in the footsteps of William Ellery Channing, who writes that while "[s]lavery is thus radically, essentially evil" (1835:722), "I do not intend to pass sentence on the character of the slave-holder" (692). Channing continues that while "a great injury is done to another, it does not follow that he who does it is a depraved man; for he may do it unconsciously, and, still more, may do it in the belief that he confers a good. . . . [T]he consciences of men are often darkened by education and other inauspicious influences" and these individuals "can hardly be expected to look on slavery as it appears to more impartial and distant observers" (704-705).

³³ The alternate version mentions a price of "two thousand millions of dollars" and anticipates only that "[e]very man in the land will give a week's work to dig away this accursed mountain of sorrow once and forever out of the world" (Myerson, 1995:168-169).

³⁴ Emerson's support for John Brown's activities came later. In 1859, he calls Brown "the hero of Harper's Ferry." Expanding on

"befriending in our own state, on our own farms, a man who has taken the risk of being shot, or burned alive, or cast into the sea, or starved to death, or suffocated in a wooden box, to get away from his driver." We have a moral duty to help the fugitive "who has run the gauntlet of a thousand miles for his freedom" (1851:58). Emerson's developing position on the Fugitive Slave Law was that the citizens of the North should "abrogate this law; then proceed to confine slavery to slave states, and help them effectually to make an end of it" (1851:68-69).

Still, in his journal in 1852 we find Emerson backtracking from this defiant position toward slavery to a more moderate stance.³⁵ In line with his earlier comments on his own proper tasks, he writes that "God must govern his own world, & knows his way out of this pit, without my desertion of my post which has none to guard it but me." Here he is referring specifically to the fact that "I have quite other slaves to free than those negroes, to wit, imprisoned spirits, imprisoned thoughts, far back in the brain of man,—far retired in the heaven of invention, &, which, important to the republic of Man, have no watchman, or lover, or defender, but I" (2010:2.599-600). After the War ended successfully in 1865, Emerson returns to his stronger stance on slavery. Referring to the formulating of the compromised American Constitution, he writes that "in the necessities of the hour" the Founders "overlooked the moral law, and winked at a practical exception to the Bill of Rights they had drawn up." While the Founders may have excepted slavery, however, "the

moral law, the nature of things, did not wink at it, but kept its eye wide open." He continues "that this one violation was a subtle poison, which in eighty years corrupted the whole overgrown body politic, and brought the alternative of extirpation of the poison or ruin to the Republic" (1867:352). The latter option barely had been avoided in the just concluded Civil War.

III

One further theme in Emerson's conception of social reform—a theme necessary to discuss in our sad time—is his consideration of war. His most focused discussion of the topic was in the essay, "War," published in 1849.³⁶ In this essay, he indicated his evolutionary belief that, at one time in the history of the human race, war performed a positive function. "As far as history has preserved to us the slow unfoldings of any savage tribe," he writes, "it is not easy to see how a war could be avoided by such wild, passionate, needy, ungoverned, strong-bodied creatures" (1849:151). The history of war signifies "a great and beneficent principle." It demonstrates "self-help," the fact that "Nature implants with life the instinct of self-help, perpetual struggle to be, to resist opposition, to attain to freedom, to attain to a mastery and the security of a permanent, self-defended being; and to each creature these objects are made so dear that it risks its life continually in the struggle for these ends" (1849:154-155). Elsewhere, Emerson calls "this military attitude of the soul . . . Heroism" (1841f:374). In addition, the war essay continues in this positive vein that warfare "carried the arts and language and philosophy of the Greeks into the sluggish and barbarous nations of Persia, Assyria and India" (1849:153). At the same time, he notes that "the art of war, what with gunpowder and tactics, has made . . . battles less frequent and less murderous" (1849:157). Thus,

his point, he writes that Brown "believes in two articles . . . The Golden Rule, and the Declaration of Independence . . . and he used this expression in conversation here. 'Better that a whole generation of men, women and children should pass away by a violent death, than that one word of either should be violated in this country'" (1859:117-118). Henry David Thoreau writes of Brown, in a fashion stronger than Emerson, that "[i]t was his peculiar doctrine that a man has a perfect right to interfere by force with the slaveholder, in order to rescue the slave. . . . I speak for the slave when I say that I prefer the philanthropy of Captain Brown to that philanthropy which neither shoots me nor liberates me" (1859:737).

³⁵ Robert A. Gross writes that, while Emerson after 1844 "publicly identified with the radical wing of abolitionism, he remained a fellow traveler of the movement, not a professional agitator" (2021:586).

³⁶ This essay was published originally in *Aesthetic Papers*, ed. Elizabeth Palmer Peabody. This same volume also contained Henry David Thoreau's "Civil Disobedience."

Emerson indicates that our traditional "sympathy with war," however powerful historically, "is a juvenile and temporary state. Not only the moral sentiment, but trade, learning and whatever makes intercourse, conspire to put it down" (1849:156). While we cannot know how far Emerson was committed to this fanciful account of history, by mid-nineteenth century it is clear that he recognized that war had become "an epidemic insanity" (1849:151).

Looking into the future, Emerson believed that the "bayonet and sword must first retreat a little from their ostentatious prominence; then quite hide themselves; . . . and then, lastly, [they] will be transferred to the museums of the curious, as poisonings and torturing tools are at this day" (1849:166). In taking the long view, he expressed his familiar belief in human advancement. "At a certain stage of his progress, the man fights, if he be of a sound body and mind," he writes. When he reaches a "higher stage," however, "he makes no offensive demonstration," being only "alert to repel injury." As human progress continues, Emerson anticipated "a still higher stage" of non-resistance where, having reached "holiness," the individual under attack "turns the other cheek" in the service of "the common soul of all men" (1849:166-167). He is careful to note here that "the peace principle" cannot be effected "by fear," or "defended" or "executed, by cowards" (1849:171). Perhaps seeking what William James later called "The Moral Equivalent of War," Emerson writes that "[t]he manhood that has been in war must be transferred to the cause of peace, before war can lose its charm, and peace be venerable to men" (1849:171).³⁷

"All history is the decline of war," Emerson writes, although he admits that it is a "slow decline," in large part because, while we have learned how to mitigate war, "the doctrine of the right of war still remains" (1849:159). Undaunted, he continues, "it is not a great matter how long men refuse to believe the advent of peace" because

"war is on its last legs; and a universal peace is as sure as is the prevalence of civilization over barbarism, of liberal governments over feudal forms." All that remains to be determined about the eventual end of war is the time-frame: "How soon?" (1849:161). Emerson's answer to this question in 1849 remains hypothetical. He writes that, "if the search of the sublime laws of morals and the sources of hope and trust, in man, and not in books, in the present, and not in the past, proceed . . . then war has a short day, and human blood will cease to flow" (1849:175). In other words, he predicted that when the immoral aspects of war become fully conscious to humans, war will be abandoned.

In the context of this negative discussion of war from 1849, we must also consider Emerson's favorable evaluation of the American Civil War that began in 1861. Here he introduces into his evolutionary analysis of the end of war a consideration of a second moral theme: the need to resort to warfare to bring an end to slavery. "When the cannon is aimed by ideas, then gods join in the combat," he writes. "When men die for what they live for, and the mainspring that works daily urges them to hazard all, then the cannon articulates its explosions with the voice of a man." In this context, "the better code of laws at last records the victory" (1863b:142). (Sadly, we have to admit that Emerson's optimism could also undergird the misguided, if sincerely-held, values of the Confederate States, and others of our day.)

One way for us to resolve Emerson's dissonance about continuing warfare is to recall the notion of destiny, and to re-present it through the ideas of Abraham Lincoln. As the Civil War was drawing to a close, in his Second Inaugural Address Lincoln writes: "Fondly do we hope—fervently do we pray—that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away." Pledging "malice toward none" and "charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right," Lincoln urges Americans swiftly "to finish the work we are in" and "to bind up the nation's wounds." Still, he allows that "if God wills that it

³⁷ In "The Moral Equivalent of War," William James considers the social-psychological aspects of warfare and emphasizes that "[t]he war against war" was going to be a serious struggle (1910:162; cf. Campbell, 2017:229-239).

continue," the War will lengthen its trail of suffering and death; and, "as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said 'the judgments of the Lord, are true and righteous altogether'³⁸" (1865:687). After the assassination of Lincoln less than six weeks later, Emerson takes up this theme of destiny as a way to deal with the conflict between the evils of war and its ongoing necessity. He writes that "[t]here is a serene Providence which rules the fate of nations, which makes little account of time, little of one generation or race, makes no account of disasters, conquers alike by what is called defeat or by what is called victory, thrusts aside enemy and obstruction, [and] crushes everything immoral as inhuman" (1865:337). This destiny carries humanity forward, regardless of the commitments of particular humans. A few years later, Emerson writes that "[t]he war made the Divine Providence credible" (1867:354). He also notes that, in this struggle to eliminate slavery, the Union soldiers were a positive force, serving "as much missionaries to the mind of the country as they were carriers of material force," bringing with them, despite the war's savage costs, "a higher civilization" (1867:355). Once again, war served a positive good.

The overall impact of Emerson's ideas on social reform should not be simply that he was full of contradictions, although his diverse utterances often were contradictory. Rather, if we consider Emerson to be a pragmatic thinker, guided by experience instead of doctrine, and working within the flow of changing circumstances, we will recognize his value as a social reformer. He will remain perhaps a bit too individualistic for our taste, and maybe a bit too romantic; but, as a thinker who tried to do justice to our complex situation, Emerson offers us wave after wave of insight.

WORKS CITED

- Brooks, V.W. 1927. *Emerson and Others*. New York: Dutton.
- Cabot, J.E. 1887. *A Memoir of Ralph Waldo Emerson*. Cambridge: Riverside Press. Two vols.
- Campbell, J. 1999. *Recovering Benjamin Franklin: An Exploration of a Life of Science and Service*. Chicago: Open Court.
- Campbell, J. 2004a. "The Centrality of Community to Democracy." *Pragmatism and Values*. Ed. J. Ryder and E. Višňovský. New York: Rodopi, 99-103.
- Campbell, J. 2004b. "Institutions and Their Reconstruction." *Deconstruction and Reconstruction*. Ed. J. Ryder and K. Wilkoszewska. New York: Rodopi, 43-47.
- Campbell, J. 2007. "Reconstruction through Education." *Education for a Democratic Society*. Ed. J. Ryder and G-R. Wegmarshaus. New York: Rodopi, 97-102.
- Campbell, J. 2009. "William James's Social Understanding of the Self." *Self and Society*. Ed. J. Ryder and S. Kremer. New York: Rodopi, 31-38.
- Campbell, J. 2011. "We Are What We Believe." *Identity and Social Transformation*. Ed. J. Ryder and R. Šíp. New York: Rodopi, 145-152.
- Campbell, J. 2017. *Experiencing William James: Belief in a Pluralistic World*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press.
- Campbell, J. 2020. "Why Emerson?" *Pragmatism Today*, XI/2, 114-124.
- Channing, W.E. 1835. "Slavery." *The Works of William E. Channing, D.D.* Boston: American Unitarian Association, 1891, 688-743.
- Dewey, J. 1902. "Contributions to Dictionary of Philosophy and Psychology." *Middle Works*. Vol. 2. Ed. J.A. Boydston. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1976, 139-269.
- Eliot, C. W. 1906. *Four American Leaders*. Boston: American Unitarian Association.
- Emerson, R.W. 1826. "Pray without Ceasing." *The Complete Sermons of Ralph Waldo Emerson*. Vol. 1. Ed. A.J. von Frank. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1989, 55-62.
- Emerson, R.W. 1836. *Nature. Essays and Lectures*. Ed. J. Porte. New York: Library of America, 1983, 5-49.
- Emerson, R.W. 1841a. "Man the Reformer." *Essays and Lectures*, 133-150.
- Emerson, R.W. 1841b. "Lecture on the Times." *Essays and Lectures*, 151-170.
- Emerson, R.W. 1841c. "The Conservative." *Essays and Lectures*, 171-189.
- Emerson, R.W. 1841d. "Self-Reliance." *Essays and Lectures*, 257-282.
- Emerson, R.W. 1841e. "Compensation." *Essays and Lectures*, 283-302.
- Emerson, R.W. 1841f. "Heroism." *Essays and Lectures*, 369-381.
- Emerson, R.W. 1841g. "The Over-Soul." *Essays and Lectures*, 383-400.

³⁸ Psalms, 19:9.

- Emerson, R.W. 1842. "The Transcendentalist." *Essays and Lectures*, 191-209.
- Emerson, R.W. 1844a. "Politics." *Essays and Lectures*, 557-571.
- Emerson, R.W. 1844b. "New England Reformers." *Essays and Lectures*, 589-609.
- Emerson, R.W. 1844c. "An Address . . . on . . . the Emancipation of the Negroes in the British West Indies." *Emerson's Antislavery Writings*. Ed. L. Gougeon and J. Myerson. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995, 7-33.
- Emerson, R.W. 1844d. "The Young American." *Essays and Lectures*, 211-230.
- Emerson, R.W. 1849. "War." *Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson*. Ed. E.W. Emerson. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1904, volume 11, 149-176.
- Emerson, R.W. 1851. "Address to the Citizens of Concord on the Fugitive Slave Law." *Emerson's Antislavery Writings*, 51-72.
- Emerson, R.W. 1854. "Fugitive Slave Law." *Emerson's Antislavery Writings*, 73-89.
- Emerson, R.W. 1859. "Speech at a Meeting to Aid John Brown's Family." *Emerson's Antislavery Writings*, 117-120.
- Emerson, R.W. 1863a. "Boston Hymn." *Collected Poems and Translations*. Ed. H. Bloom and P. Kane. New York: Library of America, 1994, 163-165.
- Emerson, R.W. 1863b. "Fortune of the Republic." *Emerson's Antislavery Writings*, 137-154.
- Emerson, R.W. 1865. "Abraham Lincoln." *Complete Works*. Vol. 11, 327-338.
- Emerson, R.W. 1867. "Address: Dedication of Soldiers' Monument in Concord, April 19, 1867." *Complete Works*. Vol. 11, 347-379.
- Emerson, R.W. 2010. *Selected Journals*. E.L. Rosenwald. New York: Library of America. Two vol.
- Field, P.S. 2002. *Ralph Waldo Emerson: The Making of a Democratic Intellectual*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Firkins, O.W. 1915. *Ralph Waldo Emerson*. New York: Houghton Mifflin.
- Franklin, B. 1751. "Observations concerning the Increase of Mankind." *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*. Vol. 4. Ed. L.W. Labaree. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961, 225-234.
- Gougeon, L. 1995. "Historical Background." *Emerson's Antislavery Writings*, xi-lvi.
- Gross, R.A. 2021. *The Transcendentalists and Their World*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux.
- James, W. 1910. "The Moral Equivalent of War." *Essays in Religion and Morality*. Ed. F.H. Burkhardt. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982, 162-173.
- Lincoln, A. 1865. "Second Inaugural Address." *Abraham Lincoln: Speeches and Writings, 1859-1865*. Ed. D.E. Fehrenbacher. New York: Library of America, 1989, 686-687.
- Marsh, J. 1829. "Preliminary Essay" to Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Aids to Reflection*. Ed. J. Beer. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993, 491-529.
- Mead, G.H. 1936. *Movements of Thought in the Nineteenth-Century*. Ed. M.H. Moore. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Myerson, J. 1885. "Textual Commentary" to *Emerson's Antislavery Writings*, 155-202.
- Nicoloff, P.L. 1961. *Emerson on Race and History: An Examination of English Traits*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Peabody, E.P. 1849. Ed. *Aesthetic Papers*. Boston: E.P. Peabody.
- Perry, B. 1931. *Emerson Today*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Rusk, R.L. 1949. *The Life of Ralph Waldo Emerson*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Schneider, H.W. 1963. *A History of American Philosophy*. New York: Columbia University Press. 2nd ed.
- Smith, H. N. 1939. "Emerson's Problem of Vocation: A Note on 'The American Scholar.'" *New England Quarterly*, XII/1, 52-67.
- Thoreau, H.D. 1849. "Civil Disobedience." *Walden and Other Writings*. Ed. B. Atkinson. New York: Modern Library, 2000, 667-693.
- Thoreau, H.D. 1854a. *Walden. Walden and Other Writings*, 3-312.
- Thoreau, H.D. 1854b. "Slavery in Massachusetts." *Walden and Other Writings*, 697-714.
- Thoreau, H.D. 1859. "A Plea for Captain John Brown." *Walden and Other Writings*, 715-743.
- West, C. 1989. *The American Evasion of Philosophy: A Genealogy of Pragmatism*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

ANALYZING TRUTHFUL EXPERIENCES: FEELING-OUT TRANSGENDER VALUES AND TRANSVALUATIONS AMIDST THE POWER OF THE PATRIARCHY

Rebecca L Farinas

Loyola University New Orleans

RebeccaFar38@aol.com

ABSTRACT: The author makes use of Alain Locke's value methodology, analyzing contemporary patriarchal power conflicts by focusing on transgender people and their community. Offering a unique method, Locke focuses his analysis on the premise that values consist of feelings and analysis, so personal freedoms of self-expression and public freedoms of collective action are vital to our progressive truthfulness. Pragmatic versions of truth, such as radical empiricism by William James and an aesthetic informed expressiveness as a tool for warranted truth by John Dewey are augmented and changed by Locke's concentration on essentially felt values, transvaluation, and social progress due to individual and cultural value analysis and expression. Transvaluation is a matter of identifying feeling modes as functional vehicles, to be employed so our values can be revised, in that our essential feelings, both private and collective, are useful to us as we find affinities amongst relative practices and varied cultures. Contemporarily Locke's method of analysis, namely systematic relativism, is appropriate in terms of power conflicts. Transgender philosopher Sue L.T. McGregor (2022) calls for a philosophy focused by relative yet also essential values, so we can come to moral, ethical and political decisions which are fair and caring. Carol Gilligan and Naomi Snider (2018) write about the need for relative value analysis based on feelings in terms of correcting adverse personal and public patriarchal power relations. Anti-gender activists present us with a value conflict with transgender people and their communities which needs such analysis. Surprisingly, contemporary transvaluation is presented, in terms of religious and political values, by an seemingly unlikely institution, as the Catholic Church offers a Lockean-like example of pragmatic problem solving and a change of values which have previously been based on static truths and patriarchal power.

Keywords: Alain Locke, William James, John Dewey, Pragmatic truth, Systematic relativism, Transgender, Patriarchy, Transvaluation

Introduction

Rather than sports being an opium of the people, November 28, 2022 was the day a civilian ran across the stadium soccer field at the Qatar hosted World Cup, carrying a rainbow flag and wearing a slogan-charged Superman t-shirt.

His act of defiance, symbolizing LGBTQ rights, Women's Rights, and Ukrainian's rights to fight Russian brutality and authoritarianism, presented audiences around the world with innovative personal and collective democratic values. His actions and those of many other athletes and fans, don't merely reinstate static beliefs, but foster new values in terms of expanding our individual freedoms by the means of collective actions. Collective actions are built upon, as well as constituted, by our individual and shared values. I contend our values of personal freedoms, respect for the self-worth of everyone, and fairness and tolerance for people holding varied ideas and beliefs, can be validated as being essential for our futures, in terms of our truthfulness, i.e. as resources for revising other values and making new ones. We make and remake such essential values by feeling and acting throughout multiple fields of our experiences, as intersected functional modes of our habits and practices, such as popular culture, moral consciousness, and political solidarity. Ever more expansive ways of realizing our possibilities for personal growth and social progress is pertinent to revaluations in those fields, as we make changes in the important value modes of religion and science.

The most standout idea connecting some early twentieth century pragmatist's views on truth (specifically William James, John Dewey, Alain Locke), as an alternative to authoritative power, is our truthfulness as expansive and consummatory of our experiences, which is part and parcel to value-making. Truthfulness, I consider here, is our ability to create effective and expansive values, as we employ our feelings of self-worth/free will, and our collective human resources for consensus. More than debating pragmatic theories of truth, I hope to further our understanding of truthfulness in terms of value analysis, particularly Locke's method of transvaluation. Rather than merely interpreting Locke's method, I strenuously apply it to a pressing contemporary problem, that being discrimination and other harms being done to transgender people and the transgender community.

Firstly, I explain how our truthfulness is a matter of preferring and directing certain feelings, as we form values which are integral with new aspects of our ongoing human endeavors. Our feelings/values are individually and historically contextual, yet relatively universal in that we act with consensus throughout our varied fields of experience (i.e. transvaluation). Our consensus is based on essential qualities of our feelings and on our creative personal and public value making in light of analysis. This process contrasts with authoritative approaches, which attempt to control people's feelings, limiting their ability to reflect by way of expressive and communicative practices.¹ Subsequently, we need to look at how some of our current normative values might be restrictive and controlling, so I analyze a contemporary value conflict, namely transgender values as contrasting with anti-gender values.² Finally, as one example, of these conflicts is in the area of religious and political beliefs, so I consider how we might change intersecting patriarchal and authoritative values of the Catholic Church, helping to solve this pressing value conflict. We will look to understanding how this example might open a better understanding of how to transvalue essential values by way of other fields of experience, such as aesthetics (sports and arts included) and moral actions. Surely, we can better understand our personal genders in terms of value analysis. Also, we can find public solutions through our deeper understanding of transgender values in relation to transvaluing/interchanging feelings/values amongst religious, aesthetic, factual, moral, and political value fields.

¹ Surely, people can strongly disagree, as a matter of their feelings, creating conflicts. But for the purpose of our current discussion there is no need to expand to positions of personal injury and legal justice in terms of harm. Our analysis is meant to be a protreptic, as a melioristic approach to finding solutions to value oriented personal and social problems.

² So, to begin, I want to apology for my bias of interpretation, in that I am not a transgender person. I am cisgender, so my ability to speak about the feelings of the LGBTQ+ individuals and community is limited, theoretical, and speculative. Please note, as a pragmatist I am critical of my direct experiential limitation, but I do regard my theoretical approach helpful. Speculation is valuable as a human resource, which I think of in terms of analysis and interpretation.

While devising *systematic relativism*, a uniquely practical value method, Locke critiques many ideas on truth and values explained by other Classic American philosophers.³ That said, he oriented his method by a pluralistic democratic view, so it suits our purpose of disposing authoritative value making. His theory is often historized, and sometimes employed as a conceptual reference, but rarely is it used systematically for solving contemporary personal and social problems, which is our intent here.⁴

In fact, Leonard Harris offers us an introduction to the problem of transgender values in his introduction to "The Philosophy of Alain Locke: Harlem Renaissance and Beyond". Harris refers specifically to our gender identities as expressive of our self-worth and personal feelings, as we express our values, including expressions of sexuality as well as through varied fields of experience.⁵ Alluding to our individuality as not based on a fixed sexuality or gender Harris writes about Locke's ideas,

³ Specifically, to this discussion, William James, John Dewey. For an explanation of how classic American philosophers shared ideas, specifically in terms of Locke's participation in the canon see Farinas, *Classical American Philosophy: Poiesis in Public*, Bloomsbury, London, 2021.

⁴ An exception is Christopher Collins, "Family Values and Same-Sex Marriage: Reconciliation via Alain Locke's Value Theory", *Philosophy in the Contemporary World*, Volume 16, Issue 1, Spring 2009, 55-65.

<https://doi.org/10.5840/pcw20091615>. Collins' discourse will be referenced in our discussion; however, he does not employ Locke's methodology systematically. We should also acknowledge the resurgence of Functional Attitude Theory, as being influenced by philosophical value theories, such as Locke's. However, such a comparison is beyond the scope of our current discussion.

⁵ Leonard Harris, "Introduction", *The Philosophy of Alain Locke*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989, p. 16. "His notion of the fluid of character of identity, for example, having bonded characteristics yet subject to flow in a variety of ways, was grounded on his conception of valuing as a force shaping our concept of our self-worth. The commonness of nature as human does not; in a naturalistic fashion, mean we will become culturally uniform. Analogously, the existence of androgynous world would not necessarily mean the existence of a world without sexual distinctions. That is, even if there were no gender distinctions such that biological females and males normally perceived one another as being shaped differently or attached presumptions of attitudes, feelings, or powers to what physical features were apparent, it does not follow that there would be no modes differentiated by sexual preferences or that such preferences would not be advertised by the individual through their dress, speech, and association."

Locke's focus on identity theoretically requires that we see collective identity as always in transition, historically constituted, and the mediating social phenomenon through which self-definitions are generated.⁶

Harris is concerned with the confluence Locke finds between personal identity and culture, in that our self-worth (respect for our feelings and our free will), as value makers is purposeful for everyone, therefore our pluralistic values can be normative and progressive. Importantly, Harris thinks, as do I, that we can understand more about ourselves and our world, while finding consensus about our personal and public values, relative to our varied circumstances of gender and sexual fluidity in our world today.

So, our identities are not completely social constructions, but we *are* profoundly influenced by shared values as modes of collective orientations, namely 'cultures'. Contemporarily, in terms of gender, we can accept new approaches to how we characterize ourselves as families and communities, knowing we are all unique persons of valued self-worth, hoping for an ever more inclusive, peaceful, and innovative world.

Employing Locke's axiology, I find differences of our value attitudes helpful as we search for shared values and co-joined feelings amidst our value conflicts, and importantly as we transvalue our feelings throughout modes of activities, thereby varying and expanding our experiences in general.

So, what does such a value analysis look like in respect to trans-gender people and their communities? Let's look more closely at what we will discuss, initially, I emphasize how analyzing our feelings and purposes is instrumental to value making, as a process which makes meaningful our experiences in relation to bettering our world. This process is an analytic and psychological process we can call truthfulness. Then, I explain how trans-gender values present us with a contemporary example of problems we encounter if we fail to consider our val-

ues in terms of relative imperatives. Taking this personal yet also public approach to values and considering our transferring of values (namely transvaluation) between fields of experience, we can make our personal feelings more reciprocal and caring. As well, we can overcome exclusively abstract and scientific dead ends, often used to exert power, repression, and oppression. We then want to work on understanding how transvaluation impacts standard normative practices and our value decisions. In the final section we briefly discuss how we can better understand our essential values in terms of religious and political modes of feelings. By transvaluation and identifying essential values we can reorient some traditional religious and contentious political attitudes currently based on patriarchal power and authoritarian oppression, toward more democratic experiences. By such analysis, transgender individuals can find help in the face of grave problems, such as increased incidents of suicide, poverty, discrimination, abuse, lack of identification privileges and individualized health care, lack of fair employment and healthcare benefits, as well as restriction of other basic rights, such as the right to vote and to have a family.⁷

My disclaimer in terms of being cisgender aside, I want to briefly refer to the views of Sue L.T. McGregor, who argues a philosophical defense of Trans Philosophy axiology. McGregor writes encouraging our analysis of relative yet evaluatively purposeful transgender values.⁸ She thinks personal and social values are embodied with the multiplicity and diversity of life. So, trans-gender persons are especially capable of feeling and acting on values which are relative and changeable, as transcultur-

⁷ An outline of my investigation is as follows: Section 1: Value Theory, Truthfulness, and Experience (in relation to Locke, James, and Dewey's philosophies). Section 2: Feeling Modes and Imperatives (according to Locke's philosophy). Section 3: Transgender Values as Transvaluations. Section 4: Religious Imperatives and Democratic Freedoms as contra to Patriarchal Power.

⁸Sue L. T. McGregor, "Transdisciplinary Axiology: To Be or Not to Be?" *Integral Leadership Review*, 2011-08-01 12:08:53, Accessed October 10, 2022.

⁶ Harris, "Introduction", *The Philosophy of Alain Locke*, p. 16.

al, transreligious, transpolitical, and transnational.⁹ Yet, McGregor does not think such relative values make an analytic axiology obsolete. So a relativistic value analysis can guide us to general outcomes, which if absent might be replaced by "...prejudice, self-interest, traditional customs, historical institutions and/or the pressure of the immediate circumstances."¹⁰ Cautioning us against static, prejudicial values, she hopes a transgender value theory will do more than just stimulate theoretical dialectical discussions by spurring personal and public activism, as we strive to eradicate systemic violence against transgender persons.

McGregor's argument inspires me to bring to the fore the importance of Locke's method of *systematic relativism*, as it is a multivariate method for expanding our experiences, as we analyze our feelings/values. Locke highlights points of reference between comparative value fields and sometimes seemingly contrasting value decisions, exposing new ways of feeling about ourselves and others. Values, he thinks of as functional attitudes embedded in our personal and public expressiveness and activities. His system also makes clear that traditions and institutions are meaningful as we revise our values, in that we can expand our understanding and tolerance of our world through our shared value imperatives. Our value-oriented feelings correspond with our pragmatic/forward looking public truthfulness, as we agree upon the essential value of self-worth and mutual respect. Tolerance and reciprocity can be felt with greater impact and take on more meaning when we locate our shared values through varied fields of our activities and culture.

We start by remembering Locke's 1945 essay "Values

and Imperatives", finding him up for the challenge of relating our well-being and truthfulness to an expansion of our values in defiance of authoritative power.

Having become accommodated to a progressive truth and an ever-expanding and creatively exploratory quest for beauty, it may be that we shall trend toward a relativistic but not anarchic ethics, world view, and religion which will be more functionally correlated with the actualities of life and conduct and more effectively normative without rigidly imposed and dictatorial authority.¹¹

Truthfulness (our felt self-worth and exercise of free will, as we make and expand our values) is inherent to our value making as we guide ourselves to consummatory meanings of our experiences. Pragmatically, our consummatory understandings of experiences involves our wholeness or confluence of our feelings and thinking throughout the many activity fields of our environments, as we look toward broadly meaningful decisions to solve our varied and often complex personal and social problems. With our ameliorative purposes in mind, we continually strive to understand how we can use our values more effectively to usurp malevolent attitudes and reactionary values that are limiting or controlling.

Value theory, Truthfulness, and Experience

Our focus in this first section is to discern in more detail, how we can go about fulfilling and expanding our experiences, in terms of our identities and valuations. I want to build confidence in Locke's method by discussing several related theories from the Pragmatist tradition associated with truth and values. What is important to our interlocutors, although they take different approaches, is their focus on our meaningful and purposeful experiences as value oriented, as we strive to feel integrated and se-

⁹ See: B. Nicolescu, *Transdisciplinarity: Theory and Practice*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, 2005.

¹⁰ McGregor, "Transdisciplinary Axiology", 2011. "Drawing on John Dewey (1859-1952), Hart (1971) suggests that if a theory of values (an axiology) is not available to afford intellectual assistance on forming ideas and beliefs about values, ideas and beliefs that are adequate enough to direct actions, other things tend to take the place of the intelligence. These other factors include prejudice, self-interest, traditional customs, historical institutions and/or the pressure of the immediate circumstances."

¹¹ Locke continues, "Our value ultimates from that point of definition and enforcement will no longer be unrealistic as principles and from the cultural point of view provincial tyrants." Locke, "A Functional View of Value Ultimates" *The Philosophy of Alain Locke*, p. 93

cure with our environments, beliefs, relationships, and pursuits. For Locke, James and Dewey, our ongoing value making is essential for our ability to fully experience, and contribute to, our world. Locke wrote,

Values therefore are not to be regarded as gratuitous additions to reality, made from the superfluity of human perversity, but as its highest qualities and the culminating points of its significance for us."¹²

We can think of having a consummatory (generally meaningful) experience, and as participants in a valuation process, as we strive for greater understanding of our feelings in terms of our co-joined purposes. So, as we value and historicize preferred experiences, they remain relevant through our ongoing feelings. For example, we cherish the time we spend with people we love, not for a utilitarian purpose, but for a myriad of reasons, such as our happiness, caring about others, learning about our histories, a sense of security, and looking forward to sharing the ups and downs of life in the future. Feelings we share during these times of family/community are personal and public incentives for participating with those values through varied kinds of activities, which Locke thinks of as 'feeling modes'. For example, we may value our family experiences as a spiritual bonding, connecting us to a religious mode. As well when we can gather with our families/communities in relation to culture, sometimes through art or ritual, we participate in an aesthetic feeling mode.

Locke explains that values come to be part of our lives because of our feelings and consummate attitudes; "value is conferred upon an object by a personal attitude towards it, it is clear that all objects can be valued by being included in a valuation-process."¹³ Noting objects Locke infers relationships, ideas, material objects, communications, discussions, and policies. Such objects carry forward our interchanges of feelings, while we are building up habits and histories which impact us in terms

of our attitudes or approaches to situations. These values are not definitive maxims nor fictional, but we feel them functionally, as aspects of our actions and fruitful experiences, while using them as tools for making future choices. Functional values can be essentially important, as the meanings and consequences for people and communities can be alike across various activities, regardless of the physicality, materiality, spirituality, or even, in some experiences, regardless of aesthetic appeal of the activity.¹⁴

For Locke values are vital for our personal identities, in that we know ourselves true to our most essential feelings while participants in value-making situations. Our analysis of what our feelings mean, i.e. how our feelings are part of our self-worth and how they function as part of our purposes of our efforts, gives relative structure to our values and our world. Locke explains, "To the poet, beauty is truth; to the religious devotee, God is truth; to the enthused moralist, what ought-to-be overtops factual reality."¹⁵ So, our feelings of beauty with all the tensions of awe and serenity, wonder, connectedness to nature, as well as creative artfulness, orient us to look to the poet as an arbitrator of what is true and valuable about our experiences. Listening to different poets means we will look culturally towards different aesthetic objects, although essential feelings toward such objects can be analyzed as functioning similarly in a myriad of experiences. In terms of our forthcoming discussion on gender, we can think about beauty as an aspect of self-identity; as we love ourselves, care for ourselves, expanding our physical and spiritual experiences, and as a matter of our thoughtful identities by which we express our values to other people. Gender can be thought of as a matter of being a valued object for our analysis, as we continue to express ourselves with a protreptic approach.

¹² Locke, "Value", *The Philosophy of Alain Locke*, p. 126.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ See Locke, "A Functional View of Value Ultimates", *The Philosophy of Alain Locke*, p. 81-93.

¹⁵ Locke, "Values and Imperative", *The Philosophy of Alain Locke*, p. 37.

Our happiness is not based solely on pleasure, although such feelings are broad in their reach, often connecting us to the aesthetic fields of arts and social engagement. In terms of values, we find happiness a matter of our fulfillment of experiences, such that as value makers we are meaningful participants of our world, as when we finish our projects, have success with our plans, fulfill a sense of duty, or as we find our love has done some good for others. We feel the success of our actions as normative, as a sense of security, concerted action, and well-being, yet we always strive to do more, perform a better job, experience a closer union. Recognizing our feelings as value-oriented, we can locate an important step in Locke's systematic relativism, as we continue to analyze and further felt values by engaging with new modes of experience. Namely, this is a step towards transvaluation, which we will continue to explore in the following section.

At this juncture of the discussion some inquirers may raise questions about Locke's value theory in terms of both personal identity and essential value imperatives. How can we make values according to our personal feelings, but also take guidance from essential human value imperatives? According to Locke, our personal identities are evidentially a matter of our attitudes, propagated by our expressiveness and communication skills. Self-worth is a character trait of value makers, as we use feeling/value analysis to create our identity. To this point Locke remarks, "everyone initially regards himself as the measure of all things".¹⁶ Realizing the importance of our identities, in respect to representing our future growth and well-being, our self-worth is an essential value imperative felt by everyone.¹⁷ Value imperatives, as expressions of what we feel needs to be done and why it needs to be done, continual inspire us to make meaningful, and

to further, our experiences, often across personal differences and social barriers.¹⁸ As said, we consummate and extend our satisfaction of such value experiences by realizing the relevance of such values across varied fields of human experience. As well, we experience a consummation of our self-worth through our ongoing participation with our activities, not as a detachment of our personal subjectivity.¹⁹ Here we can note how personal gender orientations, attitudes, and our identities are important to our choices in life. Our presentations of our personal feelings, as aesthetically/publicly/culturally oriented demonstrations of our mettle, are the very occurrences of our value judgments.

Recognizing the importance of the ongoing confluence and continuity of our feelings, personal expressiveness, and activities through our value making, Locke furthers our discussion by critiquing positivistic, dogmatic, and utilitarian aspects of pragmatic philosophy. He singles out James' notions on truth, claiming that such limits our human resources, mainly because of an overly rationalized, overly subjective orientation.

It is perhaps to be expected that the typical American philosophies should concentrate al-

¹⁶ Locke, "Values", *The Philosophy of Alain Locke*, p. 123.

¹⁷ Locke writes, "Thus the personal reaction expressed in a value-judgment carries a formal claim to universality, since every one initially regards himself as the measure of all things, until he is instructed by the dissent of others." Locke, "Values", *The Philosophy of Alain Locke*, p. 114.

¹⁸ Harris writes, "For Locke, a social identity is conditioned by our individual valuations, but they are not subjectively molded or caused in isolation from our historicity and material condition. Analogous to James's negation of an 'idea' as a fixed entity, an instance of thought, and analogous to James's negation of the 'objective world' as a fixed entity, an isolated phenomenon to be apprehended by all-seeing and naked eye unencumbered by interpretation, Locke negated racial, ethnic, religious, and political identities as fixed entities. He also negated identity as objectively give, anthropologically shaped by immutable ideologies; he negated identities as reducible to simplistic formulas of the given. Locke's philosophy may or not provide us with all the answers about the nature of values and human experience that we need, but the views he tendered provide us with substantive building blocks." See Harris, "Introduction", p. 21.

¹⁹ Locke writes, "As a *quod erat demonstrandum*, the proof or demonstration is an enjoyed consummation of a process and is by that very fact aesthetic in quality. Likewise, the contemplation of an ethical deed, when the tension of the act is not shared, becomes a detached appreciation, though it needs only the sharing of the tension to revert to the moral type of valuation. In fact moral behavior, when it becomes dispositional, with the smooth feeling-curve of habit and inner equilibrium, normally takes on a quasi-aesthetic quality, as reflected in the criterion of taste and noblesse oblige rather than the sterner criterion of "must" and of "duty." Locke, *The Philosophy of Alain Locke*, "Values and Imperatives", p. 44.

most exclusively on thought-action as the sole criterion of experience and should find analysis of the emotional aspects of human behavior uncongenial.²⁰

He goes on to note,

Ironically enough, the very type of philosophy which has insisted on truth as a value has, by rigid insistence on the objective criterion and the experimental-instrumental aspects of thought, disabled itself for pursuing a similarly functional interpretation of the other value modes and their normative principles.²¹

It seems to Locke, some pragmatists have favored the factual and objective (albeit 'experimental'), neglecting to fully analyze our feelings, which are evidentially embodied in methods and practices of our expressive activities. As well he surmises that James assumes an overly subjective attitude to personal feelings, even in terms of arts, religious events, and family/community life. However, Locke's value theory is related to other aspects of pragmatic aesthetic and ethical theories, as we will discuss in more detail later in this section, in relation to Dewey's ideas.²² For now, I can note that for both Dewey and Locke, feeling/value modes are experiential orientations to our everyday activities. For example, we identify our feelings as spiritual with a non-subjective attitude, when we pray with a sense of community in church or

before a meal, or when creating art or participating with an artistic event we feel emotionally engaged with certain aesthetic forms and meanings.

An important aspect of Locke's analysis is his thinking on value and truth as a catalyst for our participatory natures, yet his approach is in contrast with that of William James. James asks, "How will truth be realized? What, in short, is the truth's cash-value in experiential terms?" as he emphasizes the relationships we make between phenomena, objects, and ideas. These relationships transform our world and are value oriented, so for us to discern the meanings of our relationships is experimental (uncertain) yet analyzable. James places importance on a dialectical method by which we discern our objectives in making these relationships, confirm our values thereof, and test what we assume as true, ethical, or moral. He terms this process of meaning and truth Radical Empiricism. Radical Empiricism is both a valuation process and a truth gauge, as we employ the three-phase dialectical analysis.²³ So, for James, we analyze our feelings and emotions, as experiential relationships, and we anticipate consequences of our analysis, including normative moral judgements. That analysis or judgement then stands outside of our feelings or phenomenal experiences, as a relative yet reasoned truth. The detachment of judgements of truth and values from our feelings and ongoing expressions and practices is problematic for Locke, as he takes such as a worrying example of James' generally objective and overly rational/subjective approach.²⁴

²⁰ Locke is mainly referring to William James, notions of on truth. "The provisional definition of value as essentially a personal attitude, as a recognition of the supremacy, as a recognition of the supremacy of the category of personality, has maintained itself and proved a clue to the labyrinth of values. Locke, *The Philosophy of Alain Locke*. "Value", p. 126.

²¹ Locke, "Values and Imperative", *The Philosophy of Alain Locke*, p. 37.

²² Wider philosophical discussions about pragmatist theories of truth often label such as correspondence theories; basing truth on physical phenomenon we can gauge our progress in terms of the consequences of our efforts objectively. However, James assumes a difference to such labeling. Firstly, he finds correspondence theories as weak explanations of truth, in that such doesn't entail a focus on the relationships of our ideas, actions, and objects; what might happen, what we can think about relationally as new to our experience. Importantly for James is the meanings of what we experience, in terms of our subsequent valued actions Dewey expands this approach, putting an emphasis on truth as a valuation process. Dewey breaks the fact/value dichotomy, while offering us insight about many questions surrounding scientific, religious, and artistic approaches, explaining all these ways of problem solving are creative, practical and imaginative.

²³ Three phrases of this truth analysis are, a) state a postulate, which is drawn from experience, b) then a statement of fact which connects objects/entities to ideas and emotions, c) and a conclusion, which states what has been created in terms of meaningful values that we can act on, based on our analysis.

