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EMANCIPATION



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American and European Philosophy**

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INTRODUCTION:

EMANCIPATION AND LIBERATING HUMAN EXPERIENCE

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In February of 2015, philosophers from across the Atlantic met in snowbound New York City to discuss diverse views of *emancipation*. In contrast to the chilly weather, the three-day symposium provided a warm atmosphere with much room for discussions on the full spectrum of themes embedded in the pragmatist tradition, such as political justice, aesthetics, economic reform, religious freedom, racial equality, using problem solving over relying on moral/social conventions for social change, freedom of expression and lifestyles. At the close of the symposium all agreed that a fertile ground for the novel solutions to pressing global problems of emancipation was laid, while the snow continued to fall outside Fordham University's Mid-town building.

The idea that criticism of ideologies and of dogmatic beliefs has a liberating effect is as old as Plato's analogy of the cave. The story of each subsequent intellectual age can be told as providing its own rendering of human emancipation by means of waking us from various phases of dogmatic slumber. What changes noticeably are the "of" and "from" dimensions of emancipation: freedom from evil and the corruption of the soul; emancipation of the body as an object of beauty and a centre of human expression; overcoming the superstitions of a prescientific worldview and enabling a technological age; liberating humanity from prejudiced customs and political oppression. These name some landmarks in the history of philosophical endeavours aiming at emancipation. The in-between century from the mid 19th to the late 20th became the high tide of emancipatory projects, including the abolition of slavery and its racist correlates, emancipation of a working class from an ideological superstructure, emancipation of

childhood from internalisation in authoritarian educational institutions, enfranchising women and gender equality. Debates are, of course, continuing and proliferating into areas of respecting different sexual orientations, giving a voice to endangered species, future generations and entire eco-systems, or the position of Islamic cultural practices in western and mid-eastern societies.

Philosophies of emancipation in this time, such as the Frankfurt school, are theory-heavy. They centre on theory production and critique of systems (both systems of belief and political systems) and they are couched in a garb of sophisticated rhetoric that most members of the respective progressive groups could not be expected to follow. Rightly, the 20th century theorists of emancipation insisted on the political nature of scientific research and knowledge and they demasked scientific practices as part of societal power struggles. Unfortunately however, they often believed that social transformation could be wielded in discourses from within scientific institutions. Moreover, the dominant critical discourses in the 20th century between liberal and Marxist leading pundits were conducted as system debates and chiefly addressed questions of a political and economic order.

One recognisable feature of the pragmatist philosophy is the rejection of hard and fast conceptual or ideological juxtapositions. In this vein Crispin Sartwell criticises the classical political left-right spectrum, according to which state and market are imagined as opposing poles. "Squishy totalitarianism" is a label to reveal the interdependence and collaboration of state power and capitalist order.

Traditional debates focussing on system level critiques of political and economic power relations sometimes oversee the relevance of local contexts and practices in effective emancipatory endeavours, such as the role of customs, traditions and forms of aesthetic expression in guiding social change.

The pragmatist tradition offers a variety of remarkable and potentially helpful approaches in these debates, which this special issue brings together. Pragmatists seek to reconnect system level critiques with human experience, social habits and various forms of human communication. E.g. Ken Stickers asks how we can shore up the totalising tendency of capitalism, which defines all value, including the value of human life itself, in terms of capital and marketable commodities. His answer reflects on documented memories of oppressed and progressive groups, like former slaves and Haitian revolutionaries. In their accounts he finds inspirational episodes in which the experience of beauty, human courage and acts of defiance embodied resistance to a worldview that reduces human beings to a means for profit making.

Rebecca Farinas studies revolutionary transformations, namely those of the Ukrainian Maidan, in the context of religious and aesthetic experience. She links the revolutionary upheaval with lived cultural traditions, forms of expression that she finds in religious icons, which were embodied by protesters. She seeks out an intersection at James and Dewey's religious thinking, so as to synthesize James' insight of religious acceptance of our need to be emancipated from human struggles of subjective isolating states, with Dewey's theories of creative, community-oriented artistic processes. Emancipation for James and Dewey is always an ethical, social matter as well as a crucial personal and existential concern.

Pragmatists see their philosophy as a way of mediating between opposing ideologies. Sami Pihlström gives a key role to religious experience in this process. However, religion can fulfill this task only if it remains part of human experience and is not turned into an apologetic instrument of defending religious dogma. Pihlström questions in his paper whether mono-theism can help us fight evil, in that it does not pragmatically address the most urgent and compelling questions concerned with evil (and our existential condition for that matter), that

being how do we live with the evil in our lives so that we transform and change harm doing and suffering. William James' more existential moments give Pihlström opportunity to describe an emancipatory way out of excusing ourselves from dealing with evil on its own terms, as pragmatically we can emancipate our religious self awareness in terms of life as it presents itself and our meliorist attitudes.

The focus on aesthetic experience in emancipatory projects is part of the DNA of the Frankfurt School since Marcuse, Adorno, and Benjamin. Pragmatists share much of this approach. Roberta Dreon begins with thinking about beauty and life affirming qualities. For Dreon, Dewey and Marcuse, two unlikely companions in some ways, join the discussion in relation to discernment and creative aesthetic choices in living by being politically aware of the diverse nature of our everyday cultures. Although Dreon claims she can offer no solution to our global problems of an ugly, nonproductive aesthetic landscape, because of capitalist economic processes that replace aesthetically embodied artistic processes, she actually offers not merely a critique but a pragmatic melioristic analysis. By enriching practical, human relations through democracy and cultural community building, social change can happen as the focus of our ongoing histories. This course of discernment and qualification has cleared a path in commonplace experience by Berleant, as he puts forth an unapologetic critic of the contemporary "cooptation" of aesthetic resources as one that restricts and restrains human creativity, growth and profoundly meaningful interaction. Berleant impeaches the commodification, and by extension the monopolisation, of our senses by a capitalist system that found ways to manipulate our tastes, normally by means of exaggerated intensity, and reduce sensibility to means of profitmaking.

John Ryder, like Dreon, links pragmatist discourses with critical theory. Looking at the foundations of human experience in judgment Ryder sees a fault-line on the

one side of which both John Dewey and Walter Benjamin find themselves juxtaposed to Justus Buchler on the other. Whereas Dewey and Benjamin, in quite distinctive ways, see the judgement as an inferential capacity, Buchler widens the scope of judgment beyond the assertive to include expressive and active dimensions. This opens the door to give a new and autonomous and emancipated status to aesthetic judgments and expressive actions, alongside assertive judgments.

Aleksandra Lukaszewicz Alcaraz has traced points of connection between post-modern thinkers and pragmatism. As she looks at the links between aesthetics, art, thinking and politics. She champions Continental philosophies because they recognise art as an important form of critique and activism, thereby fighting the status quo, and she incorporates pragmatism's contribution of thinking of art as an embodied experience into her picture.

The central concept of "imagination" stakes out an original contribution the pragmatist tradition offers to the understanding of emancipation. Brendan Hogan connects classical Deweyan ideas on imagination in social analysis with contemporary thought on social imaginaries and emancipation for which he engages the contemporary philosophers Charles Taylor and James Bohman. He demonstrates that emancipatory critique of neo-liberal social structures and ideology does not need to obtain the standpoint of neo-Marxist Frankfurt school inspired ideology-critique but that it can start from situated inquiry, which relies on creative imaginative exploration and transformation of situations.

Traditional system level critiques also tend to ignore the importance of specific lower level theoretical and methodological questions. Eric Thomas Weber studies whether the evidence-based medicine (EBM) is a reductive scientific approach, exhibiting an advancing tendency to monopolise our medical practices. Does it reduce the suffering individuals, diverse therapeutic contexts, doctor patient relationships to routines and

procedures warranted by a modern statistical alchemy? Weber asks whether we need emancipation from this paradigm of evidence base medicine or whether we can find an emancipatory potential in its very methodological approach. After carefully surveying criticism that portrays EBM as a dehumanising and reductionist approach to medicine, he uses a pragmatist perspective to argue that EBM should be best understood as a tool, which, like any other tool, can be used and abused. Treated as a tool, Weber argues, EBM can avoid the pitfalls of reductionism and domineering as several EBM based studies of alternative medicine treatments demonstrate.

Finally Margolis' far-reaching exposé takes us a long way into questions of how to solve global problems. He identifies these problems as moral in nature. For Margolis, our solutions to over-arching problems (and he does mention a few in-directly, such as nuclear holocaust, as well as religious inspired terrorism and runaway capitalism as a type of warfare) are actually embedded in our histories and cultures, not in philosophical thought or even our most cherished fundamental beliefs. Agentive norms, when looked at from a cultural/historical perspective, are best served when separated from our common involvement with the human condition. Margolis suggests "second best norms" as the problem solving set of values leading us all to a better more human world. These second-best norms will find consensus within our independent histories and cultures through understanding that treatises, solutions, and moral grounds are always a matter of our shifting evolutionary landscapes. Solutions of emancipation come not from philosophical ideologies, but for Margolis they come from a fuller understanding of ourselves and others, as human beings, as we encourage the positive possibilities we can hold in common, thereby propelling ourselves forward to our futures. The anti-perfectionist yet meliorist approach is a red thread that runs through the pragmatist tradition and sets it apart from many other philosophies of emancipation, and it holds a

potential that may stimulate further debates on emancipation. These debates, if we dare to make a prediction, will not fade from public attention but take centre stage in the coming decades.

Reflecting back on the passionate delivery of these contributions at the NYC conference (only one paper in this edition was not presented *in situ*), we remember how their originality inspired many lively debates. Now, having collected them for the journal edition, we can also see how certain themes coalesce. We marked out four overarching themes so as to organize this special issue: 1) Emancipation and religious experience; 2) Imagination, Art and the corruption of sensibility; 3) Politics, economics and social ethics; 4) Experience, action and inference.

The NYC conference that lead to this issue could not have taken place without the vision and generosity of many people, foremost among them Judith Greene, Leszek Koczanowicz, Kenneth Stickers, and Aleksandra Lukaszewicz Alcaraz. This edition of *Pragmatism Today* represents some of the fruits of this conference, forwarded in the hope that it does more than to conclude and document an event. With this issue we intend to open opportunities for renewed inquiry into emancipation and the still underestimated contribution that pragmatist philosophies can make to this fleet of themes and problems.

I. EMANCIPATION AND RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

THE EMANCIPATORY POTENTIAL OF PRAGMATIST PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION

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ABSTRACT: *Pragmatist philosophy of religion functions as a critical mediator between various rival positions and conflicting systems of belief in the philosophy of religion, not only between theism and atheism but also between meta-level views such as evidentialism and fideism, or realism and antirealism. This paper argues that pragmatism can perform this critical task best if it is not subordinated to any apologetic project of defending (or attacking) religious belief. In this context, the essay criticizes Michael R. Slater's recent interpretation and development of pragmatist philosophy of religion. However, it is also argued that pragmatist philosophy of religion, in order to carry out its emancipatory project, should take a definite stance in (at least) one specific area within contemporary philosophy of religion: pragmatism ought to be strongly committed to antitheodicism (as opposed to any defense of theodicies) in the debate on the problem of evil. Antitheodicism itself manifests significant emancipatory potential: pragmatism may emancipate philosophers of religion from the need to theoretically "solve" the problem of evil in the first place. William James's views on evil are briefly discussed in the essay as an illustration of this.*

1. Introduction

Pragmatist philosophy of religion functions in many ways as a critical mediator – just as William James proposed pragmatism in general to function – between various rival positions and conflicting systems of belief in the philosophy of religion, not only between theism and atheism but also between meta-level views such as evidentialism and fideism, or realism and antirealism. I will in this paper argue that pragmatism can perform this critical task best if it is *not* subordinated to any apologetic project of defending (or attacking) religious belief. In this context, I will take issue with Michael R. Slater's recent interpretation and development of pragmatist philosophy of religion. However, I will also argue that pragmatist philosophy of religion, in order to carry out its emancipatory project, should take a definite stance in (at least) one particular area within contemporary philosophy of religion: pragmatism ought to be strongly committed to what I am calling *antitheodicism* (as opposed to any defense of theodicies)

in the debate on the problem of evil. This is because an antitheodacist approach to evil is, for Jamesian pragmatism in particular, a frame for any ethically serious investigation of the pragmatic value of religious belief (and, more generally, a frame for *any* ethically serious investigation of other ideas and worldviews, metaphysical ones included). We might say that antitheodicism itself manifests significant emancipatory potential: pragmatism may emancipate philosophers of religion from the need to theoretically "solve" the problem of evil in the first place, and this is part of the emancipatory project of pragmatist philosophy of religion more generally. Whether this leads to a tension within pragmatist philosophy of religion itself needs to be investigated further, though such an investigation can barely be begun in this essay.

After having assessed and to some extent criticized Slater's reading of James (and pragmatist philosophy of religion more generally), I will very briefly canvass, in a broad outline, my approach to the way in which James in my view ethically "grounds" metaphysics and "frames" this project in the problem of evil. That theme is much more comprehensively explored in some of my other ongoing work on James.¹ It should be noted, furthermore, that I cannot properly define "emancipation" here. What I will offer is a set of remarks on how pragmatism could be regarded as emancipatory at several different levels: at a metaphilosophical level as a Jamesian-like "critical mediator", and in relation to more specific questions in the philosophy of religion, such as the issue of realism and the problem of evil in particular. There is no need to believe that all these cases of emancipatory philosophizing would inevitably fall under a single general concept. However, it may be useful to investigate them on the basis of a notion of emancipation that may possess a family resemblance character.

¹ See Sami Pihlström, "The Cries of the Wounded in *Pragmatism*", hitherto unpublished ms. (partly presented at various conferences in 2014-15, forthcoming in an updated version).

Finally, my paper remains somewhat programmatic in the sense that I am primarily here interested in criticizing certain anti-emancipatory tendencies (shared by pragmatists like Slater) in contemporary philosophy of religion that pragmatism ought to set out to correct. Much further work would be needed to actually carry out the kind of philosophical emancipation whose possibility and pragmatist promise I will here try to defend.

2. James's anti-apologetic attitude: taking issue with Slater

I want to approach my topic by first critically commenting on Michael Slater's recent views. Slater's new book, *Pragmatism and the Philosophy of Religion* (2014),² is highly welcome, as it is one of the few substantial studies on pragmatist philosophy of religion that integrate historical scholarship on the classical (as well as more recent) pragmatists with a systematic argument in favor of a carefully articulated position in the philosophy of religion. However, I also find the book problematic in a variety of ways.

Slater's work is very well structured. He first focuses on key pragmatist figures and then moves on to take up systematic issues and arguments in the philosophy of religion, equipped with the pragmatist perspective reached earlier. In chapters 1 and 2, the focus is on William James – on *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, in particular (rather than, say, *Pragmatism*) – and in chapter 3 on Charles S. Peirce, particularly on his “neglected argument” for the reality of God. Slater seeks to show that these two classical pragmatists were sympathetic to supernaturalism and theism, in contrast to John Dewey, whose naturalism, secularism, and “accommodationism” are critically discussed in chapter 4, as a prelude to a thoroughgoing critique of two

contemporary Deweyan naturalistic pragmatists, Richard Rorty and Philip Kitcher (chapter 5). Having defended supernaturalism and criticized naturalism, Slater argues for two other broad positions toward the end of his inquiry: (weak) metaphysical realism, as well as the view that theism can be rationally and argumentatively supported (and, conversely, that standard evidentialist attempts to defeat it can be successfully met by the theist). His overall argument seeks to demonstrate that pragmatism need not be committed to either (ontological) naturalism or antirealism in the philosophy of religion but can and should join reformed epistemologists and other “Christian philosophers” in a campaign for supernaturalist theism, traditionally understood, offering rational support for theistic beliefs. Accordingly, he challenges the view that pragmatism simply, as many pragmatists have maintained, entails naturalism; on the contrary, “anti-naturalism” or supernaturalism remains in his view a “viable option” for pragmatists (pp. 2-3).

Slater's analysis of James's ideas is a learned contribution to the discussion of James's relevance in the philosophy of religion and religious studies (or “science of religions”). I believe Slater is right to emphasize that a certain kind of *open-mindedness* is one of the key virtues of James's account of religion: the question regarding the existence or non-existence of an “unseen order” is left open, and a scientific study of religion need not be committed to the denial of supernaturalism on the outset (p. 28). This openness is, we might say, what a general pragmatically fallibilist attitude requires us to maintain in all inquiries we undertake, and inquiries in the philosophy of religion are no exception. James, if he were alive today, “would almost certainly be critical of contemporary cognitive scientific explanations of religion” (p. 29) – primarily because those explanations tend to reduce scientifically acceptable accounts of religion into a very narrow set of all possible accounts that could be considered. Here it is easy to agree with Slater. The Jamesian spirit is also well maintained in the

² Michael R. Slater, *Pragmatism and the Philosophy of Religion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014). I will cite Slater's volume by providing the page numbers in the text. See also my review of Slater's book in *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 50:2 (2014).

later chapters where Slater defends “doxastic pluralism” about an irreducible plurality of religious and metaphysical beliefs (e.g., p. 181).

Where it is more difficult to agree with him is in the analogy he sees between James’s views on the epistemology of mystical experience and contemporary Christian philosophers’ (e.g., Alvin Plantinga’s and William Alston’s) views on this topic (pp. 44ff.). I think here Slater reads James too realistically; indeed, I have criticized his earlier writings on James in relation to these issues in more detail elsewhere.³ However, on the whole, the treatment of James is balanced and careful, based on a close reading of *The Varieties* in particular – though lacking a comparable close attention to what James is trying to do in *Pragmatism*. James’s general antievidentialism is well captured by Slater when he maintains that “an adequate philosophical defense of religious faith does not require producing arguments or evidence that would convince any rational agent to believe” (p. 56). In this respect, James is, admittedly, close to those Christian philosophers who emphasize the need to contextualize the epistemic justification of religious beliefs into our doxastic practices. But in other ways the analogy may be misleading, because those same Christian philosophers, unlike James, are involved in an apologetic business. James is much more open-minded, leaving the atheistic option open as well.

In any case, James’s defense of the rational possibility of religious faith is itself contextualized *ethically*: the problem of evil is for him the starting point for any adequate philosophical consideration of the metaphysics of theism. What James rejects is the “vicious intellectualists” (i.e., the Hegelian monistic idealists’) “metaphysical monster”, the absolute. I am not entirely convinced that Slater’s account of James succeeds in bringing this antitheodicism into view. Fortunately, Slater

recognizes that James’s “fallibilism, pluralism, and religious individualism do not mix easily with most forms of religious apologetics” (p. 75). It would, in my view, be helpful to cash out James’s criticism of such apologetics more explicitly in terms of evidentialism and antievidentialism. (I will return to the issue of theodicism vs. antitheodicism shortly.)

After the treatment of James, Slater continues his argument for the compatibility of pragmatism and supernaturalist theism by examining Peirce’s “neglected argument”, again comparing it with contemporary Christian philosophers’ arguments for the explanatory power of theism. Among these one finds Plantinga’s account of theism as a properly basic belief, as well as the traditional Calvinist ideas about *sensus divinitatis*, revived, for instance, in Alston’s theory of “perceiving God”. My worry is that Slater here turns Peirce into something like a reformed epistemologist in Plantinga’s and Alston’s style. While the neglected argument surely does offer itself to re-readings of this kind, given the enormous complexity of Peirce’s views, it also seems to me that the entire context in which one is required to produce complicated theoretical arguments for theism as an allegedly explanatory hypothesis is relatively foreign to Peirce, for whom belief in the reality of God could function just as a natural “attunement” of the human mind. The desperate need to *argue theoretically* for or against theistic beliefs seems to be a product of an intellectual culture different from Peirce’s (though perhaps not entirely different from James’s).

After having sympathetically discussed his two favorite pragmatists, Peirce and James, Slater turns to the more naturalistically (or at least anti-supernaturalistically) oriented later pragmatists, beginning from Dewey. Here the argument takes a problematic turn. In my view, it is false to say that Dewey’s naturalist interpretation of religion was “reductively” naturalistic (p. 117). It is true that Dewey dismisses theistic arguments (p. 120), but Slater offers no good reasons

³ Sami Pihlström, *Pragmatic Pluralism and the Problem of God* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), chapter 4.

why they shouldn't be missed in Dewey's way. He also begs the question against Dewey who seeks to revise theism in a thoroughgoing way when he says that no traditional theist thinks of God merely symbolically (p. 127). Of course no traditional theist does so, but the very point of Dewey's rearticulation of the notion of God – admittedly vague and controversial – is precisely to develop such a symbolic reading, possibly to some extent comparable to what has been later offered by "Wittgensteinian" philosophers of religion (who are, of course, at least equally controversial among traditional theists, as well as atheists). Similarly with the issues concerning the rationality of religious belief: while we "will find very little in the way of actual argument against the rationality of belief in God" in Dewey (p. 129), the question is why we need such arguments, rather than needing a reconsideration or even transformation of the entire "game" of arguing for and against the rationality of such beliefs.

For these reasons, my own approach to pragmatist philosophy of religion differs considerably from Slater's, because I have never regarded any apologetic projects (theistic or atheistic) as either necessary to pragmatism or philosophically very interesting. On the contrary, I think the pragmatist, especially the Deweyan pragmatist, may entirely legitimately start from the generally (or at least academically) perceived cultural situation that we may call, following Max Weber, the "disenchantment" (*Entzauberung*) of the world, which many intellectuals simply find part of enlightened common sense today – even if we in a sense live in a "post-secular" culture that no longer believes in a smooth secularization process. I suppose that only if you in some sense regard such a condition of disenchantment as your starting point can you find philosophy of religion *existentially urgent* in the way James (though perhaps not Dewey) does. That is, I do not believe, as Slater does, that it would somehow be philosophically illegitimate or irrational to start one's inquiry from such an assumption in contemporary discussions of religion – even if this position might itself be criticized or rejected in the end.

This is also a major disagreement between Slater and the contemporary pragmatists he discusses at some length, viz., Kitcher and Rorty. He maintains that philosophers tend to "overestimate the rational grounds for secularism" and to "underestimate the rational grounds for traditional forms of religious faith such as theism" (p. 151). This may or may not be true, but Slater himself fails to address the traditional arguments against theism in any detail, or to argue against those arguments, which, I suppose, he should do in order to tell us that those arguments need not be considered decisive. Yet, I do think, and here I agree with him, that a (pragmatist) investigation in the philosophy of religion *may* even quite fundamentally lead us to change our views on disenchantment, even to embrace a partial "re-enchantment" of the ("post-secular") world. This might, however, happen in a way very different from Slater's proposed way, e.g., through a certain kind of moral argument, or possibly a Deweyan-like redescription. In the spirit of fallibilism, again, I would insist on the possibility of revising one's theistic or atheistic beliefs in the course of inquiry, and I would suggest that we keep this possibility *genuinely* open.

One problem in Slater's project is that he constantly charges the critics of (supernaturalist) religion, including Deweyan naturalists, for begging the question against those who believe that there is still rational support available for supernaturalistically interpreted theism. Well, it is hard to judge who is actually begging the question here. The critic might just point out that Slater himself offers no response to the general *Entzauberung* we have been facing since the Enlightenment, or to the specific arguments against, say, the traditional proofs of God's existence that philosophers like David Hume and Immanuel Kant provided. In particular, Kant's devastating criticism of all the traditional proofs ought to be taken very seriously by the contemporary pragmatist – but so should Kant's own "moral proof".⁴

⁴ I have tried to argue in *Pragmatic Pluralism and the Problem of God* (ibid.) that pragmatist philosophy of religion, especially James's ideas, should be interpreted

Another major problem in Slater's book, already hinted at above, is that he fails to take *the problem of evil* seriously enough (except for, e.g., brief discussions in the context of James and Peirce: see pp. 71-72, 91). If one is as much concerned with the problem of offering rational support for theism as he is, one should consider in detail the ways in which the problem of evil has been seen as a "defeater" of theism. That is, Slater should consider the employment of the problem of evil in atheistic argumentation, and respond accordingly. Given that he doesn't find much support for that kind of argumentation against theistic beliefs in naturalistic pragmatism, he should at least pause to reflect why this is so. Perhaps it is so because for naturalistic pragmatists like Dewey, traditional theism is problematic to begin with, and there is no need to employ a heavy machinery of arguments from evil against it; and perhaps also because less naturalistic pragmatists, including James in particular, didn't find the problem of evil a problem that either needs to be theoretically solved or that could be put into work as a piece of atheistic argumentation in the first place. In my view, James never viewed the issue of evil in such an argumentative context at all. On the contrary, evil seems to function, for James, as a *frame* for the entire discussion on pragmatism and melioristic religion in *Pragmatism*. However, this is precisely the aspect of Jamesian philosophy of religion that Slater does not discuss, possibly because it doesn't really fit his reading of James as a philosopher engaging in a traditional project of defending supernaturalism. (Curiously, though not entirely neglected by Slater, neither "evil" nor "meliorism" are listed in his index.)

What Slater does offer us in the way of theodicies is the observation that according to Peirce one might maintain that "an overarching divine purpose [...] requires the existence of evil as a condition for growth, including not only intellectual growth but also the ongoing development of the universe", anticipating (he says) both John Hick's "soul-

making theodicy" and Plantinga's "*felix culpa* theodicy" (p. 91). If Peirce's philosophy of religion anticipates such modern (or reinvigorates classical) theodicies, so much the worse for Peirce's philosophy of religion – and this is something I am confident James would have urged, too. James's philosophy of religion is resolutely antitheodicist in comparison to any of these theodicies, including Peirce's (and especially Slater's contemporary philosophical and theological heroes'). Again, no wonder Slater fails to substantially engage with James's (in contrast to Peirce's) engagements with evil. The way in which James responds to evil as an *ethical* challenge prior to any theistic or atheistic commitments would not fit the way in which Slater makes James play the apologetically shaped game of arguments pro and contra religious belief.

Now, a treatment of pragmatist philosophy of religion remains, in my view, seriously incomplete and inadequate without a substantial discussion of evil. This is not because the existence of evil would be a premise in an argument against theism, or in favor of atheism, that would then have to be refuted by the pragmatist (such as, possibly, James) seeking to defend the rational acceptability of religious belief. On the contrary, for James, the problem of evil defines the entire context within which it is so much as possible to engage in rational argumentation about these matters. It sets the project on an ethically serious path. It is only by responding to the problem of evil that philosophy of religion – or its emancipatory project as articulated by pragmatism – can so much as get started. The problem of evil is not an additional problem to be solved after the other major problems, e.g., God's existence or the rationality of theism, have been settled. It is a problem opening a perspective on these other problems – and, more comprehensively, on all problems of human significance. I would even go as far as to argue that the problem of evil is necessary for an ethically adequate development of the pragmatic method.⁵

and further developed in this broadly Kantian spirit.

⁵ Cf. my unpublished paper, "The Cries of the Wounded in *Pragmatism*", for further reflection on this.

Of course, to say that the problem of evil ought to be taken much more seriously than it often is taken by pragmatist philosophers of religion (including Slater) is not to say that the naturalistic pragmatists Slater criticizes would have succeeded in this. It seems to me that James rather uniquely stands out among the pragmatists as a philosopher who genuinely sought to develop an adequate ethical response to evil. Most of the others, given their scientific progressivism (especially in Dewey's case) or postmodern relativism (in Rorty's case), have basically brushed the problem of evil under the carpet. They didn't, or don't, take it seriously – or at least not as seriously as James did. Only for James is the problem of evil a frame of or a perspective on the project of pragmatist philosophy of religion in general, a contextualizing factor making possible the kind of ethically concerned approach – eventually leading up to the entanglement of ethical, metaphysical, and religious/theological issues and beliefs – that James tried to develop. The ethics-metaphysics entanglement that (I would argue) is part and parcel of Jamesian pragmatism could not even be made full sense of independently of the problem of evil. The metaphysical issues concerning, say, God's reality or monism vs. pluralism won't even get off the ground unless we first take the problem of evil seriously. Our responses to this problem to a large extent determine our responses to those metaphysical questions. (I will briefly return to these matters toward the end of the essay.)

3. Pragmatic realism

This kind of pragmatist philosophy of religion according to which, e.g., the metaphysical views on theism vs. atheism are dependent on our ways of dealing with evil will undoubtedly be very difficult, or impossible, to appreciate by someone like Slater who defends a realist and basically evidentialist account of pragmatism. It seems to me clear that Slater just begins from a realistic picture (e.g., p. 108) that is too simple to accommodate Peirce's, James's, and Dewey's (or the later pragmatists') very complex views.

Specifically, for Slater, realism does not seem to be a *transcendental* problem at all. While the pragmatists have generally avoided this Kantian terminology, it seems to me that their approach to realism and its alternatives can be redescribed in such a vocabulary, precisely because it is not a matter of just maintaining a commonsensical realistic view about what there is but a matter of inquiring into how far the human mind, or human practices, (co-)constitute reality as we know it. Thus, I have previously argued that pragmatism, or Jamesian pragmatism at least, seeks to move beyond standard realisms and antirealisms, as well as standard evidentialisms and antievidentialisms (e.g., fideism), in the philosophy of religion. I think we still ought to emphasize why in fact it seeks to do so. This is, I believe, because those standard mainstream views are not only problematically monistic, hence silencing legitimate "voices" that, ethically, need to be heard, but also incapable of responding to evil.

Thus, I am also afraid that Slater simply does not appreciate what I mean by "pragmatic theological realism" in my (re)interpretation of Dewey as such a realist that he cites (p. 126, n19). Of course Dewey rejected traditional supernaturalist beliefs. But he could still have been a "pragmatic realist" in a reinterpreted sense even when it comes to reconceptualizing the very idea of God. Slater's footnote about Kant (p. 154, n2), in which he rather straightforwardly takes Kant to be an antirealist in metaphysics, is revealing here. Slater's almost total failure to address the transcendental (Kantian) dimension of the realism issue leads him to too easily contrast realism and antirealism within pragmatism. By starting from a shallow (and not fully textually supported) antirealist reading of Kant, he closes all interesting discussions of realism and transcendental philosophy in pragmatism, and in philosophy of religion – or, better, doesn't let them be opened at all in the way in which a truly emancipatory pragmatism should let them arise.⁶

⁶ Admittedly, Slater has defended his "weak metaphysical realism" in earlier publications, and there is

Slater even sympathizes with some versions of the “fine-tuning” (design) argument for theism (pp. 189ff.). Here, if not earlier, the more naturalistically inclined pragmatist will drop out of the discussion. On the other hand, I think Slater does make an important point – a point that is worth emphasizing precisely in the context of mainstream Anglo-American philosophy of religion today, a context to which he in a way seeks to accommodate the pragmatists – when he *denies* that theistic arguments should be understood as “serving a primarily *apologetic* function, namely that of convincing non-theists to believe in God through sheer force of reason” (p. 193). They definitely should not be understood as serving such a function, and they might still play some role in a religious person’s way of thinking of God.

I also agree with Slater that the (Jamesian) pragmatist ought to maintain, against stronger naturalists like Kitcher, that the assumption that naturalism is the only credible ontological view is “objectionable on ethical grounds, on account of its intolerance of other reasonable overbeliefs” (p. 174). But equally objectionable on ethical grounds is, we may argue, the theodicist attempt to theoretically account for the reality of evil. Jamesian pragmatism in the philosophy of religion, and Jamesian pragmatism more generally, starts from the rejection of such attempts. This is one (but only one) reason why a proper Jamesian pragmatism is not

no need to repeat all those arguments here. Nor is there, however, any need for me to repeat here the defense of a very different picture of realism-cum-idealism in pragmatism that I have elsewhere offered, thereby also explicitly criticizing Slater. Another problem in Slater’s attempt to reconcile pragmatism with theistic arguments based on metaphysical realism is the easiness at which he helps himself to the vocabulary and methodology of “possible worlds” in his treatment of Plantinga’s modal version of the ontological argument (p. 184). Here the pragmatist should pause to reflect on what pragmatic difference it makes to postulate possible worlds in the first place. I am afraid that this way of employing the metaphysics of possible worlds is far from Peirce’s doctrine of “real possibility”, based on his “extreme scholastic realism”.

apologetic *at all*. On the contrary, the key point of pragmatist philosophy of religion is to emancipate us, and philosophy of religion in general, from both apologetics and theodicism, two intellectual and ethical vices that often go together in mainstream philosophy of religion.

In a recent paper, my senior Finnish colleague Simo Knuuttila criticizes pragmatist philosophy of religion, insofar as it remains “antirealist”, of a kind of “double life” – also interestingly comparable, he suggests, to religious writers’, such as Martin Luther’s, views on how a Christian lives the double life of a worldly person on the one hand and a converted Christian on the other hand (i.e., “my own” life in space and time vs. the timelessness of “Christ in me”).⁷ “Pragmatic religious non-rationalism”, he says, entails acting on assumptions “one believes to be false”. Hence, there is a sense in which it entails a kind of self-deception. I would argue, however, that a truly pragmatist philosophy of religion may also emancipate us from this demand to set all our beliefs on a *single* scale of truth vs. falsity. It makes, if you will, a *legitimate* double life possible for us – or at least this could be regarded as a key aim in the pragmatist’s struggle with issues of reason and faith. However, we might say that one problem in Slater’s approach to pragmatist philosophy of religion is that, given its commitment to realism, it makes it impossible for us to react to the “double life” charge in this manner. Slater’s position makes pragmatist philosophy of religion less emancipatory than it could be. Admittedly, the notion of emancipation at work here is more specific than the general metaphilosophical one associated with the idea of pragmatism as a critical mediator between rival views, but the two are related. Precisely by allowing a kind of “double life” – one’s taking seriously both religious and scientific orientations in one’s life, for instance – pragmatism emancipates our *weltanschaulich* lives more generally.

⁷ Simo Knuuttila, “Transformation of Religion”, ms. (2014), forthcoming.

**4. James's ethical metaphysics:
the problem of evil as a "frame"**

So how exactly *does* James develop an antitheodist and (hence) antiapologetic philosophy of religion, joined with (what I see as) his ethical grounding of metaphysics? I will only very briefly try to explain how I see this matter.

James's *Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking* (1907)⁸ is rather minimalistic when it comes to explicit discussions of ethics or moral theories. The book is most famous – and in fact rather notorious – for its defense of what has become known, and has often been ridiculed, as the “pragmatist theory of truth”, according to which truth is more or less coextensive, or even conceptually reducible to, usefulness or satisfactoriness. However, far from subscribing to such an extremely implausible theory of truth (which I will not discuss here in any detail), *Pragmatism* is also one of those writings by James that upon a closer reading do turn out to contain substantial ethical insights and reflections, though not explicitly formulated moral theories or principles. Those insights and reflections are developed in conjunction with James's treatment of religion and metaphysics. Therefore, in order to understand the ethical picture James defends in *Pragmatism* (and, by extension, elsewhere in his *oeuvre*), one also needs to pay attention to the religious and metaphysical aspects of his work.

James's “pragmatic method”, as articulated in *Pragmatism*, is interpretable as a philosophical method seeking to ground metaphysical inquiry in ethical reflection and evaluation. James introduces the pragmatic method – originally formulated by Peirce in the 1870s⁹ – in Lecture II by suggesting that when

seeking to determine the meaning of our “ideas” (e.g., concepts, conceptions, beliefs, theories, and worldviews), we should look into the possible (conceivable) practical effects they and/or their objects might have in human experience and habits of action. (Note, however, that James is, again notoriously, relatively unclear here, because he is not as careful as Peirce to distinguish the practical effects of ideas from the practical effects of the objects of those ideas.) In Lectures III and IV, he illustrates this method by applying it to some metaphysical problems and beliefs, including theism vs. materialism (atheism), the concept of substance, freedom, as well as monism vs. pluralism. On my reading (which I won't be able to substantiate here), in all these cases, the pragmatic method is a method of assessing the rival views (“ideas”) from an ethical perspective.

But what does it mean, for James, to evaluate our ideas, concepts, or beliefs from an ethical perspective? The pragmatic method will remain hopelessly vague if it simply encourages us to look for the practical meaning of metaphysical (and religious/theological) views in their ethical impact, unless we have some idea about how to go on investigating that impact.¹⁰ Here, I believe, we should take the further step of interpreting the pragmatic method as a method of taking seriously the “cries of the wounded” (a phrase that does not occur in *Pragmatism*)¹¹ in relation to the various metaphysical beliefs or theories that could be proposed regarding these matters at issue. It is a method that looks into the possible futures of the world in which we live, focusing on what the different metaphysical views “promise” and on whether they can function as philosophies of hope, especially from the point of view of the “wounded”, the

⁸ All references will be to the critical edition of *Pragmatism* included in *The Works of William James*, eds. Frederick H. Burkhardt, Fredson Bowers, and Ignas K. Skrupskelis (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1975-88 [1975]).

⁹ See, in particular, Charles S. Peirce, “How to Make Our Ideas Clear” (1878), in *The Essential Peirce* (2 vols), vol. 1, ed. Nathan Houser (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992).

¹⁰ I think my own previous work on this – cf., e.g., Sami Pihlström, *Pragmatist Metaphysics: An Essay on the Ethical Grounds of Ontology* (London: Continuum, 2009) – doesn't go deep enough in this respect.

¹¹ This phrase comes from William James, “The Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life” (1891), in *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy* (1897), also in *The Works of William James* (1979).

sufferers or the victims of evil. This is a profoundly ethical undertaking. Far from maintaining that our metaphysical problems ought to be solved first – or that we could simply get rid of them – in order to turn to ethical problems later, James is suggesting that we should begin our metaphysical inquiries from the ethical examination of the practical relevance of the rival metaphysical ideas that have been or can be proposed, and that this ethical examination can only take place if we focus on how “the wounded” would respond to this or that world-picture being true.

This discussion of what I call the ethical grounds of metaphysics (and, more generally, the metaphysics–ethics entanglement) in *Pragmatism* ought to be placed in a context of a more generally ethically oriented reflection on issues of fundamental human importance, especially evil and death. As both the opening and the closing of *Pragmatism* indicate, James is deeply conscious of the significance of the problem of evil, and he is strongly opposed to any philosophical and theological attempts (e.g., theodicies) to explain evil away or to justify its existence. This is another example of Jamesian pragmatist metaphysics ultimately grounded in ethics. The metaphysical controversy between monism and pluralism, in particular (addressed in Lecture IV), invokes the problem of evil. James offers an ethical argument against monism and in favor of pluralism by pointing out that the former, unlike the latter, leads to an irresolvable theodicy problem.

Moreover, the problem of evil is not merely an example by means of which we may illustrate the Jamesian pragmatic method. Much more importantly, it offers, as already suggested above, a frame for the entire project of *Pragmatism* (and for James’s pragmatism more generally). The problem of evil provides an ethical motivation for exploring, pragmatically, metaphysical issues that ultimately need to be linked with ethics. This exploration takes place in a world in which theodicies are no longer possible (if they ever were). No theodistic

consolation is an option, James argues, for an ethically serious thinker. What we may call Jamesian antitheodicism is therefore a crucial element of his pragmatic method (framed by the problem of evil).

Pragmatism as a whole, then, is a profoundly ethical work – or so I am willing to argue. It does not contain any theory of ethics, and arguably James is opposed to the very idea of a single correct ethical theory.¹² But it does maintain that philosophical issues, whenever they are pragmatically investigated, can only be adequately explored in an irreducibly ethical context. For James, unlike the scientifically (and politically) progressivist meliorist pragmatist Dewey (and most other pragmatists), ethics is primarily an *existential* matter inseparably tied up with death, evil, and our general human finitude and vulnerability – and, therefore, with religious and metaphysical concerns about the ultimate nature of reality. In this respect, James is significantly closer to thinkers like Søren Kierkegaard, Ludwig Wittgenstein, and Jean-Paul Sartre than to his fellow pragmatists like Dewey (or even Peirce). Ethics in general, and evil in particular – as a frame of ethics, as urging us into adopting the moral perspective, as “hurting us into morality”, to borrow a phrase from Avishai Margalit¹³ – is a compelling issue for the “sick soul” rather than the “healthy-minded” (even though this terminology, again, is not used in *Pragmatism*).¹⁴ In other words, to adopt a truly ethical attitude to the cries of the wounded is to embrace a fundamentally *melancholic* view of the world.

¹² See, for an excellent argument to this effect, Sergio Franzese, *The Ethics of Energy: William James’s Moral Philosophy in Focus* (Frankfurt: Ontos, 2008).

¹³ See Avishai Margalit, *The Ethics of Memory* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2002).

¹⁴ For James’s views on the “sick soul”, see the relevant chapters of his *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902), also included in *The Works of William James* (1985). My references are to the New American Library edition (1958).

5. Conclusion

In *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, James tells us that the sick souls are those who, in contrast to the “healthy-minded”, maintain that “the evil aspects of our life are of its very essence, and that the world’s meaning most comes home to us when we lay them most to heart” (VRE 114). The sick souls, then, are those “who cannot so swiftly throw off the burden of the consciousness of evil, but are congenitally fated to suffer from its presence” (VRE 116). Reflecting on the reality of evil and suffering, we may become “melancholy metaphysicians” (VRE 121), acknowledging human helplessness and sadness even when life seems happy and easy. James concludes, as we saw, that “[t]he completest religions would [...] seem to be those in which the pessimistic elements are best developed” – that is, “religions of deliverance”, according to which one has to “die to an unreal life” in order to be “born into the real life” (VRE 139). It is, in brief, the sick soul whose investigations of ethics, metaphysics, and philosophy of religion are “framed” by the problem of evil. It is also, one might argue, the sick soul whose approach to these fundamental issues is truly emancipatory. The sick soul perceives the futility of offering a theoretical resolution to the problem of evil.

The concept of the sick soul is, for James, a concept to be employed in the psychological and philosophical description and explanation of certain kind of religious attitudes and ways of living and thinking. However, given the close relation between religion and ethics in James, this concept can, I believe, be used in ethical contexts bracketing the actual religious aspects of, say, conversion. We may say that the sick soul takes ethically seriously the evil and suffering around her/him in the world even if s/he never experiences this as a *religious* problem. The sick soul, then, acknowledges that (as James puts it toward the end of *Pragmatism*) “something permanently drastic and bitter” (P 141) may always be in store for us, however successfully we fight against evil and suffering.

Does one actually have to *be* a sick soul in the Jamesian sense in order to be able to be ethical at all? Well, I think the answer is no, in a sense roughly comparable to the sense in which you – returning to the realism issue for a moment – do not have to be a transcendental idealist (in a Kantian context) in order to have objective experiences, even if you do have to be a transcendental idealist (according to Kant) in order to be able to philosophically account for the possibility of objective experience. Thus, we may reconstruct the Jamesian argument as maintaining that you must be a sick soul in order to be able to account for the possibility of ethics. The problem we have been dealing with throughout this paper is (in non-Jamesian terms) transcendental rather than empirical, and insofar as pragmatist philosophers of religion like Slater fail to recognize this, they cut the emancipatory and more generally human potential of pragmatist inquiry into religion. The concept of the sick soul, like antitheodicism, is *constitutive of the possibility of the ethical*, not for anyone’s actually being, or failing to be, ethical.

Insofar as we detach the notion of the sick soul from its immediate context in the psychology of religion, we may say that James writes in an intellectual and spiritual setting comparable to the one occupied by Richard Bernstein, Susan Neiman, and some other contemporary philosophical and political theorists of evil, a context in which evil is a challenge to our attempt to find life meaningful at all – a setting very different from the theoretical context typical of mainstream evidentialist and theodist philosophers of religion.¹⁵ Acknowledging

¹⁵ See, e.g., Richard Bernstein, *Radical Evil: A Philosophical Interrogation* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002); Susan Neiman, *Evil in Modern Thought: An Alternative History of Philosophy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004); for a mainstream attempt at a theodist argument in philosophy of religion, see Peter van Inwagen, *The Problem of Evil* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006). I criticize van Inwagen from a perspective largely indebted to (though not identical with) Bernstein’s and Neiman’s in Sami Pihlström, *Taking Evil Seriously* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Pivot, 2014; for a discussion of James and the sick soul in that book, see chapter 2).

evil and the potential disharmony and even absurdity of life (individual and social), as well as the limits of philosophical theorization and reflection on these matters, while affirming an active, melioristic attitude (against an unavoidably tragic background), can be seen as a key Jamesian contribution to the problem of evil and to the challenge to reflect on the relations between religion, metaphysics, and morality arising from this problem. According to James, as I read him, we should never philosophically theorize in a theodist manner about the potential “harmonious” justification, accommodation, or meaningfulness of evil and suffering. We should, rather, acknowledge evil and its victims by not attempting to explain it, or their sufferings, away; and we should simply fight against evil instead of accepting it by justifying it. Moreover, we should fight against the corruption of acceptance.

A more comprehensive undertaking along these lines would seek to show that this fight against evil (and against corrupted theodicies) is part and parcel of the pragmatic method itself. It is by employing this method that we turn our attention to ethics whenever we are concerned with the world in any allegedly or apparently non-ethical sense – conceptually, metaphysically, or perhaps religiously – and it is through that kind of reflective attention that we inquire into what needs to be done by listening, as carefully as we can, to what James called the cries of the wounded. Only the sick soul, rather than the apologetic theologian, really hears those cries. The pragmatist ethical thinker *is*, on James’s view, a sick soul in this (transcendental) sense. This condition for the possibility of ethics, for the possibility of the ethical point of view itself, can only be reached if we learn to appreciate the way in which the Jamesian pragmatic method is framed by the recognition of evil.

This is also related to the double life issue briefly touched above. We may simultaneously take the ethical task fundamentally seriously, striving for what James often called the “strenuous mood”, and accept (with a kind of Stoic resignation) that there is in the end little we can do, that we will inevitably remain infinitely far from having done what we ought to do.¹⁶ Again, as in the realism case, the double life is not as catastrophic here as it might seem to be. The ethically serious frame – the problem of evil, seen as an infinitely pressing existential problem for us – legitimizes even those more relaxed moments of life during which we do recognize our finitude. This is, again, part of the emancipatory project, or perhaps promise, of pragmatist philosophy of religion. Pragmatism, at its best, can emancipate us from dealing with various pseudo-issues that stand in the way of deep understanding of religious forms of life. Among such issues are apologetic concerns with theism vs. atheism, as well as theodist attempts to deal with evil and suffering.¹⁷

¹⁶ This does not mean, however, that I would accept John Lachs’s views, as presented in his *Stoic Pragmatism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012). Lachs makes things too easy for us, because he does not find the “infinite” ethical challenge a genuine challenge at all. In my view, the Stoic resignation can (legitimately) come only after we have first found this *the* key challenge in our lives.

¹⁷ This paper was initially drafted at the kind invitation by Rebecca Farinas – even though I was unable to participate in the conference at Fordham University to which she invited me – and then scheduled to be (partly) presented at the European Pragmatism Panel in the SAAP 2015 conference in Grand Rapids, MI, which I couldn’t participate in, either, due to weather and traffic problems in New York City. Thus, I ended up writing the paper while being stranded in New York (which is not the worst thing that could happen in one’s life). There is some minor overlap with my review of Slater’s book cited in note 2, as well as with my much more comprehensive essay on James and the “cries of the wounded” (cited in note 1). I would like to thank an anonymous reviewer for helpful comments.

**THE ICON MOVES:
DIVERSITY THROUGH PRAGMATIC/
RELIGIOUS AESTHETICS OF THE EUROMAIDAN**

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ABSTRACT: Ukraine's Minister of Education, Serhiy Kvit, recently wrote about the 2014 EuroMaidan revolution, "Not only political differences but also social and national barriers became secondary on the EuroMaidan. Ethnic Ukrainians waving their flags were joined by Crimean Tatars, Jews, Poles, Belarusians, Georgians, Armenians and others."¹ He goes on to report, "Glory to Ukraine! – Glory to Heroes!" became the Maidan's slogan. It's repeated constantly by representatives of different political ideologies in all regions of Ukraine." Unfortunately, the collaborative movement turned violent, and the EuroMaidan revolution has spawned more war and what some people claim is a hawkish, conservative political agenda. None-the-less, the cultural artifacts of the February 2014 revolution - the flags, slogans, and art – remain as representations of a strong sense of unity through diversity. These artifacts are symbols presenting a democratic spirit motivated by a pluralistic and pragmatic ethos, and in this essay I contrast that consensual, often religious aesthetic, to a humanistic revolutionary spirit as described through my readings of Kant and Arendt. I contend that by viewing the EuroMaidan's people power movement from the perspectives of William James' and John Dewey's thinking on aesthetic experiences, a less ideologically dominate and more inclusively inter-personal mode of emancipation, or struggle for equal rights, is made clear. I investigate Ukraine's revolutionary culture by a textual analysis of pragmatic aesthetics alongside my interpretive study of a particular artifact of the EuroMaidan culture... specifically, the religious icon. I analyze some of the icons that were carried and raised up by the revolutionaries as deterrents to violence, during the clashes in the Kiev square, so as to highlight the value-making qualities of people's beliefs in action. Therefore the icons become philosophical artifacts, communicating a kind of pragmatic community aesthetic James and Dewey thought of in terms of religiousness.

Ukraine's Minister of Education, Serhiy Kvit, wrote in the Spring of 2014 about the EuroMaidan revolution, "Not only political differences but also social and national barriers became secondary on the EuroMaidan. Ethnic Ukrainians waving their flags were joined by Crimean Tatars, Jews, Poles, Belarusians, Georgians, Armenians and others."² He goes on to report, "Glory to Ukraine! – Glory to Heroes!" became the Maidan's slogan. It's repeated constantly by representatives of different political ideologies in all regions of Ukraine." Unfortunately despite his hopes for tolerance, the Maidan revolution has spawned a civil war resulting in thousands of Ukrainians being killed over nationalistic allegiances and geo-political divisions. Many cultural artifacts, however, the flags, slogans, and art, remain as reminders of the ethos of the sharing and inclusive sense of community practiced in Independence Square. The Euromaidan is but one revolutionary event, similar to Occupy Wall Street and World Climate Change protests, which relied on participant's feelings and their relationships with one another as part of collective, forward looking communities focused by art and cultural values.

William James and John Dewey's discussions on religious attitudes offer a philosophical understanding of such events as a means of emancipation. My overarching thesis is that religious attitudes and art as human resources of imaginative feeling, thinking and acting have a strong aesthetic valence in terms of peaceful agency and when used as cultural tools these sensibilities help to counter measures of revolutionary violence. This is a controversial topic in that religion and politics can be a violent mix spawning fanatical movements, even including an anti-Russian, jihad-like

¹ "Serhiy Kvit: The ideology of the EuroMaidan Revolution", KyivPost, Public Media, <http://www.kyivpost.com>: March 24, 2014, 5:41.

² *ibid.*

movement in Kiev.³ But I describe a peaceful, inclusive sense of religious agency in terms of James' investigations into mystical religious experience and Dewey's understanding of human nature as artistic.⁴ Explaining their views allows us to clarify how religious attitudes combined with artistic practices in a setting of community allows for civil inclusiveness, nonviolence and productive, progressive collective political action. I highlight the events in Kiev during February 2014, to give a contemporary example of a political revolution influenced by religious culture and art. I look specifically at Byzantine icons as hermeneutic examples, which although used in all sides of the conflict in the Ukraine were used as symbols of peaceful resistance in the commonplace ethos of Kiev's Independence Square. My discussion helps to better our understandings of the associations between James and Dewey's thinking on religious attitudes, so to further investigations into value-making and peace studies.

To advance my point that religious attitudes can have a productive and strong sense of political prowess I compare Dewey and James's religious aesthetics with Hannah Arendt's thoughts on political praxis based on Kantian aesthetics.⁵ I contend that Arendt does not take on board a full range of revolutionary ethos for she does not place any emphasize on value-making through artistic practices, traditions and religious beliefs.⁶ Arendt

has an understanding of revolution as a form of thoughtful, critical action, but Kantian aesthetics limits her project because his scheme leaves us with an abstract point of creativity in relation to everyday life.⁷ Let us come to Arendt's problems with aesthetic agency after discussing the strong sense of aesthetic agency James and Dewey afford to religious experiences, art and culture.

namely *religiousness*. Therefore Arendt's views on religion are relevant in that they bear out the fact that although she does not negate the "mood" of revolutionaries altogether, she stresses that human matters must be imbued with a secular attitude. Arendt is however pragmatic when she writes, "Politically, the outstanding characteristic of the Christian era had been that this ancient view of world and man – of mortal men moving in an everlasting or potentially everlasting world – was reversed: men in possession of an everlasting life moved in an ever-changing world whose ultimate fate was death; and the outstanding characteristic of the modern age was that it turned once more to antiquity to find a precedent for its own new preoccupation with the future of the man made world on earth. Obviously the secularity of the world and the worldliness of men in any given age can best be measured by the extent to which preoccupation with the future of the world takes precedence in men's minds over preoccupation with their own ultimate destiny in a hereafter." See Arendt, *On Revolution*, (London: U.K.: Penguin Books Ltd., 1990), 230. online edition, https://archive.org/stream/OnRevolution/ArendtOn-revolution_djvu.txt, accessed 05/10/2015 11:30 am.

⁷ See Ronald Beiner, "Hannah Arendt on Judging", *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, 124. In Beiner's interpretive essay to Arendt's lessons on Kant's aesthetics and politics he describes the crucial anomaly, in that disinterestedness cannot lead to a sense of culture as a group of political and creative people hoping for a more free and inclusive state of affairs, without making moral judgements the same as political judgements. He does point out though that Arendt was taken by Kant's moment of beauty "purposiveness without purpose" which allows creativity without attaching morality to politics. However, this cannot allow Arendt to move past her conclusions that political and aesthetic movements depend on the judgment of spectators. This is the opposite of what I argue as the essence of artistic, religious and political engagement. Beiner writes: "It is worth noting that the two actualities by which Kant here distinguishes political judgments namely universality and disinterestedness are the very same two outstanding marks of judgment ascribed by Kant to aesthetic taste. This famous passage shows unmistakably that political judgment, like aesthetic judgment is reserved to the spectator."

³ Marcin Mamon, "The Cross and the Sword: The Making of a Christian Taliban in Ukraine", *THE//Intercept*, online magazine, <https://firstlook.org/theintercept/2015/03/18/ukraine-part-3/>, 11:30 am CST, 03/18, 2015.

⁴ Throughout this essay I rely heavily on textual analysis of John Dewey, *Art as Experience*, (New York, New York: Penguin Group, 1934) and William James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*. (New York, New York: Penguin Group, 1902).

⁵ See Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992).

⁶ I concur that public discussions and thinking about collective goals as a matter of concepts and decisions which are methods for peace at the center of Arendt's political philosophy, are also successful tools for nonviolent social change. However religions do structure (through tradition) what is important to this discussion,

Some political theorists refer to ethnic, cultural, and religious differences as pretexts for geo-political agendas pointing to those as the main causes for revolutions. Yet, surely we should take seriously aesthetics, as both the individual's thoughts, sensations, emotions and a collective spirit that is part of believing in ongoing meanings of life, when looking to analyze why people fear cultural and ethical diversity associated with democratic and fair policies. Notably Dewey wrestled with explaining how unifying religious beliefs work with attitudes of democracy, explaining that a sense of personal freedom does not distance people from their cultural milieus or traditions.⁸ Both Dewey and James' emphasis on religious attitudes as a matter of cultural understanding and diversity is important in describing democracy. I find that they share views of religious feelings and political agency through two inter-related axioms in this respect: 1) religious/aesthetic experiences are an aspect of our awareness of how we are connected to each other and to our environments, yet they also make clear there are tensions of life. 2) Also such awareness effects people's expansive sense of imagination and creativity, furthering social changes. Accordingly James and Dewey look towards people's liberation from fear and alienation becoming more open to creative possibilities for freer, shared lives and an empowered sense of culture.

Throughout this paper I use the term *religiousness* in the pragmatic sense that Dewey used "religious" in *A Common Faith*. Dewey sought to emancipate collective feelings and

actions from being thought of as super-natural or institutionally declared or defined.⁹ For Dewey being religious is a creative process and such is a matter of feeling, thinking and acting imaginatively as an integral part of larger, cultural environments.¹⁰ As well, people are productive in their communities through artistic practices while relying on their religious attitudes as changes in their environments occur and when they are decidedly focused on cultural and political changes.¹¹ Dewey includes traditions and longstanding cultural artifacts alongside new contemporary art forms as tools to facilitate such aesthetic agency.

For James existential tension is a private feeling that something is wrong with one's life and this can lead to a

⁹ John Dewey, "Religion versus the Religious: From a Common Faith", *The Essential Dewey*, Vol. 1, ed. Larry Hickman, Thomas Alexander, Indiana University Press, 1998, 401. I have also relied on the following text for my use of the term *religiousness*, Thomas M. Alexander, *John Dewey's Theory of Art, Experience and Nature the Horizons of Feeling*, (Albany, New York: State University of New York, 1987).

¹⁰ John Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 362. Dewey sums up the connection of both personal and practical relationships between people and imaginative and broad reaching ideas communicated through art and morality. Dewey writes, "Imagination is the chief instrument of the good. It is more or less a commonplace to say that a person's ideas and treatment of his fellows are dependent upon his power to put himself imaginatively in their place. But the primacy of the imagination extends far beyond the scope of direct personal relationships. Except where "ideal" is used in conventional deference or as a name for a sentimental reverie, the ideal factors in every moral outlook and human loyalty are imaginative. The historic alliance of religion and art has its roots in this common quality. Hence it is that art is more moral than moralities."

¹¹ See Thomas M. Alexander's introduction to *A Common Faith*. Alexander quotes Dewey, "The religious attitude," Dewey says, would be "a sense of the possibilities of existence" and "devotion to the cause of these possibilities" (Late Works 4:242). What Dewey proposes, in other words, is the replace what might be called a "spirituality of the actual" with a "spirituality of the possible." Dewey, "Introduction", *A Common Faith: Second Edition*, Dewey, *A Common Faith*, introduction by Thomas M. Alexander, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013. Dewey also directly connects art with revolution, "Moreover, resistance and conflict have always been factors in generating art; and they are, as we have seen, a necessary part of artistic form." *Art as Experience*, 353.

⁸ See John Dewey, "Natural Development and Social Efficiency as Aims", *The Essential Dewey*, Vol 1, ed Larry A. Hickman and Thomas M. Alexander, Indiana University Press: Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1998. 264. In fact Dewey's definition of culture is based not only on education but also on inclusiveness and the broadening of people's views. Dewey writes, "But social efficiency as an educational purpose should mean cultivation of power to join feely and fully in shared or common activities. This is impossible without culture, while it brings a reward in culture, because one cannot share in intercourse with others without learning – without getting a broader point of view and perceiving things of which one would otherwise be ignorant. And there is perhaps no better definition of culture than that it is the capacity for constantly expanding the range and accuracy of one's perception of meanings."

person adapting a religious attitude towards life in general. He thinks that individuals, through realizing that they can feel and express a sense of having an intimate connection to a vaster field of relationships other than their own private circumstances, can resolve their anxieties. In searching for what is better than failed experiences in revealing ultimate truthfulness through abstract thinking, an individual becomes more engaged with the inter-connected relationships of life. James admits that philosophy is hopeless in fully describing this aesthetic connection, while he finds that religions often record these feelings as "a fact of experience".¹² He goes on to explain, "the divine is actually present, religion says, and between it and our relations of give and take are actual".¹³ This sense of divinity or interconnected wholeness, although largely ineffable and unexplainable through laws of dualistic causality, has a "plus, a thisness, which 'feeling alone can answer for'".¹⁴ Religious experience, according to James, is not like Kant's "Transcendental Ego of Apperception" as religious experiences are not abstracted from rational understanding. A religious attitude is felt as relationships between people, environments and even things or objects, religious experience is not transcendental because it never leaves human experience.¹⁵ Religiousness as an attitude is a matter of orienting our minds to the grand scope of relationships in our life's settings. James finds through personal testimonies that religious experiences offer people a sense of shared purpose and intention, but unlike Kant this unity of purpose is not presented to us prior to our lived experiences. Through a religious attitude a person takes up a way of living James thinks of as "healthy

mindedness" and this condition affords an empowered sense of freedom.¹⁶

Sounding much like James' description of the anxieties of people's existential crisis' Dewey thinks that people experience enhanced perceptions through wrestling with what is stable and precarious, leading to a sense of the completeness of life's processes. Yet people are also conscious of their own personalities, failures and well-being, while we discern our abilities to sometimes raise above and sometimes below natural processes.¹⁷ Dewey writes that "the religious experience that accompanies intense aesthetic perception" is a moral pursuit as not only do we bring our existential situations into focus but also wholistic religious feelings help us envision our future goals.¹⁸ Religiousness, as an artistic sensibility, would begin for Dewey with an imaginative or experimental attitude, not a set of doctrines or a discipline that restricts creative activities. Dewey explains,

¹⁶ James writes, "In many persons, happiness is congenital and irreclaimable. 'Cosmic emotion' inevitably takes in them the form of enthusiasm and freedom. I speak not only of those who are animally happy. I mean those who, when unhappiness is offered or proposed to them, positively refuse to feel it, as if it were something mean and wrong." *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 79-80.

¹⁷ Dewey writes, "Man excels in complexity and minuteness of differentiations. This very fact constitutes the necessity for many more comprehensive and exact relationships among the constituents of his being. Important as are the distinctions and relations thus made possible, the story does not end here. There are more opportunities for resistance and tension, more drafts upon experimentation and invention, and therefore more novelty in action, greater range and depth of insight and increase of poignancy in feeling. As an organism increases in complexity, the rhythms of struggle and consummation in its relation to its environment are varied and prolonged, and they come to include within themselves an endless variety of sub-rhythms. The designs of living are widened and enriched. Fulfillment is more massive and more subtly shaded." *Art as Experience*, 23.

¹⁸ Dewey, *Art as Experience*, New York City: Penguin Group, 1934, 202.

¹² James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 454.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 455.

¹⁵ See James' lines on his pragmatic way of thinking about God's existence and his critique of transcendentalism. "But all facts are particular facts, and the whole interest of the question of 'God's existence seems to me to lie in the consequences for particulars which that existence may be expected to entail." *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 522.

The religious attitude signifies something that is bound through imagination to a *general* attitude. This comprehensive attitude, moreover, is much broader than anything indicated by “moral” in its usual sense. The quality of attitude is displayed in art, science and good citizenship.¹⁹

James also gives a great deal of thought to the practical effects of religious experience, as people can feel and act with a greater sense of involvement and purpose, therefore building their personal sense of character and individual freedoms. He writes,

Religious feeling is thus an absolute addition to the Subject’s range of life. It gives him a new sphere of power. When the outward battle is lost, and the outer world disowns him, it redeems and vivifies an interior world which otherwise would be an empty waste. If religion is to mean anything definite for us, it seems to me that we ought to take it as meaning this added dimension of emotion, this enthusiastic temper of espousal, in regions where morality strictly so called can at best but bow its head and acquiesce. It ought to mean nothing short of this new reach of freedom for us, with the struggle over, the keynote of the universe sounding in our ears, and ever-lasting possession spread before our eyes.²⁰

Moreover private religious experiences have real effects in terms of political revolutions, as evidenced by my second point of comparison; that people can effect real and positive changes through religiousness by means of cultural value – making. Tradition may seem like an archaic, useless, and even a destructive word when discussing the challenges of turning over powerful governments and economic systems, because traditions seem to offer a false sense of security. But just as religious attitudes are personal methods of change as aesthetic processes through which beliefs are felt while acting upon them, traditions as creative cultural mediums help us realize that communal values are developed by our living histories. James explains constructive aspects of cultural religiousness and value making,

The world interpreted religiously is not the materialistic world over again, with an altered expression; it must have, over and above the altered expression; a *natural constitution* different at some point from that which a materialistic world would have. It must be such that different events can be expected in it, different conduct must be required.²¹

James contends that moments of truthfulness, trust, shared sacrifice and pleasure are creative and mystical points of invention in a boundless universe of relationships.²²

Dewey also thought of religious experience as creative and he wanted to emancipate religiousness from religion, breaking with traditions that restricted growth and static ideals presented as universal dogma. Again sounding like James, Dewey thinks of religious ‘factors of experience’ that can never be abstracted from everyday situations and should not be “drafted into supernatural channels.” However he describes how people use religious traditions and cultural artifacts as technologies for value-making, inculcating positive habits and creative practices which embody ongoing meanings. Thereby real effects of religious experiences can be traditional and artifactual while continually reproducing transformative effects, offering new moral possibilities and deepening shared values. As ontological experiences a community’s religious traditions have enduring felt qualities through which people change themselves and their environments. Constructing a world through aesthetic means such as religiousness, artistic practice and scientific inquiry is often a matter of history as imbued with aesthetic meanings. Dewey explains,

There are transient and there are enduring elements in a civilization. – The enduring forces are not separate; they are functions of a multitude of passing incidents as the latter are organized in to the meanings that form minds.

¹⁹ Dewey, *The Essential Dewey, Volume 1*, ed Larry A. Hickman and Thomas M. Alexander, Indiana University Press: Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1998, 408-409.

²⁰ James, *Varieties*, 48.

²¹ James, *Varieties*, p 518.

²² See James, *Varieties*, p 516. James writes, “Yet the unseen region in question is not merely ideal, for we are turned into a new men, and consequences in the way of conduct follow in the natural world upon our regenerative change.”

Art is the great force in effecting this consolidation. The individuals who have minds pass away one by one. The works in which meanings have received objective expressions endure. They become part of the environment, and interaction with this phase of the environment is the axis of continuity in the life of civilization. The ordinances of religion and the power of law are efficacious as they are clothed with a pomp, a dignity and majesty that are the work of imagination. If social customs are more than uniform external modes of action, it is because they are saturated with story and transmitted meaning. Every art in some manner is a medium of this transmission while its products are no inconsiderable part of the saturating matter.”²³

Habits and traditions can be followed without much thought or social critique but Dewey describes a transformation of these experiences when traditions become “funded” by meaning.²⁴ When there is a problem to be worked out in our environments we use our imaginations to connect our past histories with changing environments as we discern the consequences of our experiences. Religious beliefs and traditions are relevant because religious attitudes do not necessarily shackle people to static dogmas or to a political sense of

nationalistic exclusivity. As value-laden artifacts traditions can be practiced artistically and they can be conduits for assimilating history and memories to the present and as a means for re-valuation. Such re-valuation includes thinking about more expansive fields of civil inclusion as people think about their integrated yet on-going futures.

Hannah Arendt also thought about aesthetics and citizenship as catalysts for social change and revolution. In difference to James and Dewey, she thought of aesthetics in direct relation to Kantian phenomenology. Her approach to aesthetics is that a person develops their thoughtfulness and autonomy as a spectator using one’s imagination, which is a faculty of the mind, thereby able to judge social situations in consideration of other perspectives (i.e. disinterestedness is integrated with *sensus communis*). Aesthetics for Arendt and Kant is the rationalizing of feelings non-determinately and imaginatively, yet they both leave out an active sense of religious culture.

In terms of democracy and revolution, Arendt’s idea of praxis is that political actions are motivated by creative and reflective thoughts, and these thoughts have their foundation in the workings of the imagination and communicability.²⁵ Culturally for Arendt, individuals realize values, or human rights, in light of the historical epochs they are born into. For Arendt, Modernity is devoid of the most natural states of being, those being when people were doers and makers, and intuitively social or political.

²³ Dewey, *Art as Experience*, p 340.

²⁴ Dewey explains an important connection between values, meaning, history and art. “For while the roots of every experience are found in the interaction of a live creature with its environment, that experience becomes conscious, a matter of perception, only when meanings enter it that are derived from prior experiences. Imagination is the only gateway through which these meanings enter it that are derived from prior experiences. Imagination is the only gateway through which these meanings can find their way into a present interaction: or rather, as we have just seen, the conscious adjustment of the new and the old *is* imagination. Interaction of a living being with an environment is found in vegetative and animal life. But the experience enacted is human and conscious only as that which is given here and now is extended by meanings and values drawn from what is absent in fact and present only imaginatively.” He goes on to say, “There is always a gap between the here and now of direct interaction and the past interactions whose funded result constitutes the meaning with which we grasp and understand what is now occurring. Because of this gap, all conscious perception involves a risk; it is a venture into the unknown, for as it assimilates the present to the past it also brings about some reconstruction of that past.” *Art as Experience*, 283-284.

²⁵ Arendt denied that judging and being creative was completely rational, yet she contradicted herself as is noted by Ronald Beiner in his interpretative essay in *Lectures on Kant’s Political Philosophy*. Beiner writes, “We have already mentioned that in “What is Freedom?” Arendt aligns judgment with intellect or cognition, in stark contrast to her eventual denial that judgment is an intellectual faculty or is indeed cognitive at all.” He goes on to write, “So we see that it was only gradually that Arendt came to regard judging as a separate mental activity, distinct from both intellect and will; and, by the time she had settled this question in her own mind, she had come to reformulate the very relation between judgment and politics – between “the life of the mind” and “the world of appearances.” P 139.

How to reconnect people as homo-faber and zoon politikon was Arendt's moral project.²⁶ She saw the answer as being concerned with political discussions by communities in times and spaces cleared from the inequalities and prejudices of everyday life. Dialog for Arendt is the most effective form of political action.

So we can see some connection here with art, democracy and social change, as with the pragmatists, but aesthetically Arendt does not really contribute to solving the problem of a modern disconnect of judging our world and being involved in the on-going development of it, because through her Kantian aesthetics a person only comes to think imaginatively and therefore democratically through self-conscious reflection, and their conceptual *disinterestedness* leaves a gap between them and culture.²⁷ A person's imagination is blocked from the on-going traditions of collectively funded, emotional experiences. Theoretically this gap would mean positing an individual subject and an outside object, which they reflect about, even though Arendt insists that Kant was dedicated to "interplay and cooperation of sensibility and intellect".²⁸ As said, to bridge this gap creatively Arendt posits that people's political orientations are a matter of rational discussion while Kant allows for special genius talents.²⁹ Kant's program to find *sensus communis* as apriori reflective thinking is part of Arendt's political theory of the spectator as an interpretative and imaginative judge marking history.

However, my view is that a spectator cannot possibly be effective aesthetically in that they are not directly, emotionally involved with their living histories. With Arendt's philosophy there is a conceptual gap between a

spectator and culture, and also a distance between critical intellectuals and activists in revolutions.³⁰ So when employing Arendt's social tools of praxis and political debate there is a theoretical distance of intellectuals from the hearts and minds of people protesting and calling from the commonplace for social change. As well, when considering the diversity of political and religious feelings and traditions among people any theoretical universal rule of law is doomed to being over-ridden by differing personal and cultural perspectives, even though convergence and discussion is possible. But through people's attitudes of religiousness, social changes carry understandings of inter-connected values that are vehicles for broadening cultures' norms.

James emphasizes social transformations as a matter of ideals and value-making through using one's religious attitudes. In his 1892 lecture *What Makes a Life Significant* he clarifies that allowing a person or community to understand another perspective than one's own is paramount to solving social problems.³¹ James said,

³⁰ Arendt does admit that Kant never thought in terms of cultural plurality but this is not the problem pragmatically. The problem with Arendt and Kant is that creativity and aesthetic imagination is conceptually unavailable to everyone. Arendt interprets Kant in a political context when she agrees with his aesthetics of the spectator, "Only what touches, affects, one in representation, when one is uninvolved, like the spectator who was uninvolved in the actual doings of the French Revolution – can be judged or ugly, or something in between. One then speaks of judgment and no longer of taste because, though it still affects one like a matter of taste, one now has, by means of representation, established the proper distance, the remoteness or uninvolvedness or disinterestedness, that is requisite for approbation and disapprobation, for evaluating something at its proper worth. By removing the object, on has established the conditions for impartiality." P 67.

³¹ Original lecture given at Bryn Mawr in 1892 and published in 1900 (New York: Henry Holt and Company), <http://philosophy.lander.edu/intro/articles/jameslife-a.pdf>, accessed 20/02/15, 11:30 AM.

²⁶ See Arendt, *The Human Condition*, Chicago, Illinois: The University of Chicago, Press, 1958, p 27-29.

²⁷ "Disinterestedness" is required for Kant's universal subjectivity. It means being free from desire. See Emmanuel Kant, 1790. *Critique of Judgement*, trans. Meredith, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1928, 42-50.

²⁸ Arendt, *Kant Lectures*, p 27.

²⁹ Kant, 307.

And, when you ask how much sympathy you ought to bestow, although the amount is, truly enough, a matter of ideal on your own part, yet in this notion of the combination of ideals with active virtues you have a rough standard for shaping your decision. In any case, your imagination is extended. You divine in the world about you matter for a little more humility on your own part, and tolerance, reverence, and love for others; and you gain a certain inner joyfulness at the increased importance of our common life. Such joyfulness is a religious inspiration and an element of spiritual health, and worth more than large amounts of that sort of technical and accurate information, which we professors are supposed to be able to impart.³²

Dewey will add to this that art, traditions and habits are the very medium of our imaginations, imperative to our changing, integrated natures. Viewing religion and traditions as closed systems is a matter of not understanding the synthetic discrete and continuous qualities of cultures. Dewey thinks of religious feelings and traditions as powerful tools for community building as well as for wide social exchanges and transformations.³³ So Kant's concepts of the imagination are nonexistent because even as a person imagines political freedom through a critical space of reflection, this space must be recognized to be already effective and having developmental consequences in one's culture. Moreover "thinking without a banister" which for Arendt is thinking, imagining, and communicating without static traditions, religions or public opinions cannot come to a just way of judgment without people's value-making attitudes that can be traditional as well as civilly inclusive and historically developing.

My point is that thinking of the imagination as a form of universal subjectivity separated from real time traditions, habits, religious feelings and events is a dangerous philosophy, placing revolutionaries into limited and often elitist positions. Such a setting is antithetical to Arendt's own project of spreading eradicating totalitarianism through concerted action. In contrast, imagination as part of religious faith is a real contributing factor to the wholeness of experience that people strive for, although imagining an infinite variety of perspectives is beyond people's capabilities if they are separated from others, so traditions are needed. Traditions and religious beliefs can bear a strong sense of aesthetic agency if people avoid using traditions as ends in them-selves. To ignore that self-reflective value-making is embodied in people's emotive traditions and expressive cultural artifacts cuts people off from truly communicating with others who hold different values and who offer new and sometimes challenging aesthetic experiences.

Thus far we have followed a distinction made clear by understanding James and Dewey's ideas on religious and artistic experiences between concepts that are abstracted from communal practices and imaginative ideas and meaningful beliefs that are felt and *in the making*, so now we can more clearly discern the connection between religiousness and democracy.

The Ukrainians while fighting in the Maidan used their religious traditions and collectively funded histories as means for revolution and community building without demanding static sets of rules, institutional Church doctrines or exclusive national boundaries. The Maidan's ethos was one of respect for diversity. Amidst harsh winter days and nights there was raging conflict, while Orthodox Christian priests of many denominations wearing sacramental robes, stood within range of gunfire and Molotov cocktails, shoulder to shoulder, forming a line between the anti-government protesters and

³² Ibid.

³³ Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 347. Dewey writes about the discrete and continuous nature of cultures, "Each culture has its own individuality and has a pattern that binds its parts together. Nevertheless, when the art of another culture enters into attitudes that determine our experience genuine continuity is effected. Our own experience does not thereby lose its individuality but it takes unto itself and weds elements that expand its significance." Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 349.

security police, praying for peace.³⁴ Priests raised crosses while praying for peace on rosary beads in demonstration against governmental corruption and oppression. Many of the older women of Kiev brought icons from their homes, holding them like shields against aggression on either side of the barricades.³⁵ They pointed to their Saints, so that people on both sides of the conflict might use their faith in the Christian Holy Spirit as a means for acting with beatitude. This was one of the most radical uses of traditional art in recent history, and it was part of the Majdan's art explosion that also included contemporary art projects.

Eastern Orthodox icons have brought people together in prayer, tradition, and revolution throughout history. Icons are symbolic of the fates of their communities, regions, and nations carrying with them the stories of the tumultuous events of people standing against oppressive authoritative governments. Through the reverence of icons individuals have shared a spiritual sense of importance and equality comparable to the priests of the hierarchical structured Church.³⁶ An

example is the 1905 Russian peasant revolution when icons were used to try to secure basic human rights. On "Bloody Sunday" January 22 of that year Father Georgi Gapon, who was born into a peasant family in a region that is now Ukraine, led thousands of workers and their families to petition the Tsar in St Petersburg for equal rights and better working conditions. The people held icons at the frontlines of their protest to show the Tsar their common faith. Despite their show of peace many were shot and killed that day by the Tsar's Imperial Guard. Stories of Gapon's bravery as a revolutionary are told alongside accounts of Nicholas Tsar's struggle to retain ultimate authority over his empire and his elitist attitude to the struggles of the Russian people. Nicholas thought of his family supremely blessed as he was an extremely devote Christian and a renowned collector of icons. Gapon and Nicholas used the same means for binding the Russian people together, namely religion and art. However, the Tsar's hopes for unity under supreme authority were forever dashed by the 1917 October revolution and a restrictive form of communist ideology replaced Gapon's hopes for human rights. The communist revolution sought to replace religion with political and social bureaucracy and laws but people continued to struggle for a more intimate as well as communal sense of thinking and acting. This paradoxical use of icons can be read as an example of the differences Dewey spoke of between *being religious* as an attitude of creative personal and communal development and religion as an uninformative, unproductive type of dogma.

But what was is the nature of the icon tradition that remains as a productive source of religiousness, revolution and liberation? Leonid Oupensky was a Russian icon painter and historian, who wrote, along with his colleague Vladimir Lossky, about the making of

³⁴ See Antoine Arjakovsky, *The Role of the Churches in the Ukrainian Revolution*, ABC Religion and Ethics, Updated 7 Mar 2014 (First Posted 6 Mar 2014) <http://www.abc.net.au/religion/articles/2014/03/06/3958163.htm>, accessed January 2, 2015, 1:30 pm.

³⁵ The pro-Russian separatists also held icons and priests supported both sides of the conflict. For a full description of the Ukrainian clash of religions, cultures, politics from the pro-European perspective See: <http://maidantranslations.com/2014/04/13/inside-sloviansk-april-13-2014/>, accessed 04/20/15, 12:30 pm. An example of the influence of religious icons on contemporary socio-political affairs is the art exhibition: "Iconart: Visions of a World Unseen, Contemporary Sacred Art from Ukraine": The Ukrainian Institute of America is pleased to announce a group exhibition of 18 artists from Ukraine, "Iconart: Visions of a World Unseen". Organized in cooperation with Iconart Gallery of Contemporary Sacred Art, located in Lviv, Ukraine, the exhibition draws from the work of Ukrainian artists associated with the Gallery. Independently working in different media, the artists focus on spiritual and religious concerns within the contemporary cultural context in which they live. <http://iconart.com.ua/ua/events/111>, accessed 02/11/2015, 1:30 pm.

³⁶ For a scholarly account of the religious factions at play

in the Russian Revolution and how the common people both supported and split from those factions see: Vera Shevzov, *Russian Orthodoxy on the Eve of Revolution*, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.

icons and the theology behind icons. Ouspensky explains that revering icons is not a transcendental supernatural experience but a catalyst for an attitude, helping viewers to focus on a visionary world that is authentically felt, making it present. He writes in *The Theology of Icons*, "The icon does not represent the divinity. Rather, it indicates man's participation in the divine life."

According to Ouspensky human nature takes part in divine life through people imagining and acting as a part of a more autonomously felt spiritual world. This phenomenon happens in heightened aesthetics experiences, as the feelings of those praying to an icon are very real. Theologically there is a paradox in both the Orthodox and Catholic religions in that they hold that Christ, whose presence on earth is made clear through viewing the icon, has two natures; divine and human. But the Holy Spirit, as an earthly ethos or cultural attitude, is communicated through icons by uniting those natures. In Eastern Orthodox religion there is no division between material and spiritual so a material object can be divinely endowed. Ouspensky writes: "All reality, including the physical, has the potential to be sacred." So what does *sacred* mean for the zoography (an icon maker)? It means that icons express the divine wisdom of God instead of the wills of the artists or viewers. In fact icon viewing is meant to be a means for personal transformation from being and acting from an individual perspective to having a broader understanding through feelings and thoughts of divine love and charity for all people.

When viewing the icon it is not the icon that is venerated but the depiction of Christ or the Saint. Unlike portraits, icons depict people for the purpose of presenting a living presence not as a matter of homage. The icon is a receptacle for veneration as the divinity of God presents itself through the viewer. Through the veneration of icons a person melds the material world with the spiritual, thereby uniting feelings with practical aims for a more shared experience of life.

What is important about the icon's appearance is that it emancipates physical matter from any division from spiritual beliefs. In the modern era icons have been painted with layers of tempura and plaster, while ancient icons were modeled with a wax technique, called encaustic painting. The features of the icon's figures however have remained the same, as they are the most important aspects of the paintings. The eyes, ears, and mouths are idealized so as to downplay specific traits of beauty and as artifacts of worship people are shown that their prayers are free to be actualized as working beliefs and values which transverse pre-set cultural boundaries.

Intriguingly, Dewey draws from the art traditions of the Byzantine Churches to expand his notions about freedom in *Art as Experience*, leaving open an area for hermeneutic study. Dewey did not think there are two natures of experience, although he does explain that "Nature" as our physical environment is in confluence, but not always in direct correspondence, with the developmental nature of human feelings, thoughts and actions. Subsequently, Dewey makes a contribution to understanding icons. He explains that understanding ideas concerning cultural diversity and inclusiveness are integral to the purpose of an icon, because while viewing icons we perceive our inter-personal natures as expansive and as part of natural processes toward greater diversity. Dewey illuminates the connection between art theory and theology by explaining that Byzantine art inspires a conscious embodied experience of the wholeness of varied perspectives.³⁷ Dewey explains,

In reference to Byzantine art, I put the term nature in quotation marks. I did so because the word "nature; has a special meaning in esthetic literature, indicated especially by the use of the adjective "naturalistic." But "Nature" also has a

³⁷ Dewey, *Art as Experience*, p 352, "From one point of view the problem of recovering an organic place for art in civilization is like the problem of reorganizing our heritage from the past and the insights of present knowledge into a coherent and integrated imaginative union.

meaning in which it includes the whole scheme of things- in which it has the force of the imaginative and emotional word "universe." In experience, human relations, institutions, and traditions are as much a part of the nature in which and by which we live as is the physical world. Nature in this meaning is not "outside." It is in us and we are in and of it. But there are multitudes of ways of participating in it and these ways are characteristic not only of various experiences of the same individual, but of attitudes of inspiration, need and achievement that belong to civilizations in their collective aspect. Works of art are means, by which we enter, through imagination and the emotions they evoke, into other forms of relationship and participation than our own.³⁸

Icons are inspirational by a sense of our integrated natures and through inspiring openness to new relationships. Icons are not made to transport people out of reality but to bring into view our multicultural aesthetic involvement with the world.³⁹ Human relationships communicated with such religious feelings inspire sympathetic understanding and equality through value-making. When praying in front of the icon, the individual comes to experience the divine within oneself, and so experiences a sense of co-passion, which Oupensky talks about using the language of Orthodox theology, as divine grace. This transformative quality of

icon worship does not get lost in relation to people's attitudes toward each other and our hopes for a better future.

Icons are living artifacts because of the re-valuation they inspire in many communities. There are three major Orthodox churches in Ukraine, together they involve the majority of religious people in Ukraine. The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church and the Roman Catholic Church comprise the minority of Christians, and there is also a religious minority of Sunni Muslims, Protestants, and Jews. The Moscow Patriarchate has declared itself the Orthodox mother church and as the only true successor to the ancient Kievan See, which was established in the tenth century. Moscow's recent movements to unify all Orthodox Christian followers in Eastern Europe, has been talked about as being a deterrent to Ukrainian nationalistic movements. What this has meant in the past is both an intensification of political religious tensions and a general distraction from the unifying aesthetics that are inherent in religious experiences. Yet with the current political crisis many of the various leaders of the Orthodox churches have come together in their opposition to all forms of violence.⁴⁰

Although religion is often immersed with national identity, yet despite the initial political basis of conflicts, religiousness once evoked often takes precedence. Being religious is not a matter of race, and it is not commanded nationalistically by birth or privilege as religious feelings and thoughts often supersede political agendas, money, power or the ownership of land. James remarks, "Among the buildings-out of religion which the mind spontaneously indulges in, the aesthetic motive must never be forgotten."⁴¹ Accordingly churches are not

³⁸ Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 346.

³⁹ William Dean, "Radical Empiricism and Religious Art", *The Journal of Religion*, (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press), Vol. 61, No. 2 (April, 1981): 168-187. Dean's thoughts on religious art and radical empiricism are relevant here. He thinks that the judge the inter-persona and creative value to religious/aesthetic experiences one must look to its effects. Dean writes about religious art as a matter of its effects in the world and this helps explain how spirituality is reality through art. Dean makes a point about the phenomenology of religious art, in that he thinks it brings to the surface what is deep within our consciousness, without losing the mystery and unknown qualities, and it shows us those qualities as feelings and values that are evidentially real. Dean explains, "Finally, however, from the perspective of radical empiricism, religious art is most important for what it shows empirically about the world rather than for what it accomplishes subjectively for the beholder. Religious art is important not primarily because it engenders a uniquely two-faceted experience in the self, but because it defines that in the world which can engender that experience and because it can do so without clarity."

⁴⁰ See: Lydia S. Tonoyan & Daniel P. Payne (2010) The Visit of Patriarch Kirill to Ukraine in 2009 and its Significance in Ukraine's Political and Religious Life, *Religion, State and Society*, 38:3, 253-264, DOI: 10.1080/09637494.2010.49928, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09637494.2010.499283>, Accessed 06/12/14, 11:30 am.

⁴¹ James, *Varieties*, 334.

miracle factories, religious artifacts are not talisman, and revolutions are not a replacement for constructive community action, and to build the values these human endeavors carry with them, religions, art, and revolution must be participated in and responded to, to be productive and progressive.

In this respect, the icons carried into the Majdan Square were beliefs in action. They were not the priceless icons housed in the Khanenko National Museum of Arts in Kiev. However, the icons used on the front lines of the conflict had been encoded artistically to evoke the history of older icons and they are comparable to the museum antiques that date back to the 7th century. Made in the late antique Christian era, the Khanenko relics are from a time, when people extended their material reality into what they believed spiritually through their commonplace objects, and modern distinctions between materiality and spirituality did not apply. The presence of the divine on earth was spread through the physical qualities of icons.

An example is an icon, which has been prayed to since those times, *Saint Sergius and Saint Bacchus*. It dates from the Sixth Century, and being a small panel, approximately 28 by 42 cm, it was probably a lid for a reliquary box.⁴² The figures are painted and sculpted by encaustic wax and it has contemporarily been immaculately restored. Its visual qualities are reflective - the gold leaf of the halos, the ashen whites of the robes, and cornelian reds of the honorary sashes - giving off light to the objects around it. The Saint's divine images are depicted in head and shoulders posture, together filling the complete picture field. The two figures sit side by side, and as soldier Saints they have donned their military costumes. They wear Roman toques as necklaces denoting their honor and bravery. Each toque bears three large painted jewels, symbolizing the Trinity of

Christ. Their countenances are humble and compassionate, as the two soldiers have characteristically iconic features of closed mouths and luminescent eyes. In the upper register of the panel, between the two Saints, a much smaller circular icon of Jesus Christ intersects their halos. The relic is comparable to marriage portraits of its time, with the icon of Christ taking the place of the pronubus or best man. But both the two Saints are men, for this is an early example of same sex friendships within church iconography. Sergius and Bacchus were comrades but their own army - persecuted because they would not make cultic sacrifices to pagan Gods, martyred them. Contemporarily the icon has become a symbol of tolerance towards homosexuality, although as Saints they were asexual and divine in life as in death.⁴³

The faithful are called to meditate on the icon's presentation of spiritual rewards after persecution. As well, the icon's symbolism brings into stark reality the contemporary cultural struggles in Kiev, as there is a deeper aesthetic dimension to its revolutionary semiotics, through which the viewer has visual proof of a world where tolerance and acceptance of difference is a better way forward for communities.

Coming from a critical perspective Slavoj Žižek wonders how Ukraine can become successful if it joins the EU, because of the grip of global neo-liberal agendas and inauthentic political motivations on the part of Ukraine's institutional churches. As well, the European Union, according to Žižek, needs to be saved from itself, as it continues to ignore the plights of immigrant's worldwide, and of disadvantaged communities that are all but forgotten by global financiers and religious leaders.⁴⁴ He asks how churches can continually turn a

⁴² *Saint Sergius and Saint Bacchus*, Original found at Saint Catherine's Monastery, Mount Sinai, Egypt, now housed at the [Bohdan and Varvara Khanenko Museum of Arts](#), Kiev, Ukraine.

⁴³ See John Boswell, *Same Sex Unions in Pre-Modern Europe*, (New York: Vintage Books, Random House, 1994).

⁴⁴ See Slavoj Žižek, "What Europe should learn from Ukraine" *Blog Da Boitempo*, 31/03/2014, <http://blogdaboitempo.com.br/2014/03/31/zizek-what-europe-should-learn-from-ukraine/>, Accessed January

blind eye to diversity and immigration problems, while setting up distractions from religiousness by struggling for political power among themselves. He thinks Eastern European churches are forsaking the very religious aesthetic/values of inclusiveness on which they have been founded.⁴⁵ He finds that under the current conditions Europe and Ukraine are lost until they disengage from “The New World Order,” which continually propagates a human nature that is money and power rich for some, yet spiritually and resource wise impoverishing for many more. Žižek thinks that answers lie in breaching ethnic and nationalistic lines of authority and division.

Žižek fears not that Ukraine doesn’t know what it is getting into by emancipating itself so as to join Europe, but that Europeans in general remain hesitant to continue to develop and engage with a inclusive culture of equality. In regards to politics, this is disappointing in that Europeans fought hard for humanistic rights over the centuries. The spirit of liberté that helped drive the revolutionaries of the Maidan was reminiscent of the 18th century, French revolution. But as the situation slips

10, 2015, 11:30 pm. And “Why both the left and the right have got it wrong on Ukraine”, *The Guardian*, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jun/10/ukraine-slavoj-zizek-lenin>, Tuesday 10 June 2014, 05.00 EDT.

⁴⁵ See Žižek, “What Europe should learn from Ukraine” *Blog Da Boitempo*, 31/03/2014, <http://blogdaboitempo.com.br/2014/03/31/zizek-what-europe-should-learn-from-ukraine/>, Accessed January 10, 2015, 11:30 pm. He writes in his ongoing blog, “The Ukrainian Rightist nationalism is part of a renewed anti-immigrant populist vogue which presents itself as the defense of Europe. The danger of this new Right was clearly perceived a century ago by G.K. Chesterton who, in his *Orthodoxy*, deployed the fundamental deadlock of the critics of religion: “Men who begin to fight the Church for the sake of freedom and humanity end by flinging away freedom and humanity if only they may fight the Church.” Does the same not hold for the advocates of religion themselves? How many fanatical defenders of religion started with ferociously attacking the contemporary secular culture and ended up forsaking any meaningful religious experience? And does the same not hold also for the recent rise of the defenders of Europe against the immigrant threat? In their zeal to protect Christian legacy, the new zealots are ready to forsake the true heart of this legacy.”

back into one of continued conflict, one realizes that political ideals and dialog is not enough, as we saw with the philosophy of Arendt. At the current Ukrainian impasse with Russian separatists, I think Europeans should think more about Žižek’s criticism and continue emphasize the inter-relational aspects of their communities and by using religiousness as an inter-cultural tool to avoid further violence.

In *Art as Experience* Dewey explains that the aesthetics of worshipping icons changed after the 787 A.D. Second Council of Nicea. It was then that Christian churches begin to censor the symbolization of icons, consequently the liberal Christian culture entered a more politicized and elitist aesthetic era.⁴⁶ Dewey’s main thesis in *Art as Experience* is that art motivates people’s embodied feelings of religiousness through the everyday relationships of culture and community, which have been in modern times abstracted from everyday experience. Dewey placed great emphasis on everyday experiences, not calling for them to be only political, in relation to values and community building but to be artistic. Compatibly to his ideas commonplace icons are not considered by the faithful as being any less genuinely inspirational or aesthetically motivating, then their rarified museum counterparts.

During the heyday of the Maidan, artists working with a myriad of mediums immersed themselves into their revolutionary ethos. Jon Lee Anderson, a journalist for the New York Times arrived on the scene after the fall of Yanukovich’s government. The photographer Monteleone, who documented the everyday iconography of the revolution accompanied him.⁴⁷ Anderson describes how Monteleone’s pictures - which feature objects from the camp, in high relief, shot with a single reflex camera, and using an intense color sensitive

⁴⁶ Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 343.

⁴⁷ Jon Lee Anderson, “Revolutionary Relics”, *New Yorker*, <http://www.newyorker.com/culture/photo-booth/revolutionary-relics>, May 1, 2014, Accessed June 15, 2014, 11:30 am.

film, represent the co-passionate, collective spirit of the camp. Although he titles his article "Revolutionary Relic," Anderson does not talk about Monteleone's photographs of icons found amongst the camp's artifacts as religious, instead he presents the photos as material culture, a hand painted helmet, a book, a glove, bullets, a pillow.

One of the photos is of a miniature icon that carries an immense collective cultural history, although it is in its humble, commonplace presence that it seems exceptionally inspirational. The small icon is a Theotokos, Birth-Giver of God, and it is rendered in cross-stitch embroidery, on a piece of cloth that is lined on its upper and lower edges by tiny seed pearls. This cloth is mounted on muslin covered foam board behind its 2 ½ by 3-½ inch gold painted frame. The image is familiar, as it is a duplicate of a well-known icon of The Holy Mother. Her figure is always bordered in purple, the color of Creation, and stars that in the Maidan embroidered icon have been stitched over a lapis blue ground surround her. Her body is robed in red, the color of human vigor, and her gold halo is outlined in white, the color of divine light, which is symbolic of her immaculate holiness and closeness to God. Her poised frontal figure seems understated as it blends into the blue field, but her slim face is detailed with finely stitched golden threads. Her head is tilted in reverence, though her expression is not downcast but direct with focused and enthralling eyes. Her hands are crossed in supplication and from her fingers emanate the seven rays of wisdom, which are the symbolic tools of the Holy Spirit. In Monteleone's photograph the icon is suspended on a black ground, as are all the other common-place objects from the Maidan camp. Yet all of the objects, including the gaze of the Theotokos reach out to the viewer visually across the layers of representation and mediums; the computer screen, the photograph, the framed icon, the embroidered cloth, the designed configuration of the portrayal, to meet the onlooker's gaze.

This tiny, personal icon would have been carried in someone's coat or purse throughout the difficult days in the Square, but Monteleone employs it as a public call to arms, not only for contemplation but also for interpretation. If a person is devotedly Orthodox or Catholic they would know that the little piece of stitch work is the same image as its more illustrious sister icon, the Our Lady of the Gate of Dawn, housed in the morning chapel at the Medieval Gate of the Vilnius Cathedral in Lithuania. The Cathedral is both a holy site, drawing pilgrims from all over the world, and a symbol of Lithuania's centuries old struggle for independence, which was finally achieved in 1990. The Cathedral's and the icon's history and their part in Europe's history is too complex to recount, but there is one aspect that is particularly relevant. The icon is for Lithuanians and Poles a reminder of their joint uprising to free their Commonwealth from Russian rule in 1795. A Polish revolutionary from that uprising, General Tadeuze Kosciuszko, who was also a General and military engineer in the American Revolution, lead the Commonwealth's insurrection. Kosciuszko initiated the campaign by writing a landmark proclamation, (the Proclamation of Potaniec), which was circulated throughout the Commonwealth and Europe. It abolished serfdom and granted civil liberties to all peasants. This was the first official manifesto of its kind in Eastern European history.⁴⁸ However Maksym Zaluzniak a Ukrainian hero of the people who fought against the Polish aristocracy and the Russian government in 1768, had first put ideas for equal humanitarian rights. The Ukrainian and Polish/Lithuanian revolutions failed at that time but the uprisings are considered the beginning of the spread of Modern Political thought throughout Eastern Europe. The Vilnius icon is considered a source of strength in the face of unbeatable odds for these cultures. The icon is replicated in Catholic and Greek Orthodox churches alike, in many countries around the

⁴⁸ István Rév, *Retroactive Justice: Prehistory of Post-communism*, (Stanford, Ca.: Stanford University Press, 2005), 98.

world from Ukraine, Poland, Belarus, Turkey, Brazil, United Kingdom, and the United States. As well as being symbolic of previous revolutions and humanitarian theories, *Our Lady of the Gate of Dawn* is also distinct because the image of the Holy Mother is without child, and this icon stands out as a strong feminine statement. The icon can be thought of as inspirational in relation to more dynamic roles for women in Orthodox and Catholic churches.

Égalité in Europe meant freedom-in-equality, and that idea stands out in the passages of history as a unique and great contribution of Europe to the global political imagination.⁴⁹ But a political nationalistic idea of freedom is not enough to create just and safe states. To be more fully effective in our belief in democracy we must realize values of inclusiveness that are made everyday through our common relationships with each other. Liberty is better realized as a religious feeling of personal and cultural inclusiveness and wholeness than as a pre-conceptualized scheme or an idealized theme for discussion. Likewise, people around the world deserve better than a limited, static freedom based on consumerism and inauthentic images of our communities. We all deserve to be valued, as we are all boundless and free as participants in divine experiences.

Yet it is true that political and religious institutions have separated religiousness from aesthetics modes of action. Many religious leaders remain caught in static and immobile public positions, and just as many continue to vie for power through statehood. Religion, not religiousness is often used as an institutional structure of control to embody immovable, intractable positions of power. It is no wonder that prayerful communion is often thought of just a continuation of the forces of politics and economics. But through understanding religious aesthetics as *presenting* us with a better, more equal and just world, which we can feel and act on, our values and motivations can change moving us closer to forging peaceful and community-minded solutions to political problems.

For in the coat pocket of a activist fighting for freedom, on the front line, the icon image is not a stand-in for a political ideology, or a conceptualized critical theory, it is not a strategic weapon, nor a work of art that will soon be put up for auction; but it is, as Dewey said, a saturated image of who we are culturally. For our feelings and perceptions radically transfigure our values, and those values are re-presented through our collective traditions and histories, hopefully allowing our compassion and openness for an diverse world including many people's hopes and beliefs for the future, to win over violence and separatism time and time again.

⁴⁹ Žižek, "Why both the left and the right have got it wrong on Ukraine", *The Guardian*, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jun/10/ukraine-slavoj-zizek-lenin>, Tuesday 10 June 2014, 05.00 EDT.

II. IMAGINATION, ART AND THE CORRUPTION OF SENSIBILITY

THE CO-OPTIONATION OF SENSIBILITY AND THE SUBVERSION OF BEAUTY

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ABSTRACT: *The aesthetic analysis of everyday life has developed an important body of work whose significance extends beyond the academy. Because of its ubiquity in experience, aesthetic sensibility has many manifestations, both overt and concealed. This paper examines some largely hidden ways in which taste and aesthetic judgment, which are manifested in sense experience, have been subtly appropriated and exploited. I identify and describe such procedures as the cooption (or appropriation) of aesthetic sensibility, a phenomenon that has consequences damaging to health, to society, and to environment. These practices are a form of negative aesthetics that distorts and manipulates sensible experience in the interest of mass marketing and political control. Such practices have grave ethical significance and carry social and political implications that suggest another role for aesthetics, a critical one: aesthetics as an instrument for social analysis and political criticism.*

Arnold Berleant (b. 1932 –)

[Epigraph]

In due time, the theory of aesthetics will have to account not only for the delight in Kantian beauty and the sublime, but for the phenomena like aesthetic violence and the aestheticization of violence, of aesthetic abuse and intrusion, the blunting of sensibility, its perversion, and its poisoning.

Katya Mandoki, *Everyday Aesthetics: Prosaics, the Plan of Culture, and Social Identities* (2007).

I.

As a philosopher, I think of emancipation in cognitive terms. It is intellectual enlightenment of the sort that Francis Bacon attempted to instate by exposing "the idols and false notions which are now in possession of the human understanding, and have taken deep root therein...." (*Novum Organum*, 1620, xxxviii) It is Spinoza's (1632-1677) ideal of a mind, freed from the blinding force of the emotions and guided by adequate ideas, a mind that achieves true equanimity (*The Ethics*, 1677).

That we still struggle for emancipation is a humbling fact. At the same time, in our day the obstacles to emancipation are not only ignorance of natural causes or human psychology that clouds the understanding. Our need for emancipation continues to come from inadequate ideas and false systems of philosophy (Bacon's "Idols of the Theatre") from sources undreamed of in the seventeenth century or, indeed, in some cases, unknown before the immediate present. It is with emancipation from these last sources that I am concerned here.

Since the material of the philosophic enterprise is ideas, it is in that realm that, as philosophers, we can hope to contribute. From a pragmatic orientation, the contribution should be ideas that make a difference in behavior, unlike most philosophical discourse. And in keeping with the social context of behavior, such ideas should contribute to behavior that works toward emancipation in the social process. A thoughtful European philosopher once commented on "the difference between a man who is led solely by feeling or opinion, and a man who is led by reason. "The former," he wrote, "whether he will it or not, performs actions of which he is utterly ignorant; the latter is his own master and only performs such actions that he knows are of primary importance in life and therefore chiefly desires [them]. Therefore I call the former a slave, and the latter a free man...."¹

Guided by Spinoza's idea of freedom, I would like to approach the subject of emancipation, presumably a moral and political concern, from the unlikely direction of aesthetics. The observation in my recent book, *Sensibility and Sense: The Aesthetic Transformation of the Human World*, serves as the frame of my comments:

Aesthetic values are no longer confined to the museum and the scenic drive where they are honored but kept isolated and innocuous. They have become increasingly

¹ Spinoza, *The Ethics*, Part IV, Prop. LXVI, Note. *The Chief Works of Benedict de Spinoza*, trans. R.H.M. Elwes (New York: Dover, 1951), Vol. II, p. 232. I have slightly modernized the translation.

prominent in conflicts with values in morality, religion, economics, environment, and social life.²

Over the past half century, philosophical aesthetics has broadened its scope beyond an interest in beauty in the arts and in nature. Following the lead of the arts themselves, the field of aesthetics has spread outward to encompass the environment in all its forms, not only the scenic landscape but the devastated one, as well, and not only the natural environment but the urban environment.³ Over the past half century a considerable body of literature on environmental aesthetics has grown out of these concerns. Aesthetic inquiry has also been directed at humans: personal experiences and relationships, the human body itself, social behavior, and political manifestations are being studied and assessed from an aesthetic vantage. Most recently, over the past decade or so, ordinary objects and experiences have preoccupied a growing number of scholars, and the aesthetics of everyday life has become a center of attention.

This work has had a profound effect on the field of aesthetics. Not only does aesthetic inquiry now embrace the objects, activities, and experiences of human life without constraint; it necessarily implicates other areas of philosophy. As aesthetic inquiry embraces social domains, ethical and even metaphysical concerns cannot be ignored. When eyes sensitive to beauty in art and nature encounter the objects and activities of ordinary life, they see not only their hidden charms⁴ but also their failings.⁵ Aesthetics then becomes a moral instrument and

even a political factor in developing new thought in social and political aesthetics.⁶

The aesthetics of everyday life offers a fresh perspective on the world of ordinary experience, revealing facets that have long gone unremarked. These experiences may not be spectacular and may even be routine. Aesthetic value is discovered in common objects, conditions, and situations, ranging from the houses, landscaping, and trees encountered during a walk in one's own neighborhood, to basking in the spring sunshine; from tossing a ball back and forth and even, one scholar has suggested, to finding a certain aesthetic satisfaction in hanging laundry.⁷ As Yuriko Saito has noted, "We are yet to develop an aesthetic discourse regarding artifacts such as utensils, furniture, and other objects with which we interact in everyday environment and activities that we undertake with them, such as cleaning, cooking, and socializing with others."⁸ All these offer occasions of delighting in the sensible experience of an ordinary situation and the sheer sensory pleasure of being alive.⁹

² Arnold Berleant, *Sensibility and Sense: The Aesthetic Transformation of the Human World* (Charlottesville: Imprint Academic, 2010), p. 156.

³ Yuriko Saito, "The Aesthetics of Unscenic Nature," *JAAC* (Vol. 56, No. 2, Spring 1998), 101-111.

⁴ Thomas Leddy, *The Extraordinary in the Ordinary: The Aesthetics of Everyday Life* (Peterborough, Ont: Broadview, 2012).

⁵ See Arnold Berleant, *Sensibility and Sense*, Ch. Nine, "The Negative Aesthetics of Everyday Life" and Ch. Ten, "Art, Terrorism, and the Negative Sublime."

⁶ See Crispin Sartwell, *Political Aesthetics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010); Davide Panagia, *The Political Life of Sensation* (Duke University Press, 2009); Arnold Berleant, *Sensibility and Sense*, Part Three: Social Aesthetics; Arnold Berleant, *Aesthetics beyond the Arts* (Ashgate, 2012), ch.16, "The Aesthetic Politics of Environment."

⁷ Pauliina Rautio, "On Hanging Laundry: The Place of Beauty in Managing Everyday Life," *Contemporary Aesthetics* 7 (2009).

⁸ Yuriko Saito, "Future Directions for Environmental Aesthetics," *Environmental Aesthetics: Crossing Divides and Breaking Ground*, ed. Martin Drenthen and Jozef Keulartz (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), p. 26.

⁹ The literature on everyday aesthetics is already substantial and growing. While it is a recent trend, it has long been recognized. See, for example, John Dewey, *Art as Experience* (New York: Minton, Balch, and Co., 1934) and Melvin Rader and Bertram Jessup, *Art and Human Values* (Englewood Cliffs, Prentice-Hall, 1976), especially chapter 5. Important contributions to the resurgence of interest in everyday aesthetics are *Aesthetics of Everyday Life*, ed. Andrew Light and Jonathan M. Smith (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005); Katya Mandoki, *Everyday Aesthetics: Prosaics, the Play of*

We are not sufficiently aware that the origins of aesthetic value lie in sense experience. That this is the case is shown not only in the etymology of the term 'aesthetics' (from the Greek *aisthēsis*, perception by the senses) but also in the dependence of aesthetic appreciation on the sensory content of our encounter with a work of art or a natural landscape. This encounter centers on perceptual experience: acuteness in viewing, listening, touching---the full somatic engagement with the rich world of sensible experience in which we are inextricably embedded.¹⁰

For such reasons, etymological and experiential as well as historical, I think of aesthetics as the theory of sensibility. Whether sensibility be concerned with the arts, with nature, or with perceptual experience as such, aesthetic appreciation centers on a sensitivity to perceptual qualities as they are directly experienced, to their qualitative sensoriness. We experience the pleasures of sensibility in the arts and in natural beauty, but such sensory gratification also occurs in the activity of savoring the flavors, textures, and aromas of a well-prepared dinner. It is part of the pleasure we take in the cut, color, and fabric of new clothes. It is the delight we have in the intense, low-angled sunlight that causes fall foliage to glow or the snowy landscape to gleam. It occurs, too, in confronting the color abstraction of a Rothko or Frankenthaler painting. Such experience lies at the center of the delight, the pleasure, the emotional feelings associated with beauty wherever we encounter it. Clearly, sensibility is not the whole of art or of beauty but it lies at its core. This understanding of aesthetic

value differs from how it is commonly understood, associated as it is almost entirely with the fine arts and with scenic beauty in nature. Identifying aesthetics with sensibility captures the central force in the value we take in the activity of aesthetic appreciation, whether of the arts, of nature, or of ordinary life.

II.

Because of its ubiquity, sensibility has many manifestations, both overt and concealed. I want to examine here some largely hidden practices by which aesthetic sensibility has been subtly appropriated and exploited. These practices have resulted in what I call "the co-optation of sensibility." Their damaging consequences to health, society, and environment are incalculable. Let me explain.

As one cannot help being aware, the developed world has fostered an industrial-commercial culture obsessed with profitability. From schools to public agencies, no institution is immune to the business imperative of reducing costs and increasing profits. Service institutions, whose *raison d'être* is to meet people's needs and promote the transmission of culture, are particularly vulnerable, since the high labor costs of providing services is a major expense and directly impedes the maximization of profit. This model has taken a firmer and firmer hold on schools and universities, on health care, and public services of every kind. All have been subsumed under the model of profit-making enterprises.

It doesn't take much insight to recognize this pervasive pattern. Education has been turned into a lucrative business whose degrees are sometimes offered and acquired with minimal requirements. Even our public schools have become outlets for the marketing of junk food through vending machines in the hallways and commercialized school lunches, part of a pervasive and insidious pattern of exploiting children as consumers. Furthermore, who owns the air? Who owns the lakes and streams? Our environmental commons has been

Culture and Social Identities (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007); Yuriko Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Thomas Leddy, *The Extraordinary in the Ordinary: The Aesthetics of Everyday Life* (Peterborough, Ont: Broadview, 2012); *Aesthetics of Everyday Life, East and West*, ed. Liu Yuedi and Curtis L. Carter (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publ., 2014).

¹⁰ Cf. A. Berleant, "What Is Aesthetic Engagement?", *Contemporary Aesthetics*, Vol. 11 (2013), <http://www.contempaesthetics.org/newvolume/pages/article.php?articleID=684>

captured by industry, leading to air and water pollution as a by-product of industrial processes. The pattern is bold and blatant and it is pernicious, for what suffers is the public and its need for conditions and services that make living in community healthful and fulfilling, rather than a situation that is oppressive, tense, exhausting, and exploitative.

We can see this pattern most clearly in the privatization and appropriation of our environmental and technological commons, from the visual pollution of billboards and power lines infesting scenic landscapes to the industrial pollution of our rivers and the very air we breathe.¹¹ Everyone, moreover, is presumed to have a right to the benefits of innovative technological resources, whether electronic devices or flights to luxury vacations in distant places. Sometimes their pursuit is justified as a panacea for real or presumed ills, but often it is merely self-indulgence. Everything has a price and everyone expects to be able to afford it.¹² Actually, the taste for the most up-to-date is a constructed taste, a cultivated desire that is ideologically driven through intensive advertising in the service of the profit motive. Coupled with this is the pervasiveness of the commercial pressure that not only impinges on us in public places but insinuates itself onto the very clothes we wear in the form of commercial logos on their front and bald advertisements covering their back, turning the purchaser into a walking billboard.

Profit is, of course, the principal motive of most business enterprises, and I am not condemning it as such. What can be contested is whether the business model can serve as a universal template for the social order. Actually, some individuals in the business community are concerned about business ethics, and this area of applied ethics has received attention in recent years from scholars.¹³ What is at issue, however, is whether

that model justifies manipulative and exploitative practices and, more to the point of this essay, the practices widely followed that I shall describe as the co-optation of sensibility.

For there is a less obvious and exploitative practice in our profit-obsessed culture that is almost completely hidden. It is a subtle form of subverting the genuinely human capacity for fulfillment that lies at the heart of the aesthetic. For there is, I believe, what some writers have called an “aesthetic need.”¹⁴ We commonly seek out situations that reward our desire for the pleasures of sensible experience. We visit gardens, parks, and art museums; we engage in a wide range of non-competitive outdoor experiences, such as swimming, hiking, and camping; we take delight in colors, clothes, cuisine, a new car; we attend concerts, festivals, and rituals; we stroll through an historic district. All these have diverse appeal but they share the intense gratification we get from sensible experience and the uplift that comes from being taken out of ourselves, expanding our very sense of being alive by engaging in such experiences. The impulse to engage in aesthetic experience is, I think, widely shared though mostly undeveloped. It is important that we recognize it. It is important that we cultivate it.

But in our contemporary intensely commercial culture, no pure impulse is allowed to remain unsullied if it can be made to serve profitable ends, and our aesthetic need can be exploited all too easily. When “the public” is transformed into “the consumer,” everyone is vulnerable. Not only is our desire for sensible experience taken over; our very sensibility is corrupted by isolating and exaggerating it. Our impulse for beauty, for delight, for sensory satisfaction is widely appropriated in the service of maximizing profit at the expense of the pleasure and fulfillment of individual people and of society as a whole. This is the co-optation of sensibility.

¹¹ Small efforts at mitigation do not alter the basic pattern.

¹² This expectation and practice supports the credit card industry.

¹³ See the *Journal of Business Ethics*

(www.springer.com/...ethics/journal/105...).

¹⁴ Melvin Rader and Bertram Jessup, *Aesthetics and Human Values*.

The word 'co-optation' is not in common use but it has special significance in social and political critique.¹⁵ It means "secretly appropriating," taking something over to serve one's own interests. In this aesthetic case, the appropriation is hidden so that the "victim" is entirely unaware of what is being perpetrated.

The co-optation of sensibility in *food and drink* may be most easily recognized. Consider the appeal of sweetness. Soft drinks contain so much sugar that, in granular form, it usually fills over half the container. Normal thirst and the appeal of a sweet taste are turned into a commercial drink of high profitability but with unhealthy effects. Moreover, sugar is regularly added to most prepared foods, from breakfast cereal¹⁶ to salad dressing, not to mention being a major ingredient in

baked goods and most canned and packaged foods, as well as in fruit juices and other kinds of drinks.

Having a sweet tooth is more than an innocent indulgence; it carries consequences for health. Sugar is associated with what is called the metabolic syndrome: obesity, heart disease, and diabetes. Moreover, sugar is addictive and plays a part in encouraging the consumption of other addictive substances, including the caffeine in "Coke" and coffee and in a range of alcoholic drinks including wine, liqueur, and mixed drinks. Salt is another food substance where a tasteful and necessary substance is often found to excess in most prepared foods and a "taste" for salt is encouraged. At the same time, its influence in heightening blood pressure is well-documented.

Other gastronomic examples are plentiful. Consider the high use of fats and oils in deep-fried fast food that leads to obesity and high cholesterol levels.¹⁷ French fries are a vivid example, where the fat-saturated outer crust often penetrates and displaces any soft potato core. In addition, cream or cheese sauces are ladled over many dishes, preceded by cream soup and accompanied by a lavish supply of rolls and butter, not to mention the rich dessert offerings. Please note that I am not condemning the appeal of such foods but rather the encouragement of patterns of exaggerated taste and over-consumption that underlie their use. Taste is largely formed by learning, and the omnipresence of advertising encourages and underlies the acquisition of such inflated desires. To put it baldly, our very sensibility is being exaggerated in order to encourage profitable consumption.

¹⁵ What I mean by 'co-optation' is neither an external force working on sensibility nor an internal impulse but a cultural phenomenon whereby sensitivities and perceptual desires (appetites) grounded in the human organism are quietly appropriated by social-cultural mechanisms, such as (subliminal) advertising, mis-education, influences on style and crowd behavior, etc. for purposes not consciously chosen by the percipient. Those purposes may be political (in a broad, inclusive sense), economic or, more generally, social.

¹⁶ "General Mills' Vanilla, Chocolate and Cinnamon Chex boxes all proudly display a label that should make many health-conscious consumers happy: 'no high fructose corn syrup.' The only problem: it's not true. These General Mills products all contain a super-concentrated sweetener that is made from high fructose corn syrup, and within the Big Ag industry is literally called "HFCS-90" or high fructose corn syrup-90. But then the Corn Refiners Association changed the name to "fructose."¹ And now General Mills is not only disingenuously hiding their corn syrup behind this innocuous alias -- the company is bragging that it's products don't contain any! The "fructose" label is especially nefarious, since fructose is a naturally occurring fruit sugar, and HFCS-90 is a highly concentrated, highly processed product that is molecularly different from the fructose you would eat in your apple. The corn industry waves away HFCS-90 as a minor ingredient, stating "HFCS-90, is sometimes used in natural and 'light' foods, where very little is needed to provide sweetness." But that's clearly not the case. According to the label, there is actually more HFCS-90 in Cinnamon Chex than there is actual cinnamon!" ["High-fructose corn syrup more toxic than sugar, study finds," Oregonian, 1/5/15;](#) ["General Mills Will Stop Marketing Synthetic Products As 'Natural' To Make Them Appear Healthier," Credo petition, 20 Jan 15.](#) act@credoaction.com. Accessed 11/19/14.

¹⁷ The "Big Mac," for example, is a hamburger consisting of two high-fat patties topped by a slice of American cheese, with dressing, lettuce, pickles, and onions on a sesame bun, all of which contains as much or more fat than protein. In the U.S., A Big Mac contains 29 grams of fat to 25 grams of protein, with similar proportions in the many other countries where Macdonald's restaurants are found. Japan has the highest proportion of fat: 30.5 grams to 25.5 grams of protein. See the article and references on "Big Mac" in *Wikipedia* (accessed 11 Nov 2014).

Smell is another sense modality that has been co-opted. False fragrances are infused into a multitude of products, from hand cream and bar soap to laundry and dish detergents, so that it is difficult to know how anything actually smells. Fragrant overlays suffuse hotel rooms and emanate from pets and people. A principal source of perceptual information has been lost. Still another impingement on sensibility lies in the garish colors used in clothing, home decoration and, of course, in print advertising and on the Internet. Strident colors are so widespread on signs and clothing that subtle and muted colors are not noticed or have simply disappeared from the marketplace altogether.

Musical *sound* has a place in nearly every culture and it is especially prevalent in modern developed societies. Sound is an elusive phenomenon. While we can usually identify its source, sound spreads broadly and, like perfume, tends to envelop us. This is one of the appealing qualities of musical experience, but in some cases this attractive feature is exaggerated so as to become oppressive and inescapable. Extremely high volume is used in some rock concerts to increase the appeal of the music and create a manic, indeed frenetic audience response. Such high volume is intended to impress the audience by its sheer force, and indeed one can literally feel the physical pressure of the sound waves. This presumably attracts a large attendance and makes such entertainment highly profitable. Other consequences may take a little longer to recognize, such as the hearing loss from damage to the tiny hair-like cells in the cochlea of the inner ear that are the auditory nerve receptors.

Even the auditory environment is not safe. Because sound is intangible and invisible, it is easily imposed on others with impunity. Public space has long been taken over by businesses that sell sound in the form of canned music to fill empty sound-space. Commercial sound saturates transitional public places, such as waiting rooms, bars, restaurants, malls, and even the streets. And when canned sound is not present, people

cooperate by supplying it through their own headsets. Silence, even relative silence, has become a rarity.

Then there are the means by which sensibility is *distorted or drugged*. One of the most widespread and insidious practices of cultivating sensory pleasure for profit is, of course, cigarette smoking. Few smokers enjoyed their first cigarette: the taste is unpleasant, the smoke choking, the physical effects nauseating. But the appeal of emulating celebrities, the desire to display sophistication, peer pressure, and the attraction of transgression are powerful incentives. The tobacco industry uses these successfully to create the desire in many people to overcome their initial distaste, gradually leading to an acquired taste and nicotine addiction with its deleterious consequences.

The use of alcohol has become a regular pastime for many people, reinforced in popular culture on TV and in film by romanticizing drinking and appealing to self-indulgence. It is much like the way cigarette smoking was associated with sophistication until its damaging effects on health were shown to be so widespread and costly that legal measures were enacted in some developed countries to prohibit smoking in public places and by the young. Alcohol abuse may be somewhat less visible than smoking, but it is a public health problem of epidemic proportions. At the same time, the production and dissemination of alcohol is a major industry for drugging sensibilities, and its manifold forms, from beer, wine, and iced tea to mixed and straight drinks, is widely encouraged on many social and economic levels. The excessive use of alcohol is a major public health menace that carries high personal and social costs.

A related instance in which sensibility has been co-opted is pornography. The pornography industry profits enormously from appropriating people's normal erotic sensibility, removing it from feelings of caring and the richness of complex human relationships, narrowing it into pure titillation, and exaggerating it by excess in order to stimulate erotic feelings by focusing on pure sensuality.

It is clear the co-optation of sensibility is a distinctive mode of aesthetic exploitation. Some of its techniques are easily recognized once they have been identified, such as the *exaggeration* or vulgarizing of sensory stimuli in order to enhance their direct appeal. Other modes of sensory manipulation include the *perceptual deceit* in falsifying perception through the use of chemical fragrances and flavors that emulate natural ones. Such perceptual deceit is not confined to the food industry but is pervasive in the cleaning and sanitary supplies used in households and public facilities.

But there is yet another form of sensory manipulation that is directly psychological without the intermediary of tempting foods or entertainment. This consists in using sensory stimuli to create low-level anxiety, making people less attentive, less in control, even spaced-out, and so more suggestible and vulnerable. Chimes, bells, canned music, repeated public announcements, sprayed aromas are pervasive in virtually every public place: waiting rooms, lobbies, supermarkets, retail stores.

This promotion of anxiety assumes a particularly insidious form of sensory manipulation when it cultivates the apprehension of *violence*. Violence is made commonplace through insistent exposure in film, television, computer games, and on the Internet. It is the substance of TV news programs and news channels and a habitual form of mass audience entertainment. Violent behavior is depicted as commonplace and acceptable, and it is put to political use in justifying restrictions and control by exaggerating a sense of alarm in an endless succession of crises beyond immediate circumstances where there may be reasonable danger, crises that range from impending changes in the weather to political confrontations and belligerent actions between ethnic, religious, and national groups. The heightened sensibility of violence pervades public places, leading to often exaggerated security conditions. All this has an underlying aesthetic foundation in creating a permanent sensibility of alarm by cultivating a simmering somatic state of apprehension.

There is a pattern behind these practices that it is important to isolate and identify; indeed, this is the purpose of my discussion. The practice of influencing, of deliberately cultivating a distorted sensibility, altering people's taste and responses to an exaggerated or excessive degree without their clear awareness or consent, this is what I am calling *the co-optation of sensibility*. The ability to experience sensory pleasure is at the center of aesthetic appreciation of the arts, and sensible enjoyment plays a central part in most of the experiences of living. The practices I am identifying appropriate this native ability and exploit it in order to create a market for extreme tastes. Thus the very capacity for perceptual enjoyment is appropriated and shaped mainly for profit or control. To seduce our aesthetic need and capacity by creating a desire for extreme degrees of sensory craving in order to capture a consumer market is, I believe, both aesthetically and morally vicious.¹⁸ Our very sense of beauty is subverted by exaggeration and excess. This is a pattern of manipulation that pervades industrial-commercial culture and it is promoted for multiple purposes, from creating the market for a fashion and the conformity it encourages, to acquiring the political control such conformity enables.

It might seem that I am condemning all those appealing qualities and things that give pleasure to daily life, but that is not so. The problem, as I see it, is not in liking the taste of sugar, salt, or alcohol, or in seeking erotic pleasure. It lies in the pursuit of profit or control by sensory manipulation to promote excessive indulgence through miseducating our sensibilities regardless of their detrimental effects on health and wellbeing. That is to say, our sensory delight in tastes and flavors, our curiosity and interests, have been deliberately mis-

¹⁸ Cultivating an exaggerated sensibility in the art market by paintings of greater than life size and colorful excess by artists such as Roy Lichtenstein and Chuck Close might be said to symbolize as well as represent this practice. I do not ascribe to such artists the devious manipulation of the advertising industry but rather cite them as perhaps succumbing to its influence.

schooled. Sensible pleasures have been exaggerated and encouraged to the point of overindulgence, resulting in higher profits for their producers and woeful consequences to their consumers. Our desires, our judgments of taste, our very sensibility have been co-opted: they have been appropriated and exaggerated and our self-indulgence encouraged in the interests of commercial profit and political control.

It is not my intent here to condemn the profit motive, as such, but rather to expose its causal influence in this practice of aesthetic exploitation by promoting, indeed educating the public to hyper-sensation, so to say. The tastes I have been discussing rest on normal impulses but they are vulnerable to exploitation. To appropriate these desires, to intensify and exaggerate them by encouraging harmful patterns of excessive consumption, is to take advantage of people's vulnerability by exploiting their aesthetic needs. Such practices are unmitigated moral wrongs.

The insidiousness of sensory co-optation lies in the stealthy insinuation and cultivation of a distorted perceptual sensibility. The analysis I have offered of this phenomenon of mass culture documents the pervasiveness of the aesthetic in daily life and reveals ways in which it has been misused.¹⁹ Be that as it may, it

¹⁹ A revealing account of the practice of shaping sensibility for the purpose of promoting profit is what is known as the "experience economy," a concept introduced by Joseph Pine II and James Gilmore ("Welcome to the Experience Economy," *Harvard Business Review*, July-August, 1998, 97-105). I thank Yuriko Saito for this reference. As she describes it, "this economy is premised on the belief that it is insufficient for today's business to merely sell goods and services. They must also sell experiences associated with the environment surrounding the sale of their goods and services. The branding of Apple distinguishes not only the Apple products but also the whole atmosphere of Apple Store. The same applies to phenomena such as Niketown, Hard Rock Café, and Starbucks. Sometimes referred to as 'shoppertainment' or 'entertailing,' (99), everything in the store is scripted and designed to promote 'customer participation,' 'environmental relationship,' and 'a well-defined theme' through 'engage(ing) all five senses' (102-104). For example, 'the

could be objected that every culture possesses its own complex, pervasive sensibility. We can identify distinctive preferences in culinary taste, characteristic smells, bodily deportment, patterns of physical movement, speech intonation, vocal quality and style, soundscape—the full range of human sensibility—that characterize particular social classes, societies, and historical epochs. Why condemn mass industrial culture for elaborating its own distinctive sensibility?

This objection rests on a true premise: every culture imbues its members with a range of awareness that is indigenous to the human world it elaborates. We do not choose our cultural sensibility any more than we choose our native language, our parentage, or our ethnicity. We may decide, later, to adopt another, but rarely can this be done completely. Vestiges of our natal culture remain—in speech intonation, in choice of colors and style of dress, in posture, in facial expression.

Yet the sensible characteristics I have been identifying here emerge from different origins and motives and implicate a different morality. And they carry clear consequences and invoke a different order of moral judgment. The critique of mass consumer culture I have been elaborating here is not confined to that condition, alone. At the same time, I do not endorse a relativism of cultures. I believe that a cultural order that does not value and respect human life *eo ipso* but denigrates others who are different in skin color, religion, customs, or language is lower on a scale of civilization than one

mist at the Rainforest Café appeals serially to all five senses. It is first apparent as a sound: Sss-sss-zzz. Then you see the mist rising from the rocks and feel it soft and cool against your skin. Finally, you smell its tropical essence, and you taste (or imagine that you do) its freshness' (104). Or, recent proliferation of a bookstore combined with café is based upon the discovery that 'the aroma and taste of coffee go well with a freshly cracked book,' while one chain of laundromat went bust 'attempting to combine a bar and a coin-operated laundromat' because it was found that 'the smells of phosphates and hops, apparently, aren't mutually complementary' (105)." Yuriko Saito,, unpublished comments, American Society for Aesthetics annual meeting, San Antonio, TX, 31 Oct. 2014.

that respects difference on the basis of a common humanity. A society that benefits from the exploitation of other humans is lower on a scale of civilization than one that respects the varied manifestations of the human condition we all share.

III.

But let me now consider some of the *consequences* of aesthetic exploitation through encouraging sensory excess and the co-optation of sensibility. One is the corruption of taste. The rich source of human satisfaction in aesthetic pleasure is distorted by exaggeration, and the distortion becomes habitual. At the least, such excess encourages patterns of over-indulgence that may serve as compensation for the lack of other satisfactions. The yearning for sensory excess may also lead to extreme behavior and substance abuse. This is not to say that there is a necessary connection between an exaggerated sensibility and such effects, but rather that the habitual practice of sensory extremes cannot but have harmful consequences.

The effects of these practices have been extensively documented. I noted earlier the health problems caused by sugar addiction and the hearing loss from exposure to very high decibel levels. Indeed, sensory extremes can cause decreased perceptual sensitivity in general, so that we notice only gross stimuli. The quality of human life declines precipitously when whole regions of perceptual experience are distorted, impaired, or inaccessible.

The co-optation of sensibility has wide social and environmental consequences as well as personal ones. Let me offer one compelling illustration: the taste for sugar. The growth of the global market for sugar has been studied extensively and provides a dramatic example of the heinous effects of the extreme demand for sensory satisfaction. The sugar economy began in the fourteenth century and grew rapidly. This encouraged the widespread development of plantation agriculture, a system that displaced indigenous subsistence cultivation, resulting in a drastic decrease in food production for the

local economy. At the same time, the need for laborers to work the plantations led to the enslavement and the partial or complete extinction of certain native Caribbean Amerindian groups.²⁰ When this source of labor became insufficient, it encouraged the rapid growth of the African slave trade to replace it.²¹ A similar instance of sensory exploitation, in this case centering on public health, can be made for the tobacco economy. The tobacco industry spends billions of dollars a year on advertising, and tobacco use costs billions a year in medical expenses and lost productivity. Indeed, at the present time tobacco use is the second highest cause of death in the world.²²

Apart from the dramatic, large-scale consequences of sensory co-optation, there are pervasive social effects. Mass culture subjects people to constant ambient sound, to unsolicited visual intrusion, to the oppressive stimuli of the mass media and the pressures of mass population. These intrusions cannot help but produce a condition of sensory excess with the result that we may easily be overcome by perceptual exhaustion and become insensitive, even anaesthetized to sensory stimuli. Because these forces are so widespread and omnipresent, decreased sensibility overall cannot help but produce fundamental changes in the cultural ethos.

The co-optation of sensibility carries moral implications, as well. The appropriation of sensibility for profit, for control, or for other external motives violates fundamental ethical norms. Most forceful is the deeply-

²⁰ Arawaks and Caribs, among others.

²¹ The classic account of this history is Sidney W. Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985; Penguin, 1986). Another one can be found at http://www.learner.org/courses/worldhistory/support/reading_14_1.pdf, taken from Bridging World History, The Annenberg Foundation copyright © 2004.

²² Extensive information on the sugar and tobacco economies is readily available on the Internet and elsewhere.

rooted value in the sanctity of human life: the belief that life is the ultimate good and must be honored above all else. From the teachings in the Judeo-Christian traditions that, in the golden rule, oblige us to recognize our common humanity, to Kant's categorical imperative²³ that enjoins us against using other humans as means only, the Western ethical tradition subscribes to norms that condemn exploitative practices, including those I have been identifying here.

These practices have philosophical implications as well as social and moral ones. Hume's standard of taste has been violated.²⁴ The expert critic has been replaced by the authority of popular taste, taste that has been perceptually exaggerated in the service of consumption to the detriment of public health and the environment. The very capability for sensory perception has been damaged and the capacity for fine, nuanced aesthetic experience subverted, affecting not only perception in the arts but our sensory experience in general. Corrupted by exaggeration and distorted beyond recognition, the capability of developing discerning taste has been mis-educated in the service of excessive consumption: expert taste has become popular distaste.²⁵ As with other normative judgments, aesthetic judgment is capable of degrees of negativity, but the moral issue is always negative because taste, that is, aesthetic perception, has been manipulated for external ends.

The practices I have been describing are endemic in global industrial-commercial culture, where the miseducation of natural sensibility is promoted by a huge advertising industry.²⁶ There are undoubtedly

regional and national variations but the pattern is everywhere the same. Since these personal excesses feel "normal" to unreflective, miseducated consumers, their aesthetic harm is subtle yet sinister. The result of such widespread and comprehensive co-optation of our perceptual modalities is that our very sensibility has been appropriated, our aesthetic orientation in the world distorted, and our behavior made self-injurious. For these reasons the co-optation of sensibility is the more insidious because it distorts the very capacity for sensible perception. In subverting the beauty in experiencing aesthetic value by a discerning sensibility, it diminishes the richness of life.

The aesthetic analysis I have pursued in this essay is based on the observation of mass consumer culture in the United States. I expect that, with the rapid spread of a global economy, similar techniques of sensory co-optation are prevalent in other countries in the developed world, and perhaps even more so in third-world regions, where consumers are less experienced and more vulnerable to the marketing strategy of sensory co-optation.

This essay complements the important work now being done on the aesthetic characteristics of everyday life. Investigating the aesthetics of ordinary experience exposes domains of value hidden in common objects and situations. But there are other functions of everyday aesthetics besides uncovering new regions of positive aesthetic value. Exploring these areas reveals manifestations of aesthetic value that do not enhance the quality of experience but rather distort and diminish it in subtle as well as overt ways through the multiple forms and kinds of negative value.²⁷

²³ Immanuel Kant, *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysics of Morals*, trans. Thomas K. Abbott, Second Section.

²⁴ David Hume, "Of the Standard of Taste," in *Essays: Moral, Political, and Literary*, ed. Eugene F. Miller (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1985). Available online at www.csulb.edu/~jvancamp/361r15.html. This essay is widely anthologized.

²⁵ Witness the common condemnation of cultivated taste by calling it "elitist."

²⁶ My argument in this essay rests on an analysis of

practices endemic in the United States. I suspect that they are commonly found *pari passu* throughout the developed world wherever corporate culture has acquired the power to form and direct the sensibilities of the mass consumer.

²⁷ This essay deliberately does not consider the overt manipulation of consumers by all the techniques with which the advertising industry influences behavior.

This essay moves beyond the manifestly negative, exposing a mode of aesthetic negation that burrows beneath the surface of sensible experience and contaminates it by a practice I identify as the co-optation of sensibility. Such an analysis opens the way to further research in the psychology of perception, in social psychology and sociology, in business ethics and other related fields. Indeed, it shows how the aesthetic analysis of ordinary life has wide-reaching social and political implications, and an ethical significance that extends even farther. This suggests another role for aesthetics, a critical one: aesthetics as a tool of social analysis and political criticism. It remains to be seen where it will lead.^{28, 29}

Many of these are not concealed as are the practices described in this essay but, like them, may be considered instances of negative aesthetic value. See my discussion of negative aesthetics in *Sensibility and Sense: The Aesthetic Transformation of the Human World* (Exeter, UK: Imprint Academic, 2010), Chapter Nine: The Negative Aesthetics of Everyday Life. My concern in the present discussion has been with the negative aesthetic of a subtle but all the more insidious influence on sensibility.

²⁸ Spinoza may again be prescient: "...[A]ll those things which bring us pleasure are good. But seeing that things do not work with the object of giving us pleasure, and that their power of action is not tempered to suit our advantage, and, lastly, that pleasure is generally referred to one part of the body more than to the other parts; therefore most emotions of pleasure (unless reason and watchfulness be at hand), and consequently the desires arising therefrom, may become excessive. Moreover we may add that emotion leads us to pay most regard to what is agreeable in the present, nor can we estimate what is future with emotions equally vivid." *The Ethics*, Part IV, Prop. XXX, p. 242.

"We may thus readily conceive the power which clear and distinct knowledge, and especially that ... founded on the actual knowledge of God [nature] possesses over the emotions: if it does not absolutely destroy them, in so far as they are passions...; at any rate, it causes them to occupy a very small part of the mind." *The Ethics*, Part V, Prop. XX, Note, V, p. 256.

²⁹ I am grateful for suggestions and information from Riva Berleant-Schiller, Aleš Erjavec, Kevin Melchionne, and Larry Shiner.

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IMAGINATION, IMAGINARIES AND EMANCIPATION

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ABSTRACT: *This reflection on the topic of emancipation stems from an ongoing project in tune with a wider development in pragmatic philosophy. Specifically, the project aims to piece together some of the consequences of pragmatism's reconstruction of the tradition of philosophical inquiry, from the angle of human imagination. More recently this project has taken a different direction, in light of our critical situation under intensifying anti-democratic forces in the US, but also in many parliamentary democracies. Emancipation from forces that undermine democratic transformation is arguably a goal that anyone gathering under the banner of pragmatism shares. The use of the pronoun 'our' in modifying 'critical situation' above is intended. It points to the scope of the problem. The problematic situation of 'intensifying anti-democratic forces' that sets the agenda for pragmatic inquiry is most aptly termed 'neoliberal global hegemony'. Neoliberalism is a much-used technical term and its meaning is hotly contested. For the purposes of this paper, then, I would like to lift out several features common to almost all parties in the contest to provide a definition. This description will then be employed for the purposes of determining the character of the contemporary social context in which emancipatory practices take place. Second, by tying this description of the 'background' of our practices to the primacy of practical reason thesis, and specifically the role of imagination in practical reason, the pragmatic conception of agency comes into relief. A pragmatic conception of this social context of agency, the contemporary neoliberal imaginary, contributes to articulating prospects for emancipatory practice in a non-abstract sense. An example of experimentalist democratic practices of emancipation responding to crises generated by neoliberal practices is provided by recent efforts in worker co-operatives in Argentina.*

Imagination

This reflection on the topic of emancipation stems from an ongoing project in tune with a wider development in pragmatic philosophy.¹ Specifically, the project aims to piece together some of the consequences of pragmatism's reconstruction of the tradition of philosophical inquiry, from the angle of human imagination. More recently this project has taken a different direction, in light of our critical situation under intensifying anti-democratic forces in the US, but also in many parliamentary democracies.² Emancipation from forces that undermine democratic transformation is arguably a goal that anyone gathering under the banner of pragmatism shares.

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¹ Some of the key sources of this ongoing development include: Thomas M. Alexander, *The Human Eros: Eco-ontology and the Aesthetics of Existence*. (New York: Fordham UP, 2013), and, John Dewey's *Theory of Art, Experience, and Nature: The Horizons of Feeling*. (Albany: State U of New York, 1987. Steven Fesmire. *Dewey*. London: Routledge, 2015, and John Dewey and *Moral Imagination: Pragmatism in Ethics*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana UP, 2003. In addition, Mark Johnson's work, but especially *The Body in the Mind: The bodily basis of meaning, imagination, and reason*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987, *The Meaning of the Body: Aesthetics of human understanding*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007 and *Morality for Humans: Ethical understanding from the perspective of cognitive science*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014, has presented a model of imagination that draws on and is in deep sympathy with the Deweyan strain of classical American pragmatism.

² This diagnosis is one that mainstream representatives from dominant parties in the United States and Europe, for instance, regularly and increasingly repeat. It is also one that Dewey articulated in the 1930s. See John Dewey. Boydston, Poulos, & McDermott, eds. *The Later works, 1925-1953. 1935-1937 : Essays and liberalism and social action*. (Vol. 11). Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1991

hegemony'. Neoliberalism is a much-used technical term and its meaning is hotly contested. Of course not all of the definitions coincide, as not all contexts in which this term is used, from activism to intellectual analysis, are primarily philosophical by any means. For the purposes of this paper, then, I would like to lift out several features common to almost all parties in the contest to provide a definition. Specifically, "neoliberal" is an accurate description of our context, in terms of global institutions, political economic trends, and intellectual justifications for these practices. Respectively, and at a minimum, the concept denotes: 1) that advancing market forces are transforming more of the earth's surface and resources into market fungible commodities as private property in an autonomous sphere called 'the market' ideally outside the regulatory control of the state; 2) the belief that the state's role in the market should be as minimal as possible and that supra-state institutions, not subject to the norms of democratic representation of external parties to contracts, ought to provide actionable technocratically-informed policy; 3) the intertwining of the increasing militarization of states and their economic imperatives with private corporate actors in order to protect the 'economic sphere' from both state and non-governmental interference; 4) the decoupling of profit mechanisms from value creation as rooted in the labor theory of value at the core of classical liberalism, a process referred to as 'financialization'. Notice these features of a neoliberal order are a mixed bag of both empirical descriptions and normative advocacy regarding political economic activity and architecture. A recent survey of the history and literature of the concept that expresses skepticism as to its overuse by certain politically motivated scholars concludes the following:

Neoliberalism is... a loosely demarcated set of political beliefs which most prominently and prototypically include the conviction that the only legitimate purpose of the state is to safeguard individual, especially commercial, liberty, as well as strong private property rights...This conviction usually issues, in turn, in a belief that the state ought to be minimal or at least drastically reduced in strength and size, and that any transgression by

the state beyond its sole legitimate purpose is unacceptable... These beliefs could apply to the international level as well, where a system of free markets and free trade ought to be implemented as well; the only acceptable reason for regulating international trade is to safeguard the same kind of commercial liberty and the same kinds of strong property rights which ought to be realized on a national level...Neoliberalism generally also includes the belief that freely adopted market mechanisms is the optimal way of organizing all exchanges of goods and services... Free markets and free trade will, it is believed, set free the creative potential and the entrepreneurial spirit which is built into the spontaneous order of any human society, and thereby lead to more individual liberty and well-being, and a more efficient allocation of resources.³

For the purposes of my argument here, I will assume the relatively non-contentious thesis that nation-states have indeed increasingly realized the 'freedom' of markets from precisely the sort of political interference that neoliberals decry. It is precisely the evaluation of the accompanying cultural, political, and social outgrowth of the realization of neoliberal imperatives that is the crucial issue in determining the full range of unique qualities of our shared contemporary situation.

The pragmatic task, in addition, is to link the overarching character of our neoliberal context with human agents in order for emancipation to become more than an abstraction. This paper proceeds by highlighting some of the features of a pragmatic philosophical anthropology, or view of human agency, that emerges when two insights of pragmatism are taken into consideration, and to then draw out several consequences from these insights for what emancipation might look like in light of our particular problematic situation. The first insight that informs this account of human agency finds its source in the primacy of practical reason thesis in its pragmatic formulation. The second and related insight absorbs this

³ D.E Thorsen. & A. Lie, "What is Neoliberalism?" <http://folk.uio.no/daget/What%20is%20Neo-Liberalism%20FINAL.pdf> This paper is an extended version of an earlier publication, "The Neoliberal Challenge", *Contemporary Readings in Law & Social Justice*. 2011, Vol. 2 Issue 2, p.188-214. I select this definition for its minimalism and insofar as it is a skeptical take on just the line I am developing in this paper.

first thesis and sponsors a reconstruction of the practical activity of social problem solving and, in addition, privileges the centrality of imagination to human activity.

There are two main registers to the centrality of imagination to human action: the social context of human action and the individual agency of human subjects. At the level of social context, Dewey captured this phenomena by referring on one occasion to a 'framework of imagination' that saturates the cultural underpinnings of society in which all of our intellectual activities take place.⁴ In other places, and more often, he referred to a 'framework of reference' that enabled and constrained the hypothetical work necessary for social scientific inquiry.⁵ In both cases, the Deweyan idea of 'framework' has strong similarities with a more contemporary term of social scientific and philosophical art to be explored below, the 'imaginary'. Likewise, at the level of the individual subject, practical reason operates through a fund of meanings that is circumscribed by the 'framework of imagination' or 'imaginary' but also extended through what Dewey refers to as 'imaginative rehearsal', his term for deliberation.⁶ It is the power of the social context to

shape the contours and parameters of individual practical rationality with respect to emancipation in our political economic context that is the concern of this paper.

It is necessary due to the immense scope of this concern to narrow these larger claims with respect to our global "cultural matrix of inquiry"⁷ and to focus upon a specific modality of inquiry. The leading candidate selected here is one that exercises a powerful influence both on the practical reasoning of individuals living under current conditions and upon state and non-governmental policies that shape individuals' possibilities at the level of coordinated action to redress problems.⁸ The current practice of the discipline of economics points to the way in which a certain 'framework of imagination' or a 'fixed framework of reference' has grown up inside of processes of capital accumulation in free-market societies that promulgates a particular narrative about labor and markets.⁹ This 'orthodox' narrative extends its reach beyond market relations into other spheres of culture, mainly through media, but increasingly through

⁴ P. 84 John Dewey, *The Middle works, 1899-1924* (Vol. 12). Eds. J.A. Boydston, B.A. Walsh, & R. Ross, Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1982.

⁵ See, for instance, John Dewey, p. 224, "Liberating the Social Scientist". *The Later Works: 1925-1953*, Eds. J.A. Boydston, 17 vols. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1981-90

⁶ John Dewey, *Human Nature and Conduct. The Middle works, 1899-1924 Vol. 14*. Eds. J. A. Boydston, P. Baysinger, & M.G. Murphey, Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1983. is the most extended discussion of imaginative rehearsal, but many scholars have picked up on the imaginatively funded character of practical reason including Alisdair MacIntyre, *Dependent rational animals: Why human beings need the virtues*. Chicago, IL: Open Court, (1999) and Martha Nussbaum, *Cultivating humanity: A classical defense of reform in liberal education*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press (1997). and *Not for profit: Why democracy needs the humanities*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, (2010).. It is interesting to note how both Nussbaum and MacIntyre completely resonate with Dewey's claim that an educated imagination is essential both for intelligent practical reasoning and for realizing democracy in actually existing polities.

⁷ Dewey separates the contexts of inquiry of an agent into biological and cultural phases. The latter context is saturated with meaning and thus takes on a different character, one that involves the investigation and impact of various concepts, patterns of inference, and ideational structures.

⁸ R.H. Frank, T. Gilovich, & D.T. Regan, Does Studying Economics Inhibit Cooperation? *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 7(2), 159-171, 1993.

⁹ One of the most significant developments in the last several decades is that the immanent critique of economics, at the level of methodology especially, has flourished. The pillars upon which much neoclassical economics rests have undergone such significant critique that the earlier more philosophically tenuous criticisms have filtered down and are connected now to practices, including the practice of the discipline of economics itself. For an early and particularly devastating example of the critique of the methodological assumptions of neoclassical economics from both an economic and philosophical perspective, please see M. Hollis, & E.J. Nell, E. J. *Rational economic man: A philosophical critique of neo-classical economics*. London: Cambridge University Press, 1975. Nell has updated this critique to include econometrics more specifically in E.J. Nell, & K. Errouaki. *Rational econometric man: Transforming structural econometrics*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2010. For the 'fixed framework of reference' discussion see Dewey, "Liberalism and social science", op. cit.

the commodification of the education system and the ideological capture of political agencies responsible for education policy, extending into the university today.¹⁰ As we will see, Dewey's use of this term 'framework of imagination' was marshaled to characterize the cultural situation of humans before the emergence of a logically clarifying examination by the methods of philosophical reflection. A community that organizes itself merely through the narrative unity generated by a shared framework of imagination, then, for Dewey, is the sign of a pre-philosophical, pre-critical, culture. This concept will be explored more fully later. It is my contention that Dewey's description of this state of culture has not disappeared, and in fact has grown in recent decades in what are thought to be 'advanced' and 'developed' states in force and reach, with economics as a prime example. This is not a novel thesis, but I believe that coming to the scene from a pragmatic perspective has two advantages.

First, by failing to recognize the consequences of the primacy of practical reason thesis, the dominant schools of social science and especially economics, in aping their older sibling, the natural sciences, make a crucial mistake. The mistake lay in decoupling social inquiry from practical problem solving as an immanent and required element of social inquiry itself. The abstraction of social science through the use of quantification, mathematical models, covering-law ideals inherited from positivism and other elements has resulted in a 'flight from reality' in the political scientist Ian Shapiro's

terms.¹¹ But more importantly, in adopting the narrative of natural scientific progress for itself through increasing 'mathematization' of explanatory schema combined with observational data, the dominant narrative of the most institutionally powerful social sciences have engaged in a sleight of hand. This narrative transposes a veritable story of intellectual and philosophical progress onto practices of inquiry that have not, and indeed cannot, advance in the same fashion. The natural sciences' transformation of a cultural framework of imagination into a source of viable hypothesis for the understanding and transformation of the 'natural' world has been taken as an ideal in a domain that it is unsuited for. In doing so, the dominant models of human action at the micro-foundations of the most politically powerful social science remains immune to the logical engagement requisite for purging the fantastic and mythological elements of the practice. This model agent is the 'rational chooser' whose choices are rational insofar as they maximize utility. Utility maximization according to a consistent, ordered, schedule of preferences, then, becomes the *sine qua non* of rational human agency.¹² The Aristotelian dictum that one order their method according to the object of inquiry in scientific activity does not register in the particularly dominant social sciences, both institutionally and in terms of political and economic legitimating power.

Secondly, introducing key aspects of pragmatic philosophical anthropology into the question, how we are to conceptualize emancipation in the present in light of this state of social science, allows us to reconstruct terms like 'freedom' and 'non-domination' that have become part of pragmatic democratic theory in recent

¹⁰ It is beyond the scope of this paper to present the empirical evidence of the extension of neoliberal economic rationality and practices into a variety of cultural spheres, such as education, where they were once not present. However, both advocates for neoliberal policies and their opponents see the increasing advance of privatization and a shrinking of regulatory power by the state as more or less established with regard to many formerly publicly owned and managed enterprises in the last three decades and the evidence that public education, for instance, has been subject to this model under the guise of 'reform' is overwhelming, regardless of one's judgment of these developments.

¹¹ I. Shapiro. *The flight from reality in the human sciences*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005.

¹² For the famous claim that the falsifiability of the methodological fiction of the rational chooser should not matter as long as economics maintains its predictive power, see M. Friedman, "The Methodology of Positive Economics", in *Essays in Positive Economics*. Chicago, IL: U of Chicago, 1953. The larger point is that economics scores very low on the predictive adequacy criterion since Friedman's defense, and so the justification of its continued use as scientific is weak.

works, most notably those of James Bohman.¹³ These terms then become critical standards that are tested against economic conditions and practices. I will return to this second advantage in my conclusion.

Privileging imaginative capacities as the touchstone of human agency

It should be briefly noted the ways in which the model of the agent in Dewey's version is involved in an experiential field that results, in significant measure, from activities of imagination. Dewey attempted to wrench human individuality away from the subject modeled in the epistemological traditions of empiricism and rationalism.¹⁴ He inserts this isolated 'spectator' agent into the scene of doing and undergoing that is the environment of all living natural existences. The following particularly rich description of the human position distills a larger vision of human agency with imagination at its core:

Anticipation is therefore more primary than recollection; projection than summoning of the past; the prospective than the retrospective. Given a world like that in which we live, a world in which environing changes are partly favorable and partly callously indifferent, and experience is bound to be prospective in import; for any control attainable by the living creature depends upon what is done to alter the state of things. Success and failure are the primary "categories" of life; achieving of good and averting of ill are its supreme interests; hope and anxiety (which are not self-enclosed states of feeling, but active attitudes of welcome and wariness) are dominant qualities of experience. Imaginative

forecast of the future is this forerunning quality of behavior rendered available for guidance in the present. Day-dreaming and castle-building and esthetic realization of what is not practically achieved are offshoots of this practical trait, or else practical intelligence is a chastened fantasy. It makes little difference. Imaginative recovery of the bygone is indispensable to successful invasion of the future, but its status is that of an instrument. To ignore its import is the sign of an undisciplined agent; but to isolate the past, dwelling upon it for its own sake and giving it the eulogistic name of knowledge, is to substitute the reminiscence of old-age for effective intelligence. The movement of the agent-patient to meet the future is partial and passionate; yet detached and impartial study of the past is the only alternative to luck in assuring success to passion.¹⁵

In classical pragmatism, from Peirce through Dewey, problem solving activities are rooted in a genuine existential doubt or a problematic situation, and this is what sets one on the road to inquiry. Thus all inquiry, criticism, and intelligent functioning is best understood as a practical activity inflected by an imagined future. Dewey's articulation of the character of inquiry is compelling, especially when we take this insight into this

¹³ See J. Bohman, *J. Democracy across borders: From Dêmos to Dêmoi*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007. Bohman is also one of the few the philosophers of social science that conceptualizes both the pragmatic process of problem formation and the requisite coordinated action for resolving problems in terms of "practical verification". See, especially, J. Bohman, "Theories, Practices, and Pluralism: A Pragmatic Interpretation of Critical Social Science". *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, 29(4), 459-480, 1999.

¹⁴ It is recognized an entirely different angle in discussing the centrality of imagination in pragmatic understanding of human being can be told from the developmental perspective of G.H. Mead. This developmental story with respect to individual psychology is beyond the scope of this paper.

¹⁵ Dewey. "The Need for A Recovery of Philosophy." In *Creative Intelligence: Essays in the Pragmatic Attitude* edited by John Dewey. (New York: Holt) 1917: 3-69. Dewey writes in the immediate preceding paragraph: The preoccupation of experience with things which are coming (are now coming, not just to come) is obvious to any one whose interest in experience is empirical. Since we live forward; since we live in a world where changes are going on whose issue means our weal or woe; since every act of ours modifies these changes and hence is fraught with promise, or charged with hostile energies—what should experience be but a future implicated in a present! Adjustment is no timeless state; it is a continuing process. To say that a change takes time may be to say something about the event which is external and uninstrutive. But adjustment of organism to environment takes time in the pregnant sense; every step in the process is conditioned by reference to further changes which it effects. What is going on in the environment is the concern of the organism; not what is already "there" in accomplished and finished form. In so far as the issue of what is going on may be affected by intervention of the organism, the moving event is a challenge which stretches the agent-patient to meet what is coming. Experiencing exhibits things in their untermiated aspect moving toward determinate conclusions. The finished and done with is of import as affecting the future, not on its own account: in short, because it is not, really, done with.

imaginative dimension and turn to the modality of social inquiry:

Inquiry is the controlled or directed transformation of an indeterminate situation into one that is so determinate in its constituent distinctions and relations as to convert the elements of the original situation into a unified whole.¹⁶

Its practical character is intertwined with a situation that requires some type of reconstruction effected to re-establish equilibrium, solve some problem, or eliminate doubt so that one can go on. In this sense the imaginative quality of human agency still retains a rational core compatible with certain streams of enlightenment thought, one that advocates experimentalism and scientific culture, now pragmatically understood. The position taken here does not entail that because of this imaginative quality we must resort back to a model of human agency as merely mytho-poetic creativity in a romantic vein.

To say however, that practical reason is primary to theoretical reason is to invoke a special role for imagination in terms of how we carry out the redress of certain problems. It is not to say that theoretical reason and principles are not necessary to guiding and shaping action. Rather, it re-describes the status of theoretical and moral principles away from an *a priori*, or fixed meaning, integrating the principles immanently to a problematic situation. Moreover, the consequences of employing theoretical principles in given contexts at once becomes a significant test of their viability, as we can only enlist our imagination in a hypothetical projection of the consequence of a possible course of action in living up to any norm. Imagination, as Dewey writes in an oft-quoted passage, is how we connect the old and the new:

For while the roots of every experience are found in the interaction of a live creature with its environment, that experience becomes conscious, a matter of perception, only when meanings enter it that are derived from prior experiences. Imagination is the only gateway through which these meanings can find their way into a present interaction; or rather, as we have just seen, the conscious adjustment of the new and the old is imagination. Interaction of a living being with an environment is found in vegetative and animal life. But the experience enacted is human and conscious only as that which is given here and now is extended by meanings and values drawn from what is absent in fact and present only imaginatively.¹⁷

Given the forward looking character of the instrumental theory of knowledge and meaning, as well as the practical strictures of our intellectual life, our guiding ideals can only ever be ends-in-view.¹⁸

Thinking is also circumscribed by its practical character. This has deep consequences for the stance we take towards philosophical and scientific reflection. In the first instance, the primacy of practical reason privileges the particular qualitative individuality of a situation as the controlling constraint for what is possible in terms of existential reconstruction of our shattered environment. Thus, accessing this qualitative individuality in terms of hypotheses for practical activity to address it, what we might call getting the problem right, is utterly crucial. Secondly, and no less relevant for a self reflective theory of inquiry, is an examination of the conceptual battery by which we organize, make inferences, and organize plans of ongoing experimental reconstruction of the problematic situation. These two norms of inquiry take on a particular character in the social sciences, even if, as Dewey and others in the pragmatic tradition demonstrate, the pattern of inquiry for both the human

¹⁶ P. 138, Dewey, *The Collected Works of John Dewey, 1882-1953 (2nd release). Electronic edition.* Eds. J.A. Boydston, & L.A. Hickman, 1996. And *The Later Works of John Dewey, 1925-1953. Volume 12: 1938, Logic: The Theory of Inquiry.* Charlottesville, VA: IntelLex Corporation

¹⁷ Dewey, *The later works of John Dewey, Volume 10 1925-1953:1934 Art as Experience.* Ed. J.A. Boydston. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press. (1981). P. 276.

¹⁸ See "Theory of valuation" in Dewey, (1988). *The Later Works of John Dewey, Volume 13, 1925 - 1953: 1938-1939, Experience and Education, Freedom and Culture, Theory of Valuation, and Essays (The Collected Works of John Dewey, 1882-1953) (Vol. 13).* Eds. J.A. Boydston, V. Mayer, S.M. Cahn. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1988.

and natural sciences is de-limitable in a general way.¹⁹ Investigation into just this practical condition in terms of conceptual resources and experiential constraints is captured by Dewey's definition of logic; the inquiry into inquiry. Thirdly, an additional element of reflection is required to illuminate which ideals or ends are leading the assessment of the usefulness of a particular hypothesis generated out of our conceptual battery. The motivation for particular avenues of inquiry must itself be questioned in light of alternative motivations. This activity is distinct from the general pattern of inquiry, though it requires inquiry in its function. This activity Dewey terms 'criticism', the question of desirability of the desired, the preferential character of the preferred, or the value of the valued.²⁰ What sets us to inquiry is a problem, the problem identified can be solved according to the best methods available, but that does not tell us whether it is desirable to solve this problem as it is initially felt and understood as a rupture of our habitual functioning. That is to say, problems do not come ready made, intellectually speaking, in contexts where our habits are, to invoke Hans Joas' term again, 'shattered'.²¹ In fact, it is often the case that what we think is not a problem, *is* a problem, and vice versa. It is just that we are unaware of the ways in which our values in their habitual projection of consequences conceals other problems.

The conception of action that suffuses a pragmatic understanding of intellectual activity is essentially a creative one. This model of human agency is thus resistant to any simplification and reductive

categorization for the sake of natural and social scientific modeling. That is to say, human beings are essentially a creative species with respect to how they solve problems set for them by a dynamic, changing, and as Dewey put it, incomplete universe. Thus behavioristic psychology and its reductive variants in the social sciences are non-starters for giving us a model of what social inquiry ought to look like.

The agent that carries out such practical activity at once invokes abstract concepts and at the same time motivates their employment by means of values that can survive this illuminating inspection. But the values decided upon themselves are ends-in view, generated by an intelligent imaginative projection based upon prior experience and our successes and failures of inquiry. This insight will return as a constraint upon what emancipation might mean with regard to a crucial aspect of our over-arching situation, the continuing global economic crisis and the means at our disposal for social problem solving.

Imaginaries

Benedict Anderson is well known for detailing the role of imagination in the construction of nationalism in his work, *Imagined Communities*.²² Anderson offers a reconstruction of the ways in which different historical and material conditions led to the possibility of constructing a sense of identity and a nation out of peoples who had no contact with or understanding of each other, so distant were their lives. In several cases of the construction of nations, the peoples brought into union were actual enemies in previous generations. The printing press, the spread of markets, mass media technologies, and a new sense of historical time each served indispensable roles in creating an 'imagined community', cemented by the creation of the concept of a binding national language. Anderson carefully constructs his use of the concept of an 'imaginary' in a

¹⁹ A common misreading of Dewey lumps him together with positivist philosophers of science. See "The Pattern of Inquiry" in Dewey, *The Collected Works of John Dewey, 1882-1953 (2nd release). Electronic edition. The Later Works of John Dewey, 1925-1953. Volume 12: 1938, Logic: The Theory of Inquiry*. Eds. J. A. Boydston, & L.A.Hickman. Charlottesville, VA: IntelLex Corporation, 1996

²⁰ Dewey, *John Dewey, the later works, 1925-1953: Volume 4: 1929*. Eds. J.A. Boydston, H.F. Simon, & S.Toulmin, Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University, 1988.

²¹ H. Joas, *The creativity of action*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996, p. 128.

²² B.R. Anderson. *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. London: Verso, 1991.

social scientific way. He marshals a great deal of evidence in a variety of contexts to generate convincing support for the thesis- that though many were at a loss to explain the triumph of national identity over class identity in such major events as World War I- it is nonetheless possible and necessary to offer alternative explanations that invoke elements of our material culture. These *explanans*, for Anderson, include the impact of the forces of production upon the symbolic order of reproduction in an entirely novel way.

In a more philosophical vein, Charles Taylor has articulated a sense of imaginary that moves closer to the concern in this essay, to exhibit the link between the imaginative features of human agency and emancipation. In *Modern Social Imaginaries*, Taylor writes:

By social imaginary, I mean something much broader and deeper than the intellectual schemes people may entertain when they think about social reality in a disengaged mode. I am thinking, rather, of the ways people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions that underlie these expectations.²³

Taylor's own expressivist model of human agency has much overlap with a Deweyan model. The ethics of articulation that Taylor calls for, his emphasis on the overcoming of epistemology in constructing our model of philosophical anthropology and human experience, the difference between weak and strong evaluation, and the primarily meaningful character of experience all resonate with a pragmatic model of agency.

John Dewey in *Reconstruction in Philosophy*, like Charles Taylor, has a philosophical anthropological account of the origin of an 'imaginary', as opposed to Anderson's historical account. For Dewey, humans identify themselves with a tradition or a community in earlier times, one that is directly rooted in narrative, its

intensification over time, and the development of the aforementioned 'framework of imagination': Dewey here establishes a fruitful pivot through which to analyze a number of issues related to our problematic situation:

But some experiences are so frequent and recurrent that they concern the group as a whole. They are socially generalized. The piecemeal adventure of the single individual is built out till it becomes representative and typical of the emotional life of the tribe. Certain incidents affect the weal and woe of the group in its entirety and thereby get an exceptional emphasis and elevation. A certain texture of tradition is built up; the story becomes a social heritage and possession; the pantomime develops into the stated rite. Tradition thus formed becomes a kind of norm to which individual fancy and suggestion conform. An abiding framework of imagination is constructed. A communal way of conceiving life grows up into which individuals are inducted by education. Both unconsciously and by definite social requirement individual memories are assimilated to group memory or tradition, and individual fancies are accommodated to the body of beliefs characteristic of a community. Poetry becomes fixated and systematized. The story becomes a social norm. The original drama which re-enacts an emotionally important experience is institutionalized into a cult. Suggestions previously free are hardened into doctrines.²⁴

Dewey here is talking about the emergence of what is essentially analogous to the aforementioned 'imaginary', though his starting point is one that is prior to philosophical reflection and logical examination of the dominant body of beliefs in early pre-scientific cultures. Here a subtle distinction must be introduced. On the one hand Dewey is critical of those frameworks of imagination that become so hardened as to be hypostatized and impervious to 'logical clarification' or experimental reconstruction. But, on the other hand, his understanding of human creativity and the meaningful environment of doing and undergoing inflected by future consequences retains a holistic character. Thus any human environment is suffused with shared meanings in a linguistic community that are implicit and serve as an

²³ C. Taylor (2004). *Modern social imaginaries*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2004. P. 23.

²⁴ Dewey, *The Middle works, 1899-1924* (Vol. 12) Eds. J.A. Boydston, B.A. Walsh, & R. Ross, Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1982. P. 84

intersubjective 'background', analogous to the phenomenological sense of that term, for practices to take shape and continue with success. But with respect to his origin story above and the unconscious development of a framework of imagination that undergirds intellectual practices in *a priori* and implicit fashion, he could have just as easily been discussing the contemporary situation of United States culture in a variety of ways. I offer as examples the ascendant 'debate' of evolution vs. creationism, the continuing power of supply-side economics, the mistrust of climate science, and the dominance of the 'theory' of the invisible hand guiding managerial stockholder capitalism.

Perhaps Dewey's *Freedom and Culture* is most relevant and instructive in some ways with respect to illustrating the sensitivity to the manipulation of life activity a fixed framework of imagination can have. In this text, he deftly articulates the way in which Soviet Marxism, the marginalist transformation of economic liberalism, and fascism all regress to a mode of explanation that has more in common structurally with the framework of imagination of earlier cultures, than it does with a culture of experimentalism freed from doctrine, a culture of inquiry.²⁵ It is one of Dewey's most thorough meditations on the status of democracy at a particular historical juncture, writing in 1939 after a decade of challenges to the democratic ideal from both the left and right wings of politics on a global scale. In the prior year he had published his masterwork on inquiry, *Logic: the theory of inquiry*, so it is not surprising that Dewey makes a case for the priority of culture to legal procedures, forces of production, and militarist corporatism, in examining the conditions for the possibility of realizing democracy at that, or any, time.

Here Dewey, in the midst of strident arch-polemical debates among fascists, liberals and communists, provides an argument for taking stock of the power that our assumptions have in shaping our political activities, and how our imaginations can be shaped:

Schooling in literacy is no substitute for the dispositions which were formerly provided by direct experiences of an educative quality. The void created by lack of relevant personal experiences combines with the confusions by impact of multitudes of unrelated incidents to create attitudes which are responsive to propaganda, hammering in day after day the same few and relatively simple beliefs asseverated to be "truths" essential to national welfare. In short, we have to take into account the attitudes of human nature that have been created by the immense development of mechanical instrumentalities if we are to understand the present power of propaganda.²⁶

Put in terms of the larger thesis here, the constraints of imagination can then be read back into the agent in terms of their participation, subjugation or emancipation from interpretations of their situation and proposals for remedying the disequilibrium that initiated their inquiry. In Dewey's context in the 1930s this played out in relation to the rise of totalitarian movements and the refusal of liberal capitalist elites to question their economic assumptions.

If a pragmatically reconstructed scientific ethos of experimental and creative social action is to become consequential in the context of the current crises, then a kind of "intellectual disrobing" of the dominant interpretations of social reality is required.²⁷ This is

²⁶ Ibid. P. 95

²⁷ Dewey, *The later works, 1925-1953*. Ed. Boydston, J. A. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1981. P. 40. As one example, on the front page of the July 27, 2009 edition of the *Financial Times*, a large photo depicted a man in tie and firmly pressed suit pointing to a chart with lines, pie charts, bar graphs and the rest. He is demonstratively gesturing to a woman who appears to be a senior citizen, dressed rather sharply with hands folded in front of her body. One can make out from the photo that this chart was one among a series, and it is probably not too great a leap to think that this series of charts was meant to tell a story. As it turns out, the man, we are told in the caption, is an economist at the London

²⁵ Dewey, *The Later Works of John Dewey, Volume 13, 1925 - 1953: 1938-1939, Experience and Education, Freedom and Culture, Theory of Valuation, and Essays (The Collected Works of John Dewey, 1882-1953)* (Vol. 13), J.A. Boydston, V. Mayer, & S.M. Cahn. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1988.

necessary to articulate the consequences of our habits of imaginative projection in our understanding of problematic situations, and to bring into relief the imaginative rails upon which our grasp of our situation runs. Clearly the ways in which our understanding of the social sciences, and especially economics, is in need of vehement and continual intellectual disrobing. Economics is a social science of singular focus here as it is the emperor of the social sciences in terms of efficacy in creating the conditions of our current crisis.

Another significant value realized by assigning meta-theoretical privilege to the framework of imagination as the heart and origin of a developmental philosophical anthropology means that we are some distance from the totalizing claims of severe versions of ideology critique or reductions of cultural activity to the forces of production in naïve versions of historical materialism. Rather, using either the notion of a 'framework of imagination' or the philosophically inflected concept of 'imaginary' has the virtue of being able to name the power of neoliberal market forces in our self-understanding, in this instance as an insufficiently 'logically clarified' fund of practical reason with ramifications across the culture it saturates, and at the same time proffer alternatives based upon an

School of Economics, and the woman is the Queen of England. Queen Elizabeth had asked a question of her nation's economists: 'Why didn't economists predict the economic collapse, considering the unsustainability of the mortgage system and credit default practices, and then intervene with recommendations for actions to prevent such an outcome as we are experiencing?' This sent economists at LSE, the government, and around England scurrying over two weeks to come up with an answer. The revelation of the answer was an event there for the world to see on the front page of the FT. This is a remarkable occasion, in terms of political culture, and unique in Britain's political and royal history. But not as remarkable, from an intellectual and philosophical perspective, as the answer to the question found in the paper completed by the group assigned the task of answering the Queen's question. From the heart of an institution that has harbored some of the staunchest defenders of neoclassical economics and the rational choice methodology at its foundation in the social sciences came their explanation: the queen was told it was a 'failure of collective imagination'

assessment of the possibilities of the situation and historical successes in light of this domination.

Emancipation

And so given these individual and social registers of imagination in human activity, what then is the role of emancipation and emancipatory practices? Emancipation from what? Emancipation for what purpose? As with most concepts in philosophical discourse, the idea of emancipation is illuminated by its contrasting pair. I suggest as a hypothesis we take the idea of domination as the opposite of emancipation. James Bohman argues that domination consists in the elimination or prohibition of the exercise of an agent's normative powers to engage in free, efficacious, communication with respect to those political, social, and legal practices affecting that agent. In addition, the reflexive power to constitute and change those rules by which free communication realizes normative power must be guaranteed.²⁸ As Bohman puts it:

Nondomination is in fact more basic than any such good, primary or otherwise, since to be part of a cooperative scheme is already to have legitimate expectations concerning one's status with respect to others in that scheme. Thus we can see nondomination as a fundamental condition for participation in projects that are common only to the extent that, qua member, one can influence the terms of cooperation with others, and not be ruled by them.²⁹

If the previous two ways of discussing the position of the human agent with respect to their deliberation and inquiry on the individual level, and the framework of imagination or imaginary at the social level, then at least one area ripe for illumination and critique springs immediately to mind: a false picture of the role and function of the social sciences and false assumptions about human action informing these sciences.

Given that the dependence of our imaginative rehearsal on a fund of concepts that is socially mediated, and that the social mediation of these concepts takes place

²⁸ Bohman, *Op. Cit.*

²⁹ *Ibid.* P. 27

through a background which in large part goes assumed and 'unthematized', it is not surprising that the human communities reproduce the social positions of dominated and dominators. It is entirely possible due to the incomplete and provisional conceptual battery that funds our imaginary that someone cannot consciously articulate their situation of domination, especially if their interests are frustrated by forces that are largely 'unthematized'. This is not to say that individuals are judgmental dupes, in fact, given the primacy of practical reason mentioned above, individuals make great efforts to reconstruct the various problematic situations in which they continually find themselves with astonishing success given the myths that dominate intellect and sensibility.

The kind of domination I am referring to here translates into ideology in its pejorative sense of fostering a social imaginary that precludes certain perceptions, articulations, and expressions geared towards realizing an individual's free and equal exercise of their normative powers. It is not, however, a totalizing picture of ideology and is some distance from the most strident examples in the tradition of ideological critique, saturated with variants of the theory of historical materialism that they are.³⁰ Rather, domination in this ideological sense is socially maintained by a background of assumptions about the ends of activity and creativity that is so developed as to exclude the native perspective of individuals who make up that fabric. The larger questions to ask are, can certain imaginaries develop in which certain articulations are unavailable or impossible? Is it possible for individuals to be socialized into positions that are reinforced structurally, both at the level of their education and within their specific social lives such that their sense of what is possible is

harmfully delimited? Is it not a kind of domination to sustain certain social contexts where because of your social position you are run on certain institutional rails that establish frameworks of imagination where certain emancipatory moves are foreclosed?

Answering yes to these questions need not raise the specter of *deterministic* false-consciousness within this picture. However, the power of contemporary social forces to maintain differences-especially those of class and race- that transform a person's and an entire community's sense of what is possible, and thus what avenues are available for redressing problematic situations, is now so palpable in our neoliberal context as to appear to the wider public as almost inevitable. In addition, the processes of neoliberalism, in the rare occurrences that political bodies publicly debate and examine the consequences of this mixture of policy and practice, can also appear as intractable. This sense of intractability deepens when the dominant interpretations issued out of this current imaginary undergo 'logical clarification', in Dewey's sense, in public view and yet *still* coordinated action on the part of the agents that constitute the problematic situation is overridden in favor of capital imperatives embedded in neoliberal justificatory discourse.³¹

Conclusion: An example of emancipatory social inquiry in neoliberal times

However, practices do exist that counter the hegemony of the neoliberal framework of imagination. Out of the Argentinian crisis economic crisis of the early 2000s, workers reoriented their practices in order to labor and make a living according to their own designs.³² Specifically they restructured factories abandoned by capital owners in Buenos Aires for themselves, modeled

³⁰ This is not to sidestep the common Hegelian roots of historical materialism and pragmatic social philosophy. For a discussion of how these roots bear fruit in different ways with respect to the concept of hegemony, see B. Hogan. "Pragmatic Hegemony: questions and convergence". *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, 29(1), (2015). P. 107-117

³¹ The recent saga of Greece and the European Union is especially instructive of the cross-purposes of agents operating under the aegis of neoliberal principles and expressions of national democratic will.

³² For an account of this crisis, see, M. Teubal, "Rise and Collapse of Neoliberalism in Argentina: The Role of Economic Groups." *Journal of Developing Societies* 20.3-4, 2004: 173-88.

on worker-owned and operated co-operatives. In this sense, they fly directly in the face of neoliberal practices that have pushed the managerial stockholder form of privately held incorporation to its individualist limit. These models of workplace democracy have been chronicled in the Argentine case and others.³³ But it is important to note, recalling the function of imagination in connecting the old and the new as cited above, that they are not *ex nihilo* practices, or absolute rejections of existing practices. In the case of Argentina, they are transformations via the use of the tool of microfinance uncoupled from major institutions of finance capital, the education and training of former line workers in business planning, the coordination with local families and other worker-run factories, and other measures aimed towards the end of performing in the larger market. In addition, and crucially, workers used legislative avenues and political lobbying to secure legitimate protection under the existing property rights regime in Argentina, thereby defeating the counter-claims of foreign owners that had abandoned the factories.

The elements exhibited in this new form of production are varied. They include the reconstruction of the contract form—the very linchpin of liberalism’s emancipation from feudalism. Using the tools available to them to compete in a preexisting market is a radically democratic and pragmatic assertion of the creative power of individuals to emancipate themselves from the domination hidden in the contract, and in the power of capital to withdraw itself from circulation.³⁴ Rather, workers self-organized through deliberation and consultation with experts regarding the various facets of factory production, distribution, retail, and supply chains

and then made decisions as a collective body as to how to meet the needs of the production process and distribute labor, management responsibilities, and profits.³⁵

One of the reasons why alternatives seem Quixotic in the current political economic context is precisely because the way to test a proposed hypothesis, that takes the position and perspective of all the parties to a situation, is through coordinated action on the part of those affected. The natural scientific overtones of social science geared towards explanation proffer social scientific activity that ‘cannot’ by its very nature be tested by practical coordinated action among the subjects who take their interests as the starting point of social scientific ‘data’. From the perspective of mainstream social science this is to commit the worst kind of ideological error in the first place. From the dominant mainstream perspective, it is only by abstracting from the value orientations of the scientists on the one side, and neutrally identifying the preferences and perceptions of the subjects on the other side, that we might grasp explanations for certain aggregative behaviors that ultimately reduce to the individual preference schedules of individual rational choosers. While it is quite true that there are alternative social scientific methodological practices on offer, they are not dominant or effectively translated into policy, and in very large part refrain from embracing what is the *sine qua non* of what Dewey referred to as social inquiry:

For the idea commonly prevails that such inquiry is genuinely scientific only as it deliberately and systematically abstains from all concern with matters of social practice. The special lesson which the logic of the methods of physical

³³ See, for example, K. Stickers. “Dewey, economic democracy, and the Mondragon cooperatives” *European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy* Vol. 3, No. 2, 2011.

³⁴ See, R. Heilbroner, *The nature and logic of capitalism*. New York: Norton, (1985). On the domination hidden in the contract form as understood by Dewey, see T. Midtgarden. “Critical Pragmatism: Dewey’s social philosophy revisited”. *European Journal of Social Theory*, 15(4), 2012, 505-521.

³⁵ The finance experts consulted are importantly motivated by the same ethos requisite for pragmatic social inquiry. Their aim as a non-profit actor is to provide the tools for democratic production processes to thrive. Thus, their finance obligations are primarily to the factories they serve and their own continued operation and are decoupled from larger accumulation processes. For more information see, www.theworkingworld.org and <http://labase.org/>, as well as E. Winninghoff, “The giving generation”. *Barron’s*. (December 3, 2012).

inquiry has to teach to social inquiry is, accordingly that social inquiry, as inquiry, involves the necessity of operations which existentially modify actual conditions that, as they exist, are the occasions of genuine inquiry and that provide its subject-matter.³⁶

This emancipatory practice available at the level of material production, at the point of the live creature's transformation of their material environment, is one example of how an emancipatory practice can take roots in 'shattered' times. By including the agents that make up the problematic context as essential components in redressing the crisis, these alternative economic practices opened a space for genuinely imaginative and creative social inquiry that 'existentially modify actual conditions'. In this sense and in this respect, by adopting alternative measures of production, finance, and ownership, and by engaging the members of the cooperative in critique and deliberation- as individuals as well as members of a common body- as to the course of action to redress the crisis, they serve as an example of emancipatory pragmatic inquiry and an alternative to the dominant imaginary.³⁷

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³⁶ Dewey, *The Collected Works of John Dewey, 1882-1953 (2nd release). Electronic edition. The Later Works of John Dewey, 1925-1953. Volume 12: 1938, Logic: The Theory of Inquiry*. Eds. J.A. Boydston, & L.A. Hickman. Charlottesville, VA: IntelLex Corporation, 1996. P. 487

³⁷ Special thanks to Steven Fesmire, Rebecca Farinas, and Philipp Dorstewitz for edits, comments, and suggestions on an earlier draft of this paper.

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EMANCIPATORY POTENTIAL OF ART

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ABSTRACT: *Emancipation is a process of achieving freedom in a certain social field, which also has a political dimension. This potential is observable and has been used explicitly by the 20th century avant-garde movement. However, I claim that this potential is not fully recognized nowadays, because of the failure of the avant-garde – which has fallen into a trap of either surveillance to the Communist Party or to the market. Therefore, in order to understand the emancipatory potential of art, I propose two complementary perspectives. One springs from Louis Althusser's writings, especially from A Letter on Art in Reply to André Daspre (1968), his only text in which he directly writes about art and the discrepancies in art which allow for the appearance of something new in the system, as art is not fully conditioned by dominating ideology, the other from American pragmatism as marked especially by John Dewey, who was writing about the democratic character of art and of aesthetic experience that has the power to transform and enrich human lives. It is important to take pragmatism into philosophical consideration while considering art, if we want to get our bodies back, bodies immersed in an environment as ideated by Arnold Berleant or Richard Shusterman. It is important also to render a discursive structure as within post-Marxist structuralism. I claim that combining pragmatist and structuralist perspectives can also enrich our understanding of art, showing its potential to change the world.*

Introduction

Emancipation is a process of achieving freedom in a certain social field, which also has a political dimension. This potential is observable and has been used explicitly by the 20th century avant-garde movement. However, I claim that this potential is not fully recognized nowadays, because of the failure of avant-garde – which has fallen into a trap of either surveillance to the Communist Party or to the market – noted by Polish theorists like Stanisław Czekalski and Piotr Piotrowski. (These analyses are in accordance with a broader view, as proposed by Bürger and Huyssen, showing avant-garde as being in a dialectic relation with the governing system of culture, ultimately unfulfilled in its pursuit to transgress cultural borders.)¹ Disappointment in avant-

garde's failure makes it difficult to believe in art's emancipatory potential; I argue that although disappointment is understandable, it should be analyzed and it should not dispirit the emancipation which art specifically enables. This potential can be understood philosophically, and related to social and political fields.

In order to understand the emancipatory potential of art, I propose two complementary perspectives. One springs from Louis Althusser's writings, especially from *A Letter on Art in Reply to André Daspre* (1968), his only text in which he directly writes about art and the discrepancies in art which allow for the appearance of something new in the system, as art is not fully conditioned by dominating ideology. This line of reflection is nowadays taken up by Alain Badiou – who, like Pierre Macherey, Jacques Rancière, and others, was Althusser's pupil – and has developed into a search for the possibility of trespassing the political and ideological systems of late capitalism.

These considerations, born from European structuralism, are not that far from the second perspective I point at: American pragmatism as marked by Charles Sanders Peirce, William James, George Herbert Mead, and especially by John Dewey (who was writing about the democratic character of art and of aesthetic experience that has the power to transform and enrich human lives.) It is important to take pragmatism into philosophical consideration while considering art, if we want to get our bodies back, bodies immersed in an environment as ideated by Arnold Berleant or Richard Shusterman. It is important also to render a discursive structure as within post-Marxist structuralism.

These two philosophical traditions are not as oppositional as they may seem. I claim that the perspectives of pragmatism and structuralism have in common ideas of *practice* and *experience*, as demonstrated in the philosophical lineage developed

and Huyssen A. (1986). *After the Great-Divide. Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmodernism*, Bloomington and Indianapolis.

¹ Bürger, P. (1974). *Theorie der Avantgarde*, Frankfurt;

from the writings of John Dewey and Louis Althusser. Similarities between pragmatism and structural tradition are also noted by other thinkers, for example by Richard Shusterman, who relates pragmatism to Pierre Bourdieu's theory,² or by Tanja Bogusz, who compares concepts of knowledge, action, and the importance of experience, reflecting ideas from William James and Émile Durkheim with Pierre Bourdieu's and John Dewey's concepts of *habitus* and *practice*.³ She claims that: "an interpretation (...) of the categories central to both these schools; experience/disposition, knowledge and practice shall make an explicit combination of pragmatism and a sociological theory of practice possible that has not yet been attempted and that takes into account both socio-structural limits and contingent and optional spaces of possibility."⁴

I make a similar claim, proposing that combining pragmatist and structuralist perspectives can also enrich our understanding of art, showing its potential to change the world. The following paper is a brief examination of the connections between structuralism and pragmatism in relation to the problem of art's emancipatory potential, and attempts to understand this potential as also outside the democratic definition of liberty – though still within a political definition – as proposed by Alain Badiou.

Failure of Avant-garde Emancipatory Engagement

The avant-garde movement wanted to change society, its system, and art. As Polish theorist Stanisław Czekalski points out, constitutive for avant-garde of 1920's and 1930's was an aspiration:

"to realize artistic idea in *praxis* of life, and by means of that – to dismiss alienation of art and to overcome dialectically contradictions between art and social reality."⁵

However, the avant-garde art, while dreaming of being close to everyday *praxis* – the emancipation from social classes and of creative potential – started to serve communism, capitalism, and consumerism. According to Czekalski it happened because avant-garde accommodated both modern capitalism and Soviet rationalization, due to Taylorism present in both main ideologies (that is, a belief in the processes of rationalization, industrialization, and central planification as leading to a more just, equal, and democratic world in which people would have the time and strength necessary to appraise its beauty.) That the avant-garde strove to trespass the border between art and society's life, to cooperate in the creation of a new and better world, is clearly demonstrated on both Soviet and Western sides by international constructivism.

At that time the most important figures of the movement (like Doesburg, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, Fernand Leger, and Le Corbusier) had been explicitly trying to move from utopia to praxis. Previously popular abstract and geometrically organized imagery symbolizing an ideal order of the new world had passed away, giving rise to projects of concrete realizations in architecture, industrial design, and typography, among others.⁶ These

² Shusterman, R. (ed.) (1999), *Bourdieu: A Critical Reader*. Wiley-Blackwell (1999); also Shusterman's keynote speech: *Bourdieu and Pragmatism: Philosophy's Emancipatory Power*, during the conference "Emancipation: Challenges at the Intersection of American and European Philosophy." Fordham University, New York, 27th February 2015.

³ Bogusz, T. (2009). *Experiencing Practical Knowledge: Emerging Convergences of Pragmatism and Sociological Practice Theory*. In: "European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy," Associazione PRAGMA, 2012, IV, 1.

⁴ Bogusz, T. (2009).

⁵ "do realizacji idei artystycznych w *praxis* życia, a tym samym zniesienia alienacji sztuki i dialektycznego przezwyciężenia sprzeczności między sztuką a rzeczywistością społeczną" – Czekalski, S. (2000). *Awangarda i mit racjonalizacji: fotomontaż Polski okresu dwudziestolecia międzywojennego*. Poznań: Wydawn. Poznańskiego Towarzystwa Przyjaciół Nauk, p. 17.

⁶ See: Mansbach, S. A. (1980). *Visions of Totality: Laszlo Moholy-Nagy, Theo Van Doesburg, and El Lissitzky*. Ann Arbor, Mich: UMI Research Press, p. 109.

themes are found in the writings of Fernand Leger and Le Corbusier, among others. Leger wrote about the interdependence of geometry, machines, and industrial creativity, treating geometric form as dominant and infiltrating all areas, with broad visual and psychological influence.⁷ The rules of rationalization and facilitation were supposed to lead to a more equal democratic world, with houses for everybody and a good quality of life that would allow the masses/proletariat to enjoy art as well. Le Corbusier wanted to create serial architecture, accessible economically for the working class, to solve the social problems and tensions that came with the growth of this new class of people.⁸ However,

“the law of economic rivalization, that is in fact the law of capitalism, Le Corbusier acknowledged to be a basic mechanism of development, leading to the increase of quality and the dissemination of produced goods, which define a level of life of a society. In this manner social revolution has been identified paradoxically – with technological rationalization (the artist referred himself directly to Taylor's ideas) and with a continuation of development of capitalistic economy.”⁹

⁷ See: Léger, F. *Estetyka maszyny: porządek geometryczny i prawda*. First edition in: “Propos d'artistes,” Paris 1925. Reference after: Léger, F. (1970). *Funkcje malarstwa*. Translated into Polish by Guze, J., Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, p. 85.

⁸ Le Corbusier, (1923). *Vers une architecture*, Paris: G. Cres. Reference after: Banham, R. (1979). *Rewolucja w architekturze. Teoria projektowania w “pierwszym wieku maszyny”* Translated into Polish by Drzewiecki, Z., Warszawa: Wyd. Artystyczna i Filmowe, p. 272.

⁹ Prawo konkurencji ekonomicznej, czyli – w gruncie rzeczy – kapitalizmu, Le Corbusier uznaje więc za podstawowy mechanizm postępu, zmierzającego do podwyższenia jakości i rozpowszechnienia produkowanych dóbr, które określają poziom życia społeczeństwa. Tym sposobem rewolucja socjalna została utożsamiona – paradoksalnie – tyleż z racjonalizacją technologiczną (artysta odwoływał się wprost do idei Taylora), co z ciągłością rozwoju gospodarki kapitalistycznej” – Czekalski, S. (2000), p. 49. On the relationship between Le Corbusier's artistic and architectural ideas with ideology of Taylorism, see also: M. McLead, *Architecture and Revolution: Taylorism, Technocracy, and Social Change*. In: “Art Journal” Summer 1983.

On the other side of Europe the ideas of rationalization were also active within political and social fields, and within art. Soviet constructivism had served the communist ideology, as is explicit in the propagandist photomontages of Lissitzky, Rodchenko, Sienkin, and Prusakov. Agitation posters used the visual language of photomontage to influence the masses toward certain types of consumption, of work, and of leisure time. Photomontage and photography were great tools for producing these kinds of pictures; modern interest has grown beyond the search for industrial forms and “industrial art”¹⁰ (an exemplification of that described by Walter Benjamin, “the author – the producer.”)¹¹ The process of rationalization was also clearly expressed by Aleksander Rodchenko, writing on art as a conscious way of organizing of life:

“LIFE, a conscious and organized life, capable of SEEING and CONSTRUCTING, is contemporary art. A PERSON who organizes his life, work, and himself is a CONTEMPORARY ARTIST. WORK FOR LIFE and not for PALACES, TEMPLES, CEMETERIES, and MUSEUMS.”¹²

Rodchenko, like the other aforementioned artists, was trying to engage by means of photography in a perceptual change of reality, society, and humanity. His work contains disparate photographic series, such as details of the AMO factory,¹³ photoreports from the

¹⁰ See: Ławrientiew, A. (2012), *Aleksander Rodchenko: początek fotografii awangardowej w Rosji*, in: *Aleksander Rodchenko. Rewolucja w fotografii*. Edited by A. Ławrientiew, O. Swibłowa. Translated into Polish by O. Aleksejczuk, Kraków (First published in 2008), p. 204.

¹¹ Benjamin, W., *The Author as Producer* in: Benjamin, W. (2008). *The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological reproducibility, and Other Writings on Media*. Edited by Michael W. Jennings, B. Doherty, T. Y. Levin. Belknap Press.

¹² Rodchenko, A., *Slogans (CONSTRUCTION discipline, dyrektor RODCHENKO)*. In: Rodchenko, A. (2006) *Aleksandr Rodchenko. Experiments for the future: diaries, essays, letters, and other writings*. Edited and with a preface by A. N. Ławrientiew. Translated into English by J. Gambrell, New York: The Museum of Modern Art, p. 142.

¹³ A cover and subsequent pages of the magazine “Dajosz” dedicated to AMO factory (1929). After: *Александр Родченко. Фотография – искусство*. (2006). Series concept by A. Mieszczeriakowa, I.

construction of Bielomorsky Channel,¹⁴ and a sawmill, "Wachtan,"¹⁵ which show new visibilities: new machines, a new dam, the sawmill, and new people, in a new manner. These works call for a new socialist/communist archetype, for a new kind of society in which the processes of scientific management will eliminate class divisions and social exclusions, and were made for the demand of the Communist Party. In this way we can notice ambivalence in the Soviet avant-garde movement in relation to revolutionary and utopian idealism, as well as reactionary conformism, a point made by Piotr Piotrowski.¹⁶

Avant-garde's drive to cross the boundary between art and real social practice, oriented towards the emancipatory transformation of society, had ended with pacification of its power. It was subdued by the structure, a disheartening shortcoming of the promising movement's emancipatory potential in both social and political fields.

Louis Althusser on the Relationship between Art, Ideology and Science

The disappointment with avant-garde's failure to create a new, utopian reality is understandable, however it should not mislead us to forget its ability to exhort change. Philosophical consideration is needed in order to understand art as having a real political and social emancipatory force. One of the perspectives useful for that endeavor is Althusserian, although it may seem impossible at first glance, as within Althusserian terms, art (as other spheres of life) is related to ideology. However, this perspective invites a deeper investigation

of the relationship between art, ideology, and science, which can show the possibility of emancipation through art.

Althusser states clearly in *A Letter on Art...* (1968) that he does "*not rank real art among the ideologies*, although art does have a quite particular and specific relationship with ideology."¹⁷ Art shows the dominating ideology, makes it visible – consciously or not – and due to that, imbues a visual, sensory, and rational distance from the viewer. Which art? All of it? Which criteria? Who judges the criteria?

"What art makes us *see*, and therefore gives to us in the form of '*seeing*,' '*perceiving*,' and '*feeling*' (which is not the form of *knowing*), is the *ideology* from which it is born, in which it bathes, from which it detaches itself as art, and to which it *alludes*."¹⁸

The observation of an ideology's outside, from the inside, allows a distance which creates the possibility of emancipation from capitalistic conditions. For Althusser only the real and true art has this power, and he refers to novels of Leo Tolstoy, Balzac and Solzhenitsyn, who (though bourgeois) had a certain internalized distance in their presentations and wrote, in distant critique, of the system of social divisions and of their own class. Despite their personal political opinions they 'make us see' the 'lived experience' of capitalist society in a critical form:¹⁹ "It is an 'effect' of *their art* as novelists that it produces this distance inside their ideology, which makes us 'perceive' it."²⁰

An important facet in Althusser's understanding of social reality's transformational capability is the idea that art does not occupy itself with different kinds of reality, as science does. Art does not realize itself in a fantastic sphere. If it were so, it would have no real political and

Ostarkowoj. Edited by A. Ławrientiew, O. Swiełłowa. Izdatielskaja programma "Interrosa," pp. 306-307.

¹⁴ A cover and subsequent pages of the magazine "SSSR na strojkie." No. 12 (1933). After: Александр Родченко. *Фотография – искусство*. (2006), pp. 408-409.

¹⁵ "A Sawmill <WACHTAN>. 1930." After: Александр Родченко. *Фотография – искусство*. (2006), pp. 340-349.

¹⁶ Piotrowski, P. (1993). *Artysta między rewolucją i reakcją. Studium z zakresu etycznej historii sztuki awangardy rosyjskiej*. Poznań: Wydaw. Naukowe UAM.

¹⁷ Althusser, L. (1971). *A Letter on Art in Reply to André Daspre*, in: *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*. (Written: February 1968; First Published: by François Maspero, 1968). Translated into English by Ben Brewster, p. 222.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 225.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 226.

social emancipatory potential. Art relies on only one reality, subjectively experienced, which is not inherently different from the scientific one. Althusser states that:

"Art (I mean authentic art, not works of an average or mediocre level) does not give us a knowledge in the strict sense, it therefore does not replace knowledge (in the modern sense: scientific knowledge), but what it gives us does nevertheless maintain a certain *specific relationship* with knowledge. This relationship is not one of identity but one of difference (...) The real difference between art and science lies in the *specific form* in which they give us the same object in quite different ways: art in the form of 'seeing' and 'perceiving' or 'feeling,' science in the form of *knowledge* (in the strict sense, by concepts.)"²¹

Art is concerned with the same subject as science in this regard, that is, with lived experience, and can be a critique by its distance from ideology. This is possible because ideology for Althusser is not a mental system but a system of meaningful human activities, structured by Ideological State Apparatuses.²² However, real art for Althusser necessitates "internal distance" towards reality to allow critical perception of the *status quo*, and innovations of thought and habit. The change in a dominating ideology should occur not by means of fight and revolution, but of transformation, as ideology is embodied in individual activities, in personal human lives. For the French philosopher there is no differentiation between the public and the private spheres. This division he considers to be a distinction internal to bourgeoisie law and a false dichotomy, as he points at the fact that ideology is embodied in human practices of religion, family, education, trade union, culture, and other elements that have both private and public status.²³

John Dewey's Democratic Aesthetic Experience

Blurring the border between public and private, as well as a focus on concretely lived experience within a certain society, is also very important for pragmatists. For pragmatists, experience and practice – also art and aesthetics – are not simply held by individuals, nor are they just public/institutional concepts; they are immersed in a social environment, in which we are participating. Therefore concepts of *practice* and *experience* as used in John Dewey's writings are similar to Althusser's idea of *ideological practices*. In Dewey's writings, experience and practice are not unconditioned, but on the contrary, they are defined by social, historical and cultural background,²⁴ paralleling Althusser's reflections on the ideology embodied in practices. Both of these philosophers were also reflecting a possibility to gain some kind of freedom by means of art and aesthetic experience, practice and sensibility – differing terminology for similar concepts.

Dewey's pragmatist aesthetics consider art as a specifically enriching kind of human experience, which does not necessarily require connection to a certain object, i.e. work of art. From this perspective, art is thereby liberated from conceptual constraints and can be experienced freely. This perspective is based on Dewey's last book dedicated to art, where he does not present any precise definition of art, but rather shows it as a certain quality infiltrating our experience.²⁵

Dewey argues that the ways in which a work of art forms an experience, and is present in it, provide an understanding of art within the perspective of experience but with an explicitly somatic side.²⁶ By

²¹ Ibid., pp. 222-224.

²² Althusser, L. (1971). *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)*, in: *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*. Monthly Review Press; First published: in *La Pensée*, 1970.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Dewey, J. (1975). *Sztuka jako doświadczenie*. Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy Imienia Ossolińskich, p. 400. Translated into Polish by Potocki, A. from: Dewey, J. (1958). *Art as Experience*. New York: Capricorn Books, Putnam's Sons.

²⁵ Dewey, J. (1975). *Sztuka jako doświadczenie*, pp. 400-424.

²⁶ In the beginning of *Art as Experience* Dewey gives a beautiful example of an aesthetic embodied experience analyzing Parthenon: "The one who sets out to theorize about aesthetic experience embodied in the Parthenon

closely connecting body and art in terms of aesthetic experience, Dewey shows us a possibility hinting at emancipation of democratic character. Aesthetic experience does not belong to one class, group, or form, and it makes our lives and everyday activities more interesting, deeper. This analytical direction is held nowadays by Arnold Berleant, who argues for an aesthetic engagement of our bodies/minds in a certain environment; it is also taken up by Roberta Dreon, for whom aesthetic emancipation is on the level of senses and emotions, and by Richard Shusterman who develops *somaesthetics* not only as a philosophical field, but also as a practical one, developing consciousness and refinement of our bodily senses.

However, this line of thought – occupied with aesthetic experience as enriching human life and possessing a democratic character, rather than with the art as such – also illustrates how the market economy both creates and satisfies superficial human aesthetic needs. For instance, Arnold Berleant's analysis of contemporary aesthetical sensibilities claims that aesthetic sensibility has been appropriated and exploited by consumer capitalism. A desire to experience more and more, in the most pleasant way possible, has been socially imprinted by global consumerism and drives us towards unhealthy and destructive ways of living. This desire for infinitely more (more sugar, more salt, more oil, more caffeine, louder sounds, living faster and in a riskier way) is sustained by consumer mass culture for the sake of political control and market manipulation.²⁷

Berleant proposes aesthetic practice as the tool for emancipation from this control, by means of social analyses and political criticism. For him, aesthetic

experience does not have contemplative Kantian disinterested character, but is participative, multisensual, and immersed in the environment.²⁸ An experience can be understood as human aesthetic engagement in the environment, from which we are not separated, and it has power to co-create our reality. If we wish to move beyond the exploitation of our senses for the sake of capitalist interests of a few, we should try then to transform our aesthetic sensibility.²⁹ This process of transforming our aesthetic sensibility also has political, environmental, and moral implications, as underlined and analyzed by Yuriko Saito.³⁰

This perspective is very interesting, compelling, and influential, however I would like to note that the art as such disappears within Berleant's idea of environmental aesthetics. Art, here, is just another field of aesthetic, somatic experience; it is treated with the same regard as any other certain qualities of the environment, and not much favored. Analyzing the contemporary human condition, Berleant focuses on our multisensory perception. His diagnosis is pessimistic, as he observes the exploitation of human bodies financially profiting global capital. Therefore, he calls for transformation of the ways in which we satisfy our desires for food, drink, and sex; transformations of what, when, how, and – most importantly – how much we consume. This call for emancipation from consumer capitalism and global market economy can be brought about by transforming the structure of capitalism through aesthetic sensibility. Roberta Dreon reflects on a similar idea, that aesthetic quality infiltrates experience (which also has a somatic side) and shows that political economy and marketing are now increasingly and pervasively exploiting the

must realize in thought what the people into whose lives it entered had in common, as creators and as those who were satisfied with it, with people in our own homes and on our own streets.” – Dewey, J. (1934). *Art as Experience*. New York: Minton, Balch & Company, p. 4.

²⁷ Berleant, A. (2015). *The Co-optation of Sensibility and the Subversion of Beauty*. Keynote during the conference “Emancipation: Challenges at the Intersection of American and European Philosophy.” 26th of February, 2015. Fordham University, Manhattan, New York.

²⁸ See: Berleant, A. (1992). *The Aesthetics of Environment*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press; Berleant, A. (2005). *Aesthetics and Environment, Theme and Variations*. Aldershot: Ashgate; and others.

²⁹ Berleant, A. (2010). *Sensibility and Sense. The Aesthetic Transformation of the Human World*. Imprint Academic: Exeter, p. 31

³⁰ Saito, Y. (2010). *Rola estetyki w kształtowaniu świata* [The Role of Aesthetics in World-Making] Translated to Polish by J. Wierzbowska. In: “Sztuka i Filozofia” [“Art and Philosophy”] 37(2010), pp. 71-89.

"aesthetic hunger" of individuals in contemporary post-industrial societies. However, regarding the perspective of John Dewey, she claims that aesthetic emancipation has its sensuous, emotive, and imaginative side, and so searches for different, more subtle forms of enjoyment and pleasure which are not directly politically or socially engaged. This emancipation of sensibility is directed towards our well-being and happiness, also possessing ethical value.³¹

Taking into consideration the discipline of somaesthetics (proclaimed by Richard Shusterman, grown out of Dewey's pragmatist aesthetics) we can note a similar call to liberation. However, this proposal is limited to the individual body; the emancipatory potential of aesthetic practices is limited by the dominant structure within which we cultivate our bodies. Shusterman is sometimes criticized for concentration on phenomena like body-building, yogic practices, Alexander Technique, Feldenkrais Method, etc., which can be interpreted as narcissistic. Of course, the return to the body³² is very important, but evident in Shusterman's reflection is a shadow of the subject-object division, of the subject and the world. Here it is better to go back to John Dewey, who underlines *practice* as an interaction between "live creatures" and their environment; or to Arnold Berleant, who writes about an interaction in which we cannot distinguish the subject and the object, as the subject is participating in an experience within a continuum of environment.

The difference between structuralism and pragmatism is one of concentration – either on art, or on aesthetic sensibility – and stems from the difference in structure and terminology of these trends in philosophy. However, the definition of art in structuralism is such that it aligns closely with pragmatist orientation, as art is defined

through certain social fields, divisions of social class, and bodily practices held individually. This difference is therefore terminological rather than essential, and both are united in their explicit search and fight for emancipation. Structuralism notes a discrepancy in the field of art that allows something radically new to appear, something which can drive transformation of social, political, and economic structures. Pragmatism points at the need to develop, cultivate, and transform our aesthetic bodily sensibility in order to transform our world into one more just and less exploitive.

Both lines of philosophical consideration share questions: How can we think and feel innovatively? How can art or aesthetic experience bring about the radically new, to change *status quo*? Anything new can stem only from practice, from an individual and his/her personal experience in a specific context, although there is no one right way to achieve it; each experiential event or act of sensory satisfaction can bring novelty on somatic, psychological, emotional, and intellectual levels, but this is not a necessity. It can instead perpetuate habitual social patterns, or obey the capitalist economy with its desire for "a new model" all the time.

The possibility of emancipation from the structure, in Althusserian terms, exceeds his language system, as his philosophy and terminology are structured in the same way. Althusser does point at the importance of embodied practices as well as the importance of discrepancy, inconsistency, and displacement caused by distance inherent to the experience of real art. Real art is the sphere where it is possible to break from established structure and to think of something radically new. Without art, we are closed in unfinished repetition and reproduction of structural blocks of capitalism.

Dewey's line of reflection proposes focus on the aesthetic experience that art provides as enriching human life. Accepted and built upon by Berleant, Dreon, Shusterman, and many others, this proposal can give a new perspective to the world. It can lead to new practices, conducted in everyday human life, which

³¹ Dreon, R. *The Aesthetic, Pleasure and Happiness, or: Freedom is not Enough*. In: "Pragmatism Today." Vol. 6, Issue 1, 2015, p. 12.

³² Shusterman, R. (1999). *Somaesthetics: A Disciplinary Proposal*. In: "The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism." Vol. 57, No. 3 (Summer), pp. 299-313.

improve environmental, social, and political conditions of living. Although aesthetic experience eschews systemic conflict, and often is not explicit, it has potential within political and social fields to subtly change the structure of a society by influencing everyday human behavior, practices held privately. This strategy in my opinion has the advantage, if we aim to change the social structure to a more just version, because a direct fight for democracy and justice cannot change the overall structure; it can change only the hierarchy of its blocks, that is the layers, the social classes.

Nevertheless, I miss the idea of art as embodied in social and ideological practices. The field of everyday sensibility for the air, smells, sounds, and touch is important politically, especially if we connect the ideas of aesthetics with ethics or morality. Art in particular seems to have a specific potential; I find Alain Badiou's approach to understanding this potential interesting, as it connects different philosophical paths from history: from ancient times, through the philosophies of mathematics and logics, to rational and structural considerations, and into psychoanalytical reflections. Although I find no direct pragmatist inspiration in Badiou's thought, the pragmatic idea that a human being is immersed in the environment, and polysensory, fits within his philosophical lexicon, as 'human being' for him is a paradoxical set or entity, within the structural territory.

However, as Badiou is leftist (in his younger days he was even an active Maoist) there is an explicit awareness in his writings that liberal democracy is not enough to obtain freedom, because it is always built on some form of exclusion, domination, and/or discrimination. Structural analysis shows that in order to think about effectively breaking from the dominant structure, we have to move beyond liberal democracy and the idea of an individual subject, which is one of the basic concepts for this field. Badiou's proposal to transform the idea of subject, aiming at structural change towards a more just system, starts from art. Personal lived experiences and ways of subjectification that art can show are worth consideration.

The Art and The New

Badiou directly points at art's responsibility for transforming subjectivity, within the horizon of the emancipatory change of the system of modern capitalism. His writings have a point of reciprocity with John Dewey, in that both emphasize the importance of a novel experience; Badiou writes about "an event," rare and exceptional, that gives rise to a new subject and "effects" or "consequences," which are everyday practices following the event and defining it as such. The structural change awaited by Badiou has no liberal democratic character, as for him the processes of democratization are not the answer for social, economic, and political contradictions present in the world. In the last thesis from his *Fifteen Theses on Contemporary Art* Badiou points at a correlation between artistic creation and liberty, stating that in art and artistic creation there appears:

"(...) a new kind of liberty which is beyond the democratic definition of liberty. And we may speak of something like an artistic definition of liberty which is intellectual and material, something like Communism within a logical framework, because there is no liberty without a logical framework, something like a new beginning, a new possibility, rupture, and finally something like a new world, a new light, a new galaxy. This is the artistic definition of liberty and the issue today consists not in an art discussion between liberty and dictatorship, between liberty and oppression, but in my opinion, between two definitions of liberty itself."³³

This novelty, as Badiou presents his idea of it, is not exactly the sort desired by consumerist capitalism: always a new model and another variation that we have to have, have to achieve in order to be up-to-date. The novelty for which Badiou calls is rather a shift in the structures of perception within the world and how we function in it (this idea Badiou draws from an Althusserian point of view, but can be understood also within the framework of pragmatism as developed by

³³ Badiou, A. (2005). *The Subject of Art*. In: "The Symptom," Online Journal for Lacan.com on the basis of the lecture given within Deitch Projects on April 1, 2005, transcribed by L. Kerr.

Berleant). Innovations in the field of ideology and meaning are what Badiou underlines, writing that the only novelty we can create is limited to meanings, that is, we give new names, and cannot create new matter. We do not create *ex nihilo* and our creation is not creation of new matter, as there is equilibrium in the universe and we merely change material forms. Human creation is a process of reconfiguration, of subjecting entities then giving them new names.

It may seem insignificant, but giving new names has a powerful impact on reality, as broadly shown by Nietzsche, who pointed at the Overman (*Übermensch*) creating new values, giving names, and making others refer to him positively or on the basis of resentment.³⁴ Giving new names changes social structure, social identities, and ways of functioning in the world, having both mental and somatic impact. This reconfiguration is for Badiou an effect of "the artistic definition of liberty which is intellectual and material."³⁵ Badiou's statement has as the background Althusser's theory and his concept of ideology embodied in social practices held individually. Therefore, the appearance of the new transforms social structures by naming its units in a different way, and it is an effect of artistic liberty due to the distance towards ideology created by the works of art.

The Eventual Subject

Badiou's analysis is overall: in order to postulate the possibilities of change within the structure of capitalism as provoked by art, he goes deep into algorithmic structures and ontology, on the basis of which he defines a subject with potential to change the structure. The subject of true revolutionary change for which Badiou searches changes circumstance and conditions, and thereby itself; it is a rare/eventual definition of subjectivity outside the democratic definitions. It is self-identified, expressed in new ideologies, worldviews, and

images (verbal representations – not so indelible as visual representations – are not so useful to present and share new methods of understanding, explaining, perceiving, and experiencing the world).

Alain Badiou's theories draw much from Jacques Lacan,³⁶ whose concept of absence allowed an understanding of a subject conceptually surpassing symbolic order. In a similar manner the void haunts Badiou's subject, whose 'proper name' is \emptyset , the mathematical sign of the empty set. However, Badiou's line of thinking eventually diverges from Lacan, finding him too attached to a 'Cartesian epoch of science,'³⁷ and having "reproduced an operator of fidelity, postulated the horizon of indiscernible, and persuaded us again that there are, in this uncertain world, some [certain] subjects."³⁸

As Badiou's subject's name is void, it just appears within the inconsistency of the Being, extant only in a process of interminable confirmations of the hysterical historical? event that has occurred. Following this line of thought in *Theory of Subject*, he presents a multidimensional understanding of subject as a process of accurately unfolding an event.

"A subject is such that, subservient to the rule that determines a place, it nevertheless punctuates the latter with the interruption of its effects. (...) The fact that the subjective process occurs from the point of the interruption indicates the law of the subject as the dialectical division of destruction and recomposition. (...) The effect of the Same is destroyed, and what this destruction institutes is *an other Same*."³⁹

³⁶ Badiou, A., *Meditation Thirty-Seven. Descartes/ Lacan* in: *Part VIII. Forcing: Truth and the Subject. Beyond Lacan*, in: Badiou, A. (2007) *Being and Event*. Translated by O. Feltham. London-New York: Continuum, pp. 390-440. First published by Continuum 2006. Originally published in French as *L'être et l'événement*. (1988). Editions du Seuil.

³⁷ Badiou, A., *Meditation Thirty-Seven. Descartes/ Lacan* in: *Part VIII. Forcing: Truth and the Subject. Beyond Lacan*, in: Badiou, A. (2007), p. 432.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p.434.

³⁹ Badiou, A. (2009). *Theory of the Subject*. Translated and introduced by B. Bosteels. London: Continuum, p. 259. First published in French as *Théorie du sujet*. (1982). Editions du Seuil.

³⁴ Nietzsche, F. (1999). *On the Genealogy of Morals*. Translated by D. Smith. USA: Oxford University Press.

³⁵ Badiou, A. (2005). *The Subject of Art*.

The destruction of the Same by an event leads to the recomposition of the subject, which, in order to be valid, has to have consequence. This line of argumentation shows from a different angle the transformation of a subject and his/her life-embodied social practices.

The Importance of the Routine

In *Ethics*, Badiou writes on consequences that follow from the event, as for him there is no truth without routine practices.⁴⁰ These words echo the practical maxim expressed by Charles Sanders Peirce, the founder of American pragmatism: "a conditional sentence has its apodosis in the imperative mood."⁴¹ However, Peirce was occupied with neither psychological processes of judgment (which he discarded as having relevance only in a non-ideal world)⁴² nor with common psychological interpretations,⁴³ and he was not referring to "vulgar practice," that is everyday practical activity of an individual;⁴⁴ he opened the door for putting practice before theoretical rules and laws.

William James offered his own reinterpretation of formulations of Peirce's practical maxim,⁴⁵ showing the great importance of everyday individual human

experiences. This approach has been taken up by the ensuing philosophers of pragmatist orientation, being sure of the uselessness of stiff conceptual divisions and of the need to perceive life in a holistic manner, not separating knowing and doing, human beliefs and activities.⁴⁶ Perceiving reality as a process – as George Herbert Mead and John Dewey had been doing – and treating the development of culture, society, mind, and language as parts of nature and life allows one to understand common activities and things important for people's lives as possessing symbolic and aesthetic character, as they function in a social world, defining their meaning and influencing sensibility.⁴⁷

The line of thinking, started by Charles Sanders Peirce, offering a semiotic reflection on language and society, shows society as functioning on the basis of the symbolic sphere. This order of the symbolic sphere is important for social order and if we want to change the socio-symbolical order – as is Badiou's desire – it is important to elaborate everyday routine, surging from eventual/rare experiences/events and sometimes to revitalize this routine via original hysterical decoration.

Appearance of the event, which initiates a new subject and its truth are hysterical in all fields (love, politics, science and art) – when we fall in love, engage in revolution, invent a new scientific or artistic idea, we are hysterical in a way. These moments of appearance of the new have in each field specific circumstances and coincidences (their decoration) which confirms their authenticity. Although, in order to definitively constitute something new, after an event there should follow

⁴⁰ Badiou, A. (2001). *Ethics. An Essay on the Understanding of Evil*. Translated and introduced by Peter Hallward. London-New-York: Verso, pp. 40-41.

⁴¹ "Pragmatism is the principle that every theoretical judgement expressible in a sentence in the indicative mood is a confused form of thought whose only meaning, if it has any, lies in its tendency to enforce a corresponding practical maxim expressible as a conditional sentence having its apodosis in the imperative mood" – Peirce, Ch. S. (1934). *Collected papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*. Vol. V, *Pragmatism and Pragmaticism*. Edited by Ch. Hartshorne and Weiss. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, (5)19.

⁴² Peirce was of the opinion that psychology should depend on logics and not on the contrary – Ibid., (5)485.

⁴³ Peirce, Ch. S. (1958). *Collected papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*. Vol VIII, *Reviews, Correspondence, and Bibliography*. Edited by A. W. Burks, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, (8)330.

⁴⁴ Peirce, Ch. S. (1934). Reference to: (5) 402.

⁴⁵ Charles Sanders Peirce was underlining that he was a metaphysician, so that he had marked the difference between him and William James, calling James's interpretation of his thought pragmatism, and his own pragmatism – Ibid., (5) 424.

⁴⁶ Putnam, H. (1999). *Pragmatyzm. Pytanie otwarte*. Warszawa: Aletheia., pp. 36-37. Translated into Polish by B. Chwedenczuk from: Putnam, H. (1995). *Pragmatism: An Open Question*. Oxford-Cambridge: Blackwell.

⁴⁷ Therefore, in order to understand human reality, George Herbert Mead had been proposing the connection of different spheres of science as a mechanism utilizing teleology, psychology and physiology. – See: Baldwin, J. D. (1987). *George Herbert Mead. A Unifying Theory for Sociology*, Newbury Park-Beverly Hills-London-New Delhi: Sage Publications Inc., pp. 38-42.

effects, consequences, practices – the routine of everyday life.

The Subject of Art and its Responsibility

The consequences are important for the identity of a subject, as the truth of the subject for Badiou is produced by the event and its effects/consequences. This is applicable also to the subject of art, one of four types of subjects that he recognizes: the subject of science, the subject of love (the Two), the subject of politics (revolutionary), and the subject of art.⁴⁸ In a sense all these types of subjects are revolutionary, as they break with Cartesian concepts of identical-with-itself subject, as they are not individual.

The subject of art is neither an artist nor a piece of art, but rather a relation set between them in a certain position – a physical and political one, and the consequences of this relationship that follow the event of meeting. It is “a new singularity in the development of the art world”⁴⁹ and the work of art is just “the trace of an event if an event is something like an affirmative split.”⁵⁰ The concept of the affirmative split ? in the field of artistic creation Badiou defines through its consequences, “something like a new disposition between what is a form and what is not.”⁵¹ This goes along with Dewey's thoughts regarding art's transformative power over subjectivity, having its social, linguistic, personal, somatic, and aesthetic characteristics which supersede conceptual and formal divisions.

This new disposition has transformative potential and also a political side. Badiou states that “the contemporary world is a war between enjoyment and sacrifice,”⁵² understood as testing the limits of the body, and alluding to enjoyment in another world of pleasure beyond suffering. This dynamic is also present in

contemporary art, found by the French philosopher between formalism and Romanticism, as a particular phenomenon of dialectics between enjoyment and sacrifice. In this regard, Badiou imparts art with great responsibility:

“I think the question of the subject of art is today is this question — to find something like a new subjective paradigm, which is outside the contemporary war between enjoyment and sacrifice.”⁵³

According to Badiou's reasoning, the subject of art should step outside traditional concepts of relation with a body, that is, the reducibility of the subject to the body (enjoyment path) and the disjuncture of the subject from the body (sacrifice path) and reformulate it, understanding it through immanent difference. For Badiou here lies a contemporary “specific responsibility of artistic creation, which is to help humanity to find the new subjective paradigm.”⁵⁴ The artistic reconfiguration of the subject, understood in the Cartesian terms of body-mind relation, the reconfiguration that goes down to the body and that shows new visibilities, has a specifically political aim for Badiou, which he tries to implement through his writings and lectures. He says:

“So the subject of art is not only the creation of a new process in its proper field, but it's also a question of war and peace, because if we don't find the new paradigm—the new subjective paradigm—the war will be endless. And if we want peace—real peace—we have to find the possibility that subjectivity is really in infinite creation, infinite development, and not in the terrible choice between one form of the power of death (experimentation of the limits of pleasure) and another form of the power of death (which is sacrifice for an idea, for an abstract idea.)”⁵⁵

⁴⁸ Badiou, A. (2001), pp. 41-42.

⁴⁹ Badiou, A. (2005). *The Subject of Art*.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

Conclusions

In this paper I have argued for the emancipatory potential of art, which can be explained from structural and pragmatist perspectives. However, in place of contradicting these perspectives I have tried to show that the importance of the somatic, perceptual, social, and communal experience of art, does not exclude the importance of structural, discursive, linguistic, and mathematical analyses of art and its function, but it coincides with them. This synthesis allows perceiving art multidimensionally, not limiting it to a group of specific objects or characteristics to be analyzed. Of course pointing at somatic, perceptual social, and communal experience I do not refer just to pragmatism; structural, discursive, linguistic, and mathematical analyses are not solely the realm of structuralist tradition.

Although there are noticeable differences in philosophical terminology, categorizations, and emphasis on different aspects of the same phenomena between structural tradition (from which Badiou developed his ideas, alongside contemporary pragmatist aesthetics) as presented by Berleant, one should also note that what is at stake in the philosophies of both thinkers is the human aesthetic-engaged practice that is both individual and public, and has the power to change subjectivity and the way we function in our world; power which can change social, environmental, political, and morally oppressive paradigms.

I tried to show above that pragmatist and structuralist traditions intertwine relating to social practices: the way a subject is perceived as immersed in structural social reality; they also relate regarding the function of art as a field for transformation of individual/communal, private/public practices. Pragmatism has a discursive and linguistic character. Ontological and mathematical analyses of Peirce are well-known, and his concept of the Firstness could be compared with Badiou's concept of the Being, as for Peirce the Firstness is not understandable, un-named,

and can only manifest itself in "uncontrolled variety and multiplicity."⁵⁶

However, I did not aspire to present here comprehensive comparison and interpretation of similarities and differences between pragmatism and structuralism. I just aimed to argue that it is fruitful to search for coincidences between them and to perceive art from a synthesis of multiple perspectives, because it can reveal art's emancipatory potential. From that understanding, we can better explore how art creates the possibility for a transformation of subjectivity, for creation of new truths, acting beyond the scope of rationality through emotions and senses within an event/an experience, and making meaning in the effects/consequences following from it. The great power of art, what allows it to change lives, ways of experiencing, and of thinking, is art's ability to transform social, family, and political relations – this calls for a great responsibility of art, as Badiou shows – it is capable of surpassing even the democratic ideal of freedom.

⁵⁶ Peirce, Ch. S. (1931). *Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce, Vol. 1, Principles of Philosophy*, Edited by Ch. Hartshorne and P. Weiss. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. (1) 302.

AESTHETIC ISSUES IN HUMAN EMANCIPATION BETWEEN DEWEY AND MARCUSE

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ABSTRACT: *In his early essay on the affirmative character of culture, dating back to 1937, Marcuse states that the whole sphere of material production is generally regarded as being tainted by misery and injustice, and in principle alien to beauty, enjoyment and happiness. In the 1920s Dewey had made a similar point, noting that our understanding of work as a synonym for mere labour – something uninteresting and toilsome, which leaves no legitimate room for pleasure – is the result of a regressive habit, connected to an exclusive emphasis on profit. Setting out from different points of departure, both scholars assert the possibility to enjoy richer forms of life here and now – ones sensuously, emotively and imaginatively more satisfying. The present paper tries to distinguish the different meanings which Dewey and Marcuse attribute to the aesthetic aspects of our experiences, by stressing their common assumption that these aspects are one of the basic elements in our interactions with the surrounding world and that they play a decisive role in our lives. Political emancipation, as defined by Marx, does not cover the sum of human emancipation in all of its complexity, particularly because the more anthropologically oriented meaning of the term also includes the satisfaction of some aesthetic needs which must be taken into account in order to attain “thicker” forms of freedom. While for both Dewey and Marcuse at the beginning of the 20th century consumption remained the only recognized venue for pleasure, it must be acknowledged that political economy and marketing are now increasingly and pervasively exploiting the “esthetic hunger” of individuals in contemporary post-industrial societies. Nonetheless, for both Dewey and Marcuse this circumstance neither means that we must pursue a purely negative form of culture and art nor that we have to look for completely rational agents, whose conduct exclusively stems from clear and distinct ideas and arguments, with no aesthetic or qualitative influence on their deliberations. The point is rather to suggest alternative ways of satisfying our aesthetic needs, but also of making subtler distinctions between different forms of consumption, pleasure and enjoyment.*

It is well known that historically there has been no fruitful theoretical exchange between the most outstanding figures of classical pragmatism, on the one side, and the Marxist tradition, on the other, including the exponents of its cultural heritage, that is the various voices of the Frankfurt school.¹ Marcuse himself wrote a review of Dewey's *Logic. A Theory of Inquiry* in 1940, widely reflecting the cultural prejudices of his own philosophical school with regard to the American one.²

Although I agree with Peirce and Dewey when they stress the basic role which our beliefs and habits of thinking and behaving play in the comprehension of our surroundings and in the configuration of our categories, I believe it is time to give up bad, routine habits of thought in favour of more intelligent or simply more open-minded ones and to try to see whether a discussion on these subjects can suggest new perspectives or help us find alternative solutions.

This premise helps me introduce my present topic: the role played by the aesthetic aspects or aesthetic dimension of our living with respect to a form of emancipation that is wholly human rather than exclusively political.

With no pretence to philological accuracy, I would argue

¹ Of course I am referring here to the first generation of the Frankfurt school, while it is well known that “pragmatism and critical theory are now far less ignorant of, or hostile to, one another” (Deen, P. 2010. “Dialectical vs Experimental Method: Marcuse's Review of Dewey's *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry*”, *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, 46/2, p.243), primarily because of Jürgen Habermas' work. On Dewey and Marxism see Gavin, W.J. (ed.) 1988. *Context over Foundation: Dewey and Marx*, Dordrecht: Reidel and more recently the essay by John Ryder, *Naturalism pragmatist et Marxisme*, in Frega R. (ed.) 2015, *Le pragmatisme comme philosophie sociale et politique*, Lormont: BDL Editions, pp.157-202. On pragmatism and the Frankfurt School, see Jay, M. 1973. *Dialectical Imagination. A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research, 1923-1950*, Boston and Toronto: Little Brown and Company and Joas, H. 1993. *Pragmatism and Social Theory*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

² See Marcuse, H. 2010. “Review of John Dewey's *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry*”, *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, 46/2, translated by Deen, P., pp.258-265 and Deen, P. 2010. cit.

that the notorious distinction between political and human emancipation – traced by Marx in his famous essay on the Jewish question in 1844³ – may be invoked here in support of the thesis that both for John Dewey and for Herbert Marcuse real human emancipation cannot be confined to equality before the law.

Of course this is not to deny that other factors are structurally crucial for the development of a good form of shared living. It is almost trivial to say that access to survival resources together with both negative and positive forms of freedom are necessary preconditions. However, the above-mentioned philosophers, although from different perspectives, share the assumption that a form of democratic, non-repressive society must take into account the concrete man, as opposed to the abstract citizen, with his biological and existential needs to be satisfied and his desire to enjoy life, i.e. to achieve a sensuously, emotionally and imaginatively richer form of living. This also means considering the basically social structure of human living, including both aggressive and sympathetic aspects, in order to shape a new kind of non-repressive society (Marcuse) or a democracy understood as “a life of free and enriching communion” (Dewey).⁴ In other words, it is my contention that according to both authors the aesthetic aspects of our typically human form of life play a central role in the configuration of our societies and have deep political implications.

The outstanding role played by the aesthetic in configuring our forms of life is evident first of all for both Marcuse and Dewey in its negative aspects, in both political and economic terms. In *Freedom and Culture* Dewey points out that the emotions and imagination are much more powerful than information and reason as a

means of shaping public sentiment and opinion. He shows just how deep totalitarian control can go by affecting feelings, desires and emotions.⁵ Totalitarian regimes are able to exploit the human need to belong to a community, the human desire to escape responsibility, as well as our impulse towards submission and our desire to find satisfaction in shared creative activities.⁶ On the other hand, Marcuse's “Political Preface” to *Eros and Civilization* emphasizes a typical feature of present-day affluent societies: the fact that authorities have almost no need to coercively control citizens, because they are now able to satisfy human erotic and aggressive drives both by means of the market, by transforming goods into libidinal objects, and by means of cultural industries, by producing creative sublimations of human instincts.⁷

However, for both authors these circumstances do not mean that we have to deny human needs, desires and emotions because they let us be controlled by external forces. This is a rather peculiar stance if compared to the long philosophical tradition going from Plato to Adorno.

With particular reference to Marcuse, it must be said that this attitude strongly characterizes his thought in contrast to the positions of the other members of the Frankfurt School, hence reinforcing my hypothesis that a fertile comparison can be traced between Dewey and Marcuse from the point of view of the correlations between aesthetics and politics. By contrast, Adorno's prejudices against any form of aesthetic enjoyment, seen as a means of supporting and reinforcing the *status quo*, are well known.⁸ In opposition to this negative philosophical attitude, both Dewey and Marcuse – at least in his middle period – stress the structural role of

³ Marx, K. 1978. *Zur Judenfrage*, in Marx, K. - Engels, F. 1978, *Werke Band I*, Berlin: Dietz Verlag, pp.347-377.

⁴ Dewey, J. 1984. *The Public and Its Problems*, in *The Later Works, 1925-1953, Volume 2: 1925-1927*, Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, p.350. Dewey is here explicitly recalling Walt Whitman.

⁵ Dewey, J. 1988. *Freedom and Culture*, in *The Later Works, 1925-1953, Volume 13: 1938-1939*, Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, p.70.

⁶ Ibidem, pp.88-89.

⁷ Marcuse, H. 1966. *Eros and Civilization. A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud*, Boston: Beacon.

⁸ See the section entitled “Artistic enjoyment” in Adorno, T.W. 1984. *Aesthetic Theory*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

human sensitive and sensuous needs and search for alternative, non-regressive forms of human satisfaction through the model of a non-repressive society or a democratic way of life, capable of taking into account the fact that man is not just a political animal but also a “consuming” one in search of enjoyment and an enhancement of life.⁹

But this close connection between aesthetics and politics can be grasped even through a merely exterior observation of the two philosophers' production. The essays and books from Marcuse's so-called middle and late period (from 1932 to 1978)¹⁰, while having a strong political focus, always devote a chapter or paragraph to a discussion of the “aesthetic dimension”, or of a “new sensibility”. Dewey, in turn, devoted an important chapter of his *Experience and Nature* and a whole book to the aesthetic aspects of our experience and to reflections on the arts; and these texts were written precisely in the two decades when he published his most important political works, that is the 1920s and 1930s.¹¹ Furthermore, with regard to this point, it is worth stressing the fact that these were the years immediately preceding and following the Great Depression, that is the first major crisis of a highly industrialized society, combined with the emergence of financial capitalism.

This factor leads me to point out a first similarity between the two philosophers: the methodological starting point they share. Both start from the material conditions of existence or – with reference to Dewey's more anthropologically oriented stance – from the material culture they belong to. The intellectual

dispositions they critically consider – on the one hand the so-called affirmative character of culture, on the other the traditionally modern form of individualism – are considered to be deeply connected to the technological and economic (industrial) means of producing resources and to the financial and political ways of managing them. In either case, this does not amount to the sort of determinism which follows as the ultimate result of a certain stiff Marxist tradition; that is, it does not imply the thesis that our cultural superstructures are caused by and can be reduced to material conditions. Rather, it means that we have to take into account the peculiar qualities – not only the natural qualities, but also the social or economic ones – of the environment which we belong to and which we contribute to configure from within, even through our ideas about the way of interacting with these conditions, of managing them, of coping with them, and so on.¹²

A second element of convergence, a rather conspicuous one, is that both Dewey and Marcuse – albeit in a completely independent manner from one another, of course – presuppose a broad conception of the aesthetic as an aspect of human experience or of human life as such, whose manifestations in properly artistic activities and products represent one aspect of the phenomenon, without assimilating it completely. This point, in my opinion, is closely related to a third factor, which plays a relevant role in both the philosophies we are considering, that is the rooting of the aesthetic dimension in the biological, naturalistic aspects of our humanity. I believe that this kind of anthropological attitude towards the aesthetic is connected, on the one hand, to the deep influence which Schiller and his *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man* exercised on Marcuse,¹³ who originally reinterpreted them by means

⁹ Dewey, J. 1984. *The Public and Its Problems*, cit., p.321.

¹⁰ See Reitz, C. 2000. *Art, Alienation, and the Humanities. A Critical Engagement with Herbert Marcuse*, Albany NY: State University of New York Press, who distinguishes three different periods in Marcuse's philosophical production (p.11).

¹¹ Cf. Dewey, J. 1988. *Experience and Nature*, in *The Later Works, 1925-1953, Volume 1:1925*, Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press and Dewey, J. 1989. *Art as Experience*, in *The Later Works, 1925-1953, Volume 10: 1934*, Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press.

¹² See Ryder, J. (cit.) on materialism.

¹³ Schiller, F. 1992. *Über die ästhetischen Erziehung des Menschen in einer Reihe von Briefen*, in Schiller, F. 1992, *Theoretischen Schriften*, Volume 8 of *Friedrich Schiller. Werke und Briefe in zwölf Bände*, Frankfurt a.M.: Deutsche Klassiker Verlag, pp.556-676. English

of Freudian categories; and, on the other hand, to Dewey's non-dogmatic reading of Darwin's writings, which was originally connected to William James' generally naturalistic and continuistic attitude.

Nonetheless, these important, if partial, convergences should not prevent us from noting some great differences with regard to the ultimate results of Marcuse's and Dewey's respective enquiries, which have a lot to do with their conception of the arts and their idea of high and mass culture. Another particularly serious point of divergence is represented by Marcuse's final negative and consciously transcendent stance with respect to the specific conditions we live in and Dewey's idea of changing things from the inside, but also to his genuinely pluralistic stance, based on the idea of seeing not just what is wrong in our lives, but also what works differently and might have unexpected, fruitful consequences.

The first aspect to be considered, in my opinion, are the convergences between Marcuse's criticism of so-called affirmative culture and Dewey's interpretation of the old individualist paradigm. Both these kinds of criticisms focus on aesthetic, emotive and imaginative factors that are deeply entrenched in society we live in, considered from the point of view of its economic and political configurations.

Secondly, it is necessary to examine the anthropological meanings of the aesthetic aspects of our interactions with the natural and naturally social world, which in both cases do not coincide with artistic practices, objects or events. In both authors aesthetics appears to have political implications, as it concerns the very social conditions we share as human livings.

Finally, I will conclude by pointing out some divergences between the two philosophers, which remain important even if we can appreciate some

affinities on this topic, at least in a certain phase of their philosophical production.

1. Critical convergences

As a point of departure, I would suggest focusing on the common ground that may be found between Dewey's critical attitude towards the traditional modern version of individualism and Marcuse's criticism of so-called affirmative culture, which finds a complementary development in his analysis of the pros and cons of hedonism.¹⁴

In 1929 Dewey argued that the material culture we live in deeply influences the kind of men we are and the beliefs we hold.¹⁵ That is to say that technologically advanced means of industrial production and the kind of financial management exclusively oriented towards private profit are not merely exterior factors in respect to our identities; they are not marginal aspects we should entrust to economists and financial managers, in order to preserve a genuinely individual space of spiritual freedom and a distinctly cultural dimension. This is precisely the heritage of the old individualism, based on the prejudice that the individual is first of all an isolated and independent entity, whose happiness is to be pursued in an exclusively spiritual sphere, legitimating – on the earthly side – a laissez-faire economy of unrestrained private wealth accumulation.

From this point of view, Dewey's contention is that the new forms of association produced by the new means of

¹⁴ See Marcuse, H. 1965. *Über den affirmativen Charakter der Kultur*, in *Kultur und Gesellschaft I*, Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, pp.56-109. English translation: Marcuse, H. 1968. *The Affirmative Character of Culture*, in *Negations. Essays in Critical Theory*, Boston: Beacon, pp.65-98. Cf. also Marcuse, H. 1965. *Zur Kritik des Hedonismus*, in *Kultur und Gesellschaft I*, Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, pp.128-168. English translation: Marcuse, H. 1968. *On Hedonism*, in *Negations. Essays in Critical Theory*, Boston: Beacon, pp.119-150.

¹⁵ Dewey, J. 1988. *Individualism Old and New*, in *The Later Works, 1925-1953, Volume 5: 1929-1930*, Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, pp.41-123.

translation: Schiller, F. 1994. *On the Aesthetic Education of Man in a Series of Letters*, Bristol: Thoemmes.

production, while generally characterized by depersonalization, superficial forms of coexistence and mere consumerist satisfaction, can play a positive role in making the limits of old individualism clear: its elitist vocation, its dualism between mind and body and its responsibility in bestowing supremacy on the intellectual realm to the detriment of the satisfying of human material needs. From this point of view, we will see that these new forms of association play a role that is similar to that performed by hedonistic issues in Marcuse's criticism of affirmative culture.

A very important point for the present argument is the fact that according to Dewey in order to develop new forms of individualized and associated living we need a different sensibility that does not wholly correspond to deliberative reason. It is not enough to change the explicit reasons for our behaviour: we need to get to the emotional or qualitative basis of our habits and beliefs, we need to meet the human need not simply for an alleged crystal-clear conscience, but also for a fuller and more satisfying life with others and with the environmental conditions we live in.

This peculiar connection between materialism and the claim to a more integral form of human realization, capable of taking into account our aesthetic needs, can also be found in Marcuse's essay on the affirmative character of culture, dating back to 1937. His point of departure is amazingly similar to the pragmatist attitude: Marcuse criticizes the separation of what is useful and necessary from what is beautiful and enjoyable introduced by the ancient Greeks, and which implies a depreciation of human sensibility – so that the dualistic opposition between body and soul appears to have strong political implications, as is often stressed in Dewey's work. On the one hand, this separation of the useful from the beautiful and enjoyable is seen by Marcuse in his 1937 essay as the beginning of a process leading to the legitimization of what he calls “bourgeois praxis”, that is the typical middle-class pursuit of one's own profit at the expense of other members of society.

On the other hand, this separation is understood as confining happiness to the spiritual realm of culture, as basically entailing the need to transcend the empirical conditions of life. A purely interior kind of freedom is used to justify social and economic inequalities. The arts themselves contribute to this kind of situation, by being perceived as the only sphere for beauty, the only one in which spiritual enjoyment is permitted, while remaining essentially irrelevant to the conditions of material life.¹⁶

From this point of view, Marcuse acknowledges hedonism's claim to meet human sensible needs as a progressive one, struggling against the socially regressive idea of confining happiness to an alleged purely interior dimension.¹⁷ Aside from this perspective, even the boom in mass consumption reflects people's claim to lead a happier and sensuously richer life; at the same time it exposes the elitist character of affirmative culture together with its complicity in the unequal distribution of resources.¹⁸

It is possible to argue, therefore, that a significant convergence between Dewey and Marcuse would appear to emerge with respect to their understanding of

¹⁶ On this point it must be noted that Marcuse offers a different interpretation of Schiller's *Briefen* (cit.) in his essay on the affirmative character of culture compared to other texts of his. Even if the subject cannot be dealt with in this paper for evident reasons of length and opportunity, in my opinion Marcuse's understanding of Schiller's philosophical work played a crucial role in the development of his thought; in particular we find a similar oscillation in Schiller and in Marcuse between the idea of an emancipation from alienation through art, leading to human fulfilment, and the idea of art and beauty as opposed to empirical reality.

¹⁷ Cf. Marcuse's essay on hedonism.

¹⁸ It must be noted that this position was not always coherently sustained by Marcuse, who reached more regressive positions in his later essay *The Aesthetic Dimension*, dating back to 1978 (Marcuse, H. 1978. *The Aesthetic Dimension. towards a Critique of Marxist Aesthetics*, Boston: Beacon). For a wide-ranging and sharp interpretation of Marcuse's theoretical tensions or even ambiguities see Reitz, C. (cit.), who convincingly describes these aspects of Marcuse's thought as the transition from an idea of art as something that goes against alienation to a conception of art as deliberate alienation or a moving away from material conditions of life in late-capitalist societies.

life conditions in highly industrialized societies, although the two philosophers reached these conclusions by completely independent paths. According to both, in societies of this kind human lives seem to be divided into separate realms, one devoted to work exclusively for profit, and another devoted to culture and the arts, where – as already noted – enjoyment is perceived as legitimate but also as basically irrelevant to the conditions of material life.¹⁹ To complete the picture and update it to the present day, we should add a third component, that is the ever-expanding realm of consumption, in which enjoyment is allowed and indeed encouraged, but of course not primarily for the sake of human happiness. While both Dewey and Marcuse were able to detect this trend when it was first emerging, it must be acknowledged that now political economy and marketing are increasingly and pervasively exploiting the “esthetic hunger”²⁰ of individuals in contemporary post-industrial societies.

2. Understanding the aesthetic

But what about the meaning of “aesthetic” for these authors?

It must be recognized that they do not share exactly the same view of the aesthetic aspects of our life; nonetheless, some interesting similarities can be usefully summed up in order to then develop a more

detailed analysis of Dewey's and Marcuse's views on the subject.

The first thing to say is that clearly both philosophers do not confine the aesthetic dimension to the arts – neither to art products nor to artistic production and reception. The arts are envisaged as possible intensifications, enhancements or deepenings of some aesthetic traits of our experiences, on the grounds of their basic continuity with experience. Alternatively, the arts are understood as possible sublimations of erotic or life instincts, but they are not seen to cover the whole range of meanings of the aesthetic.

A second common aspect is constituted by a kind of naturalistic stance, oriented towards the biological roots of the aesthetic, with a focus, on the one hand, on human organic dependence on a natural and naturally social environment, and, on the other, on human instinctual nature. In both cases this view does not amount to a kind of reductionism making higher forms of human behaviour causally dependent upon physical structures, and dissolving the former into the latter. Rather, in both Dewey and Marcuse a kind of anthropologically oriented stance can be found which has to do with the dynamic, historical and even social configurations of our structurally dependent human nature, of our ultimately being living creatures. In this sense my contention will be that for both authors the aesthetic is ultimately connected to a tendency to enhance life.

A third correlated aspect regards their common, if independent, struggle against the dualism between body and mind, body and soul, sensibility and rationality, which is linked to an aspiration to more integral – as opposed to one-sided – forms of life and satisfying consummatory experiences. Let us begin with Dewey.

I would argue that the word 'aesthetic' for Dewey is first of all understood as an adjective or as an adverb characterizing our immediate interactions with our environment as being favourable or harmful for us,

¹⁹ There is also another point of convergence to be noted here, that is Dewey's and Marcuse's idea of work. Although there are some ambiguities in Marcuse's writing on this subject, in this paper as well as in the later essay on liberation the German philosophers deeply criticize the one-sided conception of work as exclusively oriented towards profit, while confining spiritual enjoyment to the realm of culture and of the arts. On this subject see also Marcuse's essay “Über die philosophischen Grundlagen des wirtschaftswissenschaftlichen Begriff der Arbeit”, *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaften und Sozialpolitik*, 69, pp.257-292. (English translation: *On the Philosophical Foundations of the Concept of Labour in Economics*, in Marcuse, H. 2005: *Heideggerian Marxism*, edited by Wolin, R. and Abromeit, J., Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, pp.122-150).

²⁰ This formula can be found in Dewey, J. 1989. *Art as Experience*, cit., p.12.

comfortable and welcoming or dangerous and disturbing. In *Experience and Nature* Dewey says that there is no doubt that things surrounding us, whole situations and other men and women are first of all perceived as sweet, gentle and charming, or as bitter, painful, disgusting. They make us enjoy or suffer, expand or feel oppressed. There is nothing mysterious in this phenomenon, because it is simply based on the human structural dependence on a natural and naturally social environment at all life levels. We are not primarily abstract minds, disembodied consciousnesses, completely autonomous subjects; we are not at all monadic entities, but rather living organisms, characterized by an outstanding high level of vulnerability to life conditions. For this reason the world around us affects us immediately before we can distance ourselves from these qualitative, affective or aesthetic meanings, before we can reflect and analyse the situations we experience from within and the various factors we interact with in view of other possible interactions. This is, of course, the beginning of inquiry, which is to say the method of intelligence, but it must be acknowledged that it is based on an aesthetic background.²¹ We could speak of sensibility here: this is the reason for Dewey's recovery of the word "esthetic" based on its ancient Greek root – a use essentially shared by William James. However, in this case speaking of sensibility does not imply that the word "esthetic" primarily refers to allegedly given sense data, but rather that it entails sensitive, affective, sensuous qualities.

We might formally sum up this meaning of the aesthetic aspects of our experience as a function of the structural dependence of human life upon the world. Or we could radicalize this thesis by suggesting that the source of

aesthetic meanings lies in human biological dependence, vulnerability or exposition to the environment and to other human beings, so that it is here that we find the core of Dewey's cultural naturalism. The biological truism *Art as Experience* reminds us is that life itself cannot take place in an abstract vacuum, but requires resources, energies and possibilities in the dynamic environment it belongs to and which it contributes to changing from within. Hence we enjoy or suffer our life conditions, because man is a peculiarly dependent kind of organism, whose answers to the environment are not previously fixed, but remain open, uncertain and plastic (or flexible), as well as structurally dependent on the actions of other men and women.

The consequence of this last point is that our acknowledgement and perception of others are based on our aesthetic, qualitative experience of the environment we depend on, and therefore affect the very configuration of social groups at a basic level.

A second meaning regards the use of the word aesthetic to characterize peculiarly integrated experiences, that is those interactions which come to their consummation and do not amount to mere routine, but can be perceived as significant for our lives, as capable of enhancing our energies and enriching our existence. A good equilibrium is acquired and life can flourish not at the expense of other environmental factors and other living organisms, but in expansive and enhancing ways.

We should point out that these kinds of "consummatory experiences" prefigure non-competitive forms of enjoyment, in contrast to the classical economic interpretation of the pleasure pursued by consumers in terms of individual utility.²²

²¹ On this point, we might recall that James and Peirce also stressed the structural role of the aesthetic, qualitative or affective aspects on human cognition, choices and behaviours. However, I believe that Dewey more clearly connected these aspects to our dependence – as living beings – on the environment, by interpreting them in a way consistent with his own staunchly cultural-naturalistic perspective.

²² See Kanheman, D.-Wakker, P.P.-Sarin, R. 1997, "Back to Bentham? Explorations of Experienced Utility", *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 112/2, pp.375-406 and Read, D. 2004, "Utility Theory from Jeremy Bentham to Daniel Kanheman", Working Paper LSEOR 04-64: The London School of Economics and Political Science.

Unfortunately these kinds of experiences supporting the flourishing of shared, satisfying forms of life are no longer to be found in many areas of advanced industrial society: we tend to take the lack of aesthetic qualities and enjoyment in work for granted, and to regard the lack of pleasure in science, morality or politics as a mark of seriousness and rigour. Moreover, we forget that things can work differently. These habits of thought and behaviours are so entrenched that they have become part of our identities and we need more intelligent kinds of habits to call them into question.²³

Dewey understands the arts as continuous with these qualities of human experiences, as their deliberate development and enhancement. But the point is that our contemporary societies have confined the arts to museums, and their enjoyment to narrow dimensions of our life, whose compartmentalization is the consequence of modes of productions based on an extremely high level of labour division and on the reduction of work itself to mere labour, toil, and lack of enjoyment. This leads us to our contemporary scenario, where – according to Dewey – the fruition of fine arts often proves regressive, confirming this sterile separation both on the existential level and on the social one, and where most people have to satisfy their “esthetic hunger” by means of the market, in most cases through dissipative rather than life-enhancing aesthetic experiences.

Nowadays Dewey's forecast should probably be extended to the bursting of the world art bubble – that is of the alleged independence of art – by the financial market and the deliberate exploitation of our sensibility and need for a more integrated and joyful life by sharp marketing strategies.²⁴

²³ See Dewey, J. 1988. *Human Nature and Conduct*, in *The Middle Works, 1899-1924, Volume 14: 1922*, Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press.

²⁴ See Cometti, J.-P. 2012. *Art et facteurs d'art. Ontologies Friables*, Rennes: Presses Universitaires de

Dewey believed that philosophy must address the question of the unsuccessful functions that the arts very often play in our lives nowadays. His crucial point is that, if “democracy is ultimately a quality of social living”,²⁵ we have to consider how humans actually are – and might be – aesthetically nurtured, by distinguishing in each case those conditions which contribute to a shared sense of enjoyed life and community from those that satisfy strictly private needs and in the long run foster a drying up of individual, social and environmental energies. A full democracy cannot dismiss these kinds of issues, which play an important role in shaping our way of life and even the background of our moral and political judgements.

Let us now come to Marcuse. I will focus on his middle period production, because in my opinion it is there that the German philosopher presents his most original ideas on aesthetic issues in relation to human emancipation and the notion of art. In particular, I will consider ch. 9 of *Eros and Civilization*, entitled “The aesthetic dimension”, together with the 1969 book *An Essay on Liberation*,²⁶ where two chapters are devoted to the subject of the possible biological basis of materialism and to that of a new sensibility. Despite its title, Marcuse's later essay *The Aesthetic Dimension*, from 1978, reverts to a much more conservative idea of art and culture, partially under the influence, I suppose, of Adorno's hegemonic position in the intellectual discussion of those years.²⁷

Rennes.

²⁵ See Green, M.J. 2008. *Pragmatism and Social Hope. Deepening Democracy in Global Contexts*, New York: Columbia University Press, p.2.

²⁶ Marcuse, H. 1969. *An Essay on Liberation*, Boston: Beacon.

²⁷ Marcuse opened the 1978 essay on the aesthetic dimension by acknowledging his debt to Adorno's aesthetic theory and concluded it with a quotation from Adorno's and Horkheimer's *Dialektik der Aufklärung* (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer; English translation: Cumming J. 1997, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, London-New York: Verso).

In the books just quoted, Marcuse's conception of the aesthetic in relation to human life is clearly connected to his interpretation of Schiller's *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man* and to his reading of Freud's theory of basic human instincts from a political and anthropological perspective. Freud's thesis about the repression of aggressive and sexual impulses as the ultimate cause of psychological diseases is reinterpreted by positing historical and political forms of repression of instinctive human needs – representing the heritage of our own species – as what makes the establishment of civilization possible. The key point is that according to Marcuse's writing from this period it is possible to envisage other kinds of civilization that are not oppressive, and to direct human erotic impulses in such a way as to ensure more satisfying human relations, happier forms of life, sensibly and sensuously richer experiences.

From this point of view, what are aesthetic are first of all the needs connected to our senses, understood as sources of desire rather than simply as organs of perception. For sure, Marcuse saw in this Freudian category a new version of Schiller's *Stofftrieb*, that is the human attitude to find immediate satisfaction to our sensory and sensuous needs, to reproduce life, which has been historically submitted by human *Formtrieb*, understood as the attempt to impose a controlled order, a kind of pure rationality, characterized by its sharp separation from sensibility.

In present-day society these sensible needs for “earthly gratification”²⁸ tend to be translated almost exclusively into sexual forms. Marcuse points out that they are rather erotic instincts, that is impulses directed towards the enhancement and flourishing of life, which can find fulfilment in gratifying human relations – from erotic love to parental affection, from friendship to solidarity²⁹

– together with the expansion of a sensuous and sensitive form of rationality.

This means that for the German philosopher human erotic and aggressive instincts are not inevitably antisocial, as argued by Freud. On the contrary, they must be acknowledged as constitutive parts of our humanity and developed in pro-social directions – such as in friendship, love and solidarity – in such a way as to promote the establishment of non-repressive, happy societies.

But we should add a further sphere of meaning of the aesthetic in our life. Marcuse originally developed Schiller's idea of the aesthetic state as an intermediate one, capable of acting as a mediator between sensibility and reason by making reason sensuous and sensibility fruitful, as opposed to merely dissipative. From this point of view, he speaks about a new sensibility and a new aesthetic ethos, capable of contributing to new forms of society and of satisfying the human need to live a more integrated life – a sensuously and imaginatively richer one, not condemned to fear and submission, but based on gratifying relations with other men and women, on living in a respected and nurtured environment, even on working with pleasure. Sensibility must be nurtured by the imagination and by the capacity to take other people's roles, thereby shaping an ethos capable of adequately fulfilling the basic human needs, instead of neglecting or repressing them.

Marcuse was explicitly proposing a utopia, whereby art, instead of being structurally separated as a fictive realm, becomes a technical activity whose purpose is to configure a new, non-repressive form of civilization, and

these different forms of life enhancing human relations: are they to be regarded as expansions or non-regressive sublimations of a primary sexual impulse (as it would be possible to argue from a Freudian perspective) or are they simply different kinds of relations among humans, that cannot be derived from an alleged primarily only sexual drive, because they contribute to human life reinforcement and flourishing in a plurality of ways? In my opinion in his *Essay On Liberation* Marcuse seems to support this second thesis.

²⁸ Cf. Reitz, C. cit., p.180.

²⁹ There is a further problem here, in my opinion, that can only be briefly mentioned in this paper. It deals with Marcuse's ambiguity about the relationships among

the art product itself is not apart from reality but rather takes the form of a free and happy society, a good and beautiful one.

3. Divergences on method (and why they matter)

The late Marcuse abandoned this utopian view, returning to a more conservative conception of art. In *The Aesthetic Dimension* he reverted to the idea of art as an autonomous sphere and to an approval of the distinction between fine arts and high culture, on the one hand, and popular arts and culture on the other. Deeply disappointed by the contemporary development of affluent societies, he believed that the transcendent character of art³⁰ had to be consciously used as a means to negate the current conditions of civilization. "Art as art", he argued, that is art as structurally separated and even alienated from life and reality, must be intentionally pursued for its capacity to express an extreme refusal of present conditions, while every apparent democratization of culture must be rejected because it implies a confirmation of these conditions – because it definitely acts in collusion with them.

To sum this up in a formula, Marcuse thought that art could not positively contribute to human emancipation, but had to play a merely negative, if still capital, role. What are the causes of this turnabout?³¹ I have already

referred to Adorno's influence, which is explicitly recognized in this last essay through an acknowledgement, as well as various quotations and references. But of course there is more to it.

With regard to Marcuse's theoretical perspective, one problem is constituted by the fact that the German philosopher makes the negative quality of art – its being apart, distinguished and transcendent from reality – an essential one, as though in every society in every part of the world and in every age artistic practices and productions were perceived as a realm separate from the life of the community they have developed from and which they belong to.

Dewey, on the contrary, denounced the museum conception of the arts as being the result of historical, political and even of economic conditions. He strongly struggled to avoid the current opposition between art and labour, art and scientific inquiry, art and morality or politics, trying to rescue aesthetic qualities and artistic possibilities within our present society. From this point of view, we might say that Dewey more successfully reinterpreted Hegel's teaching about the so-called *Vergangenheitscharacter der Kunst*, that is art belonging – now, not always – to our own human past. In the past the arts were an integral part of human life, deeply contributing to establishing and nurturing values, standards of judgements, institutions and so on. But even now there are forms of art we immediately identify with – we do not need any form of mediation to undergo the influence of advertising images, just as young people immediately identify with pop music. The problem is that neither aesthetics nor the philosophy of art seem to consider these phenomena a matter of analysis: they prefer leaving them in the hands of sociology.

But of course the greatest cause for Marcuse's turnabout was probably the overwhelming capacity of the economical system to spread everywhere, reaching every dimension of human life, the aesthetic one included, and of exploiting our deepest needs for its own profit.

³⁰ In my opinion, this emphasis on the supposedly transcendent character of art and beauty is related to Marcuse's reading of Schiller's *Letters*, where Schiller himself insists on the necessity to find a criterion for judging empirical forms of beauty from an extra-empirical perspective. See also Schiller's *Kallias, or on the Beautiful*. (Schiller, F. 1992. *Kallias oder über die Schönheit. Briefe an Gottfried Körner*, in Schiller, F. 1992, *Theoretischen Schriften*, Volume 8 of *Friedrich Schiller. Werke und Briefe in zwölf Bände*, Frankfurt a.M.: Deutsche Klassiker Verlag, pp.276-329).

³¹ It is to be said that, as noted by Charles Reitz (cit.), this position is not new in the thought of Marcuse, who began his philosophical carrier by sharing a conservative vision of the Fine Arts, which he later criticized in his essays on the affirmative character of culture and on hedonism. Besides, it must be observed that even during its so-called middle period Marcuse's philosophy was characterized by some tensions with regard to these aspects.

This is an enormous problem, which cannot be neglected even from a Deweyan perspective. The ability of marketing to update the pattern of the *homo oeconomicus* by turning it into that of the *homo sentimental* is as astonishing as its skill to creatively exploit the wide range of possibilities opened by this change for its own sake.³²

I have no solution to offer myself: I can only suggest that Dewey's deeply pluralistic stance towards our material culture can prove more fruitful than Marcuse's great refusal, which ultimately remains based on a dualistic approach opposing oppressive contemporary societies and utopian ones. But are existing societies really so rigidly and pervasively defined? Are their boundaries so clearly determined and their practices systematically oriented towards a single, repressive goal? Are our ways of life completely modelled after the same standard, are our patterns and habits of behaviour and thought always the same? Or is it not the case that they very often conflict with one another and are called into question?³³

This strong opposition to an allegedly repressive civilization prevents us from finding different possibilities within this society and constitutes an obstacle for any attempt at transformative action. Dewey's pragmatist attitude instead tends to draw subtler distinctions within our material culture. In particular, I believe his attitude encourages us to distinguish between different habits of consumption, because alternative possibilities may be concealed behind new conditions of production and experience. We have some standards for discriminating between good and bad experiences, that is between inclusive and expansive ones or exclusive and regressive ones. For sure, these are not transcendental principles, but provisional and limited ones; sometimes they can be

rather vague, at other times they are overt, but here and now we can – and must – perceive different colours or at least different nuances.

Furthermore, a general Deweyan attitude remains open to the possibility of appreciating the means we use to achieve our ends.³⁴ If – as is often the case – we focus exclusively on our ends, and treat our means as 'mere' means, we must understand the reasons for this and find alternative solutions, other ways of responding and acting. We must rely on the "method of intelligence", while knowing that it is limited and provides no solutions or guarantees that can be valid in all circumstances.

This is probably not enough – for sure, it is not much. But it is something important, if we share Dewey's idea that democracy has (also) to do with the felt quality of our lives.

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³² See Illouz, E., 2007. *Cold Intimacies. The Making of Emotional Capitalism*, Cambridge-Malden: Polity Press and Metelmann, J.-Beyes, T. (ed.), *Die Macht der Gefühle: Emotionen in Management, Organisation und Kultur*, Berlin: Berlin U.P.

³³ See the *Introduction* to Judith Green's book (cit.) on the alleged 'clashes of civilization'.

³⁴ See Mead, G.H. 1926. "The Nature of Aesthetic Experience", *International Journal of Ethics*, 36/4, pp.382-393 and Hickman, L.A. 1990. *John Dewey's Pragmatic Technology*, Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.

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III. POLITICS, ECONOMICS AND SOCIAL ETHICS

EMANCIPATION FROM CAPITAL

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ABSTRACT: *The paper asserts that capital is the dominant form of power and domination in the world today and argues that therefore emancipation must entail liberation from the power of capital. Drawing from the pioneer work of Max Weber, who distinguished the 'spirit' or ethos of capitalism from capitalism's institutions, the paper further argues that emancipation from capital must entail liberation not only from institutionalized forms of capital, for example, institutions of private property, but also from what the paper terms 'the capital form,' namely, the worldview that sees and values everything, including persons, in terms of capital, for instance, the tendency to view persons as 'human resources.' The paper alludes to some of the seductions of capital, whereby efforts at emancipation from capital have been derailed, and concludes by suggesting that the history of Africana people, who have long fought for emancipation from capital, provides much inspiration and insight into what emancipation from capital entails. The paper notes two examples in particular: Haiti's ongoing struggle for national emancipation and Frederick Douglass's personal struggle for emancipation.*

I open with a chant from the Haitian Revolution that is still repeated today. It is in the traditional African, call-response form.

The white colonists will persecute us!
Not a problem!
The white colonists will torture us!
Not a problem!
The white colonists will always have slaves?
Not possible!
The white colonists will kill us?
Not a problem!
We prefer death to slavery.¹

I take as evident that capital is the dominant form of domination in the world today, and based upon that premise I will argue here, first, that emancipation from capital must include emancipation not just from the institutional structures of capitalism but also from the capital form, or 'spirit' of capitalism (in the sense of Max Weber), that is, from the epistemological and ethical system created by the regime of capital, and, second,

that Africana history offers extraordinarily rich resources for such emancipation and for teaching us what it entails.

I. Five Meanings of 'Capitalism'

(1) 'Capitalism' most properly pertains to economic systems rooted in the private ownership of the means of production, as opposed to those systems wherein capital is collectively or socially owned—socialism proper. However, it is often conflated with (2) free markets, that is, economic systems that answer the fundamental questions of economy—What will be produced? How much of each good will be produced? By what means will production take place? And, who will receive what is produced?—by reference to markets governed by the principles of supply and demand. Free market economies thus stand in contrast to command or planned economies, wherein such questions are answered through some central authority, whether it be democratic or autocratic.

Capitalism and free markets do not necessarily go together. For example, Nazi Germany left capital in the hands of private owners, such as Oskar Shindler, but dictated to them what and how much they would produce. Hence, it was more properly a system of national capitalism, rather than 'national socialism.' And prior to the breakup of the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia operated a system of market socialism, wherein capital was owned collectively by the state, but production and distribution was left to the forces of the market. Thus there is no necessary connection between capitalism and free markets.

The conflation of 'capitalism' with 'free markets,' however, allows defenders of the former to claim for that system the virtues of the latter, such as its supposed elimination of chattel slavery. Ludwig von Mises offers a primary example of such conflation:

The abolition of slavery and serfdom is to be attributed neither to the teachings of theologians and moralists nor to weakness or generosity on the part of the masters. ... Servile labor disappeared because it could not stand the competition of free labor; its unpredictability sealed its doom in the market economy.

¹ Jean-Bertrand Aristide. *Haiti-Haitii? Philosophical Reflections for Mental Decolonization*, trans. Mildred Aristide (Boulder, CO: Paradigm, 2011), p. 22.

Now, at no time and at no place was it possible for enterprises employing servile labor to compete on the market with enterprises employing free labor....

.... In the production of articles of superior quality an enterprise employing the apparently cheap labor of unfree workers can never stand the competition of enterprises employing free labor. It is this fact that has made all systems of compulsory labor disappear.²

Mises offers no empirical evidence for his claim: it is but ideological assertion. Moreover, he here implicitly suggests that the worst thing that free market advocates can say about chattel slavery is that it is 'inefficient' and thereby reveals the ethical poverty of free market ideology. More to our point here, however, while Mises in this passage explicitly credits 'free markets' with ending slavery, he uses this point as part of a general defense of 'capitalism.'

'Free market' ideology offers its own utopian vision of emancipation: a world liberated from feudal oppression, wherein one is free to pursue the good life as one determines for oneself. Indeed, Adam Smith famously described the conditions of 'perfect liberty' whereby the forces of competition bring about the most equitable, just, and happy of all possible worlds, better than any philosopher king could ever achieve. It is ironic, though, that such a system would be called 'capitalism,' because, as Smith already recognized, capitalists are the people who least want such a system: within ideally free markets capitalists are relatively impotent and hence unable to achieve the 'extraordinary profits' that they desire. As Mises describes,

The direction of all economic affairs is in the market society a task of entrepreneurs. Theirs is the control of production. They are at the helm and steer the ship. A superficial observer would believe that they are supreme. But they are not. They are bound to obey unconditionally the captain's orders. The captain is the consumer. Neither the entrepreneurs nor the farmers nor the capitalists determine what has to be produced. The consumers do that. If a business man does not strictly obey the orders of the public as they are conveyed to him by the

structure of market prices, he suffers losses, he goes bankrupt, and is thus removed from his eminent position at the helm. Other men who did better in satisfying the demands of the consumer replace him.³

Free markets are thus more properly a system of 'consumerism,' as Smith suggests:

Consumption is the sole end and purpose of all production; and the interest of the producer ought to be attended to, only so far as may be necessary for promoting that of the consumer. **The maxim is so perfectly self-evident, that it would be absurd to attempt to prove it.**⁴

John Maynard Keynes concurs: "All production is for the purpose of ultimately satisfying a consumer."⁵ Free markets promise consumers emancipation to satisfy their desires, and thus the ideology in support of them is to be condemned at least for its impoverished notion of 'freedom.' I think here of Chase Bank's 'Freedom (Master) Card,' which, so its advertisement claims, "gives you the freedom to say, 'yes,' to your every desire."

There are merits in several other definitions of 'capitalism,' which are useful for our analysis here. For instance, (3) the first definition of 'capitalism' that the *Oxford English Dictionary* offers is, "a system which favors the existence of capitalists,"⁶ something which, as we saw, free markets clearly do not do. 'Capitalism' might be defined, too, (4) as an economic system wherein capital hires labor, as opposed to those systems, such as worker cooperatives, wherein labor owns capital, and (5) Robert Heilbroner defines it as "the regime of capital,"⁷ that is, a social system ruled by the power of capital.

³ Ibid., pp. 269-70.

⁴ Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (1776), ed. Edwin Cannan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), II, 179. Emphasis added.

⁵ John Maynard Keynes, *The General Theory of Employment, Interest, and Money* (1936), vol. 7 of *Collected Writings* (Cambridge: Macmillan, 1973), p. 46.

⁶ *Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1989).

⁷ Robert Heilbroner, *Behind the Veil of Economics: Essays in the Worldly Philosophy* (New York, W. W. Norton, 1988).

² Ludwig von Mises, *Human Action: A Treatise on Economics* (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2007), p. 630-31.

II. Emancipation from the Regime of Capital

Decades prior to Marx, Jacksonian democrats, such as Orestes Brownson, distinguished chattel from wage slavery. Brownson wrote, in his support of the Chartist movement in England:

we say frankly that, if there must always be a laboring population distinct from proprietors and employers, we regard the slave system as decidedly preferable to the system of wages. ... Wages is a cunning device of the devil for the benefit of tender consciences who would retain all the advantages of the slave system without the expense, trouble, and odium of being slaveholders.⁸

The slave-owner at least has it in his own self-interest to protect his investment and to provide the slave with minimum sustenance, but those who rent labor, through wages, do not necessarily care whether their laborers live or die as long as there are others to replace them. Following the collapse of Reconstruction, in 1877, Frederick Douglass concurred with Brownson's judgment: "the Negro," he claimed,

is worse off, in many respects, than when he was a slave He is the victim of a cunningly devised swindle, one which paralyzes his energies, suppresses his ambition, and blasts all his hopes; and though he is nominally free he is actually a slave. I here and now denounce this so-called emancipation as a stupendous fraud--a fraud upon him, a fraud upon the world. ... With slavery [the old slaveholders] had some care and responsibility for the physical well-being of their slaves. Now they have as firm a grip on the freedman's labor as when he was a slave and without any burden of caring for his children or himself.⁹

Such are the oppressive conditions under capitalism, as a system wherein capital hires labor.

⁸ Orestes Augustus Brownson, "The Laboring Classes," review of Thomas Carlyle's *Chartism*, *Boston Quarterly Review* (1841, in (abridged) *Social Theories of Jacksonian Democracy: Representative Writings of the Period 1825-1850*, ed. Joseph L. Blau (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1954), pp. 307, 309.

⁹ Frederick Douglass, "I Denounce the So-Called Emancipation as a Stupendous Fraud" (1888), in *Frederick Douglass: Selected Speeches and Writings*, ed. Philip S. Foner (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 1999), pp. 715, 717.

By contrast, the Mondragon cooperatives, in the Basque region of Spain, constitute a system of emancipation from capital through their subordination of capital to labor:¹⁰ only workers can own capital. Capital and profit stemming from it are thus treated as means for improving material living conditions, rather than as ends in themselves. The cooperatives measure their performance not by their profitability but by the quantity and quality of employment that they generate and maintain. As George Cheney describes, "Seeing themselves as neither in the service of capital nor alienated from it, the coops aimed to subordinate the maintenance of capital to the interests of labor and human values."¹¹ Labor democratically controls capital and is treated thereby as a fixed rather than a variable cost of production. In times of economic difficulty, such as the present, labor is the absolutely last expense to be cut, and even then workers will be transferred to another cooperative or sent to the technical school or university for retraining rather than laid off altogether. In conventional capitalist firms, by contrast, labor is viewed as a cost to be minimized and commonly the first expense to be cut, and workers are seen as expendable means rather than ends in themselves.

Although Mondragon derived this principle of the subordination of capital to labor from Catholic social teaching, the architect of Mondragon, Father Jose Arizmendiarieta, a parish priest, considered it a matter of social justice: "Cooperation is an authentic integration of the person in the economic and social process, and it is central to a new social order; employees working cooperatively ought to unite around this ultimate objective, along with all who hunger and thirst for justice in this world of work."¹² Mondragon measures

¹⁰ George Cheney, *Values at Work: Employee Participation Meets Market Pressure*, updated ed. (Ithaca, NY: ILR Press, 1999), and Kenneth W. Stickers, "Dewey, Economic Democracy, and the Mondragon Cooperatives," *European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy* 3.2 (2011): 186-99.

¹¹ Cheney, pp. 38-39.

¹² As quoted and translated by Cheney, p. 39.

economic growth not by the sheer quantity of goods produced and consumed but on the basis of the cooperatives' ability to provide stable employment in accord with human dignity. Profit is treated not as the purpose of business but as a means to create the conditions for dignified human living. As Cheney describes, "the growth of the cooperatives ... has meant far more than 'adding more of the same' to existing structures" but has included the personal growth of its members as well as the strengthening of relationships among themselves, with the community, and even with the world and the capacity of the enterprise to adapt to a changing, global economic environment.¹³

John Stuart Mill had argued already, in his *Principles of Political Economy* (1848), that cooperatives, owned primarily but not solely by the workers themselves, would be the next phase in the natural evolution of capitalism. Such cooperatives would outperform traditional capitalist firms, Mill claimed, because they would be more efficient. As owners of their own businesses, workers work harder; they manage themselves, thereby saving the huge expense of having to employ supervisors; they strive for increased efficiencies and vigilantly work to eliminate waste because they themselves benefit. Furthermore, not being pressured to return maximum profits to investors immediately, such cooperatives could retain larger portions of profits as reserves and for reinvestment.¹⁴

As I have argued elsewhere,¹⁵ Mondragon cooperatives exemplify central features of what John Dewey described when he spoke of democracy as "a way of life": they have attained a level of economic democracy in the lives of ordinary workers unmatched in world history. Mondragon's democracy is not merely a formal, political one, wherein people go to the polls every few

years to cast ballots and which can be manipulated too easily by powerful moneyed, anti-democratic interests. Rather, it is a democracy that workers practice everyday at their places of work.

Recently there have been concerns about Mondragon's failure to extend its democratic principles and structures to its international subsidiaries. For example, I have visited two of Mondragon's automotive parts plants in Mexico and talked with their workers. The workers complained that working conditions in these plants are at least as oppressive as those in plants owned by major automobile manufacturers, such as General Motors, and that there is no democracy for workers in them. I confronted economists in Mondragon with such complaints, and they admitted that Mondragon's application of its democratic principles outside of Spain is "uneven." They also indicated that they were concerned by such reports, but it was not clear that remedying these conditions was a high priority for the cooperatives that owned the plants in question.

Indeed, the history of cooperatives reveals the seductive power of capital: even within structures designed to prevent exploitative uses of capital, profit from capital lures worker owners to abandon their own ethical and democratic principles and to seek personal gain at the expense of others. At the first successful industrial, worker-owned cooperative at New Lenark, England, which utopian socialist Robert Owen began in 1799, worker-owners, hungry for additional profits, opened the cooperative to external investors, who quickly took over the enterprise and converted it into a traditional capitalist firm, which continued to operate until 1968. The attraction to external investment has been a constant threat to worker cooperatives throughout their history.¹⁶ In a similar vein, we see in the history of socialist economies, such as the Soviet Union, which

¹³ Cheney, p. 74.

¹⁴ John Stuart Mill, *Principles of Political Economy, with Some of Their Applications to Social Philosophy* (1848), ed. Donald Winch (Middlesex, England: Penguin, 1970), pp. 118-42.

¹⁵ Stickers, op. cit.

¹⁶ John Pencavel, "Worker Cooperatives and Democratic Governance," Discussion Paper No. 6932 (Bonn, Germany: Forschungsinstitut zur Zukunft der Arbeit, October 2010), pp. 27-28. <http://ftp.iza.org/dp6932.pdf>

ironically claim to be anti-capitalist, the strong propensity to reduce human beings to capital, not for profit but for ideological purposes. All these instances illustrate the seductive power of capital—the temptation to use it as a coercive means for dominating others in order to achieve one’s own ends. Thus, the capital form, as Weber showed in his own way, transcends the institutions of capitalism.

III. Slavery, Capitalism, and the Capital Form.

What I intend here by the ‘capital form’ bears strong resemblance to what Weber described as ‘the spirit of capitalism.’ Central to Weber’s famous analysis of that ‘spirit’ is his clear separation of ‘capitalism’ as an economic system and institutions such as private property and unfettered global markets, from ‘capitalism’ as an ‘ethos,’ or system of values. Similarly, the ‘capital form’ is a worldview that sees everything—living and non-living—as means for profit-making, that is, as capital. Such a worldview, however, does not stop with the non-human world, and the capital form and the spirit of capitalism come to see human beings, too, as means to profit making, as capital. Weber summarizes the spirit of capitalism in the words of Kürnberger: “They make tallow out of cattle and money out of men.”¹⁷

Indeed, the pervasiveness of the capital form is evident in the common use of such terms as ‘human capital’ and ‘human resources.’ Life no longer appears as containing its own inherent value: henceforth life must be ‘earned’—justify itself as capital.¹⁸ Moreover, people are not just treated as capital and used up in the earning of profit, but they also internalize the capital form and hence come to see and value themselves as capital: “Your future depends on how you market yourself,” proclaimed a flier on my university’s bulletin board. One is commanded by the ‘free’ labor market to present—

package, brand, and sell—oneself as human capital in order to ‘earn a living.’

Contra Mises, the slave trade made the world safe for the regime of capital in at least a two-fold way. First, it created much of the surplus value upon which capitalism was built. Reformed Marxists, such as two Trinidadian economists, Eric Williams,¹⁹ who was also the first Prime Minister of independent Trinidad and Tobago, and Oliver Cox,²⁰ one of the developers of world-systems theory, emphasize material continuities between the two systems: contrary to the claims of orthodox Marxists, that surplus value came entirely from capitalist modes of production, the Atlantic slave trade, they argue, provided much of the capital formation that was necessary for the rise of Western capitalism. On this matter Cox takes direct issue not only with orthodox Marxists but even with Marx:

The pivotal problem faced by ... Marxian economists was that of breaking through the labor-capital-commodity-surplus-value frame of reference which seemed to become more and more limiting and unrealistic. It became apparent that the accumulated capital in leading capitalist nations was not all the product of its own factories. Some of it came from “outside.”²¹

That is, significant portions of the surplus value out of which capitalism arose came from slavery.

Second, the slave-trade was the logical extension of the capital form to humanity: it is the reduction of human persons to capital in its crudest form. The slave ship served as a factory for the manufacture of human capital. As historian Marcus Rediker writes, “the slave ship worked as a machine to produce the commodity ‘slave’ for a global labor market. A violence of enslavement and a violence of abstraction developed together and reinforced each other.” The slave ship embodied

¹⁷ Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1959): p. 51.

¹⁸ Max Scheler, *Ressentiment*, trans. William Holdheim, ed. Lewis Coser (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1961), p. 160.

¹⁹ Eric Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1944).

²⁰ Oliver Cromwell Cox, *Capitalism as a System* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2004).

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 216.

the brutal logic and cold, rational mentality of the merchant's business--the process by which human beings were reduced to property [capital], by which labor was made into a thing, a commodity shorn of all ethical considerations. In a troubled era of transition from a moral to a political conception of economy, the [slave ship] represented a nightmarish outcome of the process. Here was the new, modern economic system in all its horrifying nakedness, capitalism without a loincloth.²²

The slave ship manufactured the human capital that the theories, institutions, and proponents of capitalism would take for granted and Marx would criticize: human life reduced to the logic of the balance sheet.

IV. Africana History as Resource for Emancipation from Capital

Because the power of capital to oppress comes from its capacity to threaten life, to withhold the means of living, resistance to and thus emancipation from that power and the capital form requires some intuition of, some feeling for those values that transcend those of capital—those values beyond all price—but also that transcend life itself.

Africana history is replete with inspiring examples of enslaved people successfully resisting not just their physical enslavement but also the capital form that reduces them to human capital and throwing off their physical shackles precisely because of their powerful sense of values transcending human life, enabling and empowering them to refuse to be reduced to mere human capital. On this matter I agree with Angela Davis's suggestion, in her pioneer essay making the case that Frederick Douglass warrants inclusion in the literature of philosophy, that those who have been historically denied human freedom are generally better able to articulate the nature and conditions of human freedom, of emancipation, than those who take their freedom for granted and who might even have it in their interests to deny freedom to others. "Are human beings free or are they not?" Davis asks.

Ought they be free or ought they not be free? The history of Afro-American literature furnishes an illuminating account of the nature of human freedom, its extent and limits. Moreover, we should discover in Black literature an important perspective that is missing in so many of the discussions on the theme of freedom in the history of bourgeois philosophy. Afro-American literature incorporates the consciousness of a people who have continually been denied entrance into the real world of freedom, a people whose struggles and aspiration have exposed the inadequacies not only of the practice of freedom, but also of its very theoretical roots.²³

Those who have suffered as a result of being systematically "denied entrance into the real world of freedom" have a special interest in articulating with maximal clarity those universal qualities and conditions upon which claims to rights and freedoms are made. By contrast, those who take such rights and freedoms for granted are not so motivated but are more likely to avoid such clarity so as to conceal and protect their privileged status.

In the light of Davis's comments Kanye West's recent "Made in America" tour with Jay Z is disheartening and betrays the tradition of which Davis speaks. Their song with the tour's title invokes the names of Martin, Coretta, and Malcolm as prelude to descriptions of how they made it in America,²⁴ and throughout the tour West claimed that his only responsibility to the Black community was to make as much money as possible so that it would trickle down to the Black community, and he advised young African Americans to "brand, market, and franchise" themselves like he and Jay Z have done—that is, to conform themselves perfectly to the capital form—and, without any apparent irony in their use of 'brand' and 'market,' essentially do to themselves what slaveholders had done to African peoples in the past,

²² Marcus Rediker, *The Slave Ship: A Human History* (New York: Viking, 2007), pp. 338-39.

²³ Angela Davis, "Unfinished Lecture on Liberation—2," in *Philosophy Born of Struggle: Anthology of Afro-American Philosophy from 1917*, ed. Leonard Harris (Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt, 1983), p. 90.

²⁴ Shawn Carter ('Jay Z') and Kanye West, "'Made in America' Lyrics," Genius, <http://genius.com/Kanye-west-made-in-america-lyrics> (accessed 25 July 2015)

that is, reduce them to capital. His connection of Black history with the self-capitalizing of Black bodies is disturbing because it suggests that Martin, Malcolm, and other great Black leaders died so that Black people like him could submit obediently to the regime of capital and the capital form, branding and marketing their own black bodies.

W. E. Du Bois offers a different view, with which those whom West invokes would agree: in our haste to gain access to the means of making a living, let us not forget the things of beauty that remind us of those values for which it is worth living. With his typical eloquence, Du

Bois challenges an African American audience in 1926 Chicago:

If you tonight suddenly should become full-fledged Americans; if your color faded, or the color line here in Chicago was miraculously forgotten; suppose, too, you became at the same time rich and powerful;—what is it that you would want? What would you immediately seek? Would you buy the most powerful of motor cars and outrace Cook County? Would you buy the most elaborate estate on the North Shore? Would you wear the most striking clothes, give the richest dinners and buy the longest press notices?

Or, expressed in the present-day context: would you act like West and Jay Z? Du Bois continues his challenge:

Even as you visualize such ideals you know in your hearts that these are not the things you really want. You realize this sooner than the average white American because, pushed aside as we have been in America, there has come to us not only a certain distaste for the tawdry and flamboyant but a vision of what the world could be if it were really a beautiful world; if we had the true spirit; if we had the Seeing Eye, the Cunning Hand, the Feeling Heart; if we had, to be sure, not perfect happiness, but plenty of good hard work, the inevitable suffering, that always comes with life; sacrifice and waiting, all that—but, nevertheless, lived in a world where men know, where men create, where they realize themselves and where they enjoy life. It is that sort of a world we want to create for ourselves and for all America.

‘Emancipation’ in the deep sense requires remembrance of those things of beauty that remind us of what the

world could be and for which we all must struggle. Du Bois offers four examples:

The Cathedral of Cologne, a forest in stone, set in light and changing shadow, echoing with sunlight and solemn song; a village of the Veys in West Africa, a little thing of mauve and purple, quiet, lying content and shining in the sun; a black and velvet room where on a throne rest, in old and yellowing marble, the broken curves of the Venus of Milo; a single phrase of music in the Southern South—utter melody, haunting and appealing, suddenly arising out of night and eternity, beneath the moon.

Such is Beauty. Its variety is infinite, its possibility is endless. In normal life all may have it and have it yet again. The world is full of it; and yet today the mass of human beings are choked away from it, and their lives distorted and made ugly. This is not only wrong, it is silly. Who shall right this well-nigh universal failing? Who shall let this world be beautiful? Who shall restore to men the glory of sunsets and the peace of quiet sleep?

Du Bois believed that Black folk, as a result of their history of oppression and suffering, had a special ability and mission to restore beauty to the world.²⁵

Interestingly, Kanye West, too, like Du Bois, decries the loss of beauty in the modern world and calls for its restoration, but it is mainly the beauty of expensive automobiles, estates, and clothing,²⁶ which Du Bois described as superficial.

Like Du Bois and Davis I read Africana history quite differently than does Kanye West, and I offer two examples from that history that suggest an opposite message and inspire and instruct us regarding emancipation from capital, both capital as a material force of oppression and the capital form. The first is grand and monumental: it is the story of the Haitian

²⁵ W. E. B. Du Bois, “Criteria of Negro Art” (1926), in *The Oxford W. E. B. Du Bois Reader*, ed. Eric J. Sundquist (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 325–26.

²⁶ Tim Nudd, “Kanye West Charms Cannes with His Moral Take on Brands and Culture; Plus, What He Thinks about Apple’s Deal with Beats,” *Adweek* (17 June 2014): <http://www.adweek.com/news/advertising-branding/kanye-west-charms-cannes-his-moral-take-brands-and-culture-158376>

Revolution. The second is so subtle and quiet that it could go easily unnoticed, but it is no less powerful and profound: it is from the life of Frederick Douglass

In 1779, decades prior to Haiti's own revolution, 800 mulatto and free black Haitians, many having been trained in the French army, answered Count D'Estaing's call for volunteers to join French forces already fighting with the American revolutionaries. The Haitians believed that American independence would contribute to the liberatory efforts of all oppressed people, including their own in Haiti, and naively imagined that their efforts and sacrifices would be remembered and repaid when their own revolution came. The Haitian Fontanges Legion, under the command of Viscount de Fontanges, partook in the Battle of Savanna and in an ill-advised and ill-conceived assault on the British fortification there, in conjunction with American and French troops and fleets, as well as Polish troops under the command of Count Pulaski, who suffered multiple, severe injuries. The assault failed miserably, and the British counterattacked, threatening to annihilate the combined armies. The free Haitians rose to the occasion, though, and met the attacking British troops head-on, fiercely, brilliantly, and at great loss, allowing the remainder of the southern revolutionary forces to retreat safely: by all accounts the Legion acted with extraordinary valor and skill. According to the official report, prepared in Paris, "This legion saved the army at Savannah by bravely covering its retreat,"²⁷ and it likely saved the revolution altogether. The heroics of the Legion, along with the eventual success of the American Revolution, greatly inspired other American liberators, such as Simon Bolivar, and prompted Haitians to begin planning their own emancipation. Indeed, those who fought at Savannah became some of the most important leaders of the Haitian Revolution—mulattos Commandant Villarte and André Rigaud, its leading mulatto general,

and black freedmen M. Lambert and Henri Christophe, independent Haiti's second leader and first elected President of the Northern Republic of Haiti.

The Haitian fighters imagined that the liberal principles that inspired the French Revolution would lead France to renounce its colonialist practices and abolish slavery. Much like southern slaveholders who fought in the American Revolution, Haitian planters appealed to such principles in arguing for Haiti's independence but then pledged themselves (in their own words), "To die rather than share equal political rights with a bastard race."²⁸ In 1794, after much hesitation and under intense pressure from the Haitian revolutionaries, France did abolish slavery, and two years later former slave and leader of the slave uprising, Toussaint L'Ouverture, effectively ruled Haiti. Napoleon, however, was determined to restore the profitable slave system to Haiti, and he was incensed by the very thought of defeat by a band of mulattos and black slaves, sending his very best troops and the largest expedition that had ever sailed from France, under the command of his brother-in-law, General Charles Leclerc, to crush the revolt. "All the niggers, when they see an army, will lay down their arms," Leclerc confidently boasted. "They will be only too happy that we pardon them."²⁹ L'Ouverture countered, writing to General Dessalines, Commander of the western revolutionary army, who would later become the first leader of free Haiti:

we have no other resource than destruction and flames. Bear in mind that the soil bathed with our sweat [and blood] must not furnish our enemies with the smallest aliment. Tear up the roads with shot; throw corpses and horses into all the fountains [and wells; i.e., poison the water]; burn and annihilate everything, in order

²⁷ As quoted in T. G. Steward, "How the Black St. Domingo Legion Saved the Patriot Army in the Siege of Savannah, 1779" (Washington, D.C.: American Negro Academy, 1899), p. 12.

²⁸ As quoted by Theodore J. Holly, "A Vindication of the Capacity of the Negro for Self-Government and Civilized Progress" (1857), in *Pamphlets of Protest: An Anthology of Early African American Protest Literature, 1790-1860*, ed. Richard Newman, Patrick Rael, and Phillip Lapsansky (New York: Routledge, 2001), p. 265.

²⁹ As quoted by C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*, 2nd rev. ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), p. 274.

that those who have come to reduce us to slavery may have before their eyes the image of that hell which they so deserve.³⁰

While it is common for liberation movements to cultivate utopian visions of emancipation, here Toussaint creates an image of what those resisting emancipation might expect. So the Haitians burned their cities, their fields, and their forests and poisoned their own water sources: not a grain of wheat, not a piece of wood or a single nail, not a drop of water was to be left for the French to use in their efforts to enslave and oppress. In my judgment, the Haitian Revolution was the most noble of all revolutions ever fought, the only successful revolution in human history by a slave population: never, to my knowledge, did a people pay so high a price for their liberty, and by comparison the American and French Revolutions were cake walks.

The Haitians imagined, too, wrongly again, that the United States would surely come to their aid and repay its debt. Not only did the United States fail to lift a finger to assist the Haitians in their own revolution and to repay its enormous debt, but it, with the author of its own Declaration of Independence as its President, placed an embargo upon and did all that it could to undermine the new republic, for fear that its success would inspire slave rebellions at home, which it indeed did, including a major one in Jefferson's own Virginia—Denmark Vessey's rebellion of 1822. Moreover and ever since, the United States, along with other Western colonial powers, has punished Haiti for its independent spirit and refusal to cooperate with global corporate interests, colonialism's newer form. Repeatedly the United States has militarily intervened in and occupied Haiti, even overthrowing duly elected democratic leaders, as recently as 2004.³¹

Haiti is the only Western country bearing an African

name, and its spirit of emancipation is contained in that name, which means, do not obey: resist.³² That this spirit of emancipation is animated by values transcending those of capital and even of life itself, is indicated by its extraordinary sacrifices in its resistance to the forces of capitalism but also to the capital form and also by the chant with which I opened and which is invoked still today:

The white colonists will persecute us!
Not a problem!
The white colonists will torture us!
Not a problem!
The white colonists will always have slaves?
Not possible!
The white colonists will kill us?
Not a problem!
We prefer death to slavery.³³

The memories of those beautiful days—November 18, 1803, when the Haitian revolutionaries, led by General Jean-Jacques Dessalines, defeated Napoleon's army at the Battle of Vertières, and January 1, 1804, when Dessalines declared Haiti an independent nation—those memories, immortalized in paintings by such artists as Auguste Raffet, Ulrick Jean-Pierre, Jacob Lawrence, and many others, and despite Dessalines's often brutal rule, which restored slave-like conditions for many, have done much to sustain Haiti through its troubled history and suffering.³⁴ They remind the Haitian people—and all of us—of those values, above all price, that transcend the capital form and even life itself.

Frederick Douglass, like Du Bois, speaks to the importance of memories of things beautiful. For example, even in his lowest moment and contemplating suicide, "broken in body, soul, and spirit,"³⁵ he finds himself comforted by the beauty of the sailboats on the Chesapeake Bay: "Those beautiful vessels, robed in

³⁰ Toussaint L'Ouverture, Letter to Dessalines (1802), in *The Haitian Revolution*, ed. Nick Nesbitt (London: Verso, 2008), p. 76.

³¹ Randall Robinson, *An Unbroken Agony: Haiti, from Revolution to the Kidnapping of a President* (New York: Basic Civitas Books, 2007).

³² Aristide, pp. 20-23.

³³ Ibid., p. 22.

³⁴ Aristide's book illustrates this point well.

³⁵ Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* (1845), in *Slave Narratives*, ed. William L. Andrews and Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (N.c.: Library of America, 2001), p. 324.

purest white, so delightful to the eye of freemen.”³⁶ The free movement of the ships reminds Douglass of the possibilities for his own emancipation, reminds him of what the world could be, and thereby gives him courage to continue bearing his burden and to hope for the future: “There is a better day coming,” he affirms.³⁷

Even more powerful, though, for Douglass, was his beautiful memories of his mother, who was separated from him “before I knew her as my mother”³⁸ but who “four or five times” walked 12 miles each way, in the dead of night, “after the performance of her day’s work [as] a field hand,”³⁹ and without the permission of her owner, to lie for a few moments with her son and to settle him to sleep. She died when Douglass was only about seven years old, but her memory secured his emancipation: that this beautiful woman would risk her life just to be with him for a few precious moments, presented irrefutable evidence against the lies of white supremacy, which claimed Douglass to be less than human, mere property, mere capital. One does not risk one’s life repeatedly for mere capital. So in her loving, courageous acts of sacrifice, Douglass’s mother revealed to him those values that transcend the capital form and even life itself and thereby had already set him free, emancipated him from capital.

Douglass’s emancipation began already with his mother’s love: that love in large measure set him free. His story teaches us that emancipation from capital begins, as it did for him, with those things of beauty, including gestures of kindness, friendship, and love, that remind us of our humanity and reaffirm those values within that humanity that transcend those of capital and even life itself.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 325.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 326.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 281.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 282.

SQUISHY TOTALITARIANISM AND THE LEFT-RIGHT SPECTRUM

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ABSTRACT: *The paper argues that the left-right spectrum is incoherent, and ought to be abandoned as a taxonomy for understanding political positions, and as a practical way of organizing party politics. Though there are a number of ways that the left-right spectrum has been characterized - for example, in terms of making time run faster (left) or slower (right) - the paper focuses on the question of state as against capital, and asserts that, far from being historically opposed forces, state and corporate power have a strong tendency to coincide, to coalesce into the same hands. Several historical justifications and applications of this principle of hierarchical coincidence are provided, from the British East India Company to the current Chinese state and the role of experts in American progressive politics.*

As a way of ordering political positions, the left-right spectrum is more or less the only game in town. It has great cultural currency in much of the world, and it has a certain legitimacy in what might be called the 'ordinary language' sense: it has meaning for us insofar as we use it all the time, arrange party politics around it, air it out around the water cooler, and so on. But as a framework or taxonomy of political positions, or for the purposes of research in political science, it has got to be optional. We have got to keep open the possibility that it is a flawed paradigm or could be replaced as an explanatory framework. The left-right spectrum is an historical artifact, like any other taxonomy of political systems. And it is an excruciating conceptual mess.

Now, it may be that at this point that many of us cannot think about politics without it. The spectrum widely shapes behaviors, affiliations, passionate commitments the world over. But it may also be that many assertions involving it - including characterizations of one's own position, and attacks on the positions of one's opponents, have far less meaning than one feels that they do as one is making them. It may be that what sounds clear under almost infinite repetition is in fact garbled nonsense, a kind of inarticulate noise taking the form of familiar syntax. It may be that even as we, say,

conduct party politics, we are engaged in a series of contradictions or have wandered into a limbo of pseudo-sense.

1.

The left-right terminology arose in revolutionary France in 1789, where it referred to the seating of royalists and anti-royalists in the Assembly. It is plausible to think of an early version of the conceptuality, though not the terminology, as emerging in Europe in the run-up to the Revolution, in figures such as Rousseau and Burke. The first use of 'left' and 'right' in something like their current political sense in English is attributed in the *Oxford English Dictionary* to Thomas Carlyle's *French Revolution* of 1837. The left-right spectrum only crystallized fully with the emergence of Marxism, in the middle of the 19th century, and was not fully current in English-speaking countries until early in the 20th. Before that in the West, and in every elsewhere than in the West, there were other intellectual structures for defining and arranging political positions.

The left-right spectrum, since it is linear and not infinite, can be characterized in terms two extreme poles. One way to see that it is incoherent is that these poles are defined in a number of mutually incompatible ways. So, for example, in the 1930s it was Marxist communist as against fascism. But the left defines the right pole as fascist one minute, laissez-faire the next. The left pole could be a stateless society of barter and localism; or a world of equality in which people are not subordinated by race, gender, and sexuality; or a giant Pentagon-style welfare state; or a Khmer-Rouge re-education-by-execution regime. The Nazi Party, evangelical Christians, advocates of hereditary aristocracy, Ayn Rand go-go capitalists, and redneck gun enthusiasts are *all on the same side* in the left-right conceptuality. I think it is fair to say that the left-right spectrum was devised by people who identified as the left, and the opposite pole is a random grab-bag of people who have reasons to oppose Marxism. They have similar reasons to oppose one another, however. So do Elizabeth Warren, Kim Jong-un, and anarcho-primitivists.

There are various ways to try characterize the spectrum. For example, it is sometimes said that conservatives want time to run backwards, whereas progressives want to enhance the pace at which it runs forward. Either result would be surprising. But a central characterization, and the one I will focus on, begins with an opposition of state and capital. That conceptuality is central, for example, to contemporary American politics, as Democrats urge that government makes many positive contributions to our lives, while Republicans argue that it is a barrier to the prosperity created by free markets. On the outer ends we might pit Chairman Mao against Ayn Rand: state communism against laissez-faire capitalism.

The basic set of distinctions on both sides and in the middle rests on the idea that state and corporation, or more broadly political and economic power, can be pulled apart and set against each other. This brings us to the

Principle of Hierarchical Coincidence (PHC): *hierarchies tend to coincide.*

Corollary: *resources flow toward political power, and political power flows toward resources; or, the power of state and capital typically appear in conjunction.*

As a practical matter, PHC means that if you centralize any hierarchy, whether of experts, races, capital, the Party, or whatever it may be, you are in reality recommending hierarchy in every dimension. So, if a hierarchy of education or expertise is important in your society (it's a 'meritocracy'), then resources and political power will flow toward experts. I will return to this example at the end

But the fundamental dimensions I want to pick out initially are economic and political. I will not try to show historically that PHC is true - though I intend to do that elsewhere. Here, I am going to assert flatly that it is more or less obvious, and everyone knows it to be true. A white-suprematist polity in which black people were wealthier than white people, for example, would be

extremely surprising. It would be no less surprising if regulatory capture were not pervasive. We could keep trying to institute reforms to pull economic and political power apart: I wonder what it would take empirically to show that this is counter-productive. It's counter-productive because when you beef up the state to control capital, you only succeed in making capital more monolithic, more concentrated, and more able to exercise a wider variety of powers. (Consider the relation of Goldman Sachs to the Treasury Department over the last several decades, or Halliburton and Defense, or AT&T and NSA. The distinction between "public" and "private" is rather abstract in relation to the on-the-ground overlap.) And I do think that one mark of the nonsense at the heart of the left/right spectrum is that it appears to be entirely immune to empirical refutation: it survives all as a trope in the face of all the massive data with which it is incompatible.

The contemporary form of the merger of state and capital is what I think of as the dominant variety of hierarchical power in the world today:

squishy totalitarianism: the political/economic/aesthetic/psychological system or syndrome shared in common, for instance, by contemporary China, the European Union, Russia, and the United States. It is characterized by a complex so-called 'technocratic' merger of state and capital; large-scale mechanisms of subject-formation such as compulsory state education and regulation/monopoly ownership of the media; welfare-state or 'safety-net' programs that stabilize consumption and render populations (within limits) secure and dependent; a relative tolerance for some forms of diffuse dissent and scope for individual choice, particularly in consumption, combined with pervasive state and corporate surveillance; overwhelming police and military force and sprawling systems of incarceration; entrenched extreme hierarchies of wealth and expertise; regulation of the economy by monetary policy and central banks in conjunction with banking concerns; an international regime of national

sovereignties combined with international state/corporate mechanisms for the circulation of wealth.

State and economy are merged in different permutations in Iran and Egypt, in China and Japan, in the US and the EU. Squishy totalitarian regimes want their citizens/subjects fundamentally to conceive themselves as consumers and receivers of benefits from the state, and want them to think of their freedom as primarily a freedom to choose between different things to buy or as a release from need and vulnerability to need through state benefits (these are, however, real freedoms). Then your economy will be a self-stimulating spiral of growth, your tax coffers will fill, and your elites will grow in wealth, prestige, knowledge, and power.

2.

The familiar picture is that, to the degree that you reduce the power of the state, you increase the power of capital, and vice versa. Putting it mildly, this claim is unhistorical. The rise of capital, its consolidation into a few hands, and the enduring structures of monopoly or gigantism to which it gives rise are inconceivable without the state. Even Marx saw this, in a limited way: he regarded the modern state as the agent of the bourgeoisie. At the end of the "Communist Manifesto" and elsewhere, however, Marx recommends placing communications, banking, agriculture, transportation, and so on in the hands of the state, during a revolutionary period that will culminate in a stateless paradise. But placing all these dimensions in the same hands - whatever you call these hands ('dictatorship of the proletariat', for example) - is not terribly different in practice than letting them all drift into the hands of robber barons, because whoever actually makes the decisions with regard to these things or has them at their disposal, is the dominant class or group.

We might say that the current Chinese state combines the most fearsome features of Maoism and corporate capitalism. It's all devoted to generating maximum cash

and directing it to the very top of the hierarchy. And yet the Chinese state also attempts to bestride the earth with the iron boot of collectivist totalitarianism. Now, your basic taxonomy of political and economic systems or ideologies would regard this as an incoherent merger. A conventional political scientist associates capitalism with John Locke and Adam Smith, with republicanism and individualism: 'liberalism,' in short. And in this line of thinking, if socialists reject free enterprise and engage in grand redistributivist schemes, then they require a big, extremely powerful state. So for a long time people thought of the Chinese system as combining opposed or contradictory elements. At a minimum, I'd say no one is so sure anymore.

We should think instead of the contemporary Chinese state as a provisional culmination of both state socialism and corporate capitalism. In ideology, they are opposites. But we don't live in a textbook for a course on political ideologies. We live in a world where, *from the outset, capitalism depended utterly on state power, and the basic practical thrust of left statism was annexation of the economy to new hierarchies*. The Soviet Union was a variety of monopoly capitalism, and modern America is a variety of state socialism.

What went wrong in our thinking is that we believed the account these ideologies gave of themselves. But the scrim of philosophy, theory, ideology, rhetoric was always thin. There are capitalist theoreticians who have fantasized and recommended stateless free markets, and there are communist theorists who have fantasized no markets at all, always slightly glossing over the fact that what they actually meant was an entire permeation of every aspect of life, including markets, by the state. But these were indeed fantasies. What these people wanted appeared to be entirely opposed. But they were each devoted to their own sort of hierarchy, and hierarchies tend to coincide. They were designed to rationalize or moralize what is really a single indefensible system, or to enhance the self-esteem of ideologues while pursuing the hard work of subduing populations

and gathering up all the resources for people like themselves.

The cold war disguised the fact that the systems were, in playing out their real essences, converging toward a situation in which state and economy are fully integrated and held in very few hands: a truly permanent, systemic, chronic, sclerotic hierarchy. One of the meanings of 'globalization' and the various 'international mechanisms' that go with it, may be a premonition of a world system of this variety. (One name is 'technocracy.' If you insist you could call it 'late capitalism' or 'neo-liberalism', with the proviso that it is enthusiastically statist.)

3.

The main historical point I want to make is that the rise of capitalism is not explicable without state power, which has increased throughout the capitalist period. The modern nation-state and capitalism have the same origins, or arose together, or really - simplifying slightly - are one thing in different dimensions or aspects.

Economists who undertake as broad a project as 'defining' emerging capitalism or tracing its history invariably connect it to the emergence of the modern state. Michel Beaud in his *History of Capitalism* finds the state connection criterial:

What one in any case should remember is the importance of the state in the birth, the first beginnings of capitalism; this is linked, too, to the national character of the formation of capitalism: there is no capitalism without the bourgeoisie, which developed within the framework of the nation-state at the same time as the rise of *nations* occurred. . . . Within Europe itself, the primary transforming factor is the state. National unity, currency standardization, juridical coherence, military strength and the beginnings of a national economy: all these were created and developed by the state, or with the state as organizing principle.¹

The events that economic historians focus on in the development of capitalism are, for example, the rise of the city-state of Venice and the great banking families of Europe, such as the Medici; the sixteenth-century influx of South American gold into the economy of Spain and into this same financial system; the development of securities, futures and other "abstract" instruments and markets for them in Holland and Great Britain; enclosure of internal commons and the establishment of international tariffs and free-trade zones; war both internal and external to establish and police boundaries and territorialize and commodify and garrison entire regions and continents²; manufacturing, trade, and technological development in part to equip belligerents in civil and international strife; and so on. In no case can we imagine these developments in the history of capitalism without simultaneous developments in the crystallizing and internationalizing state. Even the sort of figures who later came to be considered conservative icons, such as Smith, Hume, and Ricardo - both in their historical and prescriptive moments - centralized in their accounts the role of state action in regulation of internal markets and conducting international trade.

One way to read this history is, as Marxists do, to say that it shows that liberal republicanism and constitutional monarchy were bourgeois forms. Another is simply to read it as showing that state and economic power are indissoluble, and hence that attacking capital by beefing up the state or adding capital flatly to the state portfolio is not promising as a road to justice. If we looked at previous state or quasi-state forms, such as the ancient empires, the coincidence of economic, political, and military power is just as pronounced; it could hardly be otherwise. Leftists got into this confusion in part because under Marx's influence they came to perceive only economy as reality, and hence to hold that political hierarchies are not real hierarchies at

¹ Michel Beaud, *A History of Capitalism, 1500-2000*, trans. Tom Dickman and Anny Lefebvre (New York: Monthly Review, 2nd ed 2001 [originally published

1981]), 42-43.

² See Victoria Tin-bor Hui, *War and State Formation in Ancient China and Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge University Press, 2005)

all. This delusion reached a literally psychotic state, so that Stalinist Russia or Maoist China - two of the most rigidly and murderously hierarchical societies in world history - could be justified on egalitarian grounds.

However, as I have already indicated, Marxism also yields insights that could be used to think about these matters differently. Indeed, strands of leftist economic thought are currently being used to clarify this situation even as other strands are dedicated to obscuring it. An example is Leo Panitch and Sam Gindin's book *The Making of Global Capitalism: The Political Economy of American Empire*. They write:

As capitalism developed states in fact became more involved in life than ever, especially in the establishment and administration of the juridical, regulatory, and infrastructural framework in which private property, competition, and contracts came to operate. Capitalist states were also increasingly major actors in trying to contain capitalist crises, including as lenders of last resort. Capitalism could not have developed unless states came to do these things. Conversely, states became increasingly dependent on the success of capital accumulation for tax revenue and popular legitimacy.³

The political and economic institutions ain capitalism are completely interdependent and mutually entwined, for Panitch and Gindin, which in one respect is just what Marxists would predict. But if political hierarchy is epiphenomenal while economic hierarchy is real, then one can institute a totalitarian political regime without even noticing that one is in fact advocating inequalities of the most extreme variety. On the other hand, if only political oppressions are real and economic inequalities merely natural and salutary, you get, in the name of liberty, varieties of "free-market" capitalism which are deranged in their practical oppression. Political and economic hierarchies tend to coincide, but in my view neither is any more real or fundamental than the other. Either is both.

³ Leo Panitch and Sam Gindin, *The Making of Global Capitalism: The Political Economy of American Empire* (Verso, 2012), p. 3

4.

An early model of squishy totalitarianism was provided by East India and West India Companies in the 17th and 18th centuries, state/capitalist hybrids or state-enforced and regulated private monopolies fielding public/private armies around the globe, but by their own lights engaged primarily in maximization of profits for shareholders, who in turn were often government officials. The profits reaped were presented as being also of patriotic service to the home countries and of humanitarian service to the peoples with whom the companies were trading or whom they were conquering. Similar state/private hybrids have been central to the construction of all large capitalist economies, and would include entities such as Fannie Mae and American utility companies. "Infrastructure" and military supply are constructed or repaired in the current American economy through state contracting, and the entire economy of the DC region is dominated by Federal contractors. The US fields public-private armies all over the world, partly in defense of commercial interests.

Adam Smith describes the justification of such entities:

Some particular branches of commerce, which are carried on with barbarous and uncivilized nations, require extraordinary protection. An ordinary store or counting house could give little security to the goods of the merchants who trade to the western coast of Africa. To defend them from the barbarous natives, it is necessary that the place where they are deposited, should be, in some measure, fortified. . . . [I]t was under pretence of securing their persons and property from violence, that both the English and French East India Companies were allowed to erect the first forts which they possessed in that country.⁴ (*Wealth of Nations*, 731-32)

He points out that it was trade which required distant countries to recognize one another officially and exchange ambassadors.

⁴ Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, vol. 2 (Oxford University Press, 1976 [first published 1776]), pp. 731-32

Both state and company fleets defended company monopolies, others plying the trade routes being considered pirates. This is the origin of the very idea of monopoly capitalism. Investors stood to earn huge profits if all went well, and the capital of these companies would be invested in turn in government bonds, enabling a permanent military establishment, particularly an unprecedented construction of naval forces. These bonds would pay an extremely reliable return, funding yet more company expansion. Military needs would be fed by private textile and steel mills which would employ millions of people. Labor would have to be organized on a quasi-military basis, but wages would establish a reliable pattern of domestic consumption. Certainly such policies were disastrous for many people all over the world, and were a familiar mixed bag in terms of their effects at home. They also led to one of the most entrenched and unjust domestic and international hierarchies ever devised, or the first really global hierarchy, in which the immiseration of the third world was interlocked with the prosperity of the first.

The state has been a key force in territorialization of many dimensions of the world and human experience, turning them into property. The consolidation of the European nation-state took place in complement to the annexation of whole continents, and one central function of the rule of law is the establishment of private property. Ownership of intellectual property - like the ownership of land - cannot possibly be maintained without exhaustive bodies of records and archives of various kinds, a central function of the state from time immemorial, necessary to taxation and to trade. It has gotten to the point where state and corporation mutually enforce ownership of sequences of tones, strings of symbols and other abstract pseudo-objects.

To take another example, one way to frame the debate between Democrats and Federalists (or Jeffersonians and Hamiltonians) in the early American republic is as a debate between an agrarian, or quasi-feudal (and of

course slave) interest and an emerging market and financialized economy centered in New York.⁵ It was the capitalist interest that demanded a larger, more active state. Hamilton's primary concerns were securing a tax base, paying the national debt, establishing a national bank that could stabilize currency values and facilitate credit markets, closely regulating and taxing foreign trade in both directions, and creating a military establishment capable of crushing internal rebellions and resisting incursions from other nations. He explicitly conceived these as measures to establish a capitalist economy.

By the 1890s the American government was being bailed out by J.P. Morgan, a gesture which the state has repaid to the financial sector many times, and in response to which the idea of a central or national bank was expanded to include uniform regulation of currency under the Federal Reserve. These mechanisms for mutual stabilization of state and capital were refined and internationalized throughout the twentieth century, though they still have their problems. Such steps ended up being taken by every emerging capitalist economy, and required larger and larger structures of state surveillance and control of various sorts of transactions. It was primarily with regard to the development of such economies and the shifts from an agrarian to a manufacturing to a service model, for example, that education was made compulsory and has come more and more to be regulated at national levels.

5.

The mutual reinforcement of economic and political hierarchies that has occurred in its capitalist permutations at least since the 17th century is a kind of apparently infinite spiral of increasing oppression in which the right and left have colluded since there have been a right and left. In oscillating between liberal and conservative or Democrat and Republican, we oscillate

⁵ A good treatment of these matters is found in Robert E. Wright, *One Nation Under Debt: Hamilton, Jefferson, and the History of What We Owe* (McGraw-Hill: 2008)

between beefing up one segment of the hierarchy or another, and if I had to identify a direction of history, it would be simply be in terms of ever-increasing inequality of both power and wealth.

The idea that free markets are historically distinguished from large, powerful states is, in short, a completely ahistorical ideology, shared by the capitalist right and the communist left and even by almost everyone in between. In this regard and in a number of others, we might think of the left-right spectrum as a single ideology rather than as a taxonomy of opposites.

Ayn Rand and Vlad Lenin, Kim Il-sung and Barry Goldwater, Barack Obama and Rand Paul, Francois Mitterand and Margaret Thatcher, Ronald Reagan and Fidel Castro, Friedrich von Hayek and Leo Trotsky, Slavoj Žižek, and Augusto Pinochet, for all I know, disagreed on several matters. But they agreed on this, or said they did: the state was a force that was historically pitted against private capital. To reduce one was to increase the other and to increase one was to reduce the other. They vary inversely and the balance between them that you recommend constitutes the fundamental way of characterizing your political position. The left-right spectrum stretches from authoritarianism on the one end to authoritarianism on the other, with authoritarianism in between. It makes anything that is not that incomprehensible. It narrows all alternatives to variations on hierarchy, structures of inequality, or profoundly unjust distributions of power/wealth. And also as a single ideology, it is merely false.

My suggestion would just be this: sort political positions into hierarchical and antihierarchical, vertical and horizontal. Then we can see that Francisco Franco, Chairman Mao, Hillary Clinton and Dick Cheney are all, with slightly varying emphases or intensities, on the same side: that is, they are on the upper end.

6.

I'm going to conclude with a contemporary application of these insights, if such they are, to American progressive 'meritocracy' and its centralization of a hierarchy of knowledge, understood by and large as performance on standardized tests. This, again, is as real a hierarchy as any of the others and tends to coincide with them in the long run. People such as, say, Robert Reich, Hillary Clinton, or Cass Sunstein think that they have devoted their careers to remediating the hierarchy they are themselves perched atop, and they propose to remove it specifically by its ever-more thorough exercise. They are enjoying it, claiming it, and imposing it, and simultaneously they are identifying it as the problem they are trying to fix. Decades of welfare-type programs, racial remediations, top-down educational reforms, and so on have, I think, intensified and made more thoroughly structural and immovable the inequalities they were apparently intended to shift. For example, Sunstein prescribes the 'nudge', or setting up a structure of incentives that lure people to the desired outcomes, but the whole thing effortlessly assumes that people like Cass Sunstein understand what each of us should be nudged toward.

People like Reich and Sunstein exemplify the ways class and race are articulated or actually made now: they move back and forth from academia to think-tank to state, through the archipelago of social-science expertise, epistemic prestige, and real power. Reich and Sunstein and their ilk take on the neutral voice of the social scientist and they are chock full of statistics. This voice is an extremely central example of the 'unmarked' position of privilege: they do not implicate themselves in their advocacy. But the social sciences - overlapping with a medical model of pathologies and also a criminal-justice discourse - have been the nexus of racial and class construction since the early twentieth century. (Before that the experts and professors measured your skull and tried to fit your people into the sequence of evolution.) All the state-implemented racial and class

transformations, each layer of new welfare and housing programs, each new war on poverty and discrimination, has been justified by the social sciences. Many have been unalloyed disasters, but expertise always gets it right this time, by its own account.

You ought, it seems, to be silent before expertise. You must bow to the facts; the claim of expertise is to a special power to declare what is real. And yet the categories of the statistical tables just recirculate and reinforce the wretchedly problematic race and class taxonomies, and the whole thing presupposes that we have a right to gather information on them so we can address their problems: their problems as named by us. The power dynamics are completely inbuilt, the numbers a kind of spectral emanation of the a priori stance and categories.

A long century of this has left us fundamentally untransformed. These hierarchies are more extreme and intransigent than when it all started. How have Democratic administrations done at ameliorating income inequalities, for example? That failure is completely predictable, because the solutions and their rhetorics are imposed by direct exercises of domination by the very people who are the problem; they are imposed from the very top of the hierarchy. That just is not going to have emancipatory effects: not last time or the time before that, and not next time.

JUSTICE AS AN EVOLVING REGULATIVE IDEAL

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ABSTRACT: *In this paper, I argue that justice is best understood as an evolving regulative ideal. This framework avoids cynicism and apathy on the one hand as well as brash extremism on the other. I begin by highlighting the elusive quality of justice as an ideal always on the horizon, yet which is nevertheless meaningful. Next, I explain the ways in which it makes more sense to see justice as evolving, rather than as fixed. Finally, I demonstrate the value of Charles Sanders Peirce's concept of a regulative ideal for framing a pragmatist outlook on justice. Peirce helps us at the same time to appreciate ideals yet to let go of outmoded understandings of their metaphysical status. Ideals are thus tools for regulating behavior. Each of these qualifications demonstrates that justice is best conceived of as an evolving regulative ideal.*

In 1829, David Walker argued that emancipation from slavery would not be enough for justice and the moral uplift of former slaves.¹ More recently, Derrick Bell argued that *Brown v. Board of Education* was no success at all² and that racism was and would remain a permanent force in American society.³ Walker and Bell both give reason to believe that emancipation from slavery and past forms of oppression were incomplete or false victories yielding little more than negative liberty. The moral development of individuality and positive liberty take not only intelligence and goodwill, but also material means to accomplish. The question that arises in both instances is whether we can call such changes progress. In the case of slavery, abolition is thought of as one of the clearest steps towards greater justice. The *Brown* case is generally thought to be a success over some past problems, yet a failure with regard to the underlying problem.⁴

In my overarching project, I examine the cultural forces which can undermine or enable justice. Cultural influence can be large or small, such as in hyper-incarceration on the one hand, or in subtle uses of language that demeans groups of people on the other. My concern in the larger project centers on democratic justice and its demands for equality of citizenship. Consequently, ways of understanding the pursuit of justice are important, since even grand moments in history can reasonably be found wanting. From the start of such a project, then, two frustrating paradigmatic responses present themselves and raise difficulties for the pursuit of justice.

The first response takes the form of a dismissive cynicism. The question is whether a just culture is in fact possible or realistic. The cynical attitude rejects the idea that an ideal of justice is meaningful, since the world we live in is not ideal. Such an outlook gives up on the goal of pursuing justice and accepts inequality of citizenship as insuperable. The cynic gives up on the goal of making large-scale changes to culture and would find petty those calls for justice that concern people's use of language or the norms referred to as "political correctness."

At the other end of the spectrum, the second problematic response is absolutist. The absolutist response to the challenges for equality of citizenship rejects claims that progress has been made. It says that unless we reach the kind of justice that our ideals require, anything short of revolution is complacency and complicity, a reinforcement of injustice. Such an outlook has two worrisome outlets. The first is to give in to the cynical view, disbelieving in the meaningfulness of justice.⁵ The second is to pursue radical action. If only

¹ David Walker, *Appeal to the Coloured Citizens of the World*. Edited by Peter Hinks (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1829 / 2000).

² Derrick Bell, *Silent Covenants: Brown v. Board of Education and the Unfulfilled Hopes for Racial Reform* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

³ Derrick Bell, *Faces at the Bottom of the Well: The Permanence of Racism* (New York: Basic Books, 1993).

⁴ Bell's *Silent Covenants* makes the most extensive case

for this. In addition, Elizabeth Anderson has more recently argued in favor of integration as a moral imperative, though recognizing that *Brown*, while well intended in her view, was indeed insufficient to achieve integrated communities. Elizabeth Anderson, *The Imperative of Integration* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010).

⁵ Another version of this outlook gives up on the meaningfulness of justice in worldly affairs. Such a

ideal justice is acceptable, and if civil, political means of pursuing justice can only end in frustration, one can feel that no recourse is left for change except violence. Misguided though they are, racist white secessionists fall into this absolute camp. People with democratic, non-racist outlooks on justice can also be absolutists, of course.

When people in democratic societies fight for equality of citizenship, it is important at the same time to appreciate the critics of partial progress yet to welcome steps towards justice, even if soberly. In this paper, I argue that a just culture is an elusive and evolving ideal, yet one which can nevertheless serve valuably to regulate behavior and policy for the better.

In what follows, I will first address the elusive quality of justice as an ideal always on the horizon, yet which is nevertheless meaningful. Next, I will explain the ways in which it is useful to see justice as evolving, rather than as fixed. When interracial marriage was controversial, the United States was entirely unready or unwilling to consider homosexual marriage. With time and considerable effort to fight outmoded prejudices against homosexuality, a new culture and more inclusive sense of justice came into view. In this sense, justice evolves. Finally, I will look to Charles Sanders Peirce's concept of a regulative ideal to show how a pragmatist outlook can at the same time appreciate ideals yet let go of outmoded understandings of their metaphysical status. Ideals thus are best understood to be tools for regulating behavior.

religious response sees justice as something only possible in the afterlife, as divine justice.

I. Justice as an Ideal

"Though the arc of the moral universe is long, it bends towards justice."

"Justice too long delayed is justice denied."

— Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.^{6,7}

For sailors on long trips, the horizon hides and then reveals their destination. Such is our experience also in pursuing justice. What we conceive of as justice at any given moment may sound idyllic and final, yet is akin to the horizon. Once the merchant sailor arrives at a destination, further destinations and horizons present themselves. The horizontal quality of justice also contributes to the sense in which justice appears to evolve. Past generations thought that shaking hips on television were a moral threat. White Americans at one time resisted the desegregation of restaurants and schools. It is easy to find examples today that suggest that ours is a far more just society than those of past generations, even if in many other ways justice appears far away.

Issues of race in the U.S. offer examples of continuing injustice — of inequality of democratic citizenship — falling short of an ideal. People often tire of talking about race.⁸ Nevertheless, the Sentencing Project

⁶ Martin Luther King, Jr., "Love, Law, and Civil Disobedience," in *The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr.*, Edited by James M. Washington (New York: Harper Collins, 1986), 43-53, 52. The phrase is believed to have originated from abolitionist preacher Theodore Parker, according to John Haynes Holmes, "Salute to Montgomery," *Liberation* 1, Issue 10 (1956): 5. I am indebted for this latter reference to Clayborn Carson, Senior Editor, *The Papers of Martin Luther King, Jr., Volume 3: Birth of a New Age* (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1997), 486.

⁷ Martin Luther King, Jr. "Letter from a Birmingham Jail," in *Why We Can't Wait* (New York: Signet Classics, 1963), 77-100.

⁸ See Editors, "The 2014 Race Card: Democratic Appeals to Racial Division Are Worse than Ever," *The Wall Street Journal*, October 26, 2014, URL:

[http://www.wsj.com/articles/the-2014-race-card-](http://www.wsj.com/articles/the-2014-race-card-1414192776)

[1414192776](http://www.wsj.com/articles/the-2014-race-card-1414192776), and Tanya Young Williams, "I'm Tired of Talking about Racism and a Judge's Bid to Abolish the Grand Jury," *Huffington Post*, December 12, 2014, URL:

revealed in 2013 that if trends continue, 1 in 3 African American men can expect to be imprisoned in his lifetime.⁹

Understanding that there appears always to be more work to do with respect to justice, we can appreciate disagreements between Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcom X. X's famous and often repeated line was that "If you stick a knife nine inches into my back and pull it out three inches, that is not progress. Even if you pull it all the way out, that is not progress. Progress is healing the wound, and America hasn't even begun to pull out the knife."¹⁰ King was an advocate for moderate, peaceful means to social change, while X asked him how and why he could advocate for non-violence in response to violence inflicted. King was inspired by the work and philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi,¹¹ but X was right to wonder how King knew that he was not simply bringing sheep to the slaughter when he led protests. There is reason to believe that Gandhi's tactics would have failed utterly against the Nazis in Germany. In the American South, black men and women were lynched. Churches were bombed. Protesters were murdered. X had cause to doubt King's methods. The desegregation of schools and the protection of the right to vote, to figures like X, were partial measures for progress, pulling out the knife only partly. Appreciating Malcom X's worries, consider that even with desegregation as law, some school districts have been described as still today not having

desegregated.¹² In 2012, it was argued that schools had become more segregated than they were in the late 1960's.¹³

Contrast these conditions with the fact that the United States has elected and reelected its first African American President. On the one hand, the U.S. appears to have made some unmistakable progress, racially-speaking, given that years ago President Obama's candidacy would have been thought so unrealistic as to be impossible. Even in what some have called the "age of Obama,"¹⁴ however, conditions for African Americans in the United States have reasonably inspired Michelle Alexander to call today's prison conditions a "New Jim Crow."¹⁵ What are we to say about progress towards justice when it is partial? Have there been victories in the pursuit of justice? One response to partial measures for progress or to progress accompanied by apparent regress is to say that not much has changed. If we see justice as an ideal, however, any changes could only ever be partial progress, at best. Therefore, if change is desired, leaders must recognize that it will never be totally fulfilled.

In the tradition of American Pragmatism, we find in John Dewey's work an approach to progress more sympathetic with King's non-violent philosophy. In "Democracy is Radical," Dewey argues that you cannot achieve democratic ends with undemocratic means.¹⁶ In

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/tanya-young-williams/im-tired-of-talking-about_b_6304140.html.

⁹ The Sentencing Project, *Report of the Sentencing Project to the United Nations Human Rights Committee: Regarding Racial Disparities in the United States Criminal Justice System* (Washington, D.C.: The Sentencing Project, August 2013), URL:

http://sentencingproject.org/doc/publications/rd_ICCPR%20Race%20and%20Justice%20Shadow%20Report.pdf.

¹⁰ As cited in Carlton Waterhouse, "Avoiding Another Step in a Series of Unfortunate Legal Events," *Boston College Third World Law Journal* 26, Issue 2 (2006): 207-265, 208.

¹¹ Nirupama Rao, "Mahatma Gandhi's 'Light' Guided Martin Luther King, Jr.," *Politico*, March 7, 2013, URL: <http://www.politico.com/story/2013/03/mahatma-gandhis-lightguided-martin-luther-king-jr-88581.html>.

¹² Sharon Lerner, "A School District that Was Never Desegregated," *The Atlantic*, February 5, 2015, URL: <http://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2015/02/a-school-district-that-was-never-desegregated/385184/>.

¹³ Emily Richmond, "Schools Are More Segregated Today than During the Late 1960's," *The Atlantic*, June 11, 2012, URL: <http://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2012/06/schools-are-more-segregated-today-than-during-the-late-1960s/258348/>.

¹⁴ David Remnick, "Charleston and the Age of Obama," *The New Yorker*, June 19, 2015, URL: <http://www.newyorker.com/news/daily-comment/charleston-and-the-age-of-obama>.

¹⁵ Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow* (New York: The New Press, 2012).

¹⁶ John Dewey, "Democracy Is Radical," in *The Later*

other words, if we are to pursue democratic aims of equality and social cooperation, violence will frustrate rather than enable our ends. Of course, there is cause to appreciate the rebuttal. When one's people are murdered, hung, and bombed, not welcomed to the same table for discussion or to the same schools or voting booths, there is a foundational threat to overcome that makes the aim of cooperation seem unrealistic.

The three possible responses to the frustrated pursuit of an ideal of justice presented in the introduction represent different outlooks on the disagreements between King and X. On the one hand, seeing justice as an ideal which so thoroughly fails to match up with the real world can inspire cynicism. Justice is not meaningful on this view, as it is imaginary, not realistic. The cynic will not aim to achieve greater justice, as it is a foolish dream anyway, on his or her view. King and X both believed that action was necessary, rejecting the cynic's view. In fact, cynicism reinforces unjust social structures, King argued. He wrote that "He who passively accepts evil is as much involved in it as he who helps to perpetrate it."¹⁷

The second response sees the ideal of justice as necessary, real, and wholly frustrated in today's world. This view becomes absolutist and possibly violent. To say this is not to deny that people should have the right of self-defense. Such was the reasonable side to X's argument. The worry for King was that even violence in self-defense can be spun in public perception as aggressive violence. In addition, the violent actor undermines his or her own ends, as Dewey suggested, if one is looking to bring about peaceful results. To appreciate King's challenge for X, consider that the American South remained in the union only by force. Even to this day, Southerners continue to express their

pride in the region's resistance to the federal government with defenses of the Confederate Battle flag, as well as occasional outbursts of terrible violence.¹⁸ King believed that if the aim was transformation into a community, violence would frustrate the end, not speed its arrival.

Finally, the third possibility is that an ideal can be an inspiration. It can be the star in whose direction we travel, always elusive, yet helpful for guiding our efforts. This last approach is the outlook inspired by lines like King's, which explain that "Though the arc of the moral universe is long, it bends towards justice."¹⁹ In this sense, an ideal is aspirational. It is imagined in real life, as we recognize a spectrum of better and worse conditions than those which exist presently. Dewey had something like this in mind when he spoke of the divine in *A Common Faith*.²⁰ It is an idealized moral extension of our experience of the world, which we value as better and worse, envisioned as a matter of degree. The ideal, the perfect, is a vision of the progress of present conditions carried infinitely towards what would be better. The fact that things could be better and are always imperfect fails to motivate the cynic, but can be understood optimistically, for in fact, a true cynic would doubt that things could be better.

¹⁸ See Anna R. Schechter and Jon Schuppe, "Confederate Flag Rally Tests a Diminished Ku Klux Klan," *MSNBC.com*, July 18, 2015, URL:

<http://www.msnbc.com/msnbc/confederate-flag-rally-tests-diminished-ku-klux-klan>; Eric Thomas Weber, "What a Flag Has to Do with Justice," *The PrindlePost*, July 8, 2015, URL:

<http://www.prindlepost.org/2015/07/what-a-flag-has-to-do-with-justice/>; Therese Apel, "Deryl Dedmon, Two Others Sentenced from 7-50 Years in Hate Crime," *The Clarion Ledger*, February 12, 2015, URL:

<http://www.clarionledger.com/story/news/2015/02/10/deryl-dedmon-two-others-to-be-sentenced-in-hate-crime-tuesday/23166397/>; and Simon McCormack, "Dylann Roof Charged with 9 Counts of Murder," *The Huffington Post*, June 19, 2015, URL: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/06/19/dylan-roof-confesses_n_7620314.html.

¹⁹ King, "Love, Law, and Civil Disobedience," 52.

²⁰ John Dewey, *A Common Faith* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1933/2013).

Works of John Dewey, Volume 11 (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University, 1937/1987), 296-299.

¹⁷ Martin Luther King, Jr., *Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story* (New York: Harper & Row), 61.

There are pragmatic reasons why we must not follow the cynic's course, as well as conceptual ones. Things will only stay the same or get worse without effort, given the cynic's outlook. Beyond that, the fact that a goal is unattainable is in no way evidence of the meaninglessness of its pursuit. This argument can best be understood with reference to the idea that "ought implies can." One's moral obligations cannot reasonably include things impossible for one to do. While David Hume's insight may be true – that one cannot derive an "ought" from an "is" – we might say with Gideon Yaffe that "sometimes the way things ought to be does indeed tell us how they are."²¹ We do not blame a person for a condition that he or she could not avoid. When a person is drugged without his consent, for instance, we do not blame him for his intoxicated state. On such grounds, we might say that if a society could never achieve ideal conditions of justice, it cannot be that we ought to achieve them. That interpretation is only half right. If all one can be morally required to do is that which is within one's power, the question is whether or not striving for an ideal could not help one to come closer to it. If an ideal is impossible to achieve in one's lifetime, it may nevertheless be considered a limit towards which infinite effort can progress infinitely over time. Understanding the concepts of the ideal perfect circle may mean that a person could never draw a perfect circle by hand. It is unreasonable to say that he or she ought to draw a perfect circle and is a failure when he or she inevitably falls short of that perfection. Nevertheless, the idea of a perfect circle is meaningful, as it is instructive of the kind of aim one is striving for as well as the sorts of steps one ought to take in working toward that perfection. Thus, the pursuit of perfection, the effort to come as close to justice as a society can in a generation's lifetime is within that generation's power. The ideal can be meaningful in that sense, despite the inevitability of falling short of it as a goal.

²¹ Gideon Yaffe, "More on 'Ought' Implies 'Can' and the Principle of Alternate Possibilities," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 29 (2005): 307-312.

An ideal of justice can only obligate a person to do what is in his or her power to control. This does not mean that one gives up when things cannot be changed *en masse* immediately. When enough people make a small change, great change can occur. A change of this sort appears to be the mechanism by which homosexual marriage laws were changed. First there were activists calling for change. Then scholars and entertainers discussed the issue and combatted unconsidered sensibilities. Next, the general public resisted traditional prejudices against homosexual behavior. Finally, individuals adapted and saw that criticisms of homosexual behavior were discriminatory and unacceptable. Past criticisms came to look like the unfair arguments against interracial marriage. Such changes are slow and they reveal the extent to which all people participate in the transmission, acceptance, and modification of culture. Examples such as these also demonstrate reason for what John Lachs has dubbed "stoic pragmatism," a stoicism spirited by a pragmatic optimism to try, while not despairing when particular individuals cannot alone change all that needs to be changed.²²

Given these approaches to the nature of an ideal, it is important to tie them to the modern democratic norm of equal citizenship. In Plato's day, it seemed necessary to the great philosopher to divide up people into classes and castes. It is one thing to see and divide the needs for agriculture, civil defense, and political work. We still follow much of Plato's advice when it comes to the benefits of a broad education in general, accompanied by specialized education and focus in one's trade. The further step Plato takes, however, of calling certain social roles or castes bronze, silver, and gold today clashes with the democratic ethos. We have the sobering advantage of having witnessed some of the most grotesque forms of dehumanization and devaluation of people, in the early Twentieth Century.

²² John Lachs, *Stoic Pragmatism* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2013).

The gross atrocities of the last century undermined any assuredness people might have felt in trusting powerful groups to treat those whom they command with their best interests at heart. The modern world has seen the results of classifying people into castes, valuing some far more than others. It has come to signal one of the greatest sources of injustice, even while today many have argued that the United States is an oligarchy, not a democracy.²³ Such claims make the news because nations like the U.S. call themselves democracies, and allegedly aspire to the values of democratic justice. The democratic pursuit of justice fundamentally must reject hierarchies of citizenship, yet they persist.

Plato's optimism about the trustworthiness of unchecked rulers²⁴ has been thoroughly tested and failed. While no person is perfect, it is worth considering that had General George Washington wanted a monarchy, or to have remained President until his death, he may have been able to do so. He also could have rendered the United States far less democratic than it has become. We reify figures like him because they are so unusual for not clutching to power. Washington made present democratic developments possible in many ways. Of course, he owned many slaves and was known to have sold some to separate them from their families, as a form of punishment.²⁵ Washington had his troubling flaws as well. Had Washington not acted in such ways, we still would have reason to doubt that

leaders could be trusted to the extent that Plato's Socrates called for. The division of powers and checks and balances of modern democratic states ensure that no individual can single-handedly wield all governmental power. The clumsy government that results from such divisions is necessary because of the long history of abuses on the part of powerful classes.

Today, the democratic era takes the opposite view on Plato's mistake. While we still speak of classes and oligarchy,²⁶ hierarchies of citizenship are denounced. John Dewey and James Tufts distilled one of the central democratic values of the modern era, explaining that:

[The] worth and dignity of every human being of moral capacity is fundamental in nearly every moral system of modern times. It is implicit in the Christian doctrine of the worth of the soul, in the Kantian doctrine of personality, in the Benthamite dictum, "every man to count as one." It is embedded in our democratic theory and institutions. With the leveling and equalizing of physical and mental power brought about by modern inventions and the spread of intelligence, no State is permanently safe except on a foundation of justice. And justice cannot be fundamentally in contradiction with the essence of democracy.²⁷

This democratic ideal, of having each person count as one, rejects hierarchical citizenship. Of course, it does not capture all that justice instructs. Nor does it address every concern for democracy. But, it offers invaluable insight into ways in which today American and other societies can be more just. There is reason why we must not expect a complete and final definition of the full meaning of justice, however, which is that justice grows

²³ See Martin Gilens and Benjamin I. Page, "Testing Theories of American Politics: Elites, Interest Groups, and Average Citizens," *Perspectives on Politics* 12, Issue 3 (2014): 564-581 and Zachary Davies Boren, "The US Is an Oligarchy, Study Concludes," *The Telegraph (UK)*, April 16, 2014, URL:

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/northamerica/usa/10769041/The-US-is-an-oligarchy-study-concludes.html>.

²⁴ He even calls it permissible for them to tell a profound lie, calling themselves to believe it too. That kind of leadership is most clearly unchecked, with the protection of deception and secrecy.

²⁵ Mount Vernon Ladies' Association, "Ten Facts about Washington and Slavery," URL:

<http://www.mountvernon.org/george-washington/slavery/ten-facts-about-washington-slavery/>.

²⁶ As in Gilens and Page, but see also Nicholas Confessore, "Koch Brothers' Budget of \$889 Million for 2016 Is on Par with Both Parties' Spending," *The New York Times*, January 27, 2015, A1; and Bailey Williams, "Sen. Bernie Sanders Calls U.S. Politics 'Oligarchy'; Considers Run in 2016," *Medill News Service - United Press International*, March 9, 2015, URL:

http://www.upi.com/Top_News/US/2015/03/09/Sen-Bernie-Sanders-calls-US-politics-oligarchy-considers-run-in-2016/8711425927237/.

²⁷ John Dewey and James Tufts, *Ethics* (1908), in *The Collected Works of John Dewey, The Middle Works, Volume 5*, Edited by Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Carbondale, 1978), 466.

and evolves with changing human conditions and potential. The next step for the present paper is to consider the ways in which justice evolves and can nevertheless ultimately serve as a regulative ideal.

II. Justice as an Evolving Ideal

Perhaps the key figure with whom I disagree on the issue of the evolution of ideals is Plato. While I believe that there is much to learn still today from Plato, there is also much that must be rejected. The Platonic view that there is a realm of unchanging forms, which are perfect in part because they are unchanging, has had many critics. I will be brief in explaining my rejection of his view, which can be associated with a kind of absolutism.

One way of thinking suggests that there is a perfect sense of justice that it is unchanging, and that the world changes, progressing or regressing in reference to it. That perfect form of justice is one that we will never achieve. The ideal of a just person, as unchanging and perfect, is difficult to reconcile with the contingent development of human beings. Plato's Socrates did not hesitate to suggest the appropriateness of infanticide for the children of "inferior parents" or for "deformed" offspring.²⁸ Such outlooks today sound barbaric and unthinkable, even if a very small set of narrow exceptions have been considered in highly controversial debates about the most extreme and unusual cases.²⁹ If permanent truths are most important to Plato, it is remarkable just how profoundly at odds his view of the infanticide of many healthy children is today. One way of considering the vast changes from the ancient period to today would be to suggest that we are at a step in the

process towards that greater perfection, which always was. To the pragmatist, the question at this point is about the meaning of ideas. What conceivable practical consequence can there be in the different beliefs – between thinking that there is a perfect ideal of humanity that is unchanging and always has been, versus the belief that human beings evolve?

One conceivable consequence comes from thinking one knows the nature of that human perfection, and can thereby judge others according to that standard. For instance, if one were to believe that human bodies have a purpose, one that relates to procreation, then he or she might think that the homosexual use of reproductive organs is a misuse, and correspondingly a moral failure on grounds of violating one's nature. Michael Levin's argument in "Why Homosexuality is Abnormal" depends on beliefs about the nature of the human body and the purpose of our parts in this way.³⁰ In contrast with the absolutist or fixed form theorist, the view which sees ideals as evolving with human beings sees variation as a natural part of humanity. Such a view inclines one towards greater toleration of and respect for people's differences. In a democratic society, in which variety and freedom are key, such toleration is the wiser course. Given this understanding, the danger involved comes more from a lack of humility about the nature of ideals than from the belief that they are unchanging versus evolving. At the same time, John Lachs has offered another reason to reject the absolutist picture – namely that it is singular. He has argued that we ought to consider there to be not one, but many human natures.³¹ Lachs's view considers the vastness of human variety and also appreciates or is supported by the facts of evolutionary sciences, which see divergences of branches and strains of animals in the genus homo. Animals' conditions influence the success of their

²⁸ Plato, *Republic*, Book V, 460c.

²⁹ I am thinking of Peter Singer and his outlook on exceptional cases of profound medical problems that produce deep suffering. See Helga Kuhse and Peter Singer, "Debate: Severely Handicapped Newborns," *Law, Medicine, and Healthcare* 14, Issue 3-4 (1986): 149-153. While there are some interesting debates today, note that Plato believed it justifiable to terminate the lives of healthy infants, if they were born to "inferior" parents than those he called "golden" or "silver" citizens of the good city in the *Republic*, Book V, 460c.

³⁰ Michael Levin, "Why Homosexuality Is Abnormal," *The Monist* 67 (1984): 251-283.

³¹ John Lachs, "Human Natures," *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 63, Issue 7 (1990): 29-39.

offspring, and hence the generations that continue over time change. To pragmatists like Dewey, ideas are some of the most powerful tools we have for managing our environmental challenges. Tools must be modified as conditions change, and their nature adapts with the needs for which we must use them.

As circumstances change, another consequence of absolutism arises. If one believes adamantly in a value, thought to be unchanging, and if one thinks that society is departing ever more from it, the absolutist might be inclined towards drastic action. For example, if one believes in white supremacy, when non-white persons thrive at work or in public life, one might become angry to the point of taking drastic action. Dylann Roof, the mass murderer in Charleston, South Carolina, spoke of the threat of non-white people, for example. He was incapable of accepting the consequences of increasing social equality.³²

One final point is worth noting. Some historians like to point to the Declaration of Independence as an example of one of the great, enduring moral documents, which remains as true today in the rightness of its aspirations as it was in its own day. President Lincoln was said to have called it a lodestar, a guiding principle for his life and work. Lewis Lehrman sees in the important document evidence of something that captured the unchanging truth about humanity and our values.³³

While I agree about the moral importance of the U.S. Declaration of Independence, I see it as an important step in the evolution of human ideals, not as something of perfection that is unchanging. Not the least reason for this is the fact that at the time, the founders referred to “men” while not considering non-whites relevant. Even

when people like Lincoln eventually came around on that point, it was *men*, not women, referred to, and the idea that the term “man” captures also women was not in fact accepted. Women had to wait until the twentieth century to get the right to vote in the United States. Therefore, the Declaration of Independence turns out to be an excellent example of my point about the evolution of ideals.

III. Justice as a Regulative Ideal

Ideals can sound otherworldly, impractical, or unrealistic. In the pragmatist tradition, Charles Peirce has shown why and how ideals can be practical, such as in relation to truth as an ideal or to other ideals that can regulate behavior. An explanation of Peirce’s understanding of truth can by analogy illustrate the way in which we can see justice as an evolving, regulative ideal. I will end this section with some applications of this outlook to democratic ideals of equal citizenship.

Peirce has, with justification, been called an American genius.³⁴ Robert Neville has explained that Peirce “invented pragmatism, much modern symbolic logic, and semiotics.”³⁵ While his father Benjamin Peirce, himself a great Harvard mathematician and scientist, reinforced his son’s tendencies toward snobbishness and hubris,³⁶ C.S. Peirce’s philosophy of inquiry pointed to the importance of community and of varied points of view. In both philosophy and in the sciences, Peirce thought that

Philosophy ought to imitate the successful sciences in its methods, so far as to proceed only from tangible premises [sic.] which can be subjected to careful scrutiny, and to trust rather

³² Ray Sanchez and Ed Payne, “Charleston Church Shooting: Who Is Dylann Roof?” *CNN.com*, June 19, 2015, URL: <http://www.cnn.com/2015/06/19/us/charleston-church-shooting-suspect/>.

³³ Lewis E. Lehrman, *Lincoln at Peoria, The Turning Point: Getting Right with the Declaration of Independence* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2008).

³⁴ Robert C. Neville, *The Highroad Around Modernism* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1992), 25.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Peter Manicas’s review of Joseph Brent’s *Charles Sanders Peirce: A Life* sums up the point succinctly. See Peter Manicas, “Charles Sanders Peirce: A Life (Review),” *Biography* 17, Issue 1 (1994): 63-66, 64. For more detail, see Joseph Brent, *Charles Sanders Peirce: A Life* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1998), especially chapter 1, 26-81.

to the multitude and variety of its arguments than to the conclusiveness of any one. Its reasoning should not form a chain which is no stronger than its weakest link, but a cable whose fibers may be ever so slender, provided they are sufficiently numerous and intimately connected.³⁷

While it takes specialists to interpret data and to conduct studies, Peirce recognized that inquiry needs community, volume, and time. Peirce referred in a number of passages to the work of Pierre Simon Laplace,³⁸ the French mathematician known for *Théorie Analytique des Probabilités*,³⁹ a foundational contribution leading up to what we now call the central limit theorem. In simplest terms, that theorem, which is the basis of modern probability theory and statistics, says that when multiple samples of a population are taken over and over and plotted on a graph, they will form a normal curve. That curve's mean value is the true population mean. We can appreciate the lesson here with an analogy. If one inquirer were to check the height of 100 Americans, his or her sample, not being so large, is unlikely to be generalizable to all Americans. When 100 inquirers from different parts of the country check the height of 100 Americans, the central limit theorem says that the means of the various samples will come to form a normal (bell) curve. The more samples are taken, even of a modest number, like 100, the closer and closer the plotted means will fill in the shape of the bell curve, which points to the true mean of the whole distribution.

While some of the mathematical developments relevant for contemporary statistics came after Peirce's death, he is known as "one of the founders of statistics."⁴⁰ He was

among the key figures who illustrated how mathematical ideals help us to arrive at truth. They teach us how to design studies and how to control maximally for error and to sharpen our conclusions, rendering them more and more likely to be true. In addition, he showed that the community of inquiry, carrying out studies together, generates insights which converge on an ideal limit that we call the truth.

Peirce illustrates the power of the ideal of truth and of the corresponding process of inquiry leading to it. In his famous essay, "The Fixation of Belief," he writes,

The trial of this method of experience in natural science for these three centuries... encourages us to hope that we are approaching nearer and nearer to an opinion which is not destined to be broken down – though we cannot expect ever quite to reach that ideal goal.⁴¹

As a mathematician and, among other things, a philosopher of science, Peirce famously explained "How to Make Our Ideas Clear." In that essay, he wrote,

[All] the followers of science are animated by a cheerful hope that the processes of investigation, if only pushed far enough, will give one certain solution to each question to which they apply it. One man may investigate the velocity of light by studying the transits of Venus and the aberration of the stars; another by the oppositions of Mars and the eclipses of Jupiter's satellites; a third by the method of Fizeau; a fourth by that of Foucault; a fifth by the motions of the curves of Lissajoux; a sixth, a seventh, an eighth, and a ninth, may follow the different methods of comparing the measures of statical and dynamical electricity. They may at first obtain different results, but, as each perfects his method and his processes, the results are found to move steadily together toward a destined centre. So with all scientific research. Different minds may set out with the most antagonistic views, but the progress of investigation carries

³⁷ Charles Sanders Peirce, "Some Consequences of Four Incapacities," in *The Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce*, Edited by Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1932-1935), Volume 5, standard notation: CP.5.265.3.

³⁸ For a few, see CP.1.70, CP.2.148, and CP.2.761. It is worth noting that Peirce often said he was correcting Laplace's errors, where the latter's theory is "false and harmful" (CP.2.761).

³⁹ Pierre Simon Laplace, *Théorie Analytique des Probabilités* (Paris: Imprimerie Royale, 1847).

⁴⁰ See also Robert Burch, "Charles Sanders Peirce," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2010, URL:

<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/peirce/>, especially section 7. See also "Charles Sanders Peirce - Biography," [Web site] The European Graduate School, Library, Biography, URL: <http://www.egs.edu/library/charles-sanders-peirce/biography/>. Burch explains Peirce's contributions in some depth and the European Graduate School's library biography of Peirce refers to him as "one of the founders of statistics."

⁴¹ Charles S. Peirce, "The Fixation of Belief," *Popular Science Monthly* 12 (November 1877): 1-15, CP.5.384n.

them by a force outside of themselves to one and the same conclusion. This activity of thought by which we are carried, not where we wish, but to a fore-ordained goal, is like the operation of destiny. No modification of the point of view taken, no selection of other facts for study, no natural bent of mind even, can enable a man to escape the predestinate opinion. This great hope is embodied in the conception of truth and reality. **The opinion which is fated⁴² to be ultimately agreed to by all who investigate, is what we mean by the truth,** and the object represented in this opinion is the real. That is the way I would explain reality.⁴³

We often think of the realm of ideals in terms of morals. Pragmatists tend not to make hard distinctions between matters of fact and value, but in everyday experience, it is common to think that ideals are reserved for the social realm, not for understanding the way matter functions. Peirce shows that mundane distinction as wrongheaded, revealing that the pursuit of truth is at bottom a process guided by hope and an ideal of inquiry.

Peirce's pragmatism grew out of his reaction to Kant, seeing the power of reason to direct practice, even if ideals are not somehow ever fully known. He wrote,

Truth is a character which attaches to an abstract proposition, such as a person might utter. It essentially depends upon that proposition's not professing to be exactly true. But we hope that in the progress of science its error will indefinitely diminish, just as the error of 3.14159, the value given for π , will indefinitely diminish as the calculation is carried to more and more places of decimals. What we call π is an ideal limit to which no numerical expression can be perfectly true.⁴⁴

⁴² Peirce add this footnote: "Fate means merely that which is sure to come true, and can nohow be avoided. It is a superstition to suppose that a certain sort of events are ever fated, and it is another to suppose that the word fate can never be freed from its superstitious taint. We are all fated to die."

⁴³ Charles S. Peirce, "How to Make Our Ideas Clear," *Popular Science Monthly* 12 (January 1878): 286-302, CP.5.407. Emphasis in the original.

⁴⁴ Charles S. Peirce, "Truth," Chapter 5 in *The Collected Papers, Volume 5, Pragmatism and Pragmaticism, Book 3, Unpublished Papers*, edited by Charles Hartshorne and Paul Weiss (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1934), CP.5.565.

When we consider π as an example, we see that a mathematical idea, which we realize is not fully known to us, is in fact enormously powerful for directing human behavior. Likewise, we can think of justice as the target of progressive refinement of understanding. It is also an ideal that helps us to carry out social functions.

While Peirce's general focus was on the sciences and mathematics, he recognized that these insights apply to the moral realm. He continued,

In the above we have considered positive scientific truth. But the same definitions equally hold in the normative sciences. If a moralist describes an ideal as the *summum bonum*, in the first place, the perfect truth of his statement requires that it should involve the confession that the perfect doctrine can neither be stated nor conceived. If, with that allowance, the future development of man's moral nature will only lead to a firmer satisfaction with the described ideal, the doctrine is true.⁴⁵

We can appreciate what Peirce has in mind here through an example. The concept of consent, such as what we find in social contract theory or in bioethics, is an ideal notion when considered complete or perfect. Citizens rarely have moments in which they consent explicitly to their participation in a society. Immigrants are an exception, as they choose to enter and live in a country. Most citizens do not have many, if any, such moments. Nevertheless, in the twentieth century, the concept of consent has come to be of paramount importance in bioethics. We understand the value and importance of consent, such as of the human subjects of scientific research. Because of the terrible mistakes that past scientists have made, harming people, like in the Tuskegee syphilis experiments, we now carefully regulate studies involving human subjects.⁴⁶ At the same time, we still have much to learn and to decide about the future of consent as moral tool for justice. When doctors offer explanations to patients, they get the patients to sign forms for consent, yet a person without

⁴⁵ Ibid., CP.5.566. Emphasis in the original.

⁴⁶ James H. Jones, *Bad Blood: The Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment, New and Expanded Edition* (New York: The Free Press, 1993).

a high school degree might reasonably claim that he or she did not understand a doctor's explanation. When consent is needed, new mechanisms and understandings of the ideal can be developed and refined to address limitations in our past practices. How we might in the future ensure that a patient or patient's representative has clearly and fully consented to a risky operation is under debate and development.⁴⁷

Peirce added an important component as a philosopher of science when he thought about inquiry, be it scientific or normative. In his essay, "Some Consequences of Four Incapacities," he wrote that,

We individually cannot reasonably hope to attain the ultimate philosophy which we pursue; we can only seek it, therefore, for the *community* of philosophers. Hence, 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.⁴⁸

The community of inquirers, as Peirce explained it, is one which is regulated by ideals. Those ideals concretely instruct us on how to pursue truth together. The lesson here is that early pioneers in the fight for an underrepresented group or for a cause that society has yet to take seriously are likely to move few people in their lifetime. Nevertheless, the larger aim must be to shift the culture over time, something which courageous individuals can motivate, but to which the masses must eventually contribute, even if in small ways. Peirce shows us how to see an ideal as something which evolves, is pursued in community, and is at the same time elusive, always beyond our full understanding. Such regulative ideals are nevertheless powerful in directing behavior to success in more proximal fulfillment of their aims.

⁴⁷ See Neil C. Manson and Onora O'Neill, *Rethinking Informed Consent in Bioethics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007) and Susanne Uusitalo and Barbara Broers, "Rethinking Informed Consent in Research on Herion-Assisted Treatment," *Bioethics* 29, Issue 7 (2015): 462-469.

⁴⁸ Charles S. Peirce, "Some Consequences of Four Incapacities," *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 2, Issue 3 (1868): 140-157. CP.5.265.2. Emphasis in original.

In the United States today, many have celebrated the election twice over of an African American President. People have used language like "post-racial" or the "age of Obama." At the same time, record numbers of African Americans drop out of school in places like the impoverished regions of Mississippi. Vast numbers of Americans are incarcerated, including disproportionate numbers of African Americans. While in the country some doors have opened to higher positions of power and opportunity, a small minority of historically disadvantaged people are afforded such widened opportunities. Meanwhile, public officials are found to take money, selling African American young men to private prisons, for profit.⁴⁹ As a country, we have a long way to go in the fight against inequalities of citizenship. At the same time, exposure of apparent oligarchy makes the news. Corrupt judges get caught and incarcerated. We are far from having achieved an ideally just society, yet we have more tools today than ever before to record and spread messages and videos, such as in recordings of police brutality and unfairness. Peirce's insights reveal the need to cultivate a community of accountability, a culture of democratic justice that can more closely watch and more severely punish those officials who frustrate the movement to approach greater equity. We can use the ideals of objectivity, fairness, and due process, even if never achieving them perfectly, to better advance the aims of justice. If we avoid the dangers of cynicism and of absolutist overreach, we can do the best we can to achieve a maximally just culture.

Conclusion

While it is not new to call justice an ideal, there is reason to make the point. When a family loses a child at the hands of someone charged with his or her protection, they call for justice. What they want is the relevant

⁴⁹ Eyder Peralta, "PA Judge Sentenced to 28 Years in Massive Juvenile Justice Bribery Scandal," *NPR.org*, August 11, 2011, URL: <http://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2011/08/11/139536686/pa-judge-sentenced-to-28-years-in-massive-juvenile-justice-bribery-scandal>.

person to be punished. In that sense, when a killer does end up in jail, sometimes family members or journalists say that “justice was done.”⁵⁰ There is a sense, then, that in certain circumstances, an injustice can be partially redressed. At the cultural level, the focus of my overarching project, injustice is not something quickly or simply addressed in a trial. Even if reparations were granted for past harms done,⁵¹ we would not say that we finally have a just culture. When it comes to culture, we have in mind many layers of historically entrenched power and influence, embedded in our very uses of language, the beliefs people harbor, the practices we engage in, and our consequent institutions, all of which we pass along from one generation to the next. The fact that it took mass murder in Charleston, South Carolina to finally, in 2015, prompt people to take down the Confederate Battle Flag from state buildings illustrates how entrenched power structures can be.⁵² The cause of justice is so important, however, that we must neither be cynical nor despair, nor hold unflinchingly to some absolute, unwilling to open our minds to new evidence or problems. Instead, we should see justice as an evolving, regulative ideal towards which we can progress, with an engaged democratic community and true and unrelenting good faith effort.

⁵⁰ John Feinblatt, “A Bad Week for the NRA,” *The Huffington Post*, October 3, 2014, URL: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/john-feinblatt/a-bad-week-for-the-nra_b_5929188.html.

⁵¹ Ta-Nehisi Coates, “The Case for Reparations,” *The Atlantic*, June 2014, URL: <http://www.theatlantic.com/features/archive/2014/05/the-case-for-reparations/361631/>.

⁵² And, Mississippi has yet to remove the emblem of the Confederate Battle Flag from the canton of its state flag.

IV. EXPERIENCE, ACTION AND INFERENCE

RE-EVALUATING THE EMANCIPATORY PROMISE OF EVIDENCE-BASED MEDICINE

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ABSTRACT: *With the potential to alleviate disease and ameliorate illness, and thereby to promote the conditions for human flourishing, few human endeavors have the emancipatory potential of medicine. And yet, despite being in the age of evidence-based practice, medicine has come increasingly under criticism as a territorializing force exerting a kind of dehumanizing, colonizing pressure on patients and practitioners alike. Overwhelmingly, these attacks lean on the work of philosophers like Heidegger, Foucault, and Deleuze and Guattari. This line of criticism fails on two fronts. First, it represents a form of reductive ideological dogmatism that ignores facts on the ground – a rather ironic fact, since that charge is one of the primary allegations made by this camp against evidence-based medicine (EBM). Second, this line of attack hinges to a great extent on a consistent failure to recognize and appreciate the distinction between EBM and biomedicine. Disentangling EBM from biomedicine is an important and urgent task, therefore. When properly disentangled, it becomes clear that charges of an inherent, pernicious reductivism leveled against EBM in fact are aimed at pernicious features of biomedicine’s model of health. Evidence-based medicine is best understood as a method, not a doctrine. As method, EBM is not intrinsically reductive. Yet, like any method, it can be applied improperly, yielding reductive practices. Far less well appreciated is that healthcare professionals’ interpretive frameworks influence their practices, and, moreover, that the biomedical model represents the current prevailing model of health. This is perhaps the most important reason why EBM and biomedicine must be disentangled; in order for EBM to recover its emancipatory potential, it must liberate itself from the biomedical model, and, further, it must develop an alternate model of health consistent not only with its methodology, but with its values. In this endeavor pragmatism offers particularly rich resources.*

Introduction

In 1747, the year that Scottish physician, James Lind, conducted his well known experimental study while at sea aboard a ship of the British Navy, scurvy killed more sailors than military action (Tröhler 3). Lind’s experiment took twelve sailors “as similar as I could have them,” and assigned two each to one of six treatments, all having

the support of medical authority, or commonsense experience. The pair of sailors who took two oranges and a lemon daily showed far more dramatic improvement than the remaining ten sailors. In 1753 Lind published a *Treatise on the Scurvy* in which he not only detailed his methodology, the results of the experiment, and his rigorously kept records, but also provided a “critical and chronological view” of what had been published on scurvy to that point (Tröhler 3). Yet, it would not be until 1795 – the year after Lind’s death, and more than forty years after publication of his *Treatise* – that the British Navy would finally introduce fruit juice into the regular diet of its sailors (Tröhler 3). Less than twenty years later “the scourge of scurvy” was relatively under control (Tröhler 4).

That Lind’s research failed during his lifetime to redirect the treatment of scurvy is perhaps unsurprising, even if from our vantage point it appears scandalous. Lind and other early pioneers of what we now call an evidence-based approach to the evaluation of medical treatments (like Lind, also overwhelmingly Edinburgh trained men) ran afoul of the prevailing therapeutic dogma of their day. In that context, their perceived insubordination was sufficient grounds for dismissing their research independent of what should have been acknowledged as its clear merits. Although Lind is perhaps most commonly recognized for advocating the use of fruit juice to fight scurvy, his publication is a landmark for other, arguably more important reasons. Not least among these are that it represented a prospectively controlled clinical experiment to test the efficacy of competing alternative therapies, and that it also represented perhaps the first systematic review to be published in medicine, insofar as it critically analyzed the extant literature on scurvy and its treatment as an integral feature of making the case for the superiority of fruit juice as a therapeutic. It is not unreasonable, therefore, to suggest, as historian of medicine Ulrich Tröhler has done (2000), that Lind is the father of evidence-based medicine (EBM).

It took nearly two hundred-fifty years to get from Lind's *Treatise* to the publication of the seminal 1992 article by the Evidence-Based Medicine Working Group that would effectively launch EBM as a formal movement. A great deal changed in that time. As Howick observes, in the century prior to EBM's emergence, from 1885-1985, the rabies vaccine was discovered, as were penicillin and streptomycin; most childhood cancers were able to be cured; open heart surgery, hip replacements, and kidney transplants held out the promise that failing body parts could be replaced; and *in vitro* fertilization offered recourse to infertile couples (Howick 11). Despite these therapeutic advances, institutionally, things remained very much the same, and, not surprisingly, EBM advocates encountered (and continue to encounter) the same forms of resistance and ridicule faced by Lind and his companions over two centuries ago, leading Tröhler to note, "The history of church and law come to mind immediately when dogma is mentioned; but medical history too has abounded with dogma since antiquity – and still does," (Tröhler 2).

As the example of the eradication of scurvy suggests, few human endeavors offer such emancipatory promise as medicine. By preserving, promoting, and recovering health, medicine is not only a liberating enterprise in its own right, it simultaneously safeguards and advances many of the basic conditions for human flourishing and broader projects of social, political, educational, and other emancipation. Insofar as EBM seeks to liberate medicine from its historical bondage to the dogmatism of institutional medical authority, the arbitrariness of individual physician bias, and the unsystematic vagaries of clinical judgment, it may be understood as challenging medicine to meet its emancipatory calling. In so doing, EBM ostensibly promotes a remarkably far-reaching emancipatory agenda with significant implications for society at large. And yet, like Lind, EBM has found itself under attack regularly, and often aggressively. Critiques have taken a wide range of forms, including challenges to EBM's external validity, most notably by Cartwright

(2011; 2007); attacking the inescapable reliance on background knowledge in establishing proper controls for trials, which requires use of professional judgment – one of the very things from which EBM aims emancipate medicine (Worrall); and deploying post-positivist accounts of scientific knowledge as "situated knowledges" to challenge EBM's alleged objectivity and value-neutrality (Goldenberg 2006). In more recent years critiques have not only come from antagonists, but also from those seeking to clarify and strengthen EBM's position (Howick 2011; Gupta 2003; Parker 2005).

One form of critique that has enjoyed particular popularity among opponents since EBM's beginning is the charge that EBM is perniciously reductive. Medical professionals, philosophers, sociologists, and others have accused EBM of being a dehumanizing and colonizing force. A common suggestion within this particular line of criticism is that EBM's pernicious reductivism "erases" the selfhood both of patients and practitioners, treating them merely as instrumental cogs in a medical-industrial machine. In what follows I develop a measured defense of EBM against this particular line of critique. My objective is to show that the accusation that evidence-based medicine is perniciously reductive in dehumanizing and colonizing ways is wide of its mark, and that this form of critique is frequently tied to a certain mode of Continental philosophical engagement, the application of which tends to privilege theoretical commitments over facts on the ground in these contexts. One consequence is that these critics regularly fail to draw the distinction between evidence-based medicine and biomedicine, conflating the two as a result, and leveling attacks at EBM that are more aptly aimed at biomedicine. The reason for offering a measured defense, however, is that EBM nevertheless remains in a precarious state. For, while it is not perniciously reductive *per se*, it is not free from powerful, reductive influences from adjacent quarters, law and business in particular, but biomedicine as well. This means that EBM still has significant work to

do if it is to more fully live up to its emancipatory potential. Addressing the reductive influence of current legal structures and business-driven health management entities will require EBM advocates to engage matters of policy reform. Addressing the reductive influence of biomedicine, however, will require EBM advocates to articulate and defend an alternate interpretive framework for understanding health that avoids the pernicious reductivism of the biomedical model. In this connection, pragmatism proves to be a helpful ally.

Continental anti-foundationalist critiques of EBM

Evidence-based medicine advocates a shift away from the traditional emphasis on clinical expertise grounded in the mechanistic reasoning of pathophysiology, and toward clinical decision making grounded in evidence generated from randomized controlled trials (RCTs). On the basis of meta-analyses and systematic reviews of RCTs, EBM develops clinical guidelines designed to direct practice in conformity with the best available RCT evidence. Of course, this does not imply that RCTs are well suited to answering all our clinical questions. In addition, even with regard to those questions which RCTs are well suited to answer, it does not follow that the current best evidence for a given medical condition will be particularly decisive, and, moreover, when the current RCT evidence is strong, the problem of external validity remains – that is, the problem of understanding how evidence from “clean” trial populations screened for confounding factors applies to individual patients in routine practice, who typically present with a host of other health conditions, are already taking other treatments, and so on. Recognition of these challenges is in good part why EBM grounds its practice guidelines in what is called the evidence hierarchy. Systematic reviews and meta-analyses of RCTs represent the strongest form of evidence because they impartially assess and combine the findings of multiple, independent RCTs. A randomized controlled trial is stronger than either a prospective or retrospective cohort study, or a case study, because, unlike these

others, it controls for confounding factors. That is, by design, an RCT prospectively eliminates alternate plausible explanations for the effect under investigation. Clinical expertise, grounded in pathophysiologic rationale and physician experience, sits near the bottom of the evidence hierarchy for the reason that it is unsystematic and prone to misguided conclusions about *how* and *why* a therapy ought to work, based on what is taken to be established pathophysiologic knowledge.

Not only have the evidence hierarchy and practice guidelines not insulated EBM from attack, these features have become the primary targets of opponents who allege EBM is perniciously reductive. The most common charge against practice guidelines is that they result in so-called “cook book” medicine, in which physicians blindly apply a pre-given therapeutic “recipe” to patients according to their medical condition, with no concern for understanding or addressing any of the unique complexities of individual patients (Dopson, et al. 312). The evidence hierarchy, on the other hand, is alleged only to recognize as evidential those data that can be quantified, effectively reducing patients to mere statistics (Maier and Shibles 466). The attacks are pervasive enough that Mykhalovskiy & Weir have observed critics are “well versed at sounding the alarm bell at EBM’s potential erasure of the patient” (Mykhalovskiy & Weir 2003: 1067).

It is striking that these attacks come at a time when evidence-based medicine is perceived, as James Lind was centuries ago, to be challenging the prevailing tradition’s claims to authority, and calling instead for a new grounding in systematic, evenhanded, and unbiased clinical testing. So why is it that evidence-based medicine, arguably the most emancipated and potentially emancipating form of medicine yet to be practiced, has come under such heavy and sustained assault?

Critics who allege EBM is perniciously reductive in ways that erase the selfhood of patients can be seen as fitting into two camps – soft critics and strong critics (Thomas, forthcoming). Soft critics, who are more likely to be healthcare practitioners, tend to make more measured claims, grounded in empirical concerns about the concrete consequences of EBM implementation. By contrast, strong critics tend to make sweeping, aggressive claims with little concern for demonstrating any empirical support. Although soft critics lean on many of the same theoretical resources, my focus will be primarily on a subset of these strong critics, since they develop anti-foundationalist attacks explicitly indebted to Continental thinkers, like Heidegger, Foucault, Habermas, and Deleuze and Guattari, but also since they are overwhelmingly medically credentialed professionals. Their view, in short, is that EBM's evidence hierarchy and clinical guidelines, both of which are ultimately grounded in RCT research, represent a dehumanizing and colonizing force, territorializing the life-world of patients and practitioners alike.

The anti-foundationalist strategy typical of this particular form of critique involves first treating EBM as an extension of the modernist worldview, and then, on that basis, attacking EBM as an inherently domineering, efficiency driven, calculative-instrumental force colonizing the life-world, stripping patients (and clinicians) of their selfhood, and reducing them to gears in the medical-industrial machinery (Thomas, forthcoming). Laugharne is exemplary for the explicitness with which he presents this strategy. After asserting the traits of rationalism, materialism, and reductionism as modernism's defining characteristics, Laugharne contends these features entail modernism's denial of the individuality of people by "reducing them to their component parts (as in the emphasis on disease in medicine) or to a cog in an inhuman machine" (Laugharne, 1999: 641). On the basis of this assessment, Laugharne claims "[t]he movement to evidence-based medicine is clearly modernist" (Laugharne, 1999: 642).

Other critics claim that EBM maintains an "essentially Newtonian, mechanistic world view" that takes reality to be objective, or "absolutely independent of the human observer, and of the observer's intentions and observations" (Holmes, et al. 2006: 182) and accuse EBM of a "determination to reduce medicine to the physical and material" (Little 2002: 181).

These charges seem to stem in large part from a misunderstanding of EBM's basic commitment to prioritize RCT evidence over clinical expertise and patient narrative self-report (Parker 2005; Dopson et al. 2003; Cronje & Fullan 2003). The claim is that EBM recognizes as rational and "objective" only evidence gathered through RCTs, which, it is argued, is unduly narrow (Cartwright 2011; 2007). RCTs trade in population-level probabilities as the basis for superior clinical care, rather than personal knowledge of individual patients (Horwitz 320), and, because EBM's clinical guidelines are developed on the basis of the best available RCT evidence, a governing role is granted to "quantified 'scientific' evidence in the decision making process" of medical professionals (Cronje & Fullan 354). The influence of this reduction to quantified evidence is alleged to be so domineering that it leads inexorably to an "erasure" of the selfhood of both patients and practitioners in the clinical encounter.

According to Ståle Fredriksen (2003), EBM's prioritization of RCT evidence has led directly to an ever-expanding instrumental colonization of the lifeworld. Adapting Habermas's notion of systems colonization of the lifeworld, Fredriksen contends "the main colonising mechanism of modern medicine is situated in technological and instrumental bypass of communication," resulting in "a one-sided focus on purposive-rational problem solving" (Fredriksen 290). Instrumentation, in the form of RCTs, systematic reviews, and meta-analyses, has replaced communication because physicians' clinical expertise and patients' self-reports are considered by EBM to be less reliable sources of objective knowledge than RCTs.

Although Fredriksen does not make the argument that RCTs, systematic reviews, and meta-analyses have made physician-patient conversation entirely obsolete, this fear seems to be his concern. Moreover, EBM's instrumental technology allegedly "uncouples disease from the lifeworld;" according to Fredriksen, "[d]iseases gain a life of their own when they are viewed through a . . . Randomised Controlled Trial. They are uncoupled from the life of both patients and professionals and come into view only as objective facts, as . . . p-values" (Fredriksen 291). The effect is that "the evidence, however trifle, transforms us into instrumental slaves capable of doing nothing more than passively adapt to indisputable but unimportant facts" (Fredriksen 294).

Using a Foucauldian frame, Wall analyzes the specific power relations exerted by EBM on nursing in terms of systems of differentiation, degrees of rationalization, and forms of institutionalization (Wall 48). She contends that nursing is profoundly undercut by increasing pressure to adopt evidence-based protocols. The basic tension, as she sees it, is that EBM fails to support the primary goal of nursing – to provide clinical care – by failing to acknowledge the specific modes of knowing Wall contends are distinctive of nursing, and by grounding practice guidelines in quantified, population-based research, both of which serve to differentiate and devalue nurses and the role of nursing.

The care distinctive of nursing, according to Wall, involves an interpersonal and relational process leading to what she calls "personal knowing," which enables the nurse to "encounter the individual as a person, as a self" (Wall 45). Evidence-based practice discourse marginalizes this "personal knowing," rendering it invisible, in favor of "knowledge that supports the completion of technical (support) tasks by nurses" (Wall 47). Dopson supports this view at a more general level by suggesting "EBM is not simply about getting specific pieces of research evidence into practice. It is about creating a culture where practitioners automatically think in an evidence-based way every time they see a

new case" (Dopson, et al. 316; 318). The problem is not simply that evidence-based culture appears to abandon clinical *phronesis*, but that it does so through the insistence upon adherence to protocols "that treat all patients as essentially interchangeable" (Timmermans and Mauck 2005: 21; cf. Callahan 1999, Fredriksen 2007, and Walsh and Bowyer 2013). For Wall, this exertion of institutional power represents a clear form of Foucauldian "surveillance" in the nursing context, by which compliance with EBM principles is policed.

Whereas Wall suggests that compromising the caring endeavor of nursing jeopardizes patients, other critics influenced by Deleuze and Guattari, like Nick Fox, and Holmes et al., think patients are under attack independently of whatever indirect negative impact they might suffer through the surveillance of medical caregivers. Fox charges EBM with being guilty of the "territorialization of the subject." Following Deleuze and Guattari, he depicts "[t]erritorialization [as] an active process, whose agent may be human, animate, inanimate, or abstracted (society, God, 'they'), as may [be] the object of territorialization" (Fox 1999: 130). In this case the purported territorializing agent is evidence-based medicine, and the active process involves subjection to a system in which patients' lived bodily states are intrinsically meaningless, only gaining the possibility of significance in light of the subject's territorialization, that is, only once they signify in relation to the clinical organism, as opposed to the lived self (Fox 128). Meanwhile, Holmes and colleagues contend EBM is "dangerously reductive insofar as it negates the personal and interpersonal meaning of a world that is first and foremost a relational world, and not a fixed set of objects" (Holmes, et al. 181). Adapting Deleuze and Guattari's notion of "fascism," they assert that EBM represents a form of "microfascism" that "fetishises the object at the expense of the human subject, for whom this world has a vital significance and meaning" (Holmes, et al. 183).

So, for example, under this microfascistic process of territorialization, “it is not the self which experiences pain or attributes meaning to it, the self *is* the pain, the self is an effect of the meaning” designated by the territorializing system (Fox 128). This echoes the kind of uncoupling from the lifeworld alleged by Fredriksen. Here, however, the reduction of the meaning of disease and illness to evidence-based signifiers supposedly entails an evacuation of the very possibility of patients’ individual meaning-making with regard to their lived illness experiences. Moreover, to the extent that EBM is a dominant ideology, it allegedly excludes alternate forms of knowledge, thereby acting “as a fascist structure” (Holmes, et al. 181).

In a similarly strident tone, Maier and Shibles contend that EBM’s quantitative emphasis requires abstracting out all qualitative dimensions from the individual patient (Maier and Shibles 461), and that, as a result, “the EBM method dehumanizes the individual and patient,” rendering her as “just a number or statistic to be manipulated mathematically.” Thus, not only is the relationship between physician and patient allegedly “eliminated,” the evidence-based clinician “does not actually try to treat the patient, but the ailment” (Maier and Shibles 466-7).

In their article, “An Heideggerian Critique of Evidence-Based Medicine,” Walsh and Bowyer contend EBM is underpinned by calculative thinking that “expresses the same efficiency driven, reductive, and controlling agenda as all instrumental thinking in its efforts to regulate human life” (Walsh & Bowyer 39). Through this calculative-instrumental “bracketing off,” EBM reduces the patient to a physiological entity composed of discrete constituent parts interrelated by causal functions that can then be efficiently managed, effectively making the patient generic and interchangeable, “just another case to be managed” (Walsh and Bowyer 39). In other words, the patient as complex self enmeshed in her life-world context is thus “erased” in order to frame her problem in abstraction

and detachment from the matrix of habits, interpersonal relationships, and worldly involvements that make her the complex and unique self she is, and that constitute the contextual conditions for the meaning of her pain, suffering, and fear in her experience of illness. Thus, EBM loses sight of “the Being of the unique, suffering individual,” and it is “the disease that then becomes the focus of treatment, whilst the person herself vanishes” (Walsh & Bowyer 39). James Marcum echoes this last sentiment when he suggests that by “reducing the body to a collection of parts . . . the patient as a person vanishes before the physician’s gaze” (Marcum 313).

A measured defense of EBM

The prevalence of these critiques suggests that they have a certain appeal, at least to those operating from within Continental anti-foundationalist theoretical frameworks. Despite their appeal, however, they do not stand up to careful philosophical scrutiny. Thomas Reid wisely advised that “theory ought to stoop to fact, and not fact to theory” (Reid 138). Yet one consistent problem with these critiques is that they uncritically grant a privileged position to the theoretical framework being applied. Rather than treating theory as an operational tool in service of detecting and transforming problematic existential facts in meliorative directions, these critiques instead treat the theory as the relevant fact. Consider, for instance, what was noted at the outset, namely, that most of the critics addressed here are credentialed healthcare professionals.¹ In light of this fact, it is more than a little surprising that these opponents offer no empirical backing for their claims (Thomas, forthcoming). Instead, they are uniformly content to let their sweeping anti-foundational theoretical claims swing free of concrete, empirical support. This is deeply problematic. For at the end of the day, the charges made are empirical in nature: either it is

¹ Of the critics mentioned above, Laugharne, Horwitz, Welsby, Little, Fredriksen, Holmes and colleague Perron, Marcum, Maier, Wall and Walsh all have medical affiliations.

or is not the case that EBM “territorializes” subjects, or “erases” and “dehumanizes” patients in the manner alleged. Given the robust, unqualified nature of the allegations being made, one would expect no shortage of concrete examples from these critics’ own clinical experience illustrating just how, despite knowing and desiring better, and despite their very best efforts to resist, these critics were nevertheless powerless to avoid “erasing” the selfhood of those entrusted to their clinical care, or dehumanizing them by reducing them to mere statistical abstractions. Yet, not one such example is offered by a single one of these critics.² This is particularly ironic, given that the general nature of these critiques alleges that EBM is perniciously reductive. In their zeal to indict, these critics have themselves relied on an unduly reductive picture of EBM.

Wall is the one possible exception here. In part, this may be because Wall is better understood as a soft critic. But if we bracket the issue of how best to classify her critique, there are still concerns about the scope of her claims. Wall argues that EBM discourse and methodologies are at cross-purposes with the caring endeavor of the nursing profession. Yet, surely it is the case that the ability to determine with relative confidence which therapies are likely to be most effective for one’s patient contributes meaningfully to a nurse’s ability to fully care for that patient in the manner Wall describes as characteristic of nursing. Wall is on firmer ground when she argues that the influence exerted by evidence-based practice guidelines tends to reduce the role of nursing to “the completion of technical support tasks.” Here we have a highly plausible

claim, but it remains uncoupled from any concrete evidence that would warrant its scope beyond Wall’s own clinical experience. It is strange that Wall should decline to offer an example from firsthand experience that might strengthen the claim’s empirical basis even in that more limited, anecdotal context. One possible reason for this omission is that it turns out to be difficult to peg to EBM methodology and discourse a concrete instance of being “reduced to support task-work.”

This points to another difficulty facing Wall’s position, namely, that there are compelling plausible alternate explanations that give us reason to be skeptical of her assertions. For example, Wall fails to address the very strong economic forces known to drive the largely for-profit medical system, which demand quick clinical turn-over at the expense of meaningful interaction with patients. When business-driven health management entities are known not only to be prevalent but also to be increasingly influential in establishing parameters for the delivery of clinical care, why should we accept the theoretical claim that EBM discourse is the pernicious force at work here, short of compelling concrete evidence to that effect? Thus, it is not at all clear that Wall has met the burden of demonstrating that EBM methodology and discourse is incompatible with the nursing profession.

A second problem with this group of critiques is that they misidentify their target, conflating EBM with biomedicine. Dopson, et al., for example, claim “EBM is entirely consonant with – and a product of – the biomedical model and therefore holds a powerful attraction to doctors trained in that model,” and this is because of “EBM’s appeal to a biomedical scientific agenda” (Dopson, et al. 320-21; 319). Similarly, Fredriksen characterizes EBM as “the biomedical core” (Fredriksen 293). It is clear from this that critics have failed to understand the distinction between EBM and biomedicine.

² To be clear, I am not suggesting that these critics should provide empirical evidence in the form of *statistical data* showing that, indeed, implementation of EBM erases the selfhood of their patients (or of themselves as clinicians) in order to validate their claims. But if their claims are to amount to more than mere rhetorical-theoretical exercises, surely these practitioners should be able to provide supporting anecdotal evidence or case studies from their own clinical practices.

In my view, EBM is best understood as a method for generating evidence of an intervention's effectiveness and efficiency through clinical trials (whenever possible) that carefully control for confounders, identifying the best available evidence relevant to a particular case, and integrating it with practitioners' clinical expertise and patients' values and circumstances (Strauss et al., 2005, cited by Howick, 2011).³ A central feature of good evidence is that it rules out alternate plausible explanations for the effect under investigation; all other things being equal, if a rival explanation remains highly plausible even in the face of your own evidence, it is irrational to accept your evidence as support for the experimental hypothesis (Howick, 33). Well conducted RCTs exhibiting rigorous randomization, blinding, and concealment are currently the best means at our disposal for ruling out confounding explanations for a great number of clinical questions. An important, though often overlooked, upshot of EBM's methodological stance is that it effectively treats the question of the mechanism of causality as a "black box" (Howick, 125; see also Goldenberg 2009). To put this point differently, EBM does not concern itself with making inferences from purported knowledge of physiological mechanisms to claims that an intervention will produce a patient-relevant outcome; it forfeits answering the question of *how* an intervention works in favor of establishing *that* it

works (or does not work, as the case may be).⁴ Of course, our background knowledge, including our best pathophysiologic understanding, remains not only relevant, but also important in guiding the formation of our research questions. Properly understood, then, EBM's commitment to RCTs, and systematic reviews and meta-analyses of RCTs, is not crudely reductive. Although these methods deploy quantitative strategies, as I shall argue in more detail below, it does not follow from this that EBM reduces patients to "just a number or statistic to be manipulated mathematically." Instead, they reveal evidence of whether or not an intervention is effective, and under what conditions, leaving to the side questions about causal mechanisms.

By contrast, biomedicine is an approach to medicine that applies principles of biology and other natural sciences, particularly physiology, to clinical practice. The result is that biomedicine treats the human body as a complex machine comprised of interlocking systems of mechanisms. Gross bodily function is explained in terms of the function of more basic, lower level parts or systems, and, in recent years, increasingly in terms of the most basic known parts, our genes. Diagnoses of maladies and therapeutic prognoses alike are made on the basis of putative facts about the pathological and physiological mechanisms of disease and health (Howick 16). The now famous Cardiac Arrhythmia Suppression Trial (CAST) revealed the dangers of this over-reliance on mechanistic reasoning as evidence for which therapies will work (CAST Investigators 1989). Myocardial infarction often leaves the heart vulnerable to arrhythmias by damaging the muscle and electrical system, frequently resulting in a type of arrhythmia known as ventricular extra beats (VEBs). Epidemiological studies suggested a strong correlation between sudden cardiac deaths and arrhythmias, and so, on the basis of what was taken to be understood about the underlying

³ Upshur (2006) has accurately observed, "There are no shortage of those arguing for their preferred view of what EBM is, or is not" (p. 420). For example, it has been characterized variously as a new paradigm (EBM Working Group 1992), a social movement (Pope 2003), an epistemological framework (Tonelli 1998), and, as I advocate, a method (Howick 2011; Goldenberg 2009). Moreover, the textbook definition offered by EBM's founders has undergone multiple revisions. Despite this diversity of opinion being well recognized, the role it plays in fuelling the debate between EBM protagonists and antagonists has been largely unappreciated. In an unpublished paper, Sarah Wieten (2014) found that neither EBM proponents nor critics were particularly consistent in citing a clear definition of EBM. Resolving that issue, while urgent, lies well outside the purview of this paper.

⁴ For a careful and lucid discussion of mechanistic reasoning and EBM's position with respect to it, see Howick (2011) Chapter 10.

mechanisms involved, several drugs, developed and found to be successful in treating VEBs, began being prescribed in the belief that they would successfully reduce mortality rates among patients who had suffered myocardial infarction. In 1987, the CAST was initiated to test the efficacy of these drugs in reducing mortality among patients who had suffered myocardial infarction. The results upended all expectations supported by mechanistic reasoning, showing that the drugs increased, rather than reduced mortality, and that they had in fact killed more people every year than died in action during the whole Vietnam War (Howick 5). The results were so decisive the trial was discontinued by 1989.

The mechanistic reasoning central to biomedicine exhibits the kind of pernicious reductivism critics of EBM target insofar as it divides the human body, reducing it to its constituent parts, and simultaneously separating it from its socio-cultural context and from the lived self. It is committed to the “principle of separation,” which is “the notion that things are better understood in categories outside their context, divorced from related objects or persons,” according to Gaines and Davis-Floyd, who add that

[b]iomedical thinking is generally ratiocinative, that is, it progresses logically from phenomenon to phenomenon, presupposing their separateness. Biomedicine separates mind from body, the individual from component parts, the disease into constituent elements, the treatment into measurable segments, and patients from their social relationships and culture. (Gaines and Davis-Floyd 98)

Under the biomedical gaze, the organic, contextual, lived body is reduced to an abstract, ahistorical, and asocial assemblage of parts, processes, and systems.

This “atomistic trend” is reflected in biomedicine’s grounding philosophical framework, the biostatistical theory of health (BST). The BST is built around a fundamental distinction between theoretical health and practical health. This distinction holds that theoretical

health is the absence of disease, while practical health is the absence of treatable illness (Boorse 1977, 542; 1997, 11). Disease is defined as deviation from the species-typical biological design (Boorse 1975, 61; 1977, 543), characterized as “the typical hierarchy of interlocking functional systems” (Boorse 1977, 557; cf. 1997, 7), with goal-directedness at every level (except, importantly, the level of the unified organism as a whole), representing “contributions to the apical goals of survival and reproduction,” (Boorse 1975, 57-58).⁵ “Species-typicality” refers to functioning at or within the range of normal variation of the statistical mean for a particular function and age-sex reference class (Boorse 1977, 546). In short, according to the biostatistical theory, “health is normal functioning, where the normality is statistical and the functions biological” (Boorse 1977, 542).

This philosophical conception of health depicts the body as a fragmented conglomeration of independent mechanistic parts and processes. Christopher Boorse, the founder of the biostatistical theory, and still its most ardent philosophical defender, goes so far as to assert that isolated body parts are “independent centers of teleology,” comparing (in good Cartesian fashion) properly functioning human physiology to the “mechanical condition of an artifact,” such as the perfect mechanical condition of a 1965 Volkswagen (Boorse 1976, 80; 1975, 59). Organisms, rather than possessing a unifying integrity of their own, “are vast assemblages of systems and subsystems which, in most members of a species, work together harmoniously in such a way as to achieve a hierarchy of goals” (Boorse 1975, 57). Ranges of normal variation are determined through statistical analysis of quantitative measurements of a given physiological part, process, or system, taken from a

⁵ Peter Schwartz has rightly observed that the survival and reproduction requirement ought to have been offered in the disjunctive, rather than the conjunctive, since, to borrow his own example, the heart of a 70-year-old man contributes to his survival, but being beyond the age of reproduction does not any longer formally contribute to that goal (Schwartz 372).

supposedly representative sample of the human population.⁶ According to the biostatistical theory of health, in construing physiological functions in this way, scientists are “simply describing the organization of a species as they [find] it” (Boorse 1976, 74). Effectively, the BST ontologizes statistical ranges, and as a result, “proper functioning” turns out to have little to do with the integrity of the whole organism – since incapacitation may exist despite there being no statistical abnormalities at the level of independent parts – and it also has nothing directly to do with the functional ability of contextual, lived selves that is the object of such concern to the opponents of EBM addressed above.

An example of the gap between EBM and biomedicine is helpful at this juncture. Consider the German Acupuncture, or GERAC, trials. These evidence-based controlled trials demonstrated that sham acupuncture far outperformed the conventional therapeutic regimen of exercise, physiotherapy, and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) for persistent lower back pain, and that actual acupuncture outperformed sham acupuncture (Haake, et al.). Trial participants receiving sham acupuncture experienced a 17% improvement in response rate over conventional therapy, while those receiving actual acupuncture experienced a full 20% improvement in response rate over conventional therapy. The idea of a biomedical investigation into the therapeutic benefits of acupuncture is virtually unimaginable. Acupuncture involves the belief that a patient’s condition is related in some way to her *qi*, and that her *qi* may be manipulated through proper needling techniques by which her ailment may be improved. From

the biomedical perspective, belief in *qi*, belief that *qi* is influential in health states, and belief that *qi* can be manipulated through the insertion of needles is nonsensical, since it is flatly incommensurable with biomedicine’s modernist, objectivist, and mechanistic commitments. By contrast, from the perspective of EBM, the interesting question is whether acupuncture is demonstrably effective for certain kinds of ailments, not whether or not *qi* exists and may be manipulated to good effect.

It appears, then, that biomedicine, not EBM, exhibits the reductive features these critics target as pernicious and “self-erasing” in their attacks on EBM. Biomedicine, not EBM, represents modernist Cartesian metaphysics of mechanism and objectivism; and biomedicine, not EBM, is quantitatively reductive insofar as it reifies abstract statistical ranges as objective.

Biomedical realism and its pragmatist anti-foundationalist critique

In light of the foregoing analysis, it may be tempting to simply transfer these critiques from EBM to biomedicine. It is not obvious, however, that this strategy fairs any better. Not only is it unclear that they would fit cleanly, it is also unclear that the Continental anti-foundationalist strategies deployed in these critiques are well suited for purposes of reconstruction that might conduce to EBM’s emancipation. An alternate, and, I believe, preferable anti-foundationalist strategy is available in a Deweyan operational critique.

According to the Deweyan strategy, theories are operational, not ontological. That is, the value of a theory like the BST lies not in its being a mirror of nature accurately depicting some facet of the universe. That interpretation represents the “hypostatization of a method, an instrumentality, of inquiry . . . into something ontological” (Dewey 1938, 215). Rather a theory’s value lies in its facilitating the performance of operations on existential material by which problematic situations can be transformed into satisfactorily resolved situations.

⁶ In fact, these data used to establish the ranges of normal functioning are gathered overwhelming from the populations of developed nations. This means that the biomedical body is largely a reflection of the social and cultural conditions of Western, and westernized, peoples. The belief that ranges of statistically normal functioning defining the biomedical body are universal is an assumption that has not been satisfactorily investigated, much less adequately defended.

The Deweyan critique of biomedicine can be developed on two fronts. The first involves Dewey's view of propositions, concepts, and theories as instrumental and operational (or intermediary) rather than as reified entities; in other words, they are best understood as instrumental *means* for solving problems, not as representations of ontological *finalities*. The second involves his account of the proper relationship between qualitatively experienced problems and scientific inquiry which seeks to resolve them through quantitative methods. These two strands of Dewey's philosophy are, in fact, closely entwined.

In his 1938 *Logic*, Dewey claims "[t]he ontological hypostatization of a method, an instrumentality, of inquiry used to effect objective consequences, into something ontological, is the source of the mechanistic metaphysics of 'reality'" (Dewey 1938, 215). Somers calls this mistake "theoretical realism," explaining that it "attributes ontological truth to the theoretical phenomenon (e.g., the theory of electrons or the theory of market equilibrium)" (Somers 745). This very problem is characteristic of current biomedicine in general, and of the BST in particular; I refer to it as *biomedical realism*. We see this clearly in the BST's central distinction between theoretical and practical health, in which theoretical health is ontologically primary; only those lived incapacities grounded in abnormal statistical deviations are recognized as legitimate or "real."

Dewey's focus on the hypostatization of "methods" or "instrumentalities of inquiry" is significant here. On this view, quantitative methods are not intrinsically pernicious. Indeed, Dewey evenhandedly admonishes both those who "deplore the reduction by the scientist of all materials to numerical terms on the ground that it seems to them to destroy all value which is qualitative," and those who "insist that every subject matter must be reduced to numerical terms" of being guilty of the same logical error of taking propositions as "ultimate and complete, when, in fact, they are intermediate and instrumental" (Dewey 1938, 205-6). One clear value of a

quantitative approach is that it "renders things qualitatively unlike ... comparable with one another, in such ways that controlled interchanges are capable of being brought about" (Dewey 1938, 215).

What Dewey means by "intermediate" and "instrumental" in this context is that propositions are significant only insofar as they serve as means to the resolution of some otherwise indeterminate, troubling situation; their contents "are determined with reference to an intended future issue" rather than being self-determined or self-sufficient (Dewey 1938, 164). In other words, quantitative propositions are not transcripts of nature; they are, instead, tools enabling "controlled interchanges" between qualitatively disparate things. Quantitative reductions are a way of treating qualitatively dissimilar objects in terms "that are *logical*, rather than directly *ontological*" (Dewey 1938, 482; 206, emphasis added).⁷ Thus, the significance of quantitative objects derives not from those objects being final objects of inquiry, settled ontological realities, or by being somehow intrinsically "objective," but rather from their intermediary capacity to support ongoing controlled operations eventuating in satisfactorily resolved existential situations.

Remarkably, the example Dewey chooses to help make this general point about the intermediary and operational nature of propositions and theories is the proposition, *I am seriously ill*.

In the context indicated, the proposition is without point if taken to be final and complete. Its logical force consists in its potential connection with a future situation. . . . It formulates the possible operation which, if formed, will aid in existential production of a future situation different *in quality and significance* from that which will exist if the

⁷ "Constructive development of science has taken place through treating the material of the perceived world in terms of properties that accrue to natural objects on the ground of their function in promoted and controlled processes of systematic inquiry; that is, *in terms of properties that are logical, rather than directly ontological*" (1938: 482; emphasis mine).

indicated action is not taken. The same considerations will be found to apply to declarative propositions made by the attending physician about the facts which locate and disclose the illness on the one hand, and the course of action he prescribes for dealing with the illness on the other. (Dewey 1938, 164)

The point here is that a diagnosis of statistically abnormal deviation in, let us say, blood glucose level is valuable not because it discloses the presence of a malicious ontological entity, call it “diabetes,” but instead because it serves the intermediary function of suggesting operations to be performed to alleviate both the potential and actual lived ills that threaten the individual in question, and to prevent the consequences for diminished personal quality and significance of living that are associated with high blood glucose levels. Translation of existential data into quantitative expressions proves helpful in effecting the transformation of the existential situation, but even quantitative expressions representing the satisfactorily transformed situation cannot be taken as the content of the desired outcome, for that, too, is existential-qualitative in nature. Apart from guiding us toward a desirable qualitative-significant experience, the quantitative data are empty; their significance is not carried on their face. To frame the point differently, quantitative data, treated pragmatically, operate as principles. The same holds for our working body of background knowledge. This means that, like principles, quantitative data function as experimental hypotheses guiding our inquiries (Dewey 1922, 164-166).

At this juncture it is worth noting that EBM, too, is subject to this operational critique; indeed, applying it is vital to the project of emancipating EBM from perniciously reductive influences. Goldenberg has defended EBM against charges of wholesale “objectivism,” arguing that, although the evidence hierarchy exhibits objectivist tendencies, EBM nevertheless also demonstrates important pragmatist “allegiances,” particularly in its emphasis on RCT methodology. According to Goldenberg’s view, “problem

solving is a leitmotif for pragmatism, and concrete problem solving and the advancement of knowledge is strongly held to be best advanced through a reflexive process where our basic commitments can be scrutinized and revised in light of new findings” (Goledneberg 2009, 173). Understood in this light, EBM’s emphasis on RCTs embodies pragmatic commitments to methods of inquiry that prioritize ongoing experimental investigation over codified thinking from the past. Moreover, the randomized controlled trial appears better than its rivals at promoting “the open inquiry and democratism of empirical science” as well as exhibiting a welcome openness to revision of “even well-established views about treatment efficacy” (Goldenberg 2009, 172). On the other side, Goldenberg contends that the evidence hierarchy reflects a contrary commitment to an uncritically dogmatic “objectivism.” While RCTs reflect the bottom-up, open-ended, and ad-hoc nature of pragmatic inquiry, by contrast, the evidence hierarchy is inflexible, rule-based, and reflects objectivist ontology. However, because RCTs feature prominently in the evidence hierarchy, it turns out that they have a kind of dual-citizenship: as a method of experimental inquiry, they embody pragmatist values; as a feature of the evidence hierarchy, they represent a component of objectivist ontology. This analysis has a lot going for it, but I fail to see why pragmatists should be content to leave the matter where Goldenberg does when the hierarchy itself can, and *should*, be interpreted pragmatically. Even if EBM’s advocates (and, for that matter, its opponents) take the hierarchy to be rigid and “objective,” pragmatists need not accept this bit of dogma. If EBM is to be emancipated from objectivist elements, the view which construes the evidence hierarchy as a set of inflexible rules must be abandoned, and instead, the “hierarchy” must be treated pragmatically – that is, operationally – as a set of tested and contextually reliable, but nevertheless fallible, guiding hypotheses, the merits of which must continually answer to the demands of lived experience.

This brings us to the second prong of the Deweyan critique of biomedicine. Statistical ranges of normality are not ontological finalities, but rather operational intermediaries of inquiry into a given problematic existential situation. Properly understood, then, all such instruments of inquiry, be they propositions, concepts, or theories, are “controlled by the problem set by some qualitative situation, as one limit, and the objective consequence of a resolved situation as the other limit” (Dewey 1938, 210). Because biomedicine grants ontological primacy to statistical ranges of normality, it is possible under that framework for one to be seriously “diseased” (i.e., to have highly abnormal statistical deviations) yet experience no qualitative-existential disruption; it is also possible for one to experience severe qualitative-existential disruption without having any statistical abnormalities, and therefore without being either “diseased” or “ill.” The latter scenario is the more troubling of the two. Biomedicine demands ontological grounding in some physiologically relevant statistical abnormality before it can recognize an actual lived incapacitation as a valid medical fact. Thus, the biomedical practitioner confronted with just such a scenario may view her patient’s report with skepticism. Of course nothing about such a situation forecloses the possibility of a compassionate clinical interaction. Nevertheless, if the practitioner’s interpretive framework prioritizes ontologized statistical values rather than the patient’s existential situation, we can expect that theoretical commitment to be reflected in the kinds of clinical hypotheses that strike the practitioner as live, and therefore as worth pursuing.

Statistical ranges of normality, like all other quantitative values, gain their meaning only as they are first made relevant by some experienced qualitative-existential problem, and insofar as they aid in bringing about the transformation of a new, ameliorated qualitative situation by suggesting operations to perform. The framing and solving of a problem that interferes with living healthily, potentially obstructs one’s future, and is

therefore the basis of the proposition, “I am seriously ill,” is not reducible to abnormal statistical deviations, though those abstractions may be extremely useful intermediaries in the process of ameliorating the situation. It requires a much fuller understanding of individuals’ systems of meaningfulness and ongoing narrative self-developments in relation to their social and somatic environmental engagements, future aspirations, life purposes, and so on.

This suggests that there is a need for an alternate theoretical framework for conceiving health. If we deploy ranges of statistically normal functioning as operational intermediaries instead of treating them as the content of our conception of health, how then is health to be conceived, in light of the persistent worries about the potential erasure of selfhood and the ontologization of statistical ranges? I shall address this concern briefly in conclusion.

Conclusion:

Why EBM needs an alternate interpretive framework

My defense of EBM against its Continental anti-foundational critics has been a measured one; I’ve made the case that EBM is not *inherently* perniciously reductive, and that critics making this allegation have misidentified their true target: biomedicine. In doing so, I have been careful to avoid claiming that EBM is not guilty of pernicious reductivism *at all*. I have contended that EBM is a method. Like any method, it is subject to better and worse applications, as well as the pressure of external forces that may drive evidence-based practice toward reductive expressions. Two external sources that exert a reductive influence on evidence-based practice are business-driven health management bodies, and law. I have already noted how the first of these exerts a reductive influence in clinical practice. The profit motive of these management entities requires medical professionals to see patients at a brisk pace; more patients results in more billable expenses and an enhanced bottom line for executives and shareholders. As for the reductive influence of the law, some evidence-

based practitioners may fear becoming the target of legal action if, in trying to strike a balance between strict adherence to evidence-based guidelines and the integration of patient values and circumstances, they stray from the former in deference to the latter, only to have undesirable outcomes result (Barratt 410).

More fundamental, arguably, than the reductive influence of either business or law is the influence exerted by the biomedical conception of health. Given its pervasiveness and the current lack of a viable alternate interpretive framework for conceiving health, it is not clear what choice EBM practitioners have except to fall back on the prevailing biomedical conception. To the extent that this is the case, it is likely that the biomedical conception of health exerts a reductive influence on evidence-based clinical interactions. This is an important question for future research.

It seems, therefore, that if EBM is to recover its emancipatory calling, it would do well to develop an interpretive framework for health consistent with its more expansive, emancipatory enterprise. What is needed is an interpretive framework capable of redeploying quantitative strategies as the operational tools they are, rather than reifying them as fixed ontological entities or inflexible rules of practice, while at the same time widening the scope of health beyond mere physiological mechanisms to the embodied, social self. Otherwise, EBM effectively surrenders the interpretive field to the biomedical model, leaving itself open to that model's reductive influence and to allegations of pernicious reductivism. In the endeavor to recover EBM's emancipatory power, pragmatism – particularly the work of Mead and Dewey – offers rich and promising resources. Articulating that case fully cannot be accomplished here. Nonetheless, it is worth offering a suggestive sketch.

A profitable place to begin is by reframing health as a Deweyan ideal of *living healthily* that takes as its proper object the embodied social self (Dewey 1920, 167). For

Dewey, ideals are generalized ends-in-view, that is, intelligent, imaginative projections of the best possibilities of the present as we currently find it (Dewey 1934, 44; 49-50). This means ideals are dynamic, not static; they are rooted in the real, or “something which exists;” and yet, while rooted in existing things, they are not identical to those things, but rather are projections or hypotheses of the tendency and movement of the real (Thomas 2014, 154). In other words, Dewey treats ideals operationally; their value lies in their guiding function. For him, there is an “active relation between ideal and actual,” such that ideals fruitfully guide experience, but experience serves as a check and balance on the ideal (Dewey 1934, 51). Because experience is so central here, an “active” ideal of living healthily requires replacing the abstract, reduced, fragmented, ahistorical, and asocial biomedical body with the organic, dynamic, embodied social self. Mead's theory of selfhood offers potentially rich resources in this connection, since his construal of selfhood has the dual advantages of remaining sufficiently general, and of being grounded in, but not reducible to, biology. Moreover, insofar as his view explains selfhood as fundamentally social, Mead's theory holds out the additional promise of possessing explanatory power with regard to the relation between social conditions and individual's abilities to live healthily.

If successful, such a reconstruction of the ideal of health would at least reorient our understanding of biomedical data operationally, while simultaneously offering EBM a valuable and needed interpretive framework consistent both with its nonreductive research agenda (and its results), and its broader emancipatory calling. Of course it would leave untouched the reductive pressure of external forces, like business and law, but those concerns are matters that will need to be addressed through intelligent policy, and in any case, their pernicious influence is not rightly laid at EBM's door. Other criticisms will also still need to be addressed. There remains a lingering worry that EBM has not

removed the uncritical reliance on authority characteristic of medical history, but has only shifted it to the sources of evidence appraisal, such as Cochrane reviews. It is another fair criticism of EBM to suggest that EBM has not yet adequately developed apt methods for integrating patient values and circumstances. But it does not follow even from this that EBM “territorializes” patients’ subjectivity, or “erases” their selfhood; to the contrary, it suggests that EBM takes selfhood seriously. EBM has an impressive record of research suggesting, in a multitude of ways, that selfhood exerts an important influence on living healthily (Thomas, forthcoming). It is difficult to reconcile the contention that EBM represents a self-erasing attack on patients with this expanding body of research. EBM has done more concretely than most disciplines to point toward the need for an expansive, rather than a reductive conception of health. Biomedicine, by contrast, has shown no genuine interest in such questions, precisely because its theoretical commitments foreclose the possibility that selfhood *could* be influential on human health (and perhaps even that selfhood exists at all).

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**UNDERSTANDING EXPERIENCE:
LANGUAGE, INFERENCE, AND JUDGMENT**

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ABSTRACT: Philosophers have used broad strokes to identify a significant trait of the communicative aspect of experience. Benjamin spoke of language, Dewey of inference, and Buchler of judgment. This paper discusses what each meant, why each addressed the question as he did, and in the end which is preferable. The argument is made that Benjamin and Dewey exaggerated the role of language and inference respectively, and that among the three the concept of judgment best captures the character of the manipulative and communicative nature of experience. Dewey was right that the traditional approach to experience, wherein sensory perception is passively received and then acted upon by the mind, is unacceptable, but his alternative view that inference is built into experience is also not adequate. The primary reason for this conclusion is that much of our experience, though manipulative and communicative, is characterized not by inference but by other forms of judgment and query.

When attempting to delineate or discriminate a feature of something that has not been noticed before, philosophers have few good choices.¹ We can, and sometimes do, invent a term, or use an obscure term, to refer to the newly designated feature. Peirce, Whitehead and Buchler all did this, as did Heidegger and many others. If we do not see the need or do not wish to create a neologism, we may use an already familiar term in a new way, which has also been done many times. Either way we are subject to criticism. If we use a neologism or draw on an unfamiliar linguistic past we may be accused of obscurantism and failing to be sufficiently clear to be able to speak in straightforward language. If we stretch terms to accommodate new meanings we may be accused of misleading our readers and creating unnecessary confusion.

¹ This paper is a slightly revised version of a paper of the same title that was presented at the conference Emancipation: Challenges at the Intersection of European and American Philosophy, held at Fordham University in February, 2015. I am grateful to those who heard the presentation and made significant comments and criticisms, to the reader of the paper for this journal, and to the editor of this issue of the journal.

In what follows I am interested in considering three instances of the latter phenomenon, which is to say three cases in which philosophers have used familiar terms in ways that may be insightful but may also be guilty of confusing and misleading us. I am specifically interested in how Walter Benjamin, John Dewey, and Justus Buchler approached the manipulative and communicative character of experience, and how we might evaluate and benefit in our own work from what they offered. In Benjamin's case the term in question is "language", for Dewey it is "inference", and for Buchler it is "judgment".

In all three cases the general issue is how we are to understand that aspect of experience in or through which we manipulate our environment or our world. To put it this way is to speak more in the categories of Dewey and Buchler than Benjamin, though I think that Benjamin might have been able to agree with the point. In his 1916 essay "On Language as Such" he argues that everything is characterized by language, and language is the way anything and everything communicates itself or its nature, "communication in words being only a particular case of human language..."² Benjamin goes quite a bit further, though, and says that everything, animate and inanimate, partakes of language insofar as everything communicates its "mental contents". To refer to inanimate things as possessing and communicating mental contents is already quite clearly using existing terms in very much new ways. Language in this new meaning is the communicative activity or action of all entities insofar as they may have meaning in any given context. In this respect language, in Benjamin's treatment, is not a way of assimilating the world but, so to speak, of interjecting oneself into it; it is, in that it is an instance of communication by or to us, an aspect of the manipulative rather than the assimilative aspect of experience.

² Walter Benjamin, "On Language as Such", in *Selected Writings Volume 1, 1913 – 1926*, eds. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996, pp. 62 – 74; see p. 62.

In Benjamin's treatment, all mental being, as he puts it, has a component that is communicable, which he refers to as its "linguistic being", and it is this linguistic being of all entities that is communicated. It is not, however, communicated by language, he says, but rather "in" language, where the force of the word "in" is to say that language and linguistic meaning are identical. Language, in other words, is the linguistic meaning, or that which is communicable, in any entity. In the case of human being, language is that through which we communicate our linguistic being, and we do so, which is to say human language does so, through naming. Human language functions through naming, though evidently the languages of other entities do not. That other entities communicate to us – Benjamin mentions a mountain, or a fox – is clear enough because we would not be able to name them if they were not meaningfully available to us, and that availability is their communication, