PRAGMATISM TODAY
ISSN 1338-2799
The Journal of the Central-European Pragmatist Forum

Pragmatism and Sexuality

Volume 14, Issue 2, Winter 2023

THE CENTRAL-EUROPEAN
PRAGMATIST FORUM - CEPF

INDEXED BY: The Philosopher's Index
Scopus

EDITORIAL & ADVISORY BOARDS

GUEST EDITOR

Alexander Kremer
University of Szeged, Hungary
alexanderkremer2000@yahoo.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
J.Serrano.Zamora@uma.es

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, Cá 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: Ars Erotica, Scientia Sexualis, Puritanism

Alexander Kremer 7

Obituary: John Lachs (1934-2023)

Krzysztof Piotr Skowroński 9

Pragmatism, Sex, and Somaesthetics: An Interview with Richard Shusterman 12

Chapters

Aesthetic Existence and the Therapy of Passions in the World of George Santayana

Nora Horvath 22

The Dangerous Liaisons between Pragmatism and Psychoanalysis: Sex, Drives, and Impulses

Matteo Santarelli 40

The Queer Pragmatist and Erotic Concrescence

B. Henning 49

Cruising Uncertainty: Queering Dewey against Heteronormativity

Mark Tschaepe 59

VARIA

Shusterman and Gadamer on Aesthetics. Situatedness, Historicity and Play

ElenaRomagnoli 73

BOOK REVIEWS

Abrams J. J., Shusterman's Somaesthetics. From Hip Hop Philosophy to Politics and Performance Art. BOSTON: Brill, 2022.

Alice Dupas 85

A Short Introduction to Everyday Aesthetics
Leddy, Thomas. The Extraordinary in the Ordinary: The Aesthetics of Everyday Life.
Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press
Alexander Krémer *90*

INTRODUCTION: ARS EROTICA, SCIENTIA SEXUALIS, AND PURITANISM

Alexander Kremer
University of Szeged, Hungary
alexanderkremer2000@yahoo.com

I am glad to offer a Holiday Season present to those people who are interested in both Pragmatism and sexuality. Sexuality is ancient to man, while Pragmatism is a philosophical movement that only emerged in the 19th century. It therefore goes without saying that we should start with the former. Almost everyone in European culture is familiar with the theories of Darwin and Freud, which attribute a prominent role to sexuality in both individual life and community. Darwin's theory of evolution, which has had an extraordinary influence on Pragmatism, is based on the principle of natural selection. In his book, *On the Origin of Species*, Darwin introduced the expression of a "struggle for existence" to represent the practice of this selection. It happens not only on the individual level but also on the community level. However, we know that for Freud, libido represented all psychic energy and not just sexual energy, he also made clear that it permeates most of the human activities and lives. It is possible to renounce it, but humanity would cease to exist if everyone did.

We can see, then, that sexuality permeates our lives today as it did in the past, even if it always takes different forms, historically and socially determined. M. Foucault, in his now classic terminology of *ars erotica* and *scientia sexualis* (cf. *The History of Sexuality*. Vol. I), refers to a slice of these manifestations. Nevertheless, R. Shusterman further develops the presentation of ancient manifestations of *ars erotica* in his incredibly thorough and comprehensive book, *Ars Erotica: Sex and Somaesthetics in the Classical Arts of Love* (Cambridge University Press, 2021). The general features of Pragmatism's relation to sexuality, including the dominant role of Puritanism, are also discussed in a longer paper by Shusterman, "Pragmatism and Sex: An Unfulfilled Connection" in *The Transactions of the C.S. Peirce Society* (2022).

Before we go into the textual details of this issue, we must remember John Lachs (1934-2023), the Hungarian-born American philosopher who was an ardent fighter for democracy and Stoic Pragmatism and an expert on Santayana's philosophy. Krzysztof (Chris) Piotr Skowroński wrote an excellent obituary for us.

With the texts mentioned above, the current issue of *Pragmatism Today* is worth perusing. Reading in the foreground of these texts, one can easily interpret both the Shusterman interview and Pragmatism's relation to eroticism, psychoanalysis, and sexuality in general. Moving on to the specific texts, I would like to point out that the Shusterman interview, by necessity, addresses contexts that the author has always wanted to address about his works above but has not had the opportunity to do so.

Nora Horvath's rich article shows us that Santayana's "philosophy was centered on sensory perception, and although he sought spiritualism through his Platonism, his *The Sense of Beauty* is based on pleasure. His personal life and individual motivations are a vague background to his poetry and theoretical writings, and viewing his creative world as a whole is necessary." Matteo Santarelli analyzes the relationship between Pragmatism and Psychoanalysis. In his opinion, while "the differences between both approaches cannot be denied, I do not believe that they are fundamentally irreconcilable." "In a nutshell - Santarelli says -, the convergencies and divergencies reconstructed in this article could also be taken as an invitation to pragmatists and psychoanalysts to contribute to a social philosophy that "joins regression and progression" (Côté, 2023: 14) to provide a better understanding of social reality and to open unexpected paths to political criticism and action." B. Henning claims that there is an important functional distinction between erotic and sexual experience and that queer theorists have neglected the former in favor of the latter. Dewey's theory of "quality," most explicitly available to us in aesthetic experience, is also responsible for our time experience and how we recognize singular individuals as just who they

are. Erotic relationships, which may or may not be sexual, are oriented to the individual in their qualitative, temporal aspect. The merely sexual is essentially a negotiation of space. Making space for queer eroticism, rather than simply queer sexuality, amounts to a shift in the way we see the possibilities for community formation and familial arrangements. In Mark Tschaepe's opinion, "concepts from queer theory help advance Dewey's philosophy into inquiries concerning oppression and identity, including issues concerning gender and sexuality." On a broad level, Tschaepe encourages a "synthesis between pragmatism and queer theory that proves fruitful for both, as Dewey's philosophy of inquiry helpfully subtends queer projects while queer theory advances Dewey's philosophy into inquiries concerning gender and sexuality."

In the "Varia" section, we can read Elena Romagnoli's revealing article about the relationship between Shusterman's and Gadamer's aesthetics. It is worth reading since it is a "little-known influence of Gadamer's philosophy on the development of Shusterman's" somaesthetics. We close our present issue with two book reviews. Alice Dupas wrote a knowledgeable interpretation of Jerold J. Abrams' book, *Shusterman's Somaesthetics. From Hip Hop Philosophy to Politics and Performance Art* (Boston, Brill, 2022), and you can read from my quill a short review of Thomas Leddy's fantastic introduction, *The Extraordinary in the Ordinary: The Aesthetics of Everyday Life* (Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, (2012)).

I think everyone is familiar with the words of Terentianus Maurus: "Pro captu lectoris habent sua fata libelli" ("According to the capabilities of the reader, books have their destiny"). Based on this hermeneutic rule, let the texts speak for themselves from now on!

OBITUARY: JOHN LACHS (1934-2023)

Krzysztof Piotr Skowroński
University of Opole, Poland and Berlin
Practical Philosophy International Forum e.V., Germany

John Lachs, Centennial Professor of Philosophy Emeritus at Vanderbilt University, passed away on November 14, 2023, in Nashville, TN. He will be remembered as an eminent teacher, mentor, thinker, author, and promoter of philosophy understood both as an academic profession and as a practical contribution to good and meaningful life. His books, scholarly articles, and video recordings show a wide range of his interests and areas of competence. Let me outline just a few themes that have been recurring in his philosophical writings and public activity throughout his professional life at McGill (BA 1956, MA 1957), Yale (PhD 1961), College of William and Marry (1959-1967), and, since 1967, at Vanderbilt University, Nashville, TN.

Throughout his intellectual life, ever since his graduate studies, including his master's thesis and doctoral dissertation, Lachs has been preoccupied with Santayana, his "first love in philosophy" (*Stoic Pragmatism*, Indiana University Press 2012, p. 2), to such a degree that he became one of the most accomplished experts of Santayana's thought. He has authored *George Santayana* (Twayne 1988), On *Santayana* (Wadsworth 2006); co-authored (with Michael Hodges) *Thinking in the Ruins: Wittgenstein and Santayana on Contingency* (Vanderbilt University Press 2000); edited *Animal Faith and Spiritual Life: Unpublished and Uncollected Works on George Santayana with Critical Essays on His Thought* (Appleton 1967); co-edited (with his wife Shirley) *Physical Order and Moral Liberty: Previously Unpublished Essays on George Santayana* (Vanderbilt University Press 1969), not to mention his numerous papers, presentations, and lectures on Santayana. He has openly admitted that Santayana's *Scepticism and Animal Faith* (1923) "became a part of my life" (*Stoic Pragmatism*, p.183), that John Dewey and Santayana were for him the "dominant influences" (*The Relevance of Philosophy to Life*, Vanderbilt University Press, p. xv), and that the latter "taught me that the ultimate issue in philosophy and in everyday life is the health of one's soul" (*Stoic Pragmatism*, p. 185).

At the same time, Lachs has openly confessed that the idea of *stoic pragmatism* has been within him for a long time, and that "perhaps from the first, a defining feature of my thought" (*Stoic Pragmatism,* p. 23). 1964 was the year when he published his two first articles devoted entirely to Santayana, and it is the same year in which he published his first text written in the spirit of his stoic pragmatism ("To Have and To Be"). These two "strands" in his intellectual activity continued up and through "Santayana as Pragmatist" (2003), in which he interpreted Santayana from a pragmatist perspective, until finally his book *Stoic Pragmatism*, and his 2014 paper "Was Santayana a Stoic Pragmatist?" were published, and even further on. I have no hard scholarly evidence to claim that Lachs has been developing the idea in a parallel fashion to his scholarship on Santayana, or that he has intellectually kneaded Santayana into whatever form that could be used in order to support his arguments for *stoic pragmatism*, or that *stoic pragmatism* is a sort of continuation of Santayana's thought.

Lachs's output also testify to his expertise on American philosophy (*American Philosophy: An Encyclopedia*, co-edited with Robert Talisse, Routledge, 2008; *A William Ernest Hocking Reader*, co-edited with D. Micah Hester, Vanderbilt University Press, 2004), as well as to his efforts to promote it. Among others, he co-founded (1973) *Society for the Advancement of American Philosophy* (SAAP), co-founded *The Santayana Society* (1980), he was the President of *The Charles S. Peirce Society* (1987), *The Metaphysical Society of America* (1997), and The *William James Society* (2007). His numerous articles on American pragmatism as well as his interpretations of Peirce, James, and Dewey can be found in many academic journals and in some of the books that I enumerate in this text, *A Community of Individuals*, for example.

Lachs has even more to say by means of his ideas of *immediacy* (*Intermediate Man*, Hackett 1981; *The Cost of Comfort*, Indiana University Press 2019), *meddling* (*Meddling: On the Virtue of Leaving Others Alone*, Indiana University Press, 2014), the mind-body problem (*Mind and Philosophers*, Vanderbilt University Press 1987), ethical, socio-ethical, and bioethical issues (*A Community and Individuals*, Routledge 2003), and the problems of contemporary academia (*The University*, unpublished manuscript, completed in 2022). In his earlier years, Lachs was also interested in German philosophy. He translated and co-edited, with Peter Heath, J. G. Fichte's *The Science of Knowledge with the First and Second Introduction* (Appleton 1970) and published *Marxist Philosophy: A Bibliographical Guide* (University of North Carolina Press 1967).

Lachs expertise on many aspects of philosophy, ethics, and metaphysics in general can be seen in his co-edited, with Charles E. Schott, *The Human Search: An Introduction to Philosophy* (Oxford University Press 1982) and in a collection of his published and un-published articles *Freedom and Limits*, edited by Patrick Shade (Fordham 2014).

One can also find a booklet of poetry in his bibliography: *The Ties of Time* (Delta Canada 1970).

Most importantly, however, the practical dimension of philosophical activity has been his main message to his audiences, especially to his students (he received the Madison Sarratt Prize for Excellence in Undergraduate Teaching as well as the Vanderbilt Alumni Education Award twice). I was blessed to edit *John Lachs's Practical Philosophy*: *Critical Essays on His Thought with Replies and Bibliography* (Brill/Rodopi 2018) having organized, before, an international conference on Lachs's thought in Berlin, Germany (2015), in which he participated and demanded on us, the conference Speakers, to give him solid criticism and stimulation for more activity. This book contains his full primary and secondary bibliography, prepared by one of John's former doctoral students, dr Charles Padrón, along with a long list of sixty nine "Directed Dissertations at Vanderbilt University."

Among his central ideas was that philosophy should be instrumental in helping people to establish a practical guide as to how to live well. This should be the predominant contribution of philosophy and philosophers to the humanities and the greater culture at large. In this sense, philosophy should revert back to its Hellenistic roots, which means securing a definite practical dimension, rather than exclusively a theoretical and speculative one. He openly demanded higher standards from philosophers themselves, and in "The Obligations of Philosophers," a chapter of the book that I edited (*Practicing Philosophy as Experiencing Life*, Brill/ Rodopi 2015), we can read that "Philosophers ought to know better, speak better, and act better" (p. 7). An important part of this philosophical stance and attitude towards life is the ability to find joy in everyday life and to celebrate the moments in which we can find beauty and splendor of the natural world around us. In this respect, his *In Love with Life: Reflections on the Joy of Living and Why We Hate to Die* (Vanderbilt University Press 1998) looks as the most important expression of his views in this respect.

I suspect, his appreciation of life despite the tragic situations around us comes from his early Central / European experience (he was born in Budapest, Hungary, on July 17, 1934) and later experience of American democracy, about which he wrote in a positive mode in "From Enemies to Peaceful Neighbors," in the book we co-edited with Matthew Flamm (*American and European Values*, Cambridge Scholars 2008). Namely, at an early age, he experienced "gratuitous violence and sudden death" during WWII and then in subsequent years under Communist rule. As a ten-year-old boy, he thought about "the evanescence of life and the uncontrollability of fortune" (*Stoic Pragmatism*, p. 182). After the move to Canada with his family (1951), studying philosophy seemed almost predetermined. Ultimate, preponderant themes preoccupied him, for example: "God, the meaning of life, and the right comportment toward death" (*Stoic Pragmatism*, p.182). "From Enemies to Peaceful Neighbors"

betrays Lachs's admiration for American culture with its pluralism, diversity, and toleration and, secondly, his appropriation of its universalist character with a conviction that America should set standards and give hope to other cultures, nations, and states.

Since I have personally experienced John's friendly, always helpful and encouraging approach for more than two decades, let me conclude by saying some words in a personal tone. I met John for the first time during my first scholarly visit to the US in 2001-2002. I got the *Kosciuszko Foundation Fellowship* to do research on George Santayana under Herman Saatkamp at Santayana Edition at IUPUI Indianapolis, IN and, later, under Lachs at Vanderbilt. By the way, Saatkamp was Lachs's former PhD student and, later, colleague and, till John's death, close friend (I witnessed a wonderful spirit of friendship and cooperation between them on numerous occasions). While in Nashville, it was Lachs who encouraged me to write my academic publications in English (I had published only in my native Polish before), which I did, and to write my first book, *Santayana and America* (Cambridge Scholars, 2007). Later, he was an inspirational and helpful in organizing the *American and European Values* series of international conferences for thirteen years in Poland and Germany. Lachs was also instrumental in establishing *Berlin Practical Philosophy International Forum e.V.*; just after it started, I suggested Maja Niestrój, its Chair, that we should ask John for his permission that the association work under his patronship or *Schirmherrschaft*, as the German tradition has it.

I am very grateful to Harman Saatkamp for making it possible for John to keep in his hands, in his last moments, in a hospital bed, my authored book, freshly published, inspired by his practical philosophy: *Meaningful Life amidst a Pluralism of Cultures and Values: John Lachs's Stoic Pragmatism as a Philosophical and Cultural Project* (Brill 2023).

PRAGMATISM, SEX, AND SOMAESTHETICS: AN INTERVIEW WITH RICHARD SHUSTERMAN

Alexander Kremer
University of Szeged, Hungary
alexanderkremer2000@yahoo.com

Somaesthetics is a central feature of Richard Shusterman's pragmatist, naturalist philosophy. Initially, Shusterman imagined it as "a branch of philosophical aesthetics" (cf. *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, Rowman & Littlefield, 2000, second edition, p. 279-280), and he intentionally did not deal with topics such as food and sexuality. In the second decade of the third millennium, somaesthetics became an international movement and "an interdisciplinary field of inquiry" (cf. J.J. Abrams (ed.), *Shusterman's Somaesthetics*: *From Hip Hop Philosophy to Politics and Performance Art*, Brill, 2022, p. 247), and in recent years Shusterman has repeatedly discussed the somaesthetics of food and eroticism, including his monumental *Ars Erotica: Sex and Somaesthetics in the Classical Arts of Love* (Cambridge University Press, 2021). This interview focuses on the topic of sexuality.

A. Kremer: Why did you think at the beginning that it would not be the best idea to write first on sexuality from somaesthetic point of view?

R. Shusterman: My reluctance to treat sexuality at the beginning of my work in somaesthetics had multiple reasons, both general reasons (in terms of the context of the field of philosophy and of academic culture more broadly) and personal reasons (relating to my particular trajectory in philosophy and my cultural background). Since my personal trajectory in philosophy, like that of any academic philosopher, is significantly shaped by the existing philosophical field, the two sets of reasons are deeply intertwined. But let me begin with the general reasons related to the academic field. Sexuality was not a central theme in the pragmatist tradition that I was already working in when I introduced somaesthetics in the last few years of the 1990s. It was also not an important theme in Anglo-American philosophy or in aesthetics, although Roger Scruton, a distinguished analytic philosopher and expert in the philosophy of art, had written an interesting book, *Sexual Desire: A Moral Philosophy of the Erotic* (1986), that was, to my taste, marred by his moral and political conservatism and that didn't really leave a lasting mark in creating subsequent discussion.

In continental philosophy, there was Foucault's impressive *History of Sexuality* that did have and continues to have an important legacy but was not especially welcome in the Anglo-American philosophical tradition in which I had always worked since my student days in Jerusalem and Oxford. English and American philosophers have been far less inclined to write about sexual matters than French or German thinkers (e.g., Freud, Reich, Klages, Marcuse). American academic culture at that time (and still today) is very rightly concerned about sexism and the abuse that women in academia (and society more generally) suffer from men concerning their sex and gender identities. Sexual harassment was and remains a plague in American academia, and philosophers have been some of the most notorious culprits. I won't name names. An important and very welcome activist wave has advocated greater respect for individual choice in sexual preference and gender identity. Foucault's study of sexuality, which came after his essential studies on prisons, insanity, and their sociopolitical functions, was immediately seen as having important sociopolitical relevance and as being closely and fruitfully related to his homosexual advocacy; so his work on sexuality (and the body more generally) found considerable resonance in that powerful, progressive, political wave of gay liberation, and he was a justifiably revered, world-renowned vanguard figure in that movement.

My trajectory differed significantly from Foucault's, and my reputation and reception were much more limited. To the extent that I had an international reputation

in philosophy in the late 1990s, it was due to my book P*ragmatist Aesthetics* (1992), and the chapter of that book that got the most popular attention (in newspapers, magazines, and even an appearance on French national TV) was its chapter on rap music. For several years, I was viewed, at least in Europe, as the rap philosopher. Remember, for example, that when you interviewed me for a Budapest daily newspaper many years later (in 2014), the headline was something like "A Philosopher of Public Enemy."[1] You can give the exact formulation. Now rap was notorious for its lubricious phallocentric sexuality and sexism (the male hero was a supercool "mack daddy" or womanizing "player" while women were bitches and whores). Some critics of my work on hip hop deplored the sexism in rap and attacked me for appreciating rap's art even though I criticized its sexism and violence. I realized that if I began to develop the field somaesthetics by treating the topic of sex, my philosophical colleagues would not take somaesthetics seriously and would see my efforts for this field as simply trying to get attention for myself by treating a provocative, popular (one could even say "sexy") topic. Besides, as I already mentioned, sex was very close to the rap material I had explored, so even the astute theorist Martin Jay claimed that somaesthetics derived from my work on rap when it instead originated more from my experimentation with meditative somatic disciplines such as yoga, tai-chi, Alexander Technique, and Feldenkrais Method. I did not want my work in philosophy and somaesthetics to be seen as motivated by sexual curiosity, as the expression of a rap "player" sensibility, or as endorsing sexism in any way. Moreover, as a Jew and Israeli, I was also aware that in European antisemitism, Jewish men were often vilified as oversexed predators of innocent Christian women.

Finally, as my aesthetics was known for its defense of pleasure (and was even described by some critics as hedonistic and sensual), I feared that somaesthetics would be misunderstood as focused only on the most basic stereotypical pleasures. Indeed, the first time that I lectured on somaesthetics, the audience, though enthusiastic, thought the focus of somaesthetics was simply basic bodily pleasures, which they narrowly identified with eating and sex. I wanted to give somaesthetics a broader scope that centrally involved more distinctively cognitive and spiritual dimensions of embodiment. Not only for purposes of public relations, but because those more elevated, spiritual dimensions of body consciousness were experientially very important for me – and increasingly so after my Feldenkrais professional training and my Zen training in Japan. Of course, as I've emphasized in recent writings, there are essential cognitive and even spiritual dimensions in certain forms of eating and erotic desire.

AK: You mention in the preface to your book *Ars Erotica* that it took a long time for you to write it. Why was that?

RS: Yes, after signing the contract with Cambridge, it took me over 10 years to complete. Part of the reason for the delay, as I mentioned in the book's preface, was internal resistance in writing the book because I feared a misunderstanding and negative reaction from the academic community to which I belong. After the global wave of media attention to the Me Too movement in 2017 and the resultant justified outrage at the sexual abuse of women committed by men of power, the whole topic of *ars erotica* fell under a cloud of suspicion. I worried that even a serious critical study of classical theories of lovemaking would be seen as justifying the troubling sexist attitudes and values that those theories often expressed, even if only implicitly. I was particularly concerned that my female colleagues would be upset. Here, I can relate an interesting anecdote about how the cultural atmosphere changed during the time I wrote the book. My female colleagues were the ones who initially encouraged me to write a book related to sexual somaesthetics. They

[1] *Népszabadság*, 31. 05. 2014., and the exact title was "A Public Enemy esztétikája" ("The Aesthetics of the Public Enemy") – A. Kremer

argued that philosophers like Foucault and Bataille, who wrote about *ars erotica,* had theories that privileged violence and had little respect for women, while my work, in contrast, expressed a recognition of the power of tenderness and loving respect for feminine values, so philosophy, they said, needed a book on *ars erotica* from someone like me. By the time the book was ready for publication in 2021, the atmosphere around the topic of lovemaking was so toxic that none of these women friends were willing to endorse the book, fearing that doing so would somehow constitute affirming the sexism and patriarchy embedded in classical *ars erotica*. I understood and sympathized with their worries, even though I recognized that sexism and patriarchy pervade classical philosophy and traditional culture more generally, not simply erotic culture.

There is another reason why the book took so long to write: my initial ignorance of so much of the cultural material the book presents and analyzes. Once I began writing, it became clear to me that a proper study of *ars erotica* required examining its theories and practices within the context of the different cultures that shaped them, since erotic desire and behavior are not simply physical reactions but have an essential intentional cultural dimension. I further realized that, in our increasingly globalized, multicultural world, it was important to go beyond the narrow Eurocentric focus of Foucault. I therefore decided the book should have chapters discussing classical Chinese, Indian, Islamic, and Japanese *ars erotica* besides its chapters on biblical, Greco-Roman, medieval, and Renaissance erotic theory. The problem, however, was that I knew very little about most of those traditional cultures and almost nothing about some of them. So, I had a great deal of research to do – not only the study of the erotic texts themselves and their commentary, but also the historical and cultural contexts that shaped those texts and influenced their legacy of reception. It took a great deal of time to read and digest that material and then even more time to articulate properly what I had learned and thought worthy of presenting in the book. I hope my efforts in the book have been successful; it's had a very good reception so far, but irrespective of its reception, the book proved a very worthwhile learning experience for me, teaching me both humility in my cultural ignorance and renewed admiration for the work of cultural historians without whom I could have never written the book.

AK: After many articles and a few books devoted to somaesthetics, when and why have you felt it was high time to write about eating and sexuality?

RS: Ever since I saw that the first reaction to my idea of somaesthetics was to think of its application to food and eroticism, I realized I would eventually have to treat those topics. Although I deferred writing about them, they haunted the background of my thinking. Let me focus on sexuality rather than food here since it is the topic of this interview and the special issue of *Pragmatism Today*. Already in the second half of the 2000s, the erotic began to find explicit expression in my writing. I published a paper, "Aesthetic Experience: From Analysis to Eros," in 2006 in *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, and then, in the same journal, "Asian Ars Erotica and the Question of Sexual Aesthetics," in 2007. As for reasons why I began to write about sexuality, it is obvious that somaesthetics—as a critical, meliorative study of somatic experience and performance — should treat the topic of sex because sexuality is a central aspect of our embodiment and influence on our behavior. To neglect it would be a serious gap in the field. But there was another perceived gap that pushed me to write about sexuality. That is the failure of pragmatist philosophy to treat the issues of sexual desire and lovemaking with any depth and detail.

As I've often explained, somaesthetics is not a departure from my work in pragmatism but is essentially an extension of my pragmatist philosophy. I followed my philosophical heroes James and Dewey in emphasizing the central role of embodiment in perceptual and affective

experience as well as in action, but I felt pragmatist philosophy could engage embodiment in a more melioristic and practical way through a broader field like somaesthetics with its interdisciplinary and pragmatic dimensions. I also saw that my classical pragmatist heroes did not treat sexuality and erotic pleasures in a substantial way. This surprised me because sexual selection was an essential factor in Darwin's theory, which was a key influence on pragmatism. Instead, James affirmed in his *Principles of Psychology* what he called "the anti-sexual instinct," and he expressed horribly homophobic views. Dewey's discussions of sexuality were more positive but extremely limited, confined to comments in discussing the views of others regarding the need for primary sex education, which he affirmed. This includes his admirable defense of the moral legitimacy of Bertrand Russell's book on *Marriage and Morals*. I discuss these points in considerable detail, but also discuss the limited sexual views of James, Peirce, and Mead, along with those of Alain Locke and Jane Addams in my paper "Pragmatism and Sex: An Unfulfilled Connection" in *The Transactions of the C.S. Peirce Society* (2022). I was particularly disappointed that Dewey did not correctly address the aesthetic dimensions and somatic arts of lovemaking because his aesthetic theory seemed so well-oriented to do so. In fact, when I first immersed myself in Dewey's aesthetics (in the early 1990s), I thought he would certainly have offered a study of sexual aesthetics because his concept of aesthetic experience seemed to suggest the experience of intercourse: Think of his descriptions of aesthetic experience as a pleasurable rhythmic experience involving both action and undergoing, an experience that is highly unified and focused, and that builds through tensions and obstacles to lead to a final, complete consummation. In fact, in my essay "The End of Aesthetic Experience" (1995), I even suggested that "sexual experience… Dewey might have welcomed" as art, whereas analytic philosophers vehemently denied this. Much later, when I went systematically through Dewey's enormous corpus to look for his discussions of sex, I was disappointed to find so little direct discussion of erotic desire and lovemaking. I wish Dewey had done more, but I have tried to fill the gap rather than complain.

AK: Why did the earlier pragmatists not want to deal with this kind of sensual dimension of human life? At first, if we look at the history of pragmatism, perhaps the Puritan roots played a prominent role in this attitude. What do you think?

RS: Yes, as I write in my essay on "Pragmatism and Sex," the Puritan roots of American philosophy and, more generally, of American culture had much to do with this attitude. But the prudishness of American culture went beyond the strictly Puritan and Protestant tradition. Although protestant denominations constitute the predominant religious faith in the United States, Catholic religious sentiments have also contributed to policing the expression of sexual topics in American culture. A Catholic judge ruled that Bertrand Russell was morally unfit to teach logic at the City College of New York because he wrote a book that advocated sex before marriage. In my article on "Pragmatism and Sex," I also note how the classical pragmatists were reluctant to endorse Freud's psychoanalytic theory, partly because of its emphasis on sex. If James found Freud's work "troubling because of its sexual references,"[2] then Dewey was mordantly dismissive of Freud's appeal to sex as a concept for explaining mental life and social behavior. He writes: "Just now, another simplification is current. All instincts go back to the sexual, so that *cherchez la femme* (under multitudinous symbolic disguises) is the last word of science with respect to the analysis of conduct." "The treatment of sex by psycho-analysts… flagrantly exhibits both the consequences of artificial simplification and the transformation of social results into psychic causes."[3] Dewey is right that Freud's theo-

[2] See Linda Simon, *Genuine Reality: A Life of William James* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 363-364.
[3] John Dewey, *Human Nature and Conduct* (1922), in *John Dewey: The Middle Works*, vol. 14 (Carbondale: Southern Illinois Uni-

ries sometimes suffer from oversimplification, but part of Dewey's particular animus toward Freud's simplifications may derive from the latter's emphasis on the sexual.

Dewey's concern with education and with his idea that philosophy should concern itself with the real problems of men and women and not just the academic problems of philosophy should have made him particularly interested in sexual issues. Matters of sexuality and gender pose problems that ordinary people regularly face in one way or another because these problems are very difficult to avoid. Such issues go beyond the private realm and instead can affect society more generally, despite their origin in personal matters. Take the problem of unwanted teen pregnancy, which, besides its troubles for pregnant mothers, impacts the future of their still unborn children and sustains cycles of poverty that weaken supportive family structures and the healthy fabric of society. When I was a young associate professor at Temple University, an undergraduate student in the education department contacted me because she had to write a paper on the problem of teen pregnancy from a philosophical perspective, and she chose pragmatism. When she asked me what pragmatism had to say about this problem, I politely responded that I, regrettably, did not know, but I arrogantly thought to myself, why should pragmatism have anything to do with such a problem so remote from traditional philosophical inquiry? Now I realize how wrong I was to think that issues related to sexual conduct and its techniques are not worthy of pragmatist philosophical attention.

Gender identity that breaks the traditional gender binary constitutes another important issue that is increasingly in the public eye. Pragmatist feminists have been helpful here, but more work needs to be done with respect to queer pragmatism and trans issues. In a recent article I treat the promise of trans identity in breaking the limiting gender binary that constrains the flourishing of creative human expression.[4] Indeed, pragmatists also need to pay more attention to heterosexual erotic relations as part of their melioristic agenda for the art of living. Although heterosexuals may have the dominant and socially privileged sexual preference, this does not mean that they never face severe problems regarding their sexual behavior, problems that might be resolved through progressive, pragmatist thinking about sex.

AK: Why did you not treat Freudian sexual theory in your book? Why did you end it with Renaissance theory, with an epilogue that briefly sketches how developments relating to erotic theory helped generate the field of aesthetics?

RS: That's a good question. The simple answer is that the book was already too long and much too late in delivery. You see that it has more than 400 pages. I originally intended to write a book that would extend into modern and contemporary theory, that would go from Genesis all the way to developments today in evolutionary psychology and neuroscience. That was the proposed book that Cambridge University Press contracted. However, once I started the research and the writing, I realized that the original project was too overwhelming for me to fit into one book without making my study too superficial. So, I convinced my editor at Cambridge that I needed to reduce the book's scope.

Why did I go as far as the Renaissance and stop there? The Renaissance shows the continuity and rebirth of Western classical perspectives, where (thanks to the enduringly powerful Platonic influence) beauty and eros were intimately connected. Beauty was defined as the object of eros, and eros was defined as the desire for beauty. According to what became known as the Platonic ladder of love that pervaded the dominant Renaissance Neopla-

versity Press, 1983), 93, 106.

[4] I do this through a reading of Rilke's poetry and letters. See Richard Shusterman, "Self-Transformation as ***Trans***-formation: Rilke on Gender in the Art of Living," *The Journal of Somaesthetics*, 9, (December 2023). *The Journal of Somaesthetics* will devote its first issue of 2024 to the topic "Queering the Soma," edited by Mark Tschaepe.

tonism, one's erotic desire to enjoy the beautiful body of another person was essentially the result of the soul's recognition of the Form of Beauty in that person's body and therefore should lead to the appreciation of more spiritual manifestations of the Form of Beauty until the individual lover's soul reaches the Form of Beauty itself and gives birth to beautiful things through that unifying vision. So, even physically expressed erotic desire had an essential spiritual and ideal dimension in terms of the soul's desire for beauty that, even in its physical manifestation, reflects beauty's ideal Form. In modern aesthetic theory, eros does not have a central role in defining beauty, and there is consequently almost no attention given to the aesthetics of *ars erotica*. The epilogue in my book *Ars Erotica* tries to explain this development while offering an intriguing theory about a central cause for the birth of the modern discipline of aesthetics in the eighteenth century.

The theory is briefly this. The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries witnessed two crucial philosophical and cultural phenomena relevant to this development of separating the concept of beauty from eros. One was the rise of materialist philosophy, which, partly through the pressure of modern scientific thought, successfully challenged the hegemony of Neoplatonism and denied the traditional idea of an immaterial immortal soul that could, therefore, desire in an immaterial spiritual way. Seventeenth-century materialists like Hobbes and Spinoza, therefore, identified erotic love with lust. The second phenomenon was the wave of erotic libertinism that began in the seventeenth century, partly inspired by Montaigne's frank discussions of his adulterous sexual practice, and that carried into French thinkers of the eighteenth century like La Mettrie, Diderot, and Sade. This combination of materialism and libertinism gave eros a narrowly physical and lustful image and consequently made it unseemly to define the spiritually ennobling notion of beauty in terms of eros or desiring love. I suggest that the discourse of aesthetics arose to provide a substitute way of treating the pleasures of beauty by treating them as pleasures defined by disinterestedness and distance rather than desire and copulative union (whether secular or divine) that for millennia shaped the understanding of how to pursue and enjoy the beautiful through the experience of eros – desiring love. The last pages of the book briefly trace this story through Shaftesbury, Baumgarten, Kant, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche, but I would have needed more time and space than the book allowed to explain this hypothesis in proper detail.

AK: You obviously seem to have had more ideas about sexuality and somaesthetics than you were able to treat in the book. Would you like to mention some of those ideas here in this interview?

RS: Yes. If the book had been shorter and less late in delivery, I would have written a conclusion to underline some lessons that the book suggests. Although the seven major erotic cultures I treat are very different, they share essential commonalities and problems, which I discuss in later symposia devoted to the book.[5] I could briefly note some of them here. All these cultures are patriarchal and privilege male sexuality and gender identity along with genital, heterosexual intercourse aimed at procreation. Of course, within some of these cultures, there are also traditions of homosexuality (such as pederasty in ancient Athens or in the Japanese *nanshoku* tradition) and celibacy (such as Christianity's cult of virginity). But the dominant trend of patriarchal culture involved a reciprocally reinforcing heteronormative constellation of paternity, progeny, possession, and penetration. Patriarchy serves the dual male interests of possessive, paternalist control of progeny and of woman's sexuality. As the seed-giving father's identity was always far less certain than knowing the birth-giving mother, paternity was a significant source of male anxiety closely connected with the anxiety concerning female infidelity. Paternity was a matter

[5] One symposium was in *Foucault Studies*, 33 (2022), and another was in *Eidos: A Journal for Philosophy of Culture*," 5:4 (2021).

not only of knowledge but also of social and economic power through the patriarchal possession of one's progeny-producing wives or concubines and of one's children (whose labor and obedience the husband and father possessed). In terms of the sex act, possession was understood as penetration, because penetration by the male penis of the female's genitalia was required to conceive progeny, unlike the spawning of fish and frogs. We thus speak of the male as possessing, "having," or "taking" the female by penetrating her body through the vagina or, by extension, another orifice. But topographically, it makes equal or more sense to say that the male organ is possessed, contained, held, or taken within the female's enveloping flesh. This notion of penetration-possession as an active piercing that is necessary for producing progeny essentially promotes the patriarchal principle of heteronormativity and helps shape the masculine notions of potency and erotic action as conquest through stabbing-like violence.

