

Contemporary Pragmatism

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John R. Shook

and

Paulo Ghiraldelli, Jr.

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Guest Editor Introduction to a Symposium on Robert Westbrook's *Democratic Hope:* *Pragmatism and the Politics of Truth*

Brendan Hogan

This symposium on Robert Westbrook's *John Dewey and American Democracy* explores the continuing relevance of pragmatism for democratic political theory.

Robert Westbrook's *John Dewey and American Democracy*, published in 1991, was a rare book insofar as it was hailed by intellectuals whose disciplinary aims were very different from each other.¹ As the commentators on the back of the book indicated, scholars working in sociology, English, and philosophy all had reason to turn to this work in addition to those in Westbrook's own field of history. Besides offering a compelling narrative, *John Dewey and American Democracy* also contained arguments that convincingly demonstrated theses concerning a variety of longstanding debates regarding Dewey's theory of education, his social philosophy, and his political theory. Far from being a strictly historical document, the text showed the relevance of Dewey's philosophy to contemporary democratic theory. Specifically, by relating Dewey to issues that have emerged in the New Left and more generally in political discourse concerning the norms of democracy, as well as by emphasizing Dewey's pluralism, did *John Dewey and American Democracy* serve as a major touchstone in pragmatism's "renewal." These democratic theoretic strands of this rich work are most pertinent in approaching Westbrook's latest effort at working out the consequences of pragmatism, *Democratic Hope: Pragmatism and the Politics of Truth*.²

In *Democratic Hope*, Westbrook extends the investigation into pragmatism and the relationship between democracy and philosophy. Specifically, two questions, regarding the political valence of pragmatism and the relationship of truth to politics, and more specifically to democracy, drive this text. These questions are asked of the classical pragmatists Peirce, James, and Dewey, and brought into a more contemporary context through Sidney Hook and the question of pragmatism's relationship to Marxism. Westbrook extends these questions of democracy and philosophy to contemporary neopragmatism. Cornel

West, Hilary Putnam, Cheryl Misak, and the late Richard Rorty are all brought into the conversation by Westbrook's inquiry into the resources that contemporary thinkers in the pragmatic vein have to address the problems of humans and not just the problems of philosophers. Specifically, Westbrook employs Cheryl Misak's arguments for the "truth-aptness" of moral claims in his argument for a political valence to philosophical pragmatism. In addition he argues for a commitment to a set of practices that foster the habits necessary to carry out the kind of discourse that achieving the truth claims that a truth apt moral discourse is committed. These practices bear a normative family resemblance to those put forward by advocates of fostering the public virtues of civic republicanism.

The critics assembled for this symposium are reflective of the interdisciplinary scope and impact of Westbrook's work. That a historian has produced such a rich source of reflection on themes central to pragmatic self-understanding as truth, democracy, and politics is another testament to the author's ongoing ability to contribute to the discourse of pragmatism in varying registers in the same book. It is also fitting given the varieties of interests and contributions the classical pragmatists made to American intellectual life. Eric MacGilvray and Brendan Hogan both query the role, resources, and desirability for the epistemological justification in democratic theory, and specifically in *Democratic Hope*. Robert Talisse argues that the resources for pragmatic democratic theory cannot be drawn from the Deweyan stream of pragmatism given its commitment to both substantive goods on the one hand, and pluralism on the other. Robert Westbrook's replies take into consideration these criticisms, extending his argument for democratic hope that is supportable by practices committed to the implicit commitment to moral claims that are truth-apt.

NOTES

1. Robert Westbrook, *John Dewey and American Democracy* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991).

2. Robert Westbrook, *Democratic Hope: Pragmatism and the Politics of Truth* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2005).

Brendan Hogan
Assistant Professor of Philosophy
Philosophy Department
Harstad 112
Pacific Lutheran University
Tacoma, Washington 98447
United States

Pragmatism and the Epistemic Defense of Democracy

Eric MacGilvray

Robert Westbrook argues in *Democratic Hope* that for the pragmatist “all believers [must] be democrats simply by virtue of their desire to assert their beliefs as true,” and that they must therefore “open their beliefs to the widest possible range of experience and inquiry.” I argue against this view that doubt, not belief, lies at the center of the pragmatic theory of inquiry, and that our beliefs can be placed into doubt only by those whom we consider to be epistemically reliable. It follows that any connection between pragmatism and democracy must be empirical and not conceptual in nature.

When I first became interested in pragmatism more than ten years ago, one of the first books that I turned to was Robert Westbrook’s seminal intellectual biography of John Dewey, *John Dewey and American Democracy*.¹ It provided me with an invaluable road map through Dewey’s dauntingly large and wide-ranging corpus, the dauntingly wide range of political movements and figures that he was associated with, and the dauntingly complicated question of the relationship between his life and his thought. As I worked my way through Dewey’s writings over the next several years, I would often turn to Westbrook’s book for help in clarifying Dewey’s ideas, placing them within their proper context, and getting a sense of what I should look at next. It is still not at all uncommon for me to reach for it when I need to brush up on some point of Deweyana. So I was very pleased to see that Westbrook has a new collection of essays on pragmatism and democratic theory,² and to be asked to comment on it in this forum. I am also very pleased to be able to begin my comments by saying that this book is very much up to the high standard set by the Dewey biography, and that it is sure to be a resource to me and to anyone who is interested in the history of pragmatism or of American democratic theory for a long time to come.

I would like to use my space here to take issue not with any of the particulars of Westbrook’s narrative, but rather with what I take to be its unifying theme: the claim that pragmatism provides, or can provide, a justification of participatory democracy, and in particular that it provides what Westbrook calls an “epistemic defense” or “epistemological justification” of

democracy. (44–51, 175–188, 194–200) I do not for the purposes of this essay wish to take issue with participatory democracy itself, though I will raise some doubts on the question of whether it is best justified in epistemic terms. My primary aim is to take issue with two stronger claims: on the one hand, that pragmatism taken in itself provides, or can provide, a *justification* of participatory democracy, and on the other hand, that to be a pragmatist, or at least to be a pragmatist who thinks about politics, is to be *committed* to participatory democracy: as Westbrook puts it, that “democratic pragmatism” is a “redundant” turn of phrase. (9)

The epistemic defense of democracy comes in two flavors; one rooted in the political writings of John Dewey and the other, more recent in origin, in the rather less political writings of Charles Sanders Peirce. Westbrook engages fruitfully with both, but I will focus here, as he does, on the latter version, which has been most prominently defended in the work of Cheryl Misak.³ In this form the epistemic defense of democracy rests on four interrelated claims: (1) that all actors – and thus, *a fortiori*, all political actors – hold beliefs that they take and assert to be true, and that this is indeed part of what it means to hold a belief; (2) that truth is, as Peirce argues, simply the ideal endpoint of inquiry – “the opinion which is fated to be ultimately agreed to by all who investigate”⁴; (3) that the most reliable means of conducting inquiry is by using experimental or (as Peirce prefers to say) “scientific” methods, so that a belief-holder is, whether he or she realizes it or not, committed by virtue of the very fact of holding beliefs to using these methods; and finally (4) that scientific methods of inquiry are inherently democratic in nature, in the sense that they entail a commitment to consider and (if possible) rebut any and all opposing arguments and evidence. According to this line of argument, to refuse or otherwise fail to provide the conditions necessary for the creation of a genuinely democratic community of inquiry is to betray one’s own overriding interest in pursuing and discovering the truth. As Westbrook puts it, pragmatism so understood “requires that all believers be democrats simply by virtue of their desire to assert their beliefs as true. Those who refuse to take the experience of others seriously or, worse, choose to exclude that experience from consideration altogether are doing their own beliefs a disservice by not allowing them to answer to experience and thereby denying that they are truth-apt. Indeed, these beliefs can no longer be said, properly speaking, to be beliefs.” (50)

The epistemic defense of democracy is similar in form to the defense of deliberative democracy that has been developed by Karl-Otto Apel and Jürgen Habermas: both arguments appeal to features of a practice in which all human beings are undeniably engaged – the assertion of propositions – in order to leverage a commitment to a set of substantive political ends. It differs in arguing that political philosophers should refrain from resting their arguments on transcendental – or, as Habermas prefers to say, “quasi-transcendental” – claims about the nature of language; the epistemic defense is instead put forth as a falsifiable hypothesis about actual practices of belief and assertion. It is

important to emphasize, however, that the conceptual claim about the democratic implications of holding and asserting beliefs is *not* taken to be falsifiable, only the claim that the practice of belief-holding and – asserting is as widespread as the Peircean pragmatist says it is: as Misak puts it, the epistemic defense of democracy rests on “a hypothetical imperative of the sort: if you want beliefs which will withstand the force of experience, then do such-and such,” combined with “[t]he additional empirical or sociological claim” that “virtually everyone claims to be after such beliefs.”⁵ On this account it is possible, *pace* Habermas, to be a purely strategic communicator without renouncing one’s status as a rational agent, and such people, if they exist, are not logically compelled to admit the superiority of democratic practices of inquiry – though if they were to slip up and assert the truth of their beliefs then we would be entitled to use our democratic hypothetical imperative against them.

The epistemic defense of democracy cannot, Misak argues, provide us with a “knock-down argument” against such people; it merely “gives us something to say to ourselves about why they are mistaken.”⁶ Nevertheless, this “something” is enough to place their views beyond the pale of legitimate political discourse. We might ask, of course, how we can square the demand that we take the arguments and experiences of all people into account with a refusal to consider certain views out of hand. We might also ask how we can square the admission that the epistemic defense of democracy only gives us “something to say to ourselves” about why our opponents are wrong with Misak’s insistence (in opposition to Rorty) that we need something more than “historically conditioned” or “parochial” reasons for opposing them in the first place. It would seem, then, that proponents of the epistemic defense of democracy are caught between two apparently conflicting intuitions. On the one hand, they are guided by the epistemological intuition that truth claims, and claims to epistemic authority more generally speaking, are necessarily rooted in the beliefs and practices of particular communities of inquiry, and can claim no deeper grounding than this. On the other hand, they are guided by the moral intuition that we must be able to appeal to something more than our own “parochial” beliefs and practices if we are to respond to (what we take to be) the morally abhorrent beliefs and practices of others. It is this latter intuition, I want to argue, that must give way if we are to preserve our allegiance to pragmatism, as I believe we should. And once we abandon this intuition, we must also, as I now hope to show, abandon the epistemic defense of democracy itself.

The claim that the beliefs of, say, the Nazi (to take Westbrook’s preferred example) pose a challenge to the beliefs of the pragmatic democrat that needs to be answered is, in fact, a politically salient example of exactly the kind of mistake about belief that pragmatism was designed to avoid. A belief is, for Peirce and the other founding pragmatists, a rule of action; it establishes a habit, and so to believe a proposition is simply to be prepared to act upon it. It is from this conceptual premise that Peirce derives his pragmatic maxim: that “different beliefs are distinguished by the different modes of action to which they give

rise.”⁷ It follows that on Peircean grounds the mere assertion of a belief does not commit one to further inquiry on its behalf, because belief is, as Peirce puts it, “thought at rest.” The origins of inquiry lie for Peirce not in belief but in its opposite, doubt, and doubt follows not from habit but from the privation of habit. As long as our habits, our rules of action, reliably serve our purposes, as long as “the premises are not in fact doubted,” then we need not and will not conduct further inquiry on their behalf.⁸ To hold otherwise is to put the pragmatic cart before the horse. Indeed, Peirce positively urges us not to pretend to doubt what we do not in fact doubt, and this injunction provides the basis for his rejection of Cartesian skepticism and of the entire epistemological tradition to which it gave rise. After all, to say that the assertion of a belief commits one to responding to all challenges to it is to say, *a fortiori*, that it commits one to answering the Cartesian, which is, as I have just suggested, exactly the position that pragmatism was designed to avoid. The case of the intransigent Nazi is, in this respect, no different from the case of the intransigent skeptic.

It seems wrong, then, or at least an oversimplification, to say that “[p]ragmatist epistemology alone is enough to provide grounds for criticism of those who refuse to open their beliefs to the widest possible range of experience and inquiry” (197) – let alone to suggest that this is a “relatively modest notion of what deliberation requires.” (198) This is tantamount to saying that all objections and challenges to our existing beliefs provide us with sufficient grounds for doubting them. On the contrary, the Peircean will insist that doubt does not always or even usually follow from the mere fact that other people happen to disagree with us. Rather, our beliefs can be placed into doubt only by those whom we consider to be epistemically reliable: as Peirce says, “the mere putting of a proposition into the interrogative form does not stimulate the mind to any struggle to alter belief,” but “if disciplined and candid minds carefully examine a theory and refuse to accept it, *this* ought to create doubts in the mind of the author of the theory.”⁹ Needless to say, once we admit the necessity of distinguishing between epistemically reliable and epistemically unreliable interlocutors – once we face up to the problem of determining who has a disciplined and candid mind and who does not – then we must also admit that a commitment to democracy (or more precisely, to strict egalitarianism in inquiry) is not and cannot be an entailment of the mere fact of holding and asserting beliefs. If our concern is to hold true beliefs, then we are going to have to make judgments – fallible and revisable judgments, to be sure, but judgments nonetheless – about which challenges to our existing beliefs are worth attending to.

If doubt, and not knowledge or belief, lies at the center of the pragmatic theory of inquiry, then it follows that pragmatism taken in itself can provide us with nothing more than a method for clarifying where our doubts on a particular question lie and what we would have to do in order to resolve them. The epistemic defense of democracy, if it is to be expressed in pragmatic terms, must therefore rest not on a hypothetical imperative derived from a conceptual claim about the nature of belief, but rather on an empirical claim about the fruitfulness

of relatively egalitarian versus relatively inegalitarian procedures of inquiry in resolving actually existing doubt. Experimental science, for example, is egalitarian in a certain sense, at least in theory – it does not, or should not, matter where a hypothesis comes from, or whether it comports with traditional views, but only whether it can be experimentally verified. But it is definitely *not* egalitarian in the sense of being radically participatory or inclusive, and it seems unlikely that it would be better practiced if it was.¹⁰ When Misak says, then, in a passage that Westbrook quotes twice (46, 195), that “a true belief is such that would withstand doubt were we to inquire as far as we fruitfully could on the matter,” a belief that “would not be overturned by recalcitrant experience and argument,” she elides the fact that all of the substantive terms in this definition – “withstand,” “doubt,” “inquire,” “fruitfully,” “overturned,” “recalcitrant,” “experience,” “argument,” and (especially) “we” – are necessarily and appropriately open to interpretation and contestation. Not only are there perfectly reasonable ways of reading this statement that would countenance highly inegalitarian procedures of inquiry, there are also highly effective communities of inquiry – including scientific ones – that are in fact organized along highly inegalitarian lines.

As I see it, the strongest case that can be made for there being a link between pragmatism and the epistemic defense of democracy would be to say that the most salient doubts we have about democracy have to do with its efficacy as a means of arriving at wise or rational or reasonable decisions about matters of public concern, and that further inquiry into this matter is therefore warranted as a means either of buttressing or of refining – I choose my euphemism carefully – our commitment to democratic ideals. The epistemic defense of democracy says something stronger than this: that we somehow already *know* that democracy, in its radically participatory form, is epistemically superior to other forms of rule, because we know something about the relationship between belief, truth, and inquiry that points in a decisively democratic direction. This seems to me to get things backwards. This is what we would *like* to be the case, if we are participatory democrats, and so this is the claim that we are committed to vindicating through experimental inquiry, if we are participatory democrats: that seems to me to be the best way of stating the issue pragmatically.

How then *are* we to defend democracy, if the epistemic defense holds at best an uncertain promise? The one case in which it would unquestionably be rational to pursue a democratic method of inquiry is if the aim of our inquiry is to find out not what we *should* do, but rather what people *think* about what we should do. This gives us a clue to the real grounds that we have for adhering to the democratic ideal. We do not believe, I would argue, that everyone should have a say in answering the question of what we should do as a political community because we think that following this policy will maximize our chances of finding the right answers to the difficult problems that we face – unless we stipulate in a trivial procedural sense that the right answer is simply

whatever answer we happen to agree to. Rather, we believe on moral grounds – if we are democrats – that everyone should have a say in making decisions that profoundly affect their lives, especially when those decisions also authorize the use of coercive force over those who refuse or otherwise fail to abide by them. As I see it, then, democracy is best defended not in epistemic but in moral terms: a commitment to democracy is not a matter of showing respect for the truth, but rather of showing ourselves and our fellow citizens the respect that we are due as human beings.

The central argument of Westbrook's biography of Dewey is that Dewey was a social democratic of a fairly radical stripe, and he was so successful in making the case that it is easy to forget that this was not always the accepted view. In *Democratic Hope* he extends this argument to the pragmatic tradition as a whole, and though he is able to provide a fascinating and compelling account of the various ways in which pragmatism and democratic theory have been intertwined, I am not persuaded that the connection here is an intrinsic one. I would argue instead that pragmatism and democratic theory have been closely linked simply because pragmatism is a problem-oriented brand of philosophy, and political thought over the last century or more has, especially in the United States, been centrally concerned with the problem of democracy: with what it means, and with whether and to what extent it is or can be a viable and attractive form of government under modern conditions.

Seldom has this story been told more thoughtfully than in this book, and nothing that I have said here is meant to detract from the rich narrative that Westbrook provides. Instead, I would like to re-frame that narrative by suggesting that pragmatists have not made significant contributions to democratic theory because they have had a decisive – if sometimes inchoate – argument for democracy in their back pocket. Rather, they have made significant contributions to democratic theory because they have had an especially clear understanding of what it would mean for democracy, or for any other political ideal, to be justified, and because they have sought to bring this understanding to our attention, and to illustrate by force of example its implications for democratic theory and practice.

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NOTES

1. Robert B. Westbrook, *John Dewey and American Democracy* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991).
2. Robert B. Westbrook, *Democratic Hope: Pragmatism and the Politics of Truth* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2005). All internal page references are to this book.
3. See especially Cheryl Misak, *Truth, Politics, Morality: Pragmatism and Deliberation* (New York: Routledge, 2000), and also Robert B. Talisse, *Democracy After Liberalism: Pragmatism and Deliberative Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2005). The roots of the Deweyan version of the epistemic defense can be traced to Hilary Putnam's "A Reconsideration of Deweyan Democracy" in *Renewing Philosophy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992), pp. 180–200, discussed by Westbrook at pp. 175–188.
4. Charles Sanders Peirce, "How to Make Our Ideas Clear," in *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, ed. Charles Hartshorne, Paul Weiss, and Arthur W. Burks (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1931–1958), vol. 5, p. 268.
5. Misak, *Truth, Politics, Morality*, p. 107.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
7. Peirce, "How to Make Our Ideas Clear," p. 255.
8. Peirce, "The Fixation of Belief," in *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, vol. 5, p. 233.
9. Peirce, "Fixation of Belief," p. 232; "Some Consequences of Four Incapacities," in *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, vol. 5, p. 157 (emphasis added).
10. For further discussion see my *Reconstructing Public Reason* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004), pp. 112–116.

Eric MacGilvray
Assistant Professor of Political Science
Department of Political Science
Ohio State University
Columbus, Ohio 43210
United States

Comments on Westbrook's *Democratic Hope*

Brendan Hogan

Westbrook provides an epistemological argument for democracy which features Cheryl Misak's version of "truth aptness" in moral and political discourse. Importantly, practices of citizenship are also pointed to in providing the habits necessary to engage in inquiry that democracy requires. However, while the regulative ideal of Misak's epistemology includes pragmatic reflection regarding multiple possible answers to moral questions and fallibilism with regard to these answers, it is still unclear what paying the compliment of truth to these beliefs accomplishes in terms of practice, except to mark an exclusionary and potentially unpragmatic moment for democratic inquiry.

The motivation for these remarks stems from a particular reading of John Dewey's philosophy. This reading recognizes and attempts to demonstrate and elucidate the centrality of his theory of action or agency to the areas of metaphilosophy, inquiry, the philosophy of social science, and ethics. These are widely recognized to be the consequences of what has been termed the pragmatic version, as opposed to Kant's version, of the primacy of practical reason. The primacy of practical reason privileges the role of what philosophers have called imagination, often times only to then derogate its subservient function to the role of reason in thinking, inquiry, and philosophical speculation. In following this turn to practical reason, the imagination emerges as a central feature illuminating the purposes of engaging in philosophy, arbitrating truth claims, and testing our norms in action. In light of this and as an opening remark, I suggest that Westbrook's concluding Jamesian inversion of Lasch's comment regarding hope is indebted to a pragmatic imagination:

Hope implies a deep-seated trust in life that appears absurd to those who lack it. The best is always what the hopeful are aiming for. Their trust in life would not be worth much if it had not enjoyed successes in the past, while the knowledge that the future holds further successes demonstrates the continuing need for hope. A dark despair that things will somehow only get worse furnishes a poor substitute for the disposition to see things through even when they do. (240)¹

But how are we to consider hope *truly* hope if qualified by ‘knowledge’? I take the deep pragmatic point about hope is that we don’t have knowledge that “the future holds continuing successes.” I think pragmatism can be read, unfortunately, either way. That is, the emphasis on the stability, continuity, *synechism*, or habits of experience can lead to the conclusion that we have ‘knowledge’ that the future holds further successes. Whereas, the emphasis on precariousness, *tychism*, and the shattering of habits can lead to the conclusion that nothing is guaranteed; in fact, even our destruction may be imminent. This is the sense in which Dewey always vehemently denied he was an optimist, and Charles Peirce famously said that the community of inquiry can be “perverted indefinitely.” It is the epistemological tenor of this closing remark, however colloquially intended, that serves to frame my criticisms. I will focus on the presence of an epistemological worry in the book particularly in its reliance on the work of Cheryl Misak, Robert Talisse, and others that causes at least one problem. This problem can be captured by an alternative subtitle I propose to *Democratic Hope*: “The need for a recovery of epistemology.”

The desire for, and the attempt to, provide an epistemological argument for democracy that Westbrook encourages features Misak’s version in particular and I will be focusing on the work her position does in the book. This attempt immediately evokes, in my opinion, much recent pragmatic investigation into the normative conditions of communication akin to the Habermasian edifice of communicative action. It is a virtue of *Democratic Hope* that some practices of citizenship are pointed to in providing the habits necessary to engage in inquiry that democracy requires. While cognizant of the obstacles to realizing the American democratic ideal and the additional burdens of citizenship, Westbrook does not cash out alternative sociological theses as to how these goals will be realized. In a sense, while the regulative ideal of Misak’s epistemology includes pragmatic reflection regarding multiple possible answers to moral questions and fallibilism with regard to these answers, it is still unclear what the compliment of truth to these beliefs accomplishes in terms of practice, except to mark a resting point for inquiry. As compared with the Habermasian version, however, speech acts investigating the validity of moral judgments are geared toward rightness as opposed to truth. The pragmatic version of moral objectivity on offer from Misak has the distinctive feature of eschewing the restrictions of moral judgments from truth-status. But what is gained when we do not invoke correspondence yet still claim truth? What is the difference that makes a difference between a Habermasian version of normative rightness and a Misakian version of moral truth, given that the dialogical, cognitivist, and objective character of both claims is analogous?

In invoking Misak as the philosophical exemplar for providing a political valence to pragmatism, Westbrook invites questions. In short, what pragmatic advance does Misak provide that Habermas does not? Likewise, what pitfalls of discourse ethics does she avoid, from a pragmatic perspective? At first glance there is the virtue of not invoking the entire edifice and architectonic of

Habermas, and that it is not couched in what Glenn Newey referred to as Habermas's "brontosaurian prolixity."² However, the moral cognitivism of their respective positions is hard to distinguish, given that both Habermas and Misak's central source in pragmatism, Peirce, is read as the source of a binding deontological commitment of any speaker with beliefs to the normative structure of regulative ideals of inquiry, discourse, and thus, morality.

In addition, Misak suggests that there is a flexibility to inquiry that does not rely on any fixed methodology. But this only seems like a concession if one is not talking to a pragmatist. Habermas, too, offers the option of revising the procedures of moral discourse and the public exchange of evidence, social inquiry, argument, and will formation. But neither Misak nor Habermas are willing to suggest that the norms of inquiry *as* inquiry are not constituted by certain principles whose rejection is self-contradictory and thus non-revisable. It is to Peirce and to Dewey's benefit that they articulated a theory of principles of inquiry that are in principle open to complete revision. Habermas has only partially owned up to the demands in terms of the ethics and the *ethos* required by such an argument for democracy, and it yet hangs in the empty air of ideal speech act theory. A tension remains in Habermas's own attempt to recognize the practical and existential conditions of accomplishing unregulated and ideal discourse. In addition, while Habermas invokes the conditions communicative action as hypothetical counterfactual regulative ideals in a Peircean fashion, his description of them as 'quasi-transcendental' belies the 'fallibilist consciousness' that Westbrook approvingly cites from Habermas' oft-quoted footnote in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*.

Like Misak, what Habermas refers to as the moral cognitivism of his position also denies the stronger claim to correspondence with objective features of the world. However, the eschewing of correspondence to features of the world, and specifically circumscribing them within regulative ideals of inquiry that calls for democratic inquiry in terms of beliefs, slips the power of correspondence theories, what makes them so attractive, in through the back-door. Clearly there is an implicit claim that the 'world', or the 'mind', or the features of 'communication' are such that the proper way to proceed is through democratic inquiry, or a communicative process of will formation. This claim regarding the ground for these norms commits one to the independent 'existence' of these norms. It is not simply *ex nihilo* that we find ourselves to be the kind of beings that have beliefs and thus there is a track which the truth aptness of Misak and the normative rightness of Habermas runs along, even if it pays no explicit debts to it. In addition, I think that some of the metatheory Dewey offers with regard to the principles of inquiry is sometimes more honest as to the difficulty in 'epistemologically grounding' or offering a 'logical' argument for democracy, especially when the principles and forms of logic, or inquiry, accrue to the subject matter due to its exercise in the solving of problems. On the other hand, his theory of communication and his claim that democracy is the very ideal of community life can be read, *contra* Westbrook, as

providing the kind of ontological grounding in a metaphysics that while not strictly logical, fallibilistically grounds our democratic ideals, but in practices, not in the deontic structures of our epistemology of inquiry.³

If Dewey, as Westbrook writes, is deficient with regard to “cultural anthropology, sociology, social psychology, and political theory” then the ethos that Misak calls for is only so much schema without the necessary schematism to concrete practices, at least insofar as they are presented in the text (44). Specifically, I am referring to the thesis that moral judgments are truth-apt with a small yet non-disquotational ‘t’ because ‘we’ are *a priori* committed to their rightness and their truth. As Dewey’s theory of valuation attempted to do, so does Misak. Dewey also attempted to provide warrant for our values, through a process of valuation, thereby denying the noncognitivist program without invoking the stricter versions of correspondence theory (182–187).

In addition, there is a concern and question of clarification I have regarding the disentangling of three related concepts in pragmatist philosophy: epistemology, logic, and inquiry. In Westbrook’s discussion claiming that there is no logical argument for ‘D’emocracy in Dewey, (though Hilary Putnam seems convinced that there is), I am not sure what the salient point is, what is at stake. It seems that the only thing that could be at stake is to cede the foundationalist ground that there is beyond the experimental inquiry and lessons of history generously conceived an epistemological foundation, however cashed out, for democracy – whether it is in Putnam or in terms of the framework that Misak provides. Foundationalism is, of course, not the intention of either Westbrook or Misak. But it is the spirit I think, of the concern for an epistemological or logical argument for Democracy. Take the strength of the following quote as evidence of this spirit:

Because Misak’s pragmatism links deliberative, democratic inquiry to “the requirements of genuine belief,” it requires that all believers be democrats simply by virtue of their desire to assert their beliefs as true.
(50)

Westbrook states that Misak’s argument is the strongest argument yet offered for claiming a democratic political valence for pragmatism. I think its strength, wrapped in the quasi-transcendental epistemological package that it arrives in, is actually attempting too much; ruling out *a priori* that any creature of the type that has beliefs might end up Schmittian as opposed to Deweyan. If we are looking for normative constraint and guidance then we need only look to ourselves, in which case we are left staring Carl Schmitt, Misak’s target, directly in the face saying, “try looking at it our way, because the normative presuppositions of our discussion mean that we agree already, and not just on communication, but on Democracy as the only legitimate form of political organization.”

Though Westbrook, following Misak, come down on the side of truth-aptness, I want here to merely gesture to the advantages of the Deweyan model, grounded in his notion of social inquiry. A pragmatist, while making room for truth claims, wants a logic of inquiry, not an epistemology, and the primacy of practical reason is an important step in moving away from epistemology to inquiry. This means that the goal of inquiry is circumscribed within practical values of which warranted assertability is just one. Justification of an assertion, especially regarding morals, regarding what is valuable, desirable, and not just valued or desired, is always prospective and practical. This is not to say that the recommendations that are made regarding civic education at the close of the book are not themselves apt and in good pragmatic spirit, useful. However, the shift from epistemology to inquiry has a different register than the giving and taking of reasons with regard to the truth aptness of moral beliefs.

In the book much is made of the kind of support that Misak and Peirce as opposed to Dewey provide for such an epistemological grounding and vehicle for an intelligent democracy. At a certain point, while discussing the ground that the combined features of Peirce's community of inquiry and the semiotic system of Peirce, Westbrook writes.

What Peirce did have on offer that Dewey did not was metaphysical foundations for human community.... He [Dewey] afforded only a metaphysical ground map of uncertain, often precarious, reality in which human community would rest on the constructive intelligence and will of human beings themselves.

Westbrook continues,

The important contrast between Peirce and Dewey then, is not between realism and nominalism, they were both realists albeit of decidedly different sorts – but between a vision of human community as a manifestation of the concrete reasonableness of God's Reality and vision of human community as a manifestation of the work of particularly clever, language-using animal...Dewey could only offer communitarians an "encouraging nod, and a warning of the consequences, including the political consequences of asking for more." (quoting Hoopes, 44)

The attempt to provide such a grounding, I think, runs into practical trouble. Westbrook addresses the features of our problematic situation in closing chapters about how we are to address the situation of our failing democracy. But it is precisely this practical trouble that ought to give us pause before resting with the kind of a priori epistemological conditions that fund this model of practical change.

In agreeing that pragmatism has helpful tools in carrying out a critical and practical project with regard to the problems facing actually existing

democracies, I would point out that there are dangers lurking with regard to the contributions of which Westbrook is so appreciative. The reclaiming of the mantle of epistemology still carries with it the dangers that an epistemological approach to the world that Rorty, following Dewey, so devastatingly criticized in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, no matter how circumscribed with the pragmatist program of inquiry, dialogue, and phenomenological pluralism.⁴ If the attempt to provide a cognitive warrant to certain moral ends, then in this Misak is no different from Dewey when he writes that the aim of his pragmatism is not to practicalize intelligence but to intellectualize practice.

What does Misak advance except making explicit what is already in Dewey, only now the language is one of epistemology and discourse, as opposed to practice and reconstruction? The real move, I think, is a step backwards to the language of Peirce as a way to cement the credentials of Dewey's theory of democracy. But Dewey is consistent enough to recognize that this cannot be done given the primacy of practical reason. Ideas and values are the projections of practical habitual characters and the regulative ideals are themselves not flexible enough in terms of their metatheoretical status. Part of the reason Dewey does not provide a logical or an epistemological argument of the kind that Westbrook is looking for is that it would not do the work that Misak, Talisse and others think it does. Instead, I would argue that he focuses on the kinds of relationships that social scientists have to citizens, have to each other, and have to policy basing this in the social psychology of desires, interests, will, and intelligence developed in *Democracy and Education*, *Human Nature and Conduct*, and that culminate in his chapter on "Social Inquiry" in the 1938 *Logic: the Theory of Inquiry*. Indeed part of the main thrust of *The Public and Its Problems* is a call for the formation of just those individuals that a democracy requires in terms of intelligence, personality and competence, and in terms of the social psychology of democratic citizens, if the democracy is to be legitimate.