²⁴ Leonard Harris finds that Locke uses the major ideas of James' theory of truth, such as truth as a meaningful endeavor, to develop his unique value theory. Harris points out that truth for James, Dewey, and Locke is never value free, and neither scientific facts nor creative ideas are fixed, nor are our ideas necessarily true in isolation of our personal experiences. Harris finds Dewey's writings, a coherence theory; "that emphasized the revisability of warranted propositions.", or what is evermore functionally available for a person to act upon, which can also be described in terms of what is possible but also correctable. So, there is a practical and theoretical relativism involved with

Locke critiques radical empiricism, stressing instead our value choices as self-affirmations, consummating our valuing experiences as a process of “sustaining an attitude, the satisfaction of a way of feeling, the corroboration of a value”.²⁵ James held a strong valence on emotions, however, as our emotions are integral to our thinking, especially as such relates to our will to believe, so he does set a precedence for many ‘experiential’ pragmatists. Yet, Locke thinks of James’ radical empiricism as a rudderless approach to truth and value-making. For Locke we don’t merely guide our actions by reflecting on future consequences in terms of moral judgements, but we make choices based on the ongoing feeling nature of our activities and relationships. We trust those feelings as valuable even as they are emergent through our expressiveness, and we employ or change our feeling/thinking/activity involvements to make value decisions. Locke explains,

Human behavior, it is true, is experimental, but it is also selectively preferential, and not always in terms of outer adjustments and concrete results. Value reactions guided by emotional preferences and affinities are as potent in the determination of attitudes as pragmatic consequences are in the determination of actions. In the generic and best sense of the term ‘pragmatic,’ it is as important to take stock of the one as the other.²⁶

For Locke radical empiricism marks an “anarchic pluralism”, as such offers no explanation of how we truly share embodied values, as felt solutions to our problems.²⁷

our experiences. However, Harris points out that Dewey and Locke hold a stronger valence in terms of our feelings which are expressive and communicable, thereby bringing into the explanation of truth, as shared values. See Leonard Harris, “Rendering the Text”, *The Philosophy of Alain Locke*, p. 13.

²⁵ Locke, “Values and Imperative”, *The Philosophy of Alain Locke*, p. 37.

²⁶ Locke “Values and Imperatives”, *The Philosophy of Alain Locke*, p. 38.

²⁷ See Harris, *The Philosophy of Alain Locke*, “Pluralism and Intellectual Democracy”, p. 51.

⁵ee: Absolutism, Relativism and Anarchy: Alain Locke and William James on Value Pluralism”

¹eil W. Williams, Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society, Vol. 53, No. 3 (Summer 2017), pp. 400-424 (25 pages), Published By: Indiana University Press. Williams explains that for both James and Locke our experience includes our beliefs and feeling at its most objective, yet for Locke we can avoid “anarchic

Locke, by contrast states that while values may be looked at as facts they are not developed without our shared essential feelings. We select and rely upon certain feelings which expand our experiences according to our experiential orientations, namely a quality of our feelings as an attitudinal orientation. For Locke we account for our values, as we act via distinct qualities of feelings which are embodied with our fields of endeavor, and fortified by our ongoing fact/value choices, thereby making our values normative. Convincingly, Locke verifies that our feeling/attitudes are consequential to these fields, as we can discern distinctive and pervasive feelings for each field. Locke claims,

We are forced to conclude that the feeling quality, irrespective of content, makes a value of a given kind, and that a transformation of the attitude effects a change of type in the value situation.²⁸

For instance, we feel good when enjoying ourselves with people we love, so even when together watching a scary, horror movie our relationships grow in positive ways.

The functional aspects of our values help us locate essential qualities of feelings and common attitudes, as we find pervasive value qualities across varied modes of experiences. So, we can now grasp how Locke finds transvaluation as a fulfillment of experience; as our multi-modal participation, is “itself a functional value”.²⁹

Transvaluation is also a matter of analysis of our value decision making, and a method of reflection, while it can be instrumental in transforming our feelings in novel ways. Leonard Harris explains Locke’s process of transvaluation in terms of amelioration, which we can think of a betterment or expansion of our experiences.

...the process of continual transvaluation of values is not only central to what humans are but has positive consequences. It does not, in effect,

relativism”, coming to a notion of truth, by “our common feeling types which ground our different ways of valuing.”

²⁸ Locke, “Values and Imperatives”, *The Philosophy of Alain Locke*, p. 40.

²⁹ Locke, “Value and Imperative”, *The Philosophy of Alain Locke*, p. 35.

leave us in a world without the possibility of criteria for judging or preferring a set of values. Locke contends that changes in values and social norms tend to be progressively corrective. He rejects the possibility of an eternally warranted or fixed set of values or norms. Rather, understanding how values function is a pivotal requirement that should precondition considerations of which regulative normative rules we adopt.³⁰

Looking at the contemporary advocacy of transgender people, in the final part of our discussion, we will find how communities can fully experience beneficial democratic values, due to transvaluation.

However, for now let's briefly look at these ideas in respect to the value theory of John Dewey. Dewey is responsible for two essential developments of pragmatic theories of truthfulness and valuation. He, like Locke, cracks the fact/value dichotomy, through understanding values not merely as set laws or prescribed objectives, but as processes of our ongoing interactions with our world. Yet Dewey and Locke place emphasis on the meaningfulness of our presently felt experiences, which Dewey terms an "immediacy" of experience. As well, they find aesthetics as a particularly effective mode of value making, in that personal and cultural expression are poignantly creative forms of values in action, especially in terms of public advocacy for amelioratory purposes.

Both Dewey and Locke were greatly influenced by art, specifically when explaining aesthetic values.³¹ Dewey does not proxy art as truth but does find personal expression as an artistic endeavor which can be experientially consummatory.³² Dewey's project includes

how to transform our everyday habits and occurrences from mundane, to more meaningful value-making experiences. Expressing our feelings as values through the creative/imaginary processes of the artist, which can include testing critical approaches to problems, involving us, in an active sense, with pervasive qualities (feelings) which permeate the staged situation, which can then transvalue to unifies/consummate other experiences.

While Dewey relies on what he understands as an *immediacy* of the felt experience in terms of value meaning, Locke finds that such is about one's urgency for expressiveness, as part of the process of consummating a meaningful value experience. Locke goes even further, rescuing flesh and blood values as a matter of creating and expanding commonly meaningful experiences, as there are pervasive feelings or qualities which are indicative of value imperatives, which we realize and make clear as we express ourselves. Both "relative objectivity and universality" presents us with value choices as we act upon shared feeling qualities. Locke writes,

The basic qualities of values, Beauty, Truth, and Goodness, should never have been sought in logical classes, for they pertain to psychological categories. They are not grounded in types of realms of value but are rooted in modes or kinds of *valuing*.³³

So, Locke's emphasis is on our valuation processes, as we embody situational events with pervasive felt qualities, such as exaltation, moral goodness, beauty, wonder. We live as participants in a value filled world, where our choices according to the most expansive and consummatory qualities of our feelings, make a difference to others with whom we share universally beneficial value experiences.

³⁰ Harris, "A Functional View of Value Ultimates", p. 79-80.

³¹ See Richard Shusterman; Locke offers us another novel point of view, on both the value of artistic experience and the fulfillment of experience, as he offers us a fuller understanding of the importance of personal expression. Richard Shusterman discusses Locke's view, "Locke describes scientism's as a 'fanatical culture of fact.' Human life is lived more in felt experience than in the impersonal facts of science, and art's experience is typically more rich, vivid, and affectively powerful than that of science." Shusterman, "From Natural Roots to Cultural Radicalism" *Surface and Depth: Dialectics of Criticism and Culture*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 2002, p. 129.

³² John Dewey writes, "That which distinguishes an experience as aesthetic is conversion of resistance and tensions of excitations that in themselves are temptations to diversion, into

a movement toward an inclusive and fulfilling close." See also, Mathur, D. C. "A Note on the Concept of 'Consummatory Experience' in Dewey's Aesthetics." *The Journal of Philosophy* 63, no. 9 (1966): 225-31. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2024608>. Mathur writes, "Immediate Experience has a pervasive quality. This pervasive quality is 'felt' as the context of our transaction with objects and events." See Dewey, *Art as Experience*, Penguin Books Ltd, London, 1934, p. 56.

³³ Locke, "Values and Imperatives", *The Philosophy of Alain Locke*, p. 38.

Feeling Modes and Imperatives

Clearly, for Locke our lives are value oriented, so we naturally can discern our 'kinds of valuing'. We are most interested in not what happens, but what we feel ought to happen, as integral to our ongoing activities. By "values" Locke generally means attitudes, beliefs, preferences, attenuations for moral principles, aesthetic objects and practices, religious beliefs, racial and ethnic loyalties, and political platforms. These attitudes, based on feelings which fulfill our experiences with meanings, we transvalue when we express ourselves through varied activities fields, presenting us with a pervasive felt quality and a value imperative. Thereby, as value makers we are inspired to make public our self-expressions, and act as advocates for others, as we participate in varied fields of our common experience. For example, being patriotic publicizes loyalty as a moral value, as well as being a value we act upon in terms of our political practices. However, if patriotism becomes restrictive, for instance by us directing all our emotions towards political activities, we limit our ability to analysis loyal feelings in terms of other activities, in turn lessening our religious, aesthetic and moral values. It is then that perhaps a sense of chaotic rebellion or authoritative control and submission is felt instead of loyalty.

Values are disputable, as they involve a personal relation to the attitude of the valuer (whose identity is associated with the value). Yet, one's initial feelings of a value is not equivalent to its validity. All values are primary claims to an essential feeling or consummate value in terms of analysis and transvaluation, so the initial feeling may be allowed, disallowed, or reversed. In a practical sense we can take an example, when a person values their leisure time, such experiences are expressive of happiness, joy, self-confirmation, creativity, or commitment to family/community, but these experiences can be put on hold because of work obligations. Values can cancel each other, as sometimes happens for example with tensions of rela-

tionships between traditional family values and freedom of personal expression. Of course, such tensions can be felt as part of the many problems surrounding transgender parity and social justice, which is our topic of discussion in the final section.

Pure values exist as little as pure facts. Instead, values are attached to objects as part of the context of our varied kinds of experience. We feel positive and negative attitudes as distinctions of valuations, and values can be both personal and shared, i.e. in terms of feelings; acceptance/rejection (loyalty), pursuit or avoidance (courage), attractiveness or repulsiveness (beauty/ugliness). Locke explains feeling modes as value categories and a context of experiences, along with "the psychological urgency (shall we say necessity?) to construe the situation as a particular qualitative form-character."³⁴ Through our urgency to act we hold to a pervasive quality of our feelings, thereby consummating our experiences as meaningful to our situation. Imperative values are pervasive and shared feelings, that can become normative, habitual, and embodied in the activities/institutions of people's communities.

The process of transvaluation includes the varied contexts of our experiences, as we move from our present situation to the next. We discern a deeper understanding of how our feelings function by thinking of values in varied environments, such as when in church, the classroom, the scientific lab. Imperatives, as essential values, help us transvalue our attitudes to include new uses for our feelings, and help us understand more about other people's feelings and experiences. By analyzing this valuing processes, we can discern how we associate and reassociate our feelings to our varied experiences. For example, beauty is of universal value, so we can transvalue beautiful things onto moral goodness. Beauty (i.e. skilled execution of form or medium, presentation and/or interpretation, presenting consummatory meaning) as

³⁴ Jeffrey C. Stewart, *The New Negro: The Life of Alain Locke*, Oxford University Press, N.Y, N.Y., 2018, p. 41.

a value in various feeling modes, changes our experiences comprehensively, for example, art lovers who viewed Picasso's *Guernica* during WW II felt the frightening horror and urgency of the imminent crisis, aesthetically, as well as politically, morally, religiously, and factually.

Now let us turn to the form of Locke's method. Locke identifies four value fields, which are differentiated by four basic feeling modes. The Religious Value/Feeling Mode is differentiated by the feeling of exaltation, while the Ethical Value/Feeling Mode is differentiated by the feeling of tension. The Factual Value/Feeling Mode is differentiated by the feeling of acceptance and the Artistic/Aesthetic Value/Feeling Mode by the feeling of repose or equilibrium.³⁵

There are subcategories, which depend on the range of expression and communication of our values (i.e. as proactive and/or critical). There are five subcategories by which we can scrutinize our feeling/values in terms of functional fields of valuation: the feeling reference, practices or habits of our values, value type or social field, value predicate, and polarity (range of attitude). There is a dialectical aspect to each subcategory of analysis, in that we think of our feelings as descriptive of the relative possibilities of our experiences, but also and importantly we orient our values as introverted personal values or public extroverted feelings. Conflicts between how we direct our value/feelings inwardly to ourselves and outward towards society is a crucial point of analysis, in that such a difference can be the basis for conflicting feelings, miscommunication, power plays, and more positively constructive critique.³⁶ For example, the individual art-

ist may be powerful with personal expressions of values which can be thought of as affecting public circumstances, so in authoritative regimes they can be singled out as dissidents.

For Locke we are not defined by our class, race, sex nor physical appearance, but by how we direct our feelings, and consequently by the values we hold and how we act upon those values.³⁷ Locke concretizes the relative and action-oriented aspects of our feelings in terms of our feeling references, as being the focus of our interests. Different predicates follow from different feeling modes, as the artist qualifies what is most important about beauty, and the moralist what is most right. Yet, in terms of transvaluation, the specialized artist can understand the urgency of the expert scientist who has confidence in their forecasts and creative solutions. The value decisions we make, as we define ourselves in terms of our chosen value modes, can create functional pathways between value modes. Scientists who are advocates for beneficial consequences of their discoveries, find cohorts with artists and religious advocates for social justice, even with business ethicists.

What runs throughout our attitudes, and our transvaluations, is our understanding of our feelings as expansive to our experiences, presently meaningful to our circumstances, and communicable. We feel validated as creative individuals during the valuation process. Locke locates our purposes in these respects in terms of tolerance and reciprocity. Tolerance and reciprocity are essential aspects of our ability to identify ourselves as impactful value makers, as we realize ourselves as being integral to what can happen to our communities. Furthermore, Locke's theory of cultural pluralism is built on our publicly sharing our personal valuations by our public and creative expressiveness.

³⁵ Locke, "Values and Imperative", *The Philosophy of Alain Locke*, p. 41-42.

³⁶ Locke, "Values and Imperative", p.46. Locke writes, "These directional drives, determined emotionally in the majority of cases, deciding whether the value is focused inwardly or outwardly, individuated or socialized, are of the utmost practical importance. For they are the root of those civil feuds within the several value provinces between the saint and the prophet, the mystic and the reformer, the speculative theorist and the practical experimentalist in the search for truth, the aesthete and dilettante versus the creative and professional artist, and finally between the self-righteous moral zealot and the moral reformer."

³⁷ Contexts and subsequent functionality of our values, depends on our personal expressiveness and identity building. Locke concretizes the relative and action-oriented aspects of our feelings in terms of our feeling references, or the phenomena we are most oriented towards, i.e. functionality.

Transgender Transvaluation

Let us now exercise Locke's systematic relativism, analyzing the feelings of transgender people and their communities, as well as the feelings of people who do not support the legitimacy of transgender identity. Throughout this section, we will not shy away from conflicts between people in terms of feelings, however our investigation is based on Locke's analytic method rather than harnessing or trying to change negative, violence producing emotions. The central problematic is, why do we remain confused about the roles of science, medical ethics, religious beliefs, aesthetic perceptions, and political problems in relation to concerns for transgender people/community and their essential human worth.

Gender can be understood not solely as a social construct or a sexual orientation, but as a personal attitude of how to feel as oneself as a purposeful, truthful, value-oriented person. However, in terms of nomenclature of who is transgender and who makes up transgender communities, we can cite a definition from the U.S. government's Department of Justice,

Transgender is a term used to describe people who experience incongruence between the sex they were assigned at birth and their internal gender identity, who experience binary gender as restrictive or inaccurate, who do not conform to cultural expectations of binary gender, or who love someone who is transgender.³⁸

Anti-gender advocates recognize a person solely in terms of male/female physical sexuality. Bi-gender values are felt by anti-gender activists across value modes, however analysis is rarely considered in terms of universal value imperatives and democratic predicates, as will be discussed. Anti-gender theorists and advocates often dismiss transgender values and the human rights of transgender people.³⁹

³⁸ Office of Justice Programs, U.S.A., Office of Victims Crimes, "Responding to Transgender Victims of Sexual Assault", June 2014. Accessed October 10, 2022: https://ovc.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh226/files/pubs/forge/transgender_community.html.

³⁹ See "Although resistance to the incorporation of 'gender' in

Fortunately, Locke's systematic relativism is helpful, as a deconstructive and dialectical method, in that we can identify and categorize our feelings and the feelings of others in terms of practical ways we use those feelings. We can identify similar and conflicting values.

Christopher Collins, a scholar interested in Locke's value theory, investigated value conflicts between people who advocate for same sex marriage and those who hold to binary gender marriage norms.⁴⁰ Although, Collins does not apply Locke's method systematically, he highlights Locke's ideas of value reciprocity and tolerance as being vital to solving value conflicts.⁴¹ With such approaches, we recognize others are as passionate about their values as we are. We realize we share the integrity of our convictions, while taking on board that fanatical beliefs are held with conflicting consequences.⁴² Value

human rights law and policies is not new, since 2013 anti-gender campaigns have articulated as movements and increased their visibility. More recently, the transnational dimension of the anti-gender offensive has become visible as a challenge to human rights standards, including the anti-violence against women project, and a process of democratic erosion. In this column, I make a short overview of this social and political phenomenon and describe how these anti-gender campaigns have entered the human rights systems and their discourse has shifted from religious justifications towards legal ones. I conclude with general suggestions to strengthen the resilience of the human rights systems to these processes." Lorena Sosa, "Beyond gender equality? Anti-gender campaigns and the erosion of human rights and democracy", *Netherlands Quarterly of Human Rights* 2021, Vol. 39(1) 3–10 2021, pp. 33–54, Universiteit Utrecht, Utrecht, the Netherlands. [sagepub.com/journals-permissions DOI: 10.1177/0924051921996697](https://doi.org/10.1177/0924051921996697) journals.sagepub.com/home/nqh.

⁴⁰ See Christopher Collins, a scholar of American pragmatism, essay; "Family Values and Same-Sex Marriage: Reconciliation via Alain Locke's Value Theory", *Philosophy in the Contemporary World*, Volume 16, Issue 1, Spring 2009, pp. 55–65. Accessed October 10, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.5840/pcw20091615>. Collins writes, "On both lists we should expect to see goods such as family stability, committed relationships, mutual support, companionship, community recognition, raising children, and love. To be sure, the lists will include some incommensurables (procreation for instance), but Locke's value theory will encourage the parties to continue their dialogue in terms of their shared valued, the functional value constants, rather than allow themselves to become sidetracked by their differences." *Ibid*, p. 61.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, p. 60. "The process of reflecting on the (apparently) alien values of the other by reference to common modes of valuing has the potential not only to yield attitudes of tolerance (*i.e.*, respect for the intrinsic worth of the other as a valuing agent), but also to promote receptivity to transforming our own values in light of the (now intelligible) values of the other."

⁴² *Ibid*. Collins writes, "Locke's second normative principle for valuing-reciprocity--envisioning a more active and productive

reciprocity is an idea by which we can expand our understanding of a matter at hand as we begin to work to understand other people's values, respecting them and garnering respect in return. Throughout several modes of our feelings, tolerance can be thought of as a matter of us finding some longstanding values obsolete and nonfunctional, as we begin to observe new value laden practices. Collins explains how tolerance and reciprocity are intertwined as consensual feelings and reasonings, in terms of autonomous value-making.

The process of reflecting on the (apparently) alien values of the other by reference to common modes of valuing has the potential not only to yield attitudes of tolerance (*i.e.*, respect for the intrinsic worth of the other as a valuing agent), but also to promote receptivity to transforming our own values in light of the (now intelligible) values of the other. ⁴³

Assuming tolerance and reciprocity as essential approaches to acting on our feelings, throughout value fields, we can look in detail at Locke's feeling/value modes in respect to transgender identity. Furthermore, we look towards value pluralism as a technique of systematic relativism, as a taking on board the values of others in respect to intersected fields of practices. Subsequently, we can find common ground while enjoying our varied and useful norms and institutions. All marriages are improved by centering one's feeling about security, child rearing, and caring, and many could be improved as we consider feelings of mutual respect and support

for individual life goals and nonauthoritative/consensual decision making.

Before more fully investigating how to find such common ground, we should clarify what might seem a division between fact/scientific values and aesthetic values. Specifically in relation to transgender values, sex seems to be scientifically based in terms of physicality/science and gender is often understood as a social construct/aesthetic and political. Scientifically, probably the most difficult questions causing people confusion and conflict, is whether medical interventions should or should not be available to people who feel physically trapped in a wrongly sexualized body. Yet, both approaches bring social problems to the conversation, such as questions about research and use of hormonal and other medical and psychological therapies, which restroom a transgender person should visit, how to ensure fairness of identification in terms of employment and/or nationality, prohibitions of health insurance and housing security.

We can think here that gender could be a more extroverted way to feel about our social values, while sexuality a more personal way of feeling. Yet, transgender people can feel at odds with both aspects of their identities, in that they can feel wrongly sexed and wrongly gendered, as they are forced to choose in a binary gendered world. However, they can take on the attitudes of their felt sexuality with a relative understanding that there are feminine and masculine values which are essential to both genders, and those can be transvalued throughout different practices. Values such as caring, sharing resources, and how loving partnerships inspire people's health and ongoing trust in their feelings, helping us bridge the gap between science and other value fields such as aesthetics.

So, as said, scientific facts of sexuality can be at odds with our gendered feelings, but such tensions can be creative and inspiring, as we observe the functions our feelings. We often engage with several modes of value functionality when expressing ourselves. For example,

communication between disparate value cultures ultimately creating the potential for the functional improvement of corresponding value systems. The first step is essentially a deconstructive project, *i.e.*, an analysis of our own values to isolate the root modes of valuing and functional constants operative within them. The next step is to consider alien values in the same way-studying them (on the model of an anthropologist or sociologist) to discover the common human modes of valuing and functional constants at work in the alien value system (Locke 1944, 73). These two steps lay the foundation for a constructive dialogue in terms of the shared basic functional character of superficially disparate value systems. From the perspective of this common character, we can functionally evaluate the alien values to (perhaps) discover some insight, novelty, or functional utility that may be relevant for the improvement of our own value systems (Green 1999, 87)."

⁴³ Ibid, p. 60.

we can come to realize more about common aesthetic values when we are considerate of people's choice of genders, such as feeling ourselves bigender as we take on various roles in life which have previously been designated male or female.

In accord with Locke's system, changing our feelings opens new possibilities of understanding and problem solving. Locke writes, "Change the attitude and, irrespective of content, you change the value-type, and the appropriate new predicates automatically follow."⁴⁴ So a scientific problem becomes an aesthetic problem once one expands one's feelings about masculine and feminine values.

So, we can feel the decisiveness of our values of caring for and loving people, as we can move freely amongst our value modes, i.e. science carries with it obligations for what we create, as we value our free will. Religion values inspire us to acknowledge our free will, yet to be humble respecting what we experience not in a completely individual and physical sense. The expansiveness and truthfulness of our feelings in these modes comes to consummate our experiences by value predicates, such as scientific ethics and religious social justice.

Here are Locke's feeling/value modes in conjunction with attendant attitudes, fields of practice, basis for decisions, and critical references:⁴⁵

- **Religious Feeling Mode: Feeling Reference:** Exaltation/ Awe **Practice:** Worship/ Religiousness **Value Predicate:** Holy-Unholy/Good-Evil **Polarity:** Holiness-Sin/ Salvation-Damnation
- **Ethical Feeling Mode: Feeling Reference:** Conflict/ Choice, **Practice:** Ethical/Moral **Value Predicate:** Good-Bad/ Right-Wrong, **Polarity:** Conscience-Right/ Temptation-Crime
- **Factual Feeling Mode: Feeling Reference:** Acceptance/Agreement **Practice:** Curiosity-Intellectual Satisfaction/Logical Truth-Scientific Truth **Value Predicate:** Correct-Incorrect/ True-False **Polarity:** Consistency-Contradiction/Certainty-Error

⁴⁴ Locke, "Values and Imperatives", *The Philosophy of Alain Locke*, p. 44.

⁴⁵ Locke, "Values and Imperative", *The Philosophy of Alain Locke*, p. 43.

- **Artistic/Aesthetic Feeling Mode: Feeling Reference:** Repose - Equilibrium/Contemplation - Creative Activity **Practice:** Aesthetic/Artistic **Value Predicate:** Beautiful-Ugly/ Fine-Unsatisfactory **Polarity:** Satisfaction-Joy/Disgust-Distress

Additionally, before applying transgender values and finding points of transvaluation with cisgender values, we should ask what some of the barriers might be in terms of clear analysis of transgender people's attitudes. In terms of **Feeling Reference:** Do enough cisgender people have personal relationships with transgenders, or are exposed to learning about transgender values, to form a trans-valued attitude? **Practice Reference:** Generally, is there a dependence on factual or static laws rather than situationally oriented value imperatives, which we can embody with our ongoing practices and habits? **Value Type or Social Field:** Are our families, communities, and educational institutions inclusive and therefore expansive? **Value Predicate:** Are proper and pronoun names and other symbolic references bigender restrictive, thereby representing value judgements without value decisions? **Polarity:** What are the negative effects of lack of analysis and expansiveness, i.e. parity and discrimination?

Keeping such obstructions in mind, we can continue our close analysis, employing dialectical comparisons:

- **Religious Values:** Conflict: Transgender people express how they feel spiritual exaltation/awe/humility, charity, and empathy; yet they can be seen as holding values, such as self-willfulness, which can be considered unholy or sinful.
- **Ethical Values:** Conflict: Transgender people feel loyal to contributing to the goodness of their families, friends, communities, as they understand others as worthy of parity, rather than sexual or gendered biased inequality; yet they are considered unethical and immoral, because they might not support binary gender false norms such as, secured woman/free man, morally bound woman/man as law maker.
- **Factual Values:** Transgender people feel committed to their authentic of their psycho-physical feelings, such as the ability to act on their experiences as different or no genders; yet many people rely on medical facts, depending solely on binary sexuality solutions, thereby treating transsexuality as a multi-modal problem but relying only on medical solutions. (Sex can be understood as scientific based solely on bi-gender physicality, yet transgenders are often understood as a matter of social constructs.)

- **Aesthetic Values:** Transgender people feel their expressions of identity as beautiful and meaningful/educational in terms of progressive realizations of the diversity of life and creative change, caring for oneself, and as beneficial to the continuity of relationships. Yet people can be shunned as part of an aesthetic/popular prejudice, as ugly or disgusting. Artistically they can be considered unimportant because they are not symbolically reinforcing more normative or authoritative cultural trends, and therefore their values are not communicated openly.

For Locke the most vital aspects of a systematic analysis of values is how values function, both in terms of individual expression and normative imperatives. Locke finds our values need to be based on parity and reciprocity. Value conflicts, in contrast, are a matter of proving one's value authority, rather than striving for the fullness of our personal and shared experiences. So, in respect to transgender transvaluation, questions arise about how we come to embrace this process which allows us to uncover essential values and imperatives. Here we can make progress by speculating more fully on the possibilities of shared values in terms of the experiences of transgender people.

- **Universal Value:** Personal Identity/Expression: **Transvaluations:** Ethical/Aesthetic/Religious/Factual. A universal imperative is our striving to know our self-worth and exercise our free will, facilitating self-expression and public acceptance. **Possible Problematic:** Is transgender identity an expression of people who feel a lack of self-security or personal meaning, or is it an approach some people take to deal with social problems, or is it apparitional, or caused by hormonal imbalance? If your biology and your spirit are not coherent, are you a good person? **Transvalued Solutions:** We find security, so we can express ourselves more fully, when we become involved with a shared sense of commonality of purpose. Public education on how people and communities can respect and dignify one another, would inspire more personal expressions. Transgender artists, sports teams, and media celebrities have expanded our awareness and understanding of transgender people, while their artistry has encouraged more transgender people to express themselves publicly, creating stronger transgender communities.
- **Universal Value:** Faith in love and trusting each other's feelings. **Transvaluations:** Religious/Aesthetic. We have faith in loving and caring for one another, as we trust one another's feelings as real and good. **Possible Problematic:** Church teachings can be dogmatic/static, particularly if God's values, being based on an other-worldly love and the perfect being, is beyond our ability to emulate. **Transvalued**

Solution: Acceptance by faith institutions that individuals feel loving and caring and are connected to others with a myriad of feeling modes, in a multiplicity of situations. We need to engage with inter-faith dialogues and conversations amongst religious and transgender people.

- **Universal Value:** Truthfulness is a matter of creating new values, as we share feelings. **Transvaluations:** Aesthetic/Factual/Ethical/Religious. Understanding and caring for oneself is a generous and unselfish approach, as we enrich our experiences. Truthfulness is assuming a positive attitude to one's feelings, as a matter of making better and more expansive our situations and experiences, and a matter of learning protreptic practices, rather than one-sided knowledge of static facts. **Possible Problematic:** Revealing our true human nature as different than our birth sex is often understood as dishonest and malicious to a well-organized society. **Transvalued Solution:** Valuing the time and habits by which we self-reflect and talk to one another, so to take on board our fullest sense of our experiences, involving a grand diversity of goals and spiritual beliefs. Our means for helping and caring for transgender people involves learning from them, as we value personal gender decisions and new shared values.
- **Universal Value:** Family/Community experiences are shared widely and inclusively, therefore creating greater possibilities for happiness and greater flexibility in terms of change. **Transvaluation:** Ethical/Aesthetic. **Possible Problematic:** Society often allows us to centralize power in terms of one person or an organization's view of what is right and/or good. Contemporarily family/institutional power is therefore felt and understood as hierarchical and masculinized. **Transvalued Solution:** Patriarchy can be dissolved, as we work to free ourselves and others of feelings of loss, isolation, and lack of purpose. Democratic expressions and practices, such as affording everyone opportunity to follow our individual purposes, allow us to balance our feelings of loss with our meaningful pursuits, as we work to solve our individual and collective problems.
- **Universal Value:** Freedom of gender preference. **Transvaluation:** Religious/Ethical/Aesthetic/Artistic/Factual: Ethical imperatives need to include our reflections on our sexual and gendered habits. Sex is a human practice, as we share one another's feelings and experiences, while knowing and respecting others as valued persons. Gender is a matter of our individual feelings/values and practical choices. **Possible Problematic:** How do we create our most life affirming presence and comfort-giving habits, as we express transgender identities and values personally and publicly. **Transvalued Solution:** We will benefit by looking at values as transformative practices; as expressive of our most expansive, life enhancing, creative feelings, while realizing that our personal and shared feelings offer us positive progressive approaches to problems. We can make artistic symbols and our factual science more curiously oriented and expressive of transgender people's values. Politically we can engage by assisting and supporting transgender people, while opposing discrimination and oppression.

Essential values are ingenious tools, helpful to us by way of our value making processes. By developing our personal identities and community personhood, we transvalue through our feelings, across the fields of our human endeavors. After analysis we are left with the task of putting to use our values choices, as we can continue to feel the possibilities of new emergent values. So, we can look more closely at how we might employ our analysis of value-making in terms of transgender values to better our lives?

Transgender Values, Patriarchy, and the Catholic Church

Contemporarily, we find ourselves confronted with narcissistic and nationalistic tactics by several governmental and military leaders and communities around the world, instead of leaning towards people's power and individual liberties. Authoritative states resort to controlling individual's freedoms, which includes abuse of transgender people, so that their leaders retain ultimate power. So, we can ask, what might coalesce our efforts on value solutions, which will be embodied with imperatives and practices of liberty and justice. We have compared values in terms of transvaluations, looking to intersected feeling modes to find imperatives. Now we can look to such analysis to solve current cultural and political conflicts.⁴⁶

Locke focused his axiology, analyzing personal and publicly oriented feeling/values, while deflating authoritarianism. Writing about transvaluation and value pluralism Locke reveals his purpose regarding democratic values,

And so, the viewpoint, equips us not only to tolerate difference but enables us to bridge divergence by recognizing commonality wherever present. In social practice this is no scholastic virtue: it has high practical consequences for democratic living, since it puts the premium upon equivalence not upon identity, calls for co-operation rather

than for conformity and promotes reciprocity instead of factional antagonism. Authoritarianism, dogmatism, and bigotry just cannot take root and grow in such intellectual soil."⁴⁷

So, although we have discerned some answers here about our trust in our self-worth and our social values, I still need to grapple with the central question concerning truthfulness and democratic values. Are our values of parity, tolerance, and reciprocity able to be embodied with our democratic actions when our trust in our creative expressiveness, our personal relationships, our social progress are over-powered by people who hold onto patriarchal power? To answer, we look to a political value mode which Locke might have introduced if he would have foreseen the persistence of racism, sexism, homophobia, and anti-genderism in the world today. Although many people might surmise that the political is but a coalescence of other modes, I take on board a political feeling mode, in that when addressing specific problems, we need detailed analysis of our experiences. So, we will want to understand how democratic political values facilitate processes of transvaluation, so we can realize our shared value imperatives.

- **Political Feeling Mode: Feeling Reference:** Consensus, Equivalence **Practice:** Democratic Engagement/ Citizenry/Cultural Openness **Value Predicate:** Fair-Unfair/Justice-Injustice **Polarity:** Liberty-Meliorism/Authoritarian Commandership-Totalitarian Institutions

Answers come to mind, as we reflect on the parameters of such a feeling mode. Feeling ourselves connected to values via self-awareness, our purposiveness in terms of our communities, rather than an orientation whereas we

⁴⁶ Locke's views on cultural relativism provides us with added insight: "Cultural relativism, to my mind, is the culminating phase of relativistic philosophy, and it is bound to have a greater influence than any other phase of relativism upon our conception and practice of values. See Locke, "Values and Imperatives", *The Philosophy of Alain Locke*, p. 49

⁴⁷ Locke writes, "It has more chances thus of becoming habitual. Most importantly perhaps, it breaks down the worship of the form _ that dangerous identification of the symbol with the value, which is the prime psychological root of the fallacies and errors we have been discussing. We might pose it as the acid text for an enlightened value loyalty that it is able to distinguish between the symbol and form of its loyalty and the essence of objective of that loyalty. Such critical insight, for example, would recognize a real basic similarity or functional equivalence in other values, even when cloaked in considerable superficial difference. Nor, on the other hand, would it credit any merely superficial conformity with real loyalty." Locke, "Pluralism and Intellectual Democracy", *The Philosophy of Alain Locke*, p. 60. "

give over such awareness to dictatorial or unreflective dogmatic commands, is made paramount. Recalling our topic, as we know ourselves in terms of our felt gender, our realization of the opening of socially progressive possibilities, as we find our similarities to other people in terms of values, inspiring and perpetuating our democratic prowess.⁴⁸ With such inclusivity in mind, we can thereby hold on to creative and fruitful experiences as cultural. Surely a political/cultural transvaluation in terms of transgender understanding is needed if we are to solve current social problems.

Language stands sentinel to such a cultural shift. Nomenclature is highlighted by the political/culture value wars between gender and anti-gender theorists. 'Gender' denotes personal preference in terms of social roles formed around male and female sexuality, allowing for our personal choices of identity. Pro-gender activists work across value modes to ensure a new emergent personal/political value, wanting us to be able to choose how we are identified in terms of he, she, us, ours, they, theirs, etc.. With our current democratic personal and social practices, which include same sex marriage and more solitary independent lifestyles, we can think of how our long-standing by-gender social roles have become inadequate. As an example of how gender choice can be more embodied in our democratic lives, we can all choose whether or how to change our names in matrimony, as we decide how to honor our parental lineages. So why shouldn't we be able to change how we identify ourselves

in terms of other kinds of situations, such as our gender? Possibly, we can ask, is it because such changes upset our overarching patriarchal approach to society.

In relation to transgender persons, political activism, and cultural relativism, we can look towards how the transgender and feminist communities have become respectful of each other's values. Feminist philosophies are sometimes thought of as consistent with transgender values as each emphasizes equivalence regarding people's personal feelings and public interrelationships. The LGBTQ+ community looks towards usurping hurtful binary gender identity mandates, and feminists hope to eliminate superiority of male gender, so the two groups value sexual social parity. Our identities are consummated by values of gender parity and our experiences are expanded.

In contrast, anti-gender advocates often feel that their thinking empowers women, as they conceive their roles as activists as proving of their political power. They uphold a tenet of the "natural family", finding that family should only be formed by a man and woman, and each should support one another. Yet, male sexual superiority if not supposed as de facto, is reinforced by social issues supported by anti-gender advocates such traditional work roles for women and men. However, some feminists find that by abolishing gender, anti-gender women limit values, because an individual's reliance on their sexuality, rather than their free will, is prioritized.⁴⁹ People around the world who identify as part of a 'Pro Family Movement' advocate for a status quo assuring women importance, yet there are only secondary roles in terms of personal and public affairs. Anti-gender activists fight to hold on to sexualized power and their bigender roles which are strong because they are supported by even more controlling male cohorts.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Cultural relativism allows us to concede our vastly different value systems, while focusing on coming together in terms of our mutual feelings for benefitting one another. Josiah Royce influenced Locke's conception of cultural relativism with a concept of 'loyalty to loyalty'. Locke writes, "Loyalty to loyalty transposed to all the fundamental value orders would then have meant, reverence for reverence, tolerance between moral systems, reciprocity in art, and had so good a metaphysician been able to conceive it, relativism in philosophy." Royce and Locke agree that our common ends are value oriented, being embedded in our aims and means, as we act together with loyalty, tolerance, and caring for our communities. An example we can discern, is when we strive for our freedoms recognizing more and more how we value our commitments to assure other people of their freedom and liberty. See Locke, "Values and Imperatives", *The Philosophy of Alain Locke*, p. 49.

⁴⁹ See the mission values, and pertinent information, of two contrasting organizations: International Organization for the Family: <https://profam.org/>, Accessed October 10, 2022. Southern Poverty Law Center, "World Congress of Families" <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/group/world-congress-families>, Accessed October 10, 2022.

⁵⁰ In contrast, Lorena Sosa advocates for stronger international

Feminists Carol Gilligan and Naomi Snider, in their book, *Why Does Patriarchy Persist?* (2018), highlight that our feelings, attitudes, and intelligence is value oriented. Values must change as we change the cyclical powers of patriarchal repression. Psychologically when our reasoning and emotions are separated, especially when we are involved with power struggles that are based on reasoning as a superior male trait, personal and social cycles of protest, loss, despair and ultimately detachment, are enabled.⁵¹ Such a cycle takes our us time and effort, which we could use pursuing our valuation analysis and bettering our practices.

They go on to explain how fixed male and female gender roles reinforce patriarchal power, basically because with binary orientations we are not able to express ourselves with our singular voices. The cycle of loss moves us from protest about our oppression, to losing our relationships because of our outspokenness and unhappiness, to feelings of loss and even despair.⁵² The next pos-

support for eliminating violence against women and transgender people because of unequal gendered power relations. She understands anti-gender movements as eroding our universal human rights and the foundations of democracy because of the harmful power relations between what anti-gendered people feel are “natural” differences between men and women. Anti-gender activists often transvalue their political concerns to religious beliefs. Neo-liberal global order has produced insecurity and unfairness in terms of worker security, individual voice as a democratic tool, and a strong middle class. See Lorena Sosa, *Journal of Women’s History: Fundamentalism and the Family: Gender, Culture, and the American Pro-family Movement* Margaret Lamberts Bendroth, *Journal of Women’s History* Johns Hopkins University Press, Volume 10, Number 4, Winter 1999, pp. 35-54.

⁵¹ See Carol Gilligan and Naomi Snider, *Why Does Patriarchy Persist?*, Cambridge, U.K., Polity Press, 2018. See p. 72. “The gender binary, by splitting reason (masculine), along with mind and thought, from emotion and feelings (feminine), interrupts what Damasio, LeDoux, and other neuroscientists have shown to be the vital connections between our thoughts and our emotions _ connections that , in the absence of trauma, are neurologically set. It is trauma, not development, that separates reason from emotion, as Damasio explains in his book *Descartes’s Error* . What had been taken as the sine qua non of rationality (reason unsullied by emotion), was revealed instead to be a manifestation of injury.” Also see p. 73, “Thus patriarchy with its gender binary and hierarchy was considered to be part of the natural order of things, until the studies of girl’s resistance. What previously had been described as girls’ problems with separation appeared, upon closer inspection, to be problem girls were having with a patriarchal culture that was forcing them to silence an honest voice as the price for having “relationships.”

⁵² Gilligan and Snider write, “This loss of relationship has been rationalized, justified as a necessary sacrifice or a cost of grow-

sible turn in the cycle of effects of persistent patriarchal gender roles is that our communities which can become vehicles for political truth, “turns into the protest of a political resistance.”