My book on *ars erotica* shows how preoccupation with penetration hinders our sexual happiness by limiting the palette of erotic pleasures. Abelard, for example, abandoned his loving relations with his wife Heloise, because (having been castrated) he lost his conventional powers of penetration, and he could not see another way of expressing erotic love and desire, although Heloise was happy to physically manifest their love in other erotic ways. Similarly, we see how Montaigne's preoccupation with genital sex and penetration filled him with the anxiety of impotence. Freeing sex from the paradigm of penetration can liberate women as well as men by encouraging the pursuit of other forms of loving, erotic contact. Moreover, whereas in past ages the desire for progeny entailed the demand for heteronormativity and genital penetration, which in turn fostered gender binarism, today's new technologies of fertilization refute the claim that producing offspring requires heterosexual coitus and thus weaken the gender binarism that heterosexuality implies and reinforces. The new gender identities that are gradually taking shape in contemporary culture should enable new forms of eroticism. Today we are in an awkward but promising liminal place, between a strongly patriarchal, heteronormative culture that is losing its oppressive indomitable grip on our erotic lives and a still unrealized future that is burgeoning with new gender identities and sexual relationships but still struggling to find a securely comfortable place in our societies. It is a very exciting time for new erotic theorizing. Pragmatist philosophers should take up the challenge.

AK: Nowadays, at least two new fields of aesthetics have emerged: environmental and everyday aesthetics. As I see the two topics mentioned above (eating and sexuality), it seems that somaesthetics is also ab ovo everyday aesthetics. However, I am confident you have a more complex standpoint about the relationship between your somaesthetics and everyday aesthetics.

RS: Yes, my position on these topics is indeed more complex and nuanced. First, I would not simply equate eating and lovemaking in terms of belonging to everyday aesthetics. Eating may be something that we do every day and need to do every day, while lovemaking is not in this category. People practicing total chastity do not do it at all. The ancient Epicurean philosophers, who warned against the troubles of sex, distinguished between activities that were natural and necessary versus those that were natural but *not* necessary. Eating exemplified the former, whereas sexual activity belonged to the latter and thus could (in their view) be renounced for the sake of greater overall pleasure, which they conceived in rather bland terms of undisturbed calm feelings devoid of discomfort. Somaesthetics certainly includes important dimensions of everyday aesthetics because (as the soma is the medium of our lives) somaesthetics is centrally involved in the art of living, which involves many everyday activities. Somaesthetics emerged from pragmatist aesthetics, which had the Deweyan aim of overcoming the

compartmentalization of art into the elite fine arts by emphasizing the aesthetic dimensions of arts and practices outside the realm of high art. That is why pragmatist aesthetics, with its defense of popular art and aesthetic body practices, was seen as one of the early forces in the recent development of everyday aesthetics. Crispin Sartwell's fine essay on "Aesthetics of the Everyday" in the *Oxford Handbook of Aesthetics* (2010) discusses my defense of rap music in this everyday connection. Obviously, as the soma is necessarily and actively engaged in our everyday activities, somaesthetics, with its meliorative impulse to improve the quality of our experience, includes matters of everyday aesthetics. From the outset, somaesthetics highlighted the value of monitoring and improving the quality of our breathing, and breathing is something we do not only every day but every minute. (Similarly, because the soma is always necessarily impacted by its environment, somaesthetics is also relevant to environmental aesthetics). However, somaesthetics goes beyond everyday aesthetics (and environmental aesthetics) because it goes beyond the field of aesthetics, extending into other fields of philosophy. Indeed, I remember you wrote an extensive article in J.J. Abrams's edited book on my somaesthetics in which you describe somaesthetics as not simply aesthetics but a broader philosophy, and you are right about this.[6] Initially, I thought somaesthetics would be a branch of aesthetics, but it evolved beyond that. In fact, it is now an interdisciplinary field with research outside the academic field of philosophy, including the field of human-computer interactive design.

I'm very pleased about the flourishing of everyday aesthetics and about its connection with somaesthetics. But from my pragmatist perspective, I also have two concerns about the future development of everyday aesthetics. Pragmatist aesthetics advocated the aesthetic value of practices outside the realm of fine art in order to oppose art's compartmentalization from our ordinary lives and experiences. The pragmatist principle of continuity urged the continuity of life and art, insisting that art emerged from our practices of living and that art's intensifying of experience fed back into our lives, enriching them, and sometimes even significantly reshaping them. I worry that a dominant focus on everyday aesthetics in opposition to the traditions of fine art could result in a similar compartmentalization, obscuring once again the important relations and continuities between art and life. Somaesthetics is concerned with the arts as well as with everyday practices. My own somaesthetic practice includes work in performance art with the Man in Gold.[7] Those performances are hardly everyday experiences, but they do embody the continuity of art and life. In expressing the pragmatist principle of continuity that Peirce called synechism, somaesthetics also reflects the pragmatist concern with critical meliorism. This brings me to my second concern regarding our contemporary enthusiasm for everyday aesthetics. It could be characterized as a broadly political worry. Exhortations to focus on appreciating the beauty of our everyday lives instead of focusing on superior works of art can dull our critical, meliorist consciousness by giving us the impression that the everyday phenomena are good enough and do not require serious improvement. But this belies the troubling conditions of everyday life for too many people. I am reminded here of Adorno's mordant critique of commercial commodity culture: "It corresponds to the behavior of the prisoner who loves his cell because he has been left nothing else to love."[8] To the extent that preoccupation with everyday aesthetics involves an alienation from the

[6] Cf. A. Kremer: "From Pragmatism to Somaesthetics as Philosophy," J.J. Abrams (ed.), *Shusterman's Somaesthetics: From Hip Hop Philosophy to Politics and Performance Art*, Brill, 2022, pp. 44-60.

[7] For my work with the Man in Gold, see, for example, Richard Shusterman, *The Adventures of the Man in Gold: Paths between Art and Life* (Paris: Hermann, 2016), the six articles about the Man in Gold in J.J. Abrams (ed.), *Shusterman's Somaesthetics: From Hip Hop Philosophy to Politics and Performance Art* (Leiden: Brill, 2022), and the articles about this project on https://www.fau.edu/artsandletters/humanitieschair/books/man-in-gold/man-in-gold-reviews/

[8] T.W. Adorno, "On the Fetish-Character in Music and the Regression of Listening." In A. Arato and E. Gebhardt, *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader* (New York: Continuum, 1987), 280.

realm of art (a realm entailing the critique of existent reality and expressing a utopian desire for a much better world), our enthusiasm for the everyday harbors dangers of uncritical complacency. Somaesthetics is explicitly motivated by a critical, meliorist impulse; it is not satisfied with our everyday experience and use of our bodies. It has a utopian yearning, including in its treatment of love-making – the promise of happiness for more people and in more ways.

Chapters

AESTHETIC EXISTENCE AND THE THERAPY OF PASSIONS IN THE WORLD OF GEORGE SANTAYANA

Nora Horvath
Széchenyi István University, Győr, Hungary
horvath.nora@sze.hu

ABSTRACT: The protagonist of my study, George Santayana, by idealizing love and sublimating sexual desires, has become the author of an aesthetics of existence elevated to literature and philosophy. He made self-cultivation and a life of satisfying desires a philosophical problem. His life's work is based on aesthetics, but it cannot be clearly placed within either Pragmatism or Platonism. My interpretation of Santayana from the perspective of the philosophy of desire takes the philosopher out of the conservative interpretative framework. His philosophy was centred on sensory perception, and although he sought spiritualism through his Platonism, his *The Sense of Beauty* is based on pleasure. His personal life and individual motivations are a vague background to his poetry and theoretical writings, and it is therefore necessary to view his creative world as a whole.

Keywords: George Santayana, Pragmatism, Platonism, aesthetics, desire, poetry, aesthetic existence, beauty, idealization

1. Introduction

In a letter dated 1924, Santayana wrote to Harry Abbot:

> Love has never made me long unhappy, nor sexual impulse uncomfortable: on the contrary in the comparatively manageable form in which they have visited me, they have been great fun, because they have given me an interest in people and (by a natural extension of emotion) in things, places, and stories, such as religion, which otherwise would have failed me altogether; because in itself, apart from the golden light of diffused erotic feeling falling upon it, the world I have been condemned to live in most of my life would have been simply deadly. I have never been anything but utterly bored and digusted with the public world, the world of business, politics, family, and society. It was only the glimmer of sport, humour, friendship, or love falling over it that made it tolerable[1] (Holzberger 2002, 179).

[1] G. S. to H. W. Abbott, Rome, January 16, 1924.

Love, presented as an essential component of a good life, is a recurring theme of Santayana's philosophy. His early sonnets are fueled by the idea of immortal love, he built the last chapters of *The Sense of Beauty* on the psychology of desiring, devoted a separate chapter to love in *Reason in Society (The Life of Reason)* and all his books on poetry - *The Interpretations of Poetry and Religion* and in *Three Philosophical Poets* - the trinity of love-desire-sexuality also plays a cardinal role in exploring the relationship between poetry and philosophy. Santayana declared many times the importance of the ideal combination of love, beauty and the good life.

In the introduction to the essay *Love*, Santayana warns that we should never lose sight of two things when examining love:

> one, that love has an animal basis; the other, that it has an ideal object. Since these two propositions have usually been thought contradictory, no writer has ventured to present more than half the truth, and that half out of its true relations (Santayana 1930, 8).

American thought in the 19th century was largely dominated by pragmatism, and in New England the Puritan heritage was dominant. That is why the works of life that sought to show the world-dominating power of beauty, through poems, prose, works of art, or entire philosophical systems, are considered special. George Santayana is one of those who, after several decades of living in America, chose Europe because they did not feel at home in the American milieu. His respect for Europe can be explained by his admiration for old traditions, cultural assets and works of art. According to Santayana, man definitely needs an ultimate ideal by which he can approach perfection. He linked the ideal to the joy of contemplation and to love. The idea, the so-called „Hellenic idea", in which, in addition to the idealization of Greek mythology, religion, philosophy, masculine hero-cult, friendship and love, a cardinal role is played by beauty's power to entice knowledge, to invite upward, and its power to ensnare the whole of life. The idea was fueled by Plato's *Phaedrus*

and *Symposium*. The dialogues of the feast are permeated with homoerotics. The idealization of moving away from physicality unfolds in the dialogue between Socrates and Diotima, although the separation of heavenly and earthly Eros is already present in the speech of Pausanias. In the case of Santayana, as in the case of his contemporaries - Fred Holland Day or Edward Perry Warren - the appeal of homoeroticism cannot be ignored. According to William G. Holzberger:

> So far as we know, Santayana never had a romantic relationship with a woman, though there were several women with whom he enjoyed close friendship and lifelong correspondence. […] From his letters, from the events of *The Last Puritan* and his remarks about the novel in the letters, and from the conversation about A. E. Housman reported by Cory, it seems clear that Santayana's sexual orientation was not conventional (Holzberger 2001, xxxviii).

2. Based on the basic nature of sexual passion

Santayana devotes most attention to sexual attraction and sexual desire in *The Sense of Beauty*. As he writes:

> The capacity to love gives our contemplation that glow without which it might often fail to manifest beauty; and the whole sentimental side of our aesthetic sensibility —without which it would be perceptive and mathematical rather than sesthetic— is due to our sexual organization remotely stirred (Santayana 1955, 38).

A healthy body is held together by well-coordinated vital functions, the task of which is to provide a person with a surplus of energy. Santayana believes that the sexual instinct is halfway between life functions and social functions. We do not need to assume a big difference between men and women in terms of the object and area of aesthetic interest, because in emotional life it is not important „which sex an animal has, but that it has a sex at all" (Santayana, 1955, 37). If we consider the complicated problem that nature solves in sexual reproduction, and the delicate guidance of instincts that is necessary for this process, we will see that the receptivity implanted in the individual is the same in both sexes, just as the sexual organization is basically similar in both - he claims (ibid). Regarding the effectiveness of sexual attraction, he writes that it could not be effective enough if it did not primarily affect the senses. Secondary sexual characteristics are found in both sexes; the gender feeling also extends to various secondary objects. Color, grace, form, which are the stimuli of sexual passion, acquire a certain beauty for their own sake before they fulfill their purpose. In other words, they do not exist only to promote reproduction (Santayana, 1955, 38). These secondary objects of interest - which are the most striking elements of beauty - can be called sexual, because the reactions they provoke greatly determine our sexual life (Santayana, 1955, 39). „If any one were desirous to produce a being with a great susceptibility to beauty, he could not invent an instrument better designed for that object than sex" (ibid.) – we can read, but before we label him a radical naturalist, he sneaks in the examination of the senses into the part examining the materials of beauty, and comes to the conclusion that the joys of the eye, ear, imagination and memory are most easily objectified and become ideas, and although touch, taste and smell are called inferior senses, far from aesthetics, and artists constantly resort to these senses. Fragrant gardens, mouth-watering meats, incense and perfumes, colors and shapes that stimulate the senses are presented to us. As an example, he cites Keats, the „most sensuous of English poets, in whom the love of beauty is supreme", and despite his sophistication, he still sings the glory of perception considered less noble (Santayana 1955, 43). Based on all this, we can conclude that the path to beauty leads through sexual desire. Colors and shapes are sexualized when we interpret them as capable of arousing sexual desire. It was nonsense on the part of Santayana's critics to accuse him with asexuality. The Freudian sublimation theory can be recalled in the part when he talks about the conversion of sexual passion. Sex is not the only object of sexual passion, he says, because when love does not find its usual object, the suppressed fire

breaks out in different directions - it can turn into religious fandom, fanatical philanthropy, love of nature or love of art, and then the overflowing passion visibly it floods areas that would otherwise not be emphasized. Based on these, Santayana claims that in this case everything can become a secondary object of sexual passion for a person, „and that to this fact the beauty of nature is largely due"(Santayana, 1955, 40). He believes that the vital energy would be used most optimally if every male only aroused his desire for the female that would take care of the succession, and only as often as this was necessary from the point of view of reproduction; thus, the male's energy and attention could be freed up and directed elsewhere. However, he does not write anything about women's 'untapped' desires.

Santayana misses open speech in poetry. He praises Lucretius because he is the most ingenuous, but blames him for not writing with his great honesty „the drama of the awakened senses, the poignant suasion of beauty" which fogs the brain (Santayana, 1930, 15). He points out that Western poets should not disparage Asians' poetry of unparalleled elegance, the expression of joy at the gaze of the beloved, the happiness of the chase and being chased, and the soaring of lovers together (ibid.). He mentions situations that Plato, Xenophon, and Plutarch discuss in connection with male couples, and it can be assumed that he is also thinking of male love when he writes that if the honest passion of young people arouses disgust, they are forced into aloofness and hypocrisy because of gossip (ibid. 17). And thus, banished from the open scene, mocked, beauty will necessarily flourish in hidden places and unfathomable hearts, but this divides the world into two, separates the inner and outer life. As a result, many people become alienated from the conventional, moralizing world, which they instinctively feel artificial and alien. Rather, they escape to a private fairyland, where unexpected joys await them. For „the thousand and one nights of their dreams", they happily forget the barren, unfriendly world in which they are forced to live. The confessional nature of this extraordinary and surprising train of thought is confirmed by the letter that Santayana wrote to his well-known friend from Harvard, William Morton Fullerton[2], at the end of the 1880s. Passions and instincts made him think very seriously, and in a strange way, in a letter he expressed his views on the problems of sexuality affecting young boys. It's a shockingly personal and outspoken opinion, but nobody knows how Fullerton reacted to it. Santayana lists six things that boys have to choose from – or rather, when they can't handle their imagination anymore:

1. Wet dreams and the fidgets.
2. Mastibation.
3. Paiderastia.
4. Whoring.
5. Seductions or a mistress.
6. Matrimony (Holzberger 2001, 92-93).

He excludes 4 because he knows that a prostitute belongs to everyone, so the matter will end sooner or later. He believed that only the 3-4-5 was worth talking about. 4 can harm your health, he says, 5 can have serious consequences - children, legal trouble, etc. He knows that „paiderastia" was popular in ancient times and in Eastern cultures, but he also rejects it - his reasoning speaks for itself: he goes beyond it not because he considers it morally reprehensible, but because it is surrounded by so many prejudices, „that it hardly comes under the possibilities for us" (ibid. 93). In another letter he wrote to Henry Ward Abbott on April 23, 1887, Santayana quoted a verse that also speaks volumes about his thoughts. According to Holzberger the comments of the young Santayana in that letter about women and marriage are common in the banter of young men, but the general tone there is obviously not heterosexual:

[2] „William Morton Fullerton (1865–1952), member of the Harvard class of 1886, became a journalist and spent most of his life in Paris. He was a member of the international literary society. Fullerton had numerous love affairs with both men and women and awakened the dormant sexuality of such notable writers as Henry James and Edith Wharton. (See Marion Mainwaring's *Mysteries of Paris: The Quest for Morton Fullerton* [Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2000].)" (Holzberger 2001, 14).

> … I hate my own arrogance and would worship the man who should knock it out of me. Says a Spanish song:
> I am searching land & ocean
> For the man that I might love,
> And whenever my heart finds him
> Then he will have found his slave.
>
> Man or thing—it makes no difference—but heaven grant it be no woman. … Of course all girls aren't foolish—some are charming and I am tender on two or three myself; but if I ever humbug a woman into marrying me, it will be a piece of selfishness on my part, depend upon it, and not a conquest on hers (Holzberger 2001, xxxviii).

Santayana's works clearly shed light on the relationship between aesthetics and sexuality, showing us a profound conceptual difficulty in relation to desire and eroticism, which was not only influenced by the late Victorian debates on aesthetics and sexuality, but also foreshadowed Freud's earliest expositions on creativity and sublimation. He believed that sexuality and aesthetics are related concepts. According to Christopher Lane, Santayana, like Henry James, sometimes sexualized beauty and wanted to connect the works of thinkers of such disparate character and influence as Plato, Keats, Schopenhauer, Lotze, Emerson, William James and Walter Pater. The result of this work is the exciting fluctuation between passion and asceticism, which is also reflected in *The Last Puritan* (Lane 1999, 166). According to Lane, McCormick's excellent biography of Santayana confirms this reading because he points out that Santayana used the latest psychological research for his aesthetics (ibid. 165). And indeed, his first theoretical work, *The Sense of Beauty*, became the main summary of this topic. When Sanda, the sister of the famous art collector Bernard Berenson remarked that she considered Santayana's theory of beauty in the book to be an overflow of sexual passion, Berenson reprimanded her (Samuels, 1979, 314), because during their decades of friendship he had perhaps already experienced Santayana's praise of physical beauty - on the Platonic model - to the higher regions it is used to collect the energy needed for ascent.

3. Related to the Platonic conception of love - from the perception of beauty to the ennoblement of idealization into religion

> ...it is still a deep and dumb instinctive affinity, an inexplicable emotion seizing the heart, an influence organising the world, like a luminous crystal, about one magic point. So that although love seldom springs up suddenly in these days into anything like a full-blown passion, it is sight, it is presence, that makes in time a conquest over the heart; for all virtues, sympathies, confidences will fail to move a man to tenderness and to worship, unless a poignant effluence from the object envelop him, so that he begins to walk, as it were, in a dream. Not to believe in love is a great sign of dulness (Santayana 1930, 27).

Santayana, in his essay on Platonic love, names constancy in a changing world and Platonic love as representing „something absolute" as the essence of Platonic philosophy (Santayana 1931, 100). According to the dualistic view, assuming a difference between the world of people and the real world of ideas, in beauty and love the ordinary person can feel as if he is benefiting from pieces of a better world, as if the visit of beauty and love gives him a glimpse of an otherwise inaccessible world, to lost happiness. With the hopeful expectation of demi-humans, he looks for this happiness at every turn, in every new face he sees: (ibid. 101)

> We, and the whole universe, exist only by the passionate attempt to return to our perfection, by the radical need of losing ourselves again in God. That ineffable good is our natural possession ; all we honour in this life is but the partial recovery of our birthright ; every delightful thing is like a rift in the clouds through which we catch a glimpse of our native heaven. If that heaven seems so far away and the idea of it so dim and unreal, it is because we are so far from self-knowledge, so much immersed in what is alien and destructive to the soul (Santayana 1931, 102).

The pursuit of perfection and the desire that pervades the whole life will be the essence of the philosophy of life, which, based on Platonic foundations, but denying independently existing ideas, considers beauty to be the ultimate perfection. Since for Santayana, beauty is born from an embodied sense of pleasure, our ability to feel

pleasure determines whether we can enjoy the feeling of perfection. Even because of the rejection of absolute ideas, we cannot say that his thinking lacks upward dynamics in the Platonic sense, because through the perfection found in the ecstasy of love and the joy of contemplation, he hopes to rise to the spiritual life, in which he already shakes off all worldly feelings that bind body and soul. In Santayana's conception of beauty and love, he also tries to harmonize idealism with the sensuality-based conception of naturalism.

In 1891, Santayana wrote a critique of William James' *The Principles of Psychology*, in which he clearly denies the idea of the independent existence of ideas:

> Ideas are not substances that exist by themselves and now and then allow us to look upon them. They are creatures of our thought, bubbles of our stream of life, mental figures in our mental kaleidoscope. When we lose sight of them, they no longer exist" (Kerr-Lawson 1991, 37).[3]

According to Anthony Woodward, Santayana's naturalism denies dualism of any kind and it is pointless to insist too much on characterizing the nature of the essence-existence difference as Platonist or dualist. There are no two existing worlds, he says, and supports this with a Santayana quote from *The Realms of Being* (Woodward, 1991, 6):

> There is only one world, the natural world, and only one truth about it; but this world has a spiritual life possible in it, which looks not to another world but to the beauty and perfection that this world suggests, approaches, and misses… (ibid. 7).

Santayana's works published in the twenties and thirties no longer only reject the independent existence of ideas, but also the dualistic worldview, at least to the extent that they posit the special spiritual sphere, which also fits the destination of escape, as a world that can be lived within the real world. However, this does not change the assessment of the noble role attributed to love, different from all others.

According to Santayana, perfections must remain unattainable. The ideal thing is the result of aspiration itself, existing in the imagination of those creatures who live in the realm of spirit (Singer 2000, 84). A perfect form, an adequate ideal does not exist apart from the role it plays in the life of a given individual. Making judgments is also the creation of an ideal. The ideal does not exist independently of its function. Based on Santayana's late writings, the so-called ideals „essences" that guide us, but are not realized or perfected (Arnett 1957, 54-55).

Apologia Pro Mente Sua reveals that for Josiah Royce the core of Santayana's philosophy is the separation of the concepts of essence and existence. This was one of those rare criticisms that open one's eyes to one's own nature, Santayana wrote. The *Apologia* is a candid confession of the most controversial issues in Santayana's philosophy. In his explanation of his early works, he also clarifies the concept of „ideal":

> …in *Interpretation of Poetry and Religion*, then just published, I freely referred to „ideals", insisting that Platonic Ideas and the deities and dogmas of religion were ideal only: that is to say, they were fictions inspired by the moral imagination, and they expressed unsatisfied demands or implicit standards native to the human mind. Ideals belonged to poetry, not to science or to serious hypothesis (Santayana 1940, 497).

In Santayana's philosophy, there can be no love without imagination. Imagination not only creates one's ideals, but allows one to subsume loved ones under them. This latter function is what Santayana calls idealization. In accordance with its animal basis, love originates from instincts, but it demands that it is otherwise just an ordinary natural thing, to be idealized. Santayana talks about men and women who are driven towards each other by a material force that governs their sexual desires and affections, and then highlights the change caused by the intervention of love. During the imaginative act, the beloved appears to the lover in a form reminiscent of an ideal. The lover's love expresses a double attraction: on the one hand, to the ideal belonging to the object -

[3] Originally in George Santayana, Daniel Cory (ed): *The Idler and His Works*, pp. 97-107. New York: Braziller, 1957.

which is the result of human imagination - and on the other hand to the beloved, who is a partial embodiment of the good or beautiful to which he is attracted as an ideal (Singer 2000, 85-86). For Santayana, as for Plato, all love worthy of the name must have an ideal object: the lovers find in each other the ideal form that is essentially eternal and capable of infinite embodiment. This „form" or „essence", as Santayana later called it, is a potential of the perfect. If a man falls in love with a light-haired woman, it is because his heart is captured by the idea of the perfect blonde. This ideal thing is what man really loves, not woman, in its dimness and contingency (ibid. 83). According to Singer, although elements of Santayana's philosophy are commonly called Platonist, this idea is closer to the Renaissance interpretation of Plato than to Plato himself. People smuggle ideals into real things as part of their struggle with the environment. With the help of imagination, we imagine possibilities that, if realized, could cause constant pleasure (ibid. 84). In Santayana's interpretation, love is an imaginative search for unattainable ideals. What used to be a competition for instinctual gratification has become a longing for perfection (ibid. 85-86):

> Such is the nature of idealization. Like the Venus of Apelles, in which all known beauties were combined, the ideal is the union of all we prize in all creatures; and the mind that has once felt the irresistible compulsion to create this ideal and to believe in it has become incapable of unreserved love of anything else. The absolute is a jealous god; [...] All things become to the worshipper of the ideal so many signs and symbols of what he seeks" (Santayana 1927, 127).

In the last decades of the quattrocento, the influence of the Platonic-inspired doctrine of Beauty, which spread with Ficino's ideas in literary and artistic circles, became dominant. For Ficino, the assumption of the role of Beauty as a theoretical mediator is essential, because it started from the Plotinian principle according to which the soul rises from the finite light of the world to the infinite brilliance of the divine light. According to Ficino's theorem Beauty represents the most developed radiance of that supreme Good, which is reflected in perceptible order. But for this very reason, Beauty constantly encourages the soul, so that it moves from love to beauty, from form to form, and returns to the most primal of all forms, to the absolute first and pure Beauty, in which the divine essence itself is reflected and exalted. Based on these, Beauty is the symbol of complete and final perfection and the idea of the Beautiful is engraved in our minds „ab aeterno" (Vasoli 1983, 54-55).

Santayana provides the most detailed analysis of the nature of idealization in *Platonic Love in Some Italian Poets*. Here, he examines the transformation of the appreciation of beautiful things into the worship of ideal beauty. He is interested in moving from the love of individuals to the love of God. He turns to the poetry of Dante and Michelangelo for illustration. In the works of 13-16th century poets he saw the reincarnation of old wisdom and not its imitation (Santayana, 1927, 120). The figure and poetry of Dante accompanied Santayana throughout his life. He was already a fan of it as a teenager, and when he got to Harvard - thanks to Charles Eliot Norton's art lectures and Dante translations, as well as Dante research and evenings - interpretation possibilities were revealed to him that he didn't know before. The Dante cult in Boston clearly contributed to the formation of Santayana's taste, but it is already presented as part of a concept in the 1910 Three Philosophical Poets. Along with Goethe and Lucretius, Dante builds his theory on the importance of philosophical poetry, in which the praise of Dante's love poetry is also repeated:

> It has taught us to love and to renounce, to judge and to worship. What more could a poet do? Dante poetized all life and nature as he found them. His imagination dominated and focused the whole world. He thereby touched the ultimate goal to which a poet can aspire; he set the standard for all possible performance (Santayana 1910, 133).

Santayana traces the process of divineization and perfection of love for Beatrice in the works of Dante. As Beatrice becomes the personification of virtue and beauty,

the poet's love is purified, and he begins to respect the lady of his heart as a saint. Feelings for the girl who has reached heaven turn into mystical adoration. Beatrice is also a representative of God, whose greatness and majesty the poet praises through Beatrice's beauty:

> The eyes of Beatrice reflect a supernal light. It is the ineffable vision of God, the beatific vision, that alone can make us happy and be the reason and the end of our loves and our pilgrimages. A supreme ideal of peace and perfection which moves the lover, and which moves the sky, is more easily named than understood (ibid. 97-98).

A true ideal is not just an ill-conceived utopia. If we make it our own, it changes our lives because it guides us like a lantern, giving us strength and pride:

> perhaps it would be better to say that to have an ideal does not mean so much to have any image in the fancy, any Utopia more or less articulate, but rather to take a consistent moral attitude towards all the things of this world, to judge and coordinate our interests, to establish a hierarchy of goods and evils, and to value events and persons, not by a casual personal impression or instinct, but according to their real nature and tendency. So understood, an ultimate ideal is no mere vision of the philosophical dreamer, but a powerful and passionate force in the poet and the orator. It is the voice of his love or hate, of his hope or sorrow, idealizing, challenging, or condemning the world (ibid. 98).

Santayana's analysis of Dante is far from thorough, as he only briefly mentions interpretation possibilities that he was well aware of. „I am not a Dante scholar nor a Goethe scholar. [...] They have attracted me; they have moved me to reflection; they have revealed to me certain aspects of nature and of philosophy..." (ibid. v.) – wrote in the preface to *Three Philosophical Poets*. He does not mention, for example, John Addington Symonds' investigations into the relationship between Platonic and chivalric love, or his writings about Dante, which testify to much greater knowledge and the brave, open expression of their author's opinions, even though he knew them because he used Symonds' translations of poems. In his essay *The Dantesque and Platonic Ideals of Love*, published in 1893, we read the following from Symonds:

> Beatrice is not only Beatrice, Portinari's daughter and Simone's wife. She is also all that the poet-philosopher learned and saw and loved of beautiful or good or true; the whole of which, as springing from her influence, he carries to her credit, and worships under her sign and symbol. This, I repeat, is a difficult attitude of mind for us modern men, with our positive conceptions, to assimilate. In order to approach the task more easily, it may be well to consider another type of amorous enthusiasm which once flourished in the world for a short season, and which also assumed the philosophical mantle. I allude to that specific type of Greek love which Plato expounds in the *„Phaedrus"* and *„Symposium"* (Symonds MCMXVIII, 60):

Greek love and chivalrous love form two extraordinary and exceptional phases of psychological experience. By comparing them in their points of similarity and points of difference, we may come to understand more of that peculiar enthusiasm which they possessed in common, which made love in either case a ladder for scaling the higher fortresses of intellectual truth, and which it is now well-nigh impossible for us to realise as actual (ibid. 61).

Strangely, in none of Santayana's early works does he analyze the dialogues of Plato, which he also loved, which formed the main material of his seminars and basically determined the themes and style of his early poetry. He knew and liked the Plato reading habits of the Oxfordians, and this also contributed to the fact that he remembered the Oxford milieu with such great affection throughout his life. In the essay „Platonic Love in Some Italian Poets", following the example of Dante, he succeeds in continuing his theory about higher emotions, but not by turning to the original source, but to poetry again. If we are looking for an example of an even more direct expression of the idealization of love, of turning the perception of beauty into a religion, we have to turn to Michelangelo, he writes (Santayana 1927, 131):

> We find in Michael Angelo's poems a few recurring ideas, or rather the varied expression of a single half aesthetic, half religious creed. [...] All true beauty leads to the idea of perfection; the effort toward perfection is the burden of all art, which labours, therefore, with a superhuman and

> insoluble problem. All love, also, that does not lead to the love of God and merge into that love, is a long and hopeless torment; while the light of love is already the light of heaven, the fire of love is already the fire of hell. These are the thoughts that perpetually recur, varied […] (ibid. 132.).

„A perfect love is founded on despair"– says Santayana in the sonnet XXXIII (Santayana 1896, 37). He also adds an explanation in his autobiography:

> It is not love simply, but only perfect love that includes despair. Love in itself includes hope, or at least a desire to preserve the object of it, to enshrine and defend it. And in regard to the object even perfect love retains this solicitude. It is only in regard to the lover, as a poor human being, that hope must be cut off, plucked up by the roots, if love is ever to become pure, happy and immortal. The perfect lover must renounce pursuit and the hope of possession (Santayana, 1953, 15).

The „perfect" love included in a sonnet (XXXIII.) involves not only renunciation, but also anguish: „I am thy pupil in the school of pain" - writes Santayana. The beauty of his beloved taught him „proud sorrow" and „eternal prayer", but if he can no longer see him/her, he can only keep his/her memory in his mind (Santayana, 1896, 37). Santayana carried within himself the image (eidos) of his beloved, whose beauty manifests Eros and opens the gaze, the vision. According to Ernesto Grassi, carrying an image within has a double meaning: on the one hand, it means the – as much sensual as it is spiritual – striving, which is the experience of a restlessness that demands an explanation, because this restlessness carries within us the original inspiration for which we are destined. However, carrying an image inside is also the defining moment of the artist, who is able to grasp the similarity in his own works by comparing the inner image with the outer figure (Grassi, 1997, 57). In all his works, be they fictional or autobiographically inspired, poetry analysis or poetry, Santayana was concerned with this very special type of love, which is never fulfilled, full of renunciation and torment, or even turning into idealization. He never wanted to own or collect things and people. At the end of his biography, he calls the mentality when we want to keep material and physical beings for ourselves animal passion. He felt that his indifference to physical things had made him a platonist in love. He considered the people and things thrown into his path by fate as gifts from which he could gain pure ideas (Santayana, 1953, 130). „All mortal loves are tragic because never is the creature we think we possess the true and final object of our love ;" – wrote Santayana (Santayana 1927, 141). Similar ideas were immortalized also in the sonnet XVI.:

> The wings of sacred Eros as he flew / And left me to the love of things not seen.
> 'T is a sad love, like an eternal prayer, / And knows no keen delight, no faint surcease (Santayana, 1896, 18).

Santayana loved Stendhal's book *On Love*, he could identify with the thoughts of the French writer, who said that people with money will never understand the happiness of the dreamers who inspired him to write his book. Stendhal distinguished four types of love: „l'amour physique, l'amour vanité, l'amour gout, la grande passion". In Santayana's opinion, it is not psychologically impossible that in passionate love physical desire can be transformed into complete devotion and heroism, self-sacrifice and renunciation. Great passion can turn into worship by the end of the transformation (Santayana, 1953, 15). „Amour gout" can also become capable of transformation, if it becomes the pure joy of beauty and charm - and therefore in its entirety - it becomes aesthetic. It is clear from the confession that for Santayana, pure adoration is the most perfect form of love, which can only be achieved by completely giving up the physical and all selfish intentions:

> The passion of love, sublimated, does not become bloodless, or free from bodily trepidation […]. It is essentially the spiritual flame of carnal fire that has turned all its fuel into light. The psyche is not thereby atrophied; ont he contrary, the range of its reactions has been enlarged. It has learned to vibrate harmoniously to many things at once in a peace which is an orchestration of transcended sorrows (ibid.).