Unless the arguments of Misak are themselves articulations of provincial principles whose testing is ongoing, then they have slipped into foundationalism; if they are provisional, then they aren't really different than statements that Dewey made over and over again throughout his life. This provisionality Westbrook acknowledges along with Misak. But to offer a pragmatically epistemological argument for democracy itself belies a kind of moral and practical judgment about human life that is truth apt. It itself stands as the kind of reflection offered to experience for verification and argument. But the linchpin for Misak, and following her, Westbrook, is that any refutation of this position will look just like an example of the kind of evidence, argument, and deliberation from the experiences of others that are its normative core. But must it? Is it of necessity that the charge of self-performative contradiction be the last word to those with beliefs who would reject the moral truth claimed for democracy, and does this kind of necessity fit into a pragmatic philosophy of ongoing justification and practicality?

Inquiry and its normative definition preclude anything like a non-democratic community from being a community of inquiry at all. So while Westbrook and Misak are adamant about the plurality of possible answers to moral questions, there are definite answers ruled out a priori in non-pragmatic fashion. These are the answers of those who see that the threat to their way of life *is* enlightenment. Democracy and inquiry analytically entail one another and this exclusivity is one of the problems of the epistemological argument for democracy as well as the practice of democracy historically: that it has often been based on exclusions of those considered incoherent in a priori fashion. It is not clear that proceduralizing this model of inquiry actually owes up to the fallibilism it promotes in its very self-understanding.

NOTES

1. All quotes and citations in parentheses are from Robert Westbrook's *Democratic Hope: Pragmatism and the Politics of Truth* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2005).

2. Glen Newey, "Gassing and Bungling," review of *Between Facts and Norms*, *London Review of Books* (8 May 1997): 14–15.

3. For an ontological reading of the consequences of Dewey's theory of inquiry see Ralph Sleeper, *The Necessity of Pragmatism: John Dewey's Conception of Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001).

4. Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1979).

Brendan Hogan
Assistant Professor of Philosophy
Philosophy Department
Harstad 112
Pacific Lutheran University
Tacoma, Washington 98447
United States

Two Democratic Hopes

Robert B. Talisse

Robert Westbrook claims that pragmatist political theorists share a common hope for democracy. I argue that there are at least two distinct and opposed pragmatist conceptions of democracy – one Deweyan, the other Peircean – and thus two distinct and opposed hopes for democracy. The author criticizes the Deweyan view and defends the Peircean view.

In his new book, *Democratic Hope: Pragmatism and the Politics of Truth*, Robert Westbrook provides a compelling account of the state of play in pragmatist political theory.¹ On the whole, I find his analyses and narrative agreeable. However, Westbrook's discussion provides occasion to draw attention to an important and growing schism within contemporary pragmatist political theory. Although Westbrook writes as if there is a single, though variously expressed, democratic hope that pragmatists adopt, I see at least *two* separate and opposed democratic hopes that claim to be pragmatist in origin. These two democratic hopes derive respectively from the two different pragmatisms of John Dewey and Charles Peirce.²

To be sure, Deweyan democracy has been the dominant paradigm among pragmatists for thinking about politics. This is undoubtedly due to the fact that among the so-called "classical" pragmatists, Dewey devoted thousands of pages to topics in political philosophy, whereas James wrote precious little and Peirce wrote nothing.³ However, Peircean pragmatists have developed resources within Peirce's thought for theorizing about a variety of topics that Peirce himself did not address, including democracy.

I begin by posing a dilemma that confronts Deweyan democracy. I shall then argue that the Peircean approach to democracy that Cheryl Misak and I have proposed avoids this dilemma.⁴ If, as I allege, this dilemma represents a *serious* difficulty for Deweyans, and if Peircean democracy succeeds in avoiding it, then there is a significant difference between the "epistemic justification for democracy" deployed by Peirceans like Misak (195) and the Deweyan commitment to a participatory democracy grounded in a substantive moral ideal (230). This difference, I contend, marks a significant *divide* between Deweyan and Peircean democracy.⁵ This divide entails that there is not a *single* pragmatist democratic hope. There is instead a Peircean hope and a Deweyan

hope. I find myself on the side of the Peircean hope, and I oppose the Deweyan one. I am not sure where Westbrook stands, and would like to hear more.

1. A Dilemma for Deweyan Democracy⁶

We may characterize Deweyan democracy, at least in a preliminary way, in terms of the contrast between *substantive* and *procedural* theories of democracy. To make sense of this contrast, consider Schumpeter's famous definition of democracy as "that institutional arrangement for arriving at political decisions in which individuals acquire the power to decide by means of a competitive struggle for people's vote." (1950, 250) On Schumpeter's view, democracy is strictly *procedural*. Embodying no particular *normative* vision for society beyond that of efficient and limited government, it consists simply in procedures of political decision.

Given its procedural orientation, Schumpeter's view also implies a position regarding what we might call the *scope* of democracy. If democracy is simply a procedure by which elites compete for political office, then democracy is focused exclusively on the *state*. Hence, on Schumpeter's view, democracy is maximally *narrow* in scope; it is, we may say, *statist*.

The Deweyan view, by contrast, holds that democracy is not simply a procedure for deciding who shall hold political office; it is instead a "way of life" (LW11: 217; LW13: 155) that manifests a substantive "moral" (LW7: 349) and "social" (LW2: 325) ideal, a commitment to the "liberation of the potentialities of members of the group in harmony with the interests and good which are common" (LW2:327).⁷ On the Deweyan view, Democracy's home, then, is not the voting booth or the jury box or the floor of congress; rather, democracy resides "in the attitudes which human beings display to one another in all the incidents and relations of daily life" (LW14:226). In short, Deweyans see democracy as *moral* "through and through: in its foundations, its methods, its ends" (LW13:173); they identify democracy with the *moral* aspiration of a political order in which each "feels [the community's] success as his success, and its failure as his failure" (MW9:18). In fact, Dewey associates democracy with "the one, ultimate, ethical ideal of humanity" (EW1:248).

Because of its substantive nature, Deweyan democracy also rejects the *statist* orientation of Schumpeter's view. Since on the Deweyan view democracy is a moral ideal in its own right, "the idea of democracy is a wider and fuller idea than can be exemplified in the state even at its best" (LW2: 325). As it is a "mode of associated living" (MW9:43) and the "idea of community life itself" (LW2: 328), Deweyan democracy has a *broad* scope. For Deweyans, democracy is *deep*; that is, they take democracy as a moral ideal that extends down into "all modes of human association," including "the family, the school, industry, religion" (LW2: 325).

Now let us turn to the dilemma. Much of contemporary political philosophy is motivated by the problem set for substantive theories of democracy by

what John Rawls calls “reasonable pluralism” (1996, 36). Reasonable pluralism is the view according to which there are *several* substantive moral visions of the human good that are consistent both with liberal-democratic politics and with the best employment of moral reasoning, but are nonetheless inconsistent with each other.⁸

If we concede that reasonable pluralism obtains, and accept the fundamental liberal insight that the political order must justify itself to those living under its authority, the problem for Deweyan democracy is clear. Under conditions of reasonable pluralism, any conception of democracy that is tied directly to a specific substantive moral ideal is oppressive, since it attempts to enlist the coercive power of the state in the task of realizing a set of values which reasonable citizens could reject.⁹

The problem is worsened by the fact that Deweyan democracy is not only *substantive* but *deep*. Deweyans do not attempt only to enlist the institutions of the state in service of their reasonably contestable moral ideals; they call for *all* institutions of social association to follow suit.¹⁰ But, again, if reasonable pluralism obtains, then the values constitutive of Deweyan democracy comprise but one reasonable moral vision of society and the human good. To recommend that the whole of society be reconstructed to manifest and cultivate Deweyan democratic values is to reject the pluralism among reasonable citizens that lies at the heart of modern democracy. Again, this is oppressive.

Thus the dilemma: Deweyans must either relinquish the aspiration to reconstruct society in the image of their substantive moral commitments, or they must deny reasonable pluralism. Taking the first horn of the dilemma is tantamount to relinquishing that which is distinctive about Dewey’s democratic theory. Taking the second horn makes Deweyan democracy an aggressive and hegemonic form of communitarianism. Neither seems very promising.

More importantly, it is important to note that, in any case, Deweyan democracy is not particularly *deliberative*. If Deweyan democracy is shorn of its substantive elements, the result is a politics no more deliberative than the anemic Rawlsian image of a polity conducting its political discourses in the manner of Supreme Court justices (Rawls 1996, 254). Alternatively, if Deweyan democracy is *constituted* by a substantive moral vision that it imposes on all modes of association, then it ultimately leaves nothing to deliberate about, because all questions concerning the fundamental nature of our institutions and the values they should instantiate will have been settled in advance by Deweyan social architects.

2. Why Peircean Democracy is Different

Peircean democracy avoids this dilemma. By offering a vision of democracy that is *epistemic* rather than *moral*, the Peircean promotes a democratic theory that is substantive and deep, but nonetheless not hostile to reasonable pluralism. To see

this, consider the core of Peirce's epistemology, which can be summarized by means of the following commitments:

1. To believe that p is to hold that p is true.¹¹
2. To hold that p is true is to hold that p "is a belief that cannot be improved upon, a belief that would forever meet the challenges of reason, argument, and evidence" (Misak 2000, 49).
3. To hold that a belief would meet such challenges is to commit to the project of *justifying* one's belief, what Peirce called "inquiry."
4. The project of squaring one's beliefs with reasons and evidence is an ongoing *social* endeavor that requires participation in a "community of inquiry."

The Peircean-epistemic argument for democracy follows intuitively from these principles: one should endorse a democratic political order because only in a democracy can one live up to one's epistemic commitments. That is, if being a believer commits one to the project of justification, and if the project of justification commits one to the social enterprise of examining, exchanging, testing, and challenging reasons, then one can satisfy one's commitments *qua* believer only within a political context in which it is possible to be an inquirer. Inquiry requires that characteristically democratic norms obtain; in order to inquire, there must be norms of equality, free speech, a freedom of information, open debate, protected dissent, access to decision-making institutions, and so on. Moreover, since the project of justification involves testing one's beliefs against the broadest possible pool of reasons, experiences, and considerations, inquiry requires norms of the sort often associated with "radical democracy" views, such as participation, inclusion, and recognition.¹²

Additionally, the Peircean argument carries a number of institutional entailments. If inquiry is to commence, the formal infrastructure of democracy must be in place, including a constitution, courts, accountable bodies of representation, regular elections, and a free press. Also, there must be a system of public schooling designed to equip students in the epistemic habits necessary for inquiry, and institutions of distributive justice to eliminate as far as justice allows the material obstructions to democratic citizenship. Further, democracy *might* also require more extensive provisions, such as special measures to preserve public spaces and to create forums for citizens to encounter new perspectives.¹³

Insofar as it draws its conception of democracy from a view of what it is to believe and inquire *properly*, we can say that Peircean democracy is *substantive*. Furthermore, in light of its institutional and social implications, we can say that Peircean democracy is *broad* in scope. In these respects, Peircean

democracy might seem very closely allied with Deweyan democracy. However, there is a crucial difference. Whereas on the Deweyan view the democratic social order is justified in terms of an overarching moral ideal, the Peircean view relies upon no substantive *moral* vision. The Peircean justifies democratic institutions and norms strictly in terms of a set of *epistemic* commitments. It says that *no matter what one believes* about the good life, the nature of the self, the meaning of human existence, or the value of community, one has reason to support a robust democratic political order of the sort described above simply in virtue of the fact that one has beliefs at all.

Because we Peirceans refuse to build within our conception of democracy a doctrine about “the one, ultimate, ethical ideal of humanity” (EW1:248), we can, with Rawls and others, acknowledge the fact of reasonable pluralism. That is, we can recognize that there are many distinct and epistemically responsible moral visions that are compatible with democratic politics. Accordingly, we understand that questions of how our schools should be organized, what our communities should look like, and what constitutes good citizenship are *not* questions that can be settled by appealing to democratic theory as such; they are instead questions to be pursued experimentally and discursively *within* a democratic politics. This means that, on the Peircean view, a democratic polity that adopts after due democratic deliberation a set of policies that are considerably more modest than those which Deweyan democracy would recommend is *not ipso facto* suffering a democracy deficit. What counts for Peirceans is not the proximity of a given democratic outcome to a substantive moral vision of the ideal society, but rather whether the outcome is the result of properly democratic processes of reason exchange.

By drawing upon decidedly *epistemic* commitments, the Peircean view does not invite the dilemma between substance and pluralism occasioned by Deweyan democracy. The Peircean pragmatist does not propose a moral ideal for all of society, but rather an analysis of proper *epistemic* practice. The Peircean then recommends a political order in which disputes between conflicting moral visions can be conducted in an epistemically responsible way. Hence the Peircean pragmatist offers a far more modest politics than the Deweyan. Whereas Dewey thought that getting democracy right meant getting the whole of moral philosophy right, the Peircean leaves open the dialectical space for substantive disagreements about deep moral and social questions within democracy. In this way, Peircean democracy is substantive and deep, but not hostile to the pluralism of substantive moral doctrines. Moreover, it is also genuinely *deliberative*; it provides an epistemically normative vision of democratic politics that does not predetermine the answers to deep and substantive moral disputes.

Someone might object to the distinction I have invoked between moral and epistemic commitments. The objection runs that just as Deweyans expect everyone to converge upon a common substantive moral vision, Peirceans expect everyone to adopt a single (pragmatist) epistemology. The objection continues that Peircean epistemology is at least as controversial as any moral

philosophy; and so both the Deweyan and the Peircean views commit the same error of denying reasonable pluralism. Deweyan democracy denies it at the level of moral commitments, and Peircean democracy denies it at the level of epistemic commitments.

This objection is mistaken, but instructive. The epistemic commitments that lie at the core of Peircean democracy do not constitute a comprehensive epistemology in their own right, but rather state a set of principles that are consistent with any well-developed epistemology. That is, internalists, externalists, foundationalists, coherentists, and so on all agree that beliefs aim at truth, that when we believe, we take ourselves to be responding to reasons, argument, and evidence, and that reasons, argument, and evidence are *at the very least* reliable indicators of truth. Accordingly, the four Peircean commitments identified above represent an attempt to make explicit the epistemology that is implicit in our existing epistemic practice. They attempt to capture the norms we countenance in virtue of the very fact that we are believers. Hence, if they succeed in capturing those norms, the Peircean commitments are not *optional*. Moreover, insofar as contestation itself presupposes norms of reason-responsiveness and truth-aiming, the Peircean commitments – provided, again, that they adequately capture our epistemic norms – are non-contestable, because contestation itself presupposes them.

This is not to say that the particular articulations of the four epistemic principles above are beyond revision or once-and-for-all fixed. As they represent an attempt to capture the norms implicit in our everyday epistemic practice, they may require significant revision and refinement in light of new experience and further reflection upon our practice. But the very processes of *revision* and *refinement* presuppose the core idea that our beliefs must be responsive to argument and evidence. In this way, we retain the core of Peircean fallibilism: everything is in principle revisable, but not at the same time. We may refine our understanding of any particular epistemic norm only by implicitly accepting the others, however provisionally.

Peirceans and Deweyans are therefore *not* in the same boat. The substantive moral ideal that drives the Deweyan program is, indeed, reasonably rejectable; hence Deweyan democracy runs afoul of pluralism. The Peircean epistemic commitments, by contrast, are robust enough to support a case for democratic politics, but are nonetheless modest enough to recognize the legitimacy of deep disputes over fundamental moral ideas. Hence the Peircean offers a substantive and deep conception of democracy that is consistent with a due appreciation of reasonable pluralism.

3. Could there be a Synthesis?

Westbrook does not acknowledge this crucial respect in which Deweyans and Peirceans differ in their vision of democratic politics. In fact, Westbrook refers to a “shared hope” among Peirceans and Deweyans. He writes:

It was Dewey's hope, as it is the hope of neopragmatists including Hilary Putnam, Cheryl Misak, and Cornel West, that Americans would deliberate ... not only as citizens but as pragmatists.... They would come to meetings believing that their debates were "truth apt" in a "low-profile" sort of way.... (239)

If the argument of the previous section succeeds, Deweyans and Peirceans do *not* share a common hope for democracy. I think Westbrook is correct to say that it is a characteristically *Deweyan* hope that all democratic citizens come to participate politically as (Deweyan) pragmatists. But, as I have already indicated, such a hope is unrealistic. I do not claim to speak for neopragmatists like Putnam or West, but I contend that there is no such hope among Peirceans such as Misak and myself. Despite Westbrook's description, we do not *hope* that citizens will believe that their political claims are "truth-apt," and we do not *hope* that citizens will understand truth as a "low-profile" matter of disquotation. Instead, we begin from the fact that citizens *do* take their political beliefs to be truth apt, and then offer an analysis of truth that is robust enough to capture its normative force while being philosophically modest enough to leave deep philosophical controversies about the nature of truth to the side.¹⁴ Our sole hope is that democratic politics will proceed in a way that is increasingly epistemically responsible.

This Peircean hope recognizes that proper democracy can take many forms, and that many positions across the political spectrum can be held and defended in epistemically responsible ways. Accordingly, the Peircean hope is not essentially a hope for a more progressive or left-leaning set of policies, but a hope that, in the future, our policy decisions – *whatever they may be* – will be driven more by reasons, arguments, and evidence, and less by rhetoric, money, and power. The Deweyan hope, by contrast, is far more ambitious. Deweyan democracy proposes a comprehensive moral ideal, and it aspires to remake, to "reconstruct," the social world in its image. Under contemporary conditions of pluralism, the Deweyan hope for a democratic politics based in a shared faith in a moral ideal is not only naïve, but politically pernicious.

NOTES

1. Unless otherwise indicated, parenthetical citations refer to Westbrook 2005.

2. See Mounce 1997 for a detailed exposition of the claim that Dewey and Peirce represent not two different articulations of pragmatism, but two distinct versions of pragmatism. Richard Rorty apparently agrees with Mounce on the "two pragmatisms" thesis; he laments the "tendency to overpraise Peirce," claiming that "[Peirce's] contributions to pragmatism was merely to have given it a name, and to have stimulated James" (1982, 160f.). According to Rorty, Peirce was, among other things, "still attached to the notion of representation" (1990, 3), and so James and Dewey are, in his view, the true pragmatists.

3. Perhaps “thousands” is an understatement? John Stuhr claims that “all of Dewey’s philosophy ... simply *is* social and political philosophy” (1998, 85).

4. See Misak 2000; Misak 2004; Talisse 2004; and Talisse 2005.

5. Stuhr implicitly acknowledges the divide. He recognizes that Deweyan democracy is essentially a kind of moral faith that rejects the idea of an “epistemological justification” of democracy as “philosophically misguided” (2003, 58f.). I accept Stuhr’s description of the divide, but obviously come down on the opposite side.

6. The argument of this section draws from Talisse 2003.

7. References to *The Collected Works of John Dewey* are given as follows: *The Early Works* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1967–1971); *The Middle Works* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1976–1983); and *The Later Works* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1981–1990) are indicated by EW, MW, or LW followed by volume and page numbers.

8. Compare Chantal Mouffe, “the specificity of modern democracy lies in the recognition and the legitimation of conflict and the refusal to suppress it through the imposition of an authoritarian order” (2000, 113).

9. Hence Rawls takes the fact of reasonable pluralism to entail “the fact of oppression,” according to which “a continuing shared understanding on one comprehensive religious, philosophical, or moral doctrine can be maintained only by the oppressive use of state power” (1996, 37). This leads Rawls to argue that a “well-ordered democratic society” *cannot* be a community in the Deweyan sense (1996, 41f.).

10. Recall that the Deweyan aim is to extend democracy to “all modes of human association” (LW2: 325).

11. See Wiggins 1998 and Haack 1998, 8.

12. For an account of how these commitments can be read off of Peirce’s argument in “The Fixation of Belief,” see Talisse 2004.

13. I am thinking here of the kind of view that Cass Sunstein’s has devised (1996; 2001, 2003), and also of the proposal developed in Ackerman and Fishkin 2004. The Peircean holds that whether democracy does, in fact, require such measures is something about which we must inquire.

14. That is, in my view, Peircean pragmatists need not be *militant* disquotationalists; we do not insist that there is nothing more to truth than the Tarski biconditionals. Instead, we hold that the T-schema and the intuition that a true belief would forever survive potential defeaters are *adequacy conditions* for *any* conception of truth. So Peirceans indeed offer a “low-profile” conception of truth, but not because we necessarily oppose any higher-profile view, but instead because we contend that the low-profile version is sufficient to explain the intuitive internal connections between believing (or asserting), experience, evidence, and reasons. We leave deeper philosophical questions about the nature of truth to the side, not because we deny that such questions are worth asking, but because such questions are questions for *philosophers* to grapple with. We contend that any viable philosophical theory of truth will satisfy the adequacy conditions captured in the Peircean view; thus we hold that the disputes among truth theorists are beside the point for an epistemic view of democracy.

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Robert B. Talisse
Associate Professor of Philosophy and Political Science
Department of Philosophy
111 Furman Hall
Vanderbilt University
Nashville, Tennessee 37240
United States

Replies to Symposium Participants

Robert B. Westbrook

I am grateful for this occasion, and for the kind words of my critics here assembled. And, indeed, for their criticism. *Democratic Hope* – a collection of essays – is not the sort of book in which one places much hope. Publishers do not like to publish them; journals do not care to review them; and bookstores are reluctant to stock them. One tries, as I say in my preface, to avoid the appearance of a mere “book effect,” but seldom convincingly.

Insofar as *Democratic Hope* has a measure of connective tissue, it lies in my engagement with the relationship between pragmatist epistemology and democratic politics, what Hilary Putnam has called the Deweyan “epistemological justification of democracy.” So it is not surprising that my critics center their remarks on this relationship.

1. MacGilvray

Eric MacGilvray raises critical objections to two “strong” claims he says I make on behalf of a pragmatist epistemological argument for democracy. First, that insofar as this argument offers itself as a *justification* for participatory, deliberative democracy it is suspiciously foundational and hence not truly pragmatist. And second, that if one does not make it and hence commit oneself to participatory, deliberative democracy, one is not properly a pragmatist.

Let me begin with the second putative claim. I do not believe I make this strong claim in *Democratic Hope*. Rather, wearing my intellectual historian’s cap, I suggest that adherence or non-adherence to the epistemological argument is a nice criteria with which to distinguish two broad camps of pragmatists. As I say, in order to make this argument one has to make a set of controversial moves, moves that are controversial *within* as well as without the pragmatist family (as the comments of both MacGilvray and Hogan themselves indicate). That family is distinguished from others, I say, not by adherence to the epistemological argument for democracy but by another of Putnam’s formulations: the avoidance of “both the illusions of [foundationalist] metaphysics and the illusions of skepticism.”

Nonetheless, as a matter of philosophy and political theory, my sympathies are clearly with the adherence camp, particularly as that position has been advanced by Cheryl Misak (which Talisse nicely summarizes). I try at

length to show some of the difficulties that the non-adherents – particularly Rorty and Posner – get into by their non-adherence. I think pragmatists would do well to adhere to this argument, but I do not make any arguments for doing so that add much to those of Misak. Misak could no doubt defend her pragmatist epistemological argument for democracy better than I, but let me try.

As MacGilvray says, Misak is trying to anchor a commitment to democracy in a neo-Peircean analysis of what it means for human beings to hold a belief to be true. A true belief for a pragmatist, she says, is one that meets the test of inquiry: “A true belief is such that no matter how much further we were to investigate and debate, that belief would not be overturned by recalcitrant experience and argument.”¹ This, she readily acknowledges, is a “low profile” conception of truth – yet one, as Talisse says, is incorporated into all more ambitious, more “high profile” conceptions of truth. To assert a belief to be true thus entails a commitment to inquiry and deliberation, and since effective deliberation requires democratic practices, to assert a belief to be true entails a commitment to democracy – whether one acknowledges it or not.

As Talisse says, pragmatists such as Misak and himself claim to have captured “the norms we countenance in virtue of the very fact that we are believers,” democratic norms that “are not *optional*.” As I understand him, MacGilvray disputes this claim.

First, he argues that “the mere assertion of a belief does not commit one to further inquiry on its behalf.” Here, it seems to me, he confuses matters by implying that Misak neglects the importance of doubt to the onset of inquiry. But Misak’s contention is that “what it is to have a belief is to be committed to giving reasons for that belief” *in the event that doubt is cast on it*, for Misak does not dispute the importance of doubt to inquiry. She would be a weird sort of Peircean were she to do so. “A belief requires a justification when, and only when, it has been thrown into doubt,” she observes.² Moreover, she also contends in good Peircean fashion that we cannot in Cartesian fashion call everything into doubt all at once: “justification requires a fallible background of belief which is not in fact in doubt.” In other words, one need not answer the Cartesian, but one must, if one is to honor one’s beliefs as beliefs, respond with inquiry when challenged. “Those challenges can come from within, when my own judgments or principles conflict and I feel a pull towards revising them. And they can come from without, when I see that the judgments and principles of others, from within my circle or from afar, conflict with my own judgments and I feel a pull towards reconsidering them.”³

Second, MacGilvray contests Misak’s claim that effective inquiry is inherently democratic. That is, if he were to concede that to assert a belief to be true in the face of a challenge to it is to commit oneself to inquiry (whether or not one actually does so), he would still contend that there is no necessary reason that such inquiry be democratic. That is, it may be the case, as Talisse puts it, that “if being a believer commits one to the project of justification, and if the project of justification commits one to the social enterprise of examining,

exchanging, testing, and challenging reasons, then one can satisfy one's commitments *qua* believer only within a political context in which it is possible to be an inquirer." But, MacGilvray asks, need that context be democratic, let alone radically democratic, as Talisse argues.

Here MacGilvray raises a sharp Peircean point against Misak and Talisse: we are only likely to consider challenges to our beliefs that arise from "those whom we consider to be epistemically reliable." We are only willing to subject our beliefs to the inquiry of a "community of the competent." As he says, "If our concern is to hold true beliefs, then we are going to have to make judgments – fallible and revisable judgments, to be sure, but judgments nonetheless – about which challenges to our existing beliefs are worth attending to."

Fair enough. Every democratic community is likely to have requirements for citizenship, requirements that are to a greater or lesser degree exclusive. Barriers to entry might be higher or lower, depending on the matters at hand. But Misak's point is that when it comes to moral and political deliberation of the sort that is most in question here, the barriers must be low. As she says, "Moral judgment is inextricably bound up with our relations to others and anyone who stands in such relationships has plenty of engagement in moral deliberation. Truth requires us to listen to others, and anyone might be an expert. This, of course, does not mean that everyone is equally good at seeing when something is kind, unjust, or phony. It just means that anyone, whatever their formal training, might be very good at it. One suspects that good novelists are among the best, but so might the man on the Clapham omnibus."⁴

2. Hogan

I think Brendan Hogan's concerns are much the same as MacGilvray's, though I am not sure since they are cast in a murky, convoluted, often ungrammatical language that I find hard to follow. Moreover, his concerns also would probably be better addressed by Misak (or Talisse) than myself. Here again, I am called upon by virtue of my appreciative response as an intellectual historian to Misak's arguments to defend them. Fair enough, though once more I am sure she could do a much better job of it herself.

It is not clear to me that Hogan has read Misak. Else why raise the question of the relationship of her arguments to those advanced by Jürgen Habermas, a question she addresses directly and fully. Hogan asks skeptically "what pitfalls of [Habermas's] discourse ethics does she avoid, from a pragmatic perspective?" Misak's answer to this question is that she avoids precisely the strong, transcendental arguments for democratic communication that Habermas advances and Hogan charges her with replicating. Habermas, as she says, claims "to have uncovered the universal, necessary, non-contingent preconditions of communication – the conditions of the very possibility of communication. The justification of the pragmatic account of truth and the principles underlying discourse ethics is that if communication is possible, that account of truth and

those principles must be correct.”⁵ But this, Misak argues, is to claim too much. Habermas, as she shows, cannot sustain this claim without stipulating that which has to be proven.

Rather than begin with a transcendental claim about the necessary conditions of human communication and then smuggling her democratic convictions into these conditions as Habermas does, Misak begins much more modestly with the claim that for anyone to hold a belief is necessarily to assert that in holding that belief they are aiming at truth in a “low profile” pragmatic sense, that is, a belief that will stand the test of exhaustive inquiry. In asserting beliefs, all believers thus commit themselves to inquiry and to the (revisable) practices it requires. Hers, as she says, is not the grandiose transcendental claim of Habermas but rather “the humble point that those who want true belief undertake certain commitments.”⁶

In other words, merely asserting a claim to true belief commits one to inquiry and, Misak goes on to argue, to the democratic practices that (now, at least) we believe effective inquiry to require. “Having a belief which is aimed at the truth is something that we can assume of our opponents. Once the acknowledgement is made (as it *is* made by the flat-earther, the Nazi, etc.) that one aims at getting the right belief, then one is open to a certain sort of criticism. The way is paved for the justification of the democratic principles of inquiry. Once it is acknowledged that we have beliefs, then we can say that *qua* *believers*, we must abide by certain principles.”⁷

Hogan misunderstands my complaints about Dewey’s epistemological or logical argument for democracy. My complaint is not that Dewey did not make such an argument but rather that he never did so systematically and fully. Putnam, Misak, and Talisse all do it better than he did, but I have little doubt that he would have found it attractive. As I say to Putnam, one can indeed piece together such an argument out of Deweyan materials. Indeed, I suggest that to Misak that hers is a nice blend of Peirce and Dewey, one that draws on Peirce to forge a view that Dewey if not Peirce could embrace. And one that, like my own, has little use for Peirce’s metaphysical extravagances. For Hogan to suggest I am on Peirce’s side in my description of his metaphysical differences with Dewey is astonishingly obtuse reading of what is clearly an embrace of Dewey’s more modest, piecemeal realism.

I am always amused by the tenderness that critics such as Hogan inevitably evince for “non-democratic community,” though I doubt that they would ever wish to live in one. Hogan charges Misak and I with oppressively excluding anti-democrats. But inclusive participation is one of the most important of the principles that we identify with inquiry and democracy alike. Ours is not a view that rules out any answers to moral questions *a priori*, even those of a Nazi. It only rules out undemocratic ways of inquiring into the truth of such answers (Nazism if not Nazis, if you will), which admittedly puts authoritarians and their tender sympathizers in something of a bind.

3. Talisse

Talisse wants to make a sharp distinction between Deweyan and Peircean democracy. Though I think his commentary contains what I find to be a good reply to MacGilvray's concerns about the latter, he criticizes me for going beyond this "thin," epistemic, procedural, Peircean justification for democracy to a thick, moral, substantive, Deweyan argument.

First, let me say that I think he (and Misak) are correct to say that Peirce offers at least as many resources for making this argument as Dewey. As I say, in Dewey's case, one has to cobble together an epistemological argument for democracy from a range of disparate sources. Dewey never made it systematically and coherently.

On the other hand, as I also say, Dewey made a signal contribution to the argument by trying to show that pragmatist inquiry was applicable to moral and political questions. Peirce explicitly refused to grant this, cutting off the epistemological argument at a crucial juncture. For this reason, I am no more willing to call the argument "Peircean" than "Deweyan." If anything, it is "Putnamean" or, even better, "Misakean." And as I say, Misak makes some moves that are Peircean and others that are decidedly Deweyan. I thought I was clearly endorsing Misak's pragmatism in the passage Talisse quotes – "truth apt" and "low profile" are her terms. But, that said, I would stick to the view that there are among our fellow citizens many who do not take political debates to be "truth apt" and there are even more who take such debates to be "truth apt" in a decidedly "high profile" sort of way. I think we pragmatists do *hope* this would change.

A difficulty Dewey presents, as Talisse argues, is that he did not only make (insofar as he did) the epistemological argument for democracy but a thicker, more substantive moral argument. (Indeed, as I tried to show in *John Dewey and American Democracy*, Dewey made virtually every sort of argument – epistemological, moral, metaphysical, aesthetic, political, religious – he could think of for democracy. That is the animating heart of his thinking.)

I am sympathetic to this argument as well, though I do not really take it up in *Democratic Hope*. Here I would only suggest that insofar as Dewey coupled this moral argument to the epistemological argument, he cannot be charged with oppressive moralism. Holding to the epistemological argument does not preclude one from advancing substantive moral arguments within the confines of pragmatist inquiry. Indeed, it invites us to do so, as long as we do not coerce others but rather attempt to persuade them of our view in the context of democratic debate. And that is precisely what Dewey did (most of the time). Dewey was often alert to the dangers Talisse observes. That is why, for example, he opposed George Counts and other advocates of "counter-indoctrination" in the "Dare the School Build a New Social Order" debates of the early 1930s – resting content with schools that took shape as pragmatist epistemic communities.

Finally, let me say as I do in my discussion of Posner in the book, that adhering to the epistemological argument *does* require, in our time, the hope for a more “left-leaning set of policies.” Here one need only consult Talisse’s own list of its “institutional entailments,” which includes “accountable bodies of representation,” a “free press,” “public schooling designed to equip students in the epistemic habits necessary for inquiry,” “the preservation of public spaces,” “the creation of forums for citizen deliberation,” and “institutions of distributive justice to eliminate as far as possible material obstructions to democratic citizenship.” This latter entailment, for which James Johnson has made a powerful pragmatist argument, strikes me as particularly “left-leaning” in its implications.⁸

NOTES

1. Cheryl Misak, *Truth, Politics, Morality: Pragmatism and Deliberation* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 49.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 102, 52.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 53.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 96.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 38.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 46.
7. *Ibid.*
8. James Johnson and Jack Knight, “What Sort of Equality Does Deliberative Democracy Require?” in *Deliberative Democracy: Essays on Reason and Politics*, ed. James Bohman and William Rehg (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1997), pp. 279–319.

Robert B. Westbrook
Professor of History
Department of History
University of Rochester
Rochester, New York 14627
United States

On The Passing of Richard Rorty and the Future of American Philosophy

Judith M. Green

The passing of Richard Rorty is an event to mark in the annals of American philosophy – the passing of a spirit-guide to some, and of a dark shadow to others, but certainly that of an original, iconoclastic thinker who brought classical American pragmatism back into the contemporary philosophical conversation, and who got philosophers telling stories of achieving a long-loved dream of democracy. I outline a twelve-point agenda for productive future philosophical wrangles with Rorty, highlighting his metaphysical nominalism, anti-religious ironism, and “Western bourgeois liberal democracy.”

If we adopt Dewey’s image of the philosopher’s task ... we have to drop both the Marxist distinction between science and ideology and the distinction, deployed by both Russell and Husserl, between the a priori and the a posteriori. More generally, we have to drop all attempts to make philosophy as autonomous an activity as it was thought to be before philosophers began taking time seriously. Dewey, but not Russell, can adopt Locke’s suggestion that role of the philosopher is that of an under-laborer, clearing away the rubbish of the past in order to make room for the constructions of the future. But Dewey would have admitted, I think, that the philosopher is occasionally able to fuse this janitorial role with the role of prophet. Such a combination is found in Bacon and Descartes, both of whom combined the attempt to clear away Aristotelian rubbish with visions of a utopian future. Similarly, the effort of Dewey to get philosophy out from under Kant, of Habermas to untangle it from what he calls “the philosophy of consciousness,” and of Derrida to liberate it from what he calls “the metaphysics of presence” are intertwined with prophecies of the fully democratic society whose coming such extrication will hasten.

Richard Rorty, “Philosophy and the Future” (1995, 201)

It is hard to believe that Richard Rorty is gone. One of the world’s best-known philosophical gadflies and democratic visionaries of the post-Vietnam War era, Rorty was a broadly educated, creative, iconoclastic thinker who shed a bright light on the value of many almost forgotten contributions of the classical American pragmatists. Rorty died bravely on 7 June 2007, writing and watching the sky for really large birds until the very end. In his last weeks, Rorty is said to have sighted a California condor: a huge, broad-winged, high-flying bird that

was almost extinct, before the efforts of a handful of visionaries brought it back from the brink, and with it, hard-to-imagine impacts on the future of its niche in Earth's ecosystem, as well as on the lives of those who watch condors as spirit-guides and as omens for discerning our human future. How fitting!

To his many friends and his many opponents in American philosophy, Rorty was such a broad-winged, high-flying bird, one who either made the world more welcoming to the kind of philosophy we felt the need to do, or cast a shadow over the efforts of those of us who saw the world differently. Having wrestled with his philosophical writings for many years, I have often thought of Rorty as my opponent – someone whose accounts of works by Dewey, James, and Wittgenstein that I know well and care about were wildly unreliable, and whose influential views about many philosophical issues on which I, his junior, also work cast a large shadow over these fields that sometimes made it hard for me to find daylight. And yet, I am mindful of how liberating many of his philosophical writings have been to many gifted American philosophers, and how empowering his presence often was to many of our colleagues in Eastern Europe and Latin America who could fund conferences and publish their work because he agreed to come. Therefore, I decided to read Rorty again during the summer after his death, as I was revising my own book on pragmatism and social hope for publication. To my surprise, I learned a lot.

When I challenged Rorty at a professional conference on “public sociology” in San Francisco during the summer of 2004 to use his fame as a platform for launching active, collaborative efforts of “public philosophy,” he grumbled, “No one listens to me, anyway.” How odd that he would think that, when I have heard his work discussed in Germany, Poland, Italy, and China, as well as throughout the United States. When I reminded him that *Achieving Our Country* (1998) had been a non-fiction best-seller, widely read by other educated readers as well as philosophers, he replied that maybe he had tended to separate his philosophical voice too much from his voice as a citizen. I had to smile.

One of the great things about Rorty's philosophical writing was that it was so close to and honest about his life, not only in poignant autobiographical essays like “Trotsky and the Wild Orchids,” and in works on politics and culture like *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (1989), *Achieving Our Country* (1998), *Philosophy and Social Hope* (1999), and *Philosophy as Cultural Politics* (2007), but also in late-life dialogues with other international philosophers, including *The Future of Religion* (2005) with the Italian hermeneuticist philosopher, Gianni Vattimo, and *What's the Use of Truth* (2007), with the French analytic philosopher, Pascal Engel. Even the work that first made him famous, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (1979), was really a manifesto about why Rorty felt the need to part ways with analytic philosophy in order to write something better: “Philosophy in the Conversation of Mankind,” as he entitled the last chapter.

Conversation was Rorty's “thing,” the best thing we language-using beings could do, in his view – the best way to end cruelty and the best way to

enjoy the sheer pleasure of our own distinctive voices, as well as the voices of others among the living and the dead who have something to say and can say it well. “Conversation-stoppers” were what he tried hardest to get out of “the public square,” whether these were the authoritarian languages of organized religions, the abstractions about power of Foucault and “postmodernists,” or the “hot air” of contemporary epistemology that he thought was incapable of elevating our perspectives enough to let us see the wider plain of future choices before us as individuals, as a national culture, and as philosophers. Trailing after him now that he is gone, reading works that I missed or read from a different, more combative angle before, I find that I still disagree with him about many issues on which I wish I could still challenge him to reply.

My purpose here is to celebrate Rorty’s life in the spirit of an Irish wake, not by recounting old battles, but by continuing to argue with him about “Philosophy and the Future.” This is the title of a 1995 essay he wrote in reply (sort of) to the very able criticisms of a group of American philosophers who argued that he (and we) would do better to work closer to the various methods and insights of the classical American pragmatists than to his “neo-pragmatism” on most of the philosophical subjects that are still worth writing about. Drawing on Rorty’s “reply” to them as well as other works that I have recently re-read with benefit, and now find importantly right or importantly wrong, I aim to propose an agenda for our future work.

My recent reading of Rorty’s legacy suggests that his adult life and his philosophical writings were framed by four key commitments:

1. To the Trotskyite political “religion” of his upbringing and those who shared it;
2. To diverse intellectual and existential heroes, whom he listed and quoted throughout his works, including Galileo, Keats, Hegel, Whitman, James, Dewey, Nietzsche, Freud, Yeats, Heidegger, Proust, Wittgenstein, Sellers, Davidson, and Bloom, as well as Howe and Randolph, to whose memories he dedicated *Achieving Our Country*;
3. To his utopian ideal of “Western bourgeois liberal democracy” as contingent, fragile, non-universal, deliberative, limiting cruelty, protecting the private sphere of individual liberty, expanding human solidarity, equalizing opportunities, and assuring economic justice; and
4. To the life of the “Strong Poet” – self-creative, autonomous, paradigmatic, making new language, and thereby changing the world.

These commitments did not so much follow as conclusions from Rorty's philosophical views as motivate them. Rorty's philosophical views, always explained with erudite references to the history of philosophy as well as up-to-date comments on contemporary debates, always aimed to create – and to persuade others to accept – a coherent network of views that worked to support those four commitments that flowed from remembered loyalties and utopian visioning.

Taken together, the bold philosophical views that Rorty advanced during his last thirty years constitute a twelve-point manifesto that is well worth debating with him as a partial agenda for the future of American philosophy:

1. The Public-Private Divide
2. Languages as Contingent, World-Making, Time-Bound, Non-Translatable
3. Non-Teleological Historicist Contextualism
4. Anti-Religious, Self-Creative Ironism
5. Metaphysical Nominalism
6. Culture-Specific, Non-Universal Social Ethics
7. Dissolution, Not Resolution of Persisting Philosophical Problems
8. Anti-Methodist Contextualism
9. The Uselessness of Truth
10. Poetry, not Science, as a Model for Philosophy
11. Western Bourgeois Liberal Democracy as a Local Utopian Dream Vision
12. Cruelty-Preventing Human Solidarity as Made, not Given

These philosophical issues will make a difference to public deliberations and contestations that are already shaping our future, nationally and globally, as well as to the kinds of lives we and others will choose, and will seek both opportunities and companions to actualize.

On each of these issues, Rorty the prophet offered thoughtful and provocative comments to get us into a conversations about the future. Yet on each of these issues, I think he was importantly wrong, and I plan to continue to say so as part of my own appreciative “pragmatist piety” toward him as a Deweyan

philosopher-janitor who both cleared up a lot of rubble from the past, and also left a lot behind him. Perhaps because he, like James and a lot of the rest of us, struggled with depression, Rorty thought it was important to keep a sense of perspective and a sense of humor about the limits of our own understanding of what's going on, not only in the world but in our own experience of living. So I'm sure he had to laugh in retrospect, as I did when I came across it, about this passage from "Philosophy and the Future":

We philosophers are good at building bridges between nations, at cosmopolitan initiatives, but not at telling stories. When we do tell stories, they tend to be bad ones, like the stories that Hegel and Heidegger told the Germans about themselves – stories about the superior relation in which a certain country stands to some supernatural power. (Rorty 1995, 203)

Two years later, Rorty gave the lectures that formed the core of *Achieving Our Country*. He invoked the companion spirits of Whitman, James, and Dewey to start the process of telling a "new American story" that he said was so urgent that we should give up philosophy (at least the abstract and "hot air" kinds) to help him tell it to the American public, especially to the labor unions, in order to get them to join with us in a series of campaigns to achieve economic justice and equal opportunity – before globalization and backlash kill the dream of democracy.

Whatever the deficiencies of the "American dream-story" he offered as a starting place for this process, Rorty was prophetic about our need now for a motivating story with enough humaneness, realistic depth, and historical truth to challenge and overrule the rival post-9/11 stories told by our elected leaders and by the authoritarian terrorists with whom they have gone to war, each claiming to be making greater progress toward eventual victory. Unfortunately, however, Rorty denied that humaneness, realistic depth, and historical truth are possible in a story. For Rorty the "nominalist," as much as for Samuel P. Huntington (1996, 2004), there are no common, cross-cultural ethical standards of humaneness – only how "we" see things as "Western bourgeois liberals" and how others see things, often differently, with no common human nature, and thus, no Kantian universal rationality to serve as a common ground for the universal human rights on which Seyla Benhabib (2006) and other critical theorists have focused their democratic hopes for the future. There is no objective perspective on reality, said Rorty the "neo-pragmatist," and thus, no relative depth, distortion, or shallowness in our claims about it. There is no truth of history, said Rorty the "historicist," because there is no way to get out of the limits of our time and place, which are profoundly unlike other times and places. There is no divine plan to make sense of our present suffering and to guarantee a better future – and this is a good thing, said Rorty the "ironist," because this is the prerequisite for the self-creative freedom of "strong poets" to shape personally meaningful

individual lives, as well as a nation unlike any the world has seen before – America – in which our public democratic solidarity expresses and enhances our private freedom.

Although I and many others have read Rorty’s “new American story” as “ethnocentric” – his own term – and assumed that the scope of his hopes for democracy was narrowly national, like Huntington’s, actually he was a cosmopolitan, as he explained in “Philosophy and the Future”:

The alternative to [a] spurious and self-deceptive kind of cosmopolitanism is one with a clear image of a specific kind of cosmopolitan human future: the image of a planetwide democracy, a society in which torture, or the closing down of a university or a newspaper on the other side of the world is as much a cause for outrage as when it happens at home. (Saatkamp 1995, 203–204)

This is the kind of inclusive democratic thinking that made Rorty beloved in those global contexts in which he showed up because people were being tortured, and newspapers and universities were being shut down. This is the kind of visionary utopianism that made him a “guru” to young scholars wrestling with older philosophies who caught their first whiff of pragmatism from him.

However, if our visions are to be more than “utopian” in the pejorative sense that means we can’t get there from here, we must, as Rorty said, “agree with Marx that our job is to help make the future different from the past... contemporary philosophers, like engineers and lawyers, must find out what their clients need” (Rorty 1995, 198). What our “clients” desperately need now is for us to act as what Dewey called “liaison officers” among the disciplines and within a set of democratically inclusive, deliberative and participatory public conversations about *actually* “achieving our country” within the wider cosmopolitan project of “achieving our world” – a world for whose birth James and Dewey, as well as Jane Addams, Alain Locke, and Seyla Behabib can serve as midwives. This is a world in which a deeper quality of democracy than we have yet achieved within and between cultures and nations, and in the international economy that interlinks them, becomes increasingly the “new history of the world,” in James Baldwin’s prophetic phrase.

Because Rorty’s twelve-point manifesto includes philosophical obstacles to our work as liaison officers and midwives for “publics” in America and in other global contexts that are crying to be born, we must reconstruct it to meet our present needs while carrying on our other philosophical conversations about the merits of our various views on many other matters. So here my thumbnail sketch of how to reconstruct Rorty’s manifesto on three key points: nominalism, ironism, and Western bourgeois liberal democracy.

Nominalism. Rorty’s particular kind of social “nominalism” is really a metaphysical libertarianism, far removed from the “socialist” low-rise meta-

physics that James, Addams, Dewey, Mead, and Alain Locke shared. It treats human individuals as *sui generis*, denying that “generals” like communities and nations have any real existence, apart from the living actors who make them up. This view is actually inconsistent with Rorty’s views about the world-creating powers of language, which, as Mead pointed out, is individual-penetrating and maybe even “self”-creating – a real thing that emerges in various forms as constitutions as well as works of poetry, star maps, and the music we all remember and use to guide our lives.

Though he expressed some embarrassment about Dewey’s use of the word “metaphysic” in a passage he quoted to rebut Rawls’s claim that we can “do” democracy without metaphysical commitments, Rorty did metaphysics all the time – even though he also claimed there is no way things *really* are. But in making this move, Rorty gave up an important kind of critical leverage against his opponents and those we still face, who claim we can impose democracy on other nations and cultures, and that unregulated markets assure individual liberty – two empirically false and harmful views with which Rorty himself disagreed. How can we even talk sensibly as nominalists about the futures of nations, cultures, and the biosphere to which Al Gore has taught millions of members of a new “public” we all *really* belong? We must do some quick, in-the-field reconstructions of the older, low-rise, “socialist” kind of pragmatist metaphysics and substitute it wherever we can for Rorty’s nominalism, because we need such a pragmatist metaphysics both as a critical tool and as an imagination guide for visioning.

Ironism. Rorty’s anti-religious “ironism” was his expression of anti-authoritarianism, which he took to be the necessary first step for the creative shaping one’s own life, and as the prerequisite and purpose of democracy. It was against Rorty’s intellectual ethics to express even Dewey’s kind of pragmatist piety, because he thought it involved sneaking in the Christian God, or pantheism, or some kind of ancestor-worship by the back door. The Nietzschean label of “ironist” Rorty used for himself evokes heroes in ancient Greek dramas like *Oedipus Rex*, who followed their own, self-chosen paths without worrying about whether the gods might smite them down for exceeding the limits of human autonomy, and thereby violating divine laws and prerogatives.

In later years, in dialogue with Gianni Vattimo, Rorty wrote that he wished that he had described himself as an “anti-clericalist” (a political view) instead of an “atheist” (an epistemological or metaphysical view), because the whole issue of God’s existence just was not a “living” one for him in James’s sense. It was churches he opposed, he said, because they are dangerous to a democratic society. America’s “poetic self-creation,” he argued in *Achieving Our Country*, requires breaking through previous frames of reference to become “the paradigmatic democracy... in which governments and social institutions exist only for the purpose of making a new sort of individual possible, one who will take nothing as authoritative save free consensus between as diverse a

variety of citizens as can possibly be produced,” rejecting castes and classes as incompatible with the self-respect required for “free participation in democratic deliberation” (Rorty 1998, 29–30). Furthermore, Rorty argued, God-talk tends to make trouble in what Cornel West calls “the public square,” both because people worship different deities, and because reliance on any divinity diminishes self-reliance as well as democratic reliance on one another within self-chosen social solidarities.

However, Rorty’s neo-pragmatist “ironism” now reads as a prescription for disaster, an invitation to think that there is only one possible democratic way of living – the American way, because it is “our” way – and that such a way of living must reject *all* claims of piety as illegitimate intrusions on individual liberty, attending to no other sources of guidance than those interactively corrected ideas of free individuals that might emerge from democratic deliberation. In any case, how can “our” way even emerge among real ironists? Why would a convinced ironist deliberate?

Western bourgeois liberal democracy. Rorty’s “Western bourgeois liberal” vision of democracy suggests that “we” made it up and no one else can understand it – nor can we understand why they object to it or to various aspects of our culture – and that only middle class, educated people of leisure “get” the importance of democracy. If both the ancient Greeks and the Iroquois Confederacy are among the democracy-creating “we” cultures, as Scott Pratt (2002) says they are, or this seems like a club that any culture can join, as long as they get to do their own dance steps and add their own notes and rhythms, jazz-like, to the basic tune. The important divide is between cultural fundamentalists and cultural cosmopolitans, as Alain Locke (1935) said, and those who insist on maintaining, regaining, or achieving cultural purity are in the grip of an absolutism that rests on a lie. It’s really difficult to negotiate, collaborate, and make peace with such fundamentalists, whatever their particular faith – Christianity, Islam, Judaism, capitalism, communism, or jingoism.

The “democratic faith” Dewey, Locke, Addams, and the other classical pragmatists shared is not another “-ism” like these, because its open to learning with and from others, instead of replicating a world in our own image. It works out of an experience-rooted belief that conversation *really* works and changes us all, who can never be fully private from one another as long as language lasts. Finally, it works out of a sense that a shared biological history, expressed in human bodies transacting within a living world we shape by our actions, just as we are shaped by it, checks what it makes sense to say, giving us a common ground in human feelings, needs, and aspirations to talk, to tell our stories, and perhaps because of these, to collaborate in shaping a shared democratic future.

So Richard Rorty, *ave et valete*, as the ancient Romans used to say – hail and farewell! Let’s toast the world’s more deeply democratic cosmopolitan future and get on with the important work before us: as janitors, prophets,

conversation-mongers, public inquirers, liaison officers, hospitality workers, lifters of social hope, and a general reconstruction crew for framing transformation processes that can change the better possibilities we imagine and occasionally glimpse into experienced actualities for all of humanity and our beautiful blue-green planet.

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Judith M. Green
Associate Professor of Philosophy
Philosophy Department
Fordham University
Bronx, New York 10458
United States

Rorty's Moral Philosophy for Liberal Democratic Culture

Colin Koopman

Richard Rorty's moral writings offer a cogent summary of the moral content of contemporary liberal democratic culture. Rorty insists on a divide between our public and private lives, yet he claims that moral progress (a seemingly public affair) is primarily driven by the imagination of great poetry and philosophy (which Rorty claims are private projects). A pressing tension thus emerges between private imagination and public moral justification, which is also very real in contemporary liberal democratic culture itself. I sketch a way out of this problem, which fits well with the pragmatism he shares with William James and John Dewey.

One question immediately provoked by my title concerns the status of Richard Rorty's moral vision as specifically philosophical. Critics will wonder whether *Richard Rorty* really has a *philosophical* account of moral thought and practice. It is of course true that Rorty has not engaged with moral philosophy in the systematic manner common amongst leading contemporary moral philosophers. Even in those areas to which Rorty has devoted consistent systematic attention, such as philosophy of language and metaphilosophy, he has always been hesitant to apply the label of "philosophy" to whatever it is he sees himself as doing.

Rorty has, however, written a number of pieces which indicate the kind of moral philosophical vision we might expect of ourselves if our liberal democratic culture can ever figure out a way to take seriously the pragmatist experimentalism and meliorism that he, following William James and John Dewey, urges us to. And yet nowhere do these occasional pieces get summed up into an overall account of neopragmatist ethics. So, Rorty's varied writings on this subject are often taken as isolated contributions, rather than as contributing to a philosophical account of moral practice which Rorty is trying to pitch to contemporary intellectual culture.

Taken as individual and occasional pieces, Rorty's writings on moral philosophy seem to consist mostly in negative claims intended to debunk the typical aspirations of leading contemporary moral philosophers. Though this debunking and quasi-positivist way of reading Rorty can definitely be sustained by a certain view of his writings, a stronger and more nuanced reading of Rorty

emerges if we try to piece together a creative and post-positivist urge in his writings on the kind of moral philosophy he finds appropriate for a liberal democratic culture like ours. The obvious advantage of this stronger reading is that it gives us a more interesting Rorty to confront. It also has the added benefit of explaining why Rorty exercises such enormous influence in contemporary intellectual circles. Rorty the quasi-positivist gadfly can at best be seen as an old-fashioned kind of hanger-on taking a few last gasps of Viennese air just before the final asphyxiation of hard-core logical analysis in American philosophy departments. But Rorty the neo-pragmatist critic can more usefully be engaged as a creative thinker whose command ranges over a wide variety of texts and disciplines, and whose vision for what democratic culture might do next is taken seriously as an alternative to currently fashionable moods. It is this latter Rorty, the neo-pragmatist freewheeling interdisciplinarian, who we professional philosophers find discouraging just as our colleagues in literature departments find him exciting. It is this latter Rorty who comes as close as any other contemporary philosopher to expressing the moral philosophical content underlying much of our contemporary liberal democratic culture.

To get at this widely-embraced moral content of our liberal democratic culture, I will begin by describing Rorty's view as he stated it in the book in which he set the intellectual trajectory from which he has yet to stray. I am referring to the book that I take, and that I think Rorty himself also took, to be of greatest ongoing importance of all his works: *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (1989). I will then describe the same view as stated a few years later in a series of lectures in which Rorty offered a revised conception of his pragmatism: "Hope in Place of Knowledge" (1994). Along the way, I will point to a crucial tension in these texts between the view that imagination drives moral progress and the view that the quintessential liberal split between public and private is the last word on democratic politics. I will then explore the same tension as it appears in three of Rorty's most recent essays, all of which have been recently republished in Rorty's latest collection of philosophical papers, *Philosophy as Cultural Politics*: "Universalist Grandeur, Romantic Depth, Pragmatist Cunning" (2004a), "Philosophy as a Transitional Genre" (2004b), and "Trapped Between Kant and Dewey" (2004c). I suggest that these three essays demonstrate a real tension in Rorty's thought, such that his view of liberal morality must undergo substantial shifts if it is to avoid incoherence. Fortunately, I briefly conclude, Rorty has a way out of these problems by making a few adjustments which, although rather significant, would fit quite nicely with the centermost themes of the pragmatisms of James and Dewey from whom Rorty has drawn his primary inspiration.

1. The Value of Rorty's Philosophical Cultural Criticism

Before explicating Rorty's moral philosophy and contrasting it to Dewey's and James's views, I would like to address a preliminary concern left hanging by my

introductory remarks. Addressing this concern also enables me to indicate how pragmatists such as Rorty, Dewey, and James typically approach the very project of moral philosophy, or in other words what kind of work pragmatists typically think a moral philosophy ought to do.

The concern can be put this way: if it turns out that Rorty's moral philosophy is deeply at odds with itself, as I shall argue it is, then it can be fairly asked of me why I am going through so much trouble to explicate it in the first place. Answering this concern requires focusing on an aspect of Rorty's pragmatism which most of his philosophical critics have unfairly and indefensibly overlooked. Rorty's thought is generally worthy of explication and critique because it offers a clear and honest summary of many of the beliefs at the heart of contemporary liberal culture. Rorty's moral philosophy is worthy of consideration because it neatly summarizes the kind of moral practices which most contemporary liberals, that is most of us living in North America and Europe today, find ourselves practicing.

Indeed, it could be argued along these lines that Rorty's explication of the moral core of liberal culture deserves to be taken more seriously than many of those more rigorously-articulated but less-influential moral theories which currently enjoy prominence in contemporary philosophical discourse. It was, I think, one of Rorty's most important points that a gap between the moral practices of a liberal culture and the moral theory of academic liberals presents a serious problem for the latter. Rorty, of course, has not been alone in pressing this point. In the context of moral philosophy, this view has been impressively defended, though with motivations and arguments quite different from Rorty's, by philosophers as otherwise diverse as Bernard Williams, Stanley Cavell, Charles Taylor, and Michel Foucault.¹ These critics' shared doubts about the "purity" and "emptiness" of contemporary moral theory express a thought quite familiar to Rorty's pragmatism, namely that philosophers ought to address those problems of ordinary life which arise in the cultural milieu in which we find ourselves. The poverty of much of contemporary moral philosophy, the thought goes, can profitably be redressed by taking more seriously the kind of moral criticism which Rorty and a handful of others provide useful examples of.

This thought helps us see why it has been one of Rorty's greatest achievements that he has compellingly shown philosophers how they might learn to be cultural critics first and academics only second. This idea was concisely captured by the title of one of Rorty's essays, "The Priority of Democracy to Philosophy" (1988), in which he argued that pragmatists like John Dewey and William James provide us with exemplars of what philosophy as cultural criticism might look like. What Rorty finds exemplary in the classical pragmatists is their commitment to the hopeful democratic vistas which sustain us as individuals and communities in both our brightest and darkest hours. James and Dewey articulated and defended pragmatist philosophy in the light of their commitment to democracy, not the other way around. That point may seem trivial, but that it is not at all trivial can be quickly understood by considering all

those current philosophical fashions whose adherents are more committed to their theoretical ambitions than to the liberal democratic moralities which makes such ambitions possible in the first place. Rorty has more recently reiterated this idea in the title of his last collection of philosophical papers, *Philosophy as Cultural Politics*. In the preface to that volume Rorty urges, in quintessential pragmatist fashion, that we evaluate our philosophical disagreements “in the light of our hopes for cultural change” (2007, x).

I fully agree with Rorty, as James and Dewey would have, that if philosophy fails to reconstruct itself as cultural criticism then it shall find itself increasingly irrelevant to our most pressing cultural concerns.² If that happens, philosophy would find itself no longer in the service of a culture of liberal democracy, but rather would allow itself to be placed in the service of any variety of moral dispositions. I mention this at the outset so as to clarify that it is on the basis of my agreeing with Rorty’s prioritization of culture critical philosophical practice that I shall here seriously explicate and then severely criticize Rorty’s own particular views on what kind of moral philosophy is appropriate for a liberal democratic culture such as ours. While I am critical of Rorty here, I would still like to consider myself a Rortyan critic of the views I am arguing against.

2. Tensions in *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* and *Hope in Place of Knowledge*

The central thrust of Rorty’s *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* is a distinction between the public and private sides of modern liberal culture. One’s actions and beliefs are public if they affect others and they are private if they concern only oneself. In terms of moral philosophy, the upshot of this distinction is that we can hold our private hopes and fantasies apart from our responsibilities to other persons. We can be ironic about ourselves in attempting philosophical redescriptions which will make our old beliefs look antiquated. But there is a political risk in such ironism and so it ought to be confined to the private sphere. Things will hold together alright, Rorty thinks, so long as we allow our public relationships to be mediated by an idea of solidarity while keeping our ironic attempts at self-criticism private. Rorty’s name for our public moral cohesion is ‘solidarity’ while ‘irony’ is his name for our private moral dissent.

One important innovation which appears in Rorty’s treatment of the quintessential liberal split between public and private spheres is as follows: philosophy gets recast as a private ironizing project in contrast to public projects of solidarity-building. On this view, the role of philosophy is not to strengthen the ethics that bind us together but rather to ironically unweave the metaphors by which we describe ourselves. Ethical practices constituting the core of our public culture stand to gain everything from human solidarity and very little from philosophical irony.

One interesting feature of *Contingency* is that we find in it an argument to the effect that imagination is crucial for increasing moral solidarity. Rorty writes, "In my utopia, human solidarity would be seen not as a fact to be recognized by clearing away 'prejudice' or burrowing down to previously hidden depths, but, rather, as a goal to be achieved. It is to be achieved not by inquiry but by imagination, the imaginative ability to see strange people as sufferers. Solidarity is not discovered by reflection, but created" (1989, xvi). Thomas Alexander, another contemporary pragmatist, puts his finger on a curious tension in Rorty's view on this matter. He notes that the key for the Rortyan public sphere "is an imaginative education which allows one to grasp different contexts and enter into the standpoint of the other" (Alexander 1993, 381). Alexander detects here a strong divorce in Rorty's view between argumentation and creation, inquiry and imagination. Alexander thus concludes that Rorty "has no way of explaining how a moral imagination is educated or how it works. Creativity is as mysterious for him as the romantics; the creative shifts in language can only be absurd entrances into the fixed mechanism of routine speech habits... Ironically, Rorty's postmodernism plays upon the very conceptual notions introduced by modernism" (1993, 382–383). While it may be unfair to attribute anything resembling a frivolous postmodernism to Rorty, Alexander is correct to point out that Rorty seems to proffer a high modernist contrast between reason and imagination. Rorty's deployment of this contrast in carelessly strong terms cannot but trouble other contemporary philosophers who take Dewey and James as seriously as he does. Thus Ruth Anna Putnam echoes Alexander's worry in arguing that "insofar as we have made moral progress, I find [Rorty's] claim that this is *not* due to increased moral knowledge problematic." The reason Putnam finds this problematic is because she cannot endorse Rorty's view that "if there were moral knowledge it would be of a nonempirical reality, the sort of knowledge that Plato or, in a different way, Kant thought we could have" (Putnam 2000, 394, 403). But moral knowledge, for contemporary Deweyans and Jamesians like Alexander and Putnam, is not the kind of thing that could be opposed in any philosophically- or morally-relevant way to moral imagination. Moral success, which is what most pragmatists want to claim is what really counts, does not require moral certainty and as such it can result from either imagination or knowledge, or, even better, some hybrid of the two. The compartmentalization of knowledge and imagination on which Rorty's arguments in *Contingency* seem to rely is, whatever its merits, strangely out of step with his professed pragmatism.

This suggests a further, even deeper, tension in Rorty's position. On the one hand, Rorty wants to confine philosophy and poetry to the private sphere. And on the other hand, he offers a picture of progress in the public sphere as driven primarily by imagination. The tension between these two positions gets focused by this observation: imagination has typically been the achievement of those very philosophers and poets, the romantic ironists, who Rorty thinks ought to cloister themselves in their private monasteries. *So how can imagination, a*

typically private project, drive moral progress in the public sphere? This is the central problem facing the liberal moral philosophical vision which Rorty offers such a poignant expression of.