We can relate Gilligan’s and Snider’s analysis to Locke’s axiology. As we struggle under the strain of failed relationships which have been built on patriarchal power dynamics, we can become detached from caring relationships in general, and sometimes authoritative in our approaches to others. We lose touch with our feelings made and reinforced through our fullest participation with varied experiences or other people’s views. We then can become detached from truthfulness and our value making in general, and at risk of becoming anarchistic in terms of not wanting to participate with any essential and/or progressive values.⁵³

We can move from feminist views in relation to gender to consider the backlash from political activists who respond with the burden of patriarchal oppression in terms of anti-gender theory. Contemporarily people with the anti-gender movement are mobilized politically, religiously, and culturally against what they are convinced is the erasure of an orderly, traditionally moral society.⁵⁴

ing up. It has been spoken of as a move from dependence to independence, from rudeness to politeness and consideration. But these moves to comply with the gender codes of patriarchy are met with resistance because with the compromise of our relational intelligence we lose the relationships that we actually need and want, relationships which have now been shown in a myriad of studies to be associated with health, longevity, and even the absence of math anxiety.” Gilligan and Snider, *Why Does Patriarchy Persist?*, P. 76

⁵³ Gilligan and Snider write, “A healthy resistance to losing connection, however brings children into conflict with the forces invested in boys’ willingness to sacrifice relationships and girls becoming compliant or selfless. The protest of a healthy resistance then turns into the protest of a political resistance, which in the absence of resonance or in the face of threat or danger comes under pressure to become a psychological resistance, that is, a reluctance to know what one knows, which then paves the way for the move from despair to detachment.” See Gilligan and Snider, *Why Does the Patriarchy Persist?*, p. 76.

⁵⁴ Leimgruber explains such intersectionality, “The anti-feminist attitudes of right-wing populists correspond to a broad-based patriarchal system that uses misogynous forms of expression (see Manne 2018). Even if extreme political positions are not shared by the majority of the population, anti-feminism and anti-gender discourses are widespread. Biologicistic views on how women (and men) supposedly tick are widely accepted without much contradiction. Kate Manne (Manne 2018) diagnoses a broad misogynous

The anti-gender movement is politically focused on making laws protecting the restrictive 'natural' rights of those who feel either male or female sexed. They promote distinctly binary sexed marriage, sexualized public facilities, male/female child rearing, male/female public health services, and binary sexed educational directives and influences in education and the arts. Yet there are contradictions in their values, for example the anti-gender community thinks of a scientific consensus in terms of genetic female and male difference, yet they feel opposed to scientific therapies of hormone therapies for transgender people who want to take up their part, as a preferred gender, in community life. Such value contradictions show a failure of transvaluation, and a lack of understanding of essential value imperatives such as freedom of expression and parity of opportunities.

The scientific contradiction in anti-gender values is often accompanied by contradictions in terms of religious values, which are strong motivators for many anti-gender affiliates.⁵⁵ At this point, we could investigate the hierarchy of the Catholic Church, and Christian Right groups, Orthodox Jewish groups and Moslem groups who are institutionally and personally attached to patriarchal authority, but I am unable to offer a complete picture of the values of such groups at this time.⁵⁶ So, because of brevity we will look at the Catholic Church's official views,

attitude towards women, which becomes especially apparent when they reject patriarchal claims. The danger here is that the propagandistic discourse on "gender ideology" or "gender dictatorship" makes right-wing populism, with its dangerous mechanisms and hatred towards minorities, connectable on a broad scale." See Ute Leimgruber, 2020. "Hostility toward Gender in Catholic and Political Right-Wing Movements" *Religions* 11, no. 6: 301. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel11060301>.

⁵⁵ See fact sheets, for an overview of anti-gender political and religious organizations in the United States and internationally. Anick Druelle under the supervision of Marie-Andrée Roy, Denise Couture and Anita Caron, "Right-Wing Anti-Feminist Groups", *Institut de recherches et d'études féministes Université du Québec à Montréal*, May 2000 Global Policy Forum <https://archive.globalpolicy.org/ngos/ngo-un/gen/2000/druelle.htm#f2>, Accessed October 10, 2022.

⁵⁶ I am not wanting to exclude consideration of the values of other groups such as Orthodox Jewish groups and Moslem groups who are, and are not, institutionally, and personally attached to patriarchal authority, but I am unable to offer a complete picture of the values of such groups at this time.

as they remain at the forefront of guiding religious value modes in relation to the gender/anti-gender conflict.⁵⁷

Conservative Catholics and other Christian conservative groups around the world, have taken up an anti-gender banner, claiming the sanctity of the human form as bound to either male and female sexuality. They are officially offended by "gender ideology". Yet, many Catholics have found other viewpoints, which offer more fulfilling and progressive values.

Ute Leimgruber has written on religious, social, and political relationships as being tied to conservatives' claims on the "true values" God intended. Such values are self-evident and undeniable to the anti-gender activists. Their common-sense, naturalist approach to human identity implies thinking of sexuality as a first principle. Accordingly, we are all born in God's image but imperfectly as we are sexually binary. Humanity has been divinely designed; in that we use our free wills to follow God's divine plan. For anti-gender believers, we understand God's creation and humanity's role by adhering (making the right and only choice) to binary sexual values, such as exclusively male and female marriage and child rearing, and undeniable support for reasoned decisions about gender, such as laws and authoritative proclamations.⁵⁸ Leimgruber finds these values are tied

⁵⁷ Leimgruber writes, "With regard to family policy, decades of creating images of an enemy have shown success. Christian and secular groups have been able to introduce their ideological discourses into the field of family and gender politics at both a national and EU level. As shown by David Paternotte, "the development of gender studies as well as the concept of gender itself—that our social expectations based on biological sex are not innate but historically and socially contingent—and its inclusion in school programs have become the targets of conservative groups in France, Italy, Spain, Poland and Lithuania, provoking public debates and parliamentary discussions. These events are not disconnected moments of resistance, and scholars have emphasized the constant presence of the Catholic Church. The national church hierarchy is sometimes leading the mobilization (. . .). More crucially, (. . .) these events are also connected on an ideological level. They must be regarded as national manifestations of a transnational mobilization against what is called 'gender ideology'" (Paternotte 2014, p. 2)." Ute Leimgruber. 2020. "Hostility toward Gender in Catholic and Political Right-Wing Movements" *Religions* 11, no. 6: 301. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel11060301>.

⁵⁸ Leimgruber, Ute. 2020. "Hostility toward Gender in Catholic and Political Right-Wing Movements". "The right-catholic biblical "naturalness" relies on the determinism of bipolarity and gender

to efforts to strengthen global patriarchal, authoritative, totalitarian power dynamics, thereby manifesting in prejudices, such as anti-immigration, racism, and sexism.

A complete analysis (including theological understandings) of the Catholic Church's institutional problems of patriarchy is beyond the purview of our current discussion, yet we can discern how transvaluations of essential values help us solve this problem for the Church, its practitioners, and the public at large.

I can here offer a brief mention of an interpretation of Catholic metaphysics by Peter J Cataldo, aligning medical values with spiritual/moral values of human dignity, in respect to transgender people's struggle for health care, respect, and social justice. While not conceding the Church's ontological position, that sex is an integral act of God's creation of human persons, Cataldo determines there is a concept of gender in accordance with Catholic theology, as the factors which are embodied in our gender choices, are human conditions.⁵⁹

complementarity—and uses it as a fact to campaign against the denaturalization of the traditional gender order and the putative representatives of this position. As Juliane Lang observes, “designs of masculinity/ies and femininity/ies are functional for the internal cohesion of the community. (...) Gender becomes the central identity-creating category” (Lang 2017a, p. 169). In the Catholic Church, large parts of the conservative systematic theology are bound to the binary gender concept, so that gender studies, as well as political instruments, such as gender mainstreaming, are denounced as main opponents of the “true” or “natural” order. Gender has become—in the words of Adorno, who speaks with regard to communism—“a frightening slogan, [. . .] detached from any knowledge of the issue” (Adorno 2019, p. 31).” As well Leimgruber writes, “While the Catholic Church has been fighting against “gender ideology” since 1995, the extreme right has been following these themes in Germany since the 2000s (Lang 2017a, p. 167). Catholic, as well as secular, right-wing groups represent simplistic nature–culture arguments to justify their own homogenous and traditionalist male-dominated world views and to defend their naturalistic anthropology and the “true Catholic values”. These simplifications lead to a hermeneutic suspicion towards the liberal or gender-friendly sciences (Striet 2019, p. 22).”

⁵⁹Peter J. Cataldo, “Catholic Teaching on the Human Person and Gender Dysphoria”, Catholic Health Association of the United States, Summer 2019, chausa.org/hceusa. Accessed October 10, 2022. Cataldo writes, “The biological, psychological, or social factors that contribute to a person's sense of gender should not be conflated with the ontological reality of God's creative act. That God creates the individual human person as either male or female *qua* ontological reality is not incompatible with that same individual having a different sense of gender *qua* biological, psychological, or social factors nor with the fact that perhaps only five to ten percent of people fall between the two typical phenotypic boundaries of male and female.”

He goes on to explain Pope Francis' views,

Scientific evidence indicates that a person's sense of gender could be influenced by multiple biological and social factors. Such factors include genetic, epigenetic, neuroanatomical, and endocrine causes, fetal development, and both positive and negative social experiences.

Cataldo tells us, Pope Francis recognizes that “masculinity and femininity are not rigid categories. Cataldo concludes his study by referencing Pope Francis' attention to essential values of the Gospel; charity, love, and free will.⁶⁰ These are values imperatives we can reflect on to understand more about our choices, in terms of the complexities of our lives. Supporting the predicates of our discussion, Cataldo makes clear transvaluations of value choices throughout the fields of science, religion, morals, and aesthetics. We can choose to value our decisions on gender preference, thinking about how best to love and care for ourselves and others, and thereby avoiding patriarchal demands.

Contemporarily there are Jesuit priests, varied religious leaders, and practitioners joining their voices and actions with transgender communities. They are standing up for transgender rights in respect to health care and job opportunities, as well as social justice in terms of abolishing abuse and discrimination. Religious News Service, an online reporting service reported in March 2021,

In a statement provided to Religion News Service, Archbishop John Wester of Santa Fe, N.M., Bishop John Stowe of Lexington, Ky., and the Association of U.S. Catholic Priests as well as the presidents of two Jesuit organizations declared that “We, Bishops, religious and lay leaders of the Roman Catholic Church join with the Human Rights

⁶⁰ Cataldo, “Catholic Teaching on the Human Person and Gender Dysphoria”, “When approaching the issue of caring for persons with gender dysphoria in Catholic health care we do well to apply the teaching of Pope Francis. He taught that we should “avoid a cold bureaucratic morality in dealing with more sensitive issues . . . for although it is quite true that concern must be shown for the integrity of the Church's moral teaching, special care should always be shown to emphasize and encourage the highest and most central values of the Gospel, particularly the primacy of charity as a response to the completely gratuitous offer of God's love.”

Campaign in calling for an end to the epidemic of violence against transgender individuals.⁶¹

A commitment to essential values by the Catholic Church to respect the dignity of human life is made clear, by the group,

The statement, which cites the words of St. John Paul II, notes that the Catechism of the Catholic Church insists “every sign of unjust discrimination” against LGBTQ people “should be avoided” and condemns violent acts perpetrated against transgender people in recent years that have been documented by HRC.⁶²

Some who feel strongly about religious values go further to usurp patriarchy in terms of institutional exclusivity, as well as advocating for values of the LGBTQ+ community. The ECC is an independent Catholic church whose members strive to develop religious values and include more people in the valuation process by accepting the LGBTQ+ community. Inclusivity is an essential political value when diminishing patriarchal values, in that by realizing that our fullness of experience includes others we continue to make our own free choices to do so, rather than merely giving or taking orders.

Locke wrote passionately about his belief of God’s mercy for all people, no matter their beliefs or material circumstances. He did not think of religion as a failed institution in respect to science or secular ethics, instead we are able to transvalue religious values expanding our secular values, and vice versa. In a brief address to a group gathered to discuss racial tensions at the end of World War II, Locke searched for a more expansive understanding of socio-political values, as he pointed out our abilities to evolve politically, morally, and spiritually.

Loyalty to corporate unity is a necessary loyalty to something larger than the individual in order

to unite men. However, the traditional ideas and values associated with human group loyalties are now hopelessly inadequate as a foundation for a larger society and impose limitations on a more comprehensive human society. In the transformation of these values we need something bigger and more understanding.⁶³

Rejecting religious and sectarian fundamentalism, Locke calls on our abilities to analyze in terms of both “realism and idealism”. We can thereby find ever new conditions for our values to inspire new ways to share and act with varied communities. In terms of transgender values we should look toward embracing the fluidity and inherent value of both sexuality and gender.

With deeper understanding in terms of truthfulness and values we can relate Locke’s ideas of cultural pluralism to transgender values, but this topic deserves analysis beyond the scope of this paper.⁶⁴ However, we can sum up the ideas discussed here, which will help us make more peaceful democratic value decisions. Firstly, we use our free wills and analysis to choose ameliorative value preferences, unlike definite moral judgments. Secondly, we analyze our own values considering our participation with our communities, as sensitive value makers. Our values are practically oriented, and we can expand our understanding of changing circumstances and other people’s view by applying our values to many fields of human endeavor. And finally, we can guide our value decisions by discerning essential imperatives, as our values are undoubtedly useful when ensuring everyone’s life, liberty and pursuit of happiness.

Democratically directing our values with common essential imperatives, we can embolden ourselves by acting with tolerance and reciprocity, amidst changing times and shifting attitudes. In terms of the value conflict discussed, the Catholic Church and our governments must

⁶¹ Jake Jenkins, “Catholic leaders join LGBTQ group to condemn discrimination against transgender people.” Religious News Service, March 31, 2021, <https://religionnews.com/2021/03/31/catholic-leaders-join-lgbtq-group-to-condemn-discrimination-against-transgender-people/>. Accessed October 10, 2022.

⁶² Ibid. Jenkin writes, “It is our Catholic duty to affirm the dignity of transgender people and to defend them from harm,” the statement reads Here put the info about the Pope making clear that the church’s position is the there is male and female....”

⁶³ Locke, “Moral Imperatives for World Order”, *The Philosophy of Alain Locke: Harlem Renaissance and Beyond*, p. 151.

⁶⁴ For a fuller discussion of the relationship between science and value making in terms of cultural pluralism and value reciprocity, see Farinas, *Classical American Philosophy: Poiesis in Public*, “Science and Art Moon-lit by Values”, p. 154.

protect transgender people, considering the ongoing validity of essential values for all people and all cultures, namely human dignity, charity, and respect. What we cannot accept is static values, such as not accepting people's varied approaches to sexuality, in that such values have become outmoded by our ongoing expansiveness of our value-oriented experiences.

As we collectively hesitate at the precipice of the Twenty-First Century, loss of trust in our personal and public relationships, cruel wars, social and personal violence, and fear of a lack of natural and human resources, seems to obscure our leap of faith into a promising, progressively more moral and truthful future. Yet through value analysis, we can express with urgency our feelings of truthfulness, about ourselves as well as others, with a sense we can achieve lasting social change.

Selected Works Cited

- Cataldo, Peter J. "Catholic Teaching on the Human Person and Gender Dysphoria." Catholic Health Association of the United States, Summer 2019, chausa.org/hceusa. Accessed October 10, 2022.
- Collins, Christopher. "Family Values and Same-Sex Marriage: Reconciliation via Alain Locke's Value Theory." *Philosophy in the Contemporary World*, Volume 16, Issue 1, Spring 2009, pp. 55-65. Accessed October 10, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.5840/pcw20091615>.
- Farinas, Rebecca, *Classical American Philosophy: Poiesis in Public*, Bloomsbury, London, 2021.
- Dewey, John. *Art as Experience*. Penquin Books Ltd, London, 1934.
- Carol Gilligan and Naomi Snider, *Why Does Patriarchy Persist?*, Cambridge, U.K., Polity Press, 2018.
- Jake Jenkins, "Catholic leaders join LGBTQ group to condemn discrimination against transgender people." Religious News Service, March 31, 2021, <https://religionnews.com/2021/03/31/catholic-leaders-join-lgbtq-group-to-condemn-discrimination-against-transgender-people/>. Accessed October 10, 2022.
- Leimgruber, Ute. 2020. "Hostility toward Gender in Catholic and Political Right-Wing Movements" *Religions* 11, no. 6: 301. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel11060301>.
- Locke, Alain. *The Philosophy of Alain Locke, Harlem Renaissance and Beyond*, "A Functional View of Value Ultimates", edited by Leonard Harris. Temple University Press, 1989.
- McGregor, Sue L. T. "Transdisciplinary Axiology: To Be or Not to Be?" *Integral Leadership Review*, 2011-08-01 12:08:53, Accessed October 10, 2022.
- Nicolescu, B.. *Transdisciplinarity: Theory and Practice*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, 2005.
- Shusterman, Richard. "From Natural Roots to Cultural Radicalism ." *Surface and Depth: Dialectics of Criticism and Culture*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press. 2002.
- Stewart, Jeffrey C.. *The New Negro: The Life of Alain Locke*, Oxford University Press: N.Y, N.Y.. 2018
- Williams, N W. "Absolutism, Relativism and Anarchy: Alain Locke and William James on Value Pluralism. *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, Vol. 53, No. 3 (Summer 2017). Indiana University Press.
- Sosa, Lorena. "Beyond gender equality? Anti-gender campaigns and the erosion of human rights and democracy." *Netherlands Quarterly of Human Rights* 2021, Vol. 39(1) 3–10 2021, pp. 33-54, Universiteit Utrecht, Utrecht, the Netherlands. sagepub.com/journals-permissions DOI: 10.1177/0924051921996697 journals.sagepub.com/home/nqh.

MORAL PROGRESS: CONVERSATION OR CONFLICT? ON PHILIP KITCHER, KENNETH ARROW, AND JOHN DEWEY

Frederic R. Kellogg

Universidade Federal de Pernambuco The George

Washington University

frederickellogg@gmail.com

ABSTRACT: The economist Kenneth Arrow, in *Social Choice and Individual Values* (1951), famously proved that a society of diverse preferences can only be ordered by dictatorship. Unless diverse preferences can adjust, electoral democracy cannot govern. Philip Kitcher, in *Moral Progress* (2021), emphasizes the importance for moral progress of sympathetic understanding of others through “ideal” conversation. This paper contends that conversation alone is inadequate for resolution of conflicts in a democracy. Conflict is accompanied by discourse, but preferences are grounded in habits. Social habits, and shared patterns of conduct, resist adjustment in response to discourse alone. Yet habits and preferences demonstrably adjust in the process of conflict resolution, potentially resolving Arrow’s impossibility problem. The paper advances a pragmatic theory of preference conflict distinct from the Marxist model of power-oriented class or group conflict. Pragmatic conflict is not strictly constituted of group power struggles, but of aggregated preferences, a more common, indeed endemic, formation and interaction of opposing opinions and beliefs in response to multiple shared problems. Preference conflict theory illuminates the boundary between inquiry and violence in the polarization of aggregated opposing interests. It is open to a fluid Deweyan transformation, in the continuum of inquiry, through which specific problems can be democratically recognized, defined, and resolved by incremental group preference adjustment, as discrete problems are identified and remedial practices are adopted through stakeholder input, enforceable through law.

Introduction

This essay claims that pragmatic naturalism, the insight radically connecting philosophy to natural life that Charles S. Peirce articulated in his 1877 essay “The Fixation of Belief,” must recognize an agonistic aspect of inquiry: an aspect of empiricism grounded in extended dispute and conflict, rather than immediate aggregative induction. Peirce’s progression from doubt to belief is driven by specific conflicts and their precarious resolution. Conflict drives the acquisition of information and the need for adjustment of habits and beliefs. Where resolution is ade-

quately representative of all relevant interests, pragmatic conflict serves as a dialogical motivator and an unavoidable avenue toward justified order. Pragmatic conflict can be distinguished from the violence-prone Marxist model as a *discovery* process and an *adjustment* process. This view is supported by John Dewey’s 1927 *The Public and its Problems*, 1938 *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry*, and 1932 Dewey and Tufts *Ethics*. It is developed below in response to Kenneth Arrow’s 1951 *Social Choice and Individual Values*, and Philip Kitcher’s *Moral Progress* (2021).

I. KITCHER

“They didn’t give us the vote. We took it.”

So says a narrator in the recent PBS documentary about the relentless opposition overcome by sheer persistence in the struggle for female suffrage. In *Moral Progress* (2021, the 2019 Munich Lectures with comments), Philip Kitcher draws on John Dewey to develop a pragmatic naturalist approach to moral philosophy, following his *The Ethical Project* (2011). He cites three historical examples of moral progress, the abolition of slavery, expanded opportunity for women, and acceptance of same-gender relationships, to develop a method of moral inquiry.

How might that method reflect the striving, and fierce conflict, of the suffragist movement, the Stonewall riot, the American Civil War? Kitcher’s commentators in *Moral Progress* raise this question, one writing “The history of much moral progress . . . has not been fundamentally a history of conversation at all, but a history of power: the wielding of power by the dominant against the oppressed, and the eventual seizing of that power, or some small part of that power, by the dominated.” But notwithstanding the narrator’s claim about *taking* women’s suffrage, this model of conflict, deriving from Karl Marx and Max Weber, does not neatly fit the multiple domestic conflicts of the past, or especially of the present.

Moral Progress follows Kitcher’s tightly argued and sweeping genealogical history in *The Ethical Project*,

which focused on the three historic examples. This essay addresses the methodological issue—what lessons are implied by this history—and on the recent problem of national and global polarization that Kitcher has yet to address. In the United States, that now includes the reversal in June 2022 of *Roe v. Wade*, a gathering conservative antipathy towards same gender relations, a failure adequately to respond to gun violence even against young children, negative attitudes toward underlying differences of race and national origin, and a turn toward authoritarianism in one of the two major political parties.

The economist Kenneth Arrow, in *Social Choice and Individual Values* (1951), famously showed that a society of diverse preferences can only be ordered by dictatorship. Unless diverse preferences can adjust, electoral democracy cannot govern. Arrow's thesis provides compelling reason for an account of progress that explains how a society of multiple diverse preferences can adjust to resolve urgent controversies. His thesis is the subject of part II. Part III describes how John Dewey's theory of democracy incorporates a pragmatic approach to preference conflict and its resolution, through the transformative continuum of inquiry into discrete problems.

Moral progress becomes harder to define in a struggle among radically opposing—and shifting—views. Kitcher (with Dewey) rightly rejects the "Discovery View" that it consists in the finding of mind-independent moral truths. In his alternative account, individuals and societies make moral progress as they amend their practices to identify problematic situations. Ultimately, they overcome moral problems through conversation. In emphasizing the need for sympathetic understanding of others through 'ideal' conversation, he echoes ideas developed by Kant, Rawls and Habermas, while insisting that his methodology, unlike ideal theory, is intended for use by real people in the real world.¹

It is unfortunate that this discussion has come to rely

on just two opposing versions of 'real people' naturalism. One is the model of discourse and rational deliberation, the other of raw power conflicts among opposing groups. The latter model, deriving from Marx and Weber (since modified by Mouffe, Laclau and others, 2001) is unclear on how resolutions are effectively 'seized' by the powerless. Neither model holds realistic prospects for resolving the multiple disputes and problems driving global polarization. Neither ideal conversation nor the eventual reallocating of power (nor Mouffe's hegemony-centered 'agonistic democracy') provide an explanatory avenue for the actual adjustment of resistant individual preferences.

The phenomenon of interest here is the potential for a Deweyan *transformation* of presumed firm preferences in the resolution of often extended conflicts. Conflict is accompanied by discourse, which Marxists tend to ignore, but preferences are grounded in habits, which discourse theory underestimates. Can shared habits change? Social habits, or shared patterns of conduct, resist adjustment in response to discourse alone. Yet habits and preferences *do* demonstrably adjust in the process of conflict resolution. The very definition of a problem is adaptable, and the terms of debate can and will change over time.

Kitcher attributes enormous, indeed plenary, agency to ideal conversation. He sees progressive changes of the past as unnecessarily slow and unsteady—moral progress could have been faster and more thorough, had a methodology been applied called "democratic contractualism," outlined in 11 steps.² When a situation is de-

²1. A situation is *prima facie* morally problematic if there is some individual or group of individuals who resent the fact that the accepted moral framework permits it.

2. If a situation is *prima facie* problematic, and if its problematic status is urgent, it should initiate moral inquiry.

3. Properly pursued moral inquiry initiated by a *prima facie* problematic situation consists in an ideal conversation appropriate to that situation.

4. If a challenge is brought to members of a particular group, then it counts as urgent just in case a fully inclusive, optimally informed deliberation among representatives of the different perspectives within the group, committed to presumptive sympathy with the challengers, would endorse that challenge as one of the urgent candidates for moral inquiry.

5. A group's moral inquiries into challenges are justified just in

¹ Remarks reported in conversation with Julia Herman of the philosophy blog 'Justice Everywhere,' on October 13, 2019.

defined as morally problematic, moral inquiry proceeds in a manner designed to include all stakeholders to proceed toward inclusive resolution. Kitcher's methodology includes measures to seek a joint "justified acceptance of a situation as problematic." It includes periodic reviews of the status quo independent of actual complaints of or perceptions of a problem. Philosophers play a role in assuring that such questioning of the status quo is undertaken on a regular basis.

The aim of naturalism is toward the actual, not the ideal. The suffragists were not invited to 'converse,' but Kitcher counts that as a correctable error. Insofar as their path was an exchange of views, it was pushing relentlessly against opposing habits and beliefs. Some men argued women were too delicate for such a change: "It is unwise to risk the good we already have for the evil which may occur." When Virginia Louise Minor's registration to vote

in St. Louis in 1872 was rejected, she appealed to the Supreme Court. Nine male justices declined to interpret the 14th Amendment's "all persons" to include women. An ensuing harsh exchange of views was carved from experience: Jane Addams, in a speech before the Chicago Political Equality League in 1897, declared "I am not one of those who believe – broadly speaking – that women are better than men. We have not wrecked railroads, nor corrupted legislatures, nor done many unholy things that men have done; but then we must remember that we have not had the chance."

As the 1918 flu spread among soldiers toward the end of World War I, women surged into the U.S. workforce, undercutting arguments that they were too fragile or mentally unfit. Unequal pay and working conditions galvanized their cause, ultimately succeeding not as a seizure of power but as a convergence of national preferences. On Aug. 18, 1920, the 19th Amendment, passed by Congress the previous June, was ratified by Tennessee, the final necessary state. National preferences had changed. Yet today, with *Roe* overturned, and as the Me-Too movement and counter-reaction demonstrates, the struggle for women's full equality is ongoing. Rather than a conflict between discrete groups for a share of power, the ongoing struggle is better explained as a further opposition and continuing conflict of preferences, habits, and beliefs.

Contemporary conflicts reflect opposing preferences that arise from a clash of views of the future. That there is robust opposition over the very idea of progress is newly evident; we are again in a period of ubiquitous conflict, and a period also of potential transformation. Conflict among opposing preferences is evident in problems large and small, and conflict can lead to adjustment of those preferences. Response to conflicts can promote social transformation, and operate as an ordering process outside of the formal public sphere.

Conflict can be a negative obstacle, but a potentially positive force where conversation fails to change prefer-

case (i) each of the challenges investigated belongs to the set of urgent candidates, and (ii) there is no challenge selected for investigation such that some challenge not selected is unanimously ranked as more urgent by the deliberation through which the urgency of challenges is measured.

6. A situation is justifiably taken to be problematic just in case a properly pursued moral inquiry initiated by that situation would generate the conclusion that it is indeed problematic.

7. An ideal conversation appropriate to a *prima facie* problematic situation is a discussion in which the perspectives of all the stakeholders with respect to that situation are represented, in which proposals for responding to the situation are only considered if they, and the judgments put forward in their support, are consistent with the best information available in that situation, and in which the participants are mutually engaged.

8. A proposal is a justified resolution of a problematic situation just in case the transition from the problematic situation to that proposed would be endorsed in an ideal conversation in which the perspectives of stakeholders with respect to both situations were represented.

9. A change in moral practice is progressive just in case it would be retained in an indefinitely proceeding sequence of justified resolutions.

10. Even in the absence of challenges, societies should periodically assess whether restrictions on the appropriateness of ideals of the self for some subgroups can be justified. As in other cases of moral inquiry, urgency is measured through attempts to estimate the suffering and confinement caused if the orthodox assumptions about appropriateness of ideals turned out to be unwarranted.

11. Any moral inquiry in which claims about the proper restrictions on ideals of the self are employed to support the view that the perspectives of the challengers should not be targets of sympathetic engagement should generate a secondary inquiry into the aptness of those ideals for people who are currently viewed as unsuited to adopting them. (Kitcher 2021:34f)

ences and habits. Take two quite different contemporary examples, the general polarization of domestic politics along party lines, and by way of contrast, the issue-specific dispute over medical assistance to a willing patient's death, or voluntary euthanasia. For many years the euthanasia issue was acutely problematic and ill-defined, until Dr. Jack Kevorkian devised a program to challenge the status quo, using a device that only a patient could activate. Thereafter occurred a period of engagement and reassessment of the complex array of medical, legal, family and other issues surrounding medically assisted death.

In transformative inquiry, an initial binary standoff is replaced by the comparison of multiple considerations. At Dr. Kevorkian's trial, the opposing arguments were whether a particular death was suicide or homicide—personal autonomy vs. the right to life. The opposing sides were galvanized by abstract ideological reasoning. Although the general issue is hardly settled for all opinion, compared to the struggle over medical assistance to abortion it has reached a stage of comparative stability. Public debate over assisted death continues, but has adapted to new criteria. This phenomenon of adjustment, what might be called "transformation of the reasons environment," requires more than ideal conversation. A critical question is how the process implicates democratic values, addressed below in part III.

Both of these examples are shared conflicts that have spanned years, and have already effected transformations in American society; and both continue to do so. While political polarization does not appear anywhere near resolution, assisted death has visibly gone from a more problematic stage to one of increasing resolution, having been spurred by the conviction of Jack Kevorkian for homicide in 1999. It took Kevorkian's prison sentence to open up the topic to considerations beyond homicide versus suicide.

The very definition of a problem is adaptable, and the terms of debate can change over time. Some basic conditions of this process of adjustment are examined

in part III below. Philosophy in the 21st century has its own transformational disputes. Dewey's pragmatic naturalism, widely ignored until Richard Rorty's *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* in 1979, has mounted a comeback, with and against analytical models and ideal ethical theories. Kitcher's effort is a welcome contribution for American pragmatists, a now growing community that kept Dewey's naturalism alive during years when the APA was dominated by analytic philosophers. But since Rorty, Dewey scholarship has given less emphasis to Dewey's concern for transformations that must occur in conflict resolution and in logic itself.

Both Dewey and Kitcher follow Charles Peirce's pragmatic naturalism, the progress from doubt to belief, driven by conflict over shared problems. If "naturalism" refers to the actual world, pragmatism needs a revised theory of conflict and its resolution.

II. ARROW

Kenneth Arrow's thesis presents a powerful reason for a pragmatic theory of conflict. His seminal work, *Social Choice and Individual Values*, begins: "In a capitalist democracy there are essentially two methods by which social choices can be made: voting, typically used to make political decisions, and the market mechanism, typically used to make economic decisions." Arrow goes on to mention two other methods, dictatorship and convention, but these relate to forms of society which he distinguishes from ours, even while demonstrating that electoral mechanisms cannot work.³

³ To the philosophers of ancient Greece, the basic theory of majoritarian democracy revealed the potential "tyranny of the majority," and since the 18th century there has been doubt whether "rational" majoritarian public choice is possible at all. The "voting paradox" holds, in a simple calculation, that rational resolution of different preferences by voting is impossible. In the 18th century the Marquis de Condorcet, in the French Enlightenment, saw this as a fundamental problem in the classical model of democracy. Kenneth Arrow extended it in 1951 to prove, to the satisfaction of the academic world, that *no* rational system of ordering diverse preferences is possible other than dictatorship. But what Arrow meant by "rational" assumes fixed preferences, instantaneous analysis, and it ignores the operation of social conflict.

Arrow deploys a view drawn from economics, relating to individual preferences for commodities and economic roles.⁴ His “General Possibility Theorem” is actually a general *impossibility* theorem. Widely if not uniformly accepted by welfare economists, his theorem extends to the impossibility of ordering any social domain with assumed distinct preferences, however extensive, not just by voting, but by any method except dictatorship. Professor Allan Feldman of Brown University said of Arrow’s theory that it

provides an unambiguous answer to the question ‘is there a foolproof way to derive complete and transitive social preference relations?’ The answer is No. This clearly negative result casts doubts on all assertions that there is a general will, a social contract, a social good, a will of the people, a peoples’ government, a peoples’ voice, a social benefit, and so on and so forth. That is, it casts doubt on all notions that . . . attribute preferences to society that are comparable to preferences for an individual. Therefore it casts doubts on vast areas of 20th century social thought.⁵

But it does not necessarily cast doubt on John Dewey’s pragmatism, which in one vital respect stands in contrast to the utilitarian roots of Arrow’s thesis⁶ as well as much contemporary social thought. Arrow follows a utilitarian turn toward instant individual preferences, and the assumption that every individual has their own distinct and presumably stable set of them.⁷ In contrast, Dewey’s pragmatic model emphasizes the critical importance of problem solving in a potentially transformative continuum of inquiry. The very preferences assumed to be stable by Arrow are subject to case-by-case adjustment in the course of Deweyan inquiry.

Arrow delineates his universe of fixed preferences as

lettered variables, like *x*, *y* and *z*, representing distinct preferences. A simple demonstrable model takes three individuals, 1, 2 and 3, who have the divergent preferences *x*, *y* and *z*. It is then a straightforward mathematical problem to investigate how they might vote on their preferences, or what rational method might exist for resolving disagreement. The simple math problem underlies Arrow’s General Possibility Theorem for all systems:

Assume a society composed of three voters, 1, 2 and 3. Further, assume that they are presented with three mutually exclusive proposals, *x*, *y* and *z*. The voters must choose under majority rule between proposals *x* and *y*. Proposal *x* will win because both 1 and 2 prefer *x* to *y*, and will vote accordingly; 3, who prefers *y*, will be outvoted. If instead the electorate is presented with a choice between *y* and *z*, *y* will win because that is preferred by 1 and 2. If the voters are given the choice between *x* and *z*, *z* will win because voters 2 and 3 will vote for *z*.

The conclusion? The majority wants both *x* and not-*x*. Note that if this summary (by the author of this essay, not by Arrow) were to say that 1, 2 and 3 “are deliberating,” rather than “are presented with” the three proposals, it would add an element of time and the possibility of dynamic interaction. Yet Arrow himself considers no such elements, nor the possibility of preference transformation over time, because he does not consider the relation of particular preferences to specific shared problems.

Arrow asserts “These alternatives are *mutually exclusive* [my emphasis]; they are denoted by the small letters *x*, *y*, *z*, ... On any given occasion, the chooser has available to him a subset *S* of all possible alternatives and he is required to choose one out of this set” (1951:12). If two individuals holding *x* and *y* are in active disagreement, might they resolve it over time? If so, can preferences *x* and *y* be properly considered “mutually exclusive” during that time? Arrow’s thesis claims to address all preferences regarding individual values. Any theory of preferences should be able to comprehend such phenomena as the political polarizations currently afflicting contemporary western societies.

⁴ See Amartya Sen, *Collective Choice and Social Welfare*, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2017.

⁵ Allan Feldman, *Welfare Economics and Social Choice Theory* (Boston: Martinus Nijhoff, 1980) 191.

⁶ References here to utilitarianism are to its social policy applications, or ‘public choice’ utilitarianism as opposed to ‘personal morality’ utilitarianism; see Amartya Sen and Bernard Williams, *Utilitarianism and Beyond* (Cambridge University Press 1982), 1-2.

⁷ The favored authority for this view is George J. Stigler & Gary S. Becker, “De Gustibus Non Est Disputandum,” *American Economic Review*, vol. 67, No. 2 (Mar., 1977), 76-90

If indeed there is interaction over time, at what point in the inquiry are opposing preferences considered sufficiently rigid to be “mutually exclusive”? Throughout society, many individual preferences are arguably distinct at any given moment, but many others are changing by degree throughout active engagement by preference holders. Arrow at each instantaneous point would insist on dictatorship as the only choice option. His conception of dictatorship cuts off inquiry at a purely hypothetical point within the problematic continuum.⁸ A choice may ultimately be put to a referendum, but this does not foreclose whether proposals have been adequately subjected to particularized formative inquiry, including citizen input, and already subject to transformation.

There are circumstances in which Arrow’s model appears accurately representative. In a small committee meeting where the participants come with firm and unyielding views, the voting paradox and Arrow’s thesis may prove correct.⁹ The next step in Arrow’s argument is to apply the same logic to society as a whole: multiple individuals holding multiple unyielding preferences, with no clear outcome from voting. But Arrow in 1951 makes the error of overextending his assumption of mutually exclusive preferences. His claim that no “rational” system of ordering other than dictatorship is possible in a vast society of diverse preferences assumes that everyone is like the unyielding committee members.¹⁰

⁸ I am grateful to Brian Butler of UNC Asheville for articulating this point.

⁹ The process of dispute identifies salient characteristics for others who share the problem and look for a solution. Thus, the presumption of a society of constant, stable preferences is a hypothetical model, and not the only available one. It is often said to work for situations like a referendum. However, unlike the symbols *x*, *y* and *z*, referendum alternatives are specifically framed. The real world does not often propose an undefined referendum, like “\$1 million for schools, police, or roads.” It is more like “\$1 million for construction of a new elementary school building on the corner of Ash and Main Streets,” versus “\$1 million for hiring and training 25 new officers,” and \$1 million to repave Route 56.” Each proposal has been subject to a particularized formative inquiry, including citizen input, and transformative conflict.

¹⁰ “The aim of the present paper is to show that these difficulties are general. For *any* method of deriving social choice by aggregating individual preference patterns which satisfies certain natural conditions, it is possible to find individual preference

Preferences *x*, *y* and *z* are distinct and are compared simultaneously. But if individuals 1, 2 and 3 *actively* disagreed, would there not be a potential conflict, and if so, might it be resolved? Arrow’s proof applies the basic analysis to any group of any size, up to and including an entire country. His calculation reaches the same impossibility conclusion for an unlimited domain of individual preferences, and it carries the same assumption into that vast domain, positing the unyielding nature of the entire body of preferences, as well as the *instantaneous* comparison of them all. Can a *changing* preference, one that is by definition not fixed and discrete from all others marked by letters, be represented *by*, or *as*, a letter such as *x*, *y*, or *z*? If not, then Arrow’s calculus is missing a key element of the social utility calculus. The positions *x* and *y* are in transformation, such that an acceptable middle course may be reached. Unlike the general utility maximization problem driving Arrow’s inquiry (1951:3), actual inquiry involves particular problems seeking solutions.

Arrow’s model is not accurate and comprehensive if preferences, economic and otherwise, are subject to *adjustment* in the wake of interaction and internal conflict. If change *is* possible, then dispute and non-violent conflict is actually a *saving force* in democratic society. It breaks free from the tight grip of the impossibility theorem.¹¹ If there is a dispute between individuals 1 and 2 over the nature of *x*, and the two individuals are given time to work it out, perhaps coming to a *new version* of *x* (call it ‘*x* prime’) there would be no necessity of a

patterns which give rise to a social choice pattern which is not a linear ordering. In particular, this is very likely to be the case if, as is frequently assumed, each individual’s preferences among social states are derived purely from his personal consumption-leisure-saving situation in each.” Arrow 1950:330, emphasis in original, footnote omitted.

¹¹ “If we adopt the traditional identification of rationality with maximization of some sort, then the problem of achieving a social maximum derived from individual desires is precisely the problem which has been central to the field of welfare economics. However, the search for a clear definition of optimum social welfare has been plagued by the difficulties of interpersonal comparisons. The emphasis, as is well known, has shifted to a weaker definition of optimum, namely, the determination of all social states such that no individual can be made better off without making someone worse off.” Arrow 1950:329

dictator.¹² This is a very different conclusion from that of professor Feldman, that Arrow's "clearly negative result casts doubts on all assertions that there is a general will, a social contract, a social good, a will of the people, a peoples' government, a peoples' voice."

Pragmatic conflict is a form of public inquiry that goes on all the time, in between the occasional elections and referenda. For civil society to continue, persistent disputes must be resolved, whether or not they can be put before an electorate for a majoritarian vote. Conflicts influence preferences, while suffrage alone, though essential to democracy, does not. A new dynamic for democracy thus comes into view. It involves the interaction between the emergence of disputes, their ongoing agonistic inquiry throughout American society, and the formal process of referenda and elections. Democratic inquiry does not begin and end with voting, an insight that was fundamental to Dewey's philosophy of democracy.

Arrow's model is a "flash camera" image picturing a society of immediate individual preferences. It is distinct from, and oblivious to, a dynamic social environment of both settled and unsettled problems under constant consideration, in which individual attitudes and preferences cannot accurately be caught as a fixed image, as they are in different stages of resolution in continuing inquiries.¹³ Arrow's theorem and the voting paradox ignore the epistemology of preference, the role of disagreement, and the extended continuum of inquiry. Arrow applies his

model to any universe of preference-holding individuals, but it holds only if the entire universe of relevant preference-holders is *static within the period of inquiry and choice*. The model tacitly presumes instantaneous choice in an unchanging framework.

By comparison, John Dewey's vision of the distribution of social preferences in response to an uneven universe of ongoing problems (some more defined and addressed than others) is closer to what Nancy Cartwright (referring to scientific inquiry) has called a "dappled world."¹⁴ It reflects constant incremental group preference adjustment, as discrete problems are identified and remedial practices are generated. But specific problems can be more, or less, democratically recognized, defined, and resolved. How inclusive and factually comprehensive resolution occurs will affect democratic ideals and institutions. The next section examines Dewey's vision and how it relates to deliberative democracy.