What torments Michelangelo's giants on the frescoes of the Sistine Chapel, what sorrow or love agony causes

their writhing suffering? asks Santayana in *Platonic Love in Some Italian Poets* (Santayana, 1927, 133). We can find the answer in his love for the beauty of the human body, in his artistic disappointments, and in the vicissitudes of fate: we don't have to find „vulgar" reasons for the extraordinary feelings of this extraordinary man, says Santayana (ibid. 134). Although he mentions Symonds' translation of Michelangelo's *The Birth of Love and Beauty*, unlike Symonds, he does not mention Tomasso di Cavalieri, one of the main inspirations for Michelangelo's poems. He doesn't want to bring it up, he doesn't look for „vulgar reasons". He is a fan of Michelangelo's art and feels for it with every inch, but he does not analyze the sources of his emotions, lest he get too close to the secrets of his own soul. Not only his heroes, he himself overcame the passions in order to ennoble already treatable feelings with the energy gained from them:

> So long as we live at all we must trust in something, at least in the coherence and permanence of the visible world and in the value of the objects of our own desires. And if we live nobly, we are under the same necessity of believing in noble things. However unreal, therefore, these Platonic intuitions may seem to those of us whose interests lie in other quarters, we may rest assured that these very thoughts would dominate our minds and these eternal companionships would cheer our desolation, if we had wrestled as manfully with the same passions and passed through the transmuting fire of as great a love (ibid. 146).

In *The Nature of Love* and his volume of studies on Santayana, Irving Singer relates and compares Freud's and Santayana's thoughts on love, bearing in mind the importance of the concept of idealization in their theories. Idealization also appears in Freud as a characteristic of love. But his idea is different from that of the Platonists. Freud considers idealization to be the same as „overestimation" or „overvaluation" (Singer 2000, 86). It is puzzling to what extent Freud's writings influenced Santayana. In 1923, after reading *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, he formulated his study on Freud, entitled *A Long Way Round to Nirvana; or Much Ado About Dying* (ibid. 98). According to Singer, a Platonist or Neo-Platonist like Santayana cannot fully agree with Freud's assertion that what psychoanalysis calls sexuality in the broadest sense of the word coincides comprehensively with the Eros of Plato's *Symposium* (ibid. 88). According to Singer, Platonic eros is the desire for objectively real, eternal and unchanging and perfectly unified absolute goodness and beauty. Platonic eros is directed towards the search for the ideal, while Freudian eros is merely libidinal energy, which is governed by biological need and has no transcendent component. In relation to Freud's conception of Eros, we should mention Herbert Marcuse's book *Eros and Civilization*, in which he claims that Freud's interpretation of Eros recalls Plato's early philosophy:

> Freud' s interpretation of being in terms of Eros recaptures the early stage of Plato's philosophy, which conceived of culture not as the repressive sublimation but as the free self-development of Eros. As early as Plato, this conception appears as an archaic-mythical residue. Eros is being absorbed into Logos, and Logos is reason which subdues the instincts. The history of ontology reflects the reality principle which governs the world ever more exclusively: The insights contained in the metaphysical notion of Eros were driven underground. They survived, in eschatological distortion, in many heretic movements, in the hedonistic philosophy. […] Freud's own theory follows the general trend: in his work, the rationality of the predominant reality principle supersedes the metaphysical speculations on Eros (Marcuse 1966, 125-126).

The novelty of Singer's idea lies in the fact that he saw both Freudian and Platonic features in Santayana's approach, as if Santayana had combined the two theories. For Santayana, the ideal does not objectively exist, he derives all ideals from interests that can be related to needs and desires. For him, the ideal object is only an imagined satisfaction, and it is authentic and authoritative only to the extent that it becomes so by the will of a human being. Santayana's ideals come from the imagination, just as Freud's ego ideals come from the libido (Singer 2000, 88-89).

In Santayana's conception of love, Platonic, Plotinian and Ficino elements are mixed. Eros, as an all-pervading desire, as the driving force of the pursuit of perfection,

cannot be excluded from his philosophy. However, he does not believe in objectively existing ideas. Idealization is the right and duty of our imagination, and we could not exist without it. We can often read in him about God, whose perfection we should cling to, but Santayana is not a believer in the ordinary sense of the word. However, it needs the eroticization of Ficino's amor dei, which does not exist in Plato. He claimed that the only thing that animates us and the whole world is the passionate attempt to return to perfection, to lose ourselves in God again (Santayana 1931, 102). Santayana identifies with God the ideal perfection and harmony of the processes and elements of the world. God is never a power, but an ideal (Arnett 1957, 15).

Santayana knew that very few people truly embraced the Platonic concept of love. In a study of Plotinus, he writes:

> I know that in practise a devotion that passes from individuals to the ideal is seldom an honest devotion. Platonic love has the reputation of being either frigid or hypocritical, or perhaps both at once; when it really exists, it is commonly only a sort of abstract sensuality or estheticism, at once selfish and visionary. Yet in its origin, and in the experience of the few in whom it is a spontaneous religion, Platonic, love is precisely the opposite of all that. It is a passion for individuals so intense, so arresting, so disproportionate to their poor human merits, that it seems and is the revelation of an essence greater than theirs, of something that, could we live always in its presence, would render us supremely happy. […] So that if there is anything morbid in Platonic love, it is not its unnatural coldness, but its disproportionate fervor, not the barren egoism of it, but its suicidal self-surrender; for the Platonic lover loves so reli giously that his love must needs carry him beyond its initial object, and beyond himself (Santayana 1913, 595).

This is how love gradually becomes a „natural, true religion" for Santayana, with a visible cult that ignites natural beauty and sanctifies a natural mystery, but the object of its worship is not the visible image, but in fact, the origin of all good (Santayana 1930, 32).

Santayana's belief is most comparable to what he attributed to Michelangelo - a half-aesthetic, half-religious creed, the basic tenet of which is that all true beauty leads to the idea of perfection, and thus, the perception of beauty can turn into a religion (Santayana 1927, 131-132). It is no coincidence that he noted in his earliest philosophical work that there are those among us who never even try to think about the nature of perfection as a whole, yet we can say that „our whole life is an act of worship to this unknown divinity". We have to search and research so that we can experience in the ecstasy of love or the joy of contemplation the moment in which our pursuit reaches its goal, the light of perfection flashes (Santayana 1955, 161-162). According to the *Phaidros* of Plato, who sees something like a god, which faithfuly-ly reflects beauty, first shudderes, and something of the former trepidation creeps into his heart, then, looking at it, he respects it as a god, and if he were not afraid of the suspicion of madness, he would sacrifice it to his beloved, as if to a statue of a god.[4] This was Santayana's credo. In 1900, in a letter to William James, he stated that neither Protestantism nor Catholicism influenced him as strongly as Plato and Aristotle, who gave him self-confidence and the right to be honest (McCormick 1987, 88).

4. Life in the shadow of the immortals

In Aristotle's eyes, the highest degree of pleasure is related to the exercise of acquired abilities. Joy is a manifestation of the natural state of our existence (energeia). The most perfect joy includes spontaneity, unhindered, unconstrained activity. The greatest happiness is the work of the intellect. Santayana could never be exclusively enthusiastic about contemporary philosophy, nor could he identify with the enthusiasms around him. As he wrote in his biography: „I was a teacher of philosophy in the place where philosophy was most modern, most deeply Protestant, most hopefully new! – the very things from which, in speculation, my metanoia turned me away. I

[4] after the Pahidros of Plato (251a)

could never be, I will not say a leader, but even a happy participator in the intellectual faith of my neighbours." And thinking of ancient philosophy, he remarked: „I could live only with the dead. It was comfort, but a cold comfort, to say that I was living among the immortels" (Santayana 1953, 12). Already during his studies in Germany, he felt that he was most interested in Greek ethics. He read Herodotus and Epicurus:

> Epicurus renounced most of the things called pleasures, for the sake of peace, equanimity, and intelligence, and Solon's heroes renounced life itself for the sake of a beautiful moment or a beautiful death. The extreme of classical heroism here becomes romantic; because the most romantic career, if deliberately chosen and accepted without illusion, would be a form of happiness: something in which a living will recognised its fullfillment and found its peace (Santayana 1945, 8).

Santayana „blends Stoicism with Epicureanism, the power to renounce with the capacity to enjoy." –claims Ames (Ames 1937, 94). Thomas Alexander also draws a parallel between Santayana and the sages of the ancient Hellenistic schools, who used philosophical principles as a means of life, with which they could reach a state of spiritual freedom. The practice of ataraxia, autonomy and askesis is characteristic of a personality cultivated in Hellenistic philosophy (Alexander 1997, 330). According to Plato, the main means of overcoming resistance to desires and pleasures is training, that is, asceticism, which includes both the training of the body and the soul (Foucault 1999, 77). Asceticism is a prominent issue in classical Greek thought, because it plays an important role in becoming a moral subject. As Michel Foucault pointed out in his work on the aesthetics of existence, based on Greek philosophical writings, asceticism is part of a virtuous life, which also means the life of a „free" person in the full, positive and political sense of the word (ibid. 83). Taking different lifestyles into account, ancient ethics articulates the requirement of aestheticizing human existence. In this ethic, self-control and moderation in all aspects of life were the guarantee of a beautiful and harmonious life. In shaping life into a work of art, everyone can only rely on their own moral activity, which will be individual by nature, since its starting point is the individual's relationship with himself. According to the Foucault teoretician Marcelli, the ethics of the individual results in the aestheticization of life, but social functions are already connected to it (Marcelli 2006, 162).

At the time of writing Apologia Pro Mente Sua, Santayana felt that his aestheticism was actually „a modest Epicurean humanism" (Santayana 1940, 503) and at the end of Realms of Being, in the General Review, he wrote that his philosophy, like that of the ancients, was based on the discipline of mind and heart. He calls his philosophy a „lay religion". My understanding is that this is some kind of secular religion. One of the main goals of this so-called „lay religion" was spiritual liberation. The discipline of the soul is one of the most important principles in Santayana's thinking, which cannot exclude the spiritual freedom born as a result of active contemplation. He wrote about Lucretius, but he could have meant the following: „His materialism is completed by an aspiration towards freedom and quietness of spirit" (Santayana 1910, 5). The admiration for the Hellenic idea is clearly shown in Santayana's lines about Lucretius:

> This is one complete system of philosophy, materialism in natural science, humanism in ethics. Such was the gist (veleje,magva) of all Greek philosophy before Socrates, of that philosophy which was truly Hellenic and corresponded with the movement which produced Greek manners, Greek government, and Greek art a movement towards simplicity, autonomy, and reasonableness in everything, from dress to religion. Such is the gist also of what may be called the philosophy of the Renaissance, the reassertion of science and liberty in the modern world, by Bacon, by Spinoza, by the whole contemporary school that looks to science for its view of the facts, and to the happiness of men on earth for its ideal. This system is called naturalism; and of this Lucretius is the unrivalled poet (Santaya 1910, 5).

Because of his doctrine of immortality and the soul, Santayana calls Lucretius an imperfect psychologist and a self-proclaimed moralist. He believes that Lucretius is zealously trying to prove the mortality of the soul in order

to allay fears of possible future punishments. This frees the soul and gives you the opportunity to rest (ibid. 45). In relation to Lucretius, he speaks with great respect of Epicurus, who retired to his own garden with his friends and students, searching for the possibilities of peace. He lived in moderation and self-restraint, spoke softly, distributed alms to the poor, while preaching against wealth, ambition and passion. He defended free will, which he wanted to exercise by withdrawing from the world and not by swimming against the tide (ibid. 30). Santayana's ideas agree with the main ideas of Epicurean ethics, for example in the affirmation of things that cause joy and pleasure, which lead to a state without disturbance and pain, or in emphasizing independence (autarkeia). For Santayana, the fact that Epicurus does not approve of public activities and turns his back on the social sphere may have been attractive to him. According to Santayana, if reason cannot control the passions, happiness is impossible. In other words, the pursuit of happiness also depends on reason, which can create harmony between the instincts and impulses of a given living being, as well as between it and its environment. So reason is the means of achieving harmony (Arnett 1957, 5). In her book *The Therapy of Desire*, Martha C. Nussbaum examines the philosophy of Epicurus and states that, according to Epicurus, we come into the world as healthy living beings, our abilities work reliably, but soon after we are polluted and corrupted by external forces, to which we become prisoners. Among the external influences, Epicurus includes religious superstitions (which teach fear of the gods and death), loves (which complicate the natural sexual desire), and speeches glorifying wealth and power (Nussbaum 1994, 107). In Epicurus's theory - as in Santayana's - man can control his emotions and passions with the help of reason, and in this way he can become independent from the outside world. „Lathe bioszasz" - „Live hidden" - is the Epicurean slogan that ensures the ataraxia of each person. For Epicurus, the gods exist in metacosmions, in themselves, cut off from the world. In his dissertation, Marx claimed that the happy Epicurean gods actually represented a specific philosopher's ideal of life. An ideal that Epicurus tried to realize in his own school (ibid. 548).

The hiding was not total for either Epicurus or Santayana, because while the former surrounded himself with his students, the latter also had an extensive circle of friends. Santayana arrived at the ideal of friendship that binds the master and his students only as a result of a slow process, which is as much related to his personal experiences as his theory about love and idealization. As a young lecturer, he wanted to be more of a friend and companion to the students, as an extension of the study period spent at the university. He wanted to remain a student and a companion, and he managed to do so until the age difference between him and his students became noticeable. Between the ages of thirty and forty, he broke down because of this and turned away not only from teaching, but also from the community of students. However, his faith in friendship was never broken. The Epicurean ideal was alive in him, according to which there is no greater wealth and joy than friendship. He already wrote that in *The Sense of Beauty*:

> The variety of nature and the infinity of art , with the companionship of our fellows, would fill the leisure of that ideal existence. These are the elements of our positive happiness, the things which, amid a thousand vexations and vanities, make the clear profit of living (Santayana 1955, 20-21).

In the section on Lucretius in *Three Philosophical Poets*, he examines the topic of friendship. He believes that although friendship was held in high esteem in all ancient states, only Epicurean philosophy could intensify the emphasis on friendship. He taught people that their existence in the universe is only accidental, and that comrades tossing and turning on the same raft can only count on each other. Santayana mentions the passage from Lucretius where he revives the Epicurean idyll in which the friends picnic together by the stream: „the little word „together" is all he vouchsafes us to mark what must be the chief ingredient in such rural happiness." – wrote Sa-

ntayana (Santayana 1910, 66). He praises Horace, who is less superficial on this subject (ibid).

We can find many references in Santayana's works, in which you can feel the respect for the power of friendship above all else. In his theoretical explanations, he probably did not devote more space to the question of friendship, because in his only novel, his greatest success, *The Last Puritan*, he included everything he knew and experienced about the relationship between two men in the relationship between Oliver and Mario: it „contain all I know about America, about women, and about young men. As this last is rather my strong point" (Singer 2000, 39) – said Santayana. We know of only one independent text, to which he specifically gave the title Friendship. The essay, which rested for a long time among Santayana's manuscripts, became known by Daniel Cory.[5] Based on the author's literary style, the type of paper and the color of the ink, Cory dated the birth of the essay between 1935 and 1950, to which he found no reference anywhere and believed that Santayana should have returned to this text, because at the end he started so many new threads, which are not explained (Cory 1968). That may have been the reason he never published it. Knowing Santayana's biography, the conclusions of the text are particularly interesting. It is known that he strove for freedom throughout his life, and when he really had the opportunity to do so with his inheritance, he created an independent and isolated, but not lonely, life for himself. His really serious friendships from his youth were permeated by love, so it is no wonder that in his analysis he relates the essence of friendship - free choice and the joy of free discovery - to the passion of love. According to Santayana, friendship has vital roots in human society as a valuable nurturer of love (Cory 1968, 79).

In Santayana's essay, the most frequently occurring concept related to friendship is freedom: or example, when he writes that friendship is the joining of two free souls who have met by chance, recognize and appreciate each other, but remain free (ibid. 81). But he specifically states that one of the main qualities of friendship must be freedom, and that freedom should not be burdened by any obligations (ibid. 84). Friendship, the essential feature of which is the chance meeting of free souls, is devoid of envy, as well as the desire for power and appropriation. Such meetings rarely settle on the whole soul, and never on the whole life. Friendship is a state of freedom; something spiritual – says Santayana (ibid. 85).

In its ideal form, Santayana friendship is associated with youth, the period of searching for one's way, when one's thoughts are bound by the things of the world, and is happy when one finds kindred spirits in one's wanderings. According to his thoughts, friendship is a fundamentally open bond that does not develop from home and does not seek to found a new family. Driven by the desire for adventure and discovery, he is imbued with a sense of wanderlust, dreaming of a free and reckless life, even if it is dangerous. In contrast to boyish brotherly love, this is clearly chosen, personal and exclusive (ibid. 80). in this sense it is similar to the passion of love. Each excites the imagination in a way that brotherly love cannot. In friendship, it is not the friendship itself that excites the imagination, as in love, where the whole world becomes uninteresting and confusing outside of love. The imagination of friends is filled with the world, as the field of action or the object of judgment; the recognition and selection of the friend's personality is due to his exceptionally sympathetic actions, thinking, and feelings towards other things and persons (ibid. 80-81.). Santayana sees friendship as a „vital, biological thing". He doesn't believe in their eternal oath, because he believes that no fact, no feeling can guarantee its own duration, but he is sure that the feeling of indelibility will remain forever even after such defining human relationships have cooled (ibid. 83). Those with whom he had really deep feelings died early. And in Francis Russell

[5] Between 1927 and 1952 he was Santayana's secretary. In 1968, he published the compilation *The Birth of Reason* for the first time.

- whom he believed to be a kindred spirit - he was hugely disappointed. His former admiration was drowned in indifference - at least to the outside world, but the feelings he experienced in friendship probably remained indelible. Cory, who was working as Santayana's secretary when Russell died, testifies to this. Santayana received the news with complete indifference, and Cory asked in bewilderment: "Mr. Santayana, if I dropped dead in front of you at this moment, would you be emotionally moved at all?" To which Santayana calmly replied: „You should not ask me personal questions. I knew Russell a long time ago. And the man I knew and loved then died, I am sure, many, many years ago" (McCormick 1987, 122). In 1886 he first met John Francis Stanley Russell, Bertrand Russell's brother. He had never had the opportunity to talk to English people before, so he found the opportunity exciting. Francis Russell was the grandson and heir of the famous Lord John Russell, but according to Santayana he was „extraordinary in his own right" (Santayana 1945, 44). In his biography, he gives such a detailed and enthusiastic description of the young nobleman that he openly reveals his true feelings: „Tall young man of twenty", „with abundant tawny hair, clear little steel-blue eyes, and a florid complexion", „he moved deliberately, gracefully, stealthily,like a tiger […]" (ibid. 44). When they first met, Russell already felt so at home in the Harvard student room that, examining the bookshelf, crouching on the floor, he read from Swinburne to Santayana, who remembered years later:

> I had not heard poetry read in this way I had not known that the English language could become, like stained glass, an object and a delight in itself (ibid. 45).

William James saw that Santayana made a deep impression on Russell, and Santayana felt that he was able to tune in to the thoughts of a man who had allowed himself to be close to someone who completely disregarded convention. Of his friends, only Henry Ward Abbott and Herbert Lyman spoke openly about his feelings for Russell. In 1887 he wrote to Abbott:

> Russell is the ablest man, all round, that I have ever met. You have no idea what a splendid creature he is, no more had I till I had seen a great deal of him. […] He isn't good, that is he is completely selfish and rather cruel […]", but „intellectually he is really brilliant… I know I am making a fool of myself in writing about him. … but I send a note of his so that you may judge for yourself and also have some idea of the men I am seeing here. Pass the note on to Herbert Lyman and let him keep it or send it back to me. I am going tomorrow to stay with Russell again, for he is laid up and wants company. … Don't tell this round, I beg of you, but I tell you because I am telling you everything to-day. I make an exception of Herbert, because I should have to tell him sooner or later, and he won't chuckle over it as if it were a joke merely, which it isn't (Holzberger 2003, vi).

A week later he sent the following letter to Abbott:

> … what I call my "fall from grace and self-control" … is simply this. Russell has a way of treating people which is insufferably insolent and insulting. Never for a moment did I imagine I could allow anyone to treat me in such a way. But I find that instead of caring for my own dignity and independence … I find that I don't care a rap for my interest in myself or my ways of doing things, but that I am quite willing to stand anything, however outrageous, that comes from a certain quarter. This is what has happened to me. I am a fool to say a word about it (ibid.)…

We don't know exactly what happened, but the emotional rollercoaster he experienced with Russell left a deep mark on Santayana. In several of his letters, he hinted that he modeled Jim Darnley in *The Last Puritan* on Frank Russell. Most of the time he used the word „love" in the novel to describe the feeling that Mario and Oliver had for each other, or to show the attraction that Oliver had for Jim Darnley (Singer 2000, 58-59).

In order to understand Santayana's friendships and affections, one must know the fascination for antiquity that was revived at the end of the nineteenth century, an integral part of which was the admiration for noble male friendships, the most poetic immortalizer of which was certainly Plato. The Hellenists and Medievalists of Victorian England agreed that the nature of male love is characterized by purity and spirituality. In an analysis by John Addington Symonds, he mentions mythological and

historical male couples who were connected either by a pederastic relationship or by a friendship known from Aristotle („non-sexual fellowship").[6] This was the typical, official, Victorian attitude towards male couples in Greek history. Perhaps it was the fact that Russell's behavior fell too far from the ideal that upset Santayana. When Russell was dismissed from Oxford because of his published letters and Lionel Johnson, Santayana made an ironic comment on the story Russell described. He knew that the reference to the „white virginal flame of innocence" from Russell's mouth was a „cheeky lie, when so many of his readers know the facts" (McCormick 1987, 65). Santayana defined the concepts of moderation, restraint, and purity based on Plato and Aristotle, with which his entire thought system was embedded in the value system of ancient Athens. His love poems and essays about love quote Plato, while the chapter ‚Free Society' of Reason in Society is based on the concept of friendship in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. Michel Foucault, examining Greek philosophical asceticism, came to the conclusion that the principle of unlimited self-restraint is expressed in boyish love, in which renunciation becomes an ideal, exemplified by Socrates, who steadfastly resists all temptations, and also the formulation of the proposition that renunciation it has a high intellectual value in itself (Foucault 1999, 246). The requirement of strictness, which follows from the fact of knowing how to control oneself, does not appear as a universal law to which everyone must submit; rather, it is a stylization principle of behavior that is intended for those who want to give their existence the most beautiful and complete form possible (ibid. 251).

5. Individual „philosophical metanoia"

Around the age of thirty, Santayana suffered a mental crisis. Later on, he called the turning point in his life metanoia, when he experienced that he was already viewed differently by those around him and could no longer consider himself young in the same way as his students. He became a teacher only to support himself, but he considered learning to be his life's calling, and if it were up to him, he would have gladly remained a student. He was inspired by the students' interests, their pastimes, and their groups of friends. It was a huge break for him when he realized that he would be forced out of the students' communities when his youth was over (Santayana 1953, 7-8). His grief only increased when his family background, which he felt was secure, was shattered, with the death of his father and the marriage of his sister, who moved to Spain. Considering his letters and resume, he seems to have expected nothing, unexpectedly and painfully affected by the news of his family. He could no longer avoid a mental breakdown when he found out that his dearest student, his closest friend whom he loved as a younger brother, Warwick Potter, died of cholera on a boat trip to France. The ordinary world has taken on a different color for him, now he has really moved away from reality. He could have thought of describing the turning from the many to the ideal in Plato's *Symposium* when he wrote:

> The platonic transition was therefore at once spontaneous and inevitable, from the many to the one, from the existent but transitory to the ideal and eternal. This transition may be called philosophic *metanoia*. Like the tragic catharsis it turns disaster into a kind of rapture without those false comforts and delusions by which religious *metanoia* is often cheapend (ibid. 8).

His carefree youth was gone in seconds.As he wrote in his autobiography: „I found myself unwillingly, and irreparably separated from Spain, from England, from Europe from my youth and from my religion" (ibid).

Warwick Potter, according to several biographers of Santayana, was the great love of the philosopher's life. In the biography, he is listed among the first and defining friends. Robert K. Martin, in *The Homosexual Tradition in American Poetry*, states that the two most defining affections of Santayana's youth were for a student named Bayley and for Warwick Potter. Bayley, by

[6] in *Studies of the Greek Poets*ben and in *The Dantesque and Platonic Ideals in Love*; the latter is is *In the Key of Blue*;

Santayana's own admission, served as the model for *The Last Puritan*'s hero, „W.P." and the recipient of contemporary sonnets. He reveals very little about Potter in his autobiography, but the figure of the boy served as an eternal model for him to sing about the transformation of body into soul. In the 1894 volume of poems, he commemorated Potter with four sonnets. The title of the series is „To W. P.". In the first of the four sonnets, Potter's virginal figure is the embodiment of spiritual Beauty. According to the poem, the beauty and goodness of the boy who died young was left untouched by time. With his death, Santayana became an eternal, erotic figure to whom he could always remain faithful. It is clear from his works that Potter's figure changed over time into an idealized boy figure, preserved in its perfection by death (Martin 1998, 110). The second sonnet: he sings of the feeling of loss. In the third, he asks why this feeling could not live longer, and then reassures himself that Potter's youth was not lost, but preserved, and that love became immortal. The fourth sonnet also reflects on the relationship between time and eternity and glorifies death as a victory over time (ibid. 111). His poems suggest that those separated by misfortune can be united in immortality. The XXXII. sonnet was also addressed to a loved one, whom he asked to be his in God and in the grave, if the cruel waves of life and bad language had already torn them apart (Santayana 1896, 36).

In 1902, under controversial circumstances, the young poet Lionel Johnson, whom Santayana met through Russell, also died in a street accident. Johnson, a young man described as a „product" of Walter Pater, was known among Oxford students for his poetry and extravagant lifestyle (Santayana 1945, 55). Russell collected and preserved the letters he received from Johnson when he was seventeen or eighteen years old, and Santayana knew the contents of several of them and quoted from them in his biography. In one of these, Johnson wrote that a person's real life does not consist of the actions that are visible to everyone, but is embodied in enjoying the sunlight, reading the books we choose, and in the faces we love (ibid. 57).

A complete edition of Santayana's poems was published in 1979. According to McCormick, thanks to this, we can look at Santayana's personality from an aspect that we did not have the opportunity to do before, because in his previously published works he persistently suppressed the feelings he unleashed in his poems. Santayana was never religious, but in his sonnets amorous adoration is almost always intertwined with images of religious adoration. According to Epstein and Porte, it is completely unnecessary to talk about Santayana's sexuality, in their studies he is presented as asexual. Despite the abundance of poems and letters, Epstein claims that paying attention to Santayana's erotic interests is the sheerest twaddle (Lane 1999, 178). Santayana's affection for young men is clear from the poems, but there is no concrete evidence, and perhaps there is no need for it. Daniel Cory's notes testify that the question of homosexuality did not particularly excite Santayana himself. In 1929, the conversation that many now cite in their Santayana biographies took place: Santayana is said to have said to Cory about A.E. Housman's poetry:

> I suppose Housman was really what people nowadays call 'homosexual,' […] I think I must have been that way in my Harvard days – although I was unconscious of it at the time (McCormick 1987, 51).

According to McCormick, it is hard to believe that a person with such education and such acquaintances as Santayana would not have discovered this about himself, until he was 65 years old. He knew the works of Plato well enough to know that not all of the friendships described in them were „Platonic", he knew the works of Tacitus, but above all, he experienced Oscar Wilde's trial, his arrest and the circumstances of his release. He was also related and good friends with Howard Sturgis, who lived in Windsor, and was a classmate of William Fullerton, whose lifestyle was also well known (McCormick 1987, 51). In the *Apologia*, Santayana notes that his

poems cannot be analyzed purely technically. Judgment is not for professors of rhetoric, for true poetry is found in content and idea. He declares that his poetry is not words or concepts, but poetry of things. Only those who understand what the author is referring to can appreciate the capture by words in the poet's work. Only those who have knowledge of what the poet wrote can judge (Santayana 1940, 599). Santayana's anger was primarily directed against Howgate, who tried to connect biographical events to his poems without knowing Spain, old Boston, Harvard, or England, France, Italy. But he called the most serious deficiency the complete lack of knowledge of Platonism on the part of Howgate, who was unable to understand the poems whose substance and secret, according to Santayana, lay in Platonism. Even in his old age, Santayana felt that when he wrote those Platonizing sonnets, Platonism was a living experience for him, not a mere imitation without knowledge of the feelings of the Italians (ibid. 600).

The poems are an integral part of Santayana's philosophy, as well as other works from his youth, even if he could no longer identify with them in his old age. Santayana told to Bruno Lind that the first edition of *Hermit of Carmel* was a mistake and should never have been reissued because it was a misguided effort. He believed that only those who were writing a psychological study of his thoughts should read it (Lind 1962, 73).

Philosophical metanoia robbed Santayana of his faith in himself and in poetry. He had broken. Even his faith in the power of imagination was almost shaken. His doubts about his own poetry were expressed most forcefully in a letter he wrote in 1905 to Robert Trevelyan - one of the „Cambridge Apostles". Trevelyan had previously sent Santayana his poem The Birth of Parsival, but in the reply letter, instead of a concrete value judgment, he found Santayana's confession about poetry:

> The truth is that I have fallen out of love with poetry and feel a kind of incompetence of speaking of it, as one might in the case of a sweatheart that had jilted one (McCormick, 1987, 114).

Contrary to his thoughts expressed elsewhere, in this letter he is incredibly pessimistic and disillusioned. It even occurs to him that all the imaginative work that the poet does is only a „hollow anachronism", a dilettantial flirtation, which is brought to life by facing our own world - and „the incapacity to face our own world", to live our true passions (ibid. 115).

6. Conclusion

In the case of Santayana, a contemplative philosophy of life striving for happiness and perfection can be demonstrated, the driving force of which is longing. In my study, I claimed that - although Santayana approaches the investigation of the sense of beauty in a naturalistic way - an all-pervading Platonist attitude can be detected in his philosophy, which, starting from the concept of love, is ennobled into a religion with the help of idealization. Santayana's work is an example of how it is possible to create an aesthetic ontology based on the Platonic conception of beauty even by maintaining the rejection of independent aesthetics within philosophy. The connection of poetry, religion and philosophy in his works also echoes the ancient Greek perception. I believe that the life work of George Santayana is an unmissable chapter in the history of pragmatist aesthetics and thinking about aesthetic living, as a forerunner of philosophical ideas promoting aesthetic living and self-cultivation, such as Rorty, Shusterman and Nehamas, and also as an heir to the ancient teachings on the care of the soul. can be assessed. According to Richard Shusterman, the postmodern ethics of taste attempts to fuse the aesthetic and moral spheres into one, by looking with suspicion at the long tradition of their philosophical separation. We can see exactly this with Santayana. His writings on the search for beauty are not isolated theoretical works, but poetically composed self-expressions of his life, secret thoughts and motivations. With his sensitive aesthetic knowledge, he created a special way of life. His aestheticism is mixed with

radical asceticism, which cannot be defined without the all-pervading presence of desire.

References

Alexander, Thomas. 1997. Santayana's Sage: The Disciplines of Aesthetic Enlightenment, In *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, March 1.

Ames, Van Meter. 1937. *Proust and Santayana. The Aesthetic Way of Life*. Chicago, New York Willet: Clark and Company.

Arnett, Willard E. 1957. *Santayana and the Sense of Beauty*. Indiana University Press.

Cory, Daniel (ed). 1968. *The Birth of Reason and Other Essays by George Santayana*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Foucault, Michel. 1999. *A szexualitás története. A gyönyörök gyakorlása*. Budapest: Atlantisz.

Grassi, Ernesto. 1997. *A szépség ókori elmélete*. Pécs: Tanulmány Kiadó.

Holzberger, William G. (ed.). 2001. *The Letters of George Santayana, Book One*. Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London: The MIT Press.

Holzberger, William G. (ed.). 2002. *The Letters of George Santayana, Book Three*. Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London: The MIT Press.

Angus Kerr-Lawson. 1991. Santayana on James*: 1891*. In *Bulletin of the Santayana Society*, No.9, Fall 1991, pp. 36-38. https://indianamemory.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/Santayana/id/2437 [2023-11-09]

Lane, Christopher. 1999. *The Burdens of Intimacy. Psychoanalysis & Victorian Masculinity*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Lind, Bruno. 1962. *Vagabond Scholar: A Venture Into the Privacy of George Santayana*. New York: Bridgehead.

Marcelli, Miroslav. 2006. *Michel Foucault, avagy mássá lenni*. Pozsony. Kalligram.

Marcuse, Herbert. 1966. *Eros and Civilizations. A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Martin, Robert K. 1998. *The Homosexual Tradition in American Poetry*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press.

McCormick, John. 1987. *George Santayana a biography*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1987

Nussbaum, Martha. 1994. *The Therapy of Desire Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Samuels, Ernest. 1979. *Bernard Berenson. The Making of a Connoisseur*. Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Santayana, George. 1940. Apologia Pro Mente Sua. In Paul Arthur Schilpp (ed): *The Philosophy of George Santayana*, pp. 495-606. Evanston and Chicago: Northwestern University.

Santayana, George. 1913. Dr. Fuller, Plotinus, and the Nature of Evil, In *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods*. pp. 589-599. October 23. https://ia801700.us.archive.org/20/items/jstor-2013464/2013464.pdf [2013-09-20]

Santayana, George. 1930. Love. In Santayana. *The Life of Reason or the Phase of Human Progress. Reason in Society*. pp. 3-34. Charles Scribner's and Sons.

Santayana, George. 1953. *My Host the World*. New York: Charles Scribner's and Sons.

Santayana, George. 1931. Platonic Love, In *Little Essays drawn from the writings of George Santayana by Logan Pearsall Smith*, pp. 100-102. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

Santayana, George. 1927. Platonic Love in Some Italian Poets, In *Interpretations of Poetry and Religion*. pp.118-146. New York: Charles Scribners and Sons.

Santayana, George. 1896. *Sonnets and Other Verses*. New York: Stone and Kimball.

Santayana, George. 1945. *The Middle Span*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

Santayana, George. 1955. *The Sense of Beauty*. New York: Dover Publication.

Santayana, George. 1910. *Three Philosophical Poets, Lucretius, Dante and Goethe*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Singer, Irving. 2000. *George Santayana Literary Philosopher*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press.

Symonds, John Addington. MCMXVIII. The Dantesque and Platonic Ideals of Love, In Ibid. *In the Key of Blue and Other Prose Essays*. pp. 55-87. London, Elkin Methews, New York: The Macmillan Company.

Vasoli, Cesare. 1983. *A humanizmus és a reneszánsz esztétikája*. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó.