The reason that Rorty argues that genius philosophers and poets need to keep their work private is that if let loose in public, the wild fires of their imagination would at least some of the time unleash torrential political conflagrations. The kind of imaginative redescription that Rorty, clearly following Shelley as much as Hegel, finds essential for moral and political progress consists in large part of the kind of ironizing that Rorty rightly recognizes as leading to moral and political instability. Rorty seems to want to have it both ways. He seems to want to be able to nurture a private sphere where poets can be strong and autonomous, but he also wants these strong isolated poets to be able to dart out into the public sphere once in awhile in order to assist moral progress. But if what Rorty really wants is imaginative moral progress, then he ought not to focus so much energy on the public-private split. By the same reasoning, if he really wants the public-private split, then he ought not focus so much energy on imagination as a motor of moral progress. This tension only gets intensified in Rorty's writings subsequent to *Contingency*.

In a series of three lectures first delivered in German in 1994, Rorty tried his hand at stating a new "version of pragmatism". The pragmatism he there offered hinged on three ideas: truth without correspondence, a world without essence, and ethics without principles. In these essays, Rorty construed pragmatism, quite originally, as a form of romanticism. Rorty ends the final lecture on this note: "We [pragmatists] see imagination as the cutting edge of cultural evolution, the power which – given peace and prosperity – constantly operates so as to make the human future richer than the human past" (1994, 87). Indeed Rorty is right, at the end of this sentence, to suggest that pragmatism focuses on hope rather than certainty. Pragmatists are not impressed with constancy, but with becoming and with growth. Pragmatists replace all the old philosophical dualisms with a more innocent "distinction between the present and the future" (1994, 87).

Basic to Rorty's argument as he lays it out here is the pragmatist denial of the distinction between morality and prudence. By getting rid of this distinction, Rorty sees pragmatism as moving past the problems of Kantian moral philosophy and toward something very close to Mill's utilitarianism, Aristotle's virtue ethics, and Hume's moral sympathy (1994, 74). Rorty claims that "the prudence-morality distinction is, like that between custom and law, a distinction of degree – the degree of need for conscious deliberation and explicit formulation of precepts – rather than a distinction of kind.... There was no point at which practical reasoning stopped being prudential and became specifically moral, no point at which it stopped being merely useful and started being authoritative" (1994, 73).

At this point Rorty connects his own pragmatist ethics, with Dewey as his primary model, to that of moral philosopher Annette Baier, who takes Hume as

her primary model. Baier's central point, according to Rorty, is that we ought to replace the Kantian moral notion of obligation with Humean ideas of trust and sympathy. Morality turns on something like imaginative sensitivity rather than on something like rational duty. Writes Rorty, "moral development in the individual, and moral progress in the human species as a whole, is a matter of re-making human selves so as to enlarge the variety of the relationships which constitute those selves" (1994, 79). Morality consists in growth, in amplification, in education. Rorty is right to emphasize this as the quintessence of Deweyan and Jamesian pragmatism. But Rorty further claims that imagination is the essential means of this process of *Bildung*. Many pragmatists will be less than comfortable with this view and especially with its implications.

Rorty explicates this point later on: "[M]oral progress is not a matter of an increase of rationality – a gradual diminution of the influence of prejudice and superstition, permitting us to see our moral duty more clearly. Nor is it what Dewey called an increase of intelligence, that is, increasing one's skill at inventing courses of action which simultaneously satisfy many conflicting demands. People can be very intelligent, in this sense, without having wide sympathies... So it is best to think of moral progress as a matter of increasing *sensitivity*, increasing responsiveness to the needs of a larger and larger variety of people and things" (1994, 81). The danger of this approach is that Rorty risks romanticizing morality insofar as he divides imagination from intelligence. Rorty is indeed right that we can break the old distinction between contemplation and action if only we can first move from certainty to hope. But why he thinks of hope in purely romantic terms of an imagination purified of reason so that it might spawn "unpredictable change" I cannot, at least not from a pragmatist perspective, adequately explain (1994, 88).

Rorty urges in these lectures that we replace metaphors of height and depth with those of width (1994, 82). But romanticism offers depth no less than does rationalism – it simply offers the depth of the imagination in place of the depth of reason. Width is achieved by embracing both imagination and reason, not one at the expense of the other. Rorty's version of pragmatism in these lectures culminates in a kind of romanticism *in extremis*. It is not at all a pragmatism that favors romanticism alongside of utilitarianism. As such, it strays from the pragmatism of both James and Dewey, who saw their philosophies as ways of bringing together these two grand currents of modern thought.

3. Pragmatist Cunning

I find Rorty more convincing in recent work where he acknowledges troubles with romantic metaphors. "I have tried too hard to assimilate pragmatism to romanticism," he admitted in an article contrasting pragmatism with both universalism and romanticism (2004a, 129). This piece sketches a characteristically Rortyan summary of the last few hundred years of intellectual history:

“The dialectic that runs through the last two centuries of philosophical thought ... is one in which universalists decry each new other to reason as endangering both rationality and human solidarity, and in which romantics rejoin that what is called rationality is merely a disguise for the attempt to eternalize custom and tradition” (2004a, 136). So what’s the solution to this impasse? “[P]ragmatism should be viewed ... as an alternative to both universalism and romanticism” (2004a, 136). Rorty’s thought here is in keeping with the best efforts of *via media* pragmatists like William James and John Dewey.³ Unfortunately, I suspect that Rorty has yet to realize all of the ramifications implicated by taking this view seriously.

To be really committed to this vision of pragmatism as pitched around both rationalism and romanticism, one ought to stop talking as if reason and imagination can be purified of one another – because that is the central quest of both rationalism and romanticism, the only difference between the two being where each side places the plus and minus signs. Romantics find in pure imagination our saving grace. Rationalists find in pure reason our lamp of liberation. So purified, both faculties look out onto the world as something to be illuminated and reflected by that part of us which is best, grandest, and deepest. As Rorty puts the concern, “The trouble with both universalist metaphors of grandeur and romantic metaphors of depth is that they suggest that a practical proposal, whether conservative or radical in character, can gain strength by being tied in with something not merely human – something like the intrinsic nature of reality or the uttermost depths of the human soul” (2004a, 137). Thinkers beholden to both rationalism and romanticism *simply assume* that we ought to chain ourselves to these extra-human powers, while virtually nobody in either tradition suspects that it might be better for we humans to push back against that which is above and beyond us. Rorty’s pragmatist rejects these positions insofar as both exhibit that dreadful but all too typical posture of profundity to which Rorty, as Habermas has recently observed, was always opposed: “behind the aura of the impressive speaker and writer and the passionate teacher lay concealed that honest and soft, nobly restrained and infinitely loveable man who hated nothing more than any pretense of profundity” (forthcoming).⁴

Rorty ends his discussion of universality and grandeur, those two pretences to profundity, with the suggestion that pragmatist cunning does the trick of nicely balancing between the opposed needs of rationalism and romanticism or what he calls “the need for consensus and the need for novelty” (2004a, 136). The pragmatist thinks that “[n]either consensus nor imaginative-ness is good in itself” (2004a, 138) and that “it takes a lot of unheroic bourgeois cunning to balance the continuing need for justification with the continuing need for novelty” (2004a, 140). Pragmatism, Rorty rightly holds, is that view of things which recognizes the importance of such cunning. On this view, pragmatism is best understood as a “romantic utilitarianism” that integrates the best parts of both traditions (Rorty 1999, 267ff.).

Now if Rorty were really to take this view seriously it would require that he go back on a great many of the things he stated earlier on in the *Contingency* book. It would, for example, require that he recant his view that imagination is the primary vehicle of moral progress. For the newest version of pragmatism as romantic utilitarianism suggests that moral progress involves both imagination and reason. While I think a shift of position here is advisable, I am not so sure that Rorty himself ever fully made the move to the more nuanced position he sketched under the heading of “pragmatist cunning.” For in other articles from around the same time, Rorty continued to purvey his old idea that imagination is the best motor of moral and political progress.⁵

4. Persisting Tensions in Rorty's Recent Moral Philosophical Writings

In a recent essay entitled “Philosophy as a Transitional Genre” Rorty described philosophy as a stage of intellectual culture somewhere between religion and literature. Philosophy's location between these other two intellectual forms could be staged conceptually, but Rorty here stages it historically and hence we get a view of philosophy as the intellectual form that mediates the transition from religion to literature. “[I]ntellectuals of the West have, since the Renaissance, progressed through three stages: they have hoped for redemption first from God, then from philosophy, and now from literature” (2004b, 8).

While both theists and philosophers sought redemption in “Knowledge of ... a way things really are” (2004b, 11), for members of literary culture, “redemption is to be achieved by getting in touch with the present limits of the human imagination” (2004b, 12). Such a culture is “always in search of novelty” and sees itself as “an ever-living, ever-expanding, fire” (2004b, 12). Rorty is thus back at the old game of presenting his own view as heavily inflected with romantic metaphors. From the point of view of literary culture, both philosophy and religion sought redemption through some “nonhuman authority to whom we owe some sort of respect” (Rorty 1998, 150; cf. 2000, 123–127 and 2002, 75). Philosophy only half-overcame the metaphysical pathos of the priests, and it was not until the great breakthrough of literary culture that we learned to teach ourselves what Emerson called self-reliance (Rorty 2004b, 13). Rorty described the “insufficient self-reliance” of the clerics and the philosophers as a “self-deluding attempt to find dignity in the acceptance of bondage and freedom in the recognition of constraint” (2004b, 26).

Critics of literary culture, romanticism, or any other cultural practice that exalts the imagination tend to underscore the dangers implicit in any style of thought that sees itself as ever-expanding and hence potentially all-consuming. Rorty was never ignorant of these risks. He recognized, and made it clear that he did, the dangers implicit in the imaginations of some of his own favorite romantics like Nietzsche and Heidegger. While Nietzsche helped us expand our conception of what was humanly possible, it was nevertheless a good thing, Rorty urged, that he was not taken too seriously by the masses he happened to

despise. Rorty's way of admitting this point without letting go of his view of the importance of the literary imagination was to suggest that "although argumentation is essential for projects of social cooperation, redemption is an individual, private matter" (2004b, 22). So his argument about literary culture was that it "asks us to disjoin political deliberation from projects of redemption ... disjoin the need for redemption from the search for universal agreement" (2004b, 22, 24). This means making a strong distinction between public and private spheres so that rational argumentation and romantic imagination can both reign free, but separately – it means "acknowledging that private hopes for authenticity and autonomy should be left at home when the citizens of a democratic society foregather to deliberate about what is to be done" (2004b, 22).

This view leads Rorty straight back to the problematic tensions in *Contingency* that I described above. The view is that imagination can be exalted, can be the free and sovereign flame that it is in its purest form, only if we keep it safely confined in the private sphere. And insofar as Rorty never stopped viewing private projects of literary-cum-romantic imagination as the engine of moral progress, he never stopped endorsing the odd implication that moral progress is a private affair. Of course, Rorty could have conceivably denied the connections between moral progress and imagination which he had previously argued for. But it seems that Rorty never abandoned this position, for in another article published contemporaneously with his recent defense of the public-private distinction, he even more strongly underscores the value of imagination for moral philosophy and the moral life.

Rorty's recent "Trapped between Kant and Dewey" should have been titled "Dewey versus both Kant and Bentham". That would not only fit with how Dewey himself understood pragmatist moral theory, but it would also better describe Rorty's purposes here. For the central thrust of this article is to debunk claims common amongst both utilitarians and deontologists. Perhaps Rorty focuses his title on Kant alone simply because in contemporary moral theory, the Kantians have almost the full field. In any event, Rorty's biggest concern here is with "the obsession with the opposition between consequentialism and non-consequentialism which still dominates elementary courses in ethics" (Rorty 2004c, 202). He thinks that his favorite pragmatist philosopher, John Dewey, showed us how to get over this obsession, and that his two favorite contemporary moral philosophers, Annette Baier and Jerome Schneewind, are pretty much up to the same thing. None of these moral philosophers thinks that we need to choose between consequentialism and deontology. Both are useful in situations where we face what Dewey called moral "uncertainty and conflict" (Dewey 1932, 165).

The problem with utilitarianism and deontology is that they perpetuate the search for ahistorical moral criteria. It is by these criteria, they think, that moral progress will finally be judged. To this Rorty contrasts his own Deweyan view that "there is only the criterion of how well or badly we ourselves can fit... new practical identities together with our own. There is only, if you like, the

judgment of history” (Rorty 2004c, 209). These new practical identities, Rorty argued, are not supplied by the conditions of practical reason itself nor by a calculus of pleasure and pain, but rather by practical exemplars. Huck Finn and Thomas Jefferson inspire us to adopt new moral stances, not principles of pleasure calculation and imperatives which bind us categorically. Rorty could thus confidently conclude with the interesting suggestion that “[d]iscussions of deontology versus consequentialism, or of whether our sense of moral obligation originates in reason or in sentiment, seem pedantic distractions from discussions of historical or literary personages” (2004c, 211).

This interesting suggestion enabled Rorty to go on to emphasize the value of moral imagination for moral progress. Rorty claimed later in the essay that “[i]t is a detailed comparison of imagined selves, situations, and communities that does the trick, not argument from principles” (2004c, 212). That line could have been lifted from *Contingency* as could the claim that moral progress is a consequence of the fact that people “are more imaginative, not that they are more rational” (2004c, 212).

To sum up, then, in recently re-stating both the primacy of imagination for moral progress (“Trapped”) and the centrality of the public-private split for democratic progress (“Transitional”), Rorty lands himself back in the very same tensions which troubled his work in the *Contingency* book and the *Hope* lectures. This is unfortunate, because in the “Pragmatist Cunning” piece Rorty seemed ready to admit the presence of this problematic tension and he seemed prepared to reconcile the incoherence by revising his view of pragmatism in a way that emphasizes pragmatism’s capacity for synthesizing romanticism and utilitarianism. I would like to now conclude by suggesting how Rorty’s cunning pragmatist might overcome the problems I have focused on in a way that would nicely fit with some of the broader themes of the philosophical outlook which Rorty just so happened to share with James and Dewey.

5. Resolving the Tensions in Rorty’s Moral Philosophy

Here is the problem with Rorty’s moral philosophy in capsule form: his emphasis on the primacy of the imagination for morality cuts against his emphasis on the importance of a distinction between our public and private lives. This, apparently, leaves the Rortyan moral philosopher with only two options.

A first option would involve abandoning the public-private split in order to extend the influence of the imagination and lessen the authority of reason. This split abandoned, imagination could then reign throughout literary culture and drive forward both our ironic self-criticism and our progressive moral solidarity. The problem with this option is that it seems to overemphasize the pragmatic efficacy of imagination. A romanticism intoxicated with its own imaginings too much risks undermining consensus (i.e., the traditional goals of the public sphere) for the sake of novelty (i.e., the traditional goals of the private

sphere). This is the danger that rationalists and pragmatists alike have always recognized in an unbridled romanticism.

A second option would involve retaining the public-private split in a way that forces us to confront a dilemma about the best means for furthering moral progress. This option forces us to face a tough, and I think irresolvable in the terms in which it is given to us, question as to whether moral progress is primarily public (and hence unimaginative) or primarily private (and hence nonpublic). Placing moral progress in the public sphere amounts to ceding it to the rationalists just insofar as imagination is exactly the thing which the private sphere was designed to contain. The effect of adopting this option would be that of making moral progress in its most radical and imaginative forms difficult to countenance. But if we balk here and place morality in the private sphere in order to retain these important connections to imagination, then we will face the usual problems concerning the seemingly relativistic claim that morality is a private affair.

It seems, then, that both of these options are untenable insofar as they only lead to further problems. And so Rorty's tension between an emphasis on the primacy of the imagination for moral progress and an emphasis on the public-private split seems irreconcilable.

However, a third option deserves consideration. Why not refuse priority in the way of moral progress to both imagination and reason and at the same time refuse to partition romanticism and rationalism into separate realms of public and private? The third option involves abandoning *both* the thought that imagination is prior to reason in the case of morality *and* the firm distinction between public and private. This option may seem far from the views which Rorty himself had defended, but I doubt that it need be far from the hearts of any of the rest of us pragmatist defenders of liberal democratic culture.

This third option, which should be recommended to those embracing Rorty's view on the basis of James's and Dewey's writings on morality, seems to me a nice way for him to repackage his account of "pragmatist cunning" as doing justice to both utilitarianism and romanticism in a way that does not require an unconvincing view of moral progress as either wholly public (and hence unconvincing because seen as unimaginative) or wholly private (and hence unconvincing because seen as private). This third option certainly requires abandoning the distinction between public and private which seems to have been at the heart of Rorty's work ever since *Contingency*. But in many ways this is advisable insofar as Rorty's defense of this distinction has occasioned more criticism than any other single view he has on offer. Those who embrace Rorty's position can, I think, consistently repudiate his previous over-emphasis on this distinction in a way that would nicely mesh with the broader themes of his neopragmatism: his anti-foundationalism and anti-representationalism, his view of the role of pragmatism in modern intellectual history, and his characteristically pragmatist attempt to overcome dualisms by way of emphasizing the important points captured by both sides of an opposing argument (for instance,

the importance of both utilitarianism and rationalism, both deontology and consequentialism).

Rorty openly admitted in one of his last essays, "I am a hedgehog who, despite showering my reader with allusions and dropping lots of names, has really only one idea: the need to get beyond representationalism, and thus into an intellectual world in which human beings are responsible only to each other" (Rorty 2004b, 4). It is useful to note that Rorty's one big idea leaves open the question of whether or not a strong distinction between public and private provides the most viable route around inhuman authorities. I follow James and Dewey in thinking that a better option for hedgehogs like Rorty involves repudiating all strong dualisms, be them between public and private or reason and imagination or utilitarianism and romanticism. The cunning pragmatist endorses the view that both reason and imagination are central to our moral progress. They do this by abandoning the traditional positions insisted upon so vehemently by those who defend the old impulse to purify reason and imagination of one another by giving them free reign in separate spheres of human life. Dewey and James alike recognized the value of both "tough-minded" austerity and "tender-minded" celebration. To think as a pragmatist as they did leads us to doubt at least two thoughts which have proven central for Rorty's moral philosophical vision for our liberal democratic culture. The first doubtful thought is that there need be an *important* distinction in kind between the roles that tough rationality and tender imagination play in our lives. The second doubtful thought is that there is an equally *important* distinction to be made between the public and private sides of our lives. James and Dewey doubted both of these thoughts long before either was defended by Rorty.

Critics have, of course, not been afraid to point out the problems engendered by Rorty's dualistic thinking about reason and imagination or public and private.⁶ But critics have generally thus far failed to focus on the way in which these various dualisms inform one another in Rorty's use of them. Critics have, in other words, thus far failed to connect Rorty's deployment of the two quite different distinctions between reason and imagination on the one hand and public and private on the other. This is worth noting just insofar as these dualisms are, when taken by themselves, not obviously problematic. It is only when we are able to witness their connection to one another in the context of Rorty's broader moral philosophical vision that we get a sense of just how problematic they can be. This is why my discussion has focused precisely on the problems attendant to Rorty's weaving together of the public versus private and reason versus imagination dualisms. Having focused on the problems with this interrelated use of these dualisms, I would like to now turn to James's and Dewey's critiques of these dualisms in order to suggest a more viable conception of liberal democratic morality which I believe is quite in keeping with the most important aspects of Rorty's thinking.

Rorty's implicit, but for his position necessary, distinction between reason and imagination can be easily shown to be quite distant from the

philosophical approaches of James and Dewey. One need only consider the way in which James and Dewey constantly worked to reinterpret the classic dualisms of modern philosophy in a way that proved them to be only functional distinctions of limited use rather than substantial distinctions of wide value. James and Dewey articulated visions of moral philosophy which rejected the reductionism of both rationalistic utilitarianism and imagination-centered intuitionism. They offered instead a richer and deeper moral vision which they believed could embrace the important demands of both rationality and imagination. An example of Dewey's rejection of a dualism of rationality and imagination can be found in his repeated criticisms of the separation of rationalistic science and imaginative art. In *Reconstruction and Philosophy*, one of Rorty's favorite books, Dewey wrote of this separation: "Surely there is no more significant question before the world than this question of the possibility and method of reconciliation of the attitudes of practical science and contemplative esthetic appreciation. Without the former, man will be the sport and victim of natural forces which he cannot use or control. Without the latter, mankind might become a race of economic monsters, restlessly driving hard bargains with nature and with one another, bored with leisure or capable of putting it to use only in ostentatious display and extravagant dissipation" (Dewey 1920, 152–153). Dewey's response to this "most significant question" was that we must find a way of reconciling scientific ratiocination and aesthetic imagination.⁷ In taking this approach he was essentially following James who had argued something very similar in his "The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life" (1891).⁸ Both Dewey and James, thus, understood pragmatism to be the philosophical project of negotiating a reconciliation between our utilitarian and romantic modes.

Rorty's second important distinction, between public and private, is far more complex and cannot be easily handled in a short space. This distinction is extraordinarily complex in part owing to the fact that it operates in different ways in different contexts such that what is 'public' in one context may be 'private' in another (compare feminist versus capitalist theories of business enterprise). Yet despite widely different deployments of the distinction between public and private, I think James and Dewey can be read as suggesting that we need not take any form of this distinction quite so seriously as thinkers like Rorty have. That does not mean that we have to prove the distinction to be philosophically incoherent or politically useless. It only means that we shall treat the distinction as one tool amongst many and therefore not as something that might qualify as the very heart of liberal culture.

That James can be read in this way follows from the basic position outlined, once again, in his essay "The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life". The upshot of that essay is that we live amidst a plurality of ideals in which no single ideal could offer a neutral and publicly-available means of adjudicating between all the others.⁹ Rorty, I think, would prefer to point to James's defense in "The Will to Believe" (1896) of our right to privately believe in ideas which

do not turn out to publicly harm those who do not endorse them.¹⁰ This is, of course, a plausible reading of James's argument in this essay, but I think his point in "The Will to Believe" is better read alongside other essays from the same period including "What Makes a Life Significant?" (1899a) and "On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings" (1899b). In these two essays James goes to great lengths to explicate how easy it is for us to neglect the impact our beliefs and actions may have on one another. James, in other words, is very concerned to show how precariously-constructed are our familiar fences between publicity and privacy. The upshot of these essays, including "The Will to Believe," is that rather than seeing substantial portions of our lives as occurring in carefully fenced private domains, we should strive to recognize the way in which our lives impact those all around us in ways we had never suspected. This is the best way to make sense of James's recommendation in the "The Moral Philosopher" of a pluralistic morality in which the great variety of human ideals continuously impact one another in ways that cannot be anticipated in advance. He does not recommend evading the clash of ideals by setting them in private – "Some part of the ideal must be butchered" (1891, 622). He recommends instead a public effort of reinterpreting our ideals in the light of the ideals of others such that we may develop newer ideals which may inclusively embrace an ever-broadening moral culture – "the victory to be philosophically prayed for is that of the more inclusive side" (1891, 623).

That Dewey is close to James on these matters can be seen in his frequently repeated claim that "democracy is a way of life," a formulation which suggests that democracy penetrates every aspect of the modern existence and is anything but a political ideal which makes claims on us only in our public, and not in our private, affairs.¹¹ Democracy, on Dewey's model, is found throughout our lives and perhaps most significantly in those deepest portions of ourselves which we like to think of as fenced off from public view. It is of course true that in his fullest statement of political philosophy, *The Public and Its Problems*, Dewey retained the idea of a distinction between public and private. But he argued there that this distinction should be drawn only "experimentally" and that politics is better understood on a model of a plurality of "publics" (Dewey 1927, 65, 126).¹² Presented with this view, Rorty would I think applaud Dewey and suggest that this exactly how he conceives of the distinction between public and private. I agree with Rorty that there is nothing preventing him from accepting Dewey's experimental way of distinguishing public and private, but it nevertheless remains true that this is a view which Rorty himself failed to really internalize into his own thinking about the split between publicity and privacy. For if one really takes seriously Dewey's experimental way of distinguishing public and private, then one will not be inclined to think of this distinction as at the very heart of liberal democratic morality, which is how Rorty, just like Rawls, described it. Certainly Dewey did not think of this distinction that way. For Dewey the heart of liberal democracy was a democratic way of life which simply cannot be brought into focus through a distinction between public and

private. Dewey had a different view of liberal democracy as a pluralistic culture in which a welter of associated publics are in unceasing interaction with one another. Some times these interactions will assume more harmonious tendencies while at other times they will be more conflictual. But never will there be a unified and neutral one 'public' sphere which adjudicates amongst all the other 'private' associations.

The best kind of philosophers, on the view I interpret James and Dewey as recommending, are those who weave the utilitarians and the romantics together into some ever yet more inclusive conception of the moral life. These philosophers will experience much trouble if they try to spell out exactly how we might unravel our utilitarianism from our romanticism in order to parse the two out into distinct spheres of public and private. These philosophers will fail to see a strong distinction in kind here even if they will recognize numerous piecemeal distinctions in degree. For that very reason these philosophers will think that distinctions between public and private or rationality and imagination are not the kinds of tools which we philosophers need to worry about improving. This is not to say that these tools will never be useful again, it is only to say that they should not be central parts of our moral vision of how a liberal democratic culture such as ours might improve itself. There are other tools more important for a liberal democratic culture and it is to those tools that we cunning pragmatist cultural critics ought to devote our attention.

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NOTES

1. See representative works by Williams (1985), Cavell (2004), Taylor (1989), and Foucault (1984).

2. I argue that the most important aspects of Rorty's pragmatism are in these respects continuous with James's and Dewey's pragmatisms, in Koopman (2006). I there describe my conception of pragmatist philosophy as a form of melioristic cultural criticism. I believe that this view of Rorty's pragmatism is also borne out by Neil Gross's (forthcoming) sociological biography of the development of Rorty's thought up to the early 1980s. Gross's book is a remarkably rich study and it is sure to contribute enormously to the transformation of the clearly inadequate received wisdom about Rorty's thought with which most philosophers have thus far labored.

3. See James Kloppenberg (1986) on James and Dewey as *via media* philosophers.

4. This quote is taken from a public memorial address for Rorty delivered by Habermas at Stanford University on 2 November 2007. This lecture will be published in *New Literary History* in 2008 and is, until then, available online at www.telospress.com.

5. Problems also persist in that Rorty continues in some contexts to identify his pragmatism with romantic thought. In an undergraduate seminar offered in 2005 at Stanford University, Rorty characterized his own position as a “romantic philosophy” identified most strongly with post-Nietzschean thought. While admittedly the format of an undergraduate course does not present the same exigencies of context as one faces in publishing in an academic journal, the point is that Rorty remains quite comfortable identifying his pragmatism with a form of romanticism.

6. For criticisms of Rorty's reason versus imagination dualism see the discussions by Alexander and Putnam cited above. Rorty's public versus private dualism has engendered a wealth of critical attention; two of the best responses are by Nancy Fraser (1988) and Thomas McCarthy (1990).

7. Gregory Pappas discusses Dewey's view on these matters in the introduction to his excellent forthcoming book on Dewey's ethics.

8. James's rejection of a reason-imagination dualism in morality is noted by Graham Bird (1997, 262) and Hilary and Ruth Anna Putnam (1989, 218).

9. For readings of James's moral philosophy along these lines see Ruth Anna Putnam (1990, 1997b).

10. See Rorty's discussion of this essay (1997).

11. This idea permeates Dewey's works from the early Dewey (1888) to the late Dewey (1939).

12. Robert Westbrook (1991, 305) rightly emphasizes this point that Dewey's concern is not *the* public but rather multiple publics.

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Colin Koopman
Humanities Research Fellow
Department of Philosophy
University of California, Santa Cruz
1156 High Street
Santa Cruz, California 95064
United States

Dewey and Dancy and the Moral Authority of Rules

Tom Spector

Dewey's pragmatist regard for the place of rules in moral deliberation occupies a middle ground between the rejection of rules found in Jonathan Dancy's moral particularism and full scale subsumptivism of actions to rules. Concerning the authority rules should play in one's moral thinking, however, Dewey is closely aligned with the particularists: he rejects their authority over individual cases. This essay takes Dewey's naturalistic approach to the derivation of rules to argue that in some cases it is ultimately beneficial to allow rules to occupy a place of authority in moral thinking.

1. Introduction

The affinities between Deweyan Pragmatist Ethics and the doctrine of Moral Particularism recently enlivening moral philosophy and promoted most forcefully by Jonathan Dancy are sufficiently striking that for Pragmatists, it must be mildly insulting that Dewey is neither referenced nor given pride of place as a proto-Particularist in the discussion. Oh well; pragmatists are used to being disrespected. Yet they trudge on cheerfully, confident that someday Dewey will have his break-out moment and that pragmatic insights and conceptual tools will finally obtain the respect they merit in contemporary analytic philosophy. The purpose of this essay is to help hasten that moment.

Discussion of the affinities and differences between Dewey and Dancy could take any number of vectors: their moral epistemologies, naturalistic ontologies, focus on moral sensitivity vs. rectitude, what happens to consistency in judgment in their respective conceptions, and their attitudes toward intuition are just a few that come to mind. I will discuss just one issue that becomes a central subject in the ethics of both: the rightful role of rules in moral deliberation. I begin with a typically Deweyan move: I will establish a continuum of possible positions regarding the role that rules (principles, norms, maxims, codes, platitudes) should play in moral deliberation and then eventually focus the discussion still further on one of the many possible aspects – the concept of the moral authority of rules – that modulate those different positions. Ultimately, I hope to establish some considerations for furthering the discussion.

2. The Continuum

At one end of this continuum, the strongest possible role for rules in moral deliberation is denoted by the subsumptive approach; the idea that “if we are doing our moral thinking properly, we can approach a new case with a set of principles, and we look to see which of those principles the case falls under.”¹ Rules gather and generalize all individual instances into one or more categories and therefore, the real work for any moral agent is to establish the rules or principles by which one should live. Once rules are established and accepted, the moral action in any given situation should present itself straightforwardly. The subsumptive approach becomes attractive where simplicity, consistency and rectitude are highly prized commodities. This might have been seen to be more urgent in the nineteenth century than now; it still receives some defense from Kantians and utilitarians who believe in final principles but otherwise has been largely left behind in analytic moral philosophy.

The opposite end of the scale is occupied by moral particularism; a doctrine holding that not only do principles *not* provide adequate guidance in moral situations, but that principles have *no place* in moral deliberation; that holding rules to be authoritative always entails severe logical difficulties and furthermore, they generally distract the agent from sensitive consideration of the situation and pervert his or her thinking. David McNaughton states it succinctly: “Moral particularism takes the view that moral principles are at best useless, and at worst a hindrance, in trying to find out which is the right action.”² Were moral philosophers given to slogans, “Rules are for fools” would probably best characterize Dancy’s position. Dancy believes he has shown that ALL moral reasons are context-dependent and that any given fact about a situation, such as that it gives the agent pleasure, can work for or against its moral evaluation depending on the context. Dancy calls this doctrine the holism of reasons.³ The ultimate holism of reasons implies that the proper orientation of the moral agent is to attend to the individual situation: Leave the rules to fend for themselves.

We can identify several intermediate stopping points – more amenable to the role of principles in moral deliberation than is particularism but short of outright subsumptivism – between these mutually hostile camps. One of the most plausible alternatives to subsumptivism is the concept that rules play an important contributory role in moral thinking, but that any given principle may be overridden by other considerations. Perhaps the most widely discussed of the “contributory” views is Ross’s concept of “prima facie” rules.⁴ Those favoring the contributory approach think it captures several important features of morality when it is functioning well: that at least some rules can be devised that are still authoritative in one’s deliberation, that these rules will always operate as considerations to be factored for or against taking a certain course of action, and that the existence of rules is an important element in establishing consistency in one’s actions – itself an important element in moral behavior.⁵

Dewey and Tuft’s *Ethics* mediates the space between the contributory

views and outright particularism. Having first established a firm distinction between rules (which discourage judgment) and principles (which are merely advisory) Dewey can encourage the moral agent to develop and consult with principles because they are solely tools for deliberation to help the agent make informed decisions. “A moral principle ... gives the agent a basis for looking at and examining a particular question that comes up.”⁶ “A principle is not a command to act or forbear acting in a given way: *it is a tool for analyzing a special situation*, the right or wrong being determined by the situation in its entirety, and not by the rule as such.”⁷ Your principles are what you have an internal conversation with when deliberating on an action. They act much like a beloved grandparent: wise but possibly out-of-touch with current situations and lacking any real authority over your actions. Were Dewey given to slogans, “Rules are but tools” would probably fit the bill.