III. DEWEY

Two key elements of Dewey's logic of inquiry are missing from Kenneth Arrow's analysis: the occurrence of specific problems, and their subjection to a continuum of inquiry. Arrow fails to address the conditions surrounding the persistence of aggregated preferences, their reinforcement in habits, their opposition in ubiquitous disputes and conflicts, and most important, their necessity to *adjust* for social order or progress in resolving disputes. His model of rationality is a detached calculation from a hypothetical fixity, ignoring vectors of information acquisition, action, and change.

The crisis of today is better understood through the lens of Dewey's vision. Dewey's outlook permits assessment of the granular nature of problems and their formation, definition, and ultimate resolution through transformative action and transformed practices. Rather than

¹² "It should be emphasized here that the present study is concerned with the formal aspects of the foregoing question. That is, we ask if it is formally possible to construct a procedure for passing from a set of known individual tastes to a pattern of social decision-making, the procedure in question being required to satisfy certain *natural* conditions [my emphasis]." Arrow 1951:2.

¹³ An Arrowian distribution of preferences can be plausibly imagined at a given instant, but only by ignoring the context and status of ongoing disputes, including over the preferences xyz that occupy various groups and are in fact subject to movement. While the model is illustrative of many specific voting quandaries, the generalized "paradox" simply observes that a society of permanent disagreements is not governable by voting. Arrow's thesis determines that under basic assumptions dictatorship is the only option.

¹⁴ Nancy Cartwright, *The Dappled World: A Study of the Boundaries of Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999)

fixed preferences, his view of society includes constant active struggle:

[T]here is no single thing denominated "society"; there are many societies, many forms of association. These different groups and classes struggle in many ways against one another and have very diverse values. Men associate in friendship and in antagonism; for recreation and for crime; they unite in clubs and fraternities, in cliques and sects, in churches and armies; to promote science and art and to prey upon others; they unite in business partnerships and corporations. Then these social units compete vigorously against one another. 1932:359

Within this ubiquitous conflict are problems arising from opposing habits and beliefs, the prevalent "arrangements in social life":

What do exist are conflicts between some individuals and some arrangements in social life; between groups and classes of individuals; between nations and races; between old traditions embedded in institutions and new ways of thinking and acting which spring from those few individuals who depart from and who attack what is socially accepted. There is also a genuine difference of convictions as to the way in which, at any given time, these conflicts should be met and managed. 1932:358-9.

The existence of "different convictions as to the way in which conflicts should be met and managed" can be seen in today's polarization, and suggests the prevalence of distinct and often opposing models of moral progress itself. Current attitudes toward sexual assault, affirmative action, climate change and remediation, policing, gun regulation, teaching controversial subjects, all contribute to a palpable, although not easily definable, ideological line between liberal and conservative politics. The framing of that line by opposing agents is a continuing project designed to gain and consolidate political power. Power is thus a constant goal of preference definition and aggregation. It is not a situated force requiring brute removal, as envisioned by Karl Marx. While Dewey is reluctant to ontologize power, his view is perhaps closer to Michel Foucault's model of power as dispersed and pervasive, rather than wielded by people or groups by

way of "episodic" or "sovereign" acts of domination or coercion.¹⁵

Dewey's principal book on government was *The Public and its Problems* (1927), a thesis that democracy is more than electoral machinery and regulatory bureaucracy. It is rooted in community, where it lives or dies: "There is no sanctity in universal suffrage, frequent elections, majority rule, congressional and cabinet government." (1927:144-5) Democratic forms "are not the whole of the democratic idea, but they express it in its political phase." (1027:146) "Regarded as an idea, democracy is not an alternative to other principles of associated life. It is the idea of community life itself." (1927:148) His remark that there is "no sanctity" in democratic mechanisms rings especially true today. We must look to specific problems and their empirical solutions.

As John Ryder recently observed in a recent issue of *Pragmatism Today*, Dewey based democracy on community and common interests. For Ryder, "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."¹⁶ I think Dewey does provide insight into the overall problem of conflicting interests.¹⁷ Unlike Arrow, he saw attitudes as malleable and responsive. Dewey's 1938 *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry* emphasizes that all problems (social or scientific) are addressed in stages. A perceived problem is at first ill-defined:

Indeterminate situations are marked by confusion, obscurity and conflict. They require clarification. An unsettled situation needs clarification because as it stands it gives no lead or cue to the way in which it may be resolved. 1938:185.

¹⁵ "'Power is everywhere' and 'comes from everywhere' so in this sense is neither an agency nor a structure." Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: The Will to Knowledge*. London: Penguin, 1998, 63. In *Ethics* Dewey and Tufts describe class dominance as a conflict of values. (1932:360-1). See also Colin Koopman, "The History and Critique of Modernity: Dewey with Foucault against Weber" (August 30, 2007). <https://ssrn.com/abstract=1011514> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1011514>

¹⁶ *Pragmatism Today*, v. 12, no. 2, 2021, 11.

¹⁷ See Christophe Point, "What's the Use of Conflict in Dewey? Toward a Pedagogy of Compromise," *Education and Culture* v. 34, no. 2, 2018.

Social conflict is not readily distinguishable from the confusion and unclarity of the “indeterminate situation.” Contemporary life in America is a collection of specific indeterminate problems contributing to a massive unsettled situation, underlain by multiple unresolved social, economic and educational issues, all of which are seen by Dewey as subject to transformative inquiry.

The controversial criminal prosecution of Jack Kevorkian in 1999 was part of the process through which information was introduced into the unsettled situation plaguing the desperation of suffering patients and their families. Thereafter, the situation gained clarity through continuing related events, each of which embodied a ‘further inquiry’:¹⁸

There is continuity in inquiry. The conclusions reached in one inquiry become means, material and procedural, of carrying on further inquiries. In the latter, the results of earlier inquiries are taken and used without being re-subjected to examination. 1938:140

In the inquiry into social problems, resolution requires what Dewey often characterized as transformation in reasoning, as in the following passage describing the progress, obviously difficult and complex, from the uncertainty of outright conflict to ‘modified’ understanding:

Since transformation of a problematic situation (a confused situation whose constituents conflict with one another) is effected by interaction of specially discriminated existential conditions, facts have to be determined in their dual function as obstacles and as resources; that is, with reference to operations of negation (elimination) and affirmation, the latter being determination of materials as positively agreeing with or reinforcing one another. No existing situation can be modified without counteracting obstructive and deflecting forces that render a given situation confused and conflicting. 1938:499-500

Dewey’s reference to “negation,” “affirmation,” and the “determination of materials” signifies a transformation of the reasoning process, as opposing sides are engaged

in a process that incorporates experience broader and deeper than an exchange of opinions in discourse. Adjustment within problematic situations is a critical factor in moving a dispute, such as medical euthanasia, to greater stability, even when not reaching final resolution. It is an element of social interaction that transcends even the most ideal conversation. As Scott Aikin and Robert Talisse have characterized Dewey’s approach (although disputing him), “The democratic process is one in which individual preferences, attitudes, and opinions are informed and transformed rather than simply aggregated.” (2018:97)

As with the criminal trial of Dr. Kevorkian, often at first there is an unyielding binary choice. As conflict drives further inquiry, there emerges a new model. The individuals in village V, holding opposing preferences regarding a dispute whether to supplant fossil fuels with wind or solar technology, might hold opposing preferences regarding an initial plan, based on multiple factors such as cost differential (*c*), land use (*l*), and aesthetic impact (*a*). After time *T*, a plan is found in which opposing preferences are reconciled by adjustments affecting *c*, *l*, and *a*, and a revised project (whether wind or solar) is agreed on. Information in a problematic continuum increases with input from alternative viewpoints. Resolution is not assured, but disagreement motivates further inquiry and adjustment of expectations.¹⁹

Aikin and Talisse claim that Deweyan democracy is “nonviable under the social and political conditions that inevitably prevail within contemporary constitutional democracies.” (2018:95) Their surprising reason is that, in addition to his recognition of ubiquitous conflict and the precarious continuum of inquiry, Dewey also urged that democracy implies the ideals of human flourishing and growth, terms that he used repeatedly in arguing for a community-oriented “organic” conception of de-

¹⁸ See, e.g., Robert F. Weir, ed., *Physician Assisted Suicide*. 1997. Bloomington: Indiana University Press; Robert Young, *Medically Assisted Death*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

¹⁹ A recent example of progress from polarized town opinion to experimental resolution over a dam removal in Camden Maine is reported in The Free Press, www.freepressonline.com, v. 38 no. 3, p.1 (September 20, 2022).

mocracy. They base their objection on the assertion that “growth” is a potentially disputed value, among a plurality of multiple incommensurable values that constitute society. Hence they disqualify Dewey’s entire contribution because it is a “unitary thesis” of growth, ignoring his overall model of social ordering through inquiry.

Aikin and Talisse base their objection on a distinctive model of society drawn from the work of John Rawls, depicted as rigidly segmented into incommensurable moral, political and religious doctrines. This depiction recalls Arrow’s fixity and is presumed to disqualify any general conception, even one that is distinctly unfixed, hortatory, heuristic, and contingent. Following their characterization of Rawls, Aikin and Talisse write “growth is but one candidate for the moral master value that a democratic society must foster, and there is accordingly reasonable disagreement among citizens over whether it is, indeed, a value.” (2018:101) While their objection demands a lengthier response, it seems clear that under their test, Aikin and Talisse would disqualify Kitcher’s “moral progress.” They instead favor a purpose-free deliberative model, in which (as they say in the above passage) individual preferences, attitudes, and opinions are, in effect, simply aggregated. (2018:225f)

Dewey’s precarious continuum of inquiry is not, strictly speaking, comparable to “deliberative democracy” in the sense advanced by contemporary writers.²⁰ While the continuum of inquiry involves discourse, it does not match Philip Kitcher’s account of ideal conversation. The current literature of deliberative democracy arose from criticism of traditional democratic theory for excessive dependence on electoral machinery. Broadly defined,

the concept of “deliberation” has served as a supplemental source of legitimacy for law. But an idealized model of deliberation does not overcome Arrow’s impossibility problem. Kitcher’s careful analysis of ideal deliberation can serve as a representative example of how current deliberative democracy is conceived by pragmatists.

Deliberation by ideal conversation is initiated by perceived resistance or “resentment” of the *status quo* by “some individual or group of individuals.” It then requires:

discussion in which the perspectives of all the stakeholders with respect to that situation are represented, in which proposals for responding to the situation are only considered if they, and the judgments put forward in their support, are consistent with the best information available in that situation, and in which the participants are mutually engaged. 2021:37.

The problem is that “the best information available” is not readily accessible until later stages of the experience and definition of a shared problem, and must be uncovered and sifted through toilsome experience. The role of an agonistic continuum of inquiry in obtaining relevant information, and expressing relevant attitudes and preferences, is an imperfect but essential aspect of a truly naturalistic pragmatic inquiry.

Certainly there is “deliberation” in extended conflict, but it is accompanied by continual discovery and redefinition. Dewey’s reference above, to diverse groups that “compete vigorously against one another,” suggests that agonistic interaction is analogous to ongoing competition, not for situated power or rhetorical victory, but for overall practical advantage. Friedrich Hayek, in his 1968 essay “Competition as a Discovery Procedure,” called competition “a procedure for discovering facts which, if the procedure did not exist, would remain unknown or at least would not be used,” whose “outcomes are unpredictable and on the whole different from those that anyone would have been able to consciously strive for; and that its salutary effects must manifest themselves by frustrating certain intentions and disappointing certain expectations.” (2002:9-10) As Hayek wrote, “we do

²⁰ Deliberative democracy is unclear on precisely who deliberates and how. Hence there are both ‘elitist’ and ‘populist’ deliberative models. See, e.g., Ethan Leib, *Deliberative Democracy in America*, University Park: Penn State Press (2009); James Fishkin, *When the People Speak*, Oxford: Oxford University Press (2011); Dennis F. Thompson, “Deliberative Democratic Theory and Empirical Political Science,” *Annual Review of Political Science* 11 (2008) 497-520. See also Shane Ralston, “Dewey’s Model of Moral Deliberation Unfiltered,” *Education and Culture* 26 (2010) 23-43.

not know in advance the facts we wish to discover with the help of competition.” (2002:10) Exploration follows motivation, which is galvanized by problematic urgency. Hayek also noted the effect of competition on behavior change: “competition represents a kind of impersonal coercion that will cause many individuals to change their behavior in a way that could not be brought about by any kind of instructions or commands.” (2002:19) The phrase “impersonal coercion” suggests reluctant but voluntary adjustment. Behavior change is thereby possible in a manner not directed by fiat, but by information crucial to the diverse purposes of multiple actors.

Economic competition is, in essence, an orderly form of natural social conflict.²¹ Meanwhile, actually orchestrating outcomes through conversation in the real world is fraught with difficulties. Opponents in shared conflicts bring self-interest to the table. Much of it is supported by confirmation bias, group-think, false information, gaming, hidden assumptions, and overriding political motives. In September 2022, President Emmanuel Macron of France announced creation of a National Council for Reconstruction, with members from all parts of political and civil society, to hold regular meetings across the country to find answers to the most pressing national problems. All opposition parties boycotted the first meeting for purely political reasons, as did many of the most powerful unions and the head of the country’s Senate.

It is challenging to gather representative participants to discuss any particular problem, even more so to address all of a nation’s “most pressing” ones. The global polarization of preferences into a sweeping ideological dualism has presented an even greater obstacle to the natural disputations that surround particular shared problems. Polarization has tended to block particular inquiry into specific issues. But this should not obscure the importance of Dewey’s extended specific continua of inquiry, and their potential for surmounting obstacles to orchestrated con-

versations, such as proposed by Macron or envisioned by Kitcher. An extended agonistic continuum of inquiry can provide time and opportunity for correcting bias and false information. It is a potentially open forum of interested participants, driven by extended feedback from experience. Many obstacles must be overcome, and an agonistic pragmatism turns a focus of inquiry toward them.

Extended particular conflicts can create experiential feedback to refute false information, rhetorical and political gaming, and (not least) unanticipated and unintended consequences. The feedback loop, which refers to the opportunity for uncensored comment and active response in a free society, permits and supports radical experimental solutions. False information should be expected, but it is not fatal to the continuum. Sources of information are subject to the assignment of degrees of credibility and trust, like the five stars of products assigned by shoppers at Walmart. Fake news is a threat to democratic ordering, but it is not the end of democracy. Dispute and conflict is an imperfect source of information and reform. It calls for open and fair inquiry into the nature of agonistic inquiry and the resolution of shared problems. It is the only alternative to fiat for the adjustment of individual preferences. As Kenneth Arrow demonstrated, dictatorship is a mathematical certainty in the absence of preference adjustment and change.

In embracing the ubiquity of conflict, Dewey’s problem-based model occupies a logical space outside both contemporary deliberative democracy *and* theories of agonism advanced by Chantal Mouffe and Ernesto Laclau (2001), that reject the possibility of reaching consensus purely through deliberation.²² Dewey emphasizes the precarious nature of a democracy rife with conflicts at every

²¹ Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes’s dissent in *Abrams v. United States* compared the opposition of ideas to a ‘marketplace.’

²² The agonistic democracy model of Mouffe and Laclau questions the empirical attainability of consensus in post-Cold War democracies. While space limits discussion here, the 2001 preface to (1985) summarizes their program as conceiving conflict as inevitably universalized into “hegemonies” and relying on creation of a “new hegemony,” one that expands “discourse” to allow “a possible alternative to the present economic order” and “the possibility of different modes of regulation.” (2001:xvi)

level. Representation of diverse voices from those affected by outcomes, and inclusion of comprehensive relevant information, are never assured. Rather than a zero-sum model of power held, defended, or seized, political power is sought by shifting alliances and various means other than strict electoral mechanisms, including ideological and conspiratorial framing, soliciting diverse positions into a narrative designed for repetition in public media.

Dewey observed that attempts to theorize conflict as a uniform property are dubious:

No general theory about the individual and the social can settle conflicts or even point out the way in which they should be resolved. 1932:359

His attitude is unsparingly naturalist, and forces attention to specific problems, not abstract concepts. Conflict drives the acquisition of information and the need for adjustment of habits and beliefs. Where resolution is adequately representative of all relevant interests, Dewey's pragmatism views conflict as a dialogical motivator and a necessary pathway toward the ideal of a justified order. Failed justification in modern society might be called a spectrum disorder; it is never total, even as justification itself is never complete. We may be destined forever to be a society of some kind of conflict.

Preference conflict theory illuminates the boundary between inquiry and violence in the polarization of aggregated opposing interests. It clarifies the precarious

path to a fluid Deweyan transformation in the continuum of inquiry, through which specific problems can be democratically recognized, defined, and resolved by incremental group preference adjustment, as discrete problems are identified and remedial practices are adopted through accessible stakeholder input, bypassing ideology in their enforcement through law.²³

REFERENCES

- Aikin, Scott F., & Robert B. Talisse. 2018. *Pragmatism, Pluralism, and the Nature of Philosophy*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Arrow, Kenneth J. 1950. "A Difficulty in the Concept of Social Welfare." *Journal of Political Economy*, Vol. 58, No. 4 (Aug. 1950), 328- 346
- _____. 1951. *Social Choice and Individual Values*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Dewey, John. 1927. *The Public and Its Problems*. New York: Henry Holt & Co.
- _____. 1938. *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry*. New York: Henry Holt & Co.
- _____. and James H. Tufts. 1932. *Ethics*. New York: Henry Holt & Co.
- Hayek, Friedrich A. 2002. "Competition as a Discovery Procedure." *Quarterly Journal of Austrian Economics*, v.5 no.3 (Fall 2002), 9-23
- Kellogg, Frederic R. 2021. *Pragmatism, Logic, and Law*. Lanham & New York: Lexington Press.
- Kitcher, Philip. 2021. *Moral Progress*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- _____. 2001. *The Ethical Project*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.
- Mouffe, Chantal, & Ernesto Laclau. 2001 [1985]. *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*. London & New York: Verso.

²³ Incremental group preference adjustment and enforcement through law is addressed at length in Kellogg 2021, 27-77.

WHY CONTROLLING THE HISTORICAL NARRATIVE MATTERS: A JAMESIAN RESPONSE

Armen T. Marsoobian

Professor of Philosophy, Southern Connecticut State University

*Human Rights Institute, University of Connecticut
Visiting Scholar, Columbia University*

ABSTRACT: An examination of the lessons learned from William James's oration on the dedication of the Civil War Monument memorializing Colonel Robert Shaw and the Fifty-Fourth Regiment Massachusetts Infantry, an all-Black unit. The role of monuments in making visible the values of a society is explored in the context of promoting a nation's historical narrative, in particular in their propagation of the South's Lost Cause narrative. The genocidal violence against Armenians in the Caucasus by the Azerbaijani regime serves as the second illustration of the abuse of historical narratives.

Keywords: William James, Civil War monuments, civic courage, the Lost Cause, historical narratives, genocidal violence, Armenians, Azerbaijan

Part One: William James on Memorializing the Civil War

"We speak of the past as final and irrevocable. There is nothing that is less so . . . the past (or some meaningful structure of the past) is as hypothetical as the future."

George Herbert Mead,
The Philosophy of the Present, 1932

William James, fully sensing the wrong direction that our nation was heading by retreating from the gains made by African Americans during Reconstruction, gave an oration on the occasion of the unveiling of the Civil War Memorial to Robert Gould Shaw and the Massachusetts Fifty-Fourth Regiment erected on the Boston Common. This oration is as relevant today as it was when it was given in May 1897. One could say that its prescience is even more chilling given the most recent threats to U.S. democracy during the Donald Trump era. Honored that day was the Massachusetts Fifty-Fourth Regiment, an all-Black regiment that fought a heroic yet unsuccessful battle to capture Fort Wagner, a citadel guarding Charleston harbor, in July 1863. James's explicitly political oration attempted both to give meaning to such a memorial and to warn the nation of the dangers it faced if the historical lessons of the war were ignored. Tragically, James's warning was ignored. His words could not stop the emerging process by which our nation's narrative was being rewritten. Over the next fifty years, the story of America's original sin of slavery and the war that was fought to end it, were transformed into what Southerners call the Lost Cause. The



Lost Cause was mainstreamed by educational institutions and the mass media so that Americans both North and South could sit comfortably in front of movie screens and take similar pleasures in the cinematic portrayal of the genteel lost world of *Gone with the Wind*. One year before James's oration, the United States Supreme Court infamously ruled in *Plessy vs. Ferguson* that segregation was constitutional. The principle of equality evaporated for Black Americans under the false doctrine that separate could be equal. Across the nation, white supremacist domestic terrorism and Jim Crow laws would rule the day. Economic and social inequities between Blacks and whites became sedimented and continue to the present moment.

I will use James's oration as a jumping off point for my argument for the claim that an open, continuing, and critically honest examination of a nation's historical narrative is crucial for the maintenance of a healthy democracy. Anti-democratic forces, whether they be fascist mass movements or individual autocrats supported by economic elites, have long known the importance of establishing their *own* historical narrative in order to justify and thus maintain their power. I illustrate my claims by first focusing on the debates in the United States about the removal of Confederate monuments. Contemporaneous with this debate is the more recent rightwing backlash regarding the teaching of United States history, especially as it is taught in public schools. This has taken the form of attacks on teachers and school boards who have tried to open the curriculum to voices who have long been silenced, especially African Americans and Native Americans. The *bête noire* of this rightwing attack has been the 1619 Project and what they falsely label Critical Race Theory. Attacks on the latter amount to straw person arguments since Critical Race Theory is not taught at the secondary school level, let alone at most universities.¹ I will then conclude in Part Two by briefly

shifting to a more global perspective by pointing to one, among many, similar attempts to rewrite national narratives to justify geopolitical violence against an indigenous people, in this case the Armenians of the South Caucasus. We are rife with such examples today, instance President Putin's claims that the Ukraine is an artificial creation and has no history of its own.

But first, let us turn back to William James. While James spends a good portion of the oration describing Colonel Shaw's actions leading up to and during the battle of Fort Wagner, the salient points he raises pertain to the moral values conveyed by Shaw's agency and that of his African American soldiers. It is these values that the memorial should evoke in us, not simply the recording of an important historical event. Early in the oration, James strikes at the heart of the matter:

The historic significance of an event is measured neither by its material magnitude, nor by its immediate success. . . . The war for our Union, with all the constitutional questions which it settled, and all the military lessons which it gathered in, has *throughout its dilatory length but one meaning in the eye of history. It freed the country from the social plague which until then had made political development impossible in the United States. . . . And nowhere was that meaning better symbolized and embodied than in the constitution of this first Northern negro regiment.* (James 1897, 40) (emphasis added)

While a modern audience may want to take exception to Augustus Saint-Gauden's rendering of the elements of the monument, especially the scale in which the white officer, Colonel Shaw, is depicted in comparison to the Black troops he is leading, James gives equal importance to both elements of the work. He admonishes the spectator to "look at the monument and read the story":

See the mingling of elements which the sculptor's genius has brought so vividly before the eye. There on foot go the dark outcasts, so true to nature that one can almost hear them breathing as they march. State after State by its laws had denied them to be human persons. The Southern leaders in congressional debates, insolent in their security, loved most to designate them by the contemptuous collective epithet of "this peculiar kind of property." There they march,

¹ See the curricular work on *The 1619 Project* on the Pulitzer Center website: <https://pulitzercenter.org/lesson-plan-grouping/1619-project-curriculum>

warm-blooded champions of a better day for man. There on horseback, among them, in his very habit as he lived, sits the blue-eyed child of fortune, upon whose happy youth every divinity had smiled. Onward they move together, a single resolution kindled in their eyes, and animating their otherwise so different frames. The bronze that makes their memory eternal betrays the very soul and secret of those awful years. (41)

James focuses on the singleness of purpose between the white officer and his Black troops. They are engaged in a campaign to purge the nation of the disease inherited at its birth:

Since the 'thirties the slavery question had been the only question, and by the end of the 'fifties our land lay sick and shaking with it like a traveler who has thrown himself down at night beside a pestilential swamp, and in the morning finds the fever through the marrow of his bones (41).

James is clear, the nation's disease must be purged at its source, slavery.

James was well aware of the destructive consequences of war, for his younger brother Wilky was gravely wounded in the Fort Wagner assault, but compromise was not the cure for this disease. Acknowledging the nation's original sin, something that many today in our polarized nation refuse to do, James gets to the heart of the matter:

Our great western republic had from its origin been a singular anomaly. A land of freedom, boastfully so-called, with human slavery enthroned at the heart of it, and at last dictating terms of unconditional surrender to every other organ of its life, what was it but a thing of falsehood and horrible self-contradiction? For three-quarters of a century it had nevertheless endured, kept together by policy compromise, and concession. But at last; that republic was torn in two; and truth was to be possible under the flag. Truth, thank God, truth! even though for the moment it must be truth written in hell-fire. (42)

Yet by 1897 the truth was in danger and had never established itself in the defeated Confederate States. With the end of Reconstruction, the few gains made by freed African Americans in the South came to an end. While militarily defeated in 1865, most Southerners, especially among the former ruling white-elite landowners, were never able to psychologically accept defeat or reject their belief in the

righteousness of their cause. They turned the adage that "history is written by the victors" on its head. The process of rewriting the war's historical narrative had begun soon after the April 1865 surrender of Robert E. Lee at Appomattox Court House. This is a history never taught in the schools in America. The details of the historiography of this process are fascinating but this is not my concern here.

One thought experiment is warranted. While appearing to be comparing apples and oranges, it is worthwhile making a comparison with the aftermath of Nazi Germany's defeat in 1945. Yes, granted, ours was a civil war and the other was an international response to a war of aggression. Yet, in the aftermath of World War II, no active National Socialist-aligned terrorist organizations carried out violence against Jewish survivors and others. While in the aftermath of the Civil War, the Ku Klux Klan was immediately formed and continued to terrorize African Americans for over one hundred years. Can one imagine the formation of an organization in Germany thirty years after the end of the war that propagated the ideology of National Socialism and a benign narrative regarding the Second World War? Well, this is precisely what the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC), established in 1894, did to propagate the myth of the Lost Cause? Germans of the post-war generation began in the '60s and '70s to question their elders' silence about their Nazi past, while in contrast, the UDC set up programs throughout the South to indoctrinate children into the Lost Cause through youth clubs known as the Children of the Confederacy. For generations, the Southern elite would train their youth in a manner not that far removed from the Hitler Youth of the 1930s. There are, of course, important contextual differences and yes, there are extreme rightwing movements in Germany today, evidence the Alternative for Deutschland (AfD), but the outcomes were starkly different in the American and German experiences.² The American philos

² The American philosopher Susan Neiman makes a strong case for these contrasting outcomes in her book, *Learning from the Germans: Race and the Memory of Evil* (2020).



United Daughters of the Confederacy at the Confederate Memorial, Arlington National Cemetery, Virginia. June 5, 1922. Photo via Wikimedia Commons.



The Children of the Confederacy visiting a Confederate grave.
Photo: Library of Congress.



Members of the John Triplett Chapter of the Children of the Confederacy, Thomasville, Georgia, 1911. Photo: Georgia Archives.

opher Susan Neiman makes a strong case for these contrasting outcomes between the American and German experiences in her book, *Learning from the Germans: Race and the Memory of Evil* (2020).

As has been well-documented by historians in the wake of the Black Lives Matter protests, Confederate monuments immediately began to be constructed in the two decades following the war's end, though mostly on a small scale and often in cemeteries. Ironically, James refers to a similar monument building phenomenon, but he has in mind the typical Northern monument to the Union dead:

And this, fellow-citizens, is why, after the great generals have had their monuments, and long after the abstract soldier's-monuments have been reared on every village green, we have chosen to take Robert Shaw and his regiment as the subjects of the first soldier's-monument to be raised to a particular set of comparatively undistinguished men. The very lack of external complication in the history of these soldiers is what makes them represent with such typical purity the profounder meaning of the Union cause. (42)

The irony is that in the three decades after James's speech, the United Daughters of the Confederacy spearheaded an effort that led to the greatest boom in Confederate monument-building, with statues of "abstract soldier's-monuments" of "Johnny Reb" springing up in village squares, in front of court houses, State capitols, and prominent civic locations throughout the South. Monumental statues of Confederate leaders and generals, such as Robert E. Lee, soon followed. This construction boom abated during the Depression of the 1930s and stopped altogether during the war years that followed.

With the rise of the Civil Rights Movement in the late 1950s and 60s, a revival in monument building took place. This culminated in the 1972 construction of the world's largest Confederate monument, the craving in granite of the images of General Lee, General Stonewall Jackson, and the President of the Confederacy Jefferson Davis, on horseback on the façade of Stone Mountain outside of Atlanta, Georgia.

The call for the removal of the Stone Mountain Monument and other monuments has grown intense, starting with the General Lee statue in Charlottesville, Virginia at which a Neo-Nazi and White supremacist march in defense of the monument led to a riot and the death of a counter-protestor. Momentum for removals grew after the May 2020 murder of George Floyd. The argument has often been made that such monuments are about history and heritage and their removal is an attempt by the radical Left to rewrite history. Grady Vickery a member of the Sons of Confederate Veterans made such an argument regarding Stone Mountain in a National Public Radio interview: “What it [Stone Mountain] means to me is that, being a lifelong student of history, local history, Georgia history, your history, my history, it’s all common

effort that originally commenced in 1915 at the height of the Ku Klux Klan’s revival – a revival given impetus by the box office success of Cecil B. DeMille’s *The Birth of a Nation*? The original backers were the aforementioned Daughters of the Confederacy. Claiming that this is a “common history” belies the fact that for African Americans this common history is one of oppression and domestic terrorism.

As argued by William James, monuments are not simply documents of historic events but *values made visible*. In the case of the Boston Civil War Memorial, the value is courage but in a double sense. James argues that the monument represents both civic and military courage or valor. Colonel Shaw had already shown military courage in his prior commissions leading the Massachusetts Sev-



Town Green, Guilford, Connecticut, 1877. “The abstract soldier’s-monuments have been reared on every village green.”

history, folks. This carving is a monument” (Mofatt 2021). What history is Vickery a student of? The history of the backlash against the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s when the backers of the monument enlisted the State of Georgia to support the project? Or is it the history of the

enth and Second Regiments. Taking on the leadership of the first all-Black regiment was a risky experiment given the repercussions of its failure for public support for the war. James distinguishes the two types of courage:



The “Johnny Reb” statue known as “At Ready” outside the Albemarle County Courthouse in Charlottesville, Virginia. Photograph: Erin Edgerton/AP.



Robert E. Lee statue in Charlottesville that was recently removed.



Members of the Ku Klux Klan burn a large cross atop Stone Mountain in DeKalb County, Georgia, on July 23, 1948, while initiating 700 new members. AP Photo, File.



Stone Mountain Monument, 1000 Robert E. Lee Blvd., Stone Mountain, Georgia.
Photo: Smithsonian Magazine.

That lonely kind of courage (civic courage as we call it in times of peace) is the kind of valor to which the monuments of nations should most of all be reared, for the survival of the fittest has not bred it into the bone of human beings as it has bred military valor; and of five hundred of us who could storm a battery side by side with others, perhaps not one would be found ready to risk his worldly fortunes all alone in resisting an enthroned abuse. The deadliest enemies of nations are not their foreign foes; they always dwell within their borders. And from these internal enemies, civilization is always in need of being saved. The nation blest above all nations is she in whom the civic genius of the people does the saving day by day, by acts without external picturesqueness; by speaking, writing, voting reasonably; by smiting corruption swiftly; by good temper between parties; by the people knowing true men when they see them, and preferring them as leaders to rabid partisans or empty quacks. Such nations have no need of wars to save them. (51)

On a Jamesian reading, Stone Mountain is not a monument to evoke valor, civic or otherwise, but fear and intimidation of African Americans. It makes visible the value of racism.

James concludes his oration by identifying two civic virtues – or what he here calls “common habits” – that are essential for the survival of democracy. For, “Democracy is still upon its trial. The civic genius of our people is its only bulwark, and neither laws nor monuments, neither battleships nor public libraries, nor great newspapers nor booming stocks; neither mechanical invention nor political adroitness, nor churches nor universities nor civil service examinations can save us from [the] degeneration” of democracy (52). James identifies these “two common habits” that must be “carried into public life” for democracy’s survival: “One of them is the habit of *trained and disciplined good temper towards the opposite party when it fairly wins its innings*. It was by breaking away from this habit that the Slave States nearly wrecked our Nation. The other is that of fierce and merciless resentment toward every man or set of men who break the public peace” (53) (emphasis added). Sadly, I believe, we are failing the Jamesian test. When Joe Biden “fairly” won his “innings” in the 2020 presidential election, and Trump perpetuated the Big Lie that the election was stolen, this civic habit essential to democracy’s survival was broken. Commentators have noted, the storming of the U.S. Capitol was the first instance in our history when the peaceful transfer of power almost came up short.³

Part Two: Controlling Historical Narratives in Our Present Moment

“As Solzhenitsyn said, violence and lies – these two things have always gone hand in hand. Violence doesn’t exist and is unable to exist alone; it is unfailingly accompanied by lies. Violence has nothing to hide behind except lies.”

Akram Aylisli, “Instead of an Epilogue,” *Farewell Aylis*

As mentioned at the outset, we find a similarly egregious rewriting of history taking place in the genocidal violence against Armenians in the South Caucasus. I cannot do full justice here to the decades long conflict between the oil-rich autocracy of Azerbaijan and Armenia, one of the few functioning democracies born out of the breakup of the Soviet Union. While the genocide of Ottoman Armenians is much better known and thoroughly documented, the fact that Turkish Nationalist forces invaded the Caucasus in spring 1918 is less known. Aided by the Turkic Azerbaijani brethren, they were intent on exterminating the remnants of the Armenian nation. These forces were halted by Armenian resistance. Before the year ended, an armistice brought an end to World War I and this phase of the genocidal campaign of violence against the Armenians. Defeat in the war, did not bring an end to the ambitions of the nationalist pan-Turkic movement and their goal of cleansing the Caucasus of its Armenian population. Just as the Lost Cause narrative perpetuated the “nobility” of Southern life before Northern repression, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and his propagandist minions have characterized the Armenians of the region as “settler colonists” who have usurped the native Azeris of their historic lands. The victims have none become the oppressors. Reversing the historical narrative, they fabricated a narrative that claims that Armenians committed genocide against the Azeri people and ethnically cleansed them from not only Nagorno Karabakh but from most of the lands that now comprise the Republic of Ar-

menia, the other civic habit, the “fierce and merciless resentment toward men who break the public peace” has come up short. For them, the Capitol insurrectionists were exercising their free speech rights, not breaking the public peace.

³ Doubly sad is the fact that for a significant portion of the pop-

menia. Aliyev has made his goal abundantly clear, “Armenia as a country is of no value. It is actually a colony, an outpost run from abroad, a territory artificially created on ancient Azerbaijani lands” (Aliyev 2012).⁴ Aliyev does not recognize the internationally recognized territorial integrity of the Republic of Armenia:

We have perhaps a hundred times more grounds not to recognize the territorial integrity of Armenia than they have not to recognize our territorial integrity. Because everyone already knows this, and so does the world community, that in November 1920 our historical lands of Zangazur [Syunik], as well as Goycha [Sevan], were severed from us and annexed to Armenia. The city of Yerevan was ceded to Armenia on 29 May 1918. So, there are many factors for us, as they say, not to recognize the territorial integrity of Armenia. (Aliyev 2022)

The lies that Aliyev and his regime spew forth bear out what Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn meant when he wrote, “For violence has nothing to cover itself with but lies, and lies can only persist through violence” (Solzhenitsyn 1974). The lies take the form of a decades long process of reinscribing the physical landscape of the lands they have controlled or captured. Thousands of ancient and medieval Armenian monuments, including churches and cemeteries, have been pulverized to dust or ascribed to the long extinct Caucasian Albanians whose presence in the region cannot be established after the 8th century. Armenian churches and monasteries that have fallen into the hands of the Azeris as a result of their successful military assault on the Armenian populated Republic of Artsakh (formerly known as Nagorno Karabakh) are now undergoing a scrubbing of all traces of the distinctive Armenian alphabet from their walls and artifacts. The once Armenian province of Nakhichevan, placed by Stalin under Azerbaijani control in the early days of the Soviet Union, underwent a decades-long systematic campaign of cultural heritage destruction. The violence against the indigenous inhabitants in this region has resulted in

countless deaths and the flight of all the remaining Armenians from Azeri controlled lands. As the Harvard art historian, Christina Maranci has written, “Between 1997 and 2006, as a decade-long investigation revealed last year, Azerbaijan deliberately wiped Nakhichevan clean of its Armenian culture, destroying more than 89 medieval churches, 5,840 khachkars (carved cross-stones), and 22,000 historical tombstones” (Maranci 2020). A more recent 436-page forensic investigation by Cornell University’s Caucasian Heritage Watch has established irrefutable evidence for this destruction:

In a year-long forensic investigation, Caucasus Heritage Watch (CHW) has used high-resolution satellite imagery to document the fate of Armenian cultural heritage sites in the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic of Azerbaijan (Arm.Nakhichevan). To summarize our main finding, CHW’s research shows the complete destruction of 108 medieval and early modern Armenian monasteries, churches, and cemeteries between 1997 and 2011. This figure represents 98% of the Armenian cultural heritage sites we were able to locate and assess for this investigation. These findings provide, for the first time, conclusive forensic evidence that silent and systematic cultural erasure has been a feature of Azerbaijan’s domestic ethnic policies. (Caucasian Heritage Watch 2022, 6)

This cultural genocide has facilitated the Azeri irredentist ambitions by removing all contrary evidence to the historical narrative that the Aliyev regime has been propagating. Monuments and mosques have been placed in former sites of Armenian cultural heritage.

Hand in hand with the physical cleansing of the landscape of people and their cultural heritage is the wholesale sanitizing of Azerbaijani literature produced both before and since the breakup of the Soviet Union. Censorship is a mark of all authoritarian regimes and Azerbaijan is no exception. Numerous writers have been arrested or exiled and their books banned and burned. The chief illustration of a highly honored artist’s fall from grace in the Aliyev regime is the “People’s Writer” Akram Aylisli. His 2013 novella *Stone Dreams* in which a central character is transported in his dreams to hometown Agulis (Aylis), home to an ancient Armenian community and the historic

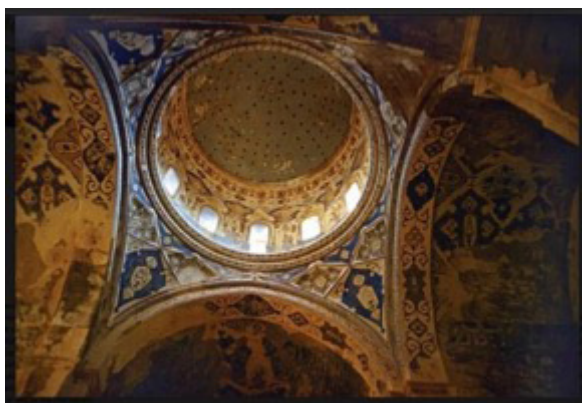
⁴ See also the Reuter’s coverage of Aliyev’s remarks in “Azeri president says Armenia is a country “of no value.” November 20, 2012.



Agulis (Aylis) at the beginning of the 20th century.



St. Thomas Monastery consisted of church, bell towers, a wall, and auxiliary buildings.



Interior dome of St. Thomas (r).



New mosque on site of St. Thomas.

monastery of Saint Thomas (Saint Tovma), was his crime.⁵

The town's Armenian population had been massacred by Azeri militias aided by Turkish officers in 1919 well after

⁵ As reported in Caucasian Heritage Watch's report, *Silent Erasure*: "In 2021, an investigation by [Simon] Maghakyan, for which CHW provided satellite imagery, concentrated on the destruction of Armenian monuments in Agulis, a town in Nakhchivan with a deep history of Armenian habitation. In response to these findings, an Azerbaijani diplomat proclaimed, "First and foremost, we need to make it clear that there is no such thing as 'Armenian heritage' in the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic simply because Armenians never lived there." Continued government denial not only seeks to silence those who decry heritage destruction; it also demands that the prior existence of these monuments be forgotten. The policy of denial entraps Azerbaijani officials into a manifestly false discourse that is objectively refuted not only with available satellite imagery, but Azerbaijan's own archive of Soviet-era topographic maps and monument lists" (7).

the 1918 armistice. Aylisli's benign treatment of fictional Armenian characters and his historically truthful characterization of events lead to his books being banned and burned. He himself was sent into internal exile and his pension revoked. Jamesian civic courage has no place in such totalitarian societies.