Woodward, Anthony. 1991. Santayana and Goethe, In *Bulletin of the Santayana Society*, No. 9., Fall 1991. pp. 1-7. https://indianamemory.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/Santayana/id/2407 [2023-11-09]

THE DANGEROUS LIAISONS BETWEEN PRAGMATISM AND PSYCHOANALYSIS: SEX, DRIVES, AND IMPULSES

Matteo Santarelli
University of Bologna
matteo.santarelli4@unibo.it

ABSTRACT: This paper is a contribution to the discussion on the relationship between pragmatism and psychoanalysis. Specifically, I will contribute to the discussion by focusing on the concept of sex. Classical pragmatists – e.g., Dewey and Mead – criticize Freudian psychoanalysis for its exaggerated focus on sex. Yet, their criticisms lack a thorough discussion of what sex exactly means, according to Freud. In this paper, I would like to focus on Freud's idea of *sex as a drive* in order to shed light on some important and hitherto partially neglected convergences and divergences between pragmatism and psychoanalysis.

Keywords: pragmatism; Sigmund Freud; sex; drives; impulses.

Introduction

The relationship between pragmatism and psychoanalysis has been the subject of growing attention in the last years and decades. As early as the 90's, Vincent Colapietro's seminal work highlighted both the presence of an idea of the unconscious in Peirce and the possibility of using Peircean semiotics to illuminate and analyze the "unconscious habits" of neurotic patients (Colapietro, 1995). The relationship between James and Freud, on the other hand, is both direct – as the two met in person at the Clark Lectures in 1909 – and problematic – as James refused to adopt the terminology of the unconscious (Colapietro, 2021), and intuitively considered himself much closer to the perspective of Carl Gustav Jung (Dadaian, 2023). Even more complex is the relationship between Dewey and Freudian psychoanalysis. While Dewey welcomed Freud's anti-intellectualist innovations, there is no lack of critical distancing. Dewey's criticisms, which concern, among other things, Freud's failure to recognize the social dimension of the unconscious (Dewey 1922), have brought some authors to point out that Dewey refers not to a Freudian unconscious dimension, but rather to a pre-reflective dimension (Santarelli, 2020), and that he foreshadows an aesthetic conception that is an alternative to that of Freud (Henning 2022). Finally, recent contributions have focused on the similarities and the differences between George Herbert Mead's social psychology and Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis (Côté 2015; 2023; Santarelli, 2013).

Apparently, the role of sex is a major point of disagreement between pragmatism and Freudian psychoanalysis. It is uncontroversial that classical pragmatists criticized the excessive role played by sex in psychoanalytical explanation. This criticism is part of a more general skepticism towards the reductivist tendencies of Freud's system. The monothematic emphasis of sexual dynamics in psychoanalysis risks overshadowing the social nature of instincts and impulses, the varieties of affective human experiences, the interplay between impulses, intelligence, and habits as a major source of individual and social progress. In contrast, pragmatists do not seem to take much interest in sex – neither as a decisive instinct or impulse in the human psychic economy, nor as a practice to be improved and refined (Shusterman, 2021). To put it bluntly, sex is the exact point where the paths of psychoanalysis and pragmatism seem to part.

In this paper, I will neither try to reconstruct the relationship between these two streams of thought in general terms, nor I will discuss the pragmatist approach to sex. Rather, I would like to contribute to the ongoing discussion on pragmatism and psychoanalysis by focusing on a very specific issue: Freud's specific understanding and use of the concept of sex – i.e., *sex as a drive*. The reasons of this focus are twofold. First, classical pragmatists did not include in their criticisms of Freud a thorough account and discussion of the idea of drive. They blamed Freudian psychoanalysis for its reductive focus on sex, but without a fair account of what sex really means in Freudian psychoanalysis. Second, this specific topic is also rarely explored in the growing and increas-

ingly significant secondary literature on pragmatism and psychoanalysis. Focusing on some infrequent and yet notable exceptions (Rieff, 1959; Henning, 2022, 2023; Coté, 2023), I will focus on the topic of sex as a drive to shed light on some important divergencies and convergences between the two approaches.

The Pragmatists vs. Freud

Pragmatists resisted rather straightforwardly the wave of enthusiasm toward psychoanalysis that affected the American intellectual world in the early twentieth century (Zaretsky, 2015). On of the reasons of this resistance can be explicitly found in the several pragmatist condemnations of Freud's excessive interest in sex as a major factor in human psychological lives. James' scattered comments on Freudian psychoanalysis display a certain amount of ambivalence. In his masterpiece *The Varieties of Religious Experience,* James writes:

> In the wonderful explorations of Binet, Janet, Breuer, Freud, Mason, Prince, and others, of the subliminal consciousness of patients with hysteria, we have revealed to us whole systems of underground life, in the shape of memories of a painful sort which lead a parasitic existence, buried outside of the primary fields of consciousness, and making irruptions thereinto with hallucinations, pains, convulsions, paralyses of feeling and of motion, and the whole procession of symptoms of hysteric disease of body and of mind. Alter or abolish by suggestion these subconscious memories, and the patient immediately gets well. (James, 1902: 217).

James is, however, unconvinced by the general framework of Freud's theory: he is concerned about Freud's fixations, his conceptions of symbolism, his debunking attitude toward religion. And in general terms, James refuses to adopt the very concept of unconscious (Weinberger 2000; Colapietro 2021). In a letter to Théodore Flournoy, James expresses the hope that "Freud and his pupils will push their ideas to their utmost limits, so that we may learn what they are. They can't fail to throw light on human nature". Yet, he confesses that Freud gave him the impression of a man "obsessed with fixed ideas" (in Perry: 1935, II, 122-23).

Mead's and Dewey's works generally acknowledge Freud's contribution as shedding light on the pre-reflective dimension of the psyche, and on the role that internalized norms play in our moral and social lives. But when it comes to sex, their comments on psychoanalysis are scattered, but definitely direct. Mead ironically refers to the "more or less fantastic psychology of the Freudian group", and to its tendency to focus on sex and violent self-assertion, while from Mead's perspective, the normal situation is "one which involves a reaction of the individual in a situation which is socially determined, but to which he brings his own responses as an "I."" (Mead, 2016: 210-1). When critically discussing those theories which try to single out discrete and separated instincts, Dewey seems to have psychoanalysis in mind as he mentions the current simplification according to which: "All instincts go back to the sexual, so ᵗhat *cherchez la femme* (under multitudinous symbolic disguises) is the last word of science with respect to the analysis of conduct" (Dewey, 1922: 133).

Dewey becomes far more explicit as he discusses the "treatment of sex by psychoanalysts". This treatment – Dewey argues – is fallacious, as it generalizes the ways sex is conceived of and experienced in a specific cultural and historical context as if they were "the necessary effects of fixed native impulses of human nature" (Dewey, 1922: 106). A few pages below, Dewey goes as far as to propose a Deweyan redefinition of the complex – a key psychoanalytic concept – as a "surreptitious furtive organization which does not articulate in avowed expression" (Dewey, 1922: 113-114). In doing so, he criticizes the one-sidedness of the clinical psychology of his time – allegedly, psychoanalysis – for overworking "the influence of sexual impulse in this connection" (Dewey, 1922: 114). And finally, Dewey maintains that psychoanalysts "get

their truths mixed up in theory with the false psychology of original individual consciousness" (Dewey, 1922: 62). This prevents them from providing a convincing account of the social nature of human mind.

To sum up: from the perspective of Dewey's social psychology, the psychoanalytical treatment of sex is subject to three criticisms: 1) it expresses a form of naive universalism, as it generalizes phenomena belonging to specific cultural contexts[1]; 2) it overemphasizes the role of sexual impulses in the etiology of complexes; 3) it is part of an overly individualistic framework.

Are these criticisms accurate and legitimate? Is Freud really exaggerating the role of sex in our individual and collective lives? Or are these reprimands a sign of the pragmatists' prejudicial and prudish attitude towards sex?

Richard Shusterman (2021) has held this latter position. Shusterman criticizes pragmatists for failing to take a serious account of sex and sexual practices, despite the fact that their embodied and experience-and-practice-centered approach should involve a keen interest in such matters. When it comes to James, Peirce, Dewey, and Mead, this lack of interest is traced back to a mixture of Puritanism and gender privilege – as white heterosexual men, these authors did not feel the urge to reflect on sexual issues. As an example of this prudish attitude and theoretical bashfulness, Shusterman mentions Dewey's "animus to Freud's ideas", as it is expressed in some among the aforementioned quotes from *Human Nature and Conduct*. The unfortunate theoretical outcome of this "animus" to sexual issue is Dewey's failure to see "the genuine possibility of aesthetic qualities and ideal meanings in lovemaking" (Shusterman, 2021: 17). Dewey is right when he claims that the inhibition of sexual impulse from immediate discharge might open space for imagination, reflection and the emergence of meaning and aesthetic values. Yet, according to Shusterman, Dewey did not have the courage to perform one final step. He did not realize that inhibition might lead to the emergence of the aesthetic value *within* sexual practices, believing instead that such an emergence occurs when sexual impulses are sublimated into goals that are practically irrelevant "to the physiological end of sexual intercourse" (Shusterman, 2021: 16).

A thorough and general discussion of Shusterman's challenging criticism of classical pragmatists falls beyond the scope of this paper[2]. This is why I intend to focus my attention on a very specific aspect of Schusterman's reconstruction, i.e., Dewey's "animus" to Freud. I would like to stress a minor point and a major point. The minor point is that "animus" is probably too strong a word. If we concede that Dewey surely does not buy the whole psychoanalytical system, he nonetheless welcomes different aspects of Freud's revolution. As Sidney Hook wrote: "John Dewey once remarked that although he was critical of dualistic elements in Freud's psychology, especially of his concept of a substantial unconscious, he was deeply impressed by Freud's extraordinary powers of observation of human behavior" (Hook, 1990: 212). As a sign of this attitude which appears neither enthusiastic, nor entirely hostile, one could mention Dewey's proximity to Alfred Meyer, an important psychologist and psychiatrist who creatively and critically embraced several aspects of Freud's thought (see Colapietro, 2023). The major point is that Dewey's anti-reductivist and culturalist criticism of psychoanalysis does not directly address the psychoanalytical understanding of sex. And, curiously enough, in a brief but quarrelsome reference to the notion of libido, Dewey (1922: 154) mentions Jung – i.e., the author who broke with Freud precisely because (among other

[1] This resonates with several criticisms leveled against Freud from cultural anthropologists of the time. This resonance is probably not a matter of chance, given Dewey's intellectual proximity with prominent anthropologists such as Boas and Malinowski (Goldman, 2012). See for instance Malinowski's challenge to Freud's hypothesis of the universality of the Oedipus complex.

[2] For a detailed and inspiring criticism of Shusterman, see Henning (2023). I personally agree with Henning on various points – e.g., Shusterman's failure to grasp the sexy nature of Dewey's idea of consummation and his prejudicial and poor interpretation of Jane Addams' approach to sex.

reasons) he rejected the Freudian identification of libido with sexual energy.

This brings us to the next question. Apart from the pragmatists' allegedly cold relationship with sex, is the Freudian idea of sexual drives compatible at all with pragmatism – and especially, with Dewey's and Mead's social psychology and philosophy?

Tell me the truth about sex. From quantitative disagreement to qualitative disagreement

It is generally agreed that, from a pragmatist standpoint, Freud's perspective is *reductive*. Pragmatists contributed to a rich and multifaceted understanding of Eros as a leading force in our personal, intellectual, and aesthetic lives (Alexander, 2013; Henning, 2022). From this perspective, Eros is not just a sublimation of sex in Freud's sense – i.e., a redirection of sexual libido towards a non-sexual and socially approved and valued aim. Dewey himself in fact, uses the term sublimation, but in a very different sense. As Robert Westbrook points out (1991: 291), when Dewey speaks of the sublimation of impulses, he has in mind a process of reconstruction through which the impulse becomes a factor intelligently coordinated with others engaged in a continuous course of action. To "sublimate" an impetus of anger, we must include it within a lasting practical disposition that drives us to denounce and fight social injustice. More generally speaking, an impulse is sublimated when it becomes "a factor coordinated intelligently with others in a continuous course of action" (Dewey, 1922: 108). On a theoretical level, this appears to be a much more ambitious conception than Freud's original idea, according to which to sublimate a drive means directing the drive toward a goal that is different from sexual satisfaction[3].

Yet, this charge of reductivism can be further articulated in two different directions. One could argue that pragmatism's criticism of the psychoanalytical approach to sex is basically *quantitative*: Freud is wrong because he reduces the complexity of eros to sex, and – generally speaking – he overemphasizes the role played by sex in normal and pathological psychological processes. This appears to suggest that Freud gets it *locally right* when he talks about sex. The problem is that he overstretches the domain of validity of his discoveries.

But a *second direction* can be followed as well, one which suggests that pragmatists should not merely be wary about the extent of the validity of Freud's conception of sexuality. More radically, they should reject Freud's conceptualization of sex in itself. In the remainder of the article, I will explore this hypothesis. To do so, it is necessary to do what the classical pragmatists have neglected to do, namely, to examine the Freudian conception of sex.

Freud's ideas about sex develop in a complex and sophisticated way throughout his intellectual development. For the present discussion, we can limit our focus to two aspects. The first is the tight connection between *sex* and *drives*. It is true and undebatable that, according to Freud, sexual drives play an extremely important role both in pathological processes – i.e., the genesis of neuroses – and in non-pathological aspects of our lives – i.e., art. What is less clear is the meaning of the word *drive*. Strachey's decision to translate the original German term *Trieb* with *instinct* rather than with *drive* in the *Standard Edition* is not helpful. In fact, it is evident that Freud understands sexual *Triebe* as something very different from instincts[4]**.** Insofar as drives are understood as propulsive

[3] We should not underestimate the political stakes of this disagreement. Recently, Barbara Stiegler highlighted how the influence of a certain interpretation of Freud was also present in the great theoretical opponent of Dewey, Walter Lippmann. Especially in *A Preface to Politics* of 1913, Lippmann starts from the idea of the centrality of drives in our social and political life. The drives are neither to be repressed nor indulged, but rather sublimated (in Freud's sense), that is, directed toward a goal that is more civilized and less brutal. The task of the politician is therefore to find good substitutes for our bad desires (Stiegler, 2019: 31). The political and democratic import of Dewey's redefinition of sublimation is not unrelated to Dewey's overall criticism of Lippmann's "technocratic" approach.

[4] The background of this issue, and the reasons why in the *Revised Standard Edition* of Freud's work *Trieb* is translated with "drive" rather than with "instinct" – as Strachey does in the

forces that remain relatively indeterminate, both with regards to their objects and to the behavior through which they are expressed, they cannot be assimilated to instincts – neither in the classical definition of the term nor in the more recent idea of behavior and innate trigger-mechanisms (Laplanche & Pontalis, 1988: 214). Sexual drives are more plastic and more indeterminate than instincts, and this very plasticity is the main reason why we can track their vicissitudes (Freud, 1915).

The second aspect is to be found in Freud's mature production, especially following the important changes, which occurred in psychoanalysis at the turn of the 20th century. The most relevant among these changes for the present discussion is Freud's move from an early dualism – opposing sexual drives to ego-survival-drives – to a second dualism – opposing sexual drives to life drives[5]. In the context of this second dualism – announced in his 1920 essay "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" – sexual drives become part of the wider set of *life drives*. In opposition to the disruptive and disintegrating force of death drives, life drives aim at conserving existing units of life, and at generating and preserving new and more complex units (Freud, 1938: 149). And in turn, life drives are generally described in terms of Eros, i.e., something whose goal is "complicating life" and at the same time, "preserving it" (Freud, 1923 40). Therefore, sexual drives are part of a wider aspect of psychological life that aims at creating bigger organizations of life by uniting existing unities. In this sense, rather than reducing psychical life to sex, Freud seems to radically expand the common meaning of sex (Lear, 2015).

There are some surprising points of contact between Freud's mature theory of sexual drives and the pragmatist philosophy and social psychology. First, sexual drives refer to an impulsive dimension of life that is situated at the boundaries between the somatic and the psychological dimensions (Freud 1915), and which cannot be reduced to instincts. This idea resonates significantly with Mead's (2016) terminological move from the vocabulary of instincts to the vocabulary of impulses and with Dewey's (1922) focus on the interplay between impulses and habits[6]. Similarly to what happens with Freud's drives, the concept of instincts is not well equipped to account for the relative fluidity, dynamism and motility of human impulsive life.

Second, in Freud's mature works, Eros plays an integrative role that some pragmatist scholars attributed to…*eros*! According to Thomas Alexander, Eros can be defined as the drive towards an integrated and full experience of meaning (Alexander, 2013: 5). As B. Henning argues, this idea of Eros can and should include a more familiar understanding of the word – e.g., sexual relationships. From this perspective, sexual fulfillment "is not merely a matter of securing pleasure for oneself, it also realizes our ability to temporarily transcend or expand beyond the boundaries that seemed to separate the self from another" (Henning, 2022 101). Of course, this pragmatist understanding of eros includes a qualitative aspect that is not at the center of Freud's interest. This can be seen by observing how much richer Dewey's idea of consummation is (Henning 2022: 102) in comparison with the mere fulfillment of drives. Moreover, this erotic process of integration is fulfilled in very different ways in the two perspectives – see the aforementioned different ideas of sublimation which can be found in Dewey and in Freud[7]. Yet, when it comes to the integrative role of Eros, pragmatism and Freudian psychoanalysis seem to be somehow on the same page.

Standard Edition – are painstakingly reconstructed in Solms (2018: 31-35).

[5] It is precisely because of this dualism that Dewey's criticism already mentioned, that in psychoanalysis "all instincts go back to the sexual" (Dewey, 1922: 133), is misleading.

[6] On this topic, see Dreon's (2022) painstaking analysis.

[7] One could argue that Freud's dualism about drives is incompatible with the pragmatist refusal of the existence of separate instincts, and more generally speaking, with the pragmatist anti-dichotomic attitude. Yet, I think the disagreement on this point can be mitigated through two caveats. First, drives are not instincts. Second, Freud is keenly aware that life drives and death drives hardly ever exist in their pure form: "every instinctual impulse that we can examine consists of similar fusions or alloys of the two classes of instinct" (Freud, 1933: 104).

Nonetheless, the idea of drive is also a matrix of extremely relevant differences between pragmatism and psychoanalysis. The first difference has to do with Freud's idea of the *death drive*. Pragmatists and Freud agree that our mature selves are constituted by habits belonging to different layers of time. Habits do not naturally fade as soon as the environmental conditions from which they emerge have disappeared. Rather, they are provided with a kind of inertial force. This inertia of habits is a source of major conflict. John Dewey (1931: 160-161) and Jane Addams (1902) see this inertia as a major source of political and moral impasses. In Freud's perspective, adult neurotics often suffer from the persistence of defense mechanisms that were useful in childhood but counterproductive to functional adult life. And yet, the repetition of well-ingrained habits in the context of therapy – i.e., the phenomenon of transference – is both a resistance to the progress of therapy and an opportunity to stir the iron when it is hot. In stark contrast with hyper-rationalist readings of psychoanalysis, Freud seems to suggest that interpretations become effective only when pathological habits are concretely enacted in the framework of the therapeutic relation[8].

The idea of inertial habits is a productive way to make sense of this repetitive unconscious aspect of human psychical life[9], but this agreement ceases at the precise moment when Freud traces the genesis of these repetitions back to a specific kind of drive opposed to life "instincts," e.g., death drive (Freud 1920). Here, repetition is connected to a far deeper motive than the mere inertial tendency of habits – i.e., the maladaptive persistence of early defenses, the mechanism through which control becomes an absorptive end in themselves, rather than a means. According to Freud's mature work, repetitions, violence and aggression are then not the consequence of unhealthy interactions between old habits and new situations. Rather, they result when an internal, deadly drive is re-directed towards the external world and others. A far cry from the view held by pragmatist psychology and philosophy.

But things become even more complicated as Freud suggests tentatively[10] that this conservative feature is characteristic of drives *generally speaking* – i.e., including life drives and therefore Eros. According to Côté (2023, 7) the distance between drives and the pragmatist idea of impulses seems to be unbridgeable, "since the former involves a fundamental determination (to be found in libido, or in life and death drives), whereas the latter only involves spontaneous or mediated responses to specific stimuli". Moreover, while pragmatists emphasize how impulses might eventually lead to a regression with respect to a specific social order, they potentially open the path to a new emerging social organization (Mead 2016). Drives, on the other hand, somehow always include a tendency to regression. The idea that regression is not the outcome of a specific configuration of the conflict between habits and impulses in a given context, but somehow structurally belongs to human impulsive life as such, definitely cannot be included in the pragmatist conception of the human being. As Philip Rieff pointed out, "Dewey sees the impulses as capable of rescuing a society in which habits in institutional structures (i.e., collective habits) have become petrified and therefore impediments to progress. Quite on the contrary, Freud sees drives as "themselves the force which limits progress by threating a renewal of conflict (Rieff, 1959: 32). The ambivalent nature of drives is an ineradicable source of disintegration of character and social action.

[8] For a pragmatist reading of transference, see Brigati (2015).
[9] See the discussion between Colapietro (2000) and De Lauretis (2000).

[10] In Lecture XXXII of the new series of introductory lectures to psychoanalysis, Freud writes: "The question, too, of whether the conservative character may not belong to all instincts without exception, whether the erotic instincts as well may not be seeking to bring back an earlier state of things when they strive to bring about a synthesis of living things into greater unities - this question, too, we must leave unanswered" (Freud, 1933: 107).

Conclusions

The considerations brought forward in the final part of the article seem to suggest a clear incompatibility in the way Freud and the pragmatists understand the human mind. The focus on the Freudian concept of drive – a focus that pragmatists have tended to neglect – ultimately seems to reinforce the idea of an unbridgeable distance between the two perspectives. These theoretical observations seem to be strengthened by some succinct historical considerations. It is interesting how heterodox or alternative tendencies to psychoanalysis have often found theoretical resources in pragmatism. Harry Stack Sullivan – i.e., the founder of interpersonal psychology, significantly influenced by pragmatism – has always been considered an outsider in the psychoanalytic movement (Mitchell and Black 1995). Alfred Adler and Carl Gustav Jung – initially heirs apparent to Freud before their "betrayal" – were significantly influenced by pragmatism (Winetrout 1968; Dadaian 2023)[11].

Does this mean that the relationship between pragmatism and psychoanalysis should only be thought of in terms of *radical incompatibility*? While the differences between both approaches cannot be denied, I do not believe that they are fundamentally irreconcilable. For example, it is possible to take resources from each perspective to correct the limitations of the other mutually. If pragmatism allows us to grasp the aesthetic, participatory, and qualitative dimensions of sexual life, psychoanalysis teaches us that the danger of regression is a constant threat in our private lives as well as in collective phenomena. Pragmatist categories can also help us to creatively highlight and reinterpret some crucial aspects of psychoanalytic theory and practice – e.g., defense mechanisms, transference, and anxiety. Generally speaking, it is reasonable to argue that the comparison between pragmatism and psychoanalysis becomes all the more productive the more one conceives of Freudian psychoanalysis as a practice and puts Freud's theoretical speculations in the background.[12]

Yet, paradoxically, even the categories seemingly most alien to pragmatism can be creatively put at the service of a pragmatist social philosophy. Think of the idea of regression. A keen interpreter of Freud like Herbert Marcuse (1955) highlighted how the regressive aspect of our fantasies can be a source of criticism of social conformism and of the more repressive forms assumed by the reality principle. Moreover, the inertia of habits is not simply a source of conservativism, but also a legitimate resistance against the pressing contemporary imperative to immediately adapt ourselves to reality (Stiegler, 2019), rather than readjust (Dewey 1934) ourselves, our social relationships and social reality according to our interests, values, and desires[13]. In a nutshell, the convergencies and divergencies reconstructed in this article could also be taken as an invitation to pragmatists and psychoanalysts to contribute to a social philosophy that "joins regression and progression" (Côté, 2023: 14) to provide a better understanding of social reality and to open unexpected paths to political criticism and action.

Bibliography

Addams, J. 1902. *Democracy and Social Ethics*, Urbana, University of Illinois Press 2002.

Alexander, T. 2013. *The Human Eros: Eco-ontology and the Aesthetics of Existence*, New York, Fordham University Press.

Brigati R., 2015. "Staging the Truth. Psychoanalysis and Pragmatism," *European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy*, VII (1), doi. org/10.4000/ejpap.381.

Colapietro, V. 1995. "Notes for a Sketch of a Peircean Theory of the Unconscious". *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, *31*(3), 482–506. http://www.jstor.org/stable/40320555

[11] For the sake of brevity, I will leave aside the political dimension of the conflictual relationship between pragmatism and psychoanalysis.

[12] I would like to thank Valentina Petrolini for pointing to this aspect and for her important comments on a previous version of the paper.

[13] Accordingly, I only partially agree with Philip Rieff's statement that Dewey lacks the conceptual tools to understand regressive phenomena adequately.

Colapietro, V. 2000. "Further Consequences of a Singular Capacity". In John P. Muller & Joseph Brent (eds), *Peirce, Semiotics and Psychoanalysis*, Baltimore and London, The John Hopkins University Press, 136-58.

Colapietro, V. 2021. "James' Rejection of the Unconscious. A Fallacious Disavowal?" In S. Marchetti, (Ed.), *The Jamesian Mind*, London and New York, Routledge.

Colapietro, V. 2023. "John Dewey and Adolf Meyer on a Psychobiological Approach", *European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy*, XV-2, https://doi.org/10.4000/ejpap.3523

Côté, J.-F. 2023. « George Herbert Mead and Psychoanalysis ». *European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy* 15 (2).

Côté, J.-F. 2015. *George Herbert Mead's Concept of Society: A Critical Reconstruction*, Boulder/New York, Paradigm Publishers/Routledge.

Dadaian, A. 2023. "Jung and James". *European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy* [Online], XV-2 | 2023, https://doi.org/10.4000/ejpap.3563

De Lauretis, T. 2000. "Gender, body, and habit change". In John P. Muller & Joseph Brent (eds), *Peirce, Semiotics and Psychoanalysis*, Baltimore and London, The John Hopkins University Press, 159-170.

Dewey, J. 1922. *Human Nature and Conduct*. In *The Middle Works of John Dewey*, vol. 14, ed. by Jo Ann Boydston, Carbondale and Edwardsville, Southern Illinois University Press (1988).

Dewey, J. 1931. "The Need for a New Party". In *The Later Works of John Dewey*, vol. 6, ed. by Jo Ann Boydston, Carbondale and Edwardsville, Southern Illinois University Press (1985): 156-173.

Dewey, J. 1934. *A Common Faith*. In *The Later Works of John Dewey*, vol. 9, ed. by Jo Ann Boydston, Carbondale and Edwardsville, Southern Illinois University Press (1986): 1-58.

Dreon, R. 2022. *Human Landscapes. Contributions to a Pragmatist Anthropology*. Albany NY, Suny Press.

Freud, S. 1915. "Instincts and their Vicissitudes". In *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XIV (1914-1916): On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement, Papers on Metapsychology and Other Works,* ed. J. Strachey, London, Hogarth Press 1957, 109-140.

Freud, S. 1920. "Beyond the Pleasure Principle". In *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XVIII (1920-1922): Beyond the Pleasure Principle, Group Psychology and Other Works*, ed. J. Strachey, London, Hogarth Press 1955, 1-64.

Freud, S. 1923. *The Ego and the Id.* In *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XIX (1923-1925): The Ego and the Id and Other Works*, ed. J. Strachey, London, Hogarth Press 1961, 1-64.

Freud, S. 1933. *New Introductory Lectures in Psychoanalysis*. In *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XXII (1932-1936): New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis and Other Works*, ed. J. Strachey, London, Hogarth Press 1964, 1-182.

Freud, S. 1938. *An Outline of Psychoanalysis*. In *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XXIII (1937-1939): Moses and Monotheism, An Outline of Psycho-Analysis and Other Works*, ed. J. Strachey, London, Hogarth Press 1964, 141-208.

Goldman, L. 2012. "Dewey's Pragmatism from an Anthropological Point of View". *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, *48*(1), 1–30. https://doi.org/10.2979/trancharpeirsoc.48.1.1

Henning, B. 2022. *Dewey and the Aesthetic Unconscious: The Vital Depths of Experience*. Lanham: Lexington Books.

Henning, B. 2023. "Where Pragmatism Gets Off: Sexuality and American Philosophy". *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society: A Quarterly Journal in American Philosophy 59*(1), 1-9. https://doi.org/10.2979/csp.2023.a900114.

Hook, S. 1990. "Science and Mythology in Psychoanalysis". In *Psychoanalysis, Scientific Method, and Phiilosophy*, ed. S. Hook, New Brusnwick and London, Transactions Publishers. 212-224.

James, W. 1902. *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. New York: Vintage Books (1990).

Laplanche, J., Pontalis, J.B. 1988. *The Language of Psychoanalysis,* New York & London, Routledge.

Lear, J. 2015. Freud. London, New York: Routledge.

Marcuse, H. 1955. *Eros and Civilization. A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud.* Boston, Beacon Press.

Mead G. H. 2016. *Mind, Self & Society*, [The Definitive Edition], ed. by Charles W. Morris, Hans Joas and Daniel Huebner, Chicago, University of Chicago Press.

Mitchell, S., Black, M.J. 1995. *Freud and Beyond: A History of Modern Psychoanalytic Thought*, New York, Basic Books.

Perry, R. B. 1935. *The Thought and Character of William James,* two volumes. Boston: Little, Brown, & Co.

Rieff, P. 1959. Freud: the Mind of the Moralist. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1979.

Santarelli, M. 2013. "From the Others to the Other. A Psychoanalytical Reading of George Herbert Mead." In F. T. Burke & K. P. Skowronski (Eds.), *George Herbert Mead in the Twenty-First Century*, Lanham, Lexington Press, 159-171.

Santarelli, M. 2020. "The Dark Side of Habits. A Pragmatist Account". *Lo Sguardo*, *31*(2), 285-302. Solms, M. 2018. "Extracts from the *Revised Standard Edition* of Freud's complete psychological works." *The International Journal of psycho-analysis*, *99*(1), 11–57. https://doi.org/10.1080/00207578.2017.1408306

Stiegler, B. 2019. *Il fauts' adapter» Sur un nouvel impératif politique*, Paris, Gallimard.

Weinberger, J. 2000. "William James and the Unconscious: Redressing a Century-Old Misunder-

standing." *Psychological Science*, *11*(6), 439-445. https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9280.00286

Westbrook, R. B. 1991. *John Dewey and American Democracy*. Ithaca (NY) and London, Cornell University Press.

Winetrout, K. 1968. "Adlerian Psychology and Pragmatism." *Journal of Individual Psychology, 24 1*, 5-24.

Zaretsky, E. 2015. *Political Freud: A History*. New York Chichester, West Sussex: Columbia University Press. https://doi.org/10.7312/zare17244.

THE QUEER PRAGMATIST AND EROTIC CONCRESCENCE

B. Henning
Xavier University
henningb1@xavier.edu

ABSTRACT: This paper seeks to correct the underdeveloped conversation between American pragmatism and queer theory. It proposes a functional distinction between erotic and sexual experience through the situational ontology of John Dewey, which emphasizes the primary character of the concrete event is temporal rather than spatial. Taking spatial relations as primary is the mental habit of modern philosophies that assume a physicalist view of nature, but it is also the approach of the queer phenomenology of Sarah Ahmed, who has presented the lived experience of sexuality as a way of being oriented in space which queer experience disorients. Granting that the sexual interaction may emphasize attention to the spatial dimension, it is offered here that the erotic situation could be understood as taking the temporal register of interaction as predominating. Time, for a human being, is first and foremost a lifetime, and it is in the context of this indeterminate length that erotic interactions are meaningful.

Keywords: Queer Theory, John Dewey, Process Philosophy, Eros, Temporality

Americans are frequently accused of being "puritanical," both in the precise sense of having a significant cultural and intellectual history that involves an extreme form of Protestantism and in the more colloquial sense that indicates a pervasive retreat from eroticism and squeamishness around sexuality, at least when it is not confined to those containers—bedrooms, strip clubs, pornography—that have been set aside for just this purpose. Since I am a contemporary American philosopher, I am tempted to deny that I am informed by either sense of my puritanical inheritance, but this refusal would also be sophomoric, an obstinate denial from a scholar within a philosophical tradition that is ill at ease with itself, having hardly reached an adolescence. The healthier course is to acknowledge that the character of American thought includes idiosyncrasies, and insights often lurk in the space between the colloquial and the philosophical idiom. If I am puritanical in my Americanness, then I am also pragmatic. Here is another word with complicated associations, the use of which in casual speech almost never suggests eroticism or its more insouciant cousin, "sexiness." I've made the case elsewhere that Puritan thought might be more voluptuous than our caricatures would lead us to believe, but now I'd like to do the intellectual work to exorcise the prejudices that continue to influence even my own unreflective associations with American Pragmatism—and replace them with more ardent thoughts.

This is an inquiry to find a functional distinction between the sexual and the erotic. If I claim to do so as a pragmatist, I mean that I am interested in the possibilities for action and for practice that are revealed by this distinction. One of my aims is that this study should constitute a part of the groundwork to imagine "queer ecologies," rather than sexual communities, who are not simply allied through a shared identity or sexual practice, but are erotically attuned within a shared "situation," in the Deweyan sense. My interest is also that of American philosopher who has inherited a complex intellectual history along with a paradoxical culture that extends itself globally without knowing itself locally and must now have faith that philosophy offers us possibilities for recovering meaning where intellectual habits have narrowed through neglect.

Max Weber once characterized the United States as a place where "the imagination of a whole people has been turned toward purely quantitative bigness," which is as devastating an assessment of a culture's capacity for eroticism as I've ever seen. A preference for "keeping things simple" through detached and impersonal assessments of cost and benefit and a habit of tethering value to quantities of capital rather than things of direct enjoyment are sensibilities that run through American life; in this mode, the "good" action seldom admits of dispute. The good is whatever is most efficient, most profitable, is whatever the actuary says it is. In colloquial speech, pragmatism often implies narrow ways of thinking, a prefer-

ence for the expediency of identifying a narrow means to achieve a narrow end. This way of being pragmatic is at some distance from "pragmatism" as a name for an American philosophical tradition.

"Pragmatism" is related to the ancient Greek word *pragma,* which might be translated as "thing" or the "subject" of a study, an "action," or, as I suggest, a "concrete event." A thing that is also an action is an occurrence in time. Hence, an event that is also a concrescence. A philosophical approach that is devoted to concrescence as an existential value will have an inherent capacity for eroticism, whether or not it has developed a poetic sense for it. If we are permitted to regard John Dewey as a pragmatist (with caveats), then we have plenty of resources for regarding the erotic event pragmatically. Concrete events, for Dewey, are "situations," which he defines as "complex existence(s) that are held together in spite of their internal complexity by the fact that they are dominated and characterized throughout by a single quality." These complex wholes, which we encounter qualitatively, are singular and emergent. They give rise to their own logics and patterns of conduct, which may or may not resemble those of another situation that we have previously encountered. Intelligent conduct is successful insofar as it is sensitive to the qualitative situation in which it occurs.