While Dewey’s endorsement of principles clearly places his ethics short of full-bodied particularism, I call attention to an important dividing line he has crossed that places him considerably closer to particularism than may be initially apparent. The dividing line concerns the authority that rules can be regarded as having in the thinking of the moral agent. How Dewey comes to this side of the divide is through his naturalistic theory of how rules and principles arise.

“If different situations were wholly unlike one another, nothing could be learned from one which would be of any avail in any other. But having like points, experience carries over from one to another, and experience is intellectually cumulative. Out of resembling experiences general ideas develop; through language, instruction, and tradition this gathering together of experiences of value into generalized points of view is extended to take in a whole people and a race. Through inter-communication the experience of the entire human race is to some extent pooled and crystallized in general ideas. These ideas constitute *principles*. We bring them with us to deliberation on particular situations.”⁸

This naturalistic derivation for the individual conscience he extends to the anthropological; where morality is seen as evolving out of group norms – out of the necessary foundation of developing intelligence, by which one becomes capable of reflection on one’s morals, and achieving a degree of social cooperation.⁹ In this, he presages Kohlberg’s research into stages of moral development. Dewey emphasizes that moral development grows out of antagonism with the conservative elements of the status quo and with tradition. He speaks of two “collisions;” that between the group and the rising self-awareness of the individual, and that between order and progress.¹⁰ As customs became increasingly seen as inadequate guides to morality, reason stepped in to fill the void. But, reason in the form of giving oneself rules (norms, maxims, principles etc.) that feel somehow imposed rather than made up on the spot is nothing more than itself a make-shift, a placeholder, to fill the void left by tradition, custom,

the authority of the clan. That is to say, those rules derived from reason have no real command authority. All well and good, but (and here Dewey would be an excellent hard-line particularist) eventually the utility of principles all too often falls prey to the rule-makers. "Their origin in experience is forgotten and so is their proper use in further experience." "Instead of being treated as aids and instruments in judging values as the latter actually arise, they are made superior to them." A generalist might ask, then, if we not deliberating according to what principles to apply, what then? Dewey's answer is that the proper office of moral deliberation is not adherence to principle, but "imaginative rehearsal of various courses of conduct."¹¹

The important dividing line Dewey has crossed with his naturalistic derivation of principles that places him closer to the particularist camp than the Rossian camp is the sense of authority one may allow a rule to have over one's deliberations. While the contributory theorists retain the possibility of rules acting in an authoritative manner over the agent, for Dewey, the recognition that they are bootstrapped from experience means that they are, as he said, merely useful. Their independent existence is nothing the agent must contend with. He drains off all sense of external command. While particularists would welcome this pragmatist approach to moral principles, they would maintain that he doesn't take it far enough. Particularists strike at rules with two different punches. First they move the generalist rule-supporters to a place on the continuum much like Dewey's by arguing epistemologically that no non-circular means exists to interpret rules with command authority without resorting to an equally difficult "black box" intuitionism. Then they seek to finish the job all the way down to out-and-out particularism by arguing from practicality: that rules are pernicious as much as helpful, that they are ineffective because situations are too variable for rules to do the job they are supposed to do (the holism of reasons argument), and that the danger to consistency that the adherence to rules offer to ameliorate is highly overrated. We could say then, that Dewey is on board with the particularists' arguments from epistemology, but that he would not be as impressed with their arguments from practicality to move all the way down to hard-line particularism.

Robert Brandom's neo-pragmatist approach seeks to inch back up the scale toward the generalists just enough to capture at least some of the sense of authority that principles lose under Dewey's conception, but without resorting to black-box intuition. To do so, Brandom advances the idea of entitled inferences. Brandom substitutes the concepts of commitment and entitlement for "the traditional deontic primitives of obligation and permission ... because of the stigmata they contain betraying their origin in a picture of norms as resulting exclusively from the commands or edicts of a superior, who lays an obligation on one or offers permission to a subordinate."¹² This substitution is necessary to make it clear that entitlement is not conferred from above, as it were, but rather is assembled from the ground-up via assertions which are themselves "fundamentally fodder for inferences"¹³ which can, in turn, support entitlements and

commitments. From a foundation of good premises, for example, an agent may *commit* to a course of helping end world hunger, or a different agent may be *entitled* to seek the punishment of wrongdoers. If this strategy works, then it certainly bestows upon certain generalized inferences the authoritative role Dewey dismissed; but it is no longer mysterious how that authority comes about. A generalization from instance to principle is “valid or sound if entitlement to the premises generates entitlement to the conclusion.”¹⁴ Thus, one generates for oneself *permission* to regard a generalization (principle) as binding, but not the *requirement* to do so. In this way, the authoritative sense of principle can be regained, at least on occasion. Recognition of the validity of the premises to which one comes to subscribe allows the agent to move to the conclusion that the principle should be regarded as binding and applicable to all similar situations. The authority and the principle weren’t always there (waiting to be understood) as they seem to be for Ross; instead, the agent funds the principle with authority by recognition of its entitlement through inference from good, strong premises.

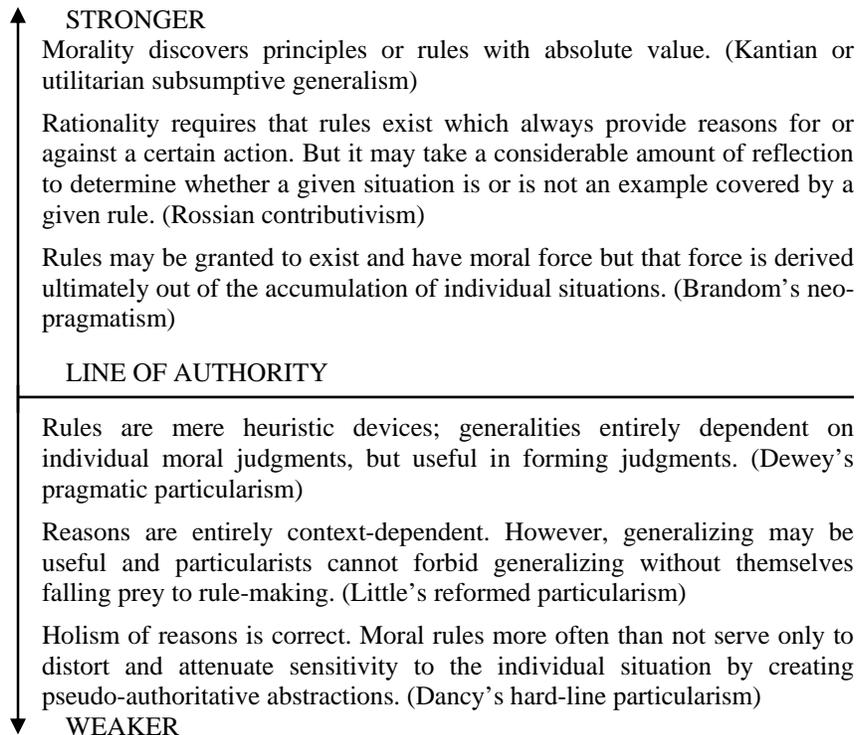
Dancy, however, is not impressed with the prospects for this strategy to work. He points to the problem of inferences being sound in first-person deliberation but which fail when applied to others. He points out that “Its raining: so I will stay in” is sound, but “Its raining: so he’ll stay in” is unwarranted.¹⁵ If, however, it could be demonstrated that everyone shares the same premises, such as a strong belief in the social efficacy of democracy or the free-enterprise system, then we all might well agree to subscribe to such principles operating authoritatively over our lives; funding such principles not only with acquiescence, but also with approval and commitment. Of course, at this point, what was originally a rather lean principle has become considerably saddled by the need for outside corroboration. Even if entitlements could be demonstrated to elicit something like objective approval, Dancy argues that entitlements are just as susceptible to becoming mired in countervailing reasons as are Ross’s *prima facie* reasons. In the face of countervailing reasons, what good does it do to both give oneself permission and not give oneself permission?

Another point on the continuum remains: a less-than hardline particularism; something that mediates between Dewey and Dancy. Margaret Little thinks that particularists can indeed befriend the idea that rules have their place in moral deliberation in what we might call “reformed” particularism. She, like Dancy, argues this both from logic as well as from practicality. Logically, particularists have no basis for making a rule out of rejecting the role of rules. “Ironically, particularism must eschew *pro tanto* for *prima facie* claims,”¹⁶ to avoid contradiction. Therefore, they must leave the door open for rules. One can accept Dancy’s thesis of the holism of reasons, but not have to commit oneself to rejecting the idea that most of the time, situations will have more rather than fewer commonalities making them susceptible to the utility of constructing general inferences about them. She writes:

Once we are truly at ease with the idea of irreducible context-dependency, then, we can reintroduce into particularism a role for explanatory generalities beyond those invoked in pedagogy and heuristics. For while explanation has everything to do with generality, it need have nothing to do with codified generality. It is simply a false contrast to think that we must either talk about single cases or about codified generalities: the interesting, post-positivist terrain all lies between.¹⁷

Little thinks it would be a mistake to forebear seeking explanations for one's moral intuitions. Taken seriously, this attitude leads to the "moral exemplar of a thoroughly radical particularist is, in essence, a moral idiot savant – someone with an exquisite ability to see moral properties directly in the elements at hand, but at a loss when we ask him to make inferences or to explain why something is cruel rather than kind."¹⁸ Having opened the door to generalities, can she keep codification out roaming the streets? Dewey certainly thought it possible, but in the next section, I suggest some reasons why for particularists it would be contradictory to do so, and perhaps undesirable to boot.

Here is a rank-ordered spectrum of statements that represent the possible attitudes toward moral rules from strongest to weakest:



3. Reconsidering the Authority of Rules

Part of the problem for a particularist insistence that rules are context-dependent is that this entails the assumption that the context in any given situation is self-evident. While we may conclude as a practical matter that a child's falling into a river is all the context we need to know about the situation, this is only a practical decision. Thankfully, most of our ethical decisions occur at a more leisurely clip than the child-in-the-river example and context reveals itself as a normative concept. It's the part of the situation you determine should not be considered malleable. Some of the most interesting ethical and political disagreements are over what should be considered context and not so much what to do about it. Think, for example, of the struggle to establish a comprehensive environmental ethics and how the relevant context continues to be enlarged and embellished from other humans, to all sentient beings, to all of life, and even to geologic features. To draw from a world in which I am intimately familiar; an architect might be asked to design a garage addition for a growing family needing an extra car. Who is to say that the best solution to this problem isn't a rapid transit local bond issue or even a comprehensive national transportation policy? Is the family's immediate need all the context we need to know? In all but the most urgent situations, it is likely that we by necessity erect defacto stopping rules in deciding how far to expand the relevant context. The business of deciding how much of all the possible context to consider is normative through and through.

This observation regarding the normativity of context introduces an even thornier question for both Dancy and Dewey: Who is to say that in a given context, adherence to rules isn't the best course of action? While I too am impressed by the insights and orientation of the particularist argument, like Little, I find myself drawn to suggest that the particularists have left themselves no right to insist that rules are always inappropriate. It seems that, to be consistent, they have to remain agnostic on this matter. Indeed, I would propose that one can be a particularist and acknowledge that acceptance of a strong normative "command authority" of rules, may, on occasion, be the best route to responding to a moral context. Allow me to again take a characteristically Deweyan strategy by substantiating this philosophic point with a naturalistic derivation. To do so, I will describe a context of moral import with which I am well acquainted; the interpretation of and adherence to the building code by architects and engineers, and seek to generalize from there.

Building codes exemplify all that both Dancy and Dewey would find obnoxious in rules: they are authoritative, blatantly arbitrary at times, they discourage individual judgment in favor of adherence, and are maximally legalistic. Despite these features, their role in developed societies is crucial to the well-being of the public, and it would be difficult to imagine a different, more particularist, sort of mechanism that would fill this role. While no one would claim that the building code is a moral command of the likes of the

golden rule, certainly, what one chooses to do with it is of utmost moral gravity. While unquestioned adherence to the requirements for, say, sizing the exit pathways out of buildings, or meeting earthquake performance criteria may well be onerous in individual situations, or may not even deliver the level of safety the designer would feel most comfortable with in a given structural design, nevertheless, the gap between the moment when a designer is specifying the means of emergency egress or the means by which a building is to resist the lateral forces generated by earthquakes on the one hand, and the eventuality of the emergency in which the structure had better perform on the other can easily be decades, in which case it is unlikely to actually improve building safety for the architect or engineer to design to his individual consideration of the concrete situation. Safety is unlikely to be improved because no one will know how to take advantage of the unconventional design. They (inhabitants, emergency response teams, later designers) need the conventions provided by the rule book, in this case the building code. The case of under-design is an easy one to say no to, but the dis-value of over-design perhaps deserves more explanation. Under-design of exits and of structural connections clearly places the public in harm's way, but what would be wrong with over-design? In general, while over-design (making a building's connections extra strong, or enlarging exits beyond the code minimums) is unlikely to do any actual harm, it is a waste of scarce resources that COULD and should be put elsewhere. It wastes resources because no mechanisms are in place to allow later users to understand and therefore exploit the additional safety measures.

Building codes (the rules) become something with authority in their own right; something with which the designer must contend. The significant moral issue of public safety is best served by designers submitting their particular concerns in any isolated situation to the authority of the code for the benefit of the larger context. They should elect to depart from code-mandated norms only under the most extreme circumstances. The designer doesn't get to say, in effect "code-schmode, I am only concerned with the details of the problem at hand," without becoming deeply morally suspect. And so in this sense, society has reason to value a designer who respects the rules because "those are the rules" over one who constantly questions and feels little compunction about subverting them in different ways. Conventions (such as building codes) are crucial elements for the advancement of complex and specialized societies such as ours. The designer can (and should) recognize that, being conventions, they could be otherwise and still feel strongly that "those are the rules." No need to think of building codes as anything more than the products of trial and error for them to retain this authority over agents' actions. Cultivating this attitude of respect for the authority of the rules is exactly what most benefits society in such situations.

What is the relevant context in this situation? Is it the isolated building design, or is it society's need for building performance of a certain caliber? If it's the latter, which clearly makes the most sense, then in this particular situation the best hope for good outcomes is served by designers' respecting the

rules as embodying authority over their design decisions. No need to challenge Dancy's thesis on the context-dependency of rules to recognize that determining the relevant context often requires as much moral work as deciding what to do about it. What I am suggesting is that we take up Little's observation that particularism itself cannot without contradiction proscribe rules ("Ignore rules" itself sounding much like a rule) and allow that in certain situations, the most socially, morally, efficacious thing to do is stick to the rules and regard them as authoritative over our actions. This suggestion is similar to Brandom's but goes a step further by giving a detailed explanation for how rules may acquire authority over others. While Dewey's suspicion of principles becoming mindless rules is well-founded, his dismissal of them is all too easy.

This observation on the technical matter of building code interpretation could, I think, be generalized into consideration of many situations in anthropologically complex societies in which a certain amount of predictability is crucial for societal advancement. That some rules might operate with authority over society, an authority that takes on a life of its own, may well be to the net benefit in the overall, even though they almost certainly will result in sub-optimal outcomes in isolated situations. A norm may not lead to the most efficient or optimal solution on every occasion, but overall it works because it gives everyone something to count on. And indeed, we may encounter situations where we judge the norm to be sub-optimal, but that recognition is not enough to cause us to discard or otherwise ignore or subvert the norm because in the overall it is best if everyone can count on its adherence. This recognition of the authority of norms is still based on outcomes; ultimately, the accumulation of individual outcomes which Dewey cites as the naturalistic derivation of principles. Acceptance of the efficacy of the authority of certain rules beyond what Dewey would allow them nevertheless seems to me entirely pragmatic. No appeal beyond a sense of the greater social good served by strong rules is needed nor sought. Ignore them at one's moral peril.

Having constructed a continuum for attitudes regarding the authority of rules, I am not at all sure how the attitude toward rules suggested by my example would actually fit. Indeed, I seem to have messed up my own chart. I am not making any blanket assertions regarding the appropriateness or inappropriateness of rule-based deliberation, only asserting that some of the time, we can give good reasons why rules *should* operate with presumptive authority over individual decisions, but that at other times (especially when that poor child has fallen into the river yet again), Dancy's hard-line against them may be just the ticket. Rules are not always necessary and desirable, but neither are they never necessary either. Some rules might be regarded as wise grandparents, while others legitimately act as stern taskmasters. By posing serious challenges to the presumptive approach, Both Dewey and Dancy have, it seems to me, allowed the question of the role of rules to be opened for whatever approach (and here surely Dewey is smiling) works.

NOTES

1. Jonathan Dancy, *Ethics Without Principles* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), p. 3.
2. David McNaughton, *Moral Vision: An Introduction to Ethics* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), p. 190. Others say much the same thing. Dancy doesn't give principles much wiggle room: "A particularist conception is one which sees little if any role for moral principles." (Dancy, *Ethics Without Principles*, p. 1). Robin Celikates says, "Particularism ultimately rests on an argument about the role of principles in moral life and about the codifiability of morality." "Review of Jonathan Dancy's *Ethics Without Principles*," *Journal of Moral Philosophy* 3 (2006): 120. Martha Nussbaum's analysis of Aristotle summarizes the particularist's hostility to rules as a practical impediment to the exercise of good judgment: "...excellent choice cannot be captured in general rules, because it is a matter of fitting one's choices to the complex requirements of a concrete situation, taking all of its contextual features into account. A rule, like a manual of humor, would both do too little and too much: too little, because most of what really counts is in the response to the concrete; and this would be omitted. Too much, because the rule would imply that it was itself normative for response (as a joke manual would ask you to tailor your wit to the formulae it contains), and this would impinge too much on the flexibility of good practice." Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 71–72. Jay Garfield boils it down to this: "What divides particularists and universalists is not a thesis about moral ontology, but about moral epistemology," nor we might add, not even about what the right answers are, but how you go about arriving at them. Garfield emphasizes the descriptive and prescriptive function of rules. Garfield, "Particularity and Principle: The Structure of Moral Knowledge" in *Moral Particularism*, ed. Brad Hooker and Margaret Little (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 193, footnote.
3. See especially Dancy, *Ethics Without Principles*, pp. 73–78.
4. W. D. Ross, *The Right and the Good* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1930). For a thorough discussion on the differences between absolutist and prima facie conceptions of moral rules, see Russ Shafer-Landau, "Moral Rules," *Ethics* 107 (1997): 586–588.
5. The importance of consistency is a favorite theme of those who distrust particularism. Mark Shelton, for example, observes: We make countless judgments "all the time in particular situations and cases. Even if we make these judgments based on good reasons, we may find that our judgments seem haphazard, inconsistent, or incoherent. To put it loosely, they may strike us as just not hanging together. To put it more positively, we can seek to integrate our judgments into a system, and more strongly we can demand of ourselves that we do this. The point of having principles, I suggest, is to honour this demand: we articulate principles to guide our judgment-making so that it becomes and remains systematic. At a minimum, we recognize that our many far-flung judgments can easily degenerate into being haphazard, inconsistent, and incoherent, and we put ourselves on our guard against this by articulating and employing principles." "The Point of Principle," *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 14 (2006): 123. But, as Joseph Raz counters, "Outside the domain of morality the temptation to think of intention or action as guided by principles almost disappears. Where the issue is essentially instrumental, that is, about the way to achieve a set goal, it seems that principles are out of place (though rules of thumb may be a great help)." "The Truth in Particularism," in *Moral Particularism*, ed. Brad Hooker and Margaret Little (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 56. Simon Blackburn points out that while the

universalist may worry over the inconsistency of the particularist's judgments, consistency would largely follow from the recognition of moral truths. "Once we happily categorize certain moral judgments as true, we will conform to our general usage of the word 'reason' if we classify dispositions which tend to their acceptance as reasonable." Thus the debate may turn more on what the universalist vs the particularist considers to be adequate evidence of truth. As Blackburn argues, once truth is decided "reason looks after itself." "Reply: Rule-Following and Moral Realism," in *Wittgenstein: To Follow a Rule*, ed. Steven Holtzman and Christopher Leich (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), p. 181.

6. John Dewey and James H. Tufts, *Ethics*, rev. edn. (New York: Henry Holt), p. 309.

7. *Ibid.*

8. *Ibid.*, p. 304. Bo Mou summarizes Dewey's position on rules this way: for Dewey "a general moral rule is neither conceptually nor empirically prior to particular and concrete situations." "Moral Rules and Moral Experience: A Comparative Analysis of Dewey and Laozi on Morality," *Asian Philosophy* 11 (2001): 163.

9. Dewey and Tufts, *Ethics*, p. 34.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 67.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 303.

12. Robert Brandom, *Making it Explicit* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994), p. 160.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 168.

14. Dancy, *Ethics Without Principles*, p. 61.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 61–62.

16. Margaret Little, "Moral Generalities Revisited" in *Moral Particularism*, ed. Brad Hooker and Margaret Little (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 303. Rebecca Lynn Stangl characterizes Little's view in this way: "Little's version of particularism holds that there are no true substantive principles which identify non-moral features of the world having invariant moral valence. Unlike Dancy, however, she does not extend this thesis to the so-called 'thick' ethical properties. Thus, she does not deny that properties such as kindness, generosity, and courage might always be good-making." "Particularism and the Point of Moral Principles," *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 9 (2006): 220.

17. Little, "Moral Generalities Revisited," p. 302.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 304.

Tom Spector
Associate Professor of Architecture
School of Architecture
Oklahoma State University
Stillwater, Oklahoma 74078
United States

Embedded and Embodied Moral Life

Elizabeth Baeten

Evolutionary biology and other fields presupposing humans as products of natural selection (cognitive semantics, for example) have much to contribute to philosophic inquiry. This seems especially true for American philosophy in a broad “pragmatist” or “naturalist” tradition. I examine sociality as a precondition of being human (including the infant/mother dyad), embodied cognition, and culture as a product of ecological niche construction. I then make some suggestions, with Dewey in mind, as to the shape of our thinking about our moral lives once we recognize humans as squarely within the field shaped by evolutionary forces.

1.

Certain sciences have long played an important role in philosophic inquiry. Mathematics, astronomy, and physics in particular have served not only as models for the kind of rigor expected of philosophy, but are taken as exemplars of the kinds of knowledge worthiest of pursuit. Taking as our model for philosophic rigor these sciences, though in many respects helpful in clarifying our philosophic ideas, can also be an impediment to analysis. These modes of inquiry are predicated on elimination of contingency, history, and situatedness. It doesn't matter if the concrete block is blue or red, on the surface of the earth or the moon, dropped today or in the last century – the law of gravity works in precisely the same way. And it does not matter that from our earthly perspective the sun moves across the sky – taking up a neutral perspective allows us to understand that the earth revolves around the sun. But these sciences, when taken as the exemplars of human knowing, either construct a false foundation for understanding the moral dimension of life (very broadly speaking) or deny satisfactory knowledge in the sphere of human conduct.

Is there an alternative to these scientific models of rigor and exactitude? Much of contemporary philosophy, even in the American classical tradition, is deeply mistaken in not following research in several areas of current work in biology – particularly evolutionary biology, primatology, and ecology. We also ought to be taking seriously current work in neuroscience and cognitive science. In earlier incarnations, pragmatists insisted that the *contents* of the sciences, not

merely the mode of inquiry of the most successful sciences, ought to inform philosophic work. This seems a rather obvious point, yet the grimaces that often attend mention of the Churchlands' neurophilosophy, for example, remind us that not all philosophers find the wedding of contemporary life sciences and philosophical inquiry compelling, or even palatable.

Evolution through natural selection is a profound challenge to the most entrenched habits of human thought, including philosophical thought; and I think it has not yet been absorbed in any deep way, even after more than 150 years since the publication of *On the Origin of Species*. Certainly many people simply deny that we are products of natural processes, in any of our attributes. Others may agree that our physical features are products of natural selection, but are unwilling to take the further step and recognize that a wide range of behaviors are similarly produced. Of those who admit a limited role to evolution, some will defend a soul or something like it as the counterpart to a naturally produced material self, others that cultural pressures are separate from, and more important than, natural selection when speaking about human behavior.

What I would like to present is a brief sketch of what can be said about a few important human traits if we take evolution seriously and apply it thoroughly.

2.

One persistent and universal feature of human habitats is other human beings. As with any persistent habitat feature, those individuals most successful at survival and reproduction are those who fit more closely the persistent habitat features. Human beings, as products of natural selection, are social animals. Humans did not become social; we became human (as individuals and as a species) within an already established pattern of social relations. Even a cursory look at contemporary work in primatology, especially studies of the behaviors of chimpanzees and bonobos, indicates that our nearest common ancestor must also have been intensely gregarious. Designing imaginary scenarios to discover how we might have come to shrug off our initial solitary human existence and live in groups is foolish. A more sensible exercise would be imagining the processes of carving out separate selves from a social organism. Group life long predates the appearance of whatever characteristics we take to be specifically human. We are embedded creatures; each is born into a social organization that provides the environment in which and through which a self with self-interests arises.

We can go further than this: along with saying that humans are ineradicably social/political animals, and that our humanity presupposes our sociality, the stronger claim can be made that the basic unit of human being is a dyad. Until about one hundred years ago, and in many areas of the world today, the basic human unit is the infant/lactating caregiver pair. If the infant is not literally attached to a milk-producing adult, that infant will die and the mother's

chance of reproductive success will diminish. This is certainly the case for infants younger than six months, but given the difficulty of digesting most subsistence foods, children under the age of two or three depend on breast milk for the greatest share of nourishment as well as for the immunity resources supplied this way. The mother is the environmental niche for the infant, a niche that is shaped in profound ways by the organisms that inhabit it.¹

And we must remember that this necessary dyad was the case through all of human evolutionary history. Given the precariousness of both maternal and infant survival during childbirth and early infancy, this stage of human existence is the subject of intense selection pressure. That is, there are very many ways to get it wrong – with severe consequences for either organism and the genetic inheritance held in that organism. There are relatively few ways of getting it right enough that more often than not at least the maternal partner in the dyad survives. It takes a pelvic channel just wide enough to allow the passage of a huge brain. That huge brain is itself only half finished during pregnancy, and the infant is born at such an immature stage of physical development it cannot hold up its head or cling tenaciously enough to the mother to maintain its necessary connection to food and safety. Given the many ways of being unsuccessful, the relatively few successful structures and behaviors of birthing and early infancy have become deeply entrenched. Relentless mortal weeding out leaves behind comparably persistent structures and behaviors.

The co-dependence of the maternal/infant dyad (the mother dependent on the infant for reproductive success and infant's dependence on the mother for sheer survival) and the several years of dependency, along with the enormous development of the infant's brain during this time period, combine to form the intensely social habitat of the young human. Evolutionary history does not move the species from solitude to sociality and an individual's life trajectory does not move from insular to gregarious.

3.

What else follows from a more thoroughly applied notion of evolution to human existence? We would no longer see nature as opposed to culture and that dichotomy as well as those of nature/nurture and instinctive/learned and the like would have to be rethought. I do not mean to imply that we must come to appreciate a more subtle interplay of what is dichotomous; rather the categories themselves must be reconfigured. If humans are the products of natural selection, then our cultural endowment is a natural one; it is a mode of habitat structuring. Just as we would not spend a great deal of time analyzing the relative contribution of genetic endowment versus the web environment in the survival strategies of spiders, the battles over natural versus cultural determinants of human behavior seem oddly conceived.²

Humans modify their habitats in many ways, one of which is to place solutions to recurrent problems in the environment itself, obviating the necessity

of frequent wheel invention. For example, domesticated grasses contain in the genome the information necessary for adequate agricultural production. We needn't keep a copy of that genome in mind, or on a hard drive in order to have bread. We need only save seeds and inherit the tools and practices necessary for growing the plants. Our cultural productions become part of the habitat to which we respond, inherited along with our genetic endowment. But the cultural productions are the result of natural beings using natural means.

The transformation of habitat by fashioning nodes of meaning and information is extreme in our species, but not unique to it. Primatologists and other ethologists are finding rudimentary cultural practices in other species. There are, for example, chimpanzees who use two kinds of stones, one as an anvil and one as a hammer, to open nuts that are otherwise impossible food. Not only does it take many unsuccessful trials to learn to use the tools effectively, they bring the stones along when going to forage, or bring the nuts back to a central location where the tools are stored. The young watch the process very attentively and often mimic the adults. While it is unclear whether or not any "active" teaching happens (that is, adults correcting the juveniles), the youngsters do grow up to be effective nut crackers. Ethologists use "culture" to describe this process, in part because the strategies used for food collection differ for members of the same species living in different geographical locations. So, for example, chimpanzees in one location might fish for termites with a stick whose end has been chewed to feather it out while those in another might coat the stick with sap to make it sticky. We have modification of an environmental opportunity (sticks), different modifications in different locales, mimicking by juveniles, and intergenerational dispersal of the behavior. Tool use by animals is not limited to chimpanzees, or even primates, but these provide the clearest picture of culture as a natural feature of animal life.

4.

Another important shift when we adopt the evolutionary perspective is our understanding of reason. Cognitive science has made many discoveries in the past few decades. The field has been roughly divided between those who conceive of mind as a computational system, the software run on the hardware of the brain and those who believe that mind can only be accounted for as part of an organism shaped by natural selection. This former side of the divide sees mind as understandable in terms of its algorithmic processes, processes that can be understood in most respects independent of the physical substrate of the brain, just as we can understand the logic of computer programs independent of the type of physical machinery used to run them.

The computational model of the brain can be roughly described as input-(transformation according to some rules for symbolic manipulation)-output. But to depict the brain as an input-manipulation-output biological machine is to make several mistakes, if we take brains to be products of evolutionary

processes. Brains are not passive recorders of what ever happens to come their way. Brains exert control over the organism/habitat in such a way as to best ensure continued survival. Brains-in-bodies seek out regularities and novelties in the habitat suitable to their needs. In the mechanistic language of computer programming, the brain is better described as an output-input device; that is, the brain acts in such a way as to control the behavior of the organism (output) in finding what it needs to take in. John Dewey made a similar point before the 20th century in his critique of the reflex arc picture of behavior. The relationship between an organism and its habitat is “a circuit, not an arc or broken segment of a circle. This circuit is more truly termed organic than reflex, because the motor response determines the stimulus, just as truly as sensory stimulus determines movement.”³

From the moment it is born, if not before, the infant is seeking. Within seconds of birth it begins rooting, seeking a nipple; it reaches and grabs for whatever may be there. Infants are, when not asleep, in motion in one way or another with eyes moving, arms waving, legs kicking. In these stages of brain development, the infant is a continuous circuit of experience – turning the cup upside down and laughing when the juice spills in a cascade toward the floor and then running its fingers through the puddle and licking them off. There is continuous manipulation of its habitat to see where the world pushes back and where it can be turned over, looked under, squeezed, or swallowed. These early months show the infant eliciting the responses it needs from those around it and learning to adjust to its surround. Infants at two to three weeks old (one study claims as soon as forty-five minutes after birth) mimic the facial expressions of adults, and infants seek out face-like structures within nine minutes after birth.⁴ If this is how actual infants behave as their brains develop, why would we think of “mind” as an input-output device that manipulates arbitrary symbols? Only, I think, if we believe that being bodied adds nothing significant.