In 2001 the Azerbaijani government started the process of adopting a Latin alphabet replacing the Cyrillic one imposed by Joseph Stalin in the Soviet period. Researchers such as Ararat Sekeryan have discovered that this process accelerated in 2004 under Ilham Aliyev's government. The opportunity opened up for Azeri propagandists to expunge any favorable treatment of Arme-

nians from the Azeri literary cannon, a truly Orwellian endeavor. The government launched a massive campaign to transliterate Soviet-era Azerbaijani literature from the Cyrillic alphabet into the Latin script. As Sekeryan remarks: "During this state-sponsored campaign, more than 2,000 works of fiction have been transliterated with a particular type of censorship: Armenian characters and any kind of ethnic reference to Armenia and Armenians were cleansed from the fictional world of Soviet Azerbaijan" (Sekeryan 2019). Armenians either disappeared or were distorted as evil doers in the Azerbaijani imaginary. Creating such racial stereotypes was central to the Lost Cause myth in the American South. Slaves were happy, simple people who were well taken care of on their plantations. The overturning of this way of life after emanci-

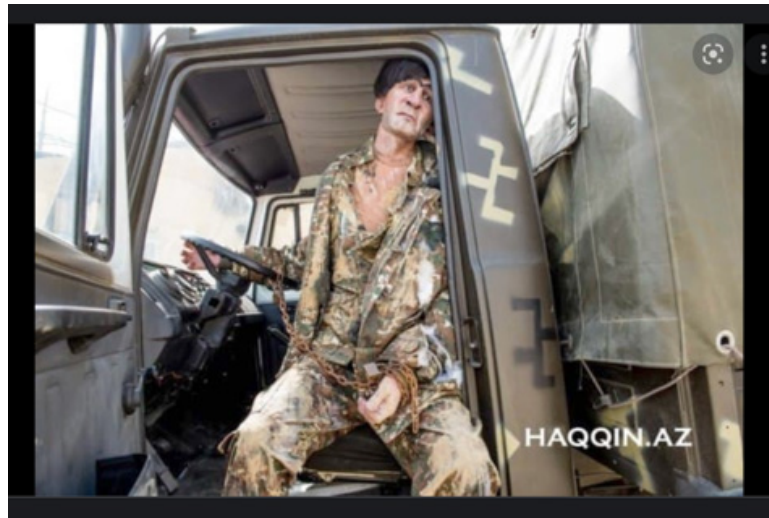
pation, turned some Blacks into dangerous predators lusting after the white women of the South. Racial lynching came to dominate the landscape. In a similar fashion, the vacuum of knowledge about the Armenian past and its repopulation with Armenian evildoers and oppressors, makes it easier for the Azerbaijani government to indoctrinate young people with the racist stereotypes of Armenians necessary to facilitate their campaign of genocidal violence. Such stereotypes fuel the hatred that we saw manifested in the war crimes and atrocities that continue to be perpetrated to this day. After the 2020 Karabakh War in which Armenians suffered significant losses in life and territory, the Aliyev regime built a monument to the war in central Baku. Called the Military Trophy Park, it displayed captured and destroyed



A child playing in the Military Trophy Park, Baku, spring 2021.



A child playing in the Military Trophy Park, Baku, spring 2021.



Mannequins of Armenian soldiers.



Mannequins of Armenian prisoners of war.



President Aliyev taking a photo op with the helmets of dead Armenian soldiers, April 2021.

Armenian military equipment and helmets of slain soldiers. Mannequins of Armenian soldiers in degrading poses with grotesque facial features were displayed. Universal condemnation and an International Court of Justice ruling against the Republic of Azerbaijan resulted in the removal of the mannequins and helmets but the continuing indoctrination of young people to hate Armenians continues through their state educational system.⁶

Erasing and distorting Armenian cultural heritage, I argue, fits the types of acts outlined in the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide. In the words of the Convention, these are actions “causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group,” and are intended to destroy the group, the Armenians of the Caucasus. Such cultural destruction is genocide.

Just as in the South with its Lost Cause narrative, when history is weaponized by those determined to hold on to power, violence, whether racial or genocidal results. Just as generations of young Southern whites grew up in an atmosphere of oppression fostered by the myth of the Lost Cause, a generation of young Azeris have now grown up with a distorted history that demonizes Armenians. Such breeding of hatred inevitably leads to atrocities and the war crimes we have witnessed in the over three-decades long conflict in the Caucasus. Controlling the historical narrative does matter, for it is a matter of life or death for all those who are oppressed.

⁶ In 2021 Armenia brought a case against Azerbaijan under the provisions of the *International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination*. The Court ruled unanimously in Armenia's favor that Azerbaijan must “Take all necessary measures to prevent the incitement and promotion of racial hatred and discrimination, including by its officials and public institutions, targeted at persons of Armenian national or ethnic origin” (29). The Court also ruled that “Take all necessary measures to prevent and punish acts of vandalism and desecration affecting Armenian cultural heritage, including but not limited to churches and other places of worship, monuments, landmarks, cemeteries and artefacts” (29). Enforcement of these rulings has been negligible since there are no compliance mechanism aside from referral to the United Nations. <https://www.icj-cij.org/public/files/case-related/180/180-20211207-ORD-01-00-EN.pdf>

References

- Aliyev, Ilham. 2012. Twitter Post. November 20, 2012, 4:52 AM. <https://twitter.com/presidentaz/status/270827003521929216?lang=en>
- Aliyev, Ilham. 2022. Quoted in “‘Whether peace agreement signed now or not, we will always increase and must build up our military capacity’ - Azerbaijani President,” Trend New Agency, January 12, 2022. <https://en.trend.az/azerbaijan/politics/3540265.html>
- Caucasian Heritage Watch. 2022. *Special Report #1, Silent Erasure: A Satellite Investigation of the Destruction of Armenian Heritage in Nakhchivan, Azerbaijan*. Lori Khatchadourian, Adam T. Smith, Husik Ghulyan, & Ian Lindsay. Cornell Institute of Archaeology and Material Studies, Cornell University. <https://indd.adobe.com/view/publication/2a6c8a55-75b0-4c78-8932-dc798a9012fb/58x9/publication-web-resources/pdf/CHWNakhichevanReportFull.pdf>
- International Court of Justice. 2021. *Application of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (Armenia v. Azerbaijan)* 7 December 2021.
- James, William. 1897. “Oration by Professor William James,” in *Exercises at the Dedication of the Monument to Colonel Robert Gould Shaw and the Fifty-Fourth Regiment of Massachusetts Infantry, May 31, 1897*, Boston: Municipal Printing Office.
- Maranci, Christina. 2020. “Cultural Heritage in the Crosshairs Once More --- The resolution to the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan leaves irreplaceable treasures in harm's way,” Arts in Review -- Cultural Commentary, *Wall Street Journal*. New York, N.Y. November 19, 2020. <http://ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/news-papers/arts-review-cultural-commentary-heritage/docview/2461689667/se-2?accountid=10226>
- Moffat, Emil. 2021. “Confederate Imagery on Stone Mountain Is Changing, But Not Fast Enough for Some,” June 21, 2021 WABE-FM broadcast. <https://www.capradio.org/news/npr/story?storyid=1007924006>
- Neiman, Susan. 2020. *Learning from the Germans: Race and the Memory of Evil*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Reuters Staff. 2012. “Azeri president says Armenia is a country ‘of no value.’” November 20, 2012. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-azerbaijan-armenia/azeri-president-says-armenia-is-a-country-of-no-value-idUSBRE8AJ-1DC20121120>
- Sekeryan, Ararat. 2019. “The Disposables: Literary Ethnic Cleansing of Armenians in Azerbaijani Literature,” unpublished Master's Thesis, New York: Columbia University.

DEFENDING THE TRUTH

Jane Skinner

The Cape Peninsula University of Technology

Skinnerj@cput.ac.za

ABSTRACT: This article is about 'speaking truth to power'¹. The nature of truth has been in contention for at least two and a half millennia but it can be agreed that it has reached a particular crisis point in the present, both within the academy and in the popular imagination – while the nature of power wielded by technology as it currently pervades society could never have been remotely imagined in previous centuries. The international importance of the defence of freedom of speech in these circumstances was acknowledged by the choice of activists for press freedom as the recipients of the 2021 Nobel Peace Prize. The article therefore discusses power's influence on truth as understood historically and more recently. It discusses the limiting, 'naturalizing', conceptions of knowing currently prevailing in philosophies of science, along with the pragmatist (Rortyan) retreat from any fixed philosophical stance on truth, and counters these with conceptions of 'adaptive truth' as first conceived by Charles Sanders Pierce and developed further by Joseph Margolis, with some supporting arguments suggested by the author. The final section focusses on the investigative journalists who are prepared to defend both truth and democracy, in this increasingly dangerous environment.

Key words: post truth, social media algorithms, Joseph Margolis, adaptive truth, press freedom

Introduction. The global context.

We live in an explosively divided world with communication instantly available but at the same time easily manipulable, and with communities increasingly separated into silos of sharply opposing opinion. Democracy appears to be losing traction as the experience of populations suggests that for several decades now, powerful business interests, and the influence of elites, rather than their own interests, have predominated in nominally democratic government decision making. At the same time, dictatorships are on the rise with 53 countries informally listed as being dictatorships, and right-wing parties with-

in democracies occupying powerful positions. Some very recent set-backs indicate that this is not an immutable trend (and this is important to consider for this thesis), but those at the 'coal-face' of investigating its root causes and its tools for entrenching power (the current 'networked 4th estate' of investigative journalists) warn that the dangers are real and increasing. 'Post truth' was voted the word of the year in 2016, suggesting the widespread currency of this strange phenomenon. A suspicion of elites, and thus of the scientific truth which they purvey, has helped to fuel this attack on empirical evidence as the foundation for establishing facts as Paul Thomson recently explored in some depth (Thompson, 2021) indicating that the complexity of the position occupied by post truth adherents is far greater than can be countered simply with a more 'scientific' stance.

Philosophical Underpinnings

If philosophies have generally preceded social change, and either endorsed or threatened existing social order, it becomes pertinent to consider their role within the present context.

Critical theory. Joseph Margolis held that 'all philosophy is political' (Margolis, 2000) and thus that all initiating ideas are potentially involved in, or influential in shaping, or will be shaped by, structures of power within society. This idea was first captured as an incendiary concept by Karl Marx in the *German Ideology* when he wrote that 'The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas...the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force'(Marx, 1845). The uprisings against autocratic rule which took place throughout Europe three years later can be linked to this thinking, and, in the nearly two hundred years since, the idea has taken different forms but has never been entirely erased as a way of understanding the fault lines in society, and providing grounds for dissent. However, while the 'critical theory' of the

¹ This is attributed to Bayard Rustin in 1942, a Black Quaker in the Civil Rights Movement, advocating non-violent methods in his fight for social justice.

Frankfurt School of the 1930s and 40s saw the influence of power on perceptions of reality (Engels' 'false consciousness') as pervasive, they also saw it as inescapable: "It cannot be succeeded by a new theory, *but only by rational reality itself* [emphasis added]: The abyss between rational and present reality cannot be bridged by conceptual thought" (Marcuse, 1961). Herbert Marcuse thus believed that there was no conceptual bridge which could allow us to access rational reality – we are trapped in the power structures of the present. Later in the century Michel Foucault also held that "Power is everywhere" and "comes from everywhere" so in this sense is neither an agency nor a structure" (Foucault 1998: 63). These twentieth century theories therefore considered escape from the distortions created by power as in practice impossible, at the same time denying the potential efficacy of any practical action in the defence of a more rational, democratic society. This gives some traction to Richard Rorty's idea that his continental postmodern counterparts represented a 'spectator left' (Rorty, 1998:13). This postmodern scepticism also, it has been suggested, feeds into current acceptance of 'post truth' positions (McIntyre, 2018).

Occupying, until fairly recently, a central role in the social sciences, critical theory now appears to be largely in abeyance, and a brief internet search of 'critical thought' will bring up little that is political, while only Amhurst College, it seems, offers a course in 'critical theory'. On the other hand, contemporary educational discourse elevates 'critical thinking' (divorced from any acknowledged political connotations) to a key skill within 'student-centred', and 'life-long learning' discourses. Closer investigation will show however that its object is to assist students in acquiring those '21st century skills' seen as essential for economic success within our global, competitive society (Starkey, 2019) – in Marxian terms, indicating that 'the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time [still] its ruling intellectual force'.

But truth and knowledge, thus conceived as nar-

rowed down and shaped by power, now face a yet more existential threat in the emergence of 'false news' and 'post-truth' or the denial of established scientific, empirical means of establishing facts. Intelligent meaning making is not debatable here. There is no such starting point.

Richard Rorty and theories of power. As the leading pragmatist of his time, Rorty may have criticised his continental contemporaries for taking an ineffectual stance, but he himself explicitly rejected any belief in philosophy having a role to play in issues of power. "Without traditional concepts of metaphysics we cannot make sense of the appearance-reality distinction, and without this distinction one cannot make sense of the notion of 'what is really going on'. No more metaphysics, no more unmasking" (Rorty, quoted in Critchley, 1996:14). Rorty believed that we could leave that to "muckraking journalists" – an insight which is prescient for our present situation, but which removes the academy entirely from the scene.

Other philosophies. At the same time, 'mainstream' philosophy could be characterised as either focussed on language issues to the exclusion of the real world (analytic thinkers) – a further disengagement from politics – or focussed on 'cognitive science' where naturalizing accounts of knowing are limited to 'the causal closure of physics' and consciousness and the nature of mind are fiercely debated, but only within materialist ('naturalizing') conceptions where our popular ideas about minds may be understood as mere folk psychological myths (Plotkin, 1998: 98). Two philosophers from this school of thought (Don Ross and David Spurrett) for instance, explain the apparent success of human agents in their interventions in the world, as simply the outcome of programming within the brain. "We think it is overwhelmingly likely that agents are programmes and they are not anything else" (Ross and Spurrett, 2003: 52). With this analysis Rorty agrees, if in rather more poetic terms. "some atoms in the void account of micro-processes within individual human beings will...permit of every sound or inscription which will ever be uttered" (Rorty,

1980: 354). But if we are not ultimately responsible we cannot be ultimately held to account – and we can best be understood, in the vision of the novelist Yuval Noah Harari in his book *Homo Deus* (Harari, 2015) as a species within the control of algorithms.

Overall therefore humanity is denied individual access to intelligent meaning-making, or the means to effectively act upon it, by every dominant thought system. Philosophical thought is thereby effectively removed from democratic processes, and the academy is deeply complicit in its removal.

Margolis and the counter-currents

While Rorty saw current materialism and ‘naturalizing’ as in accord with pragmatism, Joseph Margolis argued that the connection was true only in so far as both reject spiritual or religious positions, but so do many other disparate thought systems (Margolis, 2002). Classical pragmatists, he pointed out, would never have questioned the central significance of natural meaning-making or the efficacy of human intelligence. Thus Margolis supports a pragmatist position which he characterises as ‘natural but not naturalizable’. Indeed he sees that ‘this may yet prove to be the best short statement of pragmatism’s late discovery of itself’ (Margolis, 2002: 6). However, he also foresees that philosophers will still be ‘battling Cartesianism’ throughout most of the 21st century. It is therefore to a strategy of my own for defusing and re-focusing this mind-body problem that I digress here, before returning to my main thesis.

My position (which I see as essentially Margolian) is developed in an article published in 2006 involving a non-material alternative to the currently dominant materialist philosophical method. My argument focusses on the broader issue of the *nature* of life and of consciousness, on ‘what is the difference’ (between material matter, and living and conscious immaterial capacities) beyond ‘what *makes* the difference’ as the narrower

focus taken by the materialists. I argue that this has to involve completely undiscovered fields of enquiry, very far removed in the chain of evolution from the inert material world at its earliest origins which is the limitation set for themselves by the materialists: “To try to explain advanced consciousness in terms of the simplest physical and material mechanisms that pre-date life and the further development of a central nervous system, must be a severely inadequate strategy” (Author, 2006: 80). I suggest (very tentatively) that a search for such immaterial capacities will need some form of isomorphism as a starting point – and that this could possibly be found between aspects both of organic life and of consciousness (holistic, dynamic, inter-connected, and involved with potential over actual existence) and the outer limits of the natural world, discovered in the early twentieth century, paradoxically by the very analytic, reductionist, methods from which they differ radically (ibid: 88).

Less tentatively, the article points to the onset of consciousness as clearly a biological adaptation (as do both Dewey and Margolis) but, further than that, I argue for its acceptance as the most important evolutionary adaptation ever achieved “a cognitive capacity allowed to individuals by evolution itself”. “This evolutionary understanding *entails* that what we know is more truthful than false – otherwise the adaptation could not be logically defended as having survival value” (Author, 2006: 89). This approach also entails that “we are stuck with knowing the world and being required to deal with it” in contrast to the naturalizers who have no way to explain endogenous processes and their links to exogenous context of our existence. Cartesian dualisms may therefore take on a different appearance if consciousness and the material aspects of the body are understood as incomparable, although interdependent, realities. If conscious thought is seen as immaterial and of an order that we are currently only able very dimly to glimpse, a material method as the only means of accessing its nature must then be abandoned as inappropriate. This understand-

ing, while leaving the connection between physics and consciousness unresolved, necessarily shifts society from a passive to an active position, enabling (requiring) us to enter the political lists once again in the spirit of Dewey a hundred years ago, and for what Nobel Laureate Maria Ressa (Ressa, 2021) demands of all of us – that we ‘hold the line’ for democracy against the threat of fascism. But this discussion is only as a contribution to the wider arguments with which Margolis was most concerned, to which I now return.

I am a ‘Margolian’, or an adherent of the thought of Joseph Margolis (1924 - 2021). If no such term exists, I am coining it now! I will attempt to sketch some of Margolis’s principal contributions to philosophical thought, in so far as I believe they can be seen as significant for this paper. Margolis is hard to categorise philosophically. He admitted to being pleased to be described on one occasion as a ‘baroque analytic’ thinker – on the grounds that he appreciated the ‘genuine rigor’ of analytic thought (Margolis, 1991: x). However, at the same time, he dismisses the ability of analytic philosophy to establish ‘justified true belief’ as epistemically unfounded: “There is no way of giving conceptual priority to alethic questions over epistemic or ontic ones” (since the initiation of all concepts stems from human agency). Thus “neither logic nor epistemology is an autonomous discipline though modern analytic philosophy has always mistakenly supposed they were” (Margolis, 1991: 8). Thus, the core of analytic thought is neatly cut down to size!

Margolis’s unerring instinct for pinpointing the weaknesses in the arguments of all philosophers from Aristotle and Plato (‘those worthies’) to Emmanuel Kant (‘just another peevish rationalist *malgre lui*’) (Margolis, 2016: 104) to the ‘big names’ of his own day – and most especially Richard Rorty – did not always endear him to his colleagues, but that does not detract from the compelling power of his thought, although it may have sometimes marginalised and muted his influence.

Margolis is in fact more than a pragmatist, while

being understood as a key thinker within this genre. Rather he is perhaps a ‘pragmatist writ large’ as his later thoughts on the proper trajectory of pragmatism set it on a wider and more expansive path, one which he believed could capture the best hopes of not only pragmatism, but of philosophy more generally, at a time when he saw that: “the world is bent in the most determined way on deepening everywhere the influence of every benighted vision imaginable, at the same time the planet is being utterly used up. So the ‘best’ thinking is desperately needed”. (Margolis, 1991: x).

Beyond his unsettling of the core assumptions of analytic philosophy and challenging the naturalizing trends in cognitive science (along with the naturalizing element in Rortyan pragmatism) via a defence of the natural world as we find it – his principal contributions to thought have included a recovery of a ‘robust relativism’ from its status of rejection and obscurity suffered since the time of ancient Greece, and a development of Charles Sanders Pierce’s conception of abduction.

In *The Truth about Relativism* (1991) Margolis argues that it was on fairly flimsy grounds that Plato and Aristotle persuaded us that Protagoras was wrong in his belief that ‘man is the measure’ (of truth) a position that denies immutable, a priori, stances. On the contrary Margolis holds that, such a position is an enabling, indeed a necessary, condition for action in the world: “Vindicated, relativism has the force of deepening, in the most profound way, every incipient doubt regarding the presumptions of cognitive fixity, certainty, unconditional truth, irrelevance of context and history and personal and societal perspective in both theoretical and practical matters...once and for all”. With the deepening of doubt about immutable positions, their hold on our attention weakens and the possibilities they hold in check become available once again – that is “context and history and personal and societal perspective in both theoretical and practical matters” are reopened. Margolis also reminds us that “the prevailing philosophical winds...are blow-

ing more and more favourably in relativism's direction than was ever the case in ancient Greece". This brings us back to the discoveries of physics at sub-atomic level along with theories of relativity which allow that "there is certainly no consensus *now* that it is either incoherent or wildly unreasonable to suppose that the world has no fixed structure". But this does not entail that there is no truth. It can rather be seen that "order does not require or entail unconditional invariance, not at the level of the real structures of the world, and not at the level of the conditions of our understanding and intervening in the world". "Scientific explanation tends to become increasingly provisional, transient, imaginative and tolerant of adventurous models of 'what is'". Immovable, timeless solutions, which we have always sought, are endlessly question-begging, and thus up to now, Margolis argues "we have been pretending to draw our strength from an invariant order of norms and natures that we cannot confirm" (Margolis, 1991:105).

All of Margolis's approaches are in accord with his later support for the significance of Charles Sanders Pierce's 'abductive turn' as 'abductive Hope' which, he argues, enables us to "grasp the power of abduction to end doubt, without ensuring truth" (Margolis, 2016:100). The latter is the principal focus of this paper, and, I shall argue, of key significance in effectively defending the status of truth and democracy currently at risk. He discusses 'Charles Pierce's Abductive Turn' at some length in a chapter in his book *Toward a Metaphysics of Culture* (Margolis, 2016).

Pierce's idea of 'abduction' is as the genesis of reasonable, intelligent, common sense ideas. He explains it as "the process of forming explanatory hypotheses. It is the only logical operation which introduces any new idea" (Duven, 2021, CP 5.172). Elsewhere he says that abduction encompasses "all the operations by which theories and conceptions are engendered" (Duven, 2021, CP 5.590). Margolis's interpretation of such a logical hypothesis is one which occurs to the human mind as the one most

worthy of further investigation – and thus, if engendered by biological processes which are common to humanity, it will be equally available to everyone. (We are speaking here of reduction to the best available explanation – interestingly a position which is apparently currently adopted in many technology programmes). In a related idea Pierce points to the fact that we commonly debate with ourselves over an idea, leading to better critical answers – and this not in isolation but within the context of a wider society. Pierce believed, with Margolis, that there is an 'instinct' for rational order that "we cannot do without but whose characteristic claims cannot be confirmed" (Margolis, 2016: 100). As Margolis says there are strong similarities between these ideas and Dewey's concept of 'warrantable assertibility', which allow us to distinguish between 'absolute truth' and 'what you do not doubt'.

While Margolis quotes Peirce as saying: "if you carefully considered the question of pragmatism you will see that it is nothing else than the question of the logic of abduction" (Margolis, 2016: 98 -99), he is also at pains to admit that others may disagree that Peirce ever abandoned his earlier more mathematical ideas in favour of developing this approach to a central place in his philosophy: "if you insist that he never relented then I say he should have (ibid: 106)". Margolis's point is that this need not matter, since the abductive turn is of value to philosophy in general. We see throughout his discussion that Margolis is, in fact, only using the ideas he finds in the later writings of Pierce, as stepping stones to furthering his own philosophy. Overall he believes that the idea of 'abduction' is a "neglected, but very important resource in Pierce, in classic pragmatism and in philosophy in general (We cannot do without it)" (ibid: 100). He sees that it will provide "a better sense of direction for our time" and that it can be understood as embracing much wider streams of western philosophy, providing a benign way of 'Darwinizing Hegel' and 'Hegelianizing Darwin' (ibid:136), to which Pierce referred in another context. Thus overall:

We may find that we cannot be seriously deflect-

ed from our belief that there *is* an independent but thoroughly cognisable world to be investigated or that we human inquirers are made apt by biological evolution and the cultural invention of language...for effectively coming to know the way the world is (Margolis, 2016: 105)

This approach, whether categorised as essentially Piercean or Margolian, supports the role of rational common sense, within a common understanding, and generally accessible within a current way of life, in accessing truth. For the purposes of this paper, it is essential for defending democracy in our age of post-truth and false news.

Links back to our present predicament

A concern for the recovery of human agency and intelligent, responsible, meaning making, can of course equally be thought of as a means of recovering the essential tools for freedom of speech and democratic processes. There are shades here of George Orwell's key defence of the importance of just such individual access to truth in his novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Orwell's insight was relevant to his time in the mid-20th century when both fascism and soviet communism threatened to engulf democracy and freedom:

The obvious, the silly and the true had got to be defended. Truisms are true, hold onto that! The solid world exists...stones are hard, water is wet. Freedom is the freedom to say that two and two equal four. If that is granted all else follows (Orwell, 1990:84).

As I have noted elsewhere (author, 2021) amongst the most audacious of Rorty's reinterpretations of other thinkers' ideas in directions designed to accommodate his own, was his claim that this insight of Orwell's could be understood as meaning that "it does not matter whether 'two plus two is four' is true" – but he would defend your right to say so. Orwell's intention (although defeated in the narrative of the novel itself, indicating that we may get to a tipping point beyond which the re-

covery of democracy by this means becomes impossible) was clearly to see logic as innate, individual, and (perhaps the only) powerful antidote to the intellectual hegemony of totalitarian rulers and the influence of false ideas. It is clear that the initial grounding of accessible truth in consciousness and logic is Orwell's point, and not the secondary issue of that fight for the right to say it, which may be contingent upon its acceptance. Both appear to be facing us urgently once again.

Those most clearly in a position to know, warn us that we are currently being called upon once again to draw on our individual ability to say that 'two and two equal four' before our collective thought processes are irreversibly manipulated by false truth. If democracy is under threat, both from within and without its founding institutions, and thus in a weak position of defend itself, those on the front line in its defence are most evidently the international body of investigative journalists. Their weapons are none other than their ability, at great personal risk, to unearth the truth based on the best of available, logical evidence, of the kind that we cannot on that account doubt, although we can also not in any (what Margolis would call) 'knock down way' defend, beyond our biologized instinct for adaptive 'common sense'. They are ably represented by Nobel Laureates Maria Ressa from the Philippines and Dmitry Muratov from Russia, that is from two dictatorships, where the truth is being denied, and lives are being lost in its defence without any available international sanctions.

The nature of the challenge

Post truth. The precise origins of 'post truth', as the denial of established scientific, empirical means of establishing facts, may be hard to identify, but the means of its dissemination are clearly the social media platforms, shaped by the algorithms set by artificial intelligence, as designed for massive profit by the big tech companies. The algorithms are designed with a built-in emphasis

on those random pieces of disinformation and divisive, emotive messages that most effectively keep viewers engaged, and thus advertisers satisfied. According to Maria Ressa, this has created an 'information ecosystem' of 'surveillance capitalism' which is biased against facts (and against journalists) – a 'virus of fear, anger and hate'. It also entails that we have 'no shared reality' and there can be 'no election integrity without integrity of facts' (Ressa, 2021). In a more recent interview Ressa discusses the mechanisms involved at a deeper level (Ressa, 2022). She explains the machine learning that clones us through social media algorithms, predicting and micro-typing individuals. She argues that this reprogramming has the potential to take away free will and create an emerging new species behaviour – surely a twenty-first century version of the pervasive influence of Orwell's 'Big Brother' operating at a molecular level.

The involvement of the '4th Estate'

The right to freedom of speech and a free press is guaranteed in the First Amendment of the American Constitution as follows:

Congress shall make no law ...abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press... or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

At a previous time of serious corruption and lawlessness at the beginning of the twentieth century then President Theodore Roosevelt famously depicted the journalist as 'The man with the muck rake'. In a speech delivered in 1906 he rallied the press to be vigilant and expose the evil doers – providing only that all that they said involved only the truth. The relevant part of the speech reads as follows:

There are in the body politic, economic and social, many and grave evils, and there is urgent necessity for the sternest war upon them. There should be relentless exposure of and attack upon every evil man, whether politician or business man, every evil practice, whether in politics, business, or

social life. I hail as a benefactor every writer or speaker, every man who, on the platform or in a book, magazine, or newspaper, with merciless severity makes such attack, provided always that he in his turn remembers that the attack is of use only if it is absolutely truthful.²

It can be agreed that more than one hundred years later it is still true to say that "there are in the body politic, economic and social, many and grave evils, and there is urgent necessity for the sternest war upon them". Such are the wars for freedom of speech being fought against dictators all over the world. Whether current, essentially democratic, governments, including the USA, can be shown to maintain Theodore Roosevelt's supportive approach for investigative journalists, if their target is the government itself, is however open to question.

Yochai Benkler discusses this issue in "a Free Irresponsible Press: Wikileaks and the Battle over the Soul of the Networked Fourth Estate". He explains that the "Networked Fourth Estate" differs from "the traditional press and the traditional fourth estate in that it has a diverse set of actors instead of a small number of major presses. These actors include small for-profit media organizations, non-profit media organizations, academic centers, and distributed networks of individuals participating in the media process with the larger traditional organizations." While the members of this informal press corps are themselves potentially irresponsible, through a discussion of the case of Julian Assange and his exposure of secret US government documents in Wikileaks, the article finds that the US government is also able to "circumvent normal constitutional protections to crack down on critics who use the networked public sphere", since private companies largely tried to cut out Assange from dealing with them, for fear of government reprisals. To

² Theodore Roosevelt, Address of President Roosevelt at the Laying of the Corner Stone of the Office Building of the House of Representatives: The Man with the Muck-Rake (Apr. 14, 1906) – quoted in 'A Free Irresponsible Press: Wikileaks and the Battle over the Soul of the Networked Fourth Estate'. Yochai Benkler *Harvard Civil Liberties Law Review* May, 2011.

fast forward eleven years, we find Lassange still behind bars and a June 2022 decision of the British government to extradite him to the United States, knowing he could spend the rest of his life in jail for exposing US secret documents, being understood by the independent left-wing Guardian newspaper (17 June, 2022) as “turn[ing] investigative journalism into a criminal act”. The rights and wrongs of this case are however far from clear-cut, and it is not the focus of this article to debate them – but only to point to the possibility of (pragmatist) philosophy, as a co-guardian with the journalists of a reclaimed ‘adaptive truth’, to enter the fray – as did Dewey.

Pragmatism in a Post-Truth Era

Paul Thompson’s article ‘Pragmatism in a Post-truth Era’ is significant for this paper. He discusses the complex nuances of establishing a pragmatist stance on issues of post-truth, and uses the example of A Breeze Harper’s collected testimony on food, health and identity taken from 24 black women vegans in the United States. He shows how “it creates a quandary when institutional reform calls for recognition of voices that also appear to reject the legitimacy of science on the grounds of alleged histories of oppression by scientific elites”. Grounds for seeing scientific truths as questionable in the past, and implicated in oppressive practices, allow the position of the Vegan Sistahs to be seen as consistent with scientific norms in some respects – but where they “actively resist controlled experiment and scientific peer review” (Thompson, 2021: 95) – they diverge radically from Dewey’s position on the establishment of truth by experiment, and also from an ‘adaptive truth’ or ‘robust relativism’ which must accept the best available conclusion, all common sense critical considerations being taken into account. Thompson remains concerned however that “if Dotson and Stanley are right, it is the dismissal of the Sistah Vegan’s voice that blocks the learning process, rather than the denial of science”. A Margolian position of adap-

tive truth would however be able to settle this issue, as this voice is now being included, its previous exclusion notwithstanding. In a footnote Thomson explains his own ambivalent stance in these terms: “As a pragmatist I remain committed to the possibility that the skeptics could be right”. As a Margolian however this possibility evaporates, and the quandary Thompson sets up at the start of the article disappears. Scepticism would not have parity of position in any debate on an issue of truth, and the ‘Vegan Sistahs’ post-truth stance, in denying the conceptual tools needed to access the best available position, would have to concede to the nutritionists.

Conclusion

This article is intended as a celebration of the ideas of the late philosopher Joseph Margolis, of his contribution to pragmatism and to philosophy more widely. It is also intended as a recognition that the ‘best thinking’ that Margolis saw as so badly needed in our century, can in fact be recovered very effectively through a close reading of his own work.

References

- Benkler, Y. 2011. “A Free Irresponsible Press: Wikileaks and the Battle Over the Soul of the Networked Fourth Estate” 46 *Harvard Civil Liberties Law Review*, Rev 3, May.
- Critchley, S 1996. “Is Derrida a Private Ironist or a Public Liberal?” In in Mouffe C. (ed) *Deconstruction and Pragmatism* (Routledge)
- Duven, I, 2021. “Peirce on Abduction” *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*
- Foucault, M., 1998. *The Will to Knowledge v.1*. Penguin Books
- Marcuse, H 1961 [2001] ‘The Problem of Social Change in the Technological Society’ in *Towards a Critical Theory of Society* D Keller (ed) London and New York, Routledge.
- Margolis J., 2000. Central European Pragmatist Forum meeting, Stara Lesna, May-June. Keynote speech
- Margolis, J. 2000. “Richard Rorty: Philosophy by Other Means” in *Metaphilosophy*, Vol. 31, No. 5.
- Margolis, J. 2002. *Reinventing Pragmatism*. Ithaca, Cornell University Press
- Margolis, J. 2007. “Pragmatism without Foundation” *Continuum*, 2007.

- Margolis, J. 2016. "Charles Peirce's Abductive Turn", published *Toward a Metaphysics of Culture* (Routledge, 2016)
- Margolis, J., 1991. *The Truth about Relativism* (Cambridge, Mass: Blackwell)
- Marx, K. 1845-6. *The German Ideology* (Marx Engels archive)
- McIntyre, L., 2018. *Post-Truth*. Cambridge MA, The MIT Press.
- Orwell, G. 1990. *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (London, Penguin Books)
- Plotkin, H. 1998. "Evolution in Mind: an Introduction to Evolutionary Psychology" (Cambridge, Mass. Harvard University Press)
- Ressa, M. 2021. Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech. (You Tube video)
- Ressa, M. 2022. Webinar "Ressa in conversation with the editor" *The Guardian*, November.
- Rorty, R. 1980. *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Oxford, Blackwell)
- Rorty, R. 1989. *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity. Philosophical Papers* Vol. 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press)
- Rorty, R. 1998. *Achieving Our Country* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press)
- Skinner, J. 2006. "Beyond Materialism: Mental Capacity and Naturalism, a Consideration of Method" *Metaphilosophy*, Vol 37, No.1
- Skinner, J. 2020. "Testing the Truth" *Pragmatism Today* Vol 11, Issue 2.
- Starkey, L. 2019 "Three dimensions of student-centred education: a framework for policy and practice," *Critical Studies in Education*, 60:3, 375–390, DOI: 10.1080/17508487.2017.1281829.
- Thompson, P. B. 2021. "Pragmatism in a Post-Truth Era" *Pragmatism Today* Vol 12, Issue 2, Winter.



VARIABLE

LOVE AS BEING MOVED IN A CATEGORICAL SUBJUNCTIVE THAT IS OPENING A WORLD (WITH MAX SCHELER AND HELMUTH PLESSNER)

Hans-Peter Krüger
University of Potsdam
krueghp@uni-potsdam.de

ABSTRACT: When we look to ourselves as living creatures, a substantial parallel with animal forms of life seems to suggest itself readily. The specifics of human love would then consist in the fact that the members of the relation take on a mental distance to their connection and the cooperative effect that are generated in love. From this distance, love can be assessed and judged *as* love. Personal creatures share an excentric distance from their concentric modes of behavior. Concentricity is understood as the unity in behavior between an organism and something else in the environment. Excentricity means that persons, as participants in mind, are set outside these concentrics in a world. At the same time, persons remain living creatures who cannot do without the exercise of their concentricity. Richard Shusterman rediscovered Eros as the attractive mover of our living body to frame reconcentric levels in excentric levels of conduct. Scheler's positioning of love within the sensible order of the emotional life of persons avoids an overly hasty reduction of the relations of love into states, types of actions, moods, feelings of empathy, sympathy and affects. Love moves these foregrounds from the background where the beloved could thrive in its world. Plessner discusses the categorical subjunctive of passion in terms of the use of personal pronouns, above all the use of the 'I'. On the one hand 'I' is used to refer to the person's own conduct of life with their lived body here and now, which for the person cannot be substituted or exchanged by anything else. On the other hand, all persons say 'I' to themselves and others, and in doing so they make use of an anonymous structure that has intersubjectively. In this function of bringing out mental contents, all persons are exchangeable and replaceable and can represent one another. Hence an antimony emerges in the exercise of the I-position. In the relation of love, the "you" is to become "I", a "categorical irreality" (Plessner) in light of which nevertheless life is effectively conducted in an imagined phantasm.

How can we understand this phantasm? Beside the change of personal pronouns, our grammar offers the difference of indicative, imperative and subjunctive to share shifts between imagined perspectives and positions. That which is expressed in the indicative and imperative grows historically out of the disappointments and limitations of the categorical subjunctive in love. The excentricity of positionality, which seemed to be only a mental distance, emerges from a valuable relation of love for a world of the beloved. In excentricity one is beside oneself with love.

Keywords: love, grammar, personal pronouns, philosophical anthropology, Helmuth Plessner, Max Scheler, Richard Shusterman

1. Introduction to the topic of love

Love is not foregrounded in front of us, where an object can be placed in order to predicate certain properties of it by which it can be distinguished from other objects. It is not any kind of lifeless object. When we talk of the *attraction* and *repulsion* of electrons, we are transferring these terms figuratively from our life-world. In this way we make something foreign to us comprehensible, which does not have to understand itself as love. We can leave it open here whether there are love affairs between electrons. In any case they do not belong to our life-world.

But in speaking figuratively of attraction and repulsion in this way we bring out what we associate in life with the term *love*. It concerns the connection of at least two living creatures in their relation to the environment. This relation represents a qualitative surplus that cannot be reduced to the behavioral possibilities of each member of this relation. As biologically educated lay-persons of nature we might imagine e.g. the pair behavior of animals who like each other, give preference to each other, play with each other, help each other to find food and defend themselves, who bind themselves together and as the case may be reproduce. The offspring is the visible demonstration that this relation leads to a life of its own in the sequence of generations. But beyond reproduction there is also pair behavior among animals of the same sex, whether hunting together or raising offspring together, whether acquiring the competences of adults in playing together or in seemingly forming alliances and friendships. As romanticists of nature we find ourselves faced with an inexplicable surplus in the relations among animals, particularly when they belong to different species and are not pursuing any recognizable goal, but as biologically educated contemporaries we tend to ascribe most of the phenomena of love among animals to biological functions, such as nutrition and reproduction. Hence something like a cooperative effect emerges in love. There seems to be an opposite sort of connection

that can be clearly seen in behavior, an active separation in the conduct of animals that seems aggressive, leads to violence and seems due to a competition among finite conditions of survival.

The question is whether we need to change the scene again. Maybe the first change of scene from lifeless objects to a connection in the behavior of animals likewise rests on a figurative transfer. It is possible that we are interpreting the particular connections in the behavior of animals in accordance with our own self-understanding. In life-worldly terms we cannot be fooling ourselves about the appearance of love among animals when we see their tenderness, their care for one another, and their bodily union. We are familiar with all this in our own case as well. This is a commonality shared by animal and humans. Nonetheless we quickly become uncertain in our judgment whether this commonality really obtains when we ask ourselves how much of this is inborn for the affected animals and how much acquired, how much of it can become conscious or self-conscious for them or remains unconscious, what the standards are for the creatures themselves. The manner of loving might be incomparable between animals and humans.

Primatologists are in disagreement about this. Frans de Waal claims that the great apes share with us our feelings of sympathy, but not other apes, and hence that the discourse about love is unique to humans (de Waal 2006). On Michael Tomasello's reconstruction, second-personal morality between I and You already distinguishes humans from the great apes, not to speak of a collective intentionality in culturally and linguistically conventionalized form stabilized by institutions (Tomasello 2019). Nonetheless there is a minimal consensus that only humans can share a linguistically constituted mind with one another, which always represents a supra-individual phenomenon.

It follows from the introduction so far: humans can love one another in a manner that allows them to thematize their love *as love*. For this purpose we take a mental

distance from love. When we look to ourselves as living creatures, a substantial parallel with animal forms of life seems to suggest itself readily. The specifics of human love would then consist in the fact that the members of the relation take on a mental distance to their connection and the cooperative effect it generates insofar as they participate in this mental life as persons. From this distance love can be assessed and judged as love, e.g. cultivated or made taboo. A spectrum then emerges in which the different types of love are differentiated as they are to be affirmed or rejected for various reasons.

This mental distance in the human conduct of life is marked in the philosophical anthropology of Helmuth Plessner by his conception of persons as living creatures who can share, not an environment, like animals, but a world. Personal creatures share an excentric distance from the overlapping of their concentric modes of behavior. Concentricity is understood as the unity in behavior between an organism and something else in the environment, such as another organism. Excentricity means that persons, as participants in mind, are set outside these concentrics. At the same time persons remain living creatures who cannot do without the exercise of their concentricity. Persons carry out their concentric behavior in the foreground against an excentric background. They face the task of setting up the concentrics they need from an excentric standpoint, which they do in a manner that is always mediated, culturally, symbolically, and technically. Their offspring learn these historically accumulated mediations through a habituation into their sociocultural environment. That which has become self-explanatory and immediate through the habituation presents new problems and requires renewed ex-centerings in the historical process (Plessner 2019).¹

At first glance, it seems so that we have won an understanding of love *as love*, but, at a price, namely to

¹ For parallels of Plessner's approach with John Dewey's see Krüger 2019a; for philosophical anthropology in comparison with other philosophies see Krüger 2019b.

assume a mental distance from love. At second glance it becomes clear, that in understanding love we have no distance from love at all, only from love in a *narrower* biological sense. We take advantage of a *broader* understanding of love in understanding love, though we are in practice also products of biotic love. According to Scheler and Plessner, the salient point seems to consist in our living body whose concentricity can be moved on an excentric level in its habituations. This living body (*Leib*) is not fixated by a certain environment, though it needs some kind of environment that results from opening a world. Without this erotic being moved between excentric and reconcentric (i.e. a return to concentric) levels of conduct we would get into an usual body-mind-separation.