If Platonic eros is the desire for the good, then a Deweyan-pragmatist view of erotic life could very well resemble the Deweyan-pragmatist view of ethical life. Insofar as our actions occur within a context that is qualitatively given, we must take a broad-minded view of the good. There is no *a priori* logic that we can import without risking a clash with the situation in which we find ourselves. If we refer to wisdom or knowledge that has served us well in the past, we must do so because our immediate experience invites it—and we must avoid reversing this order by attempting to mold our present situation to resemble the one we've known before. The good action is the one that is appropriate to our present reality as it is qualitatively given, and the path to it must be discovered and re-discovered within our own present situation. The erotic event comes with the same requirements. To be *good* is to discover the habits that can be reconstructed by the needs of the present. The effort requires an attention to the whole situation in its qualitative aspect in order to see the possibilities for action that might enrich the meaning of the present moment. Seeing the possibilities and recreating our habits needs an open imagination, even a playful one, that is ready to experiment with new ways of releasing impulsive energy rather than falling back on the ruts of custom. There is no such thing as an encounter that is both erotic and pragmatic *in the colloquial sense* of *narrow thought* which functions by disengaging with qualitative life. There is no linear formula, no prescribed technique for the achievement of erotic satisfaction. On the other hand, it is certainly possible to have *sexual* encounters that are pragmatic in the narrow sense, but these will be lacking in erotic fulfillment, no matter how efficiently they discharge a buildup of organic tension. However, if the sexual encounter is experienced as a qualitative concrete event, as a complex whole that is connected to other complex wholes, if it is treated as an existential terminus, valued for its own sake as well as for the sake of its possible significance for other events, then it is erotic as well as sexual.

To "Queer" Dewey

Since Dewey did not explicitly write a theory of erotic life, I will reconstruct the one that I find implicit within his aesthetics, ethics, and metaphysics. Conveniently, a path has been laid out for us by Thomas Alexander, who uses the word "erotic" to characterize Dewey's philosophic project as a recovery of meaning within human life. Although I understand eros as primarily concerned with meaning, as Alexander does, he does not address its standard colloquial position as connected with sexual desire and romantic love—and it is sexual desire that

has been, up until this point, the essential starting point for theorizing queerness. For a fuller conception of eros in connection with sexual desire, I consult the classicist Anne Carson, and for a more contemporary vision of the erotic as connected to sexual experience without being circumscribed by it, I look to the philosopher-poet Audre Lorde. I will then return to "queer ecologies" as the pragmatic concern of this paper.

I advocate that we treat the erotic as wide category, describing relationships that foster the expansion of lived meaning, with the sexual as one possible mode of expression that exists alongside other expressive possibilities; I imagine the "queer ecologies" that are informed by erotic life as ways of nourishing and strengthening the bonds of groups, but also of pairs, families, and communities that have not been sufficiently recognized as genuine possibilities. My hunch is that, when we differentiate queer eros from queer sex, modes of connection from which we have become estranged become newly imaginable. The anti-queerness of the Twentieth and Twenty-first centuries, which is responsible for the creation of "straightness," extended well beyond the prohibitions on sexual activity to set up strict expectations for a sequence of life events that coordinates productive labor with reproductive duty—the failure to achieve milestones or the rejection of the trajectory, in part or as a whole, is punishable by a demotion within the family hierarchy and alienation from community life. Where queer relationships have been admitted into community life (an admittance that has been largely limited to homosexual pairs), they have been required to approximate the productive and reproductive logic that governs the life of the straight couple. I see queer ecologies as answering a real contemporary problem: there is a lacuna we need to address as our disillusionment with the family romance deepens. The nuclear family, that central misery responsible for so many of the neuroses that Freud detected in his study of psychic suffering, has demonstrated its inadequacy to provide support the needs of the couple and their children: children suffer from the limited availability of caretakers and archetypes, and the couple suffers at the limits of their own finite energy against the herculean task of prioritizing partnership, their livelihoods, and the immense dependency of offspring. On the other hand, the wholescale dismantling of the family is not a reasonable response: the primal processes of human concrescence—birth, sexuality, and death—are scenes of extreme vulnerability, and we cannot do without stable relationships that provide protection and stability through these phases. I also do not think that queerness can prevent the sufferings of attachment—some agonies are to be included in the list of "generic traits" that accompany all intimate bonds. All relationships are scenes of risk, rupture, and ultimately tragedy. But, as a Deweyan pragmatist, I see queerness as a kind of imaginative capability, a blossoming of possibilities amidst the wreckage of old customs that have failed to generate, sustain, and enlarge the scope of connective bonds.

In a sense, I am "queering" Dewey, much as Sarah Ahmed "queered" phenomenology. I feel somewhat hubristic in the attempt since phenomenology, particularly the fleshy, *French* variety developed by Merleau-Ponty, expresses itself in a language that accommodates the sensuous and passionate thrust of queer theory in a way that American Pragmatism generally does not. The phenomenologist attends to the "allure" in perception, a kind of desirousness that pulls us into the world. They describe our *Entrelacement*, or intertwining, which characterizes the flesh—a chiasmatic relationship between the visible and the invisible, the touching/touched, enveloping/enveloped. In short, they embrace a method of sensitivity to the minute nuances of sensuous life. Ahmed's project describes sexual life as a negotiation of space and queerness as the experience of "disorientation" when our navigation systems (norms) fail to account for the arising of unexpected desire, drawing our body in unexpected trajectories. Ahmed explores how the horizon of sexuality is a way of navigating the lived body as posi-

tioned and directed toward other bodies, and how sexual desire, particularly queer sexual desire, defamiliarizes the bodily horizon, defying the expectations we have (often passively) adopted. The experience is particularly bewildering since desire awakens an acute mode of perception that is particular to the sensitivity of the intimate body. While Ahmed does not explicitly *limit* sexuality to spatial perception, she finds it particularly productive to investigate lived sexuality and queer politics as a navigation of space where "orientation" is an immediate factor directing us to some experiences and away from others. Since phenomenology takes intentionality as a central structure of consciousness (by holding to the notion that all consciousness is the *consciousness of* something), focusing on the allure of the lived body of the other as a sensuous gestalt within our scope of contemporaneous action is appropriate to that inquiry. Experiences in which sexual desires disorient the lifeworld present us with opportunities for creative novelty. In Deweyan language, they are possibilities presented to us by impulses that (if they are not ignored or denied) provide us with a valuable opportunity to reconstruct a habit that no longer sufficiently connects us with our lived environment. Ahmed's study of the manifold meanings in the word "orientation" is very useful for understanding the confusions of desire as a shift in our experience of political and social life. I find it particularly significant that her work does not limit queerness to its negative formulation, as a mere politics of resistance in relation to a regime of enforced heterosexuality, but also values queer sexuality as a creative and positive re-negotiation of attention. This work connects well with Butler's still timely theory that gender is maintained through a series of acts, words, and gestures that inscribe the *surface* of the body, making it socially and publicly intelligible; while drag subverts the logic of gender and reveals the contingency of the power structures that ensure it. Both Ahmed and Butler present queerness as a spontaneous intervention in space that appeals to desire.

Expanding queerness beyond sexual desire into the wider horizon of erotic life redirects our attention from the navigation of space to the experience of time. Certainly, the occasion to which queerness responds is still a lived body, and the question of how I might be oriented towards it outside of widespread norms or customs is the central question of queer life. However, I propose that if it is not simply sexual desire but erotic interest that characterizes my relationship, my perception of this other body is primarily *temporal* rather than spatial. For Dewey, the individual *can* be thought of as a physical body that moves through space, but we should *primarily* think of the individual as something that is qualitative and temporal, an event or a *process* with a singular character that develops continuously through its beginning, middle, and an end. Life, for human beings, is not so much a state of affairs as it is an experience of time. Time is first given as a lifetime, for a lifetime is the given context for those beings whose experience includes meaning. It is in the context of a lifetime that I wish to consider the question. If we focus only on queer life as constituted by the sexual encounter, spatial perception offers us *angles* that reveal the slant of queer sex, but in the erotic situation, sex is the node in which the *temporality* of eros find expression in the spatial register.

The Temporal Individual

Thomas Alexander's work has most prominently located *eros* within Dewey's philosophy. Working from the Deweyan perspective of "cultural naturalism," which he has also called "ecological humanism," Alexander has argued that we ought to think of the human creature as primarily characterized by *eros*: "a drive for encountering the world and oneself with a sense of meaning and value realized through action." Cultures are the collaborative manifestations of that drive when it is fulfilled, and we should understand them as both the accretion of created meanings and that which supports the active expansion

of emergent meanings. Alexander proposes we think of cultures as "spiritual ecologies," not apart from the biophysical environment, but as an inheritance of distinctive ways we have found to be present within it, ways of responding to and honoring the potentialities we find through our sharing of the world. To live a meaningful life means to participate in this cooperative process, and we experience the fulfillment of this drive through action in response to "the lure of the world." Alexander's project takes *eros* in its most inclusive sense, well-grounded in the Platonic thought that understood it as "desire for the good," the drive that motivates human action. However, ancient Greek poetry emphasizes an aspect of eros that is understated within Alexander's work: the archetypal experience of eros is a visceral experience of desire for, and attachment to, a *particular* other. For the lyric poet (and for Lacanians) it is also an experience of an ambiguous absence that throws the self into question as it throws the desired other into exquisite relief.

In *Eros The Bittersweet,* Carson interprets eros as a crisis of the uncertain boundaries that separate "you" from "me." These are revealed particularly by *Aidōs,* which she translates as "shamefastness," an affective "voltage of decorum" discharged between two people who approach one another for "the crisis of human contact." There is an indeterminate reluctance that trembles between shyness and respect which pulls lovers back from enacting or speaking their desire with complete transparency. Erotic desire in the sexual encounter is a wish to close the gap between us, not merely for the sake of the sensuous pleasures that might than ensue, but also so that I can access the immediacy of your desire for me. If I could, I would sense what you cannot say because you do not have the words or because it violates a social code that forbids you to acknowledge the possibilities that you imagine. The erotic wish in sexual interaction aims at the renunciation of our individual selves for the sake of a merging of perspectives that synchronizes affective communion. At its most poignant, amatory desire demands perfect access to the beloved, or is the wish to grant perfect access to the lover, so that we may find evidence that our intentions are perfectly matched, my consciousness of you and your consciousness of me are replaced by a consciousness of *us*. But, as Carson follows the development of eros in classical and contemporary poetry, she finds that it is in our experience of desire and in our yearning for fusion that we discover the adamance of our boundaries. The desire that draws us together demonstrates the impossibility of its satisfaction—and a good thing too, because if we achieved such a union beyond the passionate fantasy and its poetic metaphor, desire would end. Eros seeks to decode and then reestablishes the ineradicable mystery of your desire. I can get closer, but I cannot fully reveal the contents of your sexual imagination just as I cannot intellectually decode the essence of the self that you are.

Carson invites the reader to consider Bruno Snell's thesis that by attending to the transition from epic to lyric poetry, we can also see the transition in the Ancient Greek mind from a state of pure agency to an interior realm of thought that is separate from its deeds. The idea, however controversial, has some appeal for a Deweyan who sees the emergence of cultural forms in a reciprocal relation, and thus continuous with, the evolution of the organism. In theory, the Greeks underwent a transition from a state of complete sociality, a civilization of people who did not exist for themselves apart from their actions in a participatory world, to an awareness of themselves as individuals that can give voice to an inner experience of reflection, prior to and after the fact of action. Carson is interested in the way that introduction of the Phoenician alphabet in the 8th century inaugurated a transition from an oral to a written culture, and how this shift is accompanied by a reorientation of perception: "Complete openness to the environment is a condition of optimum awareness and alertness" for a person living in an oral milieu, "and a continual fluent interchange of impressions and responses between the environment and

himself is the proper condition of his physical and mental life." Conversely, the person who reads and writes inhibits their senses in the effort to keep their attention on written words, which occasions the experience of thought as occurring separately from the concrete reality of their senses. It then becomes possible to conceive of the self as constituted by *interiority.* The newly self-reflective mind is underscored by new experiences of *ambivalence*. On the one hand, lyric, erotic poetry is the paradigmatic expression of a self that must develop relationships consciously and must seek itself through its relation to other selves. On the other hand, the addition of literacy has generated an individual that has learned to be protective of their hard-won interiority and its capacity to focus on its own self-directed thought. This is a fragile self who senses the potential for psychic disintegration posed by the potency of erotic desire. Eros is a risk of psychic loss, particularly in its frustrations, rejections, and disappointments. Carson speculates that the conception of eros as directed to or exposing a *lack* might reflect the way a self in a written culture (re)encounters an acute vulnerability when the interior self is flooded with sensual awareness in erotic desire.

Dewey is also sensitive to the ontological ambiguities that frustrate the effort to establish oneself when an individual understands in terms of a culture that includes, not only alphabetic literacy, but also emphasizes a scientific understanding of nature and an economic sensibility that prioritizes quantitative accounts as the *sine qua non* of empirical knowledge. The version of selfhood offered to us in this epoch is doubly alienated from immediate sensuous life in its zeal to replace sensation, not merely with language, but with data. If we insist upon the superior claim of quantitative methods to describe what is ultimately real, as a "pragmatist" in the colloquial and narrow sense would, and in so doing relegate quality to a merely subjective status, we will have also relinquished the individual—but not for the sake of a more thoroughly socialized agent. The devaluation of qualitative awareness sacrifices our sensitivity to integrated wholes, which are meaningfully and intrinsically changed as a consequence of their interactions with other wholes, for the sake tracking change in terms of extrinsic relations—mere changes in space. The individual that I take myself to be not truly temporal at all because time makes no difference to what I ultimately am—compound physicality that is held together by physical laws and is ultimately destined for a dissolution then renders it into (and from the perspective of an atemporal logic, already *is*) piles of impersonal stuff. The changes of birth, health, disease, and death are attributable only to redistributions of particles in space, inert matter that briefly sustains the phenomenon of consciousness and the illusion of choice. Just after Michele Besso died, Einstein wrote to the family of his friend: "Now he has departed from this strange world a little ahead of me. That means nothing. People like us, who believe in physics, know that the distinction between past, present and future is only a stubbornly persistent illusion." While I acknowledge that the sentiment conveyed when the text is read poetically reveals erotic attachment, when it is taken as a straightforward description of reality by a scientist to whom we grant this kind of authority, undermines the significance of any such attachments. Time and individuality are given to us qualitatively.

If we return to life as it is experienced and lived through, the individual is an *event* whose occurrence includes moments of significance and striving, bookended by its birth and its death, given to us as qualitative whole. To understand reality as primarily qualitative is to accept that things must be felt and sensed before they are known, and that insofar as we come to know them, our knowledge of them is had with respect to the way we continue to feel and sense them. An individual, particularly another self that I desire, is such a complex existence whom I experience in terms of the singular quality that makes them who they are and no other, and whose actions, speech, features, and gestures are coherent to me insofar as they are further revelations of this

same quality. I can comprehend the gesture of another as having meaning only when it is connected with the quality that characterizes the person with whom I am interacting. If I cannot understand a gesture, a word, or an action as emanating from the character with whom I am acquainted and who I immediately sense, then I am confused and struggle to ascribe a meaning to it. The quality of the individual is available to me immediately both in the sense that it is there at the instant of my first acquaintance (it is only on the basis of quality that I recognize any acquaintance to be made), and in the sense that it is the immediacy of the individual with which I might aim to become more familiar, and it is that which deepens and develops over the course of our relationship and throughout the lifetime of the individual. To relate to an individual, to experience a relationship with a pragmatist's attention to concrescence, is fantastically erotic. As a complex qualitative whole, my best access to you is there in my direct and immediate experience of you as a temporal, and therefore singular, being. Your potency, elusiveness, and mystery and is not a *lack* that indicates an emptiness or a truth that you withhold, it is instead a present fullness that is inexhaustible and dynamic. Even in your absence, temporary or final, you are a distinct absence, an absence that has the character of a particular absence that is unlike the absence of any other.

Erotic Consummations

The qualitative dimension of experience is given its fullest expression in what Dewey calls "aesthetic experience," which he takes as paradigmatic for experience in general. The "aesthetic" refers to a *phase* of within experience, and a *kind* of experience, and a *potential* that is implicit within all experience. The "live creature" is a being that adapts and grows through its interactions with and attachments to the various things in its environment that it needs to survive; but it also becomes estranged and depleted through failures to complete its ventures. Although we need regular contact with the things that provide nourishment, care, protection, and stimulation, we are often prevented from accessing them through distraction and interruption, through the persistence of habits that have outlived their usefulness, through institutions that compartmentalize our activity from our imaginations. When it comes, the recovery of ecological attunement is felt as a satisfying culmination, a "consummation," which is the hallmark of aesthetic experience. But these consummations are only possible when "the whole creature is present," when its attention is unified to the unfolding of its interaction with an environment, the phases of which are organized through the successive development of an underlying quality. The features of the experience may be intellectually distinguished, patterns of cause and effect may be identified, but the character that makes the experience singular and satisfying is not a determinate this or that, it is the directly sensed horizon that allows a dynamic and multifaceted event to unfold in with novel surprises, and for all that, still remain coherent.

An erotic relationship is an aesthetic experience that depends on our ability to perceive one another in our qualitative wholeness. Who "you" are to me is not an identity that can be decisively located within in a socio-cultural matrix that is adjacent or complementary relative to my position, nor a body whose spatial proportions and erogenous zones suit my preferred sexual practices. What distinguishes the erotic relationship is our capacity to experience each other as inexhaustible and singular wholes that flourish and fade in the temporal context of a lifetime—a duration that is made poignant by a tacit expectation of a relative length that can never be counted upon.

We might call it "love," (and certainly some will insist that we do) but "love" is a concept that has been spiritualized, thoroughly appropriated by a dualistic metaphysics that is intent on fixing it within the category of eternity. The aforementioned poignancy of the temporal

experience is only to be found within the "romance," a narrative we might liken to a conversion story in which courtship functions as a test of faith that, when passed, sanctifies the bond of the couple because the lovers have proven their worthiness through their aspiration to eternity. Love, in the Christian, heterosexual imagination (and its dumbing down of Plato), understands its natural teleology in the reproductive project where the body is also redeemed from the sin of its demand for pleasure by its aspirations to procreative eternity. The couple that is in (this kind of) love believes that is sufficient unto itself, devalues (by some measure) relationships outside of its enclosure, raises its children, and tends to its property having received the benediction owed to it due to its spiritual blessedness. If it is queerness we want—or satisfying sex for that matter—we are better off with eros.

Audre Lorde understood the erotic as a "resource within each of us that lies in a distinctly female and spiritual plane," the suppression of which is vital for the maintenance of racist and patriarchal power. She defined it as a non-rational wisdom, "the measure between our sense of self and the chaos of our strongest feelings," and "an internal sense of satisfaction" and a "requirement toward excellence," that is less a question of "what we do" than "of how acutely and fully we can feel in the doing." The resonance between Audre Lorde's theory of eros and John Dewey's theory of aesthetic experience is remarkable. For each, when one's work has this character, it results in the enrichment of meaning rather than the depletion of resources. While Dewey mentions the institutional, systemic, and economic forces that prevent aesthetic experience, and while I cannot help but read *Art as Experience* as a blistering critique of culture under the conditions of capitalism, he is not a polemicist. Lorde names her targets. She writes: "the principal horror of any system which defines the good in terms of profit rather than in terms of human need, or which defines human need to the exclusion of the psychic and emotional components of that need" is that it "robs our work of its erotic value."

Lorde argues that one of the cardinal strategies of oppressive power is its sequestration the erotic. In such conditions, eros is suppressed, disallowed from most dimensions of life. Its expression is confined to sexual activity, and then it is further deformed and exploited through its misrepresentation by pornography. Connecting with others in mutual acknowledgement of deep, primal feelings is a human need, and like other needs, it can be commodified or driven underground. Living in accordance with a patriarchal, racist, or extractive logic requires us to satisfy this need with "certain proscribed comings together," irruptions of erotic life in the form of a riot, or a rave, or mass hysteria that are accompanied by a "simultaneous looking away," and a tendency to misname and disparage them that prevents our recognizing their significance. In conditions where access to erotic experience is denied within daily life, Lorde explains, we use one another (frequently, men use women) as receptacles for feelings, like disposable tissues. But when we are able to access our own erotic capacities, she finds its power in "sharing deeply any pursuit with another person," and it is the lens through which we evaluate aspects of our lives in terms of their meaning, preventing us from settling for pursuits and relationships that are merely conventional, safe, or convenient.

The Need for Queer Ecologies

One of Dewey's central concerns of *Human Nature and Conduct* is the interaction between habit and impulse. Habits are our tendencies, our "readinesses to act" that structure our perceptions and give shape to the world as we inhabit it. They are part of the dynamic tension that comprise the ordered parts of the self, especially as we relate to the other members of the culture that we have inherited. Impulse, on the other hand, is an unpredictable, disorganized response to an environment. When we do not know how to meet our needs, when we lack the resources to navigate the world around us, the need

expresses itself but cannot organize the creature's efforts into a coordinated response. Impulse is generally released as a reaction to a habit that has become ossified as an overly rigid custom, a habit that has become inefficient through its refusal to adapt to the complex ecosystem that has shifted since its origination. An impulse signals an unmet need and begins the search for a new habit. As impulse, it is an ateleological reaction that can only acquire meaning insofar as we are *cared for* by someone who is willing and able to interpret our needs, creatively and intelligently, in light of their capacity attend to us as a qualitative whole. This responsive care helps impulse find a habit and is most crucial when we are infants. But the needs that defined infancy do not vanish upon our entry to language, nor our mastery of locomotion. They persist throughout our lives in moments of struggle, confusion, illness, and crisis of all kinds.

Impulses can only have sense for someone who is aware of us, who is connected to us *erotically*. Dewey tells us that individuals are creative responses to their environment, but only insofar as they elicit meaningful responses from others. Sexual interactions are important because they can illustrate this process: the biological rhythms of arousal and disorganized, unpredictable, and confusing as they emerge and shift in accordance with indefinite life stages. In their nascence, they are also *inexpressible,* idiosyncratic, and extraordinarily diverse. The requisite conditions for such excitations are almost always a rigid habit against which we revolt, and the heightening of tactile sensations that rearranges the sensitivity of the body arrives as an anticipation of a liberation, the path to which is still unclear. These shifts become meaningful, generate possibilities, and discover novel ends when they elicit a response from another who helps us develop a new habit, or enrich an old one with new significance. *Mere* sex follows a narrow path to efficient discharge. *Erotic* sex is revelatory. It is also an arena where attentiveness, openness, and imagination will always matter a good deal more than skill. I also do not mean to imply that sex is necessarily made more erotic by the length of an acquaintance or by an adherence to strict monogamy—although this may be the case for many of us—there is nothing to prevent relative strangers from sharing an illuminating and fulfilling rendezvous as long as they encounter one another as qualitatively given, dynamically complex wholes whose history and trajectory is implied and can be sensed, and perhaps imagined, even if it cannot be known. I *do* mean to explicitly state what I have already implied: queer sex, sex which is interested in the creative potential of the impulses that are released by an overly rigid custom, sex that is imaginative, developing the possibilities of the present so as to increase the meaning of a shared experience, is inherently more erotic than "straight" sex.

But sex is only an illustration: one way of engaging in erotic life. Impulses are released by crisis, by trauma, by any circumstance in which the ecosystem and creature cannot meet one another in a sustainable arrangement, where needs must be discovered and met with the help of another. We are all in the midst of such a crisis. Ecological degradation is nothing less than widening gaps between all creatures—human and non-human—and the environments they depend on. Contemporary human beings have skill sets that are more specialized and less relevant to the specific ecosystems in which they live than ever before. The pervasiveness of single family homes, the lingering social reticence from a quarantine and a long pandemic, the decrease in available "third spaces," the privatization of convivial public space, mean we are more isolated from each other and more dependent on for-profit services provided by underpaid anonymous service workers to meet our needs. Queer sex is great, but queer eros is vital.

We need queer ecologies: individuals who are connected to one another through the awareness that we are *events,* unfolding over the indeterminate duration of a lifetime that will necessarily include crises, large and small, the consequences of which can only have mean-

ing insofar as we exist for one another qualitatively and respond to one another imaginatively. We need friends, communities, and publics as well—but we also need something like family that is more resilient and more creative than what has become of "family" for many of us. We urgently need a way to *grow* families, to sustain and nourish them, that is free from the productive and reproductive logic that has come to define the institution. We need to develop new habits for accepting and *valuing* unconventional arrangements: committed and sexless friendships that are also primary relationships, polyamorous groups of more than two adults, several couples or single friends who want to dwell under a single roof, groups of friends that raise children together, adult offspring who continue cohabitate with parents and aunts and uncles, covens, clans, coteries, and combinations I have not yet imagined.

Tom Alexander called cultures "spiritual ecologies," and so they are, but we also need queer ecologies of desire, collections of individuals who are committed to making meaning out of the coming madness by collaborating to develop new patterns for caretaking when and where larger systems break down. Ecological behavior involves bringing out the tacit presuppositions that shape the world for us and considering them together. The failures of habit that need intervention can tell us nothing if we are isolated in our suffering. An increase in the possibilities of deep connection is an increase in the meaning of our present experience, and an increase in the significance of the qualitative reality of the complex whole, of the individual, of the environment, of the relationships that keep us bound to reality. Ecological responsiveness starts with an expansion of erotic life.

References

Ahmed, Sarah, Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others, Duke University Press, 2006.
Alexander, Thomas, The Human Eros: Eco-ontology and the Aesthetics of Existence, New York: Fordham, 2013.
Carson, Anne, Eros the Bittersweet, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986, 20-21.
Corliss Lamont, "New Light on Dewey's Common Faith," The Journal of Philosophy 58, no. 1, 1961: 26
Dewey, John. The Middle Works 14, Human Nature and Conduct, ed. Jo Ann Boydston, Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1988
Dewey, John, The Later Works, volume 1: 1925 Experience and Nature, ed. Jo Ann Boydston, Carbondale, Southern Illinois University Press, 1981.
Dewey, John, The Later Works, volume 10: 1952 Art as Experience, ed. Jo Ann Boydston, Carbondale, Southern Illinois University Press, 1981
Dewey, John, The Later Works, volume 14: 1939-1942 Art as Experience, ed. Jo Ann Boydston, Carbondale, Southern Illinois University Press, 1981.
Einstein, Albert, Letter to Vero and Blice Besso, March 21st 1955; Einstein Archives, 7-245.
Lorde, Audre, Sister Outsider "The Uses of the Erotic as Power," Berkley: Crossing Press, 1984.
Stikkers, Ken "Logics of Similitude and Logics of Difference in American and Contemporary Continental Philosophy", Journal of Speculative Philosophy, 20:2, 2006.
Ward, Roger, Conversion in American Philosophy: Exploring the Practice of Transformation New York: Fordham, 2004.
Weber, Max, The Protestant Work Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, Talcott Parsons, trans. London: Routledge, 1992.

CRUISING UNCERTAINTY: QUEERING DEWEY AGAINST HETERONORMATIVITY

Mark Tschaepe
Prairie View A&M University
MDTschaepe@pvamu.edu

ABSTRACT: Dewey's philosophy of inquiry and criticisms of the quest for certainty align well with concepts from queer theory. In the following, I draw Dewey's work together with that of queer theorists, especially that of José Estaban Muñoz, Jack Halberstam, and Kathryn Bond Stockton, as a step toward developing queer pragmatism beyond the vernacular notion of practical political compromise. In the spirit of the work of Charlene Seigfried, Shannon Sullivan, Barbara Thayer-Bacon, Mary Vorsino, and others who argue for connecting Dewey's work with feminist theory, I argue for re-reading Dewey through a queer lens. Extending Dewey's criticisms of certainty to include heteronormativity provides a view of his work as a form of queering that coheres with Muñoz's utopian concept of queer futurity, Halberstam's positive notion of failure, and Stockton's idea of growing sideways. Imagining pragmatism and queer theory together proves fruitful for both. Dewey's philosophy of inquiry helpfully subtends queer projects and advocacy. Concepts from queer theory help advance Dewey's philosophy into inquiries concerning oppression and identity, including issues concerning gender and sexuality. As Shannon Sullivan has indicated, Dewey's ideas of habituation, as well as his concepts of doing and undergoing, align well with Judith Butler's concept of performativity and apply to reconfiguring gender to undermine essentialism. I build upon Sullivan's work through queering Dewey's philosophy. Although Dewey is writing from within a heteronormative framework, his philosophy is not necessarily delimited by adherence to a male-female, heterosexual-homosexual, or masculine-feminine binary system when reconstructed as queer. Queering helps open Dewey's work beyond the confines of heteronormativity that have restricted the scope of his philosophy. This ongoing process provides tools that help solidify an argumentative phalanx against authoritarian ideology that is based upon unfounded, absolutist, and heteronormative assumptions concerning gender and sexuality. Dewey's pragmatism provides a critical perspective for undermining absolutist and essentialist ideology that are being used to police identity, desire, and growth. Queering Dewey's work provides a significant contribution to the development of queer pragmatism beyond the politics of compromise.

Keywords: gender; identity; inquiry; LGBTQIA+; pragmatism; queer; sexuality

> One of the reasons why so many people have started using the word 'queer' is that it is a way of saying: 'We're not pathological, but don't think for that reason that we want to be normal.'" (Warner 1999, 59).

In *Cruising Utopia*, José Estaban Muñoz's book devoted to queer futurity, he argues against what he calls "the extremely pragmatic agenda that organizes LGBT activism in North America today" (Muñoz 2009, 19). Muñoz adds the caveat that he is "not referring to the actual philosophical tradition of American pragmatism of Charles Peirce, William James, or John Dewey" (21). Rather, he is using pragmatic in a vernacular sense that refers to a practical, compromising approach that applies to sociopolitical movements. Naming Peirce, James, and Dewey is his only mention of the philosophical tradition of American pragmatism within the book, and he mentions it only in passing as a form of distancing—Muñoz is neither identifying nor rejecting the work of these thinkers. But I cannot help being struck by how well Muñoz's work aligns with that of American pragmatism, especially Dewey's criticism of philosophy's quest for certainty.[1] Dewey's criticisms of presumptive certainty and related adherence to absolute concepts also support Jack Halberstam's arguments concerning gender and sexuality as consistently complex categories of identity and action that do not adhere to underlying universality. Dewey's focus on uncertainty as a key component of inquiry also supports Halberstam's concept of failure as an important component of growth apart from heteronormative strictures and Kathryn Bond Stockton's related concept of growing sideways, which breaks with the fixed, vertical, and heteronormative conception of growth in favor of experimental, queer forms.

In the following, I draw Dewey's work together with that of Muñoz, Halberstam, Stockton, and other queer theorists. In the spirit of the work of Charlene Seigfried, Shannon Sullivan, Barbara Thayer-Bacon, Mary Vorsino,

[1] Muñoz's work coheres with pragmatic work beyond that of Dewey. For example, Cornel West's concept of *prophetic pragmatism* aligns well with Muñoz's ideas of queer futurity and utopia (West 1989). Within this essay, I am unable to examine many connections for developing queer pragmatism, although I acknowledge that there are numerous fruitful intersections and disidentifications for growth beyond heteronormative conceptions of pragmatism.

and others who argue for connecting Dewey's work with feminist theory, I argue for re-reading Dewey through a queer lens, i.e., queering Dewey beyond the confines of traditional heteronormative philosophy and framing his work as promoting the related concepts of queer futurity, failure, and growing sideways. On a broader level, I encourage synthesis between pragmatism and queer theory that proves fruitful for both, as Dewey's philosophy of inquiry helpfully subtends queer projects while queer theory advances Dewey's philosophy into inquiries concerning gender and sexuality. This combination provides a significant contribution to the development of queer pragmatism beyond the politics of compromise within activism of which Muñoz is critical.

My argument consists of four phases that work across the eight remaining subsections of the essay. First, I explain Muñoz's concept of queer futurity and how it relates to concepts within the work of Halberstam and Stockton. Second, I discuss Dewey's iconoclastic philosophy of inquiry briefly, focusing on how change and uncertainty function in his work even as he writes within the confines of heteronormativity. Within this section, I summarize work that draws Dewey's philosophy together with feminist thought and use that as inspiration for queering Dewey's philosophy. Third, I revisit Sullivan's reconfiguration of gender with Dewey's notion of habituation and Judith Butler's ideas about performativity. Finally, I discuss Dewey's work as cohering with that of Muñoz, Halberstam, and Stockton. I conclude that considering Dewey's philosophy in tandem with concepts from queer theory provides argumentative strength against absolutist and essentialist ideologies concerning gender and sexuality.

Queer

Like the word pragmatism, *queer* is an elusive term without a single, settled definition. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's early notion of queer as referring to "the open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent elements of anyone's gender, or anyone's sexuality aren't made (or can't be made) to signify monolithically" is a helpful introduction to the concept (Sedgwick 1993, 8). As Heather Love remarks, "queer sidesteps traditional identity categories such as gay, lesbian, and bisexual in favor of a more general category of social marginality" (Love 2021, 137). According to s.j. Miller, who argues for a queer literacy framework in education, the term "refers to a suspension of rigid gendered and sexual orientation categories and is underscored by attempts to interrogate and interrupt heteronormativity, reinforced by acknowledging diverse people across gender, sex, and desires, as well as to foreground the sexual" (Miller 2016, 38). *Queer theory* is a broad class of critical work that includes inquiry concerning sexuality, gender, race, disability, and other categories of identity that is in opposition to the essentialism of heteronormativity.[2] I follow Toomey, McGuire, and Russell in defining *heteronormativity* as "a societal hierarchical system that privileges and sanctions individuals based on presumed binaries of gender and sexuality; as a system it defines and enforces beliefs and practices about what is "normal" in everyday life" (Toomey et al. 2012, 188). This definition includes *both* gender and sexuality norms. In my use of heteronormativity, I

[2] *Queering* is a general term that subsumes more specific processes regarding normativity and power dynamics related to minoritized, marginalized, alienated, and ignored identities. Gust A. Yep provides helpful categories for distinguishing between types of queering. *Quaring* "focuses on the examination of the discursive and material effects of sexuality with particular attention to race, class, gender, and the body." *Kauering* involves "how sexuality, race, class, gender, and nation operate simultaneously at local and transnational levels, within particular geopolitical and historical contexts, to create domination and inequality, and celebration and opportunities for other bodies and subjects." *Crippin'* interrogates "assumptions about sexuality and able-bodiedness in an era of neoliberal capitalist domination." Finally, *transing* "generally refers to the process of examining gender embodiment in relation to other modes of difference through new forms of biomedical and communication technologies that circulate in the global world" (Yep 2013, 119-120). My focus here is on queering as it applies to connections between aspects of Dewey's philosophy and specific concepts from work in queer theory, but I believe that queer pragmatism—or the continual process of queering pragmatism—would include quaring, kauering, crippin', and transing pragmatism.

include *cisnormativity*: the assumption that cisgender is the norm and should be valued over and above all other forms of gender identity (Potter 2022). In stark terms regarding heteronormative sexuality, Michael Warner's diagnosis is fitting: "Heterosexual desire and romance are thought to be the very core of humanity" (Warner 1999, 47). Monique Wittig writes in "The Straight Mind," "although it has been accepted in recent years that there is no such thing as nature, that everything is culture, there remains within that culture a core of nature which resists examination, a relationship whose characteristic is ineluctability in culture, as well as in nature, and which is the heterosexual relationship" (Wittig 1992, 27). Wittig points to assumptions concerning nature that undergird normative standards and values that are presented as indubitable and ineluctable knowledge. As a normative principle, heterosexuality—what Adrienne Rich (1980) refers to as *compulsory heterosexuality*—is promulgated and reinforced as absolute. Heterosexuality is coupled with the construction and imposition of sex as a bifurcated, natural category, which undergirds the presumption that patriarchy is a natural system of power. As Wittig states, "the straight mind is clothed in its tendency to immediately universalize its production of concepts into general laws which claim to hold true for all societies, all epochs, all individuals" (27). The norms, values, and beliefs that comprise *heteronormativity* are embedded in everyday activities, discourse, and ideology.