Another difficulty in the computer model of the brain concerns the generation of meaning. If cognition is essentially manipulation of symbols according to laws of thought, then meaning becomes problematic. That is, how are we to ground meaning in such a way as to guarantee some relation to an “out there” that is represented by the symbols “in here,” particularly if those symbols are understood as arbitrary? But if we shift the model to an evolutionary perspective, the “problem” of meaning becomes much less problematic. Cizek describes the development of muscular control in an infant, which is concomitant with control of other features of her world. He remarks:

a child might discover that touching part of her environment produces interesting noises. With time the child may distinguish the rattle that lies next to her from the rest of the crib, discovering it as the source of the noises because the other parts of the world seem irrelevant to these noises. She may learn to grasp the rattle independently of grasping other objects, and learn to shake it this way and that to produce desired sounds.

She might thus discover that the rattle affords ‘noisemaking’. She might even come up with some kind of crude internal symbol for the rattle. Again, must we worry about how meaning gets ‘assigned’ to this symbol? The symbol is shorthand notation for ‘thing I can grasp and shake and make noises with’. The symbol is constructed much later than the sensorimotor strategy which grounds it.⁵

In fact, in very young pre-linguistic children, there is some understanding of the regularities of physical phenomena. For example, they show surprise when a dropped ball appears to move through a tabletop. Cognitive science of the computational stripe, whatever insights it may give us, seems to have the problem round about. If we begin with the most abstract formulations of knowledge of nature, especially as those are found in strings of arbitrary symbols (the laws of physics, for example) and try to show how we can be certain that those adequately map our environment, then “meaning” and “aboutness” will always be problematic.

The other side of the cognitive divide, again roughly speaking, takes as foundational the brain as a product of natural selection. If the brain is as much a product of selection as the liver, we would expect that the brain’s functions would be an accumulation of adaptive history in the same way that the liver’s functions are; that is, that our mental proclivities would reflect those that aided in survival and reproductive success for our evolutionary ancestors.

This second way of thinking about brains and what they do is sometimes called “embodied cognition.” One related branch of this is called cognitive semantics. A basic premise of this sub-field is that very early experience of the human organism in its habitat is the scaffolding on which all later mental experience rests. The earliest, most deeply embedded experiences and expectations and what these entail become “projected” onto later, usually more abstract matters. This mapping is called “metaphoric,” though the term is used in a way only tangentially related to the literary use. So, for example, the basic bodily experience of moving through space toward an object to be grasped can map onto other, more abstract territory. An argument, for example, is thought of as structured from a beginning position (premise), moving through intermediate steps (additional premises), until we reach a stopping point (the conclusion), and grasp the implication.⁶ (Parenthetically, perhaps this is why “slippery slope” protestations can be compelling. *Logically* speaking, there’s no need to fear that taking one step toward a conclusion propels one to that conclusion with no intermediate stopping points. Only the deep embodied experience of the hold of gravity when one loses one’s footing gives credence to this metaphor. Premises are premises, not steps on a path and arguments are not forward motions toward a destination that can be hastened or obstructed.)

According to cognitive semantics, our use of these embodied sub-structures is ubiquitous and for the most part unconscious. On the one hand, our abstract thought processes are constrained by a pool of possible basic level

experiences. (For example, while we might argue that we are “on firm ground” in coming to a conclusion, few of us would rest our case on “an updraft of warm air,” though the ground and the updraft perform the same function, albeit for different creatures.) On the other hand, obstacles to thought can sometimes be circumvented by employing an alternative metaphor whose entailments carry us in different directions. (Note the ease with which the reader “navigates” the preceding sentence, which is almost entirely metaphorical: *obstacles* to thought; *circumvented*; *carry* us in different *directions*. Again, ambulatory experience and its entailments carry over and structure a much more abstract field.⁷)

In any case, embodied cognition is a thoroughly naturalized account of reason and judgment. Though it is not explicitly evolutionary (as accounts from evolutionary psychology are), it certainly is consonant with an evolutionary account of human existence, and much more so than computational models of cognition.

5.

There is another, broader area of philosophic interest that must feel the pressure of evolution as a fact about human beings, and this is perhaps the most contentious: morality. What happens to moral philosophy if we take seriously the hypothesis that human beings, like all other living things, are the products of natural selection? What happens to moral philosophy if we take seriously the ecological proposition that organisms and their environments are inextricably bound and cannot be fully understood in separation? What happens to moral philosophy when we come to grips with the ineradicably social nature of a human self? What happens when we begin to take seriously the embodied character of cognition and judgment, including in the moral sphere?

This may be the place to address, briefly, the charge that any talk of morality that takes as its scope of inquiry the evolved characteristics of human beings commits the “naturalistic” fallacy. There have been many discussions of the inadequacy of this charge, but it is still raised as an objection.

The “naturalistic fallacy” charge has two forms, though these are often conflated. The first comes from Hume, who famously remarked that when reading a philosophical argument, what begins as “is the case” moves without intermediate steps to “ought to be the case.” Critics of evolutionary ethics warn that if one takes some product of evolution (“is the case”) to bolster some moral claim (“ought to be the case”) and if Hume were right in pointing out that it is odd to move from “is” to “ought” then the “factual” premise must be abandoned, reinforcing the assumption that morality is disconnected in some essential way from our natural or evolutionary condition.

Perhaps a better way of looking at Hume’s “is/ought” moral distinction is to place it side by side with his analysis of proper inferences from ordinary experience. From “is the case” judgments (it is the case that the sun rose today and it is the case that the sun rose yesterday) we cannot know with certainty that

it “ought” to rise tomorrow. That is, just as it is illegitimate, according to Hume, to reason from particular facts to certitude of natural laws, so it is illegitimate to reason from particular facts to certitude of moral laws.⁸

But we needn’t take this route to undo the disconnection of “is” and “ought” in our thinking about moral matters. Has there been a moral theory in the western tradition that is *not* founded on claims of fact? For example, for Kant, if *in fact* persons are rational beings then we ought to respect them. For Aristotle, facts about human nature determine the range of human virtues. For Bentham, the fact that we are pleasure seekers means that we ought to become better at achieving pleasure. All moral theories, it appears, begin with a presumption of facts about human nature or about the world.⁹

The second form of the charge of naturalistic fallacy comes from G. E. Moore, who called it the “open end” question. If one claims, for example, that pleasure is good, then we may ask: but why is it good? For Moore, the ability to ask this question implies that we have not yet produced “the” good, but must be referring to some other property that constitutes the goodness of pleasure. If for all such definitions of goodness we can ask “but what makes X good?” then the good must be a “simple” (unanalyzable in other terms) and directly perceived (we know it when we see it, even if we can’t define it in other terms). This analysis suffers from least one unnecessary assumption – that there must be a simple essence of goodness exemplified by but not identical with the many instances. This seems to beg the question. In refusing to countenance a plurality of goods, some of which may be in conflict, Moore assumes a unitary answer, and when a variety of goods are examined, claims that we must be missing that which yokes them all together into instances of a kind. The assumption of a unitary essence of the good and the assumption that there can be “non-natural” properties will lead one to posit such a property when one is confronted with an irreducible plurality. The “open end” question as an analytic device only works if we assume that “good” is some sort of independent variable or property.

If we apply the open end question more thoroughly, we may be prompted to ask why we *begin* ethical inquiry with a question like: What are the necessary and sufficient properties of a thing that would allow us to subsume it under the concept of “the good”? Perhaps it would be better to begin with a discussion of the kinds of practices and norms of inquiry most appropriate to the subject matter at hand. Better preliminary questions might be: What characteristics of cognition, conation, and action might better allow us to discern the morally relevant features of a situation? What level of moral acuity is necessary for recognition that some feature of our lives needs moral attention and repair?

John W. Cook, in *Morality and Cultural Differences*, points out that the common philosophical picture of morality:

represents morality as consisting of principles, and because these are conceived of as saying what one ought or ought not do, morality gets represented as ... what someone can be ordered or forbidden to do. But ...

this picture neglects our familiar understanding of the differences between, for example, callousness and sensitivity, insightfulness and obtuseness, reasonableness and perversity, fair-mindedness and prejudice, self-deception and self-criticism, wisdom and fanaticism.... For what is the use of having a command of those *other* moral terms (“good,” “fair,” “cheat,” “steal,” “lie,” etc.) if one is callous or prejudiced or is constantly deceiving oneself?¹⁰

A theory of morality is beside the point if we are oblivious to the moral demands at hand.

But how do we frame an inquiry into what constitutes moral demands? It’s here that paying serious attention to the growing body of evidence offered by the life sciences may help. For example, if we take seriously the notion that we are social creatures first and foremost, then it seems likely that maintaining and sometimes reconstructing those relations will constitute a large share of what is demanded of us. Certainly John Dewey recognized this and understood that this is not a case of the individual conforming to some overarching and impersonal “social” expectations, but rather that the social aspect of human life is thoroughly personal.¹¹ Concrete interactions with others constitute the social world. This is analogous to saying that gravity is a feature of our lives not as an external, abstract force but as the interaction of our bodies *qua* mass with all other instances of mass. The fact that we can take as a reference point something other than our own bodies in understanding gravity as a universal attribute does not mean that that is the way in which it shapes our existence. Just so with social relations – though we can take as a reference point some other “grain” of social relations in understanding broad social dimensions, those dimensions at a closer grain are just those concrete social relations in which we stand.¹²

The ubiquity of our social milieu often makes it invisible to us in the way that gravity is, perhaps becoming more visible only when an impediment. And our conformance to the demands of each is often as unthinking as breathing. As we learn to sit up, roll over, crawl and then walk by exploring the demands of gravity – all the while remaining entirely in its domain, so we begin very early on pushing and pulling against the fabric of a socially constituted environment of which we are a part. And as finding our legs in the gravitational milieu begins with severe constraints before we learn to orchestrate our movement *using* gravity to wend our way, so the social constraints begin as crude and simple demands – Don’t lie! – before we learn the nuances of truth telling in our social spheres.

James Wallace argues persuasively that morality is an area of practical knowledge, but unlike other forms of practical knowledge (engineering, for example), it is not confined to a single domain of action.¹³ So, for instance, part of the task of moral development is coming to understand not only why telling the truth is good, but under what conditions the goodness of truth comes into conflicts with other social goods, and how we might test possible solutions for

the appropriate weight of each good. A child learns not to lie to her mother. Family life – a necessity for human infants – would be much more difficult without this constraint. But soon the child is introduced to the elasticity of honesty. There's kidding, teasing, jokes, pretending, keeping the truth of one's identity from strangers, the inadvisability of telling a teacher what her parents think of the book report assignment, the more tactful ways of telling friends their behaviors are insulting. As adults, if we've developed some degree of moral subtlety, we come to understand that withholding truth may be the moral course of action.

The maintenance of social organizations that makes human life possible will require some perspicacity in the nuances of honesty and truth telling. In any case, the fact that we are first and foremost social creatures suggests that moral accounts that neglect sociality in favor of rarified individual reasoning stripped of social entanglements are off the mark, though these may have value in highlighting certain relevant concerns that ought to be taken into account. So, for example, the Kantian presumption that the purely good will not be motivated by a desire to maintain social relations (nor by any other desire) dismisses an essential and unavoidable feature of human life. However, his insistence on the necessity of respect for the dignity of "persons" is a necessary prophylactic to what appears to be a widespread tendency of humans to see only members of our own social group as members of the class of persons. On the other hand, there appears to be no duty-bound necessity in Kant's moral account to *extend* the category of person as far as is possible. Why do many of us insist, for example, that the disabled in our communities ought not be prevented from participating fully in civil society, merely because we have heretofore not recognized them as persons, and that we have a moral responsibility to expand our conception of who counts as a person to include *them*?

Not only are human beings ineradicably social, we are ineradicably cultural. There is strong evidence that cultural production is an aspect of our biological heritage, as we also see cultural production in closely related species (and, to be sure, in species more remotely related, as in several species of birds). Above, I suggested that one crucial feature of cultural production is habitat restructuring that incorporates solutions to recurrent problems. So, for instance, gathering sufficient quantities of grain for winter survival is less of a challenge if we reconfigure our habitat to consolidate the occurrence of those grains in a circumscribed area. Gathering behavior that leaves behind sufficient seed to sprout the following spring reinforces the practices. Besides the heritability of the gathering and storage practices, the land itself, now changed, is inherited by the next generation. Though this natural, cultural transformation of habitat is present in other species, our own has taken it in orders of magnitude further (perhaps to our species detriment).

Another feature of our cultural inheritance is the fund of general knowledge we have accumulated regarding regulation of our social lives.¹⁴ In the same way that our ancestors discovered that animal waste products enrich a

farmer's soil and taught that to their children, the general usefulness of honesty in our relations with neighbors was articulated and passed down as part of our cultural heritage. As John Stuart Mill understood,¹⁵ even choices guided by utility need not start from scratch at each new point of decision-making. It is as justified to look to "settled" human experience as a source of empirical evidence as it is to calculate expected consequences based on individual experience, perhaps more so, given the narrowness of individual experience.

But just as our farming practices change, though retaining enough similarities over time to allow us to recognize them as belonging to the same general area of human endeavor, so our use of a general precept of honesty will need to be revisited under new conditions. For example, we now regularly advise our children to lie (or withhold the truth) when using the internet. Truth-telling and promise-keeping are relatively stable moral dicta over long periods of time as some modicum of these seems necessary for the continued existence of a social organization to which we must belong if we are to survive. These are essentially well-tested hypotheses now, on the order of scientific theories, always open to revision but having stood thus far against the most rigorous of challenges. However, especially during periods of dramatic social, technological, or environmental changes, what constitutes the virtue of honesty will be re-tested and modified.

On the other hand, what had become settled knowledge can be almost completely overturned by changed conditions. For example, until very recently (and still so in many parts of the world) it was (is) a mistake for young girls to have sexual intercourse. The difficulties of pregnancy and childbirth (physical and in terms of providing resources for offspring) could be mitigated with the help of at least one other adult committed to the survival of the young. Waiting until she is a few years older will also allow her to build up a reservoir of resources. Without these, it is objectively bad for girls to have sex. Safe and effective birth control has changed that for many girls in some parts of the world. Arguments for waiting until marriage to have sex no longer have the same power to convince, and their cultural force is waning (though the threat of disease may play a somewhat similar role as unwanted pregnancy once did).

We are not only social and cultural creatures, we are also embodied, biological creatures. Lakoff and Johnson,¹⁶ among others doing work in cognitive semantics, point out that philosophy's longstanding assumptions about concepts and categories are instances of a very profound dependence on earliest experiences of embodiment: our bodies are containers and things are inside or outside the body. This basic level experience projected into abstract, conceptual space yields *concepts (or categories) are containers* and items are either in or out of the container (P or not-P) and every item in the container is equally valid as an exemplar of the category in respect to the particular property defining inclusion. The container metaphor of concepts and categories yields the particular structure of deductive logic: if the container that holds only Socrates is inside the container that holds only men and if that container is in another that

holds only mortals, then of course the innermost container is in the outermost and Socrates is mortal. (There is now a great deal of empirical evidence that shows that this particular instance of embodiment projected into abstract space is only one of several that we use when we reason.¹⁷)

The container metaphor of categories leads to at least two conclusions. One is that we can, in principle, discover and articulate the necessary and sufficient conditions for inclusion in the category. The second is that no member of a category can be more or less representative of the class or category. Using the container metaphor of category inclusion, the current Pope and a homosexual man who has lived for twenty years in a civil union with another man are as representative of the concept “bachelor” as is James Bond. And perhaps this is true – but only at the level of abstraction in which we rule out all attributes except those specified as necessary and sufficient conditions. On the one hand, we could see this cognitive move as eliminating the trivial to grasp the essential; on the other hand, it can appear to be a sophisticated form of question begging. The features “unmarried” and “man” may be the necessary and sufficient conditions for including any of the three examples in a logical “container” amenable to the manipulations of deductive logic; but they are of precious little help when we need a cognitive tool in using the term in everyday interactions with others. There appears to be a social context against which the various instances of unmarried man move to the foreground or back in terms of being exemplary. “Bachelor” is generally set within a net of social expectations that highlight not the “unmarried” but the “marriageable,” with the host of assumptions about marriage specific to particular times and places.

The difficulty is exacerbated when we import not only the metaphor of category as container into moral reasoning, but also the determination that the rules of deductive logic are the most suitable for adequate reasoning in the moral sphere. We see the difficulties posed by this when trying to apply a moral rule, such as “Lying can never be morally acceptable.” If we use the container metaphor of categories and the rules of deductive logic, then our task when deciding our course of action in a particular case will be to determine what a lie is and whether this instance is such a thing. This will generate the knowledge of what we are morally obliged to do. But it appears that “lying,” like “bachelor,” is a category that has prototypical members and ones that do not as clearly exemplify the features of the prototypical members. The less prototypical members are linked to each other and to the prototypical cases “radially,” in the terms of cognitive semantics.¹⁸

Furthermore, the identification of speech acts as “lies” depends on certain features of culturally relevant background assumptions (called “folk theories” or “folk models” by Sweetser¹⁹). The identification of a speech act as a lie is always set within the context of shared beliefs about communication (e.g., that truthful statements are helpful) and about knowledge (e.g., that people generally have good reasons for what they believe to be true). These assumptions need not be (and often are not) explicit, though they do provide the background against

which we engage in communication, and communication is the context for “lying.” Taking this rich context into account, it becomes clearer why social lies (“Oh, what delicious soup!”) seem problematic cases if moral reasoning is merely determining the necessary and sufficient criteria of the category “lie” and determining whether or not this particular case is such. It can also make clearer why most of us identify “untruthfulness” as the chief characteristic of lying (in fact how most of us teach our children), and yet we tend to give greater emphasis to the harm produced by the act than the factual content of it. So, a lie in the service of saving innocent lives seems to have little moral content in common with a lie told to swindle senior citizens out of their life savings. While both may be instances of untruthfulness, what we are actually attending to is the harm or benefit that follow from the act.²⁰

6.

What this all suggests is that moral reasoning is a complex set of overlapping considerations shaped by our earliest embodied experiences (determining much of the categorical and conceptual apparatus we utilize at abstract levels) and our sociality (the maintenance of adequate social organization that makes human life possible). Both of these, our embodied existence as human animals and our embedded existence as social animals follow from evolution through natural selection. We can add to this our fund of well-tested general rules of comportment constituted through our natural ability to devise heritable (though non-genetic) cultural practices. These practices are hypotheses that are tested and reshaped over long periods of time though retaining core (if skeletal) content.

Would a fully elaborated version of this description of morality displace other contenders? Very likely not, though we would think differently of their status. Moral theories are cultural products, tools to be used, evaluated, passed along when found to help solve problems. As Dewey puts it:

But when studied more closely [logically incompatible moral theories] reveal the complexity of moral situations, a complexity so great that while every theory may be found to ignore factors and relations which ought to be taken into account, each one will also be found to bring to light some phase of the moral life demanding reflective attention, and which, save for it, might have remained hidden.²¹

Given all of the above, what will an adequate account of morality look like? Answers will depend in part on empirical conditions of being human – conditions that can be illuminated by our growing knowledge in the life sciences. These sciences, however, are bound to give us different sorts of answers than those we’ve come to expect from astronomy, physics, and mathematics. My guess is that a moral theory that takes evolutionary theory

seriously into its account will be on the one hand more complex in its description of the moral field, and on the other more circumspect in its assessment of possible moral accomplishment.

Such moral theorizing will not be strictly cut off from other avenues of evaluation. It will understand moral choices as always connected to our social condition. We will understand morality as tentative, not certain; as hypothetical and to be tested, not categorical; as indefinitely revisable, not finished. Looking to advances in the life sciences will not give us final answers in the moral sphere. But knowing what we can about what sort of creatures we are can help steer us away from those answers that are very unlikely indeed.²²

NOTES

1. Sarah Blaffer Hrdy, *Mother Nature: Maternal Instincts and How They Shape the Human Species* (New York: Ballantine, 1999), especially chap. 5.

2. Niche construction is an important and relatively new area of inquiry in ecology, especially in terms of an additional path of inheritance across generations. The landscape reconstructed by one generation of beavers is bequeathed to the next generation, and insofar as niche construction conduces to differential rates of reproduction, it is possible to see these niches playing a role in natural selection.

3. John Dewey, "The Reflex Arc Concept in Psychology," *Psychological Review* 3 (1896): 357–370.

4. See review of research in Lewis Peternovich, *Human Evolution, Reproduction, and Morality* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1998), pp. 83–84.

5. Paul Cizek, "Beyond the Computer Metaphor: Behavior as Interaction," in *Reclaiming Cognition: The Primacy of Action, Intention and Emotion*, ed. Rafael Nunez and Walter Freeman (Bowling Green, Ohio: Imprint Academic, 1999), p. 136.

6. As far as I can tell, those working in embodied cognition have paid scant, if any, attention to the work of George Herbert Mead. However, his work on action and cognition would add a great deal of depth to the discussions. See especially *Philosophy of the Act*, ed. Charles W. Morris (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1938), especially Part Two.

7. Nunez and Lakoff trace the development of the concept of negative numbers as a shift in the metaphor of number as a collection of entities that can be counted to that of number as segments of a path that can be traversed forward and back. Collections of entities and movements along paths are both basic level physical experiences, but the structure of those experiences will translate into different entailments when projected into the abstract realm of mathematics. *Where Mathematics Comes From: How the Embodied Mind Brings Mathematics into Being* (New York: Basic Books, 2001).

8. Any critique and reconstruction of a Humean theory of knowledge of natural fact would be at the same time a critique and reconstruction of moral theory based on a fact/value opposition. Putnam writes that it is "indeed interesting that so many philosophers who continue to think that Hume 'showed' there is no such thing as an ethical fact today reject the identical arguments that Hume offered in connection with *causation!*" Hilary Putnam, *The Collapse of the Fact/Value Dichotomy and Other Essays* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002), p. 22.

9. One last point can be made against the charge of committing the naturalistic fallacy when one argues from ‘is’ to ‘ought’. When one claims, “Because it is God’s will” in answering the question “why ought one be honest?” one is reasoning from a “fact” (God authorizes the difference between right and wrong) to a “value” (we ought to obey those commands).

10. John W. Cook, *Morality and Cultural Differences* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 127.

11. *Ethics*, rev. edn., *The Later Works of John Dewey*, vol. 7, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1985), pp. 350–355.

12. The individual who fights against social injustice, for instance, by railing against the “system” rather than challenging concrete instances of injustice will have little hope of effecting much change.

13. James Wallace, *Ethical Norms, Particular Cases* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996), especially chap. 2.

14. I am using the terms “culture” and “cultural” in relation to our species as a whole, not to any one local culture.

15. John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*, in *Essential Works of John Stuart Mill*, ed. Max Lerner (New York: Bantam Classics, 1961), pp. 210–211.

16. George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and its Challenge to Western Thought* (New York: Basic Books, 1999).

17. For example, across cultures, we appear to rely on prototypes or best examples when using categories, and these categories often have an internal structure to them; this is similar to Wittgenstein’s notion of “family resemblance” as conferring category membership. Having necessary and sufficient attributes for membership in a class (which means no member is more or less a prime example of the class) is only one kind of category scheme we use.

18. George Lakoff, *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: What Categories Reveal about the Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), especially chap. 5.

19. Eve Sweetser, “The Definition of a Lie: An Examination of the Folk Models Underlying a Semantic Prototype,” in *Cultural Models in Language and Thought*, ed. Dorothy Holland and Naomi Quinn (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 43–66.

20. This is not to advocate for a utilitarian explanation of morality, at least on my part. However, it seems to be the case that consequences must very often play a role in moral consideration, though it appears to be a mistake to reduce consequences to those that can be measured as pleasurable or painful; that is, a more adequate account would admit to a plurality of goods, often in conflict.

21. John Dewey, *Theory of the Moral Life* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1960), pp. 24–25.

22. There has been important work done in developing fairly sophisticated naturalistic ethics that take into account our evolutionary history. See Larry Arnhart, *Darwinian Natural Right: The Biological Ethics of Human Nature* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998); Owen Flanagan, *Varieties of Moral Personality: Ethics and Psychological Realism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991); and Bill Casebeer, *Natural Ethical Facts: Evolution, Connectionism, and Moral Cognition* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2003). Other work in ethics, for example, by Todd Lekan, *Making Morality: Pragmatist Reconstruction in Ethical Theory* (Nashville, Tenn.: Vanderbilt University Press, 2003); James Wallace, *Ethical Norms, Particular Cases* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996); and Frederick Will, *Beyond*

Deduction: Ampliative Aspects of Philosophical Reflection (London and New York: Routledge, 1988), though not specifically concerned with evolutionary history, are not incompatible with it.

Elizabeth Baeten
Associate Professor of Philosophy
Emerson College
120 Boylston Street
Boston, Massachusetts 02116
United States

Pragmatism for Pacifists

Richard Werner

Many believe some version of all three of the following. (1) It is strongly presumptively wrong to kill children intentionally. (2) Modern war involves killing children intentionally. (3) Most modern wars are morally justified. These three sentences comprise an inconsistent triad. War Realism denies 1. Just War Theory denies 2. Pragmatic or Conditional Pacifism denies 3. Scrutiny reveals that one can justify, depending on the rest of what one believes, any one of the three positions but they cannot all be true. I suggest that the solution lies with pragmatic pacifism and relies upon James's sentiment of rationality.

We live in a time when war abounds. We discuss the morality or the prudence of engaging in this or that war, the morality or prudence of this or that act of war, and sometimes we discuss the morality or prudence of war itself. So even though the particulars of the morality and prudence of war are unsettled, these debates reveal that now is a time when discussion can actually help to move us forward on these issues.

Most philosophical issues, whether epistemological, metaphysical, or ethical, run beyond the reach of reason and the morality of war is no exception. This is why they are philosophical issues. This is why they remain unsettled. If one finds, for example, the issue of the morality of war fully settled, it is, as William James would say, one's rational sentiment rather than reason and evidence alone that is doing the work.¹ That is, emotion and imagination in addition to reason and evidence are playing what may be a deciding and a legitimate role in the judgment. But I do not think and James did not think that this insight condemns us either to pernicious relativism² or to skepticism. Instead, it entails a healthy pluralism consistent with the view that some beliefs are better than others – a pluralism between the two extremes of pernicious relativism and dogmatic absolutism. It is a pluralism that is consistent with epistemological fallibilism and philosophical pragmatism.

In this paper, my focus is the morality of modern war and, in particular, the noncombatant immunity thesis: that it is wrong to knowingly kill innocent people during war. The unsettled question I will investigate is: When, if ever, are we warranted in knowingly killing innocent people during war? I assume

that at the very least the children, the incompetent, and those who actively and justly oppose the war are innocent in the relevant sense.³

My hypothesis is that we do not have a clear answer to the question at this time based solely on reason and evidence and, accordingly, we are permitted to allow our rational sentiment to settle the issue. But not every answer will do. Some answers are better than others. I will investigate long-standing answers to the question that the war realist, the just war theorist, and the pacifist provide.⁴ I will argue that each, dependent upon the state of his web of belief and desire, can find tenable, even fully tenable, his own position considered internally. I also argue that it is reasonable to believe that the question of the morality of war will be fully answered by future, better versions of us and that that answer will resemble one of these three positions. What we *do* here and now will help decide how future, better versions of us will decide the issue, much as we have decided such issues as cannibalism, slavery, and genocide. I will end by offering reasons why we should allow our moral sentiment to embrace and act upon pragmatic or conditional pacifism, and why pragmatic pacifism is our best option in the present to deal with the morality of war, even while recognizing our fallibilism and that other webs of belief and desire conclude differently.

There are, I believe, three paradigmatic positions on the issue of the morality of war that entail different views about noncombatant immunity. On one side, there is an amoral attitude toward war represented by war realism. This is the view that morality has no place in war so, at best, the prohibition against killing innocents is a mutually satisfying principle and should be obeyed only if the other participants in the war obey the principle.⁵

In the center, there is just war theory.⁶ Just war theory holds that innocents may be killed during a just war only if their deaths are unintended, collateral deaths, and the war is a just war in all other respects. According to the principle of double effect, embedded within just war theory, the deaths may be foreseen but they cannot be intended.⁷ That is, they may not be the means to one's end or one's end, even though foreseeable. In addition to considerations of double effect, the collateral deaths must be proportionate to one's end. If the value of the collateral deaths outweighs the value of the end, then the deaths are not proportionate. Such calculations need not be and usually are not strictly quantitative. They require a qualitative assessment of the situation.

On the other side, there is pacifism.⁸ Like the other two theories, pacifism comes in many flavors, ranging from absolute pacifism to militarist pacifism. The absolute pacifist argues that all war is morally wrong. The militarist pacifist argues that, generally, nonviolent means of national defense provide a practically better alternative to violent means.

Pragmatic pacifism lies between these two extremes of pacifism. I consider the pragmatic pacifist to be someone who holds, first, that knowingly killing innocent people (such as children) against their will is strongly presumptively wrong⁹ and, second, that since modern wars involve knowingly killing innocent people against their will, the burden of proof is on the one who

wants to wage war to show why we are allowed to knowingly kill innocents in the war. That burden entails showing either that the massacre of innocents is not a foregone conclusion or that the wholesale killing of innocents can be morally tenable. Given the fallibility of historical attempts to gauge the waging of war, the burden is a heavy one. Wars rarely go as planned. Prewar goals are rarely realized. Simply think of the history of recent modern wars like World War II, Korea, Vietnam, the War in the Balkans, Afghanistan, or the recent war with Iraq. The unexpected massacre of innocents seems always a foregone conclusion of any modern war. Recall the bombings of London, Pearl Harbor, Dresden, Tokyo, Hiroshima and Nagasaki during World War II, the bombing of Hanoi during the Vietnam War, or the bombings and war crimes perpetrated recently in the Balkans, Afghanistan, or Iraq.

Consequently, borrowing the distinction from just war theory, the presumption is that modern war is unjust in its waging, even if it seems just in its initiation. To use just war theory against itself, a war cannot be just in its initiation if we know before we begin that it will be waged unjustly.¹⁰ So, by the pragmatic pacifist's lights, the just war distinctions between the initiation of war and the waging of war as well as that between the intentional and foreseeable killing of innocents is morally irrelevant. If we foresee their deaths before we initiate the war, if we know that there will be wholesale killing of innocents before we start and still decide to go to war, then the strong presumption is that it is an immoral war.

Each of these three positions (just war theory, war realism, pragmatic pacifism) admits of a militarist and a nonmilitarist variety.¹¹ The militarist sees war as a positive good or, at least, not necessarily a negative or bad thing overall. While aware of the horrors of war, the militarist is nevertheless convinced that these horrors are more than compensated for by the gains of war. For militarists, war transforms individuals into what they were not and perhaps could not be without war. It makes Men out of men and Women out of women. It gives those who participate in war a sense of identity and accomplishment. The rigors of war teach those who participate in it such virtues as discipline, self-confidence, perseverance, loyalty, national pride, responsibility, sacrifice, and courage.

There are gains for the nation as well, the militarists believe. They believe that sometimes the winning side realizes the objectives of the war. War turns the nation from a collection of individuals or members of this or that group into a single Community. It unites the people by giving them a common purpose. The greater good becomes more important than one's individual good. Moreover, as we sometimes say, war is good for the economy, although actual evidence for this belief is mixed unless, of course, we mean only that it is good for those who own and are employed by the defense industries.¹²

The nonmilitarist also admits that some good comes from war. After all, there are some good consequences from almost any act. But nonmilitarists generally dislike war. They believe that the horrors of war generally outweigh

the benefits. Consequently, nonmilitarists think that war should be avoided, unless there is no other recourse. Ancient Sparta, fascist Italy and Germany represent paradigms of militarist realist societies. Sun Tzu¹³ and, arguably, Carl Von Clausewitz¹⁴ represent nonmilitarist realists. They believe that the point of a powerful military is to avoid war, to instill enough fear in other nations that they will do your bidding without war. However, it is important to remember that there is a range of difference between the extreme militarist realist and the extreme nonmilitarist realist.