Richard Shusterman has rediscovered the great subject of erotic love in his book *Ars Erotica* thanks to his somaesthetic approach. His aesthetic understanding of living bodies frames reconcentric levels in excentric levels of human conduct. "Eros is not limited to the bedroom; attraction is the engine and energy of life. It makes the world go round while animating innumerable interpersonal sub-orbits." (Shusterman 2021, 11). Since Plato's *Symposium* we know Eros as the potential and task to connect body and mind in a broader understanding of love that has been lost in Western modern separation of sexuality. Shusterman invites us to consider love as an opening of world. I would like to contribute to this discussion about what love could be in an ambitious sense, here without a particular focus on a certain kind of love (of parents, children and friends, with somebody, for football or music, in God).

In the second part of my article I offer a reading of Max Scheler's material phenomenology of love which opposes the return to dualistic separations in his metaphysics. Scheler's positioning of love as longer movements within the sensible order of the emotional life of persons avoids an overly hasty reduction of the relations of love into states, types of actions, moods, feelings of empathy, sympathy and affects. In the third part of my paper I will

turn from Scheler's metaphysical order of kinds of love, and instead discuss the movements of love in terms of the categorical subjunctive in Helmuth Plessner. The anti-mony of personal life between an unrepresentable I and a representable I requires a subjunctive in which it can be lived. At the same time this tendency towards realization of an irreality cannot offer any ultimate solution to the question of love, as we remain alive in its questionability. It has primacy in leading one's life, though it can be covered.

2. Locating the question of love in the sensible order of the emotional life in Max Scheler

The typical dualism of either emotionality or rationality obscures the sensible order inhering in human emotional life. Rationalists have frequently assumed that emotional life is disorganized, which is why it has to be organized from outside by means of linguistic acts in and with reasons. Conversely, empiricists have often conceived emotional life as if it consisted of fixed basic units, atoms of feeling so to speak, which only have to be repeated and associated with one another often enough in order to generate larger combinations of biographical events that can then be symbolically condensed. Before we too hastily follow either the rationalist or the empiricist explanatory strategy, according to Scheler, we should first ask what phenomena we are concerned with in the conduct of life. If we do not position ourselves as alien observers from outside of life, but rather take part ourselves in the conduct of life, we can understand emotional excitations as mental orientations of sense. The following six-fold distinction is helpful to describe and interpret the manifold variety of human emotions.

A) States of feeling

There are states of feeling that can be more or less spatially localized (e.g. racing heart) and which have to persist for a minimal interval in order to become conscious at all, e.g. the so-called p-wave of 300 milliseconds. But

these states say nothing at all by themselves. We can measure and represent their physical correlates by ultrasound or non-invasive methods of brain research, i.e. the content of the experience bound to the first-personal view of a person living in their body can be represented by a third-personal empirical method. But the difficulty is somewhat different, both for the affected person as well as for example for a doctor, if this is a problematic state in any way: to which manageable or unmanageable context does this state belong? Does a racing heart mean that the person is in love and approaching their beloved or is it a clinically relevant disturbance of the pulse?

B) The contextualization of the states in something manageable for oneself, in aspirations or motives for action

Most states of feeling are entirely unproblematic for us, since we can more or less expect them within a certain context of action. In this sense they are learned and manageable within a purposeful structure between means and ends, connected with motivations. The jogger knows from experience that her states of feeling after 150 steps up the hill are different than they were down below in the rose-garden. Here the states of feeling play a clear role integrated into the context of action. If the jogger had the same pulse and the same shortness of breath on her sofa watching TV, without having run up the hill, she would immediately call a doctor. But it is not just the meaning of the states of feeling that changes depending on the context of action. The aspiration for the fulfillment of a certain type of action is itself a highly emotional undertaking. The jogger in our example can go running for rational reasons, if the diagnosis of her stress electrocardiogram leaves her no other choice. Perhaps however she has struck a successful balance of relaxation, enjoyment of being at one with nature in the park, and the hopes of an erotic encounter. The entire context of action is itself emotionally loaded, not just the states, which are connected together according to context and which set the expectations by which deviating states are noticed.

C) The contextualization of the states in something not manageable for oneself in moods

It is not just aspirations or motivations that organize states of feeling towards contexts of actions. There are also moods (as Heidegger, Binswanger and Plessner said, for a summary see Bollnow 2009), which Scheler however did not ever discuss separately. Moods organize states of feelings into contexts, but not the contexts of a certain way of doing something or even consciously ceasing whatever one is currently doing. Regardless of how much of these moods can be inherited or acquired: they involve a longer *condition* of feeling that clearly goes beyond *states* of feelings, and that is unable to satisfaction in a particular action. Moods color ongoing situations emotionally, which can best be expressed by music. The important point here is that moods do not involve any particular type of directedness at any particular object as we know from contexts of action. We have only incidental expectations of an object or expect nothing at all, which is why the satisfaction or disappointment by this standard does not change the mood. It perpetuates itself differently, can be distracted or interrupted but then come back upon another occasion.

With Plessner we could say: being in a good or bad mood (Plessner 2019, 275f) concerns the *scenery* itself, in the colors and lighting of which something or someone can appear, like Husserl's horizon before which something can emerge or behind which it could disappear (Plessner 1983a, 139, 184, 189). The true philosophical problem here does not consist in the particularity of a something or someone, but rather in the framework in which something or someone can show itself. The mood is what fills out the framework in which something or someone can encounter us. On the one hand it can make us disinclined to act in certain ways, so that in the mood we do without certain types of fulfillment and do not arrive at any certainty of action. On the other hand, every mood is different from another mood. In a mood we find as it were an empty stage. We feel whether this stage re-

mains empty or in which direction of focus it could populate itself including or excluding us.

The moods hence take a different direction, out of the context of the manageable into the context of something no longer manageable for oneself. This counter-movement of the mood can feel out the boundary where the contexts of action can become meaningful or meaningless for oneself, where they can flare up or fade, effervesce or run dry. Since this concerns the boundary of that which is no longer manageable for us, moods can only be manipulated to a limited extent, i.e. they cannot be managed without returning. In Western culture this often leads to unfortunate cascades of self-manipulation through medications.

D) The phenomenological series leading to the specifically human sympathy

Both motivations for action as well as moods already presuppose a distinction between oneself and the other, which however is by no means self-explanatory. This difference only comes out explicitly to intuition within another series of phenomena, namely in the series leading to the specifically human feeling of sympathy. Scheler distinguishes within this series of phenomena between 1. the *contagiousness of feeling*, 2. the *feeling of oneness*, 3. *empathy*, and 4. *sympathy* (Scheler 1985, 19-48, 105-111). The contagiousness of feeling refers to situative states of feeling that act contagiously among those involved on their vegetative and hence largely anonymous vital centers, without their conscious self getting actively involved. In the feeling of oneness (found for example in small children) the observer can distinguish between at least two conscious instantiations of self, but not the person affected, who either absorbs the other self into their own self (the idiopathic case) or loses their own self in the other self (the heteropathic case, i.e. as in hypnosis). In the case of empathy, the affected persons themselves feel – in the sense of an emotive cognition – the difference between self and other. The difference is distribut-

ed spatio-temporally; we feel our way into the other, and recapitulate their feeling retroactively or anticipate it in advance. However, it is no longer necessary – as in the contagiousness of feeling – for the same state of feeling (e.g. a racing heart) to actually occur within myself. I only must be able to actually imagine to myself their state. In the case of empathy there is no fusion of one's own self with the other (as with the feeling of oneness).

Finally, the specifics of mature human sympathy, such as feeling compassion or taking joy in another's happiness, consists in an unavoidable ambivalence. The condition of the other's feeling occurs within my myself, but as the feeling of an other, not as my own feeling. The same state of feeling is not actuated in myself but understood. In my sympathy the difference between myself and the other does not disappear. I am not the other self, but I realize the condition of the other. It requires time to return to oneself from this realization of the other's feeling. The self forms itself in its return to itself from the other in binding itself to a priority in this relation. Scheler calls this priority "value": does one's own condition or the condition of the other have the priority? Do both conditions merge into an undifferentiated "we"? Or do we sever the connection in order to come out of our realization of the other's feeling or at least be able to neutralize it for ourselves? Hence, sympathy is for Scheler no fixed answer but rather a question about the priority in the return to oneself from the other. In love the other as the beloved has primacy.

E) The movement of love

It is only with the distinction between the contexts of the manageable and the unmanageable, and for a self that can distinguish between self and other, that the question of the value commitments of the self arises. The self, i.e. a person, is not either self or other, but emerges in relating back to itself from the other. The self identifies itself with others' ways of acting in boundaries in order to become a particular person. It returns from the moods of

others as its own to itself. In conflicts, what determines our giving greater or lesser preference to this or that way of acting, to this or that mood for a particular person? Where is the boundary in a particular person's ability to be something herself in contrast to not being herself, for this person and no other person?

Scheler had not yet Plessner's later strategy to solve this question about the boundaries in the formation of one's own conduct, namely that we can experience these boundaries in unfeigned laughing and unfeigned crying (Plessner 2020). Bollnow has described the spectrum of the moods as ascending to this laughing and descending to this crying (Bollnow 2009). But Scheler had already located the specificity of the movement of love in the answer to this question of the final commitments of a self, i.e. its return to itself from the other. The moods concern sceneries in which particular types of objects and persons can emerge. Hence in the change of moods this problem of the framework becomes more urgent: in which world, as the framework of frameworks, can I live my life as a whole?

Love involves a movement, since the self can only build itself from its relations back to itself in the changing states and contexts of itself and the other. The self is not something that is just there and then unwinds itself, rather it develops itself from its relations back to itself from the difference between its own and the other. It first results from its relations back to itself in the movement through the states of feeling and the contexts of what is manageable and unmanageable for it. The self-relation of myself to myself *waxes and wanes* depending on what it has to bear at the moment. The movements of love do not represent any extension of the contexts of action into a blind activism. Rather they situate contexts of action in a scenery of the world in which they appear as valuable. The movements of love do *not* involve a *self-determination* and a *self-realization by the self's own power*. Rather it makes possible the relations back to myself from others, which does not lie in my own power as if it were a gift. The

person develops itself from the boundary to that which transcends it, i.e. by which its self, this bundle of "back-relations," can be carried. The relation of the self gives itself to something or someone in the relation of love, in which it is led beyond itself into a world. In this world the beloved could and would thrive and flourish, and the lover takes care for it. The lover is moved by the loved.

Scheler quotes approvingly Karl Jasper's remark about those involved in love: "It is not values that are discovered in love, rather in love everything becomes more valuable."² Ultimately, Scheler says, the acts of love cannot be conceived as objects, but rather can only be "realized" and "made graspable, not definable" within this relation.³ For the observer, love appears as a movement that is directed at "the being-higher of a value", i.e. a priority of the relation as a bridge into the world. Values are not given to those affected as objects, which is why there is no comparison between objects of values here. Rather the lover experiences, in the indivisibility and uniqueness of the loved, the illumination of an entire scenery of the world. Love brings out the value of the relation "*in the course of its movement*,"⁴ writes Scheler. The movement of love can also occur contrary to its empirical occasions, despite the absence of its fulfillment, which can be cultivated as a test of it. The movement of love is not either an ideal normative being or an empirically existing being, but rather a "*third*, indifferent to this distinction."⁵

F) Scheler pursues a path back from the movements of love to the contexts of action and sceneries of moods by way of affects. This represents a very tight circuit that quickly implements the newly formed order of values. The rapid implementation of this schema can succeed or can also go wrong. There are deeds done in the heat of the moment.

² Max Scheler: *Wesen und Formen der Sympathie*. Bonn, Bouvier Verlag 1985, p. 157. Cf. Karl Jaspers: *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen*. Berlin 1919, pp. 107 f.

³ M. Scheler, *Wesen und Formen der Sympathie*, l.c., p. 155.

⁴ Ibid. p. 160.

⁵ Ibid. p. 162.

The movement of love can manifest itself in states of feeling, contexts of action, feelings of empathy, sympathy and affects, but it does not exhaust itself in these, for it consummates itself in the background to all these foregrounded phenomena. It opens a world as a relation in the background that can frame the foregrounded aspects that occur situationally.

3. Love as Being Moved in a Categorical Subjunctive opening a world (H. Plessner)

Plessner takes the “categorical subjunctive” of passion as a subjunctive that is indispensable to the personal conduct of life (Plessner 1983b). He clarifies this subjunctive linguistically by recalling the expressive possibilities of the subjunctive as an irreal mode in contrast to the indicative and the imperative in our school grammar. In this manner he precisely specifies what Scheler had called the third of love, which does not occur either purely in the body or purely in the mind. The *imperative* commands something to be done that is prescribed either in the legal sense or in an ethical or religious sense. In the *indicative* we distinguish between possibility and reality by means of factual determinations under which a certain possibility becomes real. But with the *subjunctive* we express the type and manner of living life at issue. What would or could be the case if a certain orientation of life succeeded or failed? Measured against physical reality, the subjunctive seems like a reference to the irreal, which does not represent any possibility of factual reality. Measured against pure thought, the subjunctive involves intentional contents, but not in pure form, as in pure thought, but rather in the form of imagination. The subjunctive expresses in language the phantasms in which our conduct of life occurs.

Plessner discusses the categorical subjunctive of passion in more detail in terms of the use of personal pronouns, above all the use of the ‘I.’ On the one hand ‘I’ is used to refer to the person’s own conduct of life with their lived body here and now, which for the person can-

not be substituted, exchanged or represented by anything else. On the other hand, all persons say ‘I’ to themselves and others, and in doing so they make use of an anonymous structure that holds intersubjectively. In this function of bringing out mental contents, all persons are exchangeable and replaceable and can represent one another. Hence an antimony emerges in the exercise of the I-position between representability and unrepresentability, between the exchangeability and inexchangeability of the I. This antimony unfolds itself (Plessner 1983b, 340ff.) in a process in which its paradoxes and tautology can be distributed throughout the conduct of life. Between I and You a We emerges in which the members all enter into a reciprocally connection that distinguishes them from the You of the second-person plural. In the third person in singular and plural the connections can be treated as representable in a more neutral way.

The distinctions and connections between the personal pronouns represent a distribution of the paradox and the tautology that characterizes personal existence. I am I, unrepresentably, in a “we” that can be represented for others in the third-person plural. The imagined phantasms of the conduct of life are found in the shifts between the positions and perspectives of persons addressed by personal pronouns. In the relation of love the “you” is to become “I”, a “categorical irreality as it concerns humans and also things” (Plessner 1983b, 351) in light of which nevertheless life is effectively conducted.

The categorical subjunctive in the personal conduct of life is not exhausted in its linguistic explication. Language selectively explicates that which is implicit in practice. Language has the function of precisely specifying questionable themes. This specification precedes the function of thematization and is followed by the function of the formation of schemas (Plessner 1980, 153f, 170, 178, 187). *Thematization* arises through an experience that deviates qualitatively from what we are used to. The typical integration of the sense modalities (between seeing, hearing, smelling, touching, proprioception) to-

wards mental content does not make any sense for the person, who questions their current aesthesis. The use of *linguistic possibilities* of expression *specifies* the question by explicating it as a selection from the theme. The techniques of *habitus schematize* a selection from this specification, which gives rise to repeatable answers to the topic. The indicative and imperative are used to express these historically antecedent answers. But the categorical subjunctive allows for a shift between the positions and perspectives of the persons involved. They lead their lives within a phantasm of imaginations that can unite and divide.

What Scheler called the third of love, preceding dualism, is the first for persons leading their lives. That which is expressed in the indicative and imperative grows historically out of the disappointments and limitations of the categorical subjunctive. The excentricity of positionality involves a mental distance towards our physical bodies and our lived bodies. But, this distance emerges from a valuable relation of love to something or somebody in a world. Hence this distance rests on a commitment to love. In love one is beside oneself in an excentric positionality.

References

- Bollnow, Otto Friedrich. 2009. *Das Wesen der Stimmungen*, In: Bollnow, Otto Friedrich. *Studienausgabe in 12 Bänden*, hrsg. v. U. Boelhauve, G. Kühne-Bertram, H.-U. Lessing u. F. Rodi. Band 1. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann.
- De Waal, Frans. 2006. *Primates and Philosophers. How Morality Evolved*, ed. and introd. by S. Macedo and J. Ober, with contributions by R. Wright, C. M. Korsgaard, P. Kitcher and P. Singer. Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press.
- Jaspers, Karl. 1919. *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen*. Berlin: Verlag von Julius Springer.
- Krüger, Hans-Peter. 2019a. "How is the Human Life-form of Mind Really Possible in Nature? Parallels Between John Dewey and Helmuth Plessner". In: *Human Studies* 42, 47-64. DOI 10.1007/s10746-017-9429-5.
- Krüger, Hans-Peter. 2019b. *Homo absconditus. Helmuth Plessners Philosophische Anthropologie im Vergleich*. Berlin: De Gruyter Verlag Open Access.
- Plessner, Helmuth. 1980. "Die Einheit der Sinne. Grundlinien einer Ästhesiologie des Geistes." In: Plessner, Helmuth. *Gesammelte Schriften*, hrsg. v. G. Dux, O. Marquard u. E. Ströker. Band III. Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 7-315.
- Plessner, Helmuth. 1983a. "Die Frage nach der *Conditio humana*." In: Plessner, Helmuth. *Gesammelte Schriften*, hrsg. v. G. Dux, O. Marquard u. E. Ströker. Band VIII. Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 136-217.
- Plessner, Helmuth. 1983b. "Der kategorische Konjunktiv. Ein Versuch über die Leidenschaft." In: Plessner, Helmuth. *Gesammelte Schriften*, hrsg. v. G. Dux, O. Marquard u. E. Ströker. Band VIII. Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 338-352.
- Plessner, Helmuth. 2019. *Levels of Organic Life and the Human. An Introduction to Philosophical Anthropology*, transl. by M. Hyatt, introd. by J. M. Bernstein. New York: Fordham University Press.
- Plessner, Helmuth. 2020. *Laughing and Crying. A Study of the Limits of Human Behavior*, with a preface by J. M. Bernstein, transl. by J. S. Churchill and M. Grene. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
- Scheler, Max. 1985. *Wesen und Formen der Sympathie*, hrsg. v. M. S. Frings. Bonn: Bouvier Verlag.
- Shusterman, Richard. 2019. *Ars Erotica. Sex and Somaesthetics in the Classical Arts of Love*. Cambridge, UK/New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Tomasello, Michael. 2019. *Becoming Human. A Theory of Ontogeny*, Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

SUBJECT-CENTERED TRANSACTION VERSUS A-SUBJECTIVE MEDIAL PARTICIPATION. ON THE CONCEPTS OF EXPERIENCE IN PRAGMATIC NATURALISM AND HERMENEUTICS

Miklós Nyírő
University of Miskolc

1. Introduction

The aim of the paper is to address the relation between pragmatic naturalism and hermeneutics – primarily by focusing on their respective conceptions of experience as they figure in the work of a representative of each tradition, namely, John Ryder and Hans-Georg Gadamer. This way of formulating the paper’s aim may suggest, however, that in what follows I will not only make an attempt at comparing and contrasting two equally anti-Cartesian, yet pretty much different traditions of thought, but also that I will do that primarily regarding what they have to say about one and the same subject-matter, namely, the nature of human experience. Yet, it is advisable to keep in mind as an open question whether the pragmatic naturalist concept of experience – as Ryder, one of the main contemporary theoreticians in the field, presents it in his two latest volumes (2013, 2020) –, and in turn, the concept of experience as it figures in the hermeneutical philosophy of Heidegger and especially Gadamer, do or do not deal with the same problem. One must consider whether or not these authors’ respective notions of experience compete with one another insofar as they mutually vindicate for themselves a comprehensive, holistic, and therefore exclusive approach to what we call human experience, or perhaps they address utterly different dimensions of our dealings with the world and therefore may even supplement one another in some way. When pondering on such questions, it will also be necessary that the – respectively ‘ordinal’ and ‘historicist’ – ontology backing up the concepts of experience in these two traditions be as well taken into consideration.

There are, to be sure, certain general commonalities between the discussed approaches, a number of key considerations and orientations they share. Just to name a few: both traditions display a basic ontological motivation, even if in utterly different terms, and meanwhile both distance themselves from all kinds of traditional substance or subject ontology. Both of them conceive their respective ontology in ‘relational’ or ‘contextual’ terms – understood in their own specific senses –, and accordingly there is no place for a notion of Absolute – something dissolved from everything else, as the term implies it – in either of them. In fact, both traditions advocate their own kinds of humanism. Furthermore, both theories are anti-Cartesian insofar as they regard the sharp distinction between an interior sphere of consciousness (or subjectivity, self) and the ‘world’ as something external to it as untenable – although again, in very different manners –, and in tune with that, both regard the epistemological project of the modern era that pursues knowledge of the external world as either “wrong-headed from the start” – as Ryder puts it (2020, 49) –, or else, something derivative that gets the original-existential world-relation of the self fundamentally wrong. It is an especially remarkable feature of both traditions that they conceive the experiencing self itself as being constituted by experience alone – the “mind itself is constituted by the world it experiences” according to Ryder (2020, 52), and the equivalent of ‘mind’ in Gadamer, namely, ‘historically effected consciousness’ downright “has the structure of *experience*”, as we read it in *Truth and Method* (2004, 341). Thus, both theories conceive the experiencing self as ‘being in the world’ – although utterly *not* in a spatial sense in either of them (as if the world would be like a container in which the self would be contained) –, but again, they understand ‘being-in’ in very different terms, respectively. In any case, a theory of experience is clearly central to both approaches – indeed, it forms the kernel of both types of doing philosophy. Meanwhile, neither of them finds satisfac-

tory either the empiricist approach to experience (which stresses the role of passively received sense data) or the Kantian model of describing the process of experience (that accentuates the constitutive role of the transcendental subject), and they equally refuse the concomitant segmentation or compartmentalization of experience into separate branches, such as the cognitively, aesthetically, and morally-politically pregnant types of experience understood in an isolated manner. Moreover, both trends of thought are weary of the traditional emphasis put mainly on the cognitive aspect of experience, as well as of the traditionally privileged role attributed to propositions when the issues of cognition and truth are being considered.

These and other commonalities between the two discussed traditions should not obscure the fact, however, that their respective theories of experience, central in both approaches, significantly differ from one another. In order to make that difference as explicit as possible, one should take into consideration – I suggest – a difficult, because unusual, and for the most part even unknown notion we find nevertheless in the works of the hermeneuts. Namely, it is a specific concept of ‘*mediality*’, one that implies a ‘middle-voiced disposition’ on the subject’s part, that plays a central role in my argument – the most elaborated clarification of which can be found in Gadamer’s description of the phenomena of ‘play’ and ‘playing’. The main point this paper intends to highlight is, accordingly, the juxtaposition of pragmatism’s transactional view of experience and hermeneutics’ ‘medial or middle-voiced’ notion of experience.

Such an approach to contrasting the two traditions in question is also a novelty – to the best of my knowledge – compared to other extant critical comparisons of pragmatic naturalism and hermeneutics. Beyond highlighting my conceptual frame for elucidating the notions of experience in these schools of thought, however, it is also advisable to test its explanatory power. In order to do that, I will also summarize my reading of

the most prominent one among such critical comparisons, namely, Richard Rorty’s pragmatic appropriation of hermeneutics. All the more so, because Ryder levels an explicit criticism against the ‘excessive idealism’ he attributes to Rorty, without directing his point against hermeneutics. Thus, in order to clarify Ryder’s implicit distinction between Rorty’s version of interpretative philosophy and that of the hermeneuts – but also some of the fundamental discrepancies between Ryder’s own position and the hermeneuts’ views –, I will address the inherent assumptions of Ryder’s criticism, first, from a hermeneutical point of view, and then, according to my reading of Rorty. Here my chief claim will be that a distinction between the hermeneutical and the rather ‘subjectivist-idealist’ notions of interpretation can truly be made meaningful only by reference to the concept of ‘*mediality*’.

The structure of the paper is the following, accordingly. First, I discuss several remarkable features that Ryder’s ‘ordinal’ naturalist ontology and his Deweyan – albeit modified – ‘transactional’ notion of experience exhibit. In the next section, I primarily try to clarify the notion of ‘*mediality*’ – which is the common root of the conventional opposition between activity and passivity – by offering a detailed presentation of the major points made by Gadamer in his analysis of the eminently ‘medial’ phenomenon of ‘play’. It is in the light of this analysis that I also make an attempt at clarifying the generally ‘middle-voiced’ or ‘medial’ temper of hermeneutics, and in turn, Gadamer’s hermeneutical ontology. Finally – before concluding, and under the rubric of ‘The constellation of pragmatic naturalism, hermeneutics, and their Rortyan synthesis’ – I turn to the issues of ‘idealism’, ‘objectivity’, and ‘interpretation’ raised by Ryder’s mentioned criticism, and I try to elucidate them, first, mainly through an exposition of some implications of Heidegger’s notion of ontological difference, and second, through a summary of my understanding of Rorty’s project (including his appropriation of Gadamer’s concepts).

2. Ordinal ontology and transactional experience – Ryder's pragmatic naturalism

As Ryder repeatedly makes it explicit, the naturalist ontology presented in his mentioned volumes relies heavily on Justus Buchler's 'ordinal' metaphysics of nature (1990, 93–128), with the important amendment, however, that it mingles such an 'ordinality' with the idea of an overall emergent process in nature (according to which some orders rely for their emergence on others). Yet, instead of trying to give an even somewhat general account of that ontology, I would just call attention here to several of its remarkable features – features that distinguish it, in a favorable manner I would add, from most of the traditional ways of conceiving ontology.

First of all, this specific kind of naturalism maintains a highly *inclusive* notion of 'nature' – inclusive far beyond the concept of nature that drives modern natural science (signifying, roughly, the net of causally related entities in space and time), and also far beyond most of the so-called 'naturalist' philosophies that typically conceive nature in materialist-physicalist terms. In its pragmatic naturalist sense, "Nature ... is whatever there is"; or, in other words, "whatever exists *of whatever kind and in any possible way*" is 'natural', as Ryder puts it (2020, 14). Nature includes, accordingly, all the physical 'realities' – be they man-made or not –, all the mental 'realities' – be they made-up fictions or not –, and much more. It includes "material objects, ideas, dreams, histories, minds, persons, mathematical objects, emotions, fictional characters, ... possibilities, ethical principles, aesthetic values, lived bodies, universals, particulars, individuals, societies, and much else", even "contradictions, falsehoods, fictions, gods and demons, and so forth" (Ryder 2020, 14). What 'nature' in this broad sense does *not* include – since it would be a contradiction in terms – is the 'supernatural', that is to say, anything that would supposedly exist beyond or prior to nature. The core idea of this ontology is that nature encompasses all that can be said in any possible way to exist, and furthermore, that what-

ever exists is a complex or an order that is constituted by the very relations – often innumerable – in which it prevails. Nothing is simple, unrelated, or unconstituted in this thoroughly relational, anti-essentialist ontology then, and therefore nothing is 'ab-solute', either. The exclusion of the 'ab-solute' from the notion of nature does not imply, however, that the idea of 'god' would be expelled from it. The notion of a god as the creator of nature – and thus in some sense prior to it – is untenable within this kind of naturalism, yet god as the addressee of a prayer, or the Father of the divine Son – as Christian belief holds it, e. g. –, presumably has a place within it.

Meanwhile, nature in this sense does *not* form a totality or a closed whole, and it is definitely not to be conceived as a system. Nature consists rather in the open-ended plurality of whatever there is – it is composed of innumerable realities without forming one comprehensive order –, where to be a 'reality' or for something to be said 'to exist' means simply that that something prevails in some order or orders. Thus, each and every complex of nature exists in the same sense, that is to say, nothing is more or less real than anything else – which is a highly permissive thought that follows Buchler's 'principle of ontological parity' (1974, 117–147).

Besides its inclusive, pluralistic, and permissive character, this ontology is also tolerant in the very remarkable sense that – as opposed to most of the so-called 'naturalisms' which conceive nature as composed of material entities – it does not in any way urge the reduction of any part of nature to anything else, and so it does not propagate that we explain any order of nature in terms of any other. The spirit of an ordinal ontology follows on John Herman Randall, Jr.'s comment – Ryder writes – that "The significant question is, not whether anything is real or not, but ... how it is related to and functions among other reals" (2020, 14). Thus, to understand or to explain something consists in determining the orders which that something prevails in, and also the functions it has within those orders.

Such a concept of nature forms the background of Ryder's theory of experience that relies heavily on John Dewey's 'interactional' or 'transactional' notion of experience (developed throughout Dewey's many works, esp. 1981 and 1949), but at the same time, it also corrects the latter on certain points by making use of Buchler's theory of judgments (1951, 47–57; 1985, 3–55; 1974, 87–116). Much of Ryder's quarrel with the traditional expositions of experience is based on the insight that "no approach to experience is satisfactory that argues away undergoing in order to emphasize doing, or argues away doing in order to emphasize undergoing", and that – accordingly – a proper theory of experience "has to make room for objectivity and creativity, passivity and activity, ... the assimilative and the manipulative" moments in the process of experience (2020, 57). While Ryder's theory fully acknowledges the passive-assimilative side of experience in this vein, it explains the active-manipulative side of it in terms of judgments, which is to say, those productive selections between possibilities and alternatives that one makes along the process of experience. Such judgments can be assertive, exhibitiv, or active – and they may also overlap one another –, which in turn are responsible for the three potential (and at any time actualizable) dimensions of experience, namely, the cognitive, the aesthetic, and the political, without ever being strictly segmented – and Ryder expounds these aspects of experience at great length and with rich insights.

It is an important component of this theory, furthermore, that in order to grasp, assertively, the objective traits of the complexes of nature, it refers emphatically – but not exclusively – to science. However, exploration can also take place in the exhibitiv and active modes of judgment, even on a systematic and methodical level, in which cases knowledge, objectivity, and truth are also involved. On this account, then, methodical query does very well have a place within non- or extra-scientific forms of experience – yet, not exactly in the form of inquiry (as Dewey held it) which is a mode of asser-

tive judgment. This is an especially important point for us because Gadamer, as it is well known, has explicitly addressed those forms of experience – namely, the so-called 'hermeneutic phenomenon' inherent in the experience of art, that of history, and of the world in general as we experience it in true dialogues – which do not fall within the domain of methodical scientific exploration, and properly speaking cannot possibly be accounted for within the Cartesian epistemological frames of modern science. Thus, the affinities and discrepancies between pragmatic naturalism and hermeneutics are especially pregnant on this point.

3. Historicist ontology and medial (play-like) participatory experience – hermeneutics

What I'd like to emphasize in this part of my paper is that the aforementioned requirement of giving their due to both the passive and active moments within experience can be met in more than one way. One version of doing that is certainly to emphasize the *transactional character of experience*, that is to say, the equal and mutual contribution of the experienter and the experienced to the process we call 'experience'. Another version of doing just that is, however, to highlight a '*medial*' or '*middle-voiced*' *notion of experience*, as it is the case in hermeneutics.

In fact, when one looks at it from a hermeneutical point of view, the transactional concept of experience does *not radically* change the terms in which experience was earlier conceptualized. What it does is that it develops a view which – via referring to interactions or transactions – incorporates both the passive and active aspects into an ongoing process, even if in a recasted manner. It goes beyond the 'either-or' by claiming 'both' – and that would be the so-called 'Yogi Berra approach' referred to by Ryder (2020, 55). As opposed to that, the hermeneutical, 'middle-voiced' approach not only transcends the one-sided emphases in that regard, but rather, it drops the entire conceptuality of activity and passivity (even if conceived in a mutual-transactional

manner) and reaches back to the common root of that conventional opposition – which is expressed precisely by the ‘middle voice’ (commonly known as the *mesotes*; see my former article: Nyíró 2015). Hermeneutics builds its view of human existence in general, and experience in particular, on the idea according to which existing and experiencing consist above all in a (far from effortless, and thus far from merely passive) *participatory relation or involvement* – yet, first and foremost not so much in an involvement in our ‘environment’ generally, but rather – in the *event or occurrence* (Ereignis, Geschehen) of ‘meaning-formation’, whenever such a thing happens to dawn on us. Accordingly, hermeneutics conceives the notion of experience *solely* from the point of view of ‘understanding and interpretation’.

The ‘middle-voiced’ or ‘medial’ temper of hermeneutics is clearly expressed already by the very title with which Gadamer originally planned to release his magnum opus, namely, *Verstehen und Geschehen* (Understanding and Occurrence).¹ Yet, it can most readily be explained by referring to Gadamer’s analysis of the eminently ‘medial’ phenomenon of ‘play’ and ‘playing’ – the paradigmatic ‘middle-voiced’ fulfillment of which is repeatedly stressed by Gadamer.² One should not hastily dismiss Gadamer’s certain claims here on the account that what he says about play – e. g., that it has a *Wesen* on its own; that the player experiences play as a reality higher than herself; that “the subject of play is play itself”; and that “all playing is a being-played”, etc. – make not much sense to our ordinary, common sense understanding. For this is precisely the point. Namely, that our ordinary understanding is subject-centered, whereas *certain dimensions of our human*

existence and experience are ‘a-subjective’, in the sense of ‘mediality’.

In turn, the significance of Gadamer’s analysis of play resides in the fact that the notion of a play-like movement is the *key to the so-called ‘hermeneutic phenomenon’*, the unitary although multi-faceted phenomenon which is the sole topic of *Truth and Method*; indeed, it is the key to the description of how in fact understanding, along with all its concomitant efforts of interpretation, may happen to us. In order to make its ‘medial sense’ apparent – and for the sake of clarity – I will highlight the main features of play and playing by quoting Gadamer alone.

- 1.a) *Play constitutes an autonomous order* – “here something comes to dominance that fully obeys its own lawfulness”;³ play is “a context of movements that unfolds its own dynamics”;⁴ the “being of all play is always selfrealization, sheer fulfillment, *energeia* which has its *telos* within itself”; “play represents a world wholly closed within itself”. (1993, 128, 152; 2004, 112, 109.)
- *Play is a certain form of movement* – a “to-and-fro movement that is tied to any goal that would bring it to an end ... rather, it renews itself in constant repetition. ... it makes no difference who or what performs this movement. ... The play is the occurrence of the movement as such”; “the movement is not only without goal or purpose but also without effort. It happens, as it were, by itself”; it is “a process of movement that encompasses the players or the player”.⁵ (2004, 104, 105; 1993, 152.)
- *Play is nothing more than how it plays itself off* – “Play is really limited to presenting itself. Thus its mode of being is self-presentation.” (2004, 108.)
- *There is play also where no players are involved* – “the mode of being of play is not such that, for the game

¹ Gadamer himself reports on that – 1994, 75. About the circumstances of this title-change, see Jean Grondin 1999, 319.

² “... the primordial sense of playing is the medial one” (2004, 104); “... even the experiences of play that psychologists and anthropologists describe are illuminated afresh if one starts from the medial sense of the word ‘playing’” (2004, 105); “... the being of the work of art is connected with the medial sense of play (*Spiel*: also, game and drama)” (ibid.); “This point shows the importance of defining play as a process that takes place ‘in between’ (*medialen Vorgang*)” (2004, 109).

³ “... hier etwas zur Herrschaft kommt, was ganz seiner eigenen Gesetzlichkeit gehorcht”.

⁴ “... ein Bewegungszusammenhang, der seine eigene Dynamik entfaltet”.

⁵ “... ein Bewegungsvorgang, der die Spielenden oder das Spielende umgreift”.

to be played, there must be a subject who is behaving playfully. Rather, the primordial sense of playing is the medial one. Thus we say that something is 'playing' (*spielt*) somewhere or at some time, that something is going on (*im Spiele ist*) or that something is happening (*sich abspielt*). (2004, 104.)

1.b) *The player participates in the movement of play, which is the element or medium of her behavior* – “play does not have its being in the player’s consciousness or attitude, but on the contrary play draws him into its dominion and fills him with its spirit. The player experiences the game as a reality that surpasses him”; “the primacy of the game over the players engaged in it is experienced by the players themselves in a special way. ... the game itself is a risk for the player”; “play has its own essence, independent of the consciousness of those who play”. (2004, 109, 106, 103.)

— *The player is not an (exclusive) subject of the play* – “The players are not the subjects of play; instead play merely reaches presentation (*Darstellung*) through the play”; “the actual subject of play is ... the play itself”; “What holds the player in its spell, draws him into play, and keeps him there is the game itself”; “all playing is a being-played”. (2004, 103, 104, 106, *ibid.*)

— *Play poses the requirement that the player ‘lose herself’ in it* – “The structure of play absorbs the player into itself, and thus frees him from the burden of taking the initiative”; “Play fulfills its purpose only if the player loses himself in play. ... The mode of being of play does not allow the player to behave toward play as if toward an object.” (2004, 105, 103.)

— *There is a ‘sacred seriousness’ in playing* – “Seriousness is not merely something that calls us away from play; rather, seriousness in playing is necessary to make the play wholly play.” “A play is under way when the particular player is present in the full earnest of the play, that is to say, she does not any more hold

herself back as someone who merely fiddles”;⁶ “Play – indeed, play proper – ... exists ... where there are no subjects who are behaving ‘playfully.’” “Someone who doesn’t take the game seriously is a spoilsport.” (2004, 103; 1993, 152; 2004, 103, *ibid.*)

— *The consciousness of the player is characterized by a certain indecisiveness* – “in playing, all those purposive relations that determine active and caring existence have not simply disappeared, but are curiously suspended”; in playing “the difference between belief and pretense is dissolved”; “the curious indecisiveness of the playing consciousness ... makes it absolutely impossible to decide between belief and non-belief”. (2004, 102, 105, 104.)

— *Playing is participation in the medial fulfillment of play* – “play is not to be understood as something a person does”; “in spending oneself on the task of the game, one is in fact playing oneself out. The self-presentation of the game involves the player’s achieving, as it were, his own self-presentation by playing – i. e., presenting – something.” (2004, 104, 108.)

In sum, play runs its course as an *impersonal event*, forming an autonomous and closed order of movement which compels its participants to go along fittingly and follow, what is more, fulfill the movement in which they partake.

As I mentioned above, the paradigm of play is central to all cases of the hermeneutic phenomenon, for in experiencing works of art, or in trying to understand historical texts, as well as in true dialogues through which we experience and come to understand different aspects of the world – and these are the topics which the three major parts of Gadamer’s magnum opus are devoted to – one uniformly encounters truth claims, yet, not so much the truth claims of some Other, but rather, the *truth claims of the presented ‘issue’* (Sache) itself, which – as some sort

⁶ “Ein Spiel ist im Gange, wenn der einzelne Spieler in vollem Spielernst dabei ist, d. h. sich nicht mehr zurückbehält als ein nur Spielender, dem es nicht ernst ist.”

of ‘historical universal’ – plays out its possible meanings in ever new historical contexts. “In understanding we are drawn into an event of truth”, Gadamer says (2004, 484), and that proposition clearly expresses the medial sense of understanding, a sense that cannot be conveyed for or grasped from within the Cartesian framework of the subject-object dichotomy, but not even for a transactional framework of experience. (By the way, ‘play’ figures in the latter merely as one among the many possible *forms* – that is, not a dimension or even a major constituent – of experience, as Ryder explains: 2020, 62.) It is perhaps also worth of mentioning that, for Gadamer, the cyclical movement of nature itself can be characterized as “a constantly self-renewing play” (2004, 105), too, and in fact he conceives the very ‘speculative (self-mirroring) structure of Being’ – which “is the ground of hermeneutics” (2004, 472) – as an anonymous, play-like self-presentation of Being in the medium of language. Accordingly, Gadamer’s ontology envisions a hermeneutical universe that consists of ‘things or issues’ (*Sachen*) which are historically valid universals held in place by the life of language, overarching the times.

4. The constellation of pragmatic naturalism, hermeneutics, and their Rortyan synthesis

This lastly mentioned thought of Gadamer – namely, that Being has a ‘speculative structure’ in the sense that it presents or mirrors itself in the medium of language – triggered of course the dismay of many critics, and accordingly, hermeneutics has been widely criticized for its alleged ‘linguistic idealism’. In turn, Ryder repeatedly refers to an “excessive idealism” which he attributes to the kind of “extreme postmodernism” that “abandons altogether the idea that nature possesses objective traits, and therefore [holds] that all aspects of nature, and presumably experience, are a matter of interpretation, or subjective judgment, or opinion, or some such enterprise of an experiencer” (2020, 53), in which case “knowledge dissolves into so many perspectives and bi-

ases” (2020, 209). To be sure, Ryder does not direct his point against hermeneutics, but rather, he explicitly addresses it to Rorty (and implicitly to all kinds of interpretative postmodernism), and to that extent, Ryder must maintain a clear distinction between utterly ‘idealist-subjectivist’ versions of interpretative philosophy (among them Rorty), and in turn, hermeneutics. Thus, in order to clarify this very distinction – but also some of the fundamental differences between hermeneutics and ordinal naturalism – and to highlight meanwhile the explanatory power of the notion of ‘mediality’, I proceed by answering the inherent assumptions of Ryder’s criticism, first, from a hermeneutical point of view, and then, according to my reading of Rorty.

There are three such major (and correlated) assumptions in Ryder’s claims that pertain to the issues of idealism, objectivity, and interpretation. As opposed to the ‘idealism’ charge – which Ryder does not, but others pose to hermeneutics –, the first thing to be emphasized is the fact that hermeneutical philosophy maintains *a robust sense of facticity or ‘quasi-realism’* – it widely acknowledges the ‘mind-independent existence’ of entities we face within the world, and far beyond that. With that, hermeneutics can readily subscribe to the claim that there are traits of the complexes of nature “that do not depend on us, which is precisely what we mean by objectivity in nature” (Ryder 2020, 53). What hermeneutics would dispute in this regard is the claim that we can *access* those traits, and *a fortiori* the very ‘existence (or Being) of mind-independent entities’, without having recourse to understanding (‘understanding’ in the hermeneutical sense – to which we must return).

Accordingly, to the claim that for the hermeneutics ‘everything is a matter of interpretation’, or to put it in other words, that the idealism allegedly represented by hermeneutics is a linguistic one, we must object that such a claim rests on an utter neglecting of the Heideggerian distinction between **beings as such, on the one hand, and the meaning of their Being, on the other,**

which is his famous notion of the so-called ‘*ontological difference*’ (Heidegger 1982, 318–330). This difference implies, among others, that extant beings do have a ‘mind-independent reality’ and can very well be grasped, conceptually, regarding their categorically distinguishable traits, yet, all these traits say nothing about what it means that these beings are ‘given’ for us, how we do or may understand the fact that they ‘are’ (their Being). For the meaning of their Being is definitely *not* something like an extant being, and it is *not* some objective trait of beings either. That meaning is exclusively a matter of understanding, it is always ‘for us’ – even if that meaning remains implicit in most cases.

In fact, the early Heidegger solves the ‘Gordian knot’ of the realism-idealism debate by means of this very notion of ‘ontological difference’. Accordingly, the realists are right to claim that for the most part beings – or the complexes of nature, to use the terminology of ordinal naturalism – prevail independently of any ‘subjectivity’. In turn, idealism has the advantage in principle (compared with realism) that when it emphasizes – in Heidegger’s words – that “Being and Reality are only ‘in the consciousness’, this expresses an understanding of the fact that Being cannot be explained through entities”, which is to say that notions like ‘Reality’, ‘independence’, ‘objectivity’, etc., are “possible only in the understanding of Being” (1962, 251). For the hermeneuts, then, the different meanings of Being are ‘transcendental’ with regard to beings, or entities, or complexes, and such meanings are solely correlates of understanding.

In this vein, when ordinal naturalism claims that “to exist is to prevail in an order, any order” (Ryder 2020, 20), for the hermeneuts it means several things, among them that this naturalism maintains a very specific and nontraditional understanding of Being – namely, ‘to prevail in’, ‘to be located’, in tune with its ‘ordinality’ – which is a highly formalized notion held to be valid in every context, with regard to any complex. But the hermeneuts would most probably wonder, *how such an understanding of Be-*

ing is justified – beyond its coherence with all the other elaborated concepts of such a metaphysics – *without an explicit inquiry into the meaning of Being*, which in turn is Heidegger’s project. The *Seinsfrage*, which is to say the question “What are the meanings of the different modes of ‘Being’ of different kinds of entities or beings, and what is the meaning of ‘Being’ as such?”, *must be raised prior to all possible metaphysics*, at least in the eyes of the hermeneuts, and the elaboration of that question in *Being and Time* has in fact resulted in identifying several distinct meanings of ‘Being’.⁷

Ordinal naturalism maintains Buchler’s principle of ontological parity in claiming that “There are ... no degrees of reality, so there is no sense to be given to the idea that this or that exists or prevails more or less than something else” (Ryder 2020, 20), and to that tolerant idea hermeneutics – which is a version of phenomenology that in turn aims at *describing* whatever is given in experience in the very way and modality it is given, striving to distance itself from normative, prescriptive theoretical expectations or pre-judgments – would most probably *not* protest, at all. But when this ordinal naturalism, the tolerance of which is highly welcomed, goes on to address the *meaning* of the ‘reality’ of any and all the complexes in nature *uniformly* and solely in terms of the relations and functions of those complexes – their ‘operational’ aspects alone –, disregarding the possible differences in the very senses in which different kinds of complexes can be said to ‘exist’ – with that metaphysically conceived and uniformly ‘ordinal’ understanding of Being, hermeneutics is at variance.

A pertaining point is that the notion of ‘world’, and in turn, ‘being-in’ the world as such, mean something utterly different things for the two traditions. In Ryder’s ordinal metaphysics the concept of world appears in a

⁷ First and foremost, this work differentiates the meaning of human existence (care, *Sorge*) from the meaning of Being of extant entities or objects (present-at-hand, *Vorhanden*), or from that of tools (ready-to-hand, *Zuhanden*), and the later Heidegger and Gadamer go on to work out the meaning of the mode of Being of artworks, pictures, symbols, signs, history, words, the ‘thing’, etc.

number of different contexts, often in the sense of “our environment, our ‘world’”, or again, the “world as experienced”, and at times in formulations like “to reject the absolute nature of ... the world altogether”, and, “the world as related to us and the world unrelated to us” (2020, 2, 26 ff., 52, 91). In sum, there is an emphasis put on the notion of world understood as our environment which we interact with, but the same notion also refers to those aspects of nature which we do not relate to, and to that extent, ‘world’ and ‘nature’ seem to be synonymous. In turn, ‘being in’ something has nothing to do with its spatial meaning – just as in hermeneutics –, but rather, it means “being a constituent trait of [that] something” (ibid., 49), with the consequence that in cases of transaction its both ‘poles’ become constituent traits of, and therefore enter ‘in’, the other pole’s relational identity. This is precisely the reason why ordinal naturalism may be so apt for emphasizing the important point that “The relational, creative construction of meaning [comes] through the individual’s relation to the world, ... through experience” (ibid., 128).

In hermeneutics, however, being-in-the-world (*In-der-Welt-sein*) serves as a preliminary but at the same time most comprehensive characterization of human Being-there (*Dasein*), exclusively. In Heidegger’s *Being and Time*, the world does *not* signify either the ‘totality of beings’ or some region that encompasses a manifold of beings (e. g., ‘nature’ as opposed to ‘history’). Heidegger rejects such ‘realistic-objective’ notions of the world because *they deduce the concept of the world from beings that appear from the outset as entities ‘within-the-world’*. In other words, “the phenomenon of worldhood ... gets passed over” (Heidegger 1962, 93) in such approaches. As opposed to them, Heidegger sets out from the existential meaning of the world as it is mirrored for example in the phrase ‘the world of children’. What he looks for is the *existential-ontological idea of worldhood* that functions in an a priori manner in all such particular ‘worlds’. Accordingly, the world signifies the *horizon* that human

Being-there, distinguished by its understanding of Being, always already projects as a *context of meaning* in which it exists. Conceived that way, the ‘world’ is one of the ‘structural’ moments of existence, i. e., one of the so-called ‘existentialia’. Thus, the world does not in any sense belong to the non-human ‘innerworldly’ things – in themselves they are ‘worldless’. Their character of being ‘within-the-world’ is exclusively due to their being ‘disclosed’ by humans, namely, that they can get in our way only in a world that we as humans always already project.

Thus, humans are distinguished by their ‘disclosedness’ (*Erschlossenheit*) or *openness to a ‘world’* (Heidegger 1962, 171ff. – stones are not ‘open’ in any sense to any world, and animals are ‘world-poor’, *Weltarm*, according to Heidegger). This openness manifests itself in our always already attuned and finite, historically determined understanding, which is also the basis of our ability to speak. In virtue of our openness, therefore, a ‘world’ is always already disclosed for us *as a context of meaningful possibilities*. It is within the horizon of such a ‘world’ that individual beings may then acquire meaning for us – not merely as reference-points of ‘blind’ interactions, as in the case of a reflex, e. g., but rather – regarding their Being. ‘Being-in-the-world’, ‘understanding-of-Being’, and ‘linguisticity’ prove therefore to be closely connected, basic determinations of human existence – within the hermeneutical approach. Accordingly, humans do not exist in a world consisting of the sum total of objects or complexes, but rather, they exist in a ‘*hermeneutic universe*’ as it is articulated in the medium of understanding and its linguisticity. Language, or more precisely linguisticity is something basic for hermeneutics because it is most closely connected to being human, to the fact that we ‘have and live in a world’ constituted by meaningful possibilities.

Regarding the claim that interpretation is something subjective and arbitrary – arbitrary in the sense, presumably, that what is to be interpreted, namely, the *interpretandum*, does not have a constitutive role in the

process of interpretation –, it is advisable to take a closer look at the hermeneutical notion of understanding. First of all, and according to the *ontological turn of hermeneutics* introduced by Heidegger, understanding and interpretation is not merely the business of certain disciplines, but rather, humans as such are understanding-interpreting beings, they are ‘hermeneutical animals’, so to speak. According to this claim, *understanding is at work in each and every world-comportment of humans* – one needs to understand, however much implicitly, what ‘equipment’ as such means in order to be able to use a stick or a toothbrush, e. g. Such an understanding is *not* a reflexive act of some consciousness, and it is definitely not ‘reason’ in any of the senses conceived in the past. The hermeneutical notion of understanding (*Verstehen*) has nothing to do, furthermore, with the Kantian concept of understanding (*Verstand*) that grasps the content of sense-perception by means of its own a-historical concepts, the so-called categories. Nor is it a *tabula rasa*, for human understanding is defined historically – we begin our lives by appropriating the interpretations of the things around us from our parents and fellow humans (by ‘socializing’), and we always enter into new situations and world-comportments with a certain pre-understanding or ‘understanding beforehand’. This makes the ‘hermeneutical experience’ *circular*, because, first, understanding may take place – if at all – only *in between* what is familiar (has been understood) and what is not, but strange and unfamiliar (has not been understood) – and to that extent understanding is a ‘business’ of finite historical beings; and second, that ‘in-between’ is properly speaking *not* a transaction, because in the effort of understanding one has to do with ‘truth candidates’ or possible insights (rather than ‘realities’) and that implies a ‘work on ourselves’, so to speak, on our previous understandings in the light of what is being experienced, by letting the ‘truth claim’ of the issue (*Sache*) assert itself. As we have seen, Gadamer describes this process – and he is more instructive in this respect than Heidegger – in terms of a

‘middle-voiced participation in a play-like event of meaning-formation’, which is something that *happens* to us. The word ‘under-standing’ (*Ver-stehen*) expresses quite properly the fact that understanding is strictly speaking not an achievement of a sovereign subject, but rather, it is something that happens to or *breaks in* upon us. But that means that – although understanding *does* require a certain kind of effort on the part of the ‘sub-ject’ – the event of understanding is beyond our control, and it is far from being arbitrary: “this event is not our action upon the thing, but the act of the thing itself”, as Gadamer claims (2004, 459).

This explains also the acknowledged fact that understanding and interpretation – as they are conceived and practiced in hermeneutics – do not and cannot possibly have an appropriate methodology. For just as the impersonal event of play compels its participants to go along fittingly and fulfill the movement in which they partake – as we have seen –, the interpretive process also compels the interpreter *to follow, ‘medially’, the lead of the ‘issue’ (Sache) itself*, as it plays out its possible meanings. Accordingly, the interpretive-hermeneutical procedure is far from being devoid of ‘discipline’, a collected conduct of thought, or a ‘measure’ that it tries to follow. That ‘measure’ is the truth of the ‘issue’ itself, where the task of the interpreter is to *let that truth assert itself*.

On my reading, Rorty also maintains a sense of ‘quasi-realism’, as his distinction between a ‘norm-free order of causation’, on the one hand, and a ‘norm-free order of justification’ (i. e., ‘conversation’) among norm-governed vocabularies, on the other, attests to it. This distinction aims at setting intersubjective communication against the nonlinguistic world, and regarding the relation between the world and the agents as a purely causal, vocabulary-indifferent one (see Nyíró 2020, 203–206).⁸ Accordingly, Rorty does not deny that ‘there are traits of

⁸ This is what Habermas epitomized as a program urging that “‘being in touch with reality’ has to be translated into ‘being in touch with a human community’” (quoted by Rorty 2000, 56).

the complexes of nature that do not depend on us', yet, he denies that we could access those traits without having recourse to our norm-governed vocabularies – quite similarly to the hermeneuts. In fact, Rorty's notion of an 'order of justification' is but *a variant* of 'hermeneutic universalism'.

However, Rorty follows – in tune with his mentioned distinction – a basic idea of his that permeates his whole life-work, from beginning to end – one that is well known and easily 'understood', yet, hard to take to heart. This idea has for the first time been developed by Rorty as a response to the traditional mind-body problem, in his so-called 'eliminative materialism' (Rorty 1970). There his claim is that certain objects – in this case, the 'mind' – are objects that 'exist' insofar as a certain vocabulary is being used. For, if the mind is something which is defined by how we know about it – namely, by 'perfect accessibility', as Descartes claims it to be the case – then the mind is an entity insofar as a special kind of language game – one that ascribes authority to first person singular predicates – is being acknowledged.⁹ Accordingly, Rorty's mentioned 'basic idea' is that *certain 'objects' talked about owe their linguistically conceived 'existence' to the functioning of certain vocabularies* – again, the hermeneuts maintain a similar claim.

Thus, Rorty and the hermeneuts share a radically historicist outlook – one that the ordinal metaphysics of nature does not embrace (while it makes room for change, freedom, and the emergence of the 'new' in nature, it

holds fast to its 'a-historically ordinal' understanding of Being). Yet, Rorty and the hermeneuts depart when the prospects of such a historicist view of the situation are concerned. Although Rorty agrees with the hermeneuts that human finitude means being unsurpassably embedded in traditions, he is motivated by his hopes for radical cultural change, wishing to get rid of the past. His anti-representationalist program rests on the assumption that – just as "'consciousness' is an artifact of Cartesian philosophy in the same way that God is an artifact of early cosmology" (Rorty 2007, 14) – most of our traditional philosophical concepts (such as mind-independent Reality having an intrinsic nature, Truth, correspondence, objectivity, etc.) are artifacts of a representationalist paradigm of philosophical inquiry – *artifacts simply to be abandoned*, if a post-ontological, post-epistemological culture (and a pragmatism without ontology) is to be promoted, as Rorty does. The hermeneuts, however, draw different conclusions from the fact that humans are tradition-embedded beings. For Gadamer, this very fact implies that we must rehabilitate tradition as a true and equal dialogical partner. For Heidegger, in turn, tradition is ruled by the 'history of Being' and therefore one may – if one wishes – at best 'prepare for a second beginning in the history of Being'. The contrast between Rorty's 'activist' ambitions, and in turn, the 'medial, middle-voiced' approach of the hermeneuts, is most explicit on this point.

Rorty's competitive-agonal grasp on 'conversation' requires a 'leached' – that is, nominalized, de-ontologized – notion of hermeneutics, and he appropriates Gadamer's concepts of 'hermeneutics', '*Bildung*', and 'effective-historical-consciousness', accordingly (see Nyíró 2022, 55–60). Traditionally, the term 'hermeneutics' refers to the 'problems of understanding and proper interpretation', and Gadamer also makes use of it in this sense. For Rorty, however, 'interpretation' is not anchored in 'understanding' – which, as he rightly perceives, stands in the way of his radical activism –, but rather, it trans-

⁹ As Brandom puts it, "Having minds ... is a function of speaking a kind of vocabulary that incorporates a certain sort of epistemic authority structure" (Brandom 2000, 157–158). An extended version of the same idea appears already on the very first page of the Preface to Rorty's *Mirror of Nature*, where he says in general that "a 'philosophical problem' [is] a product of the unconscious adoption of assumptions built into the vocabulary in which the problem was stated" (Rorty 1979, xi). The same idea surfaces again – in a more explicit form – in the *Contingency* book, where Rorty describes intellectual history as the history of metaphors – metaphors whereby inherited problems are dissolved rather than solved (Rorty 1989, 16–22). There can be no doubt that it is the very same idea that eventually broadens into Rorty's notion of 'philosophy as cultural politics' (which is the title of his posthumously published collected papers from 2007).

figures into 're-description' according to one's purposes. Rorty doesn't speak about 'understanding' and the 'thing or issue' (*Sache*) to be understood, at all, and his activism wants to get rid of the weight of experience, too. The point in entering into hermeneutic-abnormal discourses is for him: "to take us out of our old selves by the power of strangeness" (Rorty 1979, 360). Hermeneutics for Rorty has exclusively to do with the issue of "becoming new beings" (*ibid.*). It has nothing to do with 'knowledge' or 'truth' – which could be claimed to be *valid over against individual idiosyncrasies* – in any sense.¹⁰

One can detect the same shift toward 'aestheticism' in Rorty's manner of appropriating the other two mentioned Gadamerian concepts. According to the Gadamerian notion of *Bildung*, which is derived from its humanist ideal, it leads to the acquisition of a '*sensus communis*', a "universal and common sense" (Gadamer 2004, 16), *practical reason itself*, the very "sense that founds community (*Sinn, der Gemeinsamkeit stiftet*)", a 'sense' for "the concrete universality represented by the community of a group, a people, a nation, or the whole human race. Hence developing this communal sense is of decisive importance for living" – Gadamer emphasizes (2004, 19). For Rorty, however, the main thrust in *Bildung* is that it underscores "the romantic notion of man as self-creative" (1979, 344). It is primarily – and beyond its basic function to socialize – about self-formation, individualization: we learn, first, how to follow prevailing conventions, and then, how to transcend such conventions, in whatever idiosyncratic manner.

In a similar vein, Rorty re-describes Gadamer's term of 'effective-historical-consciousness' as a notion "to characterize an attitude interested ... in *what we can get*

out of nature and history for our own uses" (my emphasis: 1979, 359). Again, Rorty does not mention any of Gadamer's correlated notions – such as 'application' in the sense of 'fusion of horizons' taking place in a true dialogue, not to mention 'the rehabilitation of authority and tradition' –, because he wants to avoid the Gadamerian implications of the term. Namely, Gadamer's concept of effective-historical-consciousness refers to the unsurpassable historicity of human understanding, according to which it is not only inevitably shaped by, but it is also compelled to remain open to, traditions.

In sum, Ryder's definite distinction between hermeneutics and the interpretative postmodernism of Rorty, which he clearly maintains in spite of the fact that Rorty appropriates in his own way hermeneutics and fosters thereby the revival of pragmatism, is wholly justified in my eyes. What I'd like to stress, however, is that such a distinction among purely interpretative philosophies can truly be made meaningful only by reference to a contrast between the 'medial or middle-voiced', a-subjective, happening-like character of understanding – as hermeneutics maintains it –, on the one hand, and the subjectivist grasps of interpretation in any manner, on the other. While for the hermeneutists the complex process of interpretation is anchored in an understanding that occurs to us in an uncontrollable manner, affording insights which are historically achieved truths, far from being arbitrary, understood as valid beyond one's own will, in Rorty's case the place of interpretation is taken by a practice of re-description that is to serve one's subjective and even idiosyncratic purposes within the arena of competing views. All the more surprising is the fact, then, that – despite of its fundamental significance and Gadamer's emphatic elaboration of the issue – this 'medial' temper of hermeneutics is not recognized in the pertaining literature (at least not explicitly, to my knowledge).¹¹

¹⁰ While Rorty interprets hermeneutics – the study of 'abnormal' discourses – as a 'Whiggish enterprise in commensuration' (one that inevitably proceeds from its own norms and refers therefore to 'human finitude'), he in fact practices it in its strong sense of a 'commensuration from the point of view of a self-assured consciousness of superiority attributed to the culture of the rich North Atlantic democracies'. Yet, thereby Rorty renounces the dialogical communality with our ancestors, and with other traditions.

¹¹ For example, a prominent interpreter of Gadamer and Rorty, Georgia Warnke rightly warns us that "hermeneutics is not as

5. Conclusion

As one can see, the scope of the concept of experience is – horizontally, so to speak – much wider in pragmatic naturalism than in hermeneutics, insofar as the former theory regards as experience every kind of transaction with our environment, whereas in the latter only those encounters figure as genuine experience which cross our expectations and therefore give occasion for reconsidering our pre-understandings. Yet, vertically speaking the hermeneutical notion of experience reaches deeper and into a more general dimension than what can be grasped or covered by its transactional concept – in fact, we often interact with our environment without understanding anything significantly new.

The ultimate reason behind this difference lies in the discrepancy between what is simultaneously active and passive, and in turn, what is medial or middle-voiced. For the latter is neither something active or passive, nor some mixture of these two, but rather, it refers to a peculiar, autonomous, and originary, ‘ontologically laden’ dimension of participatory involvement in some event –

subjectivistic as Rorty makes it out to be” (Warnke 1987, 146), yet, her otherwise insightful interpretations of these authors nowhere mention the ‘medial’ aspect of hermeneutics, and thus, they do not capture the core of the discrepancies between their approaches. In turn, Bjørn Ramberg’s Davidsonian critique of Rorty fully endorses the latter’s post-ontological initiatives, and holds against him ‘only’ that he does not acknowledge the distinctiveness of the ‘vocabulary of the mental’ (as opposed to the various causal-explanatory vocabularies – Ramberg 2000). Ramberg’s critique is important, but he takes side with Rorty’s pragmatic activism, with the consequence of passing over the basic, a-subjective dimension of human existence and its inherent ontological orientation. A further example is the Introduction to the most recent issue of the *European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy* dedicated to pragmatism and hermeneutics. Here the authors rightly emphasize as a “common horizon” of the two traditions that they equally shun “the extreme opposites of nihilistic relativism and any form of absolutism and dogmatism”, and also that despite their “different perspectives, for both Pragmatism and Hermeneutics, experience permeates the search for truth and the search for meaning”. The closest they come to defining the affinities and discrepancies between the notions of experience in these traditions is, however, to claim that although “the terrain is different” and the pragmatist notion of a “co-constructive subject-object relationship ... may not find full and direct correspondence with” philosophical hermeneutics, “some aspects do resonate with it”, especially in Gadamer, which they go on to enumerate (Busacchi, Nieddu, Michel 2022, 1–3).

just as we have seen it in Gadamer’s exposition of play and playing. What is truly medial in hermeneutics is then not only different from, but at the very root of, all activity and passivity, namely, it is the medial event of the a-subjective occurrence of ‘meaning-formation’, and hence, of understanding. To that extent, the dimension addressed by the hermeneutical concept of experience is in fact basic, and therefore universal.

Accordingly – and regarding their notions of experience –, the difference in temper between these two traditions of thought is probably best described by the difference between the active aspect of judgment emphasized in pragmatist naturalism – whereby it preserves a subject-centered point of view –, and in turn, the middle-voiced – and therefore a-subjective – aspect of understanding as it figures in hermeneutics. However, if judgment is but a selection between alternative possibilities, then hermeneutics should point out the fact that such possibilities must inevitably be understood prior to selecting between them for engagement.

In spite of these differences, the spirit of hermeneutics is much closer to that of pragmatic naturalism than the spirit of interpretative postmodernism is. This affinity between them is mostly due to their common efforts at overcoming the one-sided emphases put either on the active or the passive aspects of experience. Hermeneutics is distinguished within the spectrum of interpretative philosophies by its peculiarly medial or ‘middle-voiced’ temper, and precisely this is what implies its inherent ontological orientation, and at the same time saves hermeneutics from interpretative nihilism or subjective arbitrariness. In turn, pragmatic naturalism avoids the vicissitudes of interpretative postmodernism by developing a metaphysics of nature – an ordinal one, to be sure – in tune with its transactional theory of experience. This ordinal naturalism dissolves traditional substance- and subject-metaphysics in a pan-relational, spatio-geometrical concept of metaphysical ordinality, and thereby maintains a kind of a-temporal, a-historical conceptual frame, and in that

sense a rather ‘theoretical’ spirit. Yet, it is precisely such a-historical, metaphysical frame and corresponding attitude that hermeneutics strives to distance itself from by its temporalized, historicist, and existential ontology. Accordingly, hermeneutics is at variance with the metaphysically conceived and uniformly ‘ordinal’ understanding of Being in pragmatic naturalism, and urges instead that the *Seinsfrage* be raised prior to all possible metaphysics. This has an immediate effect on one’s approach to experience, however. For interpreting experience according to the preconceived terms of ‘ordinality’ may indeed help in grasping its content in its relational complexity, yet, it may as well cover up the true meaning of – and therefore the personal engagement in – that very experience.

References

- BRANDOM, Robert B. 2000. “Vocabularies of Pragmatism: Synthesizing Naturalism and Historicism”. In *Rorty and His Critics*. Edited by Robert Brandom. Malden – Oxford, Blackwell Publishers, 156–182.
- BUCHLER, Justus. 1951. *Toward a General Theory of Human Judgment*. New York, NY, Columbia University Press.
- BUCHLER, Justus 1974. *The Main of Light. On the Concept of Poetry*. London, UK, Oxford University Press.
- BUCHLER, Justus. 1985². *Nature and Judgment*. Lanham – New York – London, University Press of America.
- BUCHLER, Justus. 1990². *Metaphysics of Natural Complexes*. Edited by Kathleen Wallace and Armen Marsoobian. Albany, NY, State University of New York Press.
- BUSACCHI, Vinicio, Anna Nieddu and Johann Michel. 2022. “Introduction to Experience, Interpretation and Meaning: A Dialogue between Hermeneutics and Pragmatism”. *European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy*. Vol. 14, no. 1; pp. 1–6. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/ejpap/2708>; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/ejpap.2708>
- DEWEY, John and Arthur Bentley. 1949. *Knowing and the Known*. Boston, Beacon Press.
- DEWEY, John. 1981. *Experience and Nature*, LW 1. Carbondale, IL, Southern Illinois University Press.
- GADAMER, Hans-Georg. 1993². *Gesammelte Werke*. Band 2. *Hermeneutik II. Wahrheit und Methode. Ergänzungen, Register*. Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck.
- GADAMER, Hans-Georg. 1994. *Gesammelte Werke*. Band 10. *Hermeneutik im Rückblick*. Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck.
- GADAMER, Hans-Georg. 2004². *Truth and Method*. Translation revised by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marsh. London – New York, Continuum.
- GRONDIN, Jean. 1999. *Hans-Georg Gadamer. Eine Biographie*. Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck.
- HEIDEGGER, Martin. 1962. *Being and Time*. Translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson. New York, HarperSanFrancisco.
- HEIDEGGER, Martin. 1982. *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*. Translation, introduction, and lexicon by Albert Hofstadter. Bloomington and Indianapolis, Indiana University Press.
- NYÍRÓ, Miklós. 2015. “Art, Truth, Event. Positioning the Non-representationalist Paradigms of Pragmatic Naturalism and Philosophical Hermeneutics”. *Pragmatism Today – The Journal of the Central European Pragmatist Forum*. Volume 6, Issue 1, pp. 89–119. <http://www.pragmatismtoday.eu/index.php?id=2015summer1>
- NYÍRÓ, Miklós. 2020. “Reconsidering Rorty’s Theory of Vocabularies. On the Role and Scope of Persuasion in a Post-representationalist Culture”. In *Rorty and Beyond*. Edited by Randall Auxier, Eli Kramer, and Krzysztof Piotr Skowronski. Lanham – New York – London, Lexington Books, 197–213.
- NYÍRÓ, Miklós. 2022. “Incommensurability and Culture. Doubts Concerning Rorty’s Whiggish Ethnocentrism”. *Szellem és tudomány*. XIII, 2, 47–62.
- RAMBERG, Bjørn. 2000. “Post-ontological Philosophy of Mind: Rorty versus Davidson”. In *Rorty and His Critics*. Edited by Robert B. Brandom. Oxford, Blackwell Publishers, 351–370.
- RORTY, Richard. 1970. “In Defense of Eliminative Materialism.” *The Review of Metaphysics* 24, 112–121.
- RORTY, Richard. 1979. *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*. Princeton, Princeton University Press.
- RORTY, Richard. 1989. *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- RORTY, Richard. 2000. “Response to Jürgen Habermas.” In *Rorty and His Critics*. Edited by Robert B. Brandom. Malden – Oxford, Blackwell Publishers, 56–64.
- RORTY, Richard. 2007. “Cultural Politics and the Question of the Existence of God.” In *Philosophy as Cultural Politics. Philosophical Papers Volume 4*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 3–26.
- RYDER, John. 2013. *The Things in Heaven and Earth: An Essay in Pragmatic Naturalism*. Fordham University Press.
- RYDER, John. 2020. *Knowledge, Art, and Power. An Outline of a Theory of Experience*. Leiden – Boston, Brill-Rodopi.
- WARNKE, Georgia. 1987. *Gadamer: Hermeneutics, Tradition and Reason*. Oxford, Polity Press and Basil Blackwell.

The Pragmatist Understanding of the Dao: The Art of Living and the Way of Art

Tanehisa Otabe

University of Tokyo, Japan

Tanehisa.otabe@gmail.com

ABSTRACT: Shusterman's *Pragmatist Aesthetics* does not directly address philosophy or aesthetics in East Asia. In retrospect, it is an appeal to East Asian researchers of Western-style philosophical aesthetics to transform their style of thinking. Inspired by his insights, I focus on an outstanding Japanese figure of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Kakuzō Okakura (pseudonym: Tenshin) (1863–1913), to clarify the scope of pragmatist aesthetics or somaesthetics in the globalized era. The philosophical thought propounded by Okakura in *The Book of Tea* which expresses the quintessence of the traditional Japanese view of art is based on the Taoist idea of “dào,” which literally means the way, or the path. The work construes the concept of dào (in Japanese, “dō”) from a pragmatic perspective in the wide sense of the word. Pragmatist aesthetics provides a key to appropriately approach the traditional Japanese view of art called “gei-dō” (literally: the way of art).

Keywords: art of life, art of being in the world, hodōs – dào – dō, Kakuzō Okakura, gei-dō (the way of art), pantonomy and autonomy

1. Introduction

Shusterman's *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, published in 1992, does not directly address philosophy or aesthetics in East Asia. In retrospect, it is an appeal to East Asian researchers of Western-style philosophical aesthetics, including myself, to transform their style of thinking. This became even clearer when the second edition of this book was published in the year 2000. In this work, the author added a new chapter entitled “Somaesthetics: A Disciplinary Proposal,” in which he cites “Asian practices of Hatha yoga, Zen meditation, and T'ai chi ch'uan” as examples of somatic training. He also refers to Yasuo Yuasa's¹ *The Body: Toward an Eastern Mind-Body Theory* (English

translation: 1987, Japanese original: 1977).² As the author himself admits, the discipline of “somaesthetics” is certainly “prefigured”³ in the first edition of *Pragmatist Aesthetics*. However, the new name for “some old ways of thinking” clearly defines the project of somatic philosophy that he envisaged. In fact, “new names can be helpful both in stimulating new thinking and in reorganizing and reanimating older insights.”⁴ The potential of pragmatist aesthetics—or even somaesthetics—in the East Asian cultural sphere was later touched upon by Shusterman himself.⁵ Inspired by his insights, I will focus on one outstanding Japanese figure of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, to clarify the scope of pragmatist aesthetics or somaesthetics in the globalized era.

Except for the activities of the Jesuit missionaries from the late sixteenth century onward, Western philosophy was introduced into the East Asian cultural sphere during the second half of the nineteenth century.

In 1868, the symbolic event of Meiji Restoration took place in Japan. Later in 1877, the modern government-run University of Tokyo was founded. The so-called “hired foreigners” from Europe and the United States were invited to teach modern Western disciplines at the university. Western-style philosophy was also introduced as part of the modernization or Westernization of academics. The term “tetsu-gaku” was coined to refer to the Western-style philosophy. During the same period, Western-style “art” (i.e. high art) and “aesthetics” were introduced as a discipline in Japan.⁶ Thus, the modern Western academic and artistic system paved way for the reorganization of the academic and artistic tradition in Japan: not so much in ways that revitalized traditional

¹ In this paper, Japanese words and names are transcribed according to the Hepburn system, using a circumflex instead of a macron for representing a long vowel, except for the terms that are already incorporated into English (e.g., Tokyo). As for the Japanese names, the given name is written first to avoid any confusion, with the exception of pre-Meiji historical figures (e.g. Yoshida Kenkō).

² Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics: Living Beauty, Rethinking Art*, 268.

³ Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics: Living Beauty, Rethinking Art*, 13.

⁴ Shusterman, *Thinking through the Body: Essays in Somaesthetics*, 5.

⁵ Shusterman, “Pragmatism and East-Asian Thought,” 13–43.

⁶ A new term “bigaku” was created to denote aesthetics, and the word “gei-jutsu,” which had previously been used to mean liberal arts, was established as the corresponding translation for fine arts.

Japanese culture, but rather in ways that distinguished—or even excluded—Japan from the modern Western academic and artistic system as pre-modern. This is because, as we will see later, traditional Japanese thought was strongly characterized by practical wisdom, and the traditional Japanese artistic practices tended to be inseparably linked to daily life in such a way that they did not fit into the modern Western academic and artistic regimes.

In this presentation, I will focus on *The Book of Tea*, published in English in 1906 by Kakuzô Okakura (pseudonym: Tenshin) (1863–1913). Okakura studied philosophy at the University of Tokyo as an inaugural student. He took advantage of his fluency in English to engage in art administration together with his teacher Ernest F. Fenollosa (1853–1908). Okakura travelled to Europe and the United States with Fenollosa from 1886–87 to prepare for the establishment of the Tokyo School of Fine Arts, which was the first national art university. In 1890, he became the first president of the Tokyo School of Fine Arts. He dedicated himself to the preservation of Japanese antique art, which was in danger of disappearing into oblivion due to Japan's rapid Westernization. During 1901 and 1902, he visited India and got acquainted with Rabindranath Tagore (1861–1941). In 1910, he was appointed as the head of the newly-established Department of Chinese and Japanese Art at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. Okakura is rarely treated as a philosopher because of his prowess in arts. One of my teachers, Megumi Sakabe (1936–2009), whom I deeply respect, gave Okakura an extraordinary compliment: He deemed Okakura a “first-rate philosopher of Japan since the Meiji era who is extremely gifted in imagination (including historical imagination).”⁷ *The Ideals of the East* (1903), *The Awakening of Japan* (1904), and *The Book of Tea* (1906) are his major works in English. However, these are rarely considered as works in philosophy. The fact that Okakura, an active art administrator in both the United States and

Japan, addressed the matter of tea rather than fine art in *The Book of Tea*—which I regard as his masterpiece—may be one of the reasons why the book has not been treated in the philosophical context.⁸

Such a negative evaluation of Okakura suggests, however, that the axis of evaluation itself is inappropriate. The philosophical thought propounded by Okakura in *The Book of Tea* is based on the Taoist idea of “dào,” which literally means the way, or the path. The work construes the concept of dào (in Japanese, “dô” in the Sino-Japanese reading, and “michi” according to the Japanese reading) from a pragmatic perspective in the wide sense of the word. Pragmatist aesthetics might, therefore, provide a key to appropriately approach Okakura's *The Book of Tea*.

2. Preliminary Remarks on Jûdô

Several of you may have probably heard of the word “jûdô” or even seen the sport. Jûdô, formerly known as jûjutsu, is a type of wrestling of Japanese origin and has been an Olympic sport since 1964. The word jûdô is composed of jû and dô, where dô literally means the way. What, then, does jû mean? Although jûdô is a competition that tests the strength of the competitors, jû paradoxically implies tender or gentle.

In *The Book of Tea*, Okakura describes jûdô as follows:

These Taoists' ideas [of the vacuum] have greatly influenced all our theories of action, even to those of fencing and wrestling. Jiu-jitsu [sc. Jû-jutsu], the Japanese art of self-defence, owes its name to a passage in the Taoteking [sc. *Tao Te Ching*, or *Dàodé Jīng*]. In jiu-jitsu one seeks to draw out and exhaust the enemy's strength by non-resistance, vacuum, while conserving one's own strength for victory in the final struggle.⁹

Okakura probably has in mind the section 78 of *Dàodé Jīng*.

The translation by Paul Carus he refers to is as follows:

⁸ For Okakura's three books in English, see Otabe, “Kakuzô Okakura and Another Enlightenment in Early Twentieth-Century Japan.”

⁹ Okakura, *Collected English Writings*, 290.

⁷ Sakabe, “Sheringu to Okakura [Schelling and Okakura],” 329.

In the world nothing is tenderer and more delicate than water. In attacking the hard and the strong nothing will surpass it. . . . The weak conquer the strong, the tender conquer the rigid.¹⁰

At issue is the paradox that something like water, which does not have a certain form by itself and appears weak at first glance, is in fact strong. The term jûdô offers an example of the Taoist thought that favors paradoxical expressions. The word jû offers the insight that one cannot defeat an opponent by relying only on one's own power. In other words, in order to defeat an opponent, one should not resist the opponent's power, but rather utilize it effectively.

In Japan, martial arts such as jûdô and performing arts such as Noh theater are categorized as dô. Traditional Japanese artistic practices, such as calligraphy, painting, poetry, tea ceremonies and so on are collectively known as gei-dô, (the literal translation of the word is "the way of art"). These practices can be distinguished from the artistic regimes of modern Western origin. This terminology originated in the first half of the fifteenth century, became popular during the Edo period, and was established during the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century. Although the word dô is of Chinese origin, this terminology "way of art" is not popular in China. We will trace the development of the concept of dô that is peculiar to Japan.

3. ὁδός – dào – dô

The word dô in Japanese, or dào in Chinese, literally means way or path, and thus corresponds to the classical Greek word ὁδός. All three of these words are extremely polysemous, but I will simplify them to depict their characteristics.

In ancient Greece, ὁδός often takes the form of a contrast between two paths. In Hesiod's *Works and Days*

287–92, the road to Badness is contrasted with the road that leads to Goodness.¹¹ Moreover, in Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, Socrates refers to the parable of Hercules at the crossroads. The question that is raised here pertains to "which path to take," namely "the path of virtue" or "the path of vice." This suggests that, first, ὁδός is an object of choice.¹²

Second, when ὁδός is used in the dative ὁδῷ, or in the form καθ' ὁδὸν, it means "methodologically."¹³ The following is an excerpt from Plato's *Sophists* (218d):

So now, Theaetetus, this is my advice to ourselves, since we think the family of sophists is troublesome and hard to catch, that we first practice the method [μέθοδος] of hunting in something easier, unless you perhaps have some simpler way [ὁδός] to suggest.¹⁴

The English translation does not show the connection between the words; however, the Greek words for "way" and "method" are ὁδός and μέθοδος; the word μέθοδος is composed of μετά (in the sense of "according to") and ὁδός. Put in order, the way becomes a method.¹⁵

In contrast, dào—one of the key concepts in both Confucian and Taoist thoughts—is neither associated with the image of crossroads, nor is it recognized as a definite method.

The word dào appears frequently in *Analects*, one of the central texts of Confucianism, and here is a typical example:

The gentleman devotes his efforts to the roots [běn], for once the roots are established, the Way [dào] will grow therefrom. Being good as a son and obedient as a young man [xiào di] is, perhaps, the root of a man's character [rén].¹⁶

According to Confucianism, dào is the social order that arises from a fundamental virtue. Thus, James Legge (1889–1966), a Scottish sinologist who is best known as

¹⁰ Lao-Tze [sic], *Tao-Teh-King* [sic], 136. A similar view is found also in section 36: ". . . the tender and the weak conquer the hard and the strong" (Lao-Tze [sic], *Tao-Teh-King* [sic], 115).

¹¹ Hesiod, *Theogony, Works and Days, Testimonia*, 111.

¹² Xenophon, *Memorabilia, Oeconomicus, Symposium, Apology*, 95, 97.

¹³ Plato, *The Republic*, 533b, 435a.

¹⁴ Plato, *Theaetetus, Sophist*, 273.

¹⁵ Kato, "Hodosu to Metodosu [Hodos and Methodos]."

¹⁶ Confucius, *The Analects* (Book I, 2), 59.

an early translator of classical Chinese texts into English, translates it as “practical courses.”¹⁷ *Analects* raises the question whether “the Way prevail[s] in the state” or not, that is, whether the state is well governed or not.¹⁸ In contrast, according to the Taoist thought, the “way” takes on metaphysical connotations.

The [Dào (Way)] produced One; One produced Two; Two produced Three; Three produced All things.¹⁹

Taoist thought suggests that Dào precedes even “the One” (i.e., the still unarticulated, chaotic universe) and is the source from which all things (including human beings) and their workings transpire. This view contrasts sharply with that in *Analects*, where dào is regarded as the social order derived from a fundamental virtue. Thus, the Dào in Taoist thought is formulated as follows:

What is above form is called the Way [dào]; what is under form is called an object [literally: vessel].²⁰

The Taoist idea of Dào is characterized in terms of the relationship between the metaphysical and the physical—that which produces and that which is produced.

It is against this background that bodhi (i.e., awakened intellect) was later translated as dào, when Buddhism was introduced in China.

Now, let us probe into dô in Japan. Initially, under the strong influence of the Chinese political and scientific system, the concept of dô was used to refer to a territory or a specialized area. For example, the area outside the capital was divided into seven regions called “seven dôs,” and the Daigaku-ryô (namely, the former imperial university) established in the ninth century consisted of four departments—called “four dôs”—that can be likened to the liberal arts in Europe. The word “michi,” a Japanese reading of dô, was also used as “the way of ...” (added to the words that designate various fields of sciences and

arts), indicating individual areas of specialization. Toward the end of the twelfth century, an example of “uta no michi” came into existence (literally: the way of poetry). Neither the term dô nor michi has been found to be limited to the academic or artistic activities. In *Essays in Idleness*, written in the first half of the fourteenth century, the term michi refers to the various activities that people engage in their daily lives, such as the game of backgammon and the art of water wheel making. The author, Yoshida Kenkô, once asked a man rated as a champion backgammon player the secret of his success. His answer was: “You should never play to win, but so as not to lose. Decide which moves will lead to a quick defeat, and avoid them, choosing instead moves which seem likely to result in a slower defeat, if only by one throw of the dice.”²¹ Yoshida Kenkô who was impressed with these words states the following:

This is the teaching of the man who knows the way [of the backgammon play]; the same holds true also of the way of conducting the self and governing the state.²²

Although each way marks a specialized area, a person who is familiar with a particular “way” is regarded as being familiar with the rest of the “ways” as well. This is because, although the specific knowledge and skills involved in each specialized area (or way) may differ, there exists a common attitude in the pursuit of each of the ways. The awareness of “the way” is combined with the self-reflection on whether one has “attain[ed] the way”²³ or not, thereby giving rise to the conception of the way as a physico-mental training.

In Buddhism, dào originally meant bodhi (i.e., awakened intellect), but in Japan the word “Buddhist dô” has come to mean the path of physico-mental practice and training leading to an awakening.²⁴

¹⁷ Legge, *The Chinese Classics (The Analects, Book I, 2)*, 2.

¹⁸ Confucius, *The Analects (Book V, 2)*, 76.

¹⁹ Legge, *The Sacred Books of China: The Texts of Taoism (Dàodé Jīng, the section 42)*, 85.

²⁰ *I Ching or Book of Change*, 323 – slightly modified.

²¹ Yoshida Kenkô, *Essays in Idleness (Section 110)*, 93.

²² Yoshida Kenkô, *Essays in Idleness (Section 110)*, 93 (my translation).

²³ Yoshida Kenkô, *Essays in Idleness (Section 134)*, 112.

²⁴ Sagara, *Nihon no Shisô [Thought in Japan]*, Chapter 3 “Dô,” 67–99.

In sum, *dô* in Japan is characterized by the perception that each activity of life is a physico-mental practice and training.

4. Cha-dô as an “Art of Life”

Let us return to Okakura’s *The Book of Tea*. Okakura explains the *dô* as follows:

The Tao [sic] literally means a Path. It has been severally translated as the Way, the Absolute, the Law, Nature, Supreme Reason, the Mode. . . . The Tao is in the Passage rather than the Path. . . . The Tao might be spoken of as the Great Transition.²⁵

Okakura owes a great deal to Paul Carus’s 1898 translation of *Dàodé Jīng*.²⁶ However, his understanding of *dào* deviates from that of Carus, who paraphrases the term *dào* as follows:

It means “path, way, method, or mode of doing a thing,” then also, the mode of expressing a thing, or “word”; and thus finally it acquires its main meaning, which is “reason.”²⁷

Although Carus, in his translation of *Dàodé Jīng*, renders *dào* into English as “Reason” with a capital R, Okakura not only avoids the term “Reason” but also disapproves of the literal translation of the term “path.” Instead, he proposes the term “passage,” certainly not in the static, physical sense, but rather in the active, pragmatic sense of passing through.²⁸ Here, we find reflected the concept of *dô* peculiar to Japan—a concept not used as such, but added to the words that designate various fields of sciences and arts with the connotation of physico-mental training. Thus, for Okakura, the concept of *dô* underlies what he understands as aesthetics:

[The] chief contribution of Taoism²⁹ to Asiatic life has been in the realm of aesthetics. Chinese historians have always spoken of Taoism as the “art of being in the world,”³⁰ for it deals with the present—ourselves. . . . The Present is the moving Infinity, the legitimate sphere of the Relative. Relativity seeks Adjustment; Adjustment is Art. The art of life lies in a constant readjustment to our surroundings. Taoism accepts the mundane as it is and, unlike the Confucians or the Buddhists, tries to find beauty in our world of woe and worry.³¹

To accept the mundane as it is, means to affirm the world of woe and worry, that is, “the Imperfect.”³² It does not, however, mean preserving the status quo, but rather “find[ing] beauty” in “the Imperfect”—a transvaluation of a value. In the world we live in, there is no absolute and everything is relative, and we need to constantly (re) adjust ourselves to the world of which we are constitutive, so that our conduct may align with that of others. Adjustment, therefore, consists both in a centrifugal moment of being engaged in and transforming the world and in a centripetal moment of transforming ourselves through engagement with the world. These two moments of adjustment move cyclically and reciprocally, forming a never-ending process. Herein consists the art of life. At issue is, therefore, “the process, not the deed,” and “the completing, not the completion.”³³

Okakura insists that the Taoist art of life forms the spiritual background of *cha-dô* (literally: the way of tea)—for which he coins the term “Teaism” to draw attention to its kinship with Taoism and Zennism.³⁴ In the tea ceremony, the host entertains the guests by serving

²⁵ Okakura, *Collected English Writings*, 286.

²⁶ Okakura, *Collected English Writings*, 285.

²⁷ Lao-Tze [sic], *Tao-Teh-King* [sic] (Carus, “Introduction: Lao-Tze and his Philosophy”), 9.

²⁸ For more details on the relationship between Okakura and Carus regarding the concept of “*dô* (*dào*),” see Inaga, “Kuki Shûzô and the Idea of Metempsychosis: Recontextualizing Kuki’s Lecture on Time in the Intellectual Milieu Between the Two World Wars,” 112–113.

²⁹ In *The Book of Tea*, Okakura understands by Taoism a philosophical doctrine of Laozi and Zhuangzi that he calls “Laoism” in his 1903 book, *The Ideals of the East*. See Okakura, *Collected English Writings*, 41.

³⁰ Okakura uses this odd expression to render the Chinese term *chû-shi-zhû* (literally the “art of dealing with the world”) into English. In the German translation published in 1919, the term is translated as the “Kunst des In-der-Welt-Seins” (Okakura, *Das Buch vom Tee*, 31). As Tomonobu Imamichi has already highlighted, Heidegger owned a German translation of Okakura’s *The Book of Tea*, and this translation might have inspired his terminus technicus “das In-der-Welt-Sein” in his *Being and Time* (1927). See Imamichi, *Betrachtungen über das Eine. Gedanken aus der Begegnung der Antipoden*, 89, 154.

³¹ Okakura, *Collected English Writings*, 289.

³² Okakura, *Collected English Writings*, 269.

³³ Okakura, *Collected English Writings*, 281.

³⁴ The term Zennism was also coined by Okakura.

tea. The ceremony consists of drinking, talking, and appreciating the various works of art—such as calligraphic works, paintings and so on—displayed in the tea-room. Most components of the tea ceremony are part of daily life. How does cha-dô stand out from other daily activities, instead of being buried in them?

Okakura defines Teism as a “religion of the art of life”³⁵; that is, in Teism, people consciously practice the art of life, thereby aiming for higher ideals.

The [tea] ceremony was an improvised drama whose plot was woven about the tea, the flowers, and the paintings. Not a colour to disturb the tone of the room, not a sound to mar the rhythm of things, not a gesture to obtrude on the harmony, not a word to break the unity of the surroundings, all movements to be performed simply and naturally—such were the aims of the tea-ceremony.³⁶

Okakura regards the tea ceremony as a spontaneous performance by the host and guests in a small teahouse specially designed for the ceremony.

Every action in the teahouse has certainly its roots in the daily life activities. In everyday life, most of our actions arise, first, from inertia. The present is, therefore, an extension of the past, eroded by the past, so to speak. Second, our action is embedded in a means-end relationship and determined in advance by the end to be achieved in the future. Thus, the present has lost its meaning as the present. In contrast, the “art of being in the world . . . deals,” as Okakura argues, “with the present.”³⁷ In a tea ceremony where “every least action must be done absolutely perfectly,”³⁸ we must focus on the present that is neither an extension of the past nor the means to the future end, so as to optimize the present’s potential of the objects and ourselves. Thereafter, every action takes on a completely different perspective. “The whole ideal of the Teism is a result of this Zen concep-

tion of greatness in the smallest incidents of life.”³⁹ Okakura cites the example of “caretaking of [Zen] monastery.” Beginners are assigned the simplest tasks, whereas the senior monks are assigned the most difficult and servile tasks; monks may also be required to participate in Zen discussions while doing their daily work, such as weeding the garden, cutting beets, or serving tea: “Such services formed a part of the Zen discipline.”⁴⁰ Similarly, in Teism, people perform each small deed with extreme care in order to show its significance.

Further, the teahouse is “consecrated to the worship of the Imperfect, purposely leaving some thing [sic] unfinished for the play of the imagination to complete.”⁴¹ To worship the imperfect does not mean being content with the imperfect as it is, but rather realizing its potential and thereby completing it.⁴² In the face of the imperfect, the host and guests cooperatively and extemporaneously conduct the tea ceremony as a performance in a small teahouse; thus, nothing other than perfecting the process of performance counts. For the tea-masters, the motto is: “Perfection is everywhere if we only choose to recognise it.”⁴³

Thus, Teism, which is rooted in everyday activities, is not subordinate to life; on the contrary it can affect it: “[The tea-masters] sought to regulate their daily life by the high standard of refinement which obtained in the tea-room.”⁴⁴ Therefore, daily life enriches the art of life with materials, while the art of life enhances them, so that there exists a circular and reciprocal relationship between them. Thus, Okakura argues that “the influence

³⁵ Okakura, *Collected English Writings*, 283.

³⁶ Okakura, *Collected English Writings*, 284.

³⁷ Okakura, *Collected English Writings*, 289.

³⁸ Okakura, *Collected English Writings*, 293.

³⁹ Kakuzo Okakura, *Collected English Writings* (Tokyo: Heibonsha Limited, Publishers, 1984), vol. 1, 293.

⁴⁰ Okakura, *Collected English Writings*, 293.

⁴¹ Okakura, *Collected English Writings*, 294.

⁴² In *The Ideals of the East*, Okakura argues: “Not to display, but to suggest, is the secret of infinity. Perfection, like all maturity, fails to impress, because of its limitation of growth. . . . [L]eaving to [sic] the imagination to suggest to itself the completion of an idea was essential to all forms of artistic expression, for thus was the spectator made one with the artist” (Okakura, *Collected English Writings*, 99–100). By completion, Okakura understands recipient’s active participation in an artwork.

⁴³ Okakura, *Collected English Writings*, 322.

⁴⁴ Okakura, *Collected English Writings*, 322.

of the tea-masters in the field of art” is “as nothing compared to that which they have exerted on the conduct of life.”⁴⁵ In cha-dô, everything, that is, not only tea utensils and alcove decoration, but also our every action, is oriented toward finding beauty in the world.

Okakura’s view greatly resonated with the intellectuals. For example, Sutemi Horiguchi (1895–1984), an architect and an architectural historian, who sought an original style that combined modern design and Japanese teahouses, characterizes cha-dô as an “art of constructing life.”⁴⁶ Furthermore, Yoshinori Ônishi (1888–1959), one of the leading figures in aesthetics in the first half of the last century, claims that cha-dô can be compared to what the early German romantics termed “*Lebenskunst*” (i.e., an art of life).⁴⁷ In modern Japanese aesthetics, cha-dô has a unique position in art as the art of life par excellence.

5. Gei-dô (the Way of Art) and Fine Art, or Pantomony and Autonomy

In 1910, four years after publishing *The Book of Tea*, Okakura gave an influential lecture titled “A History of Art in the East” at the University of Tokyo. Okakura concluded his lecture with the following words:

The great aspect of Japanese art consists in that art is life. . . . There is a perfect harmony between art and social life. Even if you go to the countryside, there are flowers in the alcove, and even if you sit down in a room, there are manners. Everything in life is art.⁴⁸

Calligraphic works and paintings are displayed in the alcove, and poetry is composed and recited in social gatherings. Thus, the traditional Japanese artistic practice is

rooted in daily life and differs, in this respect, from modern Western fine art. It was Okakura’s teacher Fenollosa who directed his attention to this aspect. Fenollosa particularly underlined the fact that in Japan, there is no distinction between pure art and applied art.

People in the East did not find a theoretical distinction between fine art and decorative art necessary, because they thought, unlike the Western people, that both are of an applied nature, serviceable for decoration, and used for making life beautiful, and they did not forget that decoration is a noble art. Therefore, in Japan, all art is decorative, and all decorative art is lofty and elegant. That does not, however, apply to the West.⁴⁹

When the concept of fine art and the discipline of aesthetics that addresses fine art were introduced in the late nineteenth century, numerous Japanese intellectuals were forced to theorize the traditional Japanese artistic practice rooted in daily life. At this time, they focused on the term gei-dô. This term was coined by Zeami (1363?–1443?), one of the great Noh actors and writers, and popularized during the Edo period (1603–1863). However, it was precisely through confronting fine art of Western origin that the theory of gei-dô was systematized in the early twentieth century. Okakura and the aforementioned Ônishi played a significant role in systemizing the theory.

In the following part at the risk of simplification, I will describe the characteristics of gei-dô in contrast to fine art.

First, as already noted at the end of section 3, although each way marks a specialized area, a person who is familiar with a particular way (dô) is regarded as being familiar with the rest of the ways as well. This is because, although the specific knowledge and skills involved in each specialized area (or way) may differ, there is a common attitude involved in the pursuit of each way. In other words, the underlying attitude of training to master the knowledge and skills is common for all the ways. Due to its universality, gei-dô includes a variety of activities. In

⁴⁵ Okakura, *Collected English Writings*, 323.

⁴⁶ Horiguchi, “Cha-shitsu no Shisô teki Haikai to Sono Kôsei [The Intellectual Background and Structure of Teahouses],” 142 – my translation.

⁴⁷ Ônishi, *Tôyô-teki Geijutsu Seishin [Eastern Spirit of Art]*, 359. Ônishi refers to Friedrich Schlegel’s *Lyceum* Fragment 108: “[The irony] originates in the union of savoir vivre [*Lebenskunst*sinn] and the scientific spirit.” See Schlegel, *Philosophical Fragments*, 13.

⁴⁸ Okakura, “Taitô Kôgei-shi [A History of Art in the East],” 316 – my translation.

⁴⁹ Fenollosa, “Bigaku [Aesthetics],” 457–458 – my translation.

the West, fine art is distinguished from the varied other arts by the criteria of being purely focused on beauty and detached from usefulness. In contrast, the criteria to distinguish wide-ranging *gei-dô* from other arts is explained by Ônishi as follows:

Over time and with cultural development, we find an increasing tendency to subsume all arts that require practice and exercise in all senses (namely, mental and physical), regardless of their purposes and contents, under the concept of *gei-dô*. . . . Thus, it has become increasingly difficult to differentiate the so-called fine art from other arts, such as martial arts, games, and plays. This is because people increasingly became focused on *dô*, a common factor that conceptually unified these various arts, paying little attention to the essence and content of each art (such as “beauty,” “martialness,” and “playfulness”).⁵⁰

In general, the modern Western concept of art excludes nonautonomous arts (e.g., decorative or applied art) since art’s autonomy underlies modern Western aesthetics. The concept of *gei-dô*, on the contrary, tends to include all arts, provided that they involve physico-mental training (such as *Jû-dô*, or *Ki-dô*, namely Japanese chess). Here, “the ‘*dô*’ in ‘*dô* of training’ has ethical implications that should generally apply to the ‘life’ of human beings,”⁵¹ so that art as *gei-dô* becomes deeply rooted in life.

Ônishi argues that this inclusiveness of *gei-dô* testifies to the pantonomy of traditional art in Japan. The concept of pantonomy was proposed by Jonas Cohn (1869–1947) in his 1913 lecture “The Autonomy of Art and the Situation of Contemporary Culture” at the First International Congress of Aesthetics. According to Cohn, the primordial stage of culture is characterized by its pantonomy, and art is an integral element of the wholeness of life. However, when the critical mind develops and starts valuing art for its usefulness, art becomes heteronomous as a means to an external end. Emancipated from a means-end relationship, art, then, acquires autonomy by asserting its own inherent value. However,

the further the process of autonomization advances, the more art is separated from the foundation of real life that nourished it. As a result, art fades away and becomes diluted. Art, then, should strive back into an unseparated total life. In other words, it should seek a “new, conscious pantonomy.” Cohn thus depicts the history of art as a process from “primordial pantonomy” via “heteronomy” and “autonomy” to “conscious pantonomy.”⁵²

Referring to Cohn’s theory, Ônishi argues that “nature,” “life,” and “ideas” in Japan developed in an interconnected manner, such that the opposition between heteronomy and autonomy did not come to the fore after primordial pantonomy, but rather the pantonomous structure “has tended to be sustained.” The fusion of art and life is, therefore, not a testimony to the heteronomy of art. Rather, daily life enriches art with materials, while art enhances them, so that there exists a circular and reciprocal relationship between daily life and art. Ônishi underlines that the characteristic of Japanese aesthetic culture lies in the “sustainment of ‘pantonomy’” and the “profound integration of art and ‘life.’”⁵³

Second, *gei-dô* is related to “the process”⁵⁴ in Okakura’s sense. This process is not limited to the process followed by an individual who practices to master a certain technique. Rather, it is something practitioners should follow by learning under the guidance of a master and emulating—or even surpassing—the masters. The *dô* enables “collaborative artistic activities”⁵⁵ among those who have partaken, partake, and will partake in the same *dô*. Thus, *dô* pertains to the inheritance and transmission of tradition. This leads to an emphasis of the strict rules called *kata* (literally “mold” or “form”)—a “kind of spiritual legacy numerous great masters in the past have inherited, cultivated, and refined by participating in the same *dô*.”⁵⁶

⁵⁰ Ônishi, *Tôyô-teki Geijutsu Seishin [Eastern Spirit of Art]*, 40 – my translation.

⁵¹ Ônishi, *Tôyô-teki Geijutsu Seishin [Eastern Spirit of Art]*, 196 – my translation.

⁵² Cohn, *Die Sinn der gegenwärtigen Kultur. Ein philosophischer Versuch*, 150–152.

⁵³ Ônishi, *Tôyô-teki Geijutsu Seishin [Eastern Spirit of Art]*, 34.

⁵⁴ Okakura, *Collected English Writings*, 281.

⁵⁵ Ônishi, *Tôyô-teki Geijutsu Seishin [Eastern Spirit of Art]*, 57 – my translation.

⁵⁶ Ônishi, *Tôyô-teki Geijutsu Seishin [Eastern Spirit of Art]*, 57 –

Each *gei-dô* follows strict rules, which can be likened to μέθοδος. However, unlike μέθοδος, it does not take one to the end point of *gei-dô*. Ônishi quotes a teaching of Uejima Onitsura (1661–1738), a haiku poet of the Edo period: “The best way to learn haiku is to imitate the form of your teacher’s haiku; once you have learned it, it is better to leave that form and use the manner that is appropriate to your nature.”⁵⁷ Although the rules, *kata*, certainly serve as a prescribed form for the practitioners, they do not restrict their creative flow. Rather, they are preconditions for the practitioners’ creativity because they are trained to let their physico-mental self to merge with the rules. This enables them to intrinsically, willingly, and unconsciously live and abide by the rules. However, the creativity is not attributed to “original” individuals, as is the case in modern Western aesthetics,⁵⁸ but rather to the *dô*, that is, to use Okakura’s expression, the “eternal growth which returns upon itself to produce new forms.”⁵⁹ The practitioners who have made the rules a second nature through physico-mental training will be able to show their skills spontaneously and flexibly depending on the situation without being aware of the rules, and realize their own potential, as well as the potential of the objects they deal with. This is because they concentrate on the present and participate—or, rather, are involved—in the creative process of *dô*; that is, their “spirit moves in the rhythm of things.”⁶⁰ Thus, the goal of *gei-dô*’s training is not simply to acquire skills, but to live in accordance with *dô*. This is why *gei-dô* has ethical implications.

6. Conclusion

Over the centuries, the modern Western scientific and artistic system has proliferated throughout the world.

Under the overwhelming dominance of the West, non-Western academic and artistic systems tend to be regarded as deviations from Western norms. As a result, it has been extremely difficult for non-Westerners to theorize their own academic and artistic systems. This phenomenon is generally referred to as Orientalism. Orientalism is not simply the Westerners’ perception of non-Western cultures. Several non-Western intellectuals have internalized Orientalism to modernize—or rather Westernize—their countries. Under these circumstances, Okakura seems to have succeeded in theorizing the non-Western academic and artistic system by refraining from internalizing the Western perspective. Instead, he recognized the dynamic encounter between the Western and Eastern cultures. He reevaluated or reversed the values, thus affirming the significance of the “daily life” in “our world of woe and worry,” and “the Imperfect.” In the face of the oncoming modernization, or Westernization, Okakura sought—on the one hand—to revive the Taoist idea of the “art of being in the World” or the “art of life”—and on the other hand—to relativize Western modernity itself.

These difficult attempts by Okakura were made much easier by the development of pragmatist aesthetics over the past 30 years. This is because pragmatist aesthetics—especially, the somaesthetics that was prefigured in pragmatist aesthetics—provides a framework for promoting dialogue among the academic and artistic regimes of various cultures. Of course, this is not to underestimate the significance of Western academic and artistic regimes. In fact, I myself was educated in the Western style and have engaged primarily in the study of continental aesthetics. I am convinced that this framework also contributes to highlighting the characteristics of continental aesthetics. Simultaneously, this framework also liberates us from exoticism because physico-mental training is accessible to all of us and can transform all of us.

my translation.

⁵⁷ Ônishi, *Tôyô-teki Geijutsu Seishin [Eastern Spirit of Art]*, 197 – my translation.

⁵⁸ McFarland, *Originality and Imagination*, and Otabe, “Originalität und Ihr Ursprung.”

⁵⁹ Okakura, *Collected English Writings*, 286.

⁶⁰ Okakura, *Collected English Writings*, 308.

References

- Confucius. *The Analects*. Translated with an Introduction by D. C. Lau. London: Penguin Books, 1979.
- Cohn, Jonas. *Der Sinn der gegenwärtigen Kultur. Ein philosophischer Versuch*. Leipzig: Felix Meiner, 1914.
- Fenollosa, Ernest F. "Bigaku [Aesthetics]." In *Okakura Tenshin Zenshû [Complete Works]*. Vol. 8, 450–75. Tokyo: Heibonsha Limited, Publishers, 1981.
- Hesiod. *Theogony, Works and Days, Testimonia*. Translated by Glenn W. Most. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007.
- Horiguchi, Sutemi. 1936. "Cha-shitsu no Shisô teki Haikai to Sono Kôsei [The Intellectual Background and Structure of Teehouses]." In *Cha-dô Zenshû [Complete Works on Cha-dô]*. 15 vols. 1936–37. Vol. 3, 121–208. Osaka: Sôgensha Inc.
- I Ching or Book of Change*. The Richard Wilhelm Translation Rendered into English by Cary F. Baynes. London: Penguin Books, 1983.
- Imamichi, Tomonobu. *Betrachtungen über das Eine. Gedanken aus der Begegnung der Antipoden*. Tokyo: University of Tokyo, 1968.
- Inaga, Shigemi. "Kuki Shûzô and the Idea of Metempsychosis: Recontextualizing Kuki's Lecture on Time in the Intellectual Milieu Between the Two World Wars." *Japan Review* 31 (2017): 105–22.
- Katô, Shinrô. "Hodosu to Metodosu [Hodos and Methodos]." In Katô, Shinrô. *Tetsugaku no Michi [The Path of Philosophy]* [in Japanese], 3–53. Tokyo: Sôbunsha Publishing Inc., 1997.
- Lao-Tze [sic]. 1898. *Tao-Teh-King [sic]*. Translated by Paul Carus. Chicago: The Open Court Publishing Company.
- Legge, James, ed. *The Chinese Classics*. Vol. 1. *Confusian Analects, The Great Learning, and The Doctrine of the Mean*. Hongkong: Trubner and Co., 1861.
- Legge, James, ed. *The Sacred Books of China: The Texts of Taoism*. Part 1. *The Tâo Teh King, The Writings of Kwang-ze*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1891.
- Thomas McFarland, *Originality and Imagination*. London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985.
- Okakura, Kakuzo. 1984. *Collected English Writings*. Vol. 1. Tokyo: Heibonsha Limited, Publishers.
- Okakura, Kakuzo. *Das Buch vom Tee*. Translated by Marguerite and Ulrich Steindorff. Leipzig: Insel-Verlag, 1919.
- Okakura, Kakuzo. "Taitô Kôgei-shi [A History of Art in the East]." In *Okakura Tenshin Zenshû [Complete Works]*. Vol. 4, 257–316. Tokyo: Heibonsha Limited, Publishers, 1980.
- Ônishi, Yoshinori. 1988. *Tôyô-teki Geijutsu Seishin [Eastern Spirit of Art]*. Tokyo: Koubundou Publishers Inc.
- Otabe, Tanehisa. "Originalität und Ihr Ursprung. Begriffsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zur modernen Ästhetik." In *Ästhetische Subjektivität. Romantik und Moderne*, edited by Lothar Knatz and Tanehisa Otabe, 32–52. Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2006.
- Otabe, Tanehisa. "Kakuzô Okakura and Another Enlightenment in Early Twentieth-Century Japan." *Dialogue and Universalism* 32, no. 1 (January 2022): 221–32. <https://doi.org/10.5840/du202232113>.
- Plato. *Theatetus, Sophist*. Translated by H. N. Flower. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1987.
- Tôru Sagara, *Nihon no Shisô (Thought in Japan)* [in Japanese], Chapter 3 "Dô," Tokyo: Perikansha Publishing Inc., 1989.
- Sakabe, Megumi. "Sheringu to Okakura [Schelling and Okakura]." In *Sakabe Megumi Shû [Collected Works]* vol. 5, 327–45. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, Publishers, 2007.
- Friedrich Schlegel, *Philosophical Fragments*, translated by Peter Firchow, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991.
- Richard Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics: Living Beauty, Rethinking Art*, Second Edition, Lanham et alia: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2000.
- Richard Shusterman, *Thinking through the Body: Essays in Somaesthetics*, Cambridge et alia: Cambridge University Press, 2012.
- Richard Shusterman, "Pragmatism and East-Asian Thought," *Metaphilosophy* 35, nos. 1/2 (January 2004): 13–43.
- Yoshida Kenkô, *Essays in Idleness*, translated by Donald Keene, New York: Colombia University Press, 1967.
- Xenophon. *Memorabilia, Oeconomicus, Symposium, Apology*. Translated by E. C. Marchant and O. J. Todd, and revised by Jeffrey Henderson. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2007.



BOOK REVIEW

RECONSTRUCTING RORTY, ENHANCING PRAGMATISM

VOPARIL, CHRIS. *RECONSTRUCTING PRAGMATISM: RICHARD RORTY AND THE CLASSICAL PRAGMATISTS*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2022, ix + 377 pp.

Emil Višňovský
Comenius University
emil.visnovsky@uniba.sk

Let me start with a personal remark. I first encountered Richard Rorty's work (though not classical pragmatism) sometime in 1990 and can still remember the liberating effect it had on my thought.¹ Up until then I had been taught that all we have to do is to find the "right" philosophical system and follow it. Such was, alas, the general thinking behind the philosophy education in my country (where the "right" system was of course Marxism, or Marxism-Leninism for that matter). But with the historic failure of that system, I came to understand—thanks especially to Rorty—that instead of looking for a substitute, there is no such system to follow. Rather, anyone taking philosophy seriously has to try to find their own way, by thinking openly and critically, undogmatically. Since then I have come to the conviction that without Rorty we can go no further in philosophy.

Richard Rorty left behind a rich, complex *oeuvre* which, if we are to fully understand it, is in need of considerable attention from the current generation of philosophers. One issue that has not been satisfactorily settled is his relationship to classical pragmatism (but also analytic and continental philosophy). In conjunction with his provocative style this has given him a reputation as a controversial philosopher. The standard story (or at least part of it) is that Rorty misinterpreted classical pragmatism or, at

best used it for his own allegedly non-pragmatist purposes. Radical anti-Rortyans of all stripes may even feel the need to paraphrase Rorty, claiming that his "contribution to pragmatism was merely to have given it" a new turn, and "to have stimulated" its resurrection. His attempts at resurrection have generally been approved of, but his new turn has met with condemnation in most quarters. It's as if his mission was (analogous, again, with the fate of analytic philosophy) simply to dismantle it from inside by intruding into one (or other) philosophical camp. Or that he could not be a full-blooded pragmatist, only a pseudo-pragmatist, for he combined pragmatism with various features of linguistic and postmodern philosophy. Be that as it may, one can hardly dispute the claim that classical pragmatism is so deep rooted in Rorty that one cannot understand him without it. And that is what Chris Voparil has undertaken to demonstrate in his new book. "The book's basic claim is that the path forward runs through, rather than around or against, Rorty" (p. 5). It would be very strange these days to think that pragmatism might expel Rorty from the tradition (despite adversaries, even in the pragmatist camp, having attempted to do so). Today, 15 years after Rorty's demise, there are certainly some who would like to practice philosophy, including pragmatism, as if he had never existed.

Before I go any further, there is one caveat concerning the method of appropriation. The problem with Rorty has always been his creativity—his imaginative and innovative attitude (falsely understood as postmodern "relativism" or "irrationalism", and the like). In his writing he did not simply draw on his sources and interpret them in the "normal" way. He looked for inspiration. He attempted not only to pose new questions but also to reconceptualize old ones. Now, if we ask the metaphilosophical question, "From what standpoint should we interpret a set of ideas?", there are two options: we can judge the older ideas from the standpoint of the newer ones or, conversely, judge the newer ones from the standpoint of the older ones. As for pragmatism, it has

¹ Similar, perhaps, to the one Voparil (2022) mentions when citing Nancy Fraser (285, note 4).

always been—or at least should be—considered “reconstructive,” “transformational” philosophy,² with no interest in chewing the old gum forever. In other words, in its classical era pragmatism aspired to be not just “A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking” or, in the contemporary era, “An Old Name for some New Ways of Thinking”, but a truly (and thoroughly) undogmatic type of philosophy. And it really has become a pluralistic philosophical community of “family resemblance,” as the late Richard Bernstein established some time ago.³ It would therefore be rather strange to judge each new generation of pragmatists on their commonalities with the classics. As if any new version has no right to its own originality.⁴ But that is precisely what Rorty was doing—breaking the crust of philosophical conventions and all kinds of authoritarianism. Philosophy does not seem to be so canonical for him (a “strict science” as Husserl or Russell wished it to be), governed by “transcendental” normativity or by the intellectual norms common to science. Rather, philosophy is an intellectual cultural practice whose task is to be involved in fruitful transactions and conversations with its own historical era (not merely with its historical predecessors).

Voparil’s book is “re-constructive”. That means that he looks “ahead” rather than “behind,” but mostly “beyond”. Basically, his concern is to map out how pragmatism can be enhanced in the future even after Rorty (post-Rorty). It is a constructive rather than a conservative attitude. And one adopted by both classical pragmatists and Rorty himself. It is re-constructive because it cares about the tradition on which it builds. A tradition is not just something that has existed in the past. It is not the same as “old”. A tradition—if it is to be kept alive—must be constantly renewed, reconstructed (even

in Rorty’s case, as Voparil is doing). Reconstruction—or in this case self-reconstruction—should be seen as a genuine pragmatist (Deweyan) strategy for renewing philosophy, making it more useful and interesting, more advanced and up to date with its own era. Moreover, Voparil’s attitude is “integrative” rather than disjunctive. He dismisses all exclusionary readings: “either classical or new pragmatism”, “either Peirce or Rorty”, either experimentalists or lingualists. He is ready to learn from them all for the sake of pragmatism’s continuity. The key method for this is Rortyan conversationalism: looking for fruitful exchanges even between those who “normally” thought no such thing possible. Last but not least, Voparil’s attitude is pluralistic. It focuses on mutual relations—both the influence of the classics on Rorty and his relation to them. It is pertinent to the question of how pragmatism is to be developed further. There is and should be no single dominant way; it has to be pluralistic. Differences are not the same as divisions or oppositions, let alone contradictions, or even antagonisms. Pragmatists do not want unity to descend into uniformity or even totalitarianism. They need open communication and collaboration.

Thus, the key strategy in the book is twofold: 1. to demonstrate the commonalities between classical pragmatism and Rorty’s version, and 2. to argue that the differences between them advance rather than distort the pragmatist tradition. Voparil undertakes this strategy with meticulous precision, using his own original research in the Rorty Archive at UC Irvine as well as re-interpreting a vast amount of literature. What emerges from his work is an important contribution to pragmatist scholarship that is not uncritical of Rorty. Voparil is perceptive of the criticisms levelled against Rorty by Kitcher, Price, Brandom among others. He is prepared to both point out and explain Rorty’s impasses, arguing that it is possible to learn from them.

As for the commonalities between Rorty and classical pragmatism, rehearsing them in detail here would be futile since there are many and they are quite obvious

² See e.g. the works of the late Kai Nielsen (1991; 1995).

³ See Bernstein (1992).

⁴ Famously, Peirce moved to differentiate his version from that of the other classical pragmatist, James, by calling it “pragmatism”. However, Peirce did not think that James’s version was a complete failure, as claimed in one of the stories circulating (see e.g. Mounce 1997).

(prioritizing practice and democracy, anti-Cartesianism, anti-Kantianism even anti-Platonism, meliorism, etc.). Their common denominator, Voparil suggests, is what he originally dubs “Rorty’s pragmatic maxim”, i.e. “the least understood aspect of Rorty’s philosophy”, his normative orientation towards the issues that matter to humans (be they within or outside philosophy) and improve their lot. Even if Voparil does not articulate this maxim as classical Peirce did, providing his own, Rorty’s is the claim that the humanistic mission of philosophy is a vehicle for deepening democracy and socio-cultural change achieved by philosophical ant-authoritarianism (pp. 9, 15-16, 19, 31-32, 260, 274). Rorty’s humanistic anti-authoritarianism, as I understand it, in line with Voparil, is the idea that “nothing but our fellow humans has authority over us” (pp. 80-81); the belief “that there is no higher authority to which we owe responsibility than our fellow humans” (p. 108). In other words, it is an anti-absolutism in the sense that there is no non-human absolute authority (created by humans or not) which might exercise power over humanity, and thus it is humanity itself that is destined to decide its destiny. This is the crux of Rortyism that has attracted most of the accusations of anti-realism, subjectivism, relativism, irresponsibility, and the like. Voparil in his textual analyses throughout the book shows how this anti-authoritarianism applies to Rorty’s views on knowledge and action and how it unites his critiques of epistemology and the reconstruction of ethics. There is nothing absolute in human moral relations, just as there is nothing absolute in human epistemic practices. Everything is pluralistic and contingent despite the tradition in human culture and philosophy of searching for absolutes. Rorty’s anti-authoritarianism also serves as his anti-absolutist antimetaphysics. In social and political contexts this anti-authoritarianism includes the rejection of antidemocratic authorities (the difference between conformity and solidarity). In numerous places Voparil is clear that understanding Rorty correctly means thinking about his “maxim” of anti-authoritarianism.

There are several other key points in Rorty’s pragmatism that call for such a remedy. One of them concerns philosophical realism. As Voparil convincingly proves in his chapter on Peirce and Rorty (while providing a detailed exegesis of the three phases in the relation between Rorty and Peirce), “Rorty turns out to be more of a realist, as traditionally understood, and Peirce less of one, than we might expect” (p. 46). Both have reconstructed—Rorty more radically than Peirce—the traditional representationalist realism. Being a realist does not mean being a representationalist based on the correspondence theory of truth. Rorty learnt from Peirce’s triadic semiotic conception that the relation between the subject (mind, knowledge) and the object (reality, world) is mediated by signs (language),⁵ which he later backed up using Davidson’s triangulation, which leads Voparil to suggest that we call Rorty’s realism a “perspectival realism” or “realism without representation” (pp. 47-48). This means that reality is always described by a particular subject who cannot stop being a human subject. But every human subject is, as Rorty took from Peirce in the most fundamental way, a practical being who cannot transcend the practices, one of which is semiotic (linguistic) practice. For pragmatists, humans decide nothing unless they do so practically. Thus, it is crucial for philosophy to understand human practices, and understanding human practices means understanding human subjectivity, i.e. needs, interests, values, choices, perspectives, and the like, according to which human practices are structured. It is by no means the case that humans do not act unless they have achieved some “objective truth” or “theory”. But Rorty, with his turn to analytic philosophy in the 1960s, moved away from Peirce and the focus on linguistic practices, which was of paramount importance to him, even at the expense of non-linguistic practices or experience. Nonetheless, according to Voparil’s thorough explication, there would have been no Rorty-the-prag-

⁵ Nonetheless, he did not fully exploit Peirce’s “semiotization of philosophy” (see Višňovský 2017).

matist without Peirce's influence at the very beginning of his philosophical career.

Another notoriously attacked issue in pragmatism is its conception of truth, and Rorty is no exception here. His turn to James came relatively late (in the latter half of the 1990s) and after it he dived even deeper into human subjectivity, focusing on the ethical and emotive parts of human Self. Truth is just one type of good, which cannot exist outside human practices, foremost among which is ethical practice. This kind of practice, of course, concerns human mutual relations, in which every form of knowledge emerges and functions. Epistemic relations between humans and nonhuman reality are, again, merely part of social practices whose plurality is open for all to see. Truth as made through these practices, rather than found, seems to be largely—if not exclusively—a matter of language, of vocabularies as a whole. Moving away from non-linguistic practices (experience) in his conception of ethics, Rorty encountered tensions with respect to James as well as to Dewey, neither of whom considered giving up on the conception of experience altogether. Rorty had no use for the direct relation between human subject and non-human object in an epistemic sense, owing to his anti-representational anti-authoritarianism (even though he finally acknowledged that the phrase “to get things right” is equal to the concept of truth), but came to see the role played by experience in changing ethical behaviour. On this much debated issue of the relation between language and experience, Voparil attempts to offer a remedy when pointing out, in several passages (see e.g. pp. 33-35), that Rorty's aversion to the concept of experience was not as radical as it might seem. Rorty, mostly out of metaphilosophical motivations, wished to avoid making the concept of experience a fundamental ontological and epistemological concept of “pure experience” because there is no such thing. I think reconciliation is possible here but it requires us to develop fully the pragmatist conception of practices that includes both fundamental types: 1. discursive (linguistic)

practices functioning based on reasons and communicative norms, and 2. non-discursive (non-linguistic) practices functioning based on causes and experiential norms.⁶

The main differences include Rorty's rejection of Peirce's scientism, James's radical empiricism and Dewey's empiricist metaphysics. With regard to Dewey, Voparil shows how Rorty radicalized Dewey's reconstruction of philosophy by using Deweyan critiques against Dewey (p. 22). Embracing the idea of philosophy as cultural politics brings Rorty closer to Deweyan ideas about the role of philosophy than his earlier stances.

The chapters on Josiah Royce and James Addams analysing how they inspired Rorty may come as a positive surprise (suggesting that something similar can be done with other figures of classical pragmatism like Mead, Santayana and especially Whitehead), but can also be seen as bringing an innovative fresh angle on the typically Rortyan pragmatist themes of democracy, community, solidarity, justice, loyalty, social practice, and the like.

Last but not least, Voparil's work deserves merit, not just because he deals with pragmatism's past, but because he cares about its future, and preferably so. The future is unimaginable if we do not solve the issues he focuses attention on. Voparil looks for new and even “missed opportunities” to develop pragmatism. He looks for continuities to bridge the major gaps and lacunae. One such promising field waiting development, he suggests, is pragmatist humanism. In considering whether anything important has been left out of the book, I would highlight the infamous Rortyan private/public dichotomy.

There is a lot to be learnt from Voparil's work. It provides a new reading of Rorty that shows he holds relevance and belongs quite legitimately and creatively to the pragmatist tradition alongside the three classical pragmatists. If there was ever any doubt, it should now be clear that it was a non-starter. After reconstructing classical pragmatism with Rorty, nowadays the task is to

⁶ For an outline of this conception see Višňovský (2018).

reconstruct Rorty himself which Voparil is doing. Post-Rortyan pragmatism is not just to be reconstructed but enhanced with new, subtler features. Rorty urged us “to practice philosophy differently, in a more humanistic, socially and politically aware, and communally grounded, way” (p. 12). Perhaps most importantly, we can hope that this reconstruction of philosophy as cultural politics will start to fulfil its crucial humanistic mission and contribute to our thinking on the problems of humanity.

Let me conclude with a quote from Voparil’s book which I consider pertinent to the question of what post-Rortyan pragmatists should seriously consider their primary task: “The future of pragmatism is most assured when the energies of pragmatists are devoted not to internal skirmishes but to building bridges to other traditions that extend its insights, and to advancing the tradition’s ability to address the social and moral problems of the day” (p. 284).⁷

References

- Bernstein, Richard. 1992. “The Resurgence of Pragmatism,” *Social Research*, 59, 4, 813-840.
- Mounce, Howard. 1997. *The Two Pragmatisms: From Peirce to Rorty*. London: Routledge.
- Nielsen, Kai. 1991. *After the Demise of the Tradition: Rorty, Critical Theory, and the Fate of Philosophy*, Boulder: Westview Press.
- Nielsen, Kai. 1995. *On Transformative Philosophy: A Metaphilosophical Inquiry*, Boulder: Westview Press.
- Višňovský, Emil. 2017. “On the Interconnection between Peirce’s Pragmatism and Semiotics.” In: Gvoždiak, Vít, and Švantner, Martin, eds. *How to Make Our Signs Clear. C. S. Peirce and Semiotics*. Leiden and Boston: Brill-Rodopi 2017, 9-20.
- Višňovský, Emil. 2018. “Action, Practice, and Theory: Toward Pragmatist Philosophical Framing of Practice Theory”. In: Anders Buch and Ted Schatzki, eds.: *Questions of Practice in Philosophy and Social Theory*. New York and London: Routledge, 2018, pp. 31-48.

⁷ This work was supported by the Slovak Research and Development Agency under Contract no. APVV-18-0178.



DESIGN BY Thomas Kremer
COVER AND LAYOUT BY Dóra Szauter
COVER ART: Susan Kremer, E_pty_Spaces