What Julia Serano calls *straight assumption* and *gender constancy* are implicit to heteronormativity. The former is the assumption that every person is heterosexual by default; the latter is the assumption that binary gender categories are fixed (Serano 2022, 159). Sarah Ahmed's use of the phrase *gender fatalism* captures the assumption of gender constancy and the idea that what is assumed to be natural regarding gender determines what *will be* the case (Ahmed 2017, 25). The notion that gender and other categories of identity are natural and essential, thus determining what is and what necessarily will be the case connects to the idea of straight time against which Muñoz pushes with queer futurity.

Straight Time and Queer Futurity

S*traight time* is enforced through heteronormativity. Straight time denies that there are any viable possibilities apart from a hegemonic, heteronormative framework, which has been classified as natural. "Straight time tells us that there is no future but the here and now of our everyday life. The only futurity promised is that of reproductive majoritarian heterosexuality, the spectacle of the state refurbishing its ranks through overt and subsidized acts of reproduction" (Muñoz 2019, 22). Straight time is part of heteronormative interpellation. Options for growth are restricted by what is designated as acceptable. Possibilities for difference are curtailed by presumptions about *how things are*—what Antonio Gramsci refers to as *common sense* (Gramsci 2000). What Muñoz criticizes as pragmatic is the sociopolitical move to fit queerness within straight time through measures such as LGBT [*sic*] marriage that is modeled on heteronormativity and participation in the military—what Lisa Duggan (2012) famously calls *homonormativity*. Jack Halberstam introduces *family time*, which is within straight time, as "the normative scheduling of daily life (early to bed, early to rise) that accompanies the practice of child rearing" and is based on "strict bourgeois rules of respectability and scheduling for married couples" (Halberstam 5, 2005). The heteronormative notion of *growing up*, which Halberstam and Kathryn Bond Stockton criticize as unnecessarily limiting, is included in straight time as a natural form of growth (Halberstam 2011; Stockton 2004; 2009). Halberstam comments, "Childhood, as many queers in particular recall, is a long lesson in humility, awkwardness, limitation, and what Katheryn Bond Stockton has called "growing sideways"" (Halberstam 2011, 27). Stockton argues that children are always queer from the standpoint of *normal* adults because

children embody strangeness in contrast to heteronormative standards. Children, who are allegedly protected from sexuality, are simultaneously inscribed with norms, values, and beliefs concerning expectations about their gender and sexuality. *Growing up* is a restricted conception of growth. *Growing sideways* is growth in multiple directions without clearly discernible endpoints that do not accord with fitting into straight time. Muñoz's ideas of queerness and queer futurity oppose the limitations of straight time, family time, and growing up while including openness that allows for growing sideways.

Queer futurity counters straight time through disrupting the notion of fixed linearity. It is "a path and a movement to a greater openness to the world" that objects to the presumptions made from the standpoint of heteronormativity that attempts to dictate what is natural and what is unnatural; what desires and pleasures are acceptable and what are unacceptable (Muñoz 2019, 25). Muñoz indicates openness beyond the strictures of heteronormative determination. One is not ultimately trapped by fixed identities or desires rigidly rooted in essentialism. Queer futurity involves pursuing desires on a grand scale—desires for a "better world and freedom"—and "better relations within the social that include better sex and more pleasure" (30). Muñoz clarifies that what he calls the *queer utopian project* that he is pursuing not only pushes against heteronormativity, but also against "the tyranny of the homonormative" (26). The homonormative models itself on the heteronormative. Queerness is in direct opposition to what he refers to as *pragmatic* in the vernacular sense—a desire for normalcy. In this respect, he argues that living for queer futurity entails accepting being lost, i.e., "to accept the loss of heteronormativity, authorization, and entitlement" (72-73). The idea of queerness as accepting loss as a key aspect of overcoming the strictures of essentialism and naturalizing normativity is a component that connects queer theory to Dewey's theory of inquiry. Muñoz's idea of queer futurity helps open Dewey's work beyond heteronormativity with tools previously unacknowledged, underappreciated, or unavailable.

Failure

Cohering with Muñoz's idea of queerness as the embrace of loss and the pursuit of futurity, Jack Halberstam considers failure as rewarding. Along with queering as an interrogation of heteronormativity, a positive notion of failure is a useful tool for undermining presumptions of certainty. In the opening of their book, *The Queer Art of Failure*, Halberstam reflects about the possible rewards of failure:

> Perhaps most obviously, failure allows us to escape the punishing norms that discipline behavior and manage human development with the goals of delivering us from unruly childhoods to orderly and predictable adulthoods. Failure preserves some of the wonderous anarchy of childhood and disturbs the supposedly clean boundaries between adults and children, winners and losers. And while failure certainly comes accompanied by a host of negative affects, such as disappointment, disillusionment, and despair, it also provides the opportunity to use these negative affects to poke holes in the toxic positivity of contemporary life. (Halberstam 2011, 3).

Inquiry is triggered by failure. Halberstam helps focus attention on the beneficial aspects of failure that accompany inquiry. Failure prevents settling for problematic standards—norms, values, and beliefs—that are commonly accepted as natural or worthwhile. The queering of failure as an affordance for poking "holes in the toxic posivity of contemporary life" echoes the use of anger and suffering that writers such as James Baldwin, Audre Lorde, Adrienne Rich, Monique Wittig, and others use to poke holes in the alleged naturalness or common sense of patriarchy, misogyny, homophobia, and racism (3). Failure is a tool for dismantling hegemony and embracing uncertainty and change.

Halberstam utilizes Stuart Hall's interpretation of Gramsci to define hegemony as "a multilayered system by which a dominant group achieves power not through coercion but through the production of an interlocking

system of ideas which persuades people of the rightness of any given set of often contradictory idea and perspectives" (Halberstam 2011, 17). Wittig and Rich, among others, point to the hegemony of heterosexuality. Queering inquiry provides tools for problematizing heteronormativity. Halberstam also follows Gramsci in defining *common sense* as a set of hegemonic beliefs "that are persuasive precisely because they do not present themselves as ideology or try to win consent" (17). Problematizing heteronormativity problematizes common sense. What are presented and believed and practiced as common sense become dominant norms. Through queering—or through exercising what Halberstam calls subordinate or counterhegemonic modes of common sense—hegemonic norms are called into question (89). Queering may be understood as inquiry sparked by experiences involving confrontations with hegemony and claims of common sense. Utilizing failure and change—divergence from heteronormativity—queering interrogates certainty.

Returning to Muñoz, he also formulates queerness as a way of interrogating what is assumed to be essential and natural. As an impetus for inquiry, Muñoz highlights the present as problematic. "The present is not enough. It is impoverished and toxic for queers and other people who do not feel the privilege of majoritarian belonging, normative tastes, and "rational" expectations" (Muñoz 2019, 27). What Muñoz captures is the future-oriented direction of inquiry through the idea of queerness. He states, "Queerness, if it is to have any political resonance, needs to be more than an identitarian marker and to articulate a forward-dawning futurity. The dialectical movement that I am attempting to explicate is the interface between an engagement with the no-longer conscious and the not-yet-here" (87).

Growing Sideways

Queer futurity supplants heteronormative presumptions, such as the essentialist notion of the hetero-homosexual spectrum, through assent and positive use of queer failure that exposes the artifice of certainty surrounding binary categories of gender and sexuality. The failure of certainty expands conceptions and practices of growth beyond heteronormative strictures of growing up. Rather, growing sideways includes an array of possibilities that moves beyond assumed verticality of adulthood and utilizes uncertainty and change through inquiry. Children are inscribed with normative expectations concerning gender and sexuality that equate with being "not-yet-straight" or being identified as "homosexual," although "not-yet-straight," children are expected to approach "the official designation of straight couplehood" (Stockton 2004, 283). Children are expected to straighten naturally when the grow up. The problem of children considered as "preliminary" sexual beings whose sexuality is simultaneously "natural" and "contrary to nature" aligns with Foucault's characterization of a *pedagogization* of children's sex that provides the basis for overwhelming social inscription of norms, values, and beliefs upon children's bodies by authorities, including parents, clinicians, and educators (Foucault 1978, 104). Children are allegedly protected from sexuality while being inscribed with norms, values, and beliefs concerning expectations about their gender and sexuality. *Growing up* is a restricted conception of growth. *Growing sideways*—growth in multiple directions without clearly discernible endpoints—is a more expansive and inclusive idea of growth that aligns closely with Dewey's ideas about growth and childhood. Stockton comments that ""growing sideways" suggests that the width of a person's experience or ideas, their motives or their motions, may pertain to any age, bringing "adults" and "children" into lateral contact of surprising sorts" (Stockton 2009, 11).

Queer futurity, failure, and growing sideways are concepts that work against heteronormative assumptions and impositions about life, including desire, success, and growth. Each of these concepts contributes to arguments in queer theory against essentialism and

presumed certainty about gender and sexuality. I want to reflect on Dewey's philosophy of inquiry, his positive use of uncertainty, and his ideas about growth as providing support to these concepts and arguments from queer theory while also being enhanced through queer considerations of gender and sexuality.

Inquiry & Uncertainty

Dewey's philosophy undermines fixed epistemic categories and insists on reconstructing processes of doing and undergoing as part of inquiry. For Dewey, scientific methodology that seeks out and implements change rightly replaces essentialist conceptions of knowledge and existence. The mistaken adherence to unalterable values is rejected in favor of contingency and context. Dewey fractures adherence to false dichotomies by recognizing the transactional fluidity of experience. Rather than relying on fixed categories that are purported to determine truth or meaning of experience, Dewey begins with experience as the basis of meaning. His shift away from androcentric claims of universality and foundational metaphysics to contextual fallibilism proves favorable to queer thought, which provides tools of inclusion for experiences that are often marginalized, minoritized, and underrepresented. Charlene Haddock Seigfried recognizes and builds upon these aspects of Dewey's philosophy in her work on pragmatic feminism.

Seigfried comments on how the "pragmatist principle that theory arises from experience and is accountable to it," combined with a view to solving problems rather than simply replicating experience, are aspects of Dewey's philosophy that makes it useful for feminist philosophy (Seigfried 2002, 51). Reviewing how Dewey's work resonates with feminist thought facilitates improving upon some of the philosophical tools he presents with those of feminist philosophy. This is helpful when queering Dewey's philosophy. Insights from thinkers working in and across feminist and queer theory expand and improve upon his work by concentrating on issues concerning difference and experience. The work of these thinkers facilitates interrogating essentialized assumptions concerning gender and sexuality in ways that Dewey does not, but are consistent with his philosophy. As Seigfried indicates, Dewey's work seems to show an awareness of problems of sexism at times, but he does not pursue these consistently or thoroughly (2002). Feminist thought addresses issues of identity and oppression with greater precision than Dewey addresses them. Adopting tools from pragmatic feminism improves inquiry, especially for understanding contingency, relationality, and difference. Connections between Dewey's philosophy and feminist pragmatism inspires recognizing how tools from Dewey's work and queer theory may be combined.[3]

Seigfried notes that Dewey, influenced by the work of Jane Addams, rejects atomistic individualism and Cartesian dualism that split subject from object (Seigfried 2002; 1991). Beginning with pre-reflective experience, Dewey recognizes that inquiry begins with an existential situation pervaded by quality that is problematic. Valuing context and experience over fixed epistemic principles anticipates the importance of contingency, situatedness, and relationality within pragmatic feminism and queer theory. Essentialism is refuted in favor of varieties of experience and differences of perspective. In her argument for pragmatic feminism, Seigfried states, "The multiplicity of points of view as well as the multiple relations constitutive of persons support feminist claims to having insights to contribute to philosophizing that have so far been missing and whose absence has distorted what is there. It also gives good reasons for deemphasiz-

[3] Alison Kafer provides a helpful description for how both feminism and queer theory provide compatible critical tools that do not rely on essentializing or normalizing frameworks. "Queer theorists are committed to forging a politics that does not marginalize, normalize, or criminalize queer bodies, practices, or desires; feminist theorists are engaged in imagining open-ended politics that do not attempt to normalize all women under a unified category of 'woman'." (Kafer 2013, 23). I believe that queering Dewey's work improves upon his philosophical tools with regard to the anti-essentialist and anti-normalizing approaches Kafer suggests.

ing essentialist analysis of gender and provides a model for theorizing about the multiple relationships through which we are constituted and that have been distorted through homophobia, racism, classism, and colonialism, as well as sexism" (2002, 74-75). Barbara Thayer-Bacon reiterates the importance of multiple points of view with her idea of *qualified relativism*. "[Feminists] agree with Dewey that the more other voices are included and considered, the more each of us can trust that we have considered all available information and hope to make a sound judgment" (Thayer-Bacon 2003, 434-435). Qualified relativism recognizes that "we are embedded, limited, and embodied" and serves as a critical tool for questioning "assumptions of man-made constructs and frameworks as natural or always already in existence" (Vorsino 2015, 53). Work in feminist thought adds depth to tools derived from Dewey's philosophy that help recognize the importance of diverse, forgotten, oppressed, silenced, marginalized, and minoritized experiences. The work of queer theorists, such as that of Muñoz, Halberstam, and Stockton, provides similar expansiveness to tools that Dewey supplies, especially when applied to issues concerning gender and sexuality. Reciprocally, Dewey's work provides additional methodological tools to queer theory that are beneficial for interrogating essentialism and normativity.

Queering Dewey's Query

Although Dewey writes little about gender and sexuality, his defense of Bertrand Russell, albeit brief, provides a wedge for queering Dewey's thought that connects with the tools in his work that are enhanced by feminism and queer theory, especially his theory of inquiry and criticism of the quest for certainty. In "The Case for Bertrand Russell," Dewey comments that there is a "cultural lag" between the work of researchers in special sciences, such as anthropology and psychology, upon ethical issues, including "sexual ethics," and "popular beliefs, which, when they have not been received from some dogmatic institutional source, have usually been picked up from the flotsam and jetsam of old traditions" (LW 14, 232). Dewey targets dogmatism and intolerance that prevents inquiry into matters of ethics generally and matters of gender and sexuality more specifically. He expands upon his support of Russell in "Social Realities versus Police Court Fictions," wherein he argues against the popular, "respectable" belief that existing sexual habits that are deemed undesirable do not exist if they are not discussed, including homosexuality and masturbation (LW 14, 247). Although Dewey clarifies that his argument is not an endorsement of any sexual practices or identities, specifically homosexuality among boys, his main point is that discussion and inquiry concerning sex is to be unfettered by authoritarian principles, superstition, or fear. His defense of Russell's work on sex and marriage reflects his more general criticisms of unscientific thinking that he describes in *The Quest for Certainty* and throughout much of his work on inquiry. In *Human Nature and Conduct*, he makes a similar argument concerning social taboos and prevention of inquiry concerning sexual impulses (MW 14, 114-116). Applying these criticisms to essentialist notions of gender and sexuality helps position Dewey's work as allied with projects within queer theory that seek to overcome heteronormativity and provide acceptance for non-binary conceptions of gender and sexual desire.

In *The Quest for Certainty*, Dewey criticizes the ideas of being and knowledge as fixed and unchanging. He classifies these as antiquated, superstitious approaches that purport to find changeless principles of being from which all truths are to be deduced. Adherence to an absolute or fixed concept of knowledge leads to a conflict with natural science, i.e., the experimental model. As he states, this is because of "the incompatibility between the conclusions of natural science about the world in which we live and the realm of higher values, of ideal and spiritual qualities, which get no support from natural science" (LW

4, 33). While those who abide by absolutism or beliefs in fixed principles refuse to recognize change, experimental inquiry seeks change in attempts to locate and address problems. For Dewey, inquiry involves considerations of difference, especially from what is considered or presumed to be the case. This is what provides greater understanding of existence as it is lived, rather than as an imaginary ideal that attempts to deny change. Returning momentarily to the defense of Russell, Dewey is arguing against the denial of sexual difference for the sake of normativity or respectability and arguing for openness of inquiry that allows for considerations of difference, especially difference that is contrary to popular traditions and uncritically accepted social mores. Extending Dewey's criticisms of certainty to include heteronormativity provides a view of his work as a form of queering that coheres with Muñoz's utopian concept of queer futurity, Halberstam's positive notion of failure, and Stockton's idea of growing sideways.

Reconfiguring Gender

Shannon Sullivan's reconfiguration of gender through reconsidering Dewey's work on habit, coupled with Judith Butler's concept of performativity, is useful for enhancing Dewey's philosophical tools concerning work in queer theory. Sullivan reads Dewey's pragmatism as suggesting "that we must be open to the continual reconfiguration of our habits and the configurations of gender, sex, and sexuality that structure our existence, and we must work to increase the friction that encourages such transformation" (Sullivan 2000, 39). She argues that his notion of habit leads one to question binary categories of gender and sexuality and to reconsider cultural constructs that shape habits of gender and, relatedly, sexuality. Butler's concept of performativity adds that the elements of gender and sexuality are constituted through repetition of cultural norms. This maps onto Dewey's notion of habituation with added considerations of gender and sexuality that Dewey does not broach. Sullivan's reconfiguration of gender through Dewey's pragmatism and Butler's performativity is important for my own queering of Dewey because it opens his work further to address issues for which his philosophical tools are beneficial, but that he does not address. Following Sullivan's considerations of Dewey's notion of habituation, I press Dewey's theory of inquiry into the realm of queering to encourage further friction that erodes heteronormativity. Butler's work on performativity, interpellation, and identity is useful in this regard, especially as it coheres with Dewey's focus on uncertainty as a motivating factor to inquiry. I examine these concepts within Butler's work as I draw further connections between Dewey's approach to inquiry and concepts from queer theory.

Butler's concept of performativity as situated between construction and determinism aligns well with Dewey's notions of doing and undergoing, as well as his concept of habituation (Sullivan 2000). According to Butler, the process of iterability, "a regularized and constrained repetition of norms" is necessary for understanding performativity (Butler 1993, 95). Within various contexts, repeated performative acts of naming and signification facilitate the materialization of identities. Identification is a process that is repeated, thus becoming habitual. One is not identified once and never identified again. Rather, identification is reiterated. For instance, one is not merely named once and never named again. With each instance of their name being used, whether they are using their own name or others are using their name, they are being identified. Reiteration of the name is a performative act of naming the person.

Referring to Althusser's notion of *interpellation*, which "forms a crucial part of the juridical and social formation of the subject," Butler discusses the dissonance between performative commands that enforce norms and persons who are commanded to abide by those norms, resulting in the possibility of disobedience (Butler 1993, 121-124). Building from a consideration of being

called a name, Butler focuses on gender and sexuality as interpellated categories of identity that one does not choose. Identity is not an essence of the self. As Stuart Hall states, "this concept of identity does not signal that stable core of the self, unfolding from beginning to end through all the vicissitudes of history without change; the bit of the self which remains always-already 'the same', identical to itself across time" (Hall 1996, 3). Hall follows Butler by interpreting identification as a never-complete construction that relies on exclusion. "Throughout their careers, identities can function as points of identification and attachment only because of their capacity to exclude, to leave out, to render 'outside', abjected." (5). Identity refers to a "point of suture" between discursive constructions of identity that place persons in particular positions as social subjects, and "processes which produce subjectivities, which construct us as subjects which can be 'spoken'" (5-6). Individuals are interpellated as particular identities with which they contend. Each person performs their identities in unique ways that never quite capture a particular assignation. A person who identifies as a man never fully embodies the identity of man. The person who identifies as heterosexual never fully embodies the identity of heterosexual. "There is always 'too much' or 'too little' – an over-determination or a lack, but never a proper fit, a totality" (3). As Hall and Butler note, this is because identities are imagined narratives that have material effects. In *Bodies That Matter*, Butler focuses on gender formation that occurs within a heteronormative framework. Although identities are imposed, they are not complete. "Identities are never fully and finally made; they are incessantly reconstituted and, as is constantly marshaled, consolidated, retrenched, contested, and, on occasion, compelled to give way" (Butler 1993, 105). Although identification is often normatively powerful, it is not absolute. Identity involves contingency and ambiguity, even if expectations regarding identity are for sameness and unity (191). For instance, gender assignment is always an approximation that one cannot inhabit completely (231). Butler's indication that identification never quite succeeds in capturing who or what someone is aligns with Dewey's criticisms of fixed principles and the quest for certainty. Norms operate as imperatives with which each person is forced to negotiate, but they are contingent and constantly undergoing change (237). Attempts to occupy or escape an identity may constitute a source of struggle because identification never quite holds, yet performativity is never entirely willful or arbitrary. The ability to identify varies with persons, identity categories, and the mechanisms that enforce identity. Some identities, such as race or ethnicity, tend to be rather strict in comparison to categories of sexuality, although by no means fixed or absolute. Butler's work reveals problematic aspects of identities as impositions that supply certain forms of materiality to persons through discursive performativity. Identities, such as gender and sexuality, enforce normative habits, regardless of how dissonant these norms are with individual experiences or desires.

Disidentification, Inquiry, and Growth

Muñoz builds upon Butler's insights and uses identity to refer to transactional points (or sites of struggle) "where fixed dispositions clash against socially constituted definitions" (Munoz 1999, 6). This avoids the false dichotomy that presents identity as being either essential and fixed or freely constructed. Using this sense of identity acknowledges differences in bodies, desires, and circumstances that transact with socially constructed narratives. Muñoz quotes William E. Connolly's insight concerning the tensions between fixed dispositions and constructions: "Some possibilities of social definition are more suitable for certain bodies and certain individuals, particularly after each had branded into it as "second nature" a stratum of dispositions, proclivities, and preliminary self-understandings." (Connolly 1991, 163 quoted in Muñoz 1999, 6). Examining transactional points between

persons and identities, Muñoz uses what he calls the *Pêcheuxian Paradigm* that is based on Michel Pêcheux's description of three modes in which subjects are constructed by ideological practices. The three modes are identification, counteridentification, and disidentification (Muñoz 1999, 11). Identification refers to acceptance and voluntary assimilation to an assigned identity. A person responds to the imperative, *You are x*, by assenting, *Yes, I am x*. Counteridentification entails resistance and rejection to imposed identity. *You are x*, is confronted with, *No, I am not x*. As Muñoz states about disidentification, it is "the third mode of dealing with dominant ideology, one that neither opts to assimilate within such a structure nor strictly opposes it; rather, disidentification is a strategy that works on and against dominant ideology" (11). The response to *You are x*, might be something like, *Your imposition of x fails. I am imagining and reworking x in a way that transforms its meaning*. Mere affirmation or denial does not work—like the frustration caused by a judge demanding that a witness restrict their answer to yes or no when neither suffices. Roderick A. Ferguson notes that disidentification entails taking up ideology with revisions (Ferguson 2004, 4). As an example of ideological disidentification, Muñoz uses the example of a lesbian, "queer revolutionary from the Antilles" who interrogates the homophobia and misogyny in Frantz Fanon's *Black Skins, White Masks*, while engaging in his anticolonial discourse "as a still valuable yet mediated identification" (Muñoz 1999, 9). This does not mean that the undesirable, discriminatory elements of the ideology are simply removed while the desirable elements are chosen. As *interrogate* and *engage* indicate, disidentification involves contending with identity in a critical manner that entails change. As Dewey might say, it is to *inquire*, mindful of context.

Imagining Muñoz's concept of disidentification as inquiry helps draw tools from queer theorists together with tools from Dewey's work. Disidentification as a form of inquiry coincides with Sullivan's reconfiguration of gender and sexuality and further motivates queer futurity through consistently reconsidering and reconstructing categories of identity, including categories of desire. As a proponent of queer futurity, disidentification embraces change and fosters the erosion of presumptive certainty and adherence to fixed categories. This lends itself to the positive notion of failure and the openness of growing sideways as moving beyond the strictures of growing up. In this respect, Dewey's ideas about growth are especially compelling as they support these queer concepts.

Dewey's conception of growth, in tandem with his positive regard for uncertainty and change, contribute to the queer conception of growing sideways that Stockton introduces and Halberstam references in discussions of failure. According to Dewey, growth is "a movement of action toward a later result" (MW 9, 46). This does not imply a static, accepted standard. Rather, growth moves in multiple directions and entails development of habits that are transactional adjustments with environments. If there is an aim to growth, it is the ongoing process of growth. Types of growth are situation dependent. In his essay on Dewey as the *philosopher of growth*, Sidney Hook expounds on this by stating, "There is the growth which generates obstacles to further growth, and the growth which creates the conditions for further growth. There is growth which prevents and growth which encourages the processes of education" (Hook 1959, 1013). For Dewey, growing entails adaptation *with* one's environment, which is done through habituation. Adaptation is not restricted to adjustment *to* the environment, but also entails adjustment *of* the environment (MW 9, 52). In line with Dewey's work on habituation (and Butler's on performativity), individuals are not, therefore, merely passive and subjected to power dynamics regarding sexuality and gender. Growth includes transactional engagement, so one adjusts to the environment as the environment is adjusted through their movement of action. Growth that stifles—such as "growths in prejudice, arbitrariness, hate, invidious prestige, power and

status"—is typically considered undesirable because it disallows further inquiry (Hook 1959, 1014). To block the way of inquiry is to prevent individuals from liberation and enrichment of their lives, thus undermining their power to grow. In this regard, Dewey warns of routine habits, which are unthinking. "Routine habits, and habits that possess us instead of our possessing them, are habits which put an end to plasticity. They mark the close of power to vary. […] The short-sighted method which falls back on mechanical routine and repetition to secure external efficiency of habit, motor skill without accompanying thought, marks a deliberate closing in of surroundings upon growth" (MW 9, 54). Unthinking habits are those that assent to certainty without question, including certainty concerning gender and sexuality. Regarding presumptions concerning growing up, Dewey's work concerning children is especially relevant.

Dewey considers human beings, from the earliest age, as intelligent because they alter the ways that they engage with their environment as part of their pursuit of ends-in-view (MW 6). Children are thus understood as active, purposive agents instead of passive objects or merely potential subjects. Dewey argues against the idea that children's immaturity is a lack that somehow needs to be filled with growth. He postulates that what he takes to be the two chief traits of immaturity—dependence and plasticity—are powers that provide children with the impetus and ability to engage socially and to adapt with the environment (MW 9, 48-49). These traits indicate the importance of impulse and experimentation for Dewey, which is echoed by Stockton's work about queerness and childhood. This is especially evident in Dewey's definition of plasticity (MW 9, 49):

> This is something quite different from the plasticity of putty or wax. It is not a capacity to take on change of form in accord with external pressure. It lies near the pliable elasticity by which some persons take on the color of their surroundings while retaining their own bent. But it is something deeper than this. It is essentially the ability to learn from experience; the power to retain from one experience something which is of avail in coping with the difficulties of a later situation. This means power to modify actions on the basis of the results of prior experiences, the power to develop dispositions. Without it, the acquisition of habits is impossible.

Children are relational, desiring agents whose growth is often resistant to external imposition. Dewey highlights and values the transactional engagement of children that facilitates their creation of distinct dispositions of their own instead of devaluing children as if they are merely innocent, impressionable, neutral bodies privy to social inscription. Children actively adapt the environment to their own activities and dispositions as they adapt their activities and dispositions to the environment (MW 9, 52). Dewey recognizes that the belief is often put forth, especially within psychology and education theory, that children must be directed to adapt to the standards and demands of adulthood, but he rejects this as a misunderstanding of growth. Instead, Dewey indicates that childhood is a phase of active engagement that entails growth as a continual process rather than a means toward a fixed goal that is apart from the process. To conceive of children as needing to *grow up* to adulthood is misguided (MW 9, 55-56). Childhood and adulthood are simply names for phases of continuity (LW 1, 210). Growth may entail movement from childhood into adulthood, but it also entails movement in multiple directions, and to become an adult is not necessarily to grow up. Pressures to grow up and techniques of social inscription imposed in the service of growing up are problematized through Dewey's philosophy. In this regard, Dewey's work further lends itself to the critical work of Muñoz, Halberstam, and Stockton that interrogates and supplants heteronormativity through queering.

Conclusion

Through his philosophy of inquiry and criticism of the quest for certainty, Dewey provides an approach to issues of sexuality and gender that extends beyond the

vernacular sense of pragmatism that Muñoz criticizes. If Dewey's philosophy is a form of pragmatism, it is one that supports queer futurity, positive notions of failure, and growing sideways. Although Dewey is writing from within a heteronormative framework, his philosophy is not necessarily delimited by adherence to a heterosexual-homosexual or masculine-feminine binary system when considered in tandem with queer concepts. As Sullivan indicates, Dewey's philosophy coheres with Butler's concept of performativity and applies to reconfiguring gender to undermine essentialism. I have built upon Sullivan's work with the addition of Muñoz's concepts of disidentification and queer futurity, coupled with ideas from Halberstam and Stockton.

But why queer Dewey's work at all? What Dewey's philosophy provides is support for queer arguments against binary and essentialist assumptions concerning gender and sexuality. As Darla Linville states:

> There is newly encouraged resistance to queerness and a new insistence on normative structures. Whiteness, Christianity, masculinity (and the right to dominate/use women's bodies), heterosexuality, gender normativity and roles, ability—physical normativity that discounts contributions of those who are differently abled—are all receiving the message that they deserve the privilege they have received in the past. Conversations about contesting unearned privilege are framed as unrealistic, frivolous whining. (Linville 2017, 9-10).

This is especially relevant given the current anti-LGBTQIA+ legislation being proposed in multiple countries. At the time of writing this (15 September 2023), the ACLU reported that there were 496 anti-LGBTQ bills in the United States (https://www.aclu.org/legislative-attacks-on-lgbtq-rights). As noted, Dewey's work alone does not provide enough to combat such arguments, but by queering his philosophy, it provides important tools that help solidify an argumentative phalanx against authoritarian ideology that is based upon unfounded, absolutist assumptions concerning gender and sexuality. His arguments against fixed categories contribute to building a case against bathroom bills that attempt to reinforce binary concepts of gender, bills attempting to restrict healthcare based upon essentialist assumptions, and legislation attempting to enforce strict heteronormativity through education. Approaching Dewey's philosophy in this manner avoids the vernacular form of pragmatism as political compromise from which Muñoz distances queer futurity. Rather, it extends beyond the sociopolitical into all realms of life and resists compromise. Queering Dewey's work pushes it beyond the confines of heteronormativity. The resulting development of queer pragmatism provides critical tools for undermining absolutist and essentialist ideology that are being used to police identity, desire, and growth.

References

"Mapping Attacks on LGBTQ Rights in U.S. State Legislatures," ACLU. Last updated: 1 September 2023. Last accessed: 15 September 2023. https://www.aclu.org/legislative-attacks-on-lgbtq-rights

Ahmed, Sara. (2017). *Living a Feminist Life*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Butler, Judith. (1990). Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity. New York and London: Routledge.

Butler, Judith. (1993). *Bodies that Matter: On the discursive limits of "sex*." New York and London: Routledge.

Connolly, William E. (1991). Identity\Difference: Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox. Ithica, NY: Cornell University Press.

Dewey, John. (1978). *Journal Articles, Book Reviews, Miscellany in the 1910-1911 Period, and How We Think, The Middle Works, vol. 6: 1910-1911*, edited by Jo Ann Boydston. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.

Dewey, John. (1985). *Democracy and Education, The Middle Works, vol. 9: 1916*, edited by Jo Ann Boydston. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.

Dewey, John. (1983). *Human Nature and Conduct, The Middle Works, vol. 14: 1922*, edited by Jo Ann Boydston. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.

Dewey, John. (1981). *Experience and Nature, The Later Works*, *vol. 1: 1925*, edited by Jo Ann Boydston. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.

Dewey, John. (1988). *The Quest for Certainty, The Later Works, vol. 4: 1929*, edited by Jo Ann Boydston. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.

Dewey, John. (1988). *Essays, Reviews, and Miscellany, The Later Works, vol. 14: 1939-1941*, edited by Jo Ann Boydston. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.

Duggan, Lisa. (2012). *The twilight of equality?: Neoliberalism, cultural politics, and the attack on democracy*. New York: Beacon Press.

Ferguson, Roderick A. (2004). *Aberrations in black: Toward a queer of color critique*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Foucault, Michel. (1978). *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*. Trans. Robert Hurley. New York: Random House.

Gramsci, Antonio. (2000). *The Antonio Gramsci reader: selected writings, 1916-1935*, edited by David Forgacs. New York: New York University Press.

Halberstam, Jack. (2011). *The queer art of failure*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Hall, Stuart (1996). "Introduction: Who Needs Identity?" In *Questions of Cultural Identity*, edited by

Hall, and Paul du Gay, 1–17. London: Sage Publications.

Hook, Sidney. "John Dewey--philosopher of growth." *The Journal of Philosophy* 56, no. 26 (1959): 1010-1018.

Kafer, Alison. (2013). *Feminist, queer, crip*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Linville, Darla. "Introduction: Queering Education." *Occasional Paper Series* 2017, no. 37 (2017): 4-12.

Love, Heather. (2021). *Underdogs: Social Deviance and Queer Theory*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Miller, s.j. "Queer literacy framework." *Critical concepts in queer studies and education: An international guide for the twenty-first century* (2016): 259-272.

Muñoz, José Esteban. (1999). Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Muñoz, José Esteban. (2019). *Cruising Utopia, 10th Anniversary Edition*. New York: New York University Press.

Rich, Adrienne. "Compulsory heterosexuality and lesbian existence." *Signs: Journal of women in culture and society* 5, no. 4 (1980): 631-660.

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. (1993). *Tendencies*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Seigfried, Charlene Haddock. "Where are all the pragmatist feminists?." *Hypatia* 6, no. 2 (1991): 1-20.

Seigfried, Charlene Haddock. "John Dewey's pragmatist feminism." *Feminist interpretations of John Dewey* (2002): 47-77.

Serano, Julia. (2022). *Sexed Up: How Society Sexualizes Us, and How We Can Fight Back*. New York: Seal Press.

Stockton, Kathryn Bond. "Growing sideways, or versions of the queer child: The ghost, the homosexual, the Freudian, the innocent, and the interval of animal." *Curiouser: On the queerness of children* (2004): 277-315.

Stockton, Kathryn Bond. (2009). *The queer child, or growing sideways in the twentieth century*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Sullivan, Shannon. "Reconfiguring gender with John Dewey: Habit, bodies, and cultural change." *Hypatia* 15, no. 1 (2000): 23-42.

Thayer-Bacon, Barbara. "Pragmatism and feminism as qualified relativism." *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 22 (2003): 417-438.

Toomey, Russell B., Jenifer K. McGuire, and Stephen T. Russell. "Heteronormativity, school climates, and perceived safety for gender nonconforming peers." *Journal of Adolescence* 35, no. 1 (2012): 187-196.

Vorsino, Mary. "Re-reading Dewey through a Feminist Lens," *Educational Perspectives* 47 (2015): 50-54.

Warner, Michael. (2000). *The trouble with normal: Sex, politics, and the ethics of queer life*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

West, Cornel. (1989). *The American Evasion of Philosophy: A Genealogy of Pragmatism*. Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press.

Wittig, Monique. (1992). *The straight mind and other essays*. New York: Beacon Press.

Yep, Gust A. "Queering/quaring/kauering/crippin'/transing 'other bodies' in intercultural communication." *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication* 6, no. 2 (2013): 118-126.

Varia

SHUSTERMAN AND GADAMER ON AESTHETICS. SITUATEDNESS, HISTORICITY AND PLAY

Elena Romagnoli
University of Pisa
elenaromagnoli91@gmail.com

ABSTRACT: This paper carries on the dialogue between Shusterman and Gadamer on the topic of aesthetics. The aim is twofold. On the one hand, it shows the little-known influence of Gadamer's philosophy on the development of Shusterman's thought up to the elaboration of his mature proposal in *Pragmatist Aesthetics*. In particular, this essay focuses on the two concepts of situatedness and historicity that Shusterman inherits from Gadamer and that constitute a peculiar feature of pragmatist aesthetics, which actually distinguishes it from analytic aesthetics. On the other hand, on the basis of the commonalities between hermeneutics and pragmatist aesthetics, this essay illustrates, through the concept of play, the possibility of rethinking Gadamer's aesthetics along a pragmatist line. In particular, the participatory and anti-subjectivist character of play as an emblem of the work of art allows us to rethink the relationship between the author and the audience. This shows the anti-elitist potentials of Gadamer's aesthetics, which can be developed in connection with contemporary artistic phenomena, such as the popular arts.

Keywords: Shusterman, Gadamer, situatedness, historicity, play

1. Introduction

Shusterman's pragmatist aesthetics, later developed as somaesthetics, certainly represents one of the most promising proposals in the current aesthetic debate. Shusterman's thought is informed by a variety of sources and references (from the more classical authors, such as Dewey, to critical philosophy, popular arts and Chinese thought)[1]. A relevant and partially overlooked influence on Shusterman's pragmatist aesthetics is Gadamer's hermeneutics. Except for Kremer 2013 and Kremer 2018, it is barely known that Shusterman was strongly influenced by Gadamer's thought in the transition from analytic philosophy to the elaboration of pragmatist aesthetics, and that the engagement with Dewey is actually subsequent to that with Gadamer[2]: Shusterman approaches Gadamer's hermeneutics through Rorty, while working out a different reading of it[3].

Along this line of research, I propose to highlight the possibility of a dialogue between Shusterman and Gadamer on the role of art in the contemporary world. My intention is twofold. On the one hand, I aim to highlight hermeneutics as a source of Shusterman's thought, which is little-known but fundamental in the development of his more mature philosophical proposal. On the other hand, on the basis of the communalities between hermeneutics and pragmatist aesthetics, I propose to reassess Gadamer's aesthetics along an anti-elitist line, focusing in particular on the concept of play.

Indeed, just as Shusterman's pragmatist aesthetics was fruitfully influenced by Gadamerian hermeneutics in the 80s, nowadays hermeneutics can use pragmatist aesthetics to overcome a state of (at least partial) marginalization in respect to other currents[4]. The dialogue with pragmatist aesthetics may enable us to tone down some problematic and more conservative elements of hermeneutics and highlight a possible rethinking of it as a philosophy that is capable of accounting for contemporary forms of art, such as, for example, free jazz, as recently shown by Nielsen 2016 and Nielsen 2022, 124 ff.

[1] See, among others, Shusterman 2008, Shusterman 2019, Shusterman 2021 and Shusterman 2022. See also Dreon 2012, Shusterman 2018, Abrams 2022, and Marino 2022.

[2] Kremer clearly highlighted this point: "Rorty's pragmatist approach to meaning and interpretation, not Dewey's aesthetics were the initial focus of Shusterman's work in pragmatism, and as Rorty's pragmatic historicist interpretative theory invoked the hermeneutics of Gadamer, Shusterman also devoted considerable study to Gadamer's work before plunging deeply into Dewey" (Kremer 2018, 50).

[3] I would like to thank Richard Shusterman for being available for a discussion on this topic during the conference *The Promise of Pragmatist Aesthetics: Looking Forward After 30 Years*, 25-28/05/2022, Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design, Budapest.

[4] After great circulation and success in the '80s and '90s, the interest in hermeneutics partly declined and was replaced by other philosophical currents, like structuralism and the French Theory. The resurgence of Gadamer's thought, in particular Gadamer's aesthetics, is a process that took place in the last decades, as testified by George – Van der Heiden 2021 and Nielsen 2022.

In particular, the first part of my paper (§2) will highlight how Shusterman, as an attentive reader of Gadamer, focuses on the concepts of situatedness (§2.1) and historicity (§2.2). As brought to the fore by his late '80s writings, Shusterman learns from Gadamer that all human experience is necessarily space-time situated and that this is not a limitation but a productive possibility from which all knowledge is possible. This aspect is then reformulated in *Pragmatist Aesthetics* in the awareness of the radical historicity of art and in the critique of de-historicising conceptions that disregard the historical context in their quest for a mere definition of art. It is precisely these two hermeneutic concepts that pragmatist aesthetics takes on, constituting a fundamental characteristic of Shusterman's mature philosophical proposal that distinguishes it from the main developments of analytic aesthetics.

On the grounds of Gadamer's influence on Shusterman and leveraging on the commonalities between hermeneutics and pragmatist aesthetics, the second part (§3) of my paper will show how, by means of the concept of play as an emblem of the work of art (§3.1), we can rethink aesthetic experience in a participatory and anti-elitist way (§3.2). As Shusterman rightly identified, play has a fundamental role in Gadamer in explaining the essence of art as an anti-subjectivist and participatory process. This brings about a rethinking of the relationship between the author and the public, where the latter actively participates in the shaping of the aesthetic experience: this is a key point that Pragmatist and Gadamerian aesthetics share. By leveraging this aspect, Gadamer's aesthetics can be opened up to an anti-elitist conception of the artistic phenomena, as opposed to the separation between "high" arts and "popular" arts: an issue that featured in embryo in Gadamer's hermeneutics and that we could promisingly develop in the wake of pragmatism.

2. From Analytic to Pragmatist Aesthetics: the Gadamerian Heritage

2.1 Situating Experiences

In the context of the 1988 book *T.S. Eliot and the Philosophy of Criticism*, dedicated to reconsidering not only Eliot's poetry but his theoretical production too, Shusterman deals extensively with Gadamer's philosophy. This is far from obvious for a philosopher who had developed his thought in the context of American analytic philosophy: this book marks a sort of transition towards the development of a critique of analytic philosophy – made explicit in Shusterman 1989[5] – and the elaboration of Shusterman's own pragmatist perspective that would culminate in the first edition of *Pragmatist Aesthetics* in 1992. In the book on Eliot, quite disregarded compared to Shusterman's later works, Gadamer's centrality is explicitly stated, while Dewey's name appears only twice (see Shusterman 1988, 207, 210). Shusterman's intention is to show how Eliot can be considered close to pragmatist thought, while recovering certain hermeneutical notions. Without delving into the details of Shusterman's reading of Eliot, I will focus on some issues developed in that book to highlight how influential Gadamer's philosophy was on the formation of pragmatist aesthetics.

In the introduction to the book, Shusterman openly states: "My examination of Eliot's critical theory will not be confined to the Anglo-American perspective. It will endeavour to show how Eliot's later theory anticipates and converges with certain currents in contemporary continental philosophy, most strikingly with the hermeneutic philosophy of Gadamer on the topics of interpretation and tradition" (see Shusterman 1988, 3). As clarified by Shusterman himself, this aspect is far from obvious, in an '88 book written by a philosopher with an analytic background[6]: "This seemingly unnatural coupling of analytic

[5] In the same year Shusterman also wrote a contribution to the famous Gadamer-Derrida Debate: see Shusterman 1989a.
[6] It can be said, as affirmed by D'Angelo 2012, that Shusterman's pragmatist aesthetics builds a bridge between analytic and continental philosophy. Shusterman himself defined pragmatism "as a more promising middle way and mediator between the

philosophy with hermeneutics through the medium of Eliot is not an attempt at eclectic comprehensiveness. It reflects a significant movement in recent analytic philosophy toward historicist, holistic and non-realist points of view which converge with those urged by contemporary hermeneuticians in the continental tradition" (Shusterman 1988, 3).

In the development of the book on Eliot, it is especially from chapter 4 that a close examination of Gadamer's conception transpires. Among the fundamental themes of hermeneutics that Shusterman recalls, namely tradition, language and interpretation[7], a main place is sharply given to the condition of human finitude, which is the ground for the idea of "situatedness". I believe this is a crucial point in the development of Shusterman's thought, leading up to his proposal in *Pragmatist Aesthetics*. Situatedness is indeed rightly regarded by Shusterman as one of the "fundamental and inalienable features which condition understanding" (Shusterman 1988, 110). Shusterman defines situatedness by stating that human beings are "essentially and irremediably located in (some part of) the spatio-temporal world and that [their] perception or point of view is consequently structured or conditioned by and contingent upon their particular situation" (*Ibid*.). On recalling its Heideggerian origin, Shusterman points out that Gadamer makes the situatedness of all human experience and understanding "the cornerstone of his philosophy" (Shusterman 2012, 110)[8]. The fact that all understanding is always historically situated does not imply, however, as Shusterman rightly reminds us, that all understanding is totally determined, restricting the way we interpret a text or a phenomenon: being situated actually paves the way to a range of possibilities and perspectives that can be developed within a given vision[9].

Understanding and experiencing is thus always located in a given temporal and spatial context: a context that is, however, mutable and consciously grasped by the individual. Shusterman connects this crucial point to art and artistic experience, a topic that will be central to *Pragmatist Aesthetics*: "Art can never be created or appreciated in an historical vacuum" (Shusterman 1988, 111). Situatedness thus has a *productive* character, a fundamental acquisition that distances Shusterman from those analytic and cognitivist readings that saw it as a limit to knowledge and that brings pragmatism closer to hermeneutics. In this respect, Shusterman states that the "insistence on the situatedness of critical understanding should not be construed as merely the trivial negative reminder of *human fallibility and cognitive limitation*" (*Ibid*. Emphasis added). In this sense, Shusterman sees in situatedness a "*positive pragmatist point*" (*Ibid*. Emphasis added), namely the role of situatedness is "to promote the welfare of a being whose needs in this world are overwhelmingly situational and pragmatic" (Shusterman 1988, 111). This would lead Gadamer (and Eliot) "to elevate the status of contextual thinking and practical wisdom over scientific method with its rigid universalizable character" (Shusterman 1988, 112). The distancing from the demands of analytic philosophy already emerges in this statement, which questions the dependence on science and the attempt at the "objectivism" that he attributes to some strands of analytic aesthetics.

analytic and continental tradition" (Shusterman 2012, 4).

[7] Chapters 3, 4 and 5 of the English edition of *Pragmatist Aesthetics* – later expunged from the French, German and Italian editions as more technical chapters and less suitable for a wider audience – deal with the question of interpretation. In that context, Shusterman distances himself from the Gadamerian conception by pointing to the need to distinguish between understanding and interpretation, and instead attributing to Gadamer a reading that treats the two moments as indistinct. On this complex issue I cannot dwell here. See however in this regard Stroud 2002, 151-160.

[8] "Consciousness of being affected by history [*wirkungsgeschichtliches Bewußtsein*] is primarily consciousness of the hermeneutical situation [*Situation*]. […] We always find ourselves within a situation, and throwing light on it is a task that is never entirely finished. This is also true of the hermeneutic situation—i.e., the situation in which we find ourselves with regard to the tradition that we are trying to understand" (Gadamer 2013, 312).

[9] "Historical situatedness determines, as it were, a limiting framework with certain possibilities of logical-linguistic space for understanding to work in, but it does not determine precisely which of these possibilities must be actualized or chosen" (Shusterman 1988, 11).

Human finitude, closely linked to the concept of situatedness, is thus understood as the horizon of every possible openness to the knowledge of the other. For this reason, Gadamer's famous "rehabilitation of prejudice" (Gadamer 2013, 278 ff.) is not considered by Shusterman a limitation of knowledge but the essential initial direction from which all experience must necessarily start. However, this delimitation should not be understood in a static sense: on the contrary, the human situation is dynamic, constantly changing. This is closely linked to the hermeneutic conception whereby a work of art develops as its different readings and interpretations evolve. Shusterman responds to the criticism that this conception deals with a form of conservatism by emphasizing that it is "more normative and pragmatic than epistemological" (Shusterman 1988, 117). That is, the recovery of tradition implies the pre-understanding of the context in which each individual is necessarily situated. For this reason, rather than tradition, Shusterman refers to the concept of transmission and its mutability and non-exhaustibility: "Eliot and Gadamer recognize that this transmission is never total and that what is transmitted may anyway prove inapplicable because of the mutability of our world" (Shusterman 1988, 112).

Far from being the expression of a conservative or reactionary attitude (as has often been argued)[10], the emphasis on tradition is closely linked to situatedness: since we are always situated in a given condition, we can relate to the past through an integration with it, by dialoguing with what has been preserved of it. As Gadamer stresses, tradition must be intended as "transmission [Ü*berlieferung*]", as the movement in which "past and present are constantly mediated" (Gadamer 2012, 302). It is precisely the sharing of the tradition of the past, which of course does not imply an uncritical acceptance of all that has been, that forms the basis on which we orient ourselves, resulting in the creation of a "consensual community" (see Shusterman 1988, 170-173) that highlights the social role of philosophy[11].

The criticism made by Gadamer to historicism – i.e., that "temporal distance" cannot be overcome, thus acquiring the original author's point of view[12] – is adopted by pragmatism as a critique of the cognitivist positions, what Shusterman defines as "objectivism" (Shusterman 1988, 41-76), basically expressed as the "implausible view that a work of art be understood as independent of human perception" (Shusterman 1988, 11). According to this reading, cognitivist theories try to disregard the historical situation by abstraction. It should be noted that the topic of the situatedness of experience is fundamental to Dewey's conception (not only aesthetic)[13]. However, it is noteworthy that it is Gadamer's reading that guides Shusterman towards this position: the "Gadamer-Eliot" (Shusterman 1988, 117) conception is a theoretical anticipation of the perspective developed in *Pragmatist Aesthetics*.

2.2 The Historicity of Art

Pragmatist Aesthetics can be considered the inaugural book of the new direction of Shusterman's thought as well as of a discipline in the aesthetic field. This book weaves a constant dialogue with Dewey's philosophy, as

[10] See, for example, Caputo 1987.

[11] This is among other things one of the points on which Shusterman distances himself from Rorty and his rejection of the concept of tradition in furtherance of the "linguistic turn" of his thought: "Rorty himself seems misled by the erroneous assumption that we can only choose between the uselessly superannuated language of the past and the radically new language of the future, evidently inspired by Derrida's apocalyptic vision of a new writing born through deconstruction's dismantling of logocentrism" (Shusterman 1988, 212). On Derrida's influence on Rorty's thought, see Rorty 1982. Nonetheless, Shusterman credits Rorty (and Margolis) with helping to highlight the limitations of the objectivist view (see Shusterman 1988, 53-57).

[12] "Hence temporal distance is not something that must be overcome. This was, rather, the naive assumption of historicism, namely that we must transpose ourselves into the spirit of the age, think with its ideas and its thoughts, not with our own, and thus advance toward historical objectivity" (Gadamer 2012, 308).

[13] Indeed, the concept of situatedness is central not only to aesthetics, but to the whole of Dewey's reflection (particularly the pedagogic texts): see Hildebrand 2018, 287-300.

well as dealing with authors and texts from extremely varied perspectives (Adorno, Bourdieu, the analytic tradition, Eliot, the popular arts). I certainly do not aim to assert that Gadamer is a unique and privileged source for Shusterman. However, on the basis of what has emerged from the book on Eliot, we can show how the Gadamerian influence on the radical historicity of every human experience has remained so relevant in the subsequent developments of Shusterman's thought, although not explicitly stated.

This emerges precisely in the first chapter of *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, which defined the boundaries of pragmatist aesthetics as a discipline, especially in the version provided by Dewey's philosophy (who never employed the term "pragmatist aesthetics"), and its recovery after its partial replacement with analytic philosophy (see Shusterman 2012, 3-6). According to Shusterman, this was countered by the fact that "the analytic hegemony in Anglo-American aesthetics is being severely challenged by continentally-inspired theory based on hermeneutic, post-structuralist, and Marxian philosophies" (Shusterman 2012, 4). These are influences that Shusterman also identifies in pragmatism and which are grounded in the opposition to "foundationalist distinctions and *ahistorical* positive essences, emphasizing instead the mutability, contextuality, and social-historical praxical constitution of thought and its objects" (*Ibid*. Emphasis added). Without going into too much detail here, I am interested in showing how the concept of situatedness formulated in the book on Eliot is applied to the foundation of pragmatist aesthetics, which takes an explicitly intermediate position between analytic and continental approaches: "Placed between analytic and continental aesthetics, […] pragmatism is very well placed to help us redirect and reinvigorate contemporary philosophy of art" (Shusterman 2012, 4).

One of the main criticisms against analytic aesthetics is certainly that of being the bearer of a de-historicising view and of seeking only the definition of art (see Shusterman 2012, 21)[14]: this is Shusterman's fundamental debt to Gadamer's hermeneutics. Of course, one of the merits of the Gadamerian philosophy is recalling the radical historicity of every comprehension, without relapsing into mere historicism. This is resumed by Gadamer in the well-known principle of "*Wirkungsgeschichte*", namely, "if we are trying to understand a historical phenomenon from the historical distance that is characteristic of our hermeneutical situation, we are always already affected by history [*bereits den Wirkungen der Wirkungsgeschichte*]" (Gadamer 2013, 311). According to Shusterman, indeed, a relevant aspect that distinguishes Dewey (and thus pragmatist aesthetics) from analytic theories lies in "the historical and socio-cultural thickness" of his theory, namely in his insistence that "art and the aesthetic cannot be understood without full appreciation of their socio-historical dimensions" (Shusterman 2012, 21)[15]. This is seen as an alternative to the decontextualising and isolationist tendency that Shusterman criticizes in analytical aesthetics, which attempted to compartmentalize art by avoiding historical context, contributing to the isolation of art from other forms of life.

As I mentioned, in *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, Dewey's philosophy plays a predominant role, as he refers to it as "an aesthetics of continuity" – a definition that, as we shall see, Shusterman also employs for Gadamer. Dewey's aesthetics, as expressed in *Art as Experience*, is rooted in the interaction between the living creature and its environment (see Dewey 2008, 18ff.), recalling an integral definition of experience (Dewey 2008, 42 ff.). Indeed, pragmatist aesthetics contrasts "the typical approach which looked for a single, special property or experience to define art or aesthetics, 'a single *fundamentum divi-*

[14] See G. Dickie 1969, 253-256 and Dickie 1984. See also Davies, 2015, 375–384. From a different perspective, see Danto, 1981. Actually, Shusterman credited Danto together with Dickie and Wollheim with the attempt to take history into some consideration, albeit more sporadically and limitedly than Dewey.

[15] Dewey is in fact aware of the historical fracture that occurred after the Greek world and the consequent isolation of art in the contemporary world, as is particularly obvious in the first part of the first chapter of *Art as Experience* (see Dewey 2008, 9-18).

sionis'" (Shusterman 2012, 15). Thus, against these isolationist tendencies, Shusterman draws attention to the holism that characterizes Dewey's position, who thought it was a mistake "to try to define the aesthetic by isolating 'one strand in the total experience' of an object […], when that so-called aesthetic strand is only 'what it is because of the entire pattern to which it contributes and in which it is absorbed'" (Shusterman 2012, 15).

Shusterman rightly grasps the novelty of Dewey's approach in his critique of isolationism (with its social implications) as the separation and isolation of the aesthetic, recalling the Deweyan intent to restore continuity between art and other forms of life (see Dewey 2008, 9). It can be shown how this aspect recalls (more or less consciously in Shusterman) the process of "aesthetic differentiation" criticised by Gadamer[16]. In fact, according to Shusterman, "in contrast to Dewey's holism, analytic aesthetics has for the most part concentrated on projects of *distinction*, devoting enormous effort to clearly distinguishing the aesthetic from the non-aesthetic" (Shusterman 2012, 17. Emphasis added). This conception and the reference to the term differentiation certainly go in the same direction as the Gadamerian critique of the tendency of which he had accused 19th- and 20th-century aesthetics' (see Gadamer 2013, 39-90). In fact, for Gadamer, modern aesthetics tended to separate art from other human experiences: a process initiated by Kant and emblematically developed in Dilthey's philosophy. Artistic experience thus turned out to be a moment of suspension of and separation from reality. To this tendency, Gadamer opposed the rehabilitation of art in connection to truth: with the famous expression of art as "*increase in being* [*Zuwachs an Sein*]" (Gadamer 2013, 141) he aims to consider art an enhancement of everyday experience.

The centrality of art, as opposed to its decontextualisation, is linked to the critique of isolationism: disengaging works from their historical context leads to the musealisation of art and thus to the separation of the artistic sphere from other human activities. This is a point in common between Dewey and Gadamer, as Dreon 2018 pointed out. Later on, Shusterman, also on the basis of the confrontation with Gadamer's philosophy, emphasised the historical grounding of art as a prerogative of pragmatist aesthetics, stressing its anti-elitist scope and its openness to the popular arts, including, as is well known, "the beautiful art of rap" (Shusterman 2000, 201 ff). This is a direction that hermeneutics itself, based on the common critique of isolationism, can take.

To sum up, the ineradicable situatedness and the historicity of art are two fundamental aspects of pragmatism, and it seems relevant that Shusterman first acquired them from the Gadamerian reflection and then explicated them in Dewey's thought as a prerogative of pragmatist aesthetics. Based on these commonalities between pragmatist aesthetics and hermeneutics, the latter can reconsider the dialogue with pragmatism in a fruitful way: in this regard, the concept of play has a central role.

3. Play as a Pragmatist Clue: from Shusterman to Gadamer

3.1 The Social Seriousness of Play

In his book on Eliot, Shusterman already identified play as a paradigm to explain the essence of art. This aspect differentiates Shusterman from Dewey, who had instead criticized the readings that identify art and play, showing the risk of a disconnection of art from reality (see Dewey 2008, 218 ff.). Instead, Shusterman recalls, through Gadamer (and Eliot), the seriousness that characterises play: "In playing games *seriously* we do not typically mistake them for the serious matters of real life, but we temporarily pretend, as it were that they are. […]. We temporarily take on new identities as players and as adversaries in play, and in doing so *we may learn new things* about

[16] "By disregarding everything in which a work is rooted (its original context of life, and the religious or secular function that gave it significance), it becomes visible as the 'pure work of art'" (Gadamer 2013, 77).

each other and about our own selves" (Shusterman 1988, 139). On a similar note, Gadamer had already shown how, just like art, play has a transformative character for those who take part in it: "Play itself contains its own, even sacred, seriousness. […] Seriousness is not merely something that calls us away from play; rather, seriousness in playing is necessary to make the play wholly play" (Gadamer 2013, 108).

Play has thus a transformative value, and, moreover, as Shusterman perfectly stresses, it implies the involvement and participation of the players: in fact, "but though the structure or rules of a game govern the player who submits to them, the game could not properly exist without its players and only achieves its 'full being' when it is played" (Shusterman 1988, 140). This is a conception that perfectly echoes the Gadamerian anti-subjectivistic reading of the play, right down to the statement that "players and their play constitute an essential part of a game" (Shusterman 1988, 141). On this basis, according to Shusterman, we can see a link between the play "conceived in this way" (*Ibid*.) and the work of art. In fact, even the work of art is actively structured by the different readings given of it. Against the neutralisation of the point of view from which a work is read or admired, Shusterman in fact emphasises: "Literature's effect is a function not only of the power of the work or author but *greatly depends on the reader*, on the breadth, depth, and experience-proven firmness of his previous structure of belief, not to mention his capacity for imaginative understanding" (Shusterman 1988, 146. Emphasis added).

Shusterman's recovery of play also emerges in a little-known text of 1988 (the same year of the book on Eliot), that consists in a review of the English edition of Gadamer's collection *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*. In this short but dense review, Shusterman focuses on the essay *The Relevance of the Beautiful. Art as Play, Symbol, and Festival*, showing how Gadamer attempts to address the question of the changing role of art in the modern world. Shusterman here describes Gadamer as "always a proponent of unity and continuity" (Shusterman 1988a, 751) – using similar words for Dewey, as I mentioned before – who seeks a possible answer to the role of art in the concepts of play, symbol and festival. Shusterman identifies in play the anthropological component of Gadamer's philosophy and the possibility of rethinking the relationship between the work of art and the public; the symbol stands for the impossibility of an assimilation and reduction of the work of art to mere conceptuality; the festival instead shows the collective and communitarian dimension of the work of art (see Shusterman 1988a, 752). According to Shusterman, here Gadamer would show how art is not only an oppressive instrument employed by the ruling classes and elites: in Gadamer's reading, festival in particular is a collective moment, open to all, just as art can be addressed to every viewer, including the popular entertainment of the masses (see Shusterman 1988a, 752).

As Shusterman rightly observed, the concept of play allows for the overcoming of the distinction between the author and the audience in the sense of art as a participatory and active event which the public contributes to: an aspect that already underpinned Dewey's thinking[17] and was taken up by Shusterman himself. In *Pragmatist Aesthetics*, the conception of art as a participatory experience welding the hiatus between art and life is explicitly connected with the questioning of a dualism that (since Aristotle) would consider art on the model of creation, that lead to "the fetishization of art's objects with little regard for their actual use in appreciative experience" (Shusterman 2012, 54). For Shusterman, the rethinking

[17] In Dewey, the critique of philosophical dualism had already taken the form of a critique of the distinction between the aesthetic and the artistic, i.e., between the passive aspect of enjoyment and taste, and the active, creative aspect. This is a central theme in Chapter IX of *Experience and Nature*, eventually taken up in *Art as Experience*, where Dewey points out that "we have no word in the English language that unambiguously includes what is signified by the two words 'artistic' and 'aesthetic.' Since 'artistic' refers primarily to the act of production and 'esthetic' to that of perception and enjoyment, the absence of a term designating the two processes taken together is unfortunate" (Dewey 2008, 53).

of art as experience (underlying Shusterman's reading of Dewey)[18], which therefore takes its processual and dynamic dimensions into account, is actually a reminder that "artistic creation is itself a powerful creation which shapes the artist as well as the work" (*Ibid*.). This also implies a revision of the separation between the audience and the artist, "between the active maker or author and the contemplative receiver or reader" (*Ibid*.).

The conception of art as experience thus provides a way out of such dualism, since it "links artist and audience in the same twofold process" (Shusterman 2012, 55). Shusterman explicitly affirms that "art, in its creation and appreciation, is both directed making and open receiving, controlled construction and captivated absorption" (*Ibid*.). Pragmatist aesthetics has particularly emphasised the social outcomes of redefining the relationship between the audience and the author from a democratic, horizontal and anti-elitist perspective. By leveraging the concept of play and its processual character, we can open hermeneutics, along the lines of pragmatism, up to an anti-elitist rethinking of art.

3.2 Anti-elitist Potentials of Hermeneutical Aesthetics

According to Shusterman, indeed the most important topic in Dewey's aesthetics is the "privileging of *dynamic aesthetic experience* over the fixed material object which our conventional thinking identifies […] as the work of art" (Shusterman 2012, 25. Emphasis added). Moreover, he continues, "the essence and value of art are not in the mere artefacts we typically regard as art, but in the dynamic and developing experiential activity through which they are created and perceived" (*Ibid*.). Gadamer shares with pragmatism the fact that he privileges art as "experience" conceived as *Erfahrung*, and not as *Erlebnis*, i.e. as a process and not as a mere object of artistic contemplation, separated from what is not aesthetic[19]: "The work of art is *not an object* that stands over against a subject for itself. Instead the work of art has its true being in the fact that it becomes an *experience* [*Erfahrung*] that changes the person who experiences it" (Gadamer 2013, 107. Emphasis added). It is this aspect of art as interaction that both Shusterman (as well as Dewey) and Gadamer place at the heart of their conceptions (see Kremer 2018 and Romagnoli 2022).

The Gadamerian concept of "play [*Spiel*]" is an emblem of the work of art, where the subject is not the player but the process of play itself (Gadamer 2012, 107)[20]. Since all playing is a being-played (Gadamer 2012, 11), play is understood as "self-presentation [*Selbst-Darstellung*]"[21] (Gadamer 2013, 112). The concept of play can thus be explained as participation, overcoming the subject-object dichotomy. Gadamer stresses that the participants play an active role in shaping the experience: the same goes for the role of the spectator in the constitution of the artistic experience. In *The Relevance of the Beautiful,* Gadamer explicitly supports the applicability of this account to contemporary works of art that require the active participation of the public: "I think this point is enormously significant for the contemporary discussion of modern art. What ultimately concerns us here is the question of the work. One of the basic impulses of modern art has been the desire to break down the distance separating the audience, the 'consumers,' and the public from the work of art" (Gadamer, 1998, 24).

Gadamer's conception of art as play is thus closely linked to the rethinking of reception or fruition as a form of creation and participation in the work of art. In his es-

[18] See Shusterman 2001.
[19] "Aesthetic experience [*Erlebnis*] is directed towards what is supposed to be the work proper— what it ignores are the extra-aesthetic elements that cling to it, such as purpose, function, the significance of its content" (Gadamer 2013, 78).
[20] The concept of play is a fundamental topic in the field of Gadamerian studies: see in particular Vilhauer 2010.
[21] As Kremer 2018, 52, rightly points out, a conception akin to that of play is developed in Shusterman's essays *Art as Dramatization*, where "dramatization" is doubly defined as to "'put something on stage,' to take some event or story and put it in the frame of a theatrical performance or the form of a play or scenario" and as 'to treat something as, or make it seem, more exciting or important'" (Shusterman 2001a, 367-368).

say *The End of Art? From Hegel's Doctrine of the Pastness of Art to the Anti-art of Today* (1985), Gadamer states that it is necessary to "pull the rug from underneath the false alternatives of production and reception, of the aesthetics of production and the aesthetics of reception" (Gadamer 2022, 72). Moreover, in line with pragmatism, Gadamer continues: "On the side of the artist we have the anticipation of the effect which the work will have, whether as fulfilling an expectation, trumping an expectation or producing a contrast to an expectation. On the other side, the work of art is always encountered in such a way that the spectator always ascribes something like an intention or an idea to it or to the artist, who is its creator" (*Ibid*.). The work only emerges from a wholeness, which is not, however, the result of something static or planned, but "it is like a genuine dialogue, in which the unforeseeable makes its appearance and orients the course of the conversation" (Gadamer 2022, 73).

Prompted by this common point, an additional step made by Shusterman consists in showing that the strict separation between the creator and the beholder has consequences on the *social* role of art. In fact, equating art to the production of definite objects, independent of the artist who made them, neglects those forms of artistic experience in which one can hardly speak of a definite, independent work, such as dance improvisation[22]. The reassessment of the relationship between the creator and the spectator leads to dismissing the separation between fine arts and popular arts, showing a democratic understanding of art. This also relates to an attempt at social meliorism, since the isolationism of art "provides an excuse for the powers and institutions that structure our everyday life to be brutally indifferent to natural human needs for the pleasure of beauty and imaginative freedom" (Shusterman 2012, 19-20). In the wake of Dewey, Shusterman specifies how the isolation of art results in a worsening of the living conditions of the "masses", excluded from the cultural-artistic elite: "Not only does the elitist equation of art with high art alienate and intimidate many people from seeking satisfaction in the fine arts; it denies them recognition of the artistic legitimacy and potential of the so-called 'low' arts or entertainment they do enjoy – 'the movie, jazzed music, the comic strip'" (Shusterman 2012, 19).

I claim that these elements could be potentially highlighted in particular in the essays following *Truth and Method*, such as *The Relevance of the Beautiful*, where Gadamer distances himself even more from a classical conception of aesthetics that was only related to the fine arts. Based on the participatory character of play and the democratic character of the festival, as "meant for everyone" (Gadamer 1998, 39), Gadamer seems to prefigure an overcoming of the distinction between the high arts and the popular arts: "The *Threepenny Opera*, or the record of modern songs so popular with the young people of today are equally legitimate. They too have a capacity to establish communication in a way that reaches people of every class and educational background" (Gadamer 1998, 50-51).

From this point of view, Gadamer seems to be close to the pragmatist conception: although aware that the use of art as means of mass production can involve "the contagious and intoxicated enthusiasm" (*ibid*.), Gadamer states, however, that, if these means are used correctly, they are not to be rejected outright: even the arts for the masses can produce an enriching experience: "It is a profound mistake to think that our art is simply that of the ruling class. […] This is also to forget the mass media and the widespread influence that they have on the whole society. We should recognize that all these things can be used in a rational way" (Gadamer 1998, 51).

It is thus possible to affirm that Gadamer's philosophy features an aesthetic paradigm, which is open to less classical forms of art and even to technological phenom-

[22] On the topic of improvisation and its relevance for the essence of art, see Bertinetto 2022.

ena[23], as opposed to a view of hermeneutics as a conservative philosophy. The reassessment of the role of the public in the creation of the work of art conceived of as a collective process implies a focus on the social configuration of art and its role in the community. This also implies questioning the separation between "fine arts" and "popular" arts, something that is *in nuce* in Gadamer's later essays.

On this basis, just as pragmatist aesthetics has learned the situatedness and historicity of every experience from hermeneutics, developing this perspective in a social direction, hermeneutics can be reassessed in a pragmatist way, developing tools that are already present, but somewhat implicit, in Gadamerian thought. I propose that hermeneutics should be further and promisingly developed from an anti-elitist perspective, stressing the active participation of the audience in the construction of the artistic experience: this would lead hermeneutical aesthetic to embrace and expand into the realm of popular arts and "everyday aesthetic" phenomena.

Bibliography

Abrams Jarold J. (2022), *Shusterman's Somaesthetics. From Hip Hop Philosophy to Politics and Performance Art*, Boston: Brill.

Bertinetto Alessandro (2022), *Aesthetics of Improvisation*. Transl. by R.T. Valgenti, Munich: Fink Verlag.

Caputo John D. (1987), *Radical Hermeneutics*. *Repetition, Deconstruction and the Hermeneutic Project*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

D'Angelo Paolo (2012), *Pragmatist Aesthetics by Richard Shusterman. A Bridge Between the Analytics and Continentals*, in "European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy", 4, 1, 242-246.

Danto Arthur (1981), *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*, Cambridge (MA): Harvard University Press.

Davies Stephen (2015), *Defining Art and Artworlds*, in "Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism", 73, 4, 375–384.

Dewey John (2008), *Art as Experience*, in *The Later Works*, vol. 10, ed. by J. A. Boydston, Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press.

Dickie George (1969), *Defining Art*, in "American Philosophical Quarterly", 6, 3, 253-256

Dickie George (1984), *The Art Circle*, New York: Haven.

Dreon Roberta (2012), *Pragmatist Aesthetics, Twenty Years Later. Understanding Interpretation, Interpreting Understanding*, in "European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy", 4, 1.

Dreon Roberta (2018), *La "distinción de lo estético" en clave pragmatista. Dewey, Gadamer y la antropología de la cultura*, in L. Arenas, R. del Castillo, Á. M. Faerna (ed. by), *John Dewey: una estética de este mundo*, Zaragoza: Prensas De La Universidad De Zaragoza, 213-233.

Gadamer Hans-Georg (1998), *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*, ed. by Robert Bernasconi, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gadamer Hans-Georg (2013), *Truth and Method*, Translation revised by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, London: Bloomsbury.

Gadamer Hans-Georg (2022), *Ethics, Aesthetics and the Historical Dimension of Language. The Selected Writings of Hans-Georg Gadamer.* Vol. 2. Ed. and transl. by P. Vandevelde and A. Iyer. London: Bloomsbury.

George Theodore, Gert-Jan Van der Heiden (ed. by) (2021), *The Gadamerian Mind*, London: Routledge.

Hildebrand David L. (2018), *Experience is Not The Whole Story: The Integral Role of the Situation in Dewey's Democracy and Education*, in "Journal of Philosophy of Education" 52, 2, 287-300.

Kremer Alexander (2013), *Gadamer's and Shusterman's Aesthetics*, in "Pragmatism Today," 4, 1.

Kremer Alexander (2018), *Art as Experience: Gadamer and Pragmatist Aesthetics*, in R. Shusterman (ed. by), *Aesthetics Experience and Somaesthetics*, Leiden-Boston: Brill, 43-55.

Marino Stefano (2022), *Popular Music, Feminism and the "Power of the Body" in the Performance: Some Remarks on Adorno, Shusterman and Pearl Jam*, in "Popular Inquiry", 11, 2, 48-69.

Nielsen Cynthia R. (2016), *Gadamer on the Event of Art, the Other and a Gesture Toward a Gadamerian Approach to Free Jazz,* in "Journal of Applied Hermeneutics", March 15.

Nielsen Cynthia R. (2022), *Gadamer's Hermeneutical Aesthetics. Art as a Performative, Dynamic, Communal Event*, New York-London: Routledge.

Romagnoli Elena (2022), *From a Remote Pedestal to Everyday Life. The Social Role of Art in Gadamer and Dewey*, in "European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy", XIV-1.

Romagnoli Elena (2023), *Oltre l'opera d'arte. L'estetica performativa di Gadamer tra idealismo e pragmatismo*, Pisa: ETS.

Rorty Richard (1982), *Consequences of Pragmatism*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Shusterman, Richard (1988), *T.S. Eliot and the Philosophy of Criticism*, New York: Columbia University Press.

Shusterman Richard (1988a), *Review of "The Relevance of*

[23] This conception has recently been developed as a "performative" reading in Gadamer's aesthetics, as in Nielsen 2022 and Romagnoli 2023.

the Beautiful and Other Essays", in "History of European Ideas", 9, 6, 751-752.

Shusterman Richard (1989), *Analytic Aesthetics*, Oxford: Blackwell.

Shusterman Richard (1989a), *The Gadamer-Derrida Encounter: A Pragmatist Perspective*, in D.P. Michelfelder and R.E. Palmer (eds.), *Dialogue and Deconstruction. The Gadamer-Derrida Encounter*, New York: SUNY Press, 215-221.

Shusterman Richard (2001), *Pragmatism: Dewey*, in B. Gaut and D. McIver Lopes (eds), *The Routledge Companion to Aesthetics*, London and New York: Routledge, 97-206.

Shusterman Richard (2001a), *Art as Dramatization*, in "The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism", 59, 4, 363-372.

Shusterman Richard (2008), *Body Consciousness: A Philosophy of Mindfulness and Somaesthetics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Shusterman Richard (2012), *Pragmatist Aesthetics. Living Beauty, Rethinking Art*, New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000.

Shusterman Richard (ed. by) (2018), *Aesthetics Experience and Somaesthetics*, Leiden-Boston: Brill.

Shusterman (ed.) (2019), *Bodies in the Streets: The Somaesthetics of City Life*, Leiden: Brill.

Shusterman Richard (2021), *Ars Erotica: Sex and Somaesthetics in the Classical Arts of Love*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Shusterman Richard (2022), *Philosophy and the Art of Writing*, New York: Routledge.

Stroud, Scott R. (2002), *Understanding and Interpretation. Defending Gadamer in Light of Shusterman's "Beneath Interpretation"*, in "Auslegung", 22, 151-160.

Vilhauer Monica (2010), *Gadamer's Ethics of Play: Hermeneutics and the Other*, New York: Lexington Books.

Book reviews

REVIEW: *SHUSTERMAN'S SOMAESTHETICS. FROM HIP HOP PHILOSOPHY TO POLITICS AND PERFORMANCE ART*

ed. Jerold J. Abrams

Alice Dupas
alice.dupas@ens-lyon.fr

This book is definitely not the first written work dedicated to Richard Shusterman's somaesthetics. Articles on the topic abound. But for the first time, a book is devoted entirely to the practical and performative dimension of Shustermanian somaesthetics. This is important because the aforementioned dimension is rich and complex, with several ramifications, including the question of performance, the question of popular arts and hip hop in particular, and the political question.

Richard Shusterman coined the neologism of somaesthetics in the late 1990s. It refers to an embodied and sentient philosophy born of phenomenology and above all of pragmatism, which places experience at the center of philosophy and the body at the center of experience. It is then no coincidence that several chapters in the book make detailed and welcome references to Maurice Merleau-Ponty (chap. 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 11, 14), Edmund Husserl (chap. 1, 11), Charles S. Peirce (chap. 2, 4, 12), William James (chap. 2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 12, 13, 14), Richard Rorty (chap 1, 2, 5, 7, 13) and, above all, John Dewey (chap. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14). The quintessential aim of somaesthetics, like the disciplines whose heritage it claims, is to defend the body against Platonic, Christian and Cartesian condemnations and against any other somatophobic theory that would make the body the site of human weakness and cognitive deficiency, on the grounds that it is a resolutely unreflective body, the antithesis of both reason and cognition.

Right from the book's introduction, Jerold J. Abrams rightly reminds that Richard Shusterman's path to celebrating "lived embodied experience"[1] is far from anecdotal. The somaesthetician started out in analytic philosophy and ended up with a renewed version of pragmatism in somaesthetics. And it is the experience of an art form, that of dance, that provoked this transition. From this conversional moment at the end of the 1980s, Richard Shusterman's aim became that of tackling the rigidities of analytic philosophy, in particular the erroneous inferences to be found, regarding art, in Danto's Hegelian aesthetics misleadingly decoupled from everyday human life. According to Richard Shusterman, this is what is most explicitly reflected in the elitist vision of the artworld adopted by Arthur Danto in his seminal 1964[2] article on the topic[3]. To distance himself from this conceptual historicism and its strong intellectualist charge –which Jerold J. Abrams mentions and analyzes at the beginning of the second part of the book– Richard Shusterman has followed in the footsteps of Richard Rorty, and even more so in those of John Dewey, the author of the renowned work of pragmatist aesthetics: *Art as Experience*[4]. Unlike Richard Rorty, John Dewey is not suspicious of the notion of experience–which is central to the Shustermanian enterprise of revaluing the lived human body–nor does he confine his aesthetics to the literary object, and he makes the artworld depend on the political and socioeconomic factors of human life. Jerold J. Abrams' statement around the tenth page of the introduction is eloquent on this point and aptly captures Richard Shusterman's stance: "Art is everywhere. It pervades all life and society"[5]. He goes on to point out that while the artistic dimension of the lived human body has not been a major topic of discussion in the mainstream

[1] (ed.) Abrams J. J., *Shusterman's Somaesthetics. From Hip Hop Philosophy to Politics and Performance Art*, Boston, Brill, 2022, p. 4.
[2] The exact same year Arthur Danto encountered Warhol's *Brillo Boxes* at the Stable Gallery in New York.
[3] See Danto A., "The Artworld", 1964, *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 61, American Philosophical Association Eastern Division Sixty-First Annual Meeting, pp. 571-584.
[4] See Dewey J., *Art as Experience*, New York, Capricorn Books, 1934.
[5] (ed.) Abrams J. J., *Shusterman's Somaesthetics. From Hip Hop Philosophy to Politics and Performance Art*, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

aesthetic tradition, Richard Shusterman is a singular exception, yet part of a certain tradition led by Aristotle, Montaigne, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Friedrich Nietzsche, William James, George Santayana, and John Dewey. Indeed, it was in continuing this tradition that Richard Shusterman placed the body, he redefined as a soma, at the heart of his pragmatist aesthetics, reaching what Jerold J. Abrams calls the "third phase of his thought with 'somaesthetics'"[6]. This third phase, which follows the analytical phase and then aesthetic pragmatism, culminates in a very special project that makes Richard Shusterman exceed his comfortable academic role of philosopher of art. This project, called *The Adventures of the Man in Gold,* lies at the crossroads of art and life, performance and writing, philosophy and tale, and is the subject matter of the entire second part of the book.

Before that, the first part of the book alternates between critical chapters and chapters that attempt, in different ways and depending on the aim, to situate somaesthetics in a philosophical tradition that helps to explain its validity, to recall its fundamental philosophical principles, and/or to recognize its fruitful applications on an individual, social and political level. In that respect, the book does more than describe somaesthetics, which has been around for over thirty years and whose content has been made explicit on numerous occasions. It also allows its authors to criticize its foundations, open up debates, and/or propose the extension or reform of some of its features, to put forward new theses whose ambition is to advance pragmatism on a general scale. This is clear from the very first chapter written by Stefan Snaevarr, who recalls Richard Shusterman's critical stance towards metaphysics and the ontological enterprise and ends with a seven-point critique of the pragmatist and non-essentialist view of the self-supported by the somaesthetician: it would not be "entirely consistent"[7] because sufficiently ontological. This critical chapter contrasts with Alexander Kremer's laudatory chapter that follows, for whom Richard Shusterman's pragmatism cleverly combines ontology and embodied naturalism while returning philosophy to its first ancient loves (Greek and Confucian) which made it an art of living. In so doing, Richard Shusterman has revitalized philosophy, not just aesthetics. He would also have used his embodied and practical philosophy as a means of action or even emancipation against the forms of individual and social oppression that arise in everyday life. This is what Leszek Koczanowicz points out in the book's third chapter using the well-chosen concept of "somapower". It serves him to indicate the necessary relationships to be forged between the body and power within the framework of a "microphysics of emancipation" which is precisely what the interdisciplinary field of somaesthetics is striving to achieve from its everyday somatic practices. Chapter 4, written by Max Ryynänen, brings together the theme of somaesthetics as an art of living presented in Chapter 2 and the socially, culturally and politically liberating dimension of the discipline, as highlighted in Chapter 3. At the junction of these two themes, the author situates hip hop music whose deeply embodied expressive dimension and progressive pedagogical interest Richard Shusterman recognized in "The Fine Art of Rap." He did so on the basis of what he described as its postmodernist aesthetic, at once "aesthetically challenging, intellectually penetrating, and socially critical"[8]. According to Max Ryynänen, this analysis is "nothing short of revolutionary." We return to a critical tone in the fifth chapter of the book, where Tonino Griffero suggests to replace the meliorism considered too active–one could possibly say too pragmatist– of somaesthetics with a "pathic-atmospherological aesthetics" of phenomenological type which favors a form of affective passivity on the part of the embodied subject towards what aesthetically surrounds

[6] *Ibid.,* p. 12.
[7] *Ibid.,* p. 42.
[8] (ed.) Abrams J. J., *Shusterman's Somaesthetics. From Hip Hop Philosophy to Politics and Performance Art*, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

him or her ("the atmospheric feelings"[9]). Eventually, the section ends with a chapter Dorota Koczanowicz wrote to praise the impact of somaesthetics in the context of food studies. Since his 2016 essay entitled "Somaesthetics and the Fine Art of Eating," Richard Shusterman has not only expanded the range of his somaesthetics but also that of philosophy more widely, notably reopening the debate regarding the traditional dualistic vision of culture in which body and mind are split.

It should be added that the goal of this first part of the book entitled "Pragmatism and Somaesthetics" has been achieved since, by the end of it, the reader will have been reminded of the links between somaesthetics and pragmatism. More specifically, and as these general links take shape, the theoretical premises of somaesthetics are also recalled in detail so that the concrete applications of this philosophy, already apparent in the first part of the book and which will become the main focus of a second part, become apparent and gain in legitimacy. These theoretical premises could easily be summarized as follows: on the one hand, the body is a soma insofar as it is a thinking and feeling body, i.e., one that includes both body and mind and is shaped by culture and social forces as well as by nature. On the other hand, and because it is the medium through which we enter and act in the world, the soma deserves constant self-fashioning; this is the normative and meliorist part of Shustermanian somaesthetics which is at work at both the individual and the collective or socio-political level. Lastly, all this helps to explain why the soma possesses an aesthetic charge that makes it particularly effective in an artistic context. Stefan Snaevarr, for example, is right to point out that Richard Shusterman is a "somatist," someone who "thinks that the sentient body is primordial to consciousness and constitutes the ground of our coping with, and cognition of, the world." And Alexander Kremer is well advised to insist on the meliorist dimension of Shustermanian pragmatism, "according to which society should be democratized as much as possible."

The artistic dimension of somaesthetics is explored in depth in the book's second part, "Performative Philosophy and the Man in Gold." This is particularly true of the discussions on the aptly named Man in Gold, on whom the part focuses. This shining figure dressed all in gold, crosses the boundaries between reality and fiction. If the figure cannot identify itself purely and simply with Richard Shusterman, it has nonetheless seized the soma of the philosopher of art who came out somehow possessed. As such, the enigmatic figure born around 2010 in France is not easy to present or describe. And this is what the reader is reminded of in many places in the book, as on page 133 by Jerold J. Abrams: "Always attended by the photographer Yann Toma, the Man in Gold is and is not the philosopher Richard Shusterman." In Chapter 9, Yvonnes Bezrucka rightly points out that the Man in Gold does without any "philosophical discursive explanation." At the same time, Else Marie Bukdahl observes "why he is the Man in Gold, and how the Man in Gold experiences the world through the philosopher, Shusterman cannot say." Nor will Richard Shusterman break the mystery in the thirteenth chapter where he simply states that the Man in Gold "is very close to [him]."[10] One thing is certain, however: the Man in Gold is the most emblematic implementation of the practical and performative dimension of somaesthetics in the artistic sphere, no less, actually, than in life; for the Man in Gold can be assimilated to an artistic performance as well as a philosophical project, or even a somewhat mad adventure of ordinary life.

Never since *The Adventures of the Man in Gold* was published in 2016 has an essay focused (as much) on the philosophical, artistic and literary interest of the tale as well as the character it portrays. Chapters 7 to 12 consider the multiple forms this interest takes, while attempting to decipher the mysteries of the Man in Gold and the

[9] *Ibid.,* p. 86.

[10] *Ibid.,* p. 252.

content of his physical and psychological relationship with his philosopher of art and academic host. In Chapter 7, the floor is once again given to Jerold J. Abrams who mirrors the Man in Gold of the *Adventures* with Philip K. Dick's *The Golden Man*, two speechless golden men whose adventures are highly philosophical. Before doing so, Jerold J. Abrams explains that Richard Shusterman has endured what Arthur Danto would have called –though by making it signify an act of transcendence that must pragmatically be brought down to everyday life– a "transfiguration"[11] by becoming, through the photographical Man in Gold, a "gleaming and sparkling work of art"[12]. But if the Man in Gold is art, or a living work of art, he can no less take on the garb of a social figure who transcends the fictional barriers of art. In Chapter 8, Diane Richard-Allerdyce presents him as a social self, afraid of rejection, joyfully celebrating (in Jacques Lacan's sense of jouissance) human freedom and limits. But the Man in Gold is not merely binary –both a work of art and a social individual embodied in Richard Shusterman's soma. This is what Yvonnes Bezrucka aims to show in a ninth chapter in which the Man in Gold also becomes capable of being inhabited by spectators who encounter him and project their own prejudices, values and opinions. The somatic boundaries of the glittering figure are once again expanded, contributing to its mysterious hybridity and enigmatic character as much as to its ethical and pedagogical function on a collective level. Then, the poetically artistic scope of the Man in Gold can be found in Chapter 10, written by one of the *Adventures*' characters, Else Marie Bukdahl. In it, the art historian relates her links with Danish sculptors Claud Ørntoft and Marie Benthe Norheim who also appear in the tale as themselves as well as their mythical counterparts in the Man in Gold's vision. At the same time, the author insists on the interest and importance of the Shustermanian philosophy of photography which, in a somaesthetic logic, sees photography as a dynamic and complex performance rather than as an object. This is clearly evident in the radiant flows or "Somaflux" that Yann Toma captures, which cannot be reduced to the two-dimensional, static image embodied by the paper photograph, an idea that Jerold J. Abrams also recalls a few pages later. Before that, Yang Lu, in Chapter 11, does not get away from the topic of art in his analysis of the Man in Gold and the *Adventures*. As evidence of this, he focuses on the magical sculpture known as Wanmei, which appears in the last chapter of the *Adventures* and with which the Man in Gold falls in love, and also on the way in which somaesthetic practice is nourished by the foundations and the wisdom of Daoist philosophy. In the final chapter of Part Two, Jerold J. Abrams reappears for the last time to take a fresh look at another of the Man in Gold's art forms: the film (a moving and silent picture straddling the documentary and the fiction film) that Yann Toma shot about the Man in Gold, entitled *Walk the Golden Night*.

Like the first part of the book, which set itself the general ambition of recalling the links between pragmatism and somaesthetics beyond the diversity of its chapters, the second part also pursues an overhanging goal: to attest to the Shustermanian project of departitioning, i. e. departitioning of the arts (traditional arts vs. performative arts, high art vs. popular arts); departitioning of the traditional dichotomy between body and mind, sensuality and intellectuality; departitioning between verbal language and the non-discursive language of the body; departitioning between disciplines (philosophy, literature and the arts) and thus between practice and theory.

Insofar as the book allows its authors to adopt a critical point of view and open up debates on somaesthetics, and in particular on its practical dimension, it is only logical that a final part of the book should give the floor to the discipline's creator and take the following title: "Shusterman in His Own Words". It is here, in fact, that Richard Shusterman is given the opportunity to engage

[11] See Danto A., *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1981.
[12] (ed.) Abrams J. J., *Shusterman's Somaesthetics. From Hip Hop Philosophy to Politics and Performance Art*, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

in dialogue with the book's contributors and possibly to respond to their kind attacks. He does so in an extensive chapter, Chapter 13, subtitled "Remarks on the Preceding Chapters". The somaesthetician is careful to point out that he is "primarily interested in clarifying misconceptions and exploring interesting questions emerging from the previous chapters, not in winning philosophical arguments"[13]. Right up to the end of the book, then, the debates continue, refining themselves but remaining open, which not only allows the reader to form his or her own opinion on somaesthetics from a perspective of freedom specific to the somaesthetic project, but also lends the work a poetic lightness that counteracts the ordinary dogmatism of theoretical essays. One could even go so far as to say that the book enjoys, in this way and without this being a flaw, that form of vulnerability of which the Man in Gold is repeatedly designated throughout the pages, and which Richard Shusterman also reminds of on page 254: "The Man in Gold's anguish and vulnerability are central to his story"[14]. Chapter 13 is also an opportunity for the latter to remind the reader that the eclecticism of somaesthetics is likewise to be found in its reception, which affects the United States as well as Europe, notably France, and Asia, such as China. Links with China, and in particular the reasons why somaesthetics is popular there, are explored in the book's final chapter in which Richard Shusterman and Yanping Gao, Associate Professor at CASS and co-editor of China's journal *International Aesthetics*, dialogue. The chapter's interest also lies in the fact that Richard Shusterman refers in several lines to his book *Act and Affect* which to date has only been published in Chinese. Readers who wish to know more about the intimate links between somaesthetics and, more broadly, pragmatism and the question of affects and feelings, will be satiated here.

And so, concludes a book whose reading is undoubtedly experienced as an active, somatic, and affective experience. If Richard Shusterman is, in his own words, "a philosopher of experience," the reader of *Shusterman's Somaesthetics. From Hip Hop Philosophy to Politics and Performance Art* will undoubtedly be, following him, a reader of experience.

References

(ed.) Abrams J. J., *Shusterman's Somaesthetics. From Hip Hop Philosophy to Politics and Performance Art*, Boston, Brill, 2022.

Danto A., "The Artworld", 1964, *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 61, American Philosophical Association Eastern Division Sixty-First Annual Meeting, pp. 571-584.

Danto A., *The Transfiguration of the Commonplace*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1981.

Dewey J., *Art as Experience*, New York, Capricorn Books, 1934.

Shusterman R., "The Fine Art of Rap," *New Literary History*, Vol. 22, No. 3, 1991, pp. 613-632.

Shusterman R., "Somaesthetics and the Fine Art of Eating," In Sherri Irvin (ed.), *Body Aesthetics*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2016, pp. 261-280.

[13] *Ibid.,* p. 244.
[14] *Ibid.,* p. 254.

A SHORT INTRODUCTION TO EVERYDAY AESTHETICS

LEDDY, THOMAS. ***THE EXTRAORDINARY IN THE ORDINARY: THE AESTHETICS OF EVERYDAY LIFE***. PETERBOROUGH, ONTARIO: BROADVIEW PRESS, (2012), 275 PP.

Alexander Kremer
University of Szeged, Hungary
alexanderkremer2000@yahoo.com

Aesthetics as a philosophical discipline is relatively young since it was born in the 18th century. Though the theoretical roots and topics of aesthetics can be traced back to ancient philosophy, where they receive their first essential formulation in Plato's fantastic theories of beauty and art, the term was coined by Alexander Baumgarten in the middle of the 18th century (*Theoretische Ästhetik: Die grundlegende Abschnitte aus der' Ästhetica*,' 1750/1758) to define his project of a science of sensory perception (aesthesis). The role of Immanuel Kant in European development is well-known. On the one hand, he inserted aesthetics into the system of philosophy. On the other hand, the subjectivization of aesthetics also happened through the Kantian critique, as Gadamer explains in *Truth and Method*. Everybody remembers the Kantian definition of "beauty" as disinterested pleasure from the *Critique of Judgment* (1790, cf. § 17). The next step in this European tradition is George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel's world-philosophy. His absolute idealism has strong effects even today, especially in Central and Eastern Europe, where the influence of German Idealism has always been more substantial for historical reasons. In Hegel's hands, aesthetics was significantly reduced and disembodied. Hegel argues that instead of sensory perception, the ideas that fine art expresses are those that count. Hegel evaluated the term "aesthetics" as inappropriate and replaced it with "philosophy of art," more precisely with "philosophy of fine art."

Without any continuation, it is clear that the European development of aesthetics became a torso due to the dominant role of the rationalist philosophical movement. It did not deal in a proper way with either the aesthetics of nature or everyday life. (In the Anglo-Saxon world, after Dewey, and with the rise of analytic aesthetics, interest in everyday aesthetics declined radically.) That is why we can say that the emergence of nature aesthetics (in the 1970s and 1980s, mainly under the influence of Allen Carlson and Arnold Berleant) and everyday aesthetics (in the first and second decades of the third millennium) only corrected the problematic European development of aesthetics. Thus, everyday aesthetics became a recent subfield of philosophical aesthetics focusing on everyday events, settings, and activities in which the faculty of sensibility is primarily at stake. Everyday aesthetics concerns not only our recurring daily routines but also episodic events or projects. We can see it, for example, in Yuriko Saito's books (*Everyday Aesthetics*, 2007 and *Aesthetics of the Familiar. Everyday Life and World-Making*, 2017), in the discussions on the pages of the online journal *Contemporary Aesthetics* (especially between 2008 and 2015). However, it is beyond question that the best introduction to everyday aesthetics is Thomas Leddy's book, *The Extraordinary in the Ordinary: The Aesthetics of Everyday Life* (2012).

Leddy's book has two main parts. The first part, which contains the first three chapters, offers us an excellent summary of the nature and field of everyday aesthetics. It happens within a broadly historical approach (Ch. 1), from the viewpoints of aesthetic experience and aesthetic properties (Ch. 2), and with a glance at the recent developments of everyday and environmental aesthetics (Ch. 3: A. Berleant, A. Carlson, A. Haapala, and Yuriko Saito). The second part (from Ch. 4th to Ch. 8th) contains the essence, namely Leddy's Aura Theory (in Ch. 4th) and "A Bestiary of Aesthetic Terms for Everyday Context" (Ch. 5). We can also find here the "Criticism Actual and Possible" (Ch. 6), the "Everyday Surface Aesthetic Qualities" (Ch. 7), and the old topic of aesthetics, the "sublime" in the frame of everyday aesthetics (Ch. 8).

At the heart of Leddy's book, however, is his Aura Theory, which defines both the range of objects of everyday aesthetics and the level of aesthetic experience. Therefore, I focus only on his Aura Theory in my review.[1] But what does Leddy mean by "aura"? The objects of everyday aesthetics are clearly not works of art, for which we require not only individual aesthetic experience but also a kind of objectivity. It is not the objectivity of a mountain, tree, or lion existing independently of the human psyche but intersubjective objectivity in Rorty's sense,[2] which manifests itself in everyday life as a consensus. For the objectivity of artistic creation, that is, for the objectivity of artistic value, the judgment of the "subjective poet," his own value judgment, is not enough. Instead, we need the consensus of a majority of a community (e.g., H-G. Gadamer's community of communication or A. Danto's art world) regarding the objective artistic value of a work of art.

In the case of everyday aesthetics, however, we are not dealing with works of art but with even the simplest objects and processes, i.e., "things" of our ordinary life in general. These, of course, do not necessarily result in aesthetic experience. But at least since John Dewey's *Art as Experience*, we have known in European culture that every experience has the potential for aesthetic experience ("an experience"). What is perceived, therefore, can also result in *aesthetic experience*. (Not in a work of art!) And for this, it is "sufficient" that the perceived "thing" is put into proper context. Our daily lives are primarily chaotic, fragmented, and frustrating, i.e., unfulfilled. However, in some cases, according to Dewey, it can be ordered, integrated, and can lead to fulfillment and satisfaction:

> A piece of work is finished in a way that is satisfactory; a problem receives its solution; a game is played through; a situation, whether that of eating a meal, playing a game of chess, carrying on a conversation, writing a book, or taking part in a political campaign, is so rounded out that its close is a consummation and not a cessation. (LW 10:42)

Leddy seems to call something like this an *aura,* but he distances himself from both J. Dewey and W. Benjamin in a sense. (More on that later.) In Leddy, the "aura" seems to be a phenomenal[3] construction born out as the ordinary thing (object, process, happening) is given to us in an aesthetic experience. This phenomenal construction is created by ourselves and by which even the simplest everyday thing can acquire a special, particular significance that the given thing alone does not have. So, there is only the possibility of an aura, just as the possibility of aesthetic experience with Dewey.[4] That is when, when placed in a specific context, we create for ourselves a phenomenon with aesthetic properties that go beyond the mere use of a given thing. We create it with our aesthetic attitude, putting things in a special aesthetic dis-

[1] It does not mean that Leddy's book does not contain an extremely rich fabric of historical and thematic analysis of different aesthetic movements and discussions.

[2] Cf. R. Rorty: „For Deweyan pragmatists like me, history and anthropology are enough to show that there are no unwobbling pivots, and that seeking objectivity is just a matter of getting as much intersubjective agreement as you can manage." (R. Rorty: *Philosophy and Social Hope*. Penguin Books, 1999, p. 15.)

[3] Leddy mentions Husserl's phenomenology, but it can also be grasped by Heidegger's distinction between *phenomenological* and *phenomenal*: "Now that we have delimited our preliminary conception of phenomenology, the terms 'phenomenal' and phenomenological' can also be fixed in their signification. That which is given and explicable in the way the phenomenon is encountered is called 'phenomenal'; this is what we have in mind when we talk about "phenomenal structures." Everything which belongs to the species of exhibiting and explicating and which goes to make up the way of conceiving demanded by this research is called 'phenomenological.'" (*Being and Time*, § 7 C)

[4] The work of art does not exist in itself (neither for Dewey, Gadamer, Shusterman, or Leddy) but only in the experience of the recipient, which thus always implies some kind of non-conceptual understanding. And this is nothing more than the effect of the work of art itself. That is, without theoretical acceptance of the significance of experience, it is impossible to understand the way of being, functioning, and impact of artistic works. Artistic creation cannot be mere theory. One of the poles of a work of art is always objectivity ("ergon," not just "energeia"); that is, it contains at least one material moment that can be grasped sensuously. Even in such highly spiritual art forms as music or literature, we can find tangible and material moments (whether the vibrations of the air, the fixation of a text in the form of traditional or digital signs, etc.). However, this is only one side of the artwork, which remains a possibility without competent reception. For example, a Greek statue that has been underground or buried for centuries is only an opportunity for a work of art, which becomes a reality only through competent reception. However, without a competent audience, contemporary music, paintings, sculptures, poems, novels, plays, photographs, films, etc., also remain mere possibilities for works of art. Artistic creation, then, is the lived actuality of meaning embodied in a meaningful experience.

course, identical to what Leddy captured with the concept of "aura."

*

Dewey's excellent *Art as Experience* influenced Leddy extremely strongly since he sees him as "one of the originators of the aesthetics of everyday life" (Leddy 2012, 97). Leddy knows that "there is an immense advantage in seeing art as a kind of experience as opposed to a collection of items" (Leddy 2012, 101).[5] Nevertheless, Leddy has also distanced himself not only from J. Dewey but also from W. Benjamin. As to Dewey, Leddy emphasizes, on the one hand, that we do not need every characteristic of Dewey's "an experience" to find or create a phenomenon with aura:

> I would not deny that there is such a thing as "an experience" in Dewey's sense, although it may be difficult to find one that has all of the qualities mentioned. Nor is it clear that everything we would ordinarily call "an experience" would have all these qualities. (Leddy 2012, 69)

On the other hand, it is also clear to Leddy that "for Dewey, inchoate experiences cannot be aesthetic" (Leddy 2012, 98). However, Leddy knows that "something can have a unity that is quite ordinary. Moreover, fragmented, non-unified things can have an aura, for example, a fragment of an ancient sculpture" (Leddy 2012, 180).

Leddy also knows that speaking about "aura" in connection with artworks makes us remember, first of all, Walter Benjamin's theory. However, Leddy goes on his own path:

"People sometimes use the term "aura" in a way similar to mine. However, I will be adapting it for my own purposes. "Aura" will be associated in the minds of many with Walter Benjamin, who spoke of the loss of aura in the age of mechanical reproduction. He thought of aura as having to do with unique existence and authenticity. That is, the presence of the original carries with it an aura of authenticity. An original painting has an aura, in this view, that a copy or a photograph of that painting lacks. I will not be using the term this way, i.e., referring to the sense of authenticity possessed by an original." (Leddy 2012, 178-179) In Leddy's opinion, the original artworks do not lose their aura if we reproduce them in photographs; the photographs also can have aura (cf. Leddy, 2012, 181).

*

It also follows from all of this that we can accept not only the primary claim that anything can become a work of art or part of it if placed in the proper context. (E.g., Duchamp: *Fountain*; Picasso: *Guernica*; Dali: *The Persistence of Memory*; etc.) We also need to accept the statement (since aesthetic experience can be brought about not only by a work of art but also by any natural or social "thing") that aesthetic experience outside artistic creation can be completely individual and subjective. The intersubjective objectivity usually required for works of art is no longer necessary here. It also follows from the previous sentences that it is pointless to try to define the subject area of everyday aesthetics since anything can result in an individual aesthetic experience. These aesthetic experiences can be of quite different levels and strengths, as Leddy also mentions in his book, separating significant and superficial aesthetic qualities.[6]

Nevertheless, if we look at Leddy's everyday aesthetics from this perspective, Shusterman's reasonable, logical counterarguments also lose their strength. Shusterman emphasizes, first of all (rightly), that somaesthetics is ab ovo everyday aesthetics since "Somaesthetics certainly includes important dimensions of everyday aesthetics because (as the soma is the medium of our lives) somaesthetics is centrally involved in the art of living, which involves many everyday activities." Thus, "as the soma is necessarily and actively engaged in our everyday

[5] It is worth noting that Gadamer says the same in *Truth and Method*: „the work of art is not an object that stands over against a subject for itself. Instead the work of art has its true being in the fact that it becomes an experience that changes the person who experiences it." (H. G. Gadamer: *Truth and Method*. (Continuum, 2004, p. 103)

[6] Cf. "Everyday Surface Aesthetic Qualities," Chapter 7th.

activities, somaesthetics, with its meliorative impulse to improve the quality of our experience, includes matters of everyday aesthetics."[7] However, he also formulates two possible critical arguments in this interview for the future:[8]

> Pragmatist aesthetics advocated the aesthetic value of practices outside the realm of fine art in order to oppose art's compartmentalization from our ordinary lives and experiences. The pragmatist principle of continuity urged the continuity of life and art, insisting that art emerged from our practices of living and that art's intensifying of experience fed back into our lives, enriching them and sometimes even significantly reshaping them. *I worry that a dominant focus on everyday aesthetics in opposition to the traditions of fine art could result in a similar compartmentalization, obscuring once again the important relations and continuities between art and life.* (Emphasis by A. Kremer)

Leddy does not speak about any opposition between everyday aesthetics and fine arts in his book. The actual case is the opposite: he emphasizes these two spheres' permanent and mutual connections. The erudite representatives of everyday aesthetics do not speak and write about an opposing relationship but rather about a dialectic one. Shusterman's second criticism is a political argument:

> This brings me to my second concern regarding our contemporary enthusiasm for everyday aesthetics. It could be characterized as a broadly political worry. Exhortations to focus on appreciating the beauty of our everyday lives instead of focusing on superior works of art can dull our critical, meliorist consciousness by giving us the impression that the everyday phenomena are good enough and do not require serious improvement. But this belies the troubling conditions of everyday life for too many people.[9]

There is indeed a risk of this happening in the case of some people. However, with that said, there are more advantages to Leddy's proposal than disadvantages. The disadvantage cannot be more significant than the already existing tide of kitsch thrown at us by the entertaining "cultural industry." Of course, mass art as a cultural industry is not the same as popular culture. On the other hand, Thomas Leddy's and Yuriko Saito's suggestions can open up a public and healthy discourse where we can openly and honestly talk about our individual aesthetic experiences. After all, the possibility of communication already has the potential for development. It has at least the potential to accept that aesthetics is at least a three-legged table: aesthetics of artworks, aesthetics of nature, and everyday aesthetics.

[7] Shusterman will, of course, argue at length here and elsewhere for the legitimacy and importance of the everyday aesthetics, but here and now the differences are interesting.
[8] Cf. the last question and Shusterman's answer in the interview published in this issue: "Pragmatism, Sex, and Somaesthetics: An Interview with Richard Shusterman," by Alexander Kremer.
[9] Cf. the same interview.

Design by Thomas Kremer
Cover and layout by Dóra Szauter

PRAGMATIST FORUM - CEPF
THE CENTRAL-EUROPEAN