Similarly, there are militarist and nonmilitarist just war theorists. Those who are militarist read the various principles of just war theory in as permissive a fashion as is needed to render tenable the war in question. They tend to be similar to militarist war realists in their assessment of individual wars. They tend to permit even nuclear war, if the nuclear war has a just cause such as deterrence and the targets are military ones. Nonmilitarist just war theorists interpret the principles of just war theory more strictly. They tend to oppose most wars and resemble pragmatic pacifists in their moral assessment of individual wars. The just war principles of last resort and proportionality, interpreted strictly, make it difficult to justly initiate or to engage justly in almost any modern war. John Ford¹⁵ and James Sterba¹⁶ are examples of nonmilitarist just war theorists while William V. O'Brien¹⁷ and Robert L. Phillips¹⁸ provide evidence of militarist just war theorists.

Finally, there are militarist pacifists and the more traditional nonmilitarist pragmatic and absolute pacifists. Militarist pacifists, like Gene Sharp,¹⁹ believe that modern war should be replaced with a combination of nonviolent and violent approaches joining traditional war fighting techniques with nonviolent direct action. Indeed, Sharp gives a realist argument for his militarist brand of pacifism. He argues that the best *nonmoral* consequences accrue, and the most practical course of action is followed, if we replace as much of the violent aspect of war with the nonviolent aspect, consistent with winning the war. Sharp, then, is a pacifist and a militarist, a realist and a pacifist. The nonmilitarist pacifist (e.g., Gandhi, King, and Havel) is the more familiar variety. Richard Wasserstrom, Robert Holmes, and Duane Cady,²⁰ represent examples of contemporary nonmilitarist pragmatic pacifists. They believe that nonviolent direct action is almost always available as an alternative to violence, and that it is always a better alternative to modern war. Violence cannot be the means to peace because violence begets violence. Peace is not only the destination; it must become the way of travel. We cannot simultaneously prepare for war and pursue peace. Holmes notes the systemic goal-oriented nature of such preparation while Cady labels it 'warism'. Fine examples of nonviolent direct action are illustrated by Denmark during World War II, India's struggle for independence from Britain, the civil rights movement in the U.S., and, more recently, nonviolent struggles in the Philippines, Chile, and Poland, to mention a few.²¹

I raise these various possibilities to indicate just how much of a spectrum there is with regard to positions on the morality of war.²² While most people naively believe that there are only two positions on war, war realism or absolute pacifism, there are, in fact, many. The many blend over a spectrum of possible positions. Anyone trying to debate the morality of war will use a carving of that spectrum, but it will be merely instrumental to some end, as there are no proper joints at which to divide. But precisely because they are instrumental to some end, some carvings are better than others.

Indeed, a fine example of the false dilemma between militarist war realism and absolute pacifism with regard to morality is evidenced with recent arguments about Afghanistan, Iraq, and Al Qaeda. The argument for going to war often began with the premise, "We must do something," and ended with the conclusion "Therefore, we ought to bomb Afghanistan (or Iraq)." The missing premises were rarely provided. But the logic seemed to be that there are only two possible positions: militarist war realism or absolute pacifism. Absolute pacifism would have us do nothing. We must do something. Therefore, we must be war realists and bomb Afghanistan (or Iraq).

While it is arguable whether the absolute pacifist would counsel doing nothing or that the war realist would counsel bombing Afghanistan and Iraq, my point is that there are myriad positions between the horns of the false dilemma, many of which counsel doing something different from bombing. Following Sharp, we could have used a combination of warism and nonviolent direct action to cripple Al Qaeda and possibly capture their leaders, while diminishing the collateral damage. Alternately, we could have followed Michael Walzer's suggested amendment to the noncombatant immunity thesis and allowed collateral deaths only in cases where a nation is willing to accept increased risk to its own, such as flying bombing missions at lower altitudes.²³ By flying lower, crews could have greatly increased accuracy at increased personal risk and diminished civilian deaths, thereby demonstrating the nation's sincerity about both the truly collateral nature and value of innocent lives in comparison with the value of our own combatants' lives.

We could have followed other realist's recommendation that we first exhaust all diplomatic and economic means of gaining our ends with Al Qaeda, thereby truly using war as a last resort, as just war theory recommends. Or, as some pragmatic pacifists and others recommended, we could have offered economic assistance to Middle Eastern nations willing to aid with the elimination of terrorists and terrorism, a Marshall plan in return for the end of Al Qaeda. In the long haul, by aiding development in the Middle East as we did in Europe after World War II, we could both remove some of the incentive to become a terrorist by reducing human misery in Moslem nations and, concomitantly, serve both our own economic interests by increasing the size of the global marketplace and our political interests by fostering democracy. As the Marshall plan brought peace, prosperity, and democracy to war-plagued Europe, so it might have to the war-plagued Middle East.²⁴

If you doubt the practicality of these suggestions, you might ask yourself just what we accomplished by bombing Afghanistan and Iraq. Our initial goals in Afghanistan were to capture the leaders of Al Qaeda, eliminate Al Qaeda as a terrorist threat, and remove the Taliban from power. Our initial goals in Iraq were to capture and destroy Iraq's supposed weapons of mass destruction, capture and destroy Al Qaeda bases in Iraq, and remove Saddam Hussein from power. In both cases, we accomplished only the last of the three goals. And as ongoing warnings of terrorist threats reveal, the accomplished goals are not directly related to the war on terrorism. We didn't eliminate Al Qaeda. We strengthened it and brought it into Iraq where it previously was unknown. We gave incentive to other Islamic Jihadist groups like Hezbollah's exploits in Lebanon. We made both our soldiers and our citizens easy targets by putting them in the theater of terror in the Middle East. We gave Islamic Jihadists new reasons to attack our nation at home. Thus, our fallacious reasoning based on the false dilemma between absolute pacifism and militarist war realism blinds us to the alternatives available to us then and now. They cloud our rational ability to assess risk, evaluate costs and benefits, and act accordingly.

All three of these positions have been around and have been debated for centuries. One aspect of my thesis is that the dispute among these three positions cannot be settled on philosophical grounds at the present time. But the dispute will eventually be settled by what actions people take and what people come to believe. At that future time, the dispute among the three positions will be settled on philosophical grounds. By then, what we consider actually right with respect to the killing of innocents will have matured and hardened, the way that our beliefs on cannibalism, slavery, and genocide have matured and hardened. Moreover, the settlement of the issue may be a reasoned settlement, depending on how it is accomplished, and not simply in accord with the maxim that might makes right. Not just any set of beliefs will do no matter how much power one may have for the simple reason that the world puts limits on what we can believe. For a belief is a disposition to behave,²⁵ a directional belief,²⁶ and some behaviors kill. Sometimes they kill empires.²⁷ Warism is one of those behaviors. History provides the laboratory where our moral experiments are played out and our conclusions lived. If our settlement of the issue is done with intelligence, then that future time will indeed be a better version of our own. Because the world puts limits on what we can believe, we need not slide into pernicious relativism. I will return to argue these points in due time.

Let me begin with the claim that the dispute among the three positions cannot be settled on philosophical grounds. Let us start with the inductive evidence. For centuries, philosophers have developed in fine detail the strengths and weaknesses of each position. But from an internal perspective each is immune to the criticisms of the others. Any internal problems were solved long ago to the satisfaction of those who hold the position. Accordingly, the seemingly telling criticisms are no longer internal – they are external, to borrow Rudolph Carnap's honored distinction.²⁸

Each of the three positions represents a language or web of belief or perspective depending on whether we want to look at the issue linguistically, epistemologically, or metaphysically. John Rawls, Catherine Elgin, Nelson Goodman and Hilary Putnam describe well the linguistic, epistemological, and the metaphysical underpinnings.²⁹ By any of these lights, each of the three positions is internally consistent and fully believable to those who hold it yet either inconsistent or unbelievable to those who hold the alternate positions.

To one who is initiated into any one of the three positions on war and peace, that position is, by Elgin's lights, tenable. That is, over time, reflective equilibrium is reached between the position and the rest of one's beliefs. It is reached, in part, by altering the rest of one's beliefs and desires to fit the position while also altering the position to fit the beliefs and desires. That is what reflective equilibrium is: moving back and forth between our beliefs and a position or principle to see if the belief can be made to fit and at what price. If, after careful consideration, we find that we can modify each to fit the other in a dialectical, dynamic fashion and we are satisfied³⁰ with the resultant effect on our web of belief and desire, then we have attained reflective equilibrium, or the tenability of belief. The position "fits" our beliefs and desires. We have attained James's sentiment of rationality. I believe that the sophisticated holders of the three positions each reach reflective equilibrium with respect to their web of belief and the position that they espouse. As we will see, each finds a fit, but the fit differs for each of the three, as does the cost of finding a fit.

Suppose, for instance, that I find myself with three beliefs that represent a trilemma: (1) I will eat lunch at noon; (2) I will bike at noon; (3) I cannot be in two places at once. I will surrender either the belief that I will eat lunch at noon or the belief that I will bike at noon before I will surrender the belief that I cannot be in two places at once. The latter belief plays a crucial role in my web of belief and desire. The belief that I cannot be in two places at once is an "ungrounded grounder" in my system of belief: it is a belief I cannot imagine abandoning and, as such, it stands fast for me. It is fully tenable for me.³¹ The other two beliefs are easier to abandon. They do not stand as fast. Given that at least one belief must fall in the inconsistent triad, I will choose either to eat lunch or to bike at noon, but not both, depending on the rest of my desires and beliefs. Thereby, I preserve the fully tenable belief; so obviously some beliefs, e.g., fully tenable beliefs, are more important than others, e.g., merely tenable beliefs or mere opinions.³²

The process of inquiry allows us to maintain a reflective equilibrium among our beliefs, tenable and fully tenable. As Elgin reflects,

A system of thought is in reflective equilibrium when its components are reasonable in light of one another, and the account they comprise is reasonable in light of our antecedent convictions about the subject at hand. Such a system affords no guarantees. It is rationally acceptable, I

contend, not because it is certainly true but because it is reasonable in the epistemic circumstances.³³

So none of the three positions – war realism, just war theory, pragmatic pacifism – is certainly true. Each has its Achilles heel by the lights of the other two. None of them is yet fully tenable in the objective sense: included within a maximally tenable system of belief. For the war realist, it is difficult to explain why the winner of a war does not devastate the loser at the close of a total war, as Thucydides described of the Athenian generals long ago or as the Allies did to Germany and the U.S. did to Japan at the close of World War II. After all, the utility of the nonmoral convention to forego the killing of innocents is lost to the winner by the end of the war, for the loser is no longer able to retaliate in kind. Similarly, there would rarely be good reason not to use nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons at the end of a war against the loser's innocents, all other things being equal. Yet most find these ideas morally repugnant even if they serve the national interest of the victorious nation. Indeed, most find many acts of war to be immoral, as is evidenced by the Nuremberg Trials, the My Lai incident, the attacks of 9/11, the tortured prisoners in Afghanistan and Iraq, and a host of World Court cases involving crimes against humanity during war, most significantly the aborted trial of Slobodan Milosevic.

Michael Walzer offers another reason to doubt war realism. He writes,

The clearest evidence for the stability of our values over time is the unchanging character of the lies soldiers and statesmen tell. They lie in order to justify themselves, and so they describe for us the lineaments of justice. Wherever we find hypocrisy, we also find moral knowledge.... If we had all become realists like the Athenian generals or like Hobbists in a state of war, there would be an end alike to both morality and hypocrisy.... But the truth is that one of the things most of us want, even in war, is to act or to seem to act morally.³⁴

There are countless other problems with war realism. For one it runs counter to our dearly held belief that all people are morally equal regardless of national origin. Not surprisingly, many of the problems of war realism resemble the standard problems with consequentialist theories of practical reason and normative ethics, for war realism is a consequentialist theory of practical reason. How are we successfully to predict the consequences of war, given that they rarely go, or end, as expected? Since it is rare that a nation enters a war expecting to lose, it is reasonable to assume that approximately one-half of those who engage in war badly miscalculate the consequences of doing so. Even if we could successfully predict the consequences of war, how are we to assign values correctly to these consequences in order to do the needed calculation of benefits and burdens? Just what is to be our unit of measurement? Just how much is the

life of child worth compared to that of a ball bearing factory during war? How do we do the calculus?

In addition, when we attempt to calculate the benefits and burdens of war in order to decide either to engage in one or how to wage one, we might ask benefits and burdens for whom? Do we include all of the population of the nation involved in the war, or only some subset of that population? If it is all of the population, we are invoking the national self-interest. How do we determine the national self-interest? Is there even such a thing as the national self-interest where *everyone's* interests are served by a given war or event? Are those interests shared equally? Perhaps we mean the greatest possible balance of satisfied interests versus frustrated interests. But how are we to measure that? Consider that those who die in wars are usually the poor who have the least to gain and rarely the privileged that have the most to gain. Or is the notion of the national self-interest itself bad metaphysics left over from an age when we considered a nation-state to be a person separate and distinct from its citizens and with separate and distinct interests?³⁵ Alternately, if it is some subset of the population's interests we are to consider, which subset? The powerful? The privileged? The majority? Big business? To any answer one might give, the question remains: Why them? How is that fair?

War realism only seems reasonable in the abstract or to one who has already tailored her beliefs to attain reflective equilibrium in order to find fit with war realism. So even though the realist has an internally consistent position that seems eminently reasonable from within to those who own it, as we saw above, the position is not immune to external criticism. To those uninitiated into realism, the theory seems as malevolent as the motives and behavior of Shakespeare's Richard III or Kubrick's Dr. Strangelove. When we expect our leaders to be war realists and political realists, we expect them to become amoral in their behavior toward other nations. But our moral habits do not parse so easily. It should, then, be no surprise when our leaders behave immorally in their personal lives, yet somehow it always is. So, externally, war realism is vulnerable to the beliefs of the uninitiated, while internally, by the initiate's lights, it is not. The same is true of just war theory.

Just war theory rests on the principle of double effect, including its distinction between intentional and foreseeable killing and the claim that the latter but not the former is morally permissible. So, according to the just war theorist, when a massive bombing raid is launched against the enemy to destroy a military target of great importance, even though we may foresee that hundreds of thousands of innocent people will be killed, we do not intend their deaths and consequently are not morally responsible for them.

The reasoning in just war theory's principle of double effect is that we intend an act if and only if the consequence of the act is our end or it is a means to our end. But the criterion for intention captures more than the just war theorist thinks.

Suppose that you are charged with the decision to build a major highway. You build the highway to minimize highway accidents. Nevertheless, you foresee that accidents will happen and that many people will die in these accidents. But their deaths play no role in the end or purpose of the highway, which is to make travel more efficient and safe, nor in the means to that end. Indeed, those like you who build highways would be happy if no highway fatalities occur. The lack of these deaths would impede neither their means nor their ends. The lack of these deaths would provide evidence that one of their ends is attained: greater highway safety. Does a highway builder then intend the deaths that in fact occur due to highway accidents? By double effect, it seems not for those deaths are neither the means nor the ends to the builder's designs.

Suppose that you are a commander of U.S. forces in Europe during World War II. You select military targets carefully to minimize civilian death. But you foresee that many civilians, German children for instance, will die in the war as collateral deaths. You also foresee that their deaths will likely hasten the end of the war. You wish they did not have to die, even though it hastens the end. But you benefit from their deaths whether you want to do so or not. Their deaths are a means to your purpose of ending the war quickly. Do you intend the collateral deaths? By double effect you do. The collateral deaths of innocents are a means to your end of finishing the war quickly. By double effect you intend those deaths even if you wish they did not occur.

If we follow strictly the dictates of the principle of double effect we should conclude that those who build the highway do not intend the deaths since the deaths detract from the purpose of the highway. Contrarily, if we follow strictly the dictates of the principle of double effect we should conclude that those who wage the war intend the deaths of innocents whenever the deaths hasten the end of the war, even if the war wagers do not want or desire the deaths to hasten the end of the war. As long as the desire to end the war as quickly as possible maintains, the dilemma maintains. Perhaps this is a correct conclusion, but it is surely not the one that advocates of just war theory and the principle of double effect normally advocate. Indeed, it would eliminate just war theory as a middle position and render it extensionally equivalent with pragmatic pacifism. Perhaps most telling, it flies in the face of common sense notions of intentionality.

Consider the following example that continues the notion that the principle of double effect contains an implausible notion of intentionality. Imagine two different wars. In the first war, those who initiate the war and those who wage it both make every attempt to follow the rules of just war theory. In addition, they truly regret the collateral deaths of innocents that they foresee and they do not mean those collateral deaths to be the end of their actions or a means to that end. They do desire the war to end quickly. But, contrary to what they want, the collateral deaths do contribute to their victory in the war and so are a means to their end and so are intended according to just war theory and, consequently, render the war unjust.³⁶ Now imagine the second war. It is

identical in all morally relevant respects with the first except that civilian deaths do not contribute to hastening the end of the war. We might even imagine that they prolong the war by stiffening the will of the enemy as it did in Vietnam and Iraq.

Now according to just war theory the first war is unjust because those who initiated and waged the war intended the deaths of innocents while the second war is just because those who initiated and waged the second war did not intend the deaths of innocents. Yet the plans and aims of both sides were the same. The only difference is that in one case the devastation caused a quicker end to the war than it did in the other. We might imagine that that was caused not by the attackers intentions but by the intentions of those attacked. As far as common sense notions of the intentions are concerned, these two wars are identical in all relevant respects. So what is true of one of them with regard to the intentions of the attackers is equally true of the other, by parity of reason. What is true of one of them with regard to the morality of war is true of the other, by parity of reason. The only difference is the psychology of those attacked. The principle of double effect and, consequently, just war theory treat similar cases dissimilarly and are, thereby, inconsistent.³⁷

Something has gone astray here. Let me suggest that the principle of double effect actually rests on an inherent ambiguity in the notion of what is 'foreseeable'. Under one sense of 'foreseeable', what I foresee is merely possible. In this sense it is foreseeable that when I drive home tonight my brakes may fail and I may kill a child even though my car is well maintained and in good repair. Such an accident is merely possible and consequently foreseeable. In the second sense of 'foreseeable' what I foresee is highly likely. In this sense when we bombed Baghdad we could foresee that we would kill tens of thousands including a high percentage of children. It is safe to say that we knew that we would kill them when we launched the raid so the deaths were surely foreseeable. What I suggest is that the first weaker sense of 'foreseeable' does not entail the intention to do what is foreseen. But the second stronger sense of 'foreseeable' does entail the intention to do the act, especially when the action that is foreseen is has especially bad consequences.³⁸ How can one bomb Baghdad knowing that ones action will kill thousands of children and not intend their deaths?

But there is a more obvious problem for just war theory, and that is with its principle of proportionality.³⁹ According to the principle of proportionality, unintended, collateral deaths during a war must be proportional to the goals of the end. When we consider war, we should consider the deaths of countless children and other innocents. Indeed, it is no stretch of the imagination to think of our bombing of Kabul or Baghdad as the massacre of countless children, certainly more than the 3,000 people who died on 9/11. What end is proportionate with killing thousands of children in a horrible way? What is the probability that that end will be accomplished by the bombing? Are there alternate better means to our end? By what calculus of practical reason do we

render those deaths morally tenable? Suppose the children are yours or they are your siblings, which is not a stretch, for they bear such relationships with others. What ends would render just their deaths as collateral in a bombing raid? Can one honestly universalize such acts? The ends must be truly major and actual, if they are to render tenable such means. Recall how frequently we misjudge or fail to attain the ends of war and our epistemological fallibilism seems to block almost any actual attempt to justly initiate a war.

Just war theory has other problems. Whenever we have a plurality of principles or rules, as we do with just war theory, conflicts among the principles and rules arise. What are we to do when the principles conflict as they inevitably do? Is a war unjust if one rule is violated? How do we weigh the violation of one rule against proportionality, the consequentialist calculation of burdens and benefits in the attempt to attain the best outcome? Simply stated, if we allow the principles of just war theory to be interpreted as *prima facie* rules then almost any modern war can be found morally just. If we require that the rules are each absolute then it is unclear that any modern war can be morally just. As already stated, we can find almost any war warranted if we allow a loose interpretation of just war principles and we can find the same war unwarranted if we apply a strict interpretation. Which interpretation is correct and how do we decide?

William V. O'Brien, an able defender of just war theory, argues that if we allow the principle of double effect, including proportionality, to be interpreted strictly, then the theory collapses into modern war pacifism, for no modern war can pass the test.⁴⁰ Since, O'Brien holds, pacifism is untenable, we must not interpret these tenets of just war theory strictly, but allow that innocents may be killed collaterally and proportionately.⁴¹ Yet doesn't O'Brien's argument beg the question at issue: whether pacifism is tenable? It matters that O'Brien assumes that absolute pacifism is the only form the position takes. Moreover, the decision to interpret just war theory is left to those in power making the decision to wage war. They are, dare I suggest, rarely disinterested observers. Just war theory becomes a loaded gun in the hands of militarists, as it was in recent attempts to use the theory both to condemn the attacks of 9/11 and to sanction our wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Indeed, if it is plausible as O'Brien suggests to treat the various rules of just war theory as *prima facie* rules, then we can use the theory to warrant the attacks of 9/11 as well as those on Afghanistan and Iraq. The just war theory becomes a *carte blanche* for war, a perfect tool for militarists or terrorists.

Finally we will consider pragmatic pacifism, the view that the burden of proof to render morally tenable a modern war is on the one who would wage the war and that that burden includes showing how the wholesale killing of innocents in the prosecution of the war is warranted. Sure, the critics say, that paints a pleasing picture, but we know what is mistaken here. This is all just utopian thinking. Sure, pragmatic pacifism would be wonderful if everyone was a pragmatic pacifist, but not everyone is. Those who are not will take advantage of those who are. Only a fool or a coward practices pragmatic pacifism.

Pragmatic pacifists counter that pragmatic pacifism is not utopian, rather warism is. Warism is contrary to our dearest beliefs about the rights to life, liberty, and property. Warism is both expensive and dangerous and most likely disproportionate with the ends of the war. Indeed, it is arguable that our recent forays into Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan reveal that the U.S. can no longer win wars, especially asymmetrical wars against determined insurgents, the only wars we are likely to fight in the near future. We have announced to the world we can no longer fight war against insurgents thereby inviting rogue states like North Korea and Iran to pursue nuclear programs. We can conquer but we cannot rule, we can destroy but we cannot create. What we have created is a tremendous national debt that mortgages our nation's future and threatens to choke our future economy. What looks increasingly utopian is our belief that we can police the world and call the tune to which everyone will dance. We lack both the resources and the will if not the hubris for the undertaking. Pragmatic pacifism, far from being utopian, is tried and true in far many more cases than we realize, as books and films such as Peter Ackerman and Jack Duvall's *A Force More Powerful* make clear.

To the pragmatic pacifist, these points seem apparent and obvious. To the warist, the pragmatic pacifist seems naïve, cowardly, and disloyal. Sure we warists believe that it is wrong to kill innocents. But sometimes you have to kill some innocents to save greater numbers of other innocents or to procure other greater goods. Sure war is expensive but it is good for the economy and necessary for our security. Sure war is dangerous but appeasement is even more dangerous.

The pragmatic pacifist counters that the empirical evidence indicates that we are poor judges of when war will save more innocents than it kills or when it will procure greater goods. Moreover, such utilitarian arguments are notoriously problematic. War is not only expensive; it is destructive. Again, before we enter the war we are poor judges about whether the benefits will exceed the costs. It is not likely that with further study we will get better at foresight. Finally, it is a false dilemma in most actual contexts to think that the only two options are war or appeasement. There are almost always other ways including nonviolent direct action. Again, it looks one way to the initiated and another way to the uninitiated. To the initiated, pragmatic pacifism is tenable, even fully tenable. To the uninitiated, war looks like the greatest human folly imaginable, let alone a horrible human vice. In order to reach reflective equilibrium the pragmatic pacifist, like the others, alters her beliefs in order to accommodate pragmatic pacifism into her web, in order to make it fit fully.

What we find tenable or fully tenable, where we are able to attain reflective equilibrium or wide reflective equilibrium among our beliefs, depends on what we already believe and desire and what beliefs and desires we are willing to change. In order to accommodate new beliefs that fit well with our web of belief and desire we modify the web in order to attain a right fit. The

realist does it. The just war theorist does it. The pragmatic pacifist does it. We all do it. It is how we operate epistemically in the world.

As John Dewey put it about a century ago, we constantly seek a better fit between the organism and the environment in order to resolve our problematic situations. It is what any rational person does in her intellectual development.

But this is not the end of the story. Our moral beliefs, as Catherine Elgin argues, fit roughly into three general categories.⁴² In the first category are the unimportant moral beliefs. At what time do we put the children down for the night? Should everyone drive on the left or the right side of the street? What should one wear to the wedding? These are morally indifferent questions, all other things being equal. In the second category are the resolved moral beliefs. Cannibalism, slavery, and genocide are strongly presumptively wrong. Acts of human kindness, honesty, and justice are strongly presumptively right. These moral issues are resolved for all of those people who we include in our moral community, all of those with whom we are in moral solidarity. But there is a third category, that of the unresolved. In this category we find the abortion debate, the euthanasia debate, and our present concern, the debate about noncombatant immunity. Notice that many of the issues that are resolved were once unresolved. Indeed, some led to wars and others to great social upheaval in order to reach resolution. Over time, the not-yet-resolved tends to become the resolved, and other issues, some new and some old, are unresolved.

So these three categories are fluid. Their members may change over time as the culture changes its technology or its beliefs and finds new ways to reflective equilibrium. Moreover, like the earlier distinction among war realists, just war theorists, and pragmatic pacifists, this tripartite distinction also functions like a spectrum admitting of degrees of difference with vague boundaries.

But there is another way to explain these three categories. We can distinguish between beliefs that are tenable and those that are true. While tenability depends on what we believe at any given time, truth is absolute. Once true, always true. So what was once tenable may prove later to be false just as what was once untenable may prove true. Similarly, it is quite reasonable to believe that some of our present day fully tenable beliefs are false. Indeed, I take it as fully tenable that any one of my fully tenable beliefs may be false, that epistemological fallibilism is true, even if fallible.⁴³

Robert Holmes offers another useful set of distinctions for our purposes.⁴⁴ A moral belief evidences subjective rightness just in case it is the result of one's immediately felt reaction about what is right in a morally problematic situation. Such a belief may or may not be tenable, warranted. It is sufficient for subjective rightness that one merely *feels* that the act is right without reflective thought. Such moral beliefs may be actionably right when held under conditions when we must act quickly and have no time to think.

Actionably right moral beliefs are those moral beliefs we find tenable or fully tenable after due consideration and depending on the context. They are the

moral beliefs that establish reflective equilibrium, those that find a right fit with the rest of our moral beliefs. We are usually warranted in acting on such beliefs because much of the time we lack the knowledge or the time or the ability to know the truth of the matter, to know what is actually right. We can do no more than the best that we can, and, usually, the best that we can do is to do what is actionably right. Usually, this is enough because ought implies can: we cannot reasonably be required to do what we cannot do.

Subjective rightness provides moral hypotheses that we test for warrant, determining if they are actionably right.⁴⁵ Each of the realist, the just war theorist, and the pragmatic pacifist finds her respective position actionably right, tenable by her lights. As the previous discussion of the underdetermination of the morality of war should make clear, at this historical moment we collectively lack the knowledge necessary to decide whom, if anyone, is actually right on the morality of war. So the issue of the morality of war, at this time, belongs in Elgin's category of the unresolved. Not until the issue moves into the category of resolved moral issues are we fully warranted in asserting that one, if any, of the three positions is actually right. Nevertheless, I intend to show how the sentiment of rationality recommends settling the dispute in the camp of the pragmatic pacifists.

Pragmatic pacifists want to settle our present thinking about killing innocents during war just as the abolitionists and suffragettes settled then present thinking in earlier times. Just as abolitionists and suffragettes eventually showed that suffrage was actually right and slavery actually wrong, so we want to show that pragmatic pacifism is not just actionably right but actually right. But we have opposition from the war realists and just war theorists who also want to settle present thinking on these issues in their own way. Each of us believes that his tenable belief is the truth which, I suggest, is in part to believe that later, better ages, will come to embrace our way of thought, our version of reflective equilibrium, and move our belief into the category of the resolved. So in the present, what we *do* matters as much as what we believe in establishing our belief as the settled version, as the fully tenable belief that we can confidently assert as the truth. *Praxis*, the synthesis of thought and action, of hope and deed through imagination, through rational sentiment, is the way to establish a better, future version of our beliefs and ourselves. It is a *praxis* that requires intersubjectivity in accord with discourse ethics. It is what John Dewey meant by acting with social intelligence. At its heart *praxis* is democratic and pragmatic.

But why should anyone embrace pragmatic pacifism given that it cannot establish itself as the truth in the here and now? I offer five brief suggestions for why we should adopt pragmatic pacifism.

First, most of us hold a trilemma of beliefs about war. We know well enough that (1) it is strongly presumptively wrong to harm children, especially in large numbers. Yet we also believe both that (2) some modern wars are morally tenable and that (3) modern wars massacre large numbers of children.

We have a trilemma among our beliefs not unlike our previous example of a trilemma. We reconcile a trilemma by changing at least one of the three beliefs. Given that it is a fact that modern wars massacre large numbers of children, we cannot change that belief without contradicting fact. Given that our belief that it is strongly presumptively wrong to harm children, especially in large numbers, is a fully tenable moral belief, one that stands fast for us, the only reasonable alternative is to give up our belief that some modern wars are warranted.⁴⁶ In addition, the moral prohibition on massacring large numbers of children seems to me an ungrounded grounder of our web of beliefs and desires: a belief that I cannot imagine abandoning. As such it is a weightier belief than the belief that some modern wars are morally warranted and, consequently, more difficult to abandon to reconcile the trilemma.

By embracing pragmatic pacifism, we are best able to reconcile the trilemma in the most rational and efficient fashion, a reconciliation that produces the maximally tenable system of belief given the options available.⁴⁷

Second, if we consider our notion of the social or moral ideal, surely it is not a world of constant war and preparation for war that robs the innocent either of the resources necessary to lead satisfactory lives or of their lives. The social ideal is a world of positive peace, the world foretold in Kant's *Perpetual Peace*, a world where social justice is possible because neither our lives nor our resources are squandered on war and preparation for war. Our job is to create an intelligent path to the social ideal, to help the project become real. We can only do so if we abandon war realism and just war theory for some form of pacifism. Otherwise we will be caught in the constant cycle of war and preparation for war that ends only in the next war.

I suggest that we begin slowly, move in the direction of civilian defense while we encourage other nations to do the same, create strong economic alliances among nations, refrain from international violence, and introduce nonviolent direct action as a form of national defense. Economically and militarily, the transition to peace will go slowly if it is to be accomplished at all, for we will need to raise new generations dedicated to peace and conflict resolution just as present generations are dedicated to war and violence as the means of solving problems. We will only be successful if we can build communities of people who trust one another and who can rely upon one another for mutual protection. To do so we will need to resolve the tensions of classism, racism, sexism, and warism – the major forms of oppression in our world. The rebuilding of community and democracy are two of the most positive aspects of the move to pragmatic pacifism.

Third, the weapons of mass destruction we now possess are too deadly to be used. Yet we face a dangerous era of their proliferation throughout the world. The more countries that have weapons of mass destruction, the more likely it is that the weapons will be used, with disastrous consequences. Only a change in mindset from power and domination to peace and cooperation can forestall what now seems merely a matter of time. Both warism and just war theory leave us

with a dangerous game of Russian Roulette that, in the long run, we can only lose.⁴⁸ As weapons of mass destruction proliferate, the odds increase that a horrific war involving their use will occur. So, over time, the odds of horrific war increase. Use of such weapons threatens a moral catastrophe. Our best hope to avoid that moral catastrophe is to avoid war and the preparation for war – to become pragmatic pacifists.⁴⁹

Fourth, such choices of how to reconcile the trilemma are truly existential ones, revelations of who I am, as well as choices of who I will become. As existentialists such as Nietzsche and Camus indicate, such preferences are deeply aesthetic.⁵⁰ John Dewey makes similar comments.⁵¹ Am I to be a person who stands for peace, for the lives of the innocent, for the lives of children or am I to be a warist willing to trade other people's lives and children for my own profit and gain? Am I to create myself out of the fear and weakness that requires death and destruction, or am I to create my life out of courage and strength, the kind of courage and strength that typified Buddha, Socrates, and Jesus in earlier ages and Gandhi, Dorothy Day, and Vaclav Havel in our own? Such a choice is a fundamental choice of self. Like Dewey, I believe that we make such choices best when we address them honestly and this entails considering them both aesthetically and morally, 'authentically' as the existentialists would say. I, for one, would neither be proud nor find the cost acceptable if I end my days living in the fear and hatred of the other upon which warism is based and that requires the willingness to massacre other people's children. I do not find that possible future self or future world appealing on aesthetic or moral grounds or in terms of authenticity.

Fifth, it is arguable that all three positions are extensionally equivalent with pragmatic pacifism. That is, it is arguable that all three theories end by condemning most actual modern wars. Properly understood, our national interest entails the end to both modern war and the preparation for such wars for many of the reasons already given. In addition, given the expected harm to innocents in any such war, plus the fact that such wars rarely go as planned and are extremely costly in every conceivable sense, our national interest is almost always best served if we avoid modern war whenever possible. Recent wars in Vietnam and Iraq in particular evidence that the U.S. is capable of destruction but not of creation. While we can most likely win a modern symmetrical war (e.g. against France or Canada) we seem unable to win modern asymmetrical wars. Our opponents understand well enough not to fight the war we want. Over time, we deplete our resources and our will to conclude these asymmetrical wars with victory or justice. By the realist's lights, we simply don't know enough to render tenable initiating most likely modern wars. So, properly understood, war realism should condemn most modern wars. Just war theory, with any sensible definition of intentionality or understanding of proportionality, entails pacifism as the earlier discussion of O'Brien indicated. Properly understood all three theories should condemn most actual modern wars even though their proponents often argue otherwise.

Now I don't offer any of these reasons as absolutely compelling or complete or even as internal criticisms of war realism or just war realism. I offer them as all they legitimately are: external reasons to criticize both war realism and just war theory that fit my web of belief and desire, reasons that I find tenable. I offer them to you for your consideration in the hope that a dialogue can begin to allow our culture to find a joint wide reflective equilibrium on the issue of the morality of war. I offer them to you as reasons to consider in our ongoing cultural discourse ethic.

But can't philosophy do more? Among the available consistent positions isn't one better than the others in terms of its consequences? Remember that whether a position is consistent with our basic beliefs depends on what our basic beliefs are. Whether we hold that our belief in a given position will have good or bad consequences depends on what consequences we project from that position and what we project depends, in part, on what our present beliefs are. These particular questions of better consequences pretend to be questions asked from a God's eye point of view while really they can only be asked and answered internally.⁵² They will only be fully answerable once the issue in question moves from the category of the unresolved into that of the resolved. There is no cosmic exile to a God's eye point of view from which to judge either before or after the issue is resolved. Such Archimedean epistemological points do not exist. Each honestly sees the world as she does and different from the others. There are no immaculate perceptions. Yet we can and do discuss these issues, and our discourse sometimes affects and changes another's web of belief and desire. That is what philosophy does. It is how philosophy progresses now that the quest for certainty is over.

It seems that what will best resolve the issue is intelligent social action. That social action may take the form of a powerful book like *Uncle Tom's Cabin* or *Soul on Ice* or *The Second Sex* or a powerful film like *Dr. Strangelove* or *Apocalypse Now* or *The Thin Red Line*. That social action may take the form of a powerful social movement like the abolitionist or suffragette or civil rights or anti-war movements. Or it may be less obvious and dramatic and take the form of teaching peace or engaging in political lobbying or writing letters to the local newspaper. Many small actions joined together may yield significant results, as it did for the abolitionists, suffragettes, civil rights workers, and war protestors.

As William James argues, our beliefs may yield a self-fulfilling prophecy. When confronted with a dilemma between no hope and some hope and our fallibility leaves us without a way to know which will prevail, yet belief is required, then it is rational to choose the course of action prescribed by hope. It worked for the abolitionists, the suffragettes, the civil rights workers, and the war protestors. Epistemology is, in part, a hope-based initiative. As Camus wrote, "where there is no hope, we must invent it." But it is not enough merely to hope, it is our actions, our intelligent social actions conjoined with and inspired by hope and imagination that can change the world for the better.

We who believe in positive peace and the end to warism are presently confronted with such a Jamesian dilemma, between no hope and little hope. There is at present little hope that we can move our culture toward positive peace in the near future just as there was little hope for a lasting peace in Europe, a peaceful end to the Soviet Union, or a peaceful end to apartheid in the U.S. or South Africa no more than a few decades ago. It is my hope that through intelligent social action we may inspire future, better versions of ourselves to end the suffering produced by warism and bring humanity closer to the positive peace from which we can all expect to benefit.

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NOTES

1. William James, "The Sentiment of Rationality," *Mind* 9 (1880): 188–205. Steven Fesmire, *John Dewey and Moral Imagination* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), especially pp. 39–44.

2. I take pernicious relativism to be either simple subjectivism (the view that what I believe to be true or right is, by that fact alone, true or right) or simple cultural relativism (whatever a culture believes to be true or right is, by that fact alone, true or right). I consider it pernicious because it blocks the road to inquiry by ending both discussion and the search for better answers.

3. Jeffrie G. Murphy, "The Killing of the Innocent," *The Monist* 57 (1973): 527–536.

4. Utilitarianism is not covered for reasons of brevity. Many of the criticisms of war realism, also a consequentialist theory, apply to utilitarianism. See especially the criticisms of utilitarianism in Robert L. Holmes, *Basic Moral Philosophy*, 3rd edn. (Belmont, Cal.: Wadsworth, 2003), or any reliable ethics text. The Holmes text also contains a development of pragmatic contextualism consistent with the approach to ethical theory that I adopt in this paper.

5. George I. Mavrodes, "Conventions and the Morality of War," *Philosophy & Public Affairs* 4 (1975): 117–131.

6. Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations*, 2nd edn. (New York: Basic Books, 1992) provides a classic statement of the theory.

7. Alison McIntyre provides a good overview of the theory. See her “Doing Away with Double Effect,” *Ethics* 112 (2001): 219–255 for an in-depth analysis.

8. Richard Wasserstrom, “On the Morality of War,” *Stanford Law Review* 21 (1969): 1642–1656, especially Part IV, provides perhaps the first statement of pragmatic pacifism in recent debate. Duane L. Cady, *From Warism to Pacifism: A Moral Continuum* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989) for an introduction to pacifism including its many versions, and Robert L. Holmes, *On War and Morality* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1989) for an extended analysis and defense of conditional pacifism. Both Cady and Holmes use ‘pragmatic pacifism’ differently from how I use the term. My use includes all senses of conditional pacifism save militarist pacifism, while theirs is more restrictive. My use of ‘pragmatic’ rests on the philosophical sense of the term while theirs rests on the popular sense.

9. Throughout the paper when I write of knowingly killing innocents, I mean knowingly killing them against their will, as stated here. For reasons of brevity and style, I sometimes avoid mention of the clause, “against their will.” It is implicitly intended. Notice that this leaves open moral questions concerning the legitimacy of personal self-defense, abortion, and euthanasia as well as the morality of any particular war. In other words, a pragmatic pacifist could render tenable personal self-defense, abortion, euthanasia, or some wars depending upon the rest of her beliefs and the context of the action. This is so both because pragmatic pacifism is general opposition to war but not necessarily to all violence (nonviolence differs from pacifism) and also because the prohibition on knowingly killing innocents is conditional, although the presumption against it is strong. For an insightful argument that one cannot warrant national self-defense by appeal to the personal right of self-defense, see David Rodin, *War and Self-Defense* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002).

10. Holmes, *On War and Morality*, makes this important point.

11. I borrow the distinction and some of the description from *Moral Constraints on War: Principles and Cases*, ed. Bruno Coppieters, Nick Fotion, and Caroline Crist (Lanham, Md.: Lexington Books, 2002).

12. It is not unreasonable to believe that the economic recession of the 1970s and early 1980s was caused by the national debt created by the Vietnam War. One interesting test of the theory will be whether America’s present (2007) national debt will plunge us into a similar recession.

13. Sun Tzu, *The Art of War* (Boulder, Col.: Westview Press, 1994).

14. Anatol Rapoport, ed. *Clausewitz On War* (Middlesex, UK: Penguin Classics, 1989).

15. John C. Ford, “The Morality of Obliteration Bombing,” *Theological Studies* 5 (1944): 261–309.

16. James Sterba, *Social and Political Philosophy* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), Part I, “Justice for Here and Now.”

17. William V. O’Brien, *The Conduct of Just and Limited War* (New York: Praeger, 1981).

18. Robert Lester Phillips, *War and Justice* (Norman, Okla.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1984).

19. Gene Sharp, *Exploring Nonviolent Alternatives* (Boston: Porter Sargent, 1970).

20. See note 8 above.

21. Peter Ackerman and Jack Duvall, *A Force More Powerful* (New York: St. Martin Press, 2000).

22. Cady, *From Warism to Pacifism*, introduces the metaphor of a spectrum of possible positions on the morality of war.

23. Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars*.

24. Obviously the present Middle East is not 1945 Europe. The task may seem daunting in the Middle East but it seemed no less daunting in war-ravaged Europe just emerging from decades of economic instability, fascism and war. Such a plan for the Middle East may be both less expensive than the present and future wars in which we are now engaged there, as well as promote peace. Bluntly stated, given the cost of modern war it is usually less costly to buy people rather than to kill them.

25. This remains a tenet of pragmatism ever since Charles Peirce.

26. Hilary Putnam, *Reason, Truth and History* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

27. Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (New York: Random House, 1987). Jared Diamond, *Collapse* (New York: Viking Press, 2004).

28. Rudolf Carnap, "Empiricism, Semantics, and Ontology" *Revue Internationale de Philosophie* 4 (1950): 20–40

29. John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971). Catherine Z. Elgin, *Considered Judgment* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996). Nelson Goodman, *Ways of Worldmaking* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1978). Hilary Putnam, *Reason, Truth and History*.

30. It is that feeling of satisfaction and fit that William James identifies with the sentiment of rationality in his piece by the same name, "The Sentiment of Rationality."

31. Elgin, *Considered Judgment*, takes "fully tenable belief" to mean a tenable belief that belongs to a maximally tenable system of belief. Let us consider that the objective sense of full tenability. I add to that a subjective sense of the phrase that means those beliefs that one cannot imagine ever abandoning, those that stand fast for one. I refer to them as "ungrounded grounders" or "basic beliefs" but they should not be considered foundational. Rather the metaphor for our system of belief is one of a web or a field of force rather than a building. Richard Werner, "Ethical Realism Defended," *Ethics* 95 (1985): 292–296 makes similar points.

32. The relevance of this example will become clear later in the paper when I discuss a problematic trilemma concerning the morality of war.

33. Catherine Z. Elgin, *Considered Judgment*. My development of a pragmatic sense of tenability borrows heavily from Elgin's account here and elsewhere. Like Elgin I try to avoid use of the philosophical notion of justification and the intractable debates surrounding it and to substitute instead her notion of tenability, which I also refer to as "warrant" following a pragmatic tradition and "reflective equilibrium" following Elgin and Rawls. Nelson Goodman offered a defense of the method of "reflective equilibrium" in determining valid rules of deduction and induction in *Fact, Fiction and Forecast*, 4th edn. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983), pp. 63–66. John Rawls, *The Theory of Justice*, made the phrase popular in philosophical circles.

34. Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars*, pp. 19–20.

35. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Heinrich Von Treitschke, Benito Mussolini, and Adolph Hitler all held that the state is an organism or person. Interestingly the language of political realism developed during the same time as the thought of the earlier two and includes such phrases as "national self-interest," "national defense," "birth of the nation," etc. These phrases hearken back to the notion of the state as an organism or

person. They are frequently treated as though they are literal when in fact they are metaphorical. Great mischief is done when we are dubbed by such metaphors.

36. Just war theorists might counter that the means or ends must be intentional means or ends in order for them to properly define 'intention'. But now we have a circular definition of 'intention'.

37. The advantages and disadvantages with the principle of double effect lead me to conclude that it is a useful rule of thumb in moral judgment but is by no means a reliable moral principle or rule. McIntyre, , makes a similar point. As a pragmatic moral contextualist (Holmes, *Basic Moral Philosophy*) I think of all so-called moral principles and rules as rules of thumb: useful tools to be adopted where and when appropriate but by no means absolutely binding or absolute without exception in application.

38. There may well be a grey area between the two.

39. McIntyre, "Doing Away With Double-Effect," makes a similar point.

40. Richard Wasserstrom, "On the Morality of War," argues a similar line. But unlike O'Brien, Wasserstrom concludes that modern war is extremely difficult to warrant from the moral point of view.

41. O'Brien, *The Conduct of Just and Limited War*.

42. Elgin, *Considered Judgment*.

43. Inhabitants of twelfth century Europe were fully warranted at the time, had tenable and perhaps fully tenable beliefs that the earth is the center of the universe, that life arises from rotting meat, and that disease is caused by sin. At the time everything spoke in favor of these beliefs and nothing spoke against them. Yet each one of these beliefs is now counted false. So we have the difference between tenability and truth, a distinction as old as Plato's *Meno*.

44. Robert L. Holmes, *Basic Moral Philosophy*.

45. Fesmire, *John Dewey and Moral Imagination*.

46. Murphy, "The Killing of the Innocent." Clearly, I mean "fully tenable" in the subjective sense described in note 31 but I also believe it to be in the objective sense there described.

47. I can't cover here the other possible ways to adjudicate the trilemma and why they are inferior. But do recall the earlier example of a trilemma concerning the choice whether to bike or eat at noon as well as the arguments offered against just war theory and war realism.

48. Both Albert Einstein and Bertrand Russell opposed nuclear weapons, at least in part, for this reason.

49. It is a chilling thought that a moral catastrophe brought about by weapons of mass destruction could awaken us to how dangerous our world has become and propel us toward pragmatic pacifism. While I do not welcome or promote such a moral catastrophe, I do recognize it as a possibility. Experience runs a hard school, but fools will learn in no other.

50. Alexander Nehamus, *Nietzsche: Life as Literature* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1985). I use 'aesthetic' in John Dewey's sense of 'esthetic' that removes the word from the museum and returns it to ordinary life. See Fesmire, *John Dewey and Moral Imagination*.

51. Fesmire, *John Dewey and Moral Imagination*.

52. Nassim Nichols Taleb, *The Black Swan* (New York: Random House, 2007), provides valuable evidence and arguments concerning our ineptitude at predicting the future successfully.

Richard Werner
John Stewart Kennedy Professor of Philosophy
Philosophy Department
Hamilton College
Clinton, New York 13323
United States

Book Reviews

Richard Rorty, *Philosophy as Cultural Politics: Philosophical Papers, Volume 4*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007. xii + 206 pp.
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Richard Rorty begins this, his final book, with a sober word of warning: “Readers of my previous books will find little new in this volume. It contains no novel ideas or arguments” (x). On the whole, this is true; much of the ground covered in *Philosophy as Cultural Politics* is indeed familiar, well-trod turf. With Rorty as cicerone, readers will glimpse the death masks of the once-mighty (Plato, Descartes, Locke, Kant); stroll past quaint ancient ruins (realism, representationalism, scientism, foundationalism); and saunter through a pantheon thronged with heroes (Hegel, Nietzsche, James, Dewey, Wittgenstein, Heidegger, Sellars, Davidson, Brandom, Fine). The entire tour, moreover, is conducted in Rorty’s suave patois: a style that is at once polished and colloquial, knowing yet hopeful, erudite but seductive.

Is this a roundabout way of saying that Rorty has multiplied books beyond necessity? By no means. In my opinion, there are at least three good reasons to read *Philosophy as Cultural Politics*. To begin with, there is the sheer range of the collection. The volume contains thirteen papers grouped under three headings: “Religion and Morality from a Pragmatist Point of View” (four papers); “Philosophy’s Place in Culture” (four papers); and “Current Issues Within Analytic Philosophy” (five papers). As these labels suggest, the spectrum of issues and themes is colourful and broad. Romanticism, God, justice, loyalty, consciousness, truth, inferentialism, naturalism, quietism, holism, communism, cold war liberalism, Kant’s moral philosophy, Wittgensteinian schisms – *Philosophy as Cultural Politics* weighs in boldly on these topics, among others. Few books have such breath-taking breadth; fewer still are written from such a distinctive and unified point of view.

A second attractive feature of this collection is that the positive, forward-looking side of Rorty’s thought is prominently exhibited throughout. Among analytic philosophers, it has long been common practice to portray Rorty as a destructive thinker who has nothing better to do than subvert the projects of modern philosophy. However, the author of these essays is an unabashed Yeasayer less interested in old polemical squabbles than in imagining a future for philosophy. That future lies in the practice of what Rorty calls “cultural politics”: the on-going project of coming up with ever-better ways of talking, where “better” is understood with reference to the pursuit of our sociopolitical

goals. Hence to say, with Rorty, that “cultural politics should replace ontology” (5) is to say that the philosopher should seek to enrich her culture’s conversational repertoire without asking whether her new-fangled language cuts Nature at the joints. Relevance – not representation – is all.

Thirdly, *Philosophy as Cultural Politics* provides a very clear statement of Rorty’s oft-misunderstood meta-philosophy. The following five theses, many of them markedly historicist, leap off the page: (1) the vocabularies in which philosophical problems are formulated are not timeless intuitions of pure Reason, but historically conditioned artefacts; (2) such vocabularies are to be assessed not by whether they mirror reality, but by how well they serve our interests; (3) the representationalist vocabulary of modern philosophy is decidedly more trouble than it is worth; (4) philosophers should work at forging more fruitful and useful vocabularies; and (5) since this poetic task of vocabulary-creation is potentially endless (unlike that of representing reality, or that of solving a fixed set of perennial problems), no “end of philosophy” is in the offing.

While Rorty’s book thus has many substantial virtues, novelty is not among them (as he himself admits). This puts a reviewer in a slightly ticklish position; for where there is nothing new, there is obviously nothing new to praise or damn. However, since the unifying theme of this wide-ranging volume is the function of philosophy, and since Rorty’s views on that subject flow from the controversial meta-philosophy outlined above, some critical reflections on the latter seem in order.

As is well-known, Rorty contends that we can transcend epistemology and metaphysics by eschewing representationalism. Many notable analytic philosophers – Thomas Nagel is an outstanding example – find this totally unconvincing; as they see it, there are certain epistemological and metaphysical problems from which we are not free to walk away, because their pre-suppositions are not “optional” or factitious.¹ Rorty’s standard response to such doubting Thomases is a nice example of cultural politics: he tells us that our culture has a better chance of becoming better – happier, more liberal, humane, tolerant, just – if we change the subject and stop talking in the archaic ways favoured by representationalists. This rejoinder raises many questions, not the least of which is whether it is coherent.

The source of this worry is the unresolved tension between two commitments: Rorty’s meta-philosophical pragmatism, on the one hand, and his ultra-radical anti-representationalism, on the other. According to the former doctrine, vocabularies are to be assessed for their utility; but to say that a given vocabulary is useful (or that it is not) is to say something about the consequences of its adoption, and thus to make putatively factual claims about how things stand in the world. As Robert Nozick once put it: “Sooner or later, it seems, a proponent of Rorty’s position must claim and affirm that certain things will in fact lead to other things, that this will indeed occur in the world, given the way the world is.”² And there’s the rub; for Rorty’s uncompromising anti-

representationalism apparently disqualifies him from making such claims. After all, Rortyeian anti-representationalists are supposed to do much more than repudiate sophisticated correspondence theories of truth; as the implacable foes of epistemology and metaphysics, they are also bound to abjure the very idea of *getting reality right* – viz., the truism that truth means making our thoughts and words answer to things (where “answerability” is understood in normative, as opposed to merely causal, terms).³ Without this platitude, however, it seems Rorty cannot judge the utility of vocabularies. What, then, becomes of his meta-philosophical pragmatism?

But I do not wish to end on a negative or skeptical note. Over the last three decades of his life, Richard Rorty prompted Anglo-American philosophers to think hard about meta-philosophical issues which increasing professionalization and specialization had encouraged them to neglect: the character of philosophical problems; the nature of philosophical progress; the legacy of the linguistic turn; the historiography of philosophy; philosophy’s relation to culture (for example, politics, literature, science, and religion); the analytic/continental divide; and – last but not least – what is living and what is dead in pragmatism. A post-modern gadfly, Rorty was a superb disturber of dogmatic slumbers; and if he persuaded few, he surely provoked many. And yet he did not provoke simply to provoke; like his hero Dewey, Rorty believed that philosophy can make a genuine difference to our culture’s future, provided philosophers refuse to let their imaginations be imprisoned by their discipline’s past. This uncommon faith in philosophy’s power – a faith conspicuously on display in *Philosophy as Cultural Politics* – is something pragmatists as a sect can prize and applaud, whether they style themselves Rortyeans or not.

NOTES

1. See especially Nagel’s essay “Rorty’s Pragmatism” (1998), reprinted in *Concealment and Exposure and Other Essays* (New York: Oxford University Press: 2002), pp. 157–162.

2. Robert Nozick, *Invariances: The Structure of the Objective World* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001), p. 53.

3. For an examination of Rorty’s anti-representationalist critique of epistemology, see my *The Varieties of Pragmatism: Truth, Realism, and Knowledge from James To Rorty* (London and New York: Continuum, 2006).

Douglas McDermid
Trent University

John R. Shook and Joseph Margolis, eds. *A Companion to Pragmatism*. Malden, Mass.: Blackwell, 2006. xii + 431 pp. Cloth ISBN 1-4051-1621-8

This volume of thirty-eight essays, by an impressive list of contributors, is a resource for anyone wishing to learn about pragmatism in general, its history, as well as the particular philosophies of the classical and more recent pragmatists. There are essays in *A Companion to Pragmatism* that discuss pragmatic philosophers in the context of the history of philosophy. For instance, Douglas Anderson in "Peirce and Cartesian Rationalism" argues that Peirce's rejection of Cartesianism "was radical but not wholesale" (161). In other words, what Peirce inherits from modern philosophy is as important to our understanding of his philosophy as the ways he breaks away from the tradition. There are several essays in this collection that stress both the break and the continuity with the tradition of all the classical pragmatist figures. Timothy Sprigge in "James, Empiricism, and Absolute Idealism" shows the historical continuity between James and idealism. The historical and philosophical relations between Hegel and the pragmatist are explored in Kenneth Westphal's essay "Hegel and Realism." In "Expressivism and Mead's Social Self" Mitchell Aboulafia argues that the pragmatists cannot be fully appreciated unless they are understood against the backdrop of the enlightenment and expressivism. Thomas Alexander argues in "Dewey, Dualism, and Naturalism" that understanding how Dewey addresses the heritage of dualism (as a common western philosophical habit) provides a better insight into his general position.

Other essays in *A Companion to Pragmatism* facilitate understanding of pragmatism by making connections or drawing similarities/differences with other philosophical traditions, some current issue or philosopher. There are essays that create bridges with what is today regarded as "continental" philosophy and others with the analytic tradition. David Vessey in "Philosophical Hermeneutics" and Paulo Ghiraldelli, Jr. in "Marxism and Critical Theory" show important commonalities and differences between some prominent figures of continental philosophy and pragmatism. Bjorn Ramberg in "Language, Mind, and Naturalism in Analytic Philosophy" and Isaac Levi in "Inquiry, Deliberation, and Method" demonstrates the relevance of pragmatism to some current issues in analytic philosophy of mind and epistemology. Judith Green in "Pluralism and Deliberative Democracy" shows why many in political theory today are interested in pragmatism (with good reason). Cheryl Misak in "Scientific Realism, Anti-Realism, and Empiricism" argues that Peirce position undercuts the categories used in recent debates about truth and reality. Mark Johnson in "Cognitive Science" argues that recent work in cognitive science validates some of the key insights of James and Dewey. Moreover, there is great potential for a mutually beneficial dialogue between pragmatists and cognitive scientists. Premature dismissal of pragmatism, normally through prejudice or misconception, precludes a constructive dialogue across philosophical traditions.

One valuable feature of the essays in this volume is that the authors work toward building bridges by addressing the most common prejudices about pragmatism. For example, it dispels the myth that the pragmatism assumes a reductive or scientific notion of experience, or that it reduces truth to utility.

One admirable aspect of *A Companion to Pragmatism* is that it shows the diversity and breadth of pragmatism as its own living philosophical tradition. This book is very inclusive with regard to who counts as a “pragmatist” and in the themes covered. The first part of the book (138 pages) is entitled “Major Figures.” As expected, this volume has chapters with brief summaries of the life and philosophy of “Charles Sanders Peirce” (by Vincent Colapietro), “William James” by Ellen Kappy Suckiel, and “John Dewey” by Philip Jackson. There is, however, now agreement among American philosophy scholars that the practice of limiting pragmatism to these three central figures must be questioned. This revisionist practice is consistent with the openness and fallibilism defended in the writings of most pragmatists. Beyond the original triumvirate and the oft-neglected figures of “George H. Mead” (by Gary Cook) and “C. I. Lewis” (by Murray Murphey). *A Companion to Pragmatism* is not afraid to reach far and wide. The chapters on “Jane Addams” by Marilyn Fischer, “Feminism” by Shannon Sullivan, and “Alain Locke” by Leonard Harris, are evidence of the recent openness and interest in the neglected historical contributions of women and African Americans to the pragmatic tradition. I predict that the next step in this direction will be the inclusion of Hispanic figures that have been neglected. In “F.C.S. Schiller and European Pragmatists” John Shook shows how mistaken it would be to assume that pragmatism was something limited to the American soil. He traces the historical and philosophical connections of the main figures in Europe and provides a survey of lesser-known figures in France, Italy, Germany and Great Britain. More importantly, *A Companion to Pragmatism* demonstrates that the European influence and respect for pragmatism continues today through the work of such prominent thinkers as Habermas and Karl-Otto Apel (in “Jürgen Habermas” by Joseph Heath and Paulo Ghiraldelli’s “Marxism and Critical Theory”). Incidentally, one nice feature of *A Companion to Pragmatism* is how each essay occasionally makes reference to some other essay in the volume, in case the reader wishes to explore further a topic. At the end of each chapter there is also a useful bibliography of primary and secondary sources.

A Companion to Pragmatism includes the “neo-pragmatist.” There are chapters on “W. V. Quine” (by Roger Gibson), “Hilary Putnam” (by Harvey Cormier), and “Richard Rorty” (by Kai Neilsen). Moreover, Putnam and Rorty provide their own contribution in the third part of the volume. Rorty in “Pragmatism as Anti-Authoritarianism” and Putnam in “Intelligence and Ethics” reconstruct what they think are key philosophical insights of James and Dewey although their selectivity strikes me as more revelatory of their own views than of the classical figures. If we were to push the limits of inclusivity in this volume, there would have been a chapter devoted to the philosophies of John McDermott, Nicholas Rescher, and Joseph Margolis. Nevertheless, the essays of

these three philosophers elsewhere in the volume (Part II) make up for the omission of chapters about them in the Major Figures section of the book. In “Pluralism, Relativism, and Historicism,” Margolis provides a clear-headed analysis of pluralism and relativism, and his view of what should be the pragmatist position in relation to these two views. In “Pragmatic Idealism and Metaphysical Realism” Rescher provides a pragmatic justification of his metaphysical realism. “Experience as Freedom” is McDermott as his best. He is an existentialist pragmatist who is not afraid to rely on personal stories and metaphors to drive home the most serious philosophical insights.

A Companion to Pragmatism is also generous and diverse in its themes. The themes-centered essays (which comprise two thirds of the volume) are split into two parts. The title for Part II, “Transforming Philosophy,” seems appropriate as a common theme in the essays in that section and in pragmatism as a philosophy. However, the choice of title for the Part III, “Culture and Nature” is not obvious. Why not “Experience and Nature,” particularly when many of the essays consider the emphasis on experience to be a distinctive feature of pragmatism? For example, “Aesthetics” by Richard Shusterman and “Aesthetic Experience and the Neurobiology of Inquiry” by Jay Schulkin are about aesthetic experience. “Religious Empiricism and Naturalism” by Nancy Frankenberry is about religious experience. Similarly, “Cognitive Science” by Mark Johnson and “Deliberation, and Method” by Isaac Levi focus on cognitive experience.

“Experience” is also missing from the Margolis historical account of pragmatism in the introduction. How can this be when James and Dewey made much of it? Margolis assumes a particular view of pragmatism and its history. According to Margolis, although James may have been the one that made “pragmatism” popular and Peirce made some breakthroughs in his early papers (in the 1870s), it was Dewey that was able to absorb and systematize of the important insights of the other two in such a way as to have pragmatism. Dewey “harmonizes and integrates in the simplest and most plausible way all the disparate threads of pragmatism’s early history that he finds congenial” (3). So far, this account is plausible and non-controversial. What remains open to debate is the key “insights” that Dewey integrates and that distinguishes pragmatism. For Margolis, Dewey recovered Peirce’s fallibilism and his early concerns with inquiry and the “pragmatic” meaning of a concept. James merely expanded this last method to broader moral and religious matters, as well as to his “botched treatment of truth” (3), and this is what Dewey had to reconstruct before providing his own contribution.

The view that pragmatism is simply born out of Peirce’s account of concepts (and inquiry) and James account of truth is, at the least, a questionable story. This is the story line favored by analytic accounts (starting with A. J. Ayer and Bertrand Russell who had little idea what the pragmatists were doing) and even by the “neo-pragmatist” (in their disregard for “experience”). The problem with this story, as some essays in *A Companion to Pragmatism* will reveal, is that it is a narrow story that is centered on language and epistemological or

cognitive concerns, such as belief formation and truth. In this story, there is no mention of James's radical empiricism or Dewey's insistence to take "experience" as method. No one can fault Margolis for holding a particular interpretation of pragmatism, and some of the essays in the volume share his story, but is the introduction the proper place to present his story? The volume reveals different – and sometimes conflicting – views about why the pragmatist tradition is a significant break from tradition and worth reconstructing today. The introduction could have been an opportunity to sort out for the reader these differences and perhaps make the case that this plurality or disagreement about pragmatism is not a fall from grace but a strength. In sum, the volume as a whole does not present a particular interpretative approach or interpretation about the nature of pragmatism, which is sharply at odds with the introduction.

There is no doubt that the editors have provided in *A Companion to Pragmatism* the broadest possible historical and philosophical landscape in which to appreciate pragmatism. For this, they should be commended. I do not know of any book of its kind that has achieved such breadth. However, I cannot help but wonder if some readers will be left with the impression that pragmatism is something so broad that it is hard to fathom. Everyone agrees that pragmatists are thinkers that are historically connected, and that there also some important philosophical continuities and commonalities. Some of the essays stress the differences between the three American co-founders to preclude homogenization of the pragmatic movement, but they all admit of some continuity and commonality in the themes and concerns, as well as some substantial common commitments to method, belief, or values. Throughout the volume, it is clear that everyone agrees that pragmatism stresses "practice," "fallibilism," "historicism," "naturalism," "anti-foundationalism," "tolerance," "openness," "democracy," and "intelligence," but the volume also shows differences that are the source of tensions among scholars of pragmatism. This review is not the place, nor do I have the space, to examine all of the different views on this issue. It should, however, be obvious to any careful reader of this volume that there is disagreement and tensions among scholars of pragmatism about the nature of pragmatism. This disagreement cannot be resolved by merely appealing to the classic texts of the movement. For even when we agree about what the classical pragmatist said, there is disagreement about two other issues: What is the most significant contribution of pragmatism in the history of philosophy? What sets them apart from other philosophical movements?

A Companion to Pragmatism is of interest to both beginners and people already familiar with pragmatism. It is an invaluable resource for anyone interested in the history and current thought of pragmatism. This volume demonstrates how the original thought of the major figures in this philosophical tradition continues to be vital and relevant, with a promising future.

Gregory Fernando Pappas
Texas A&M University

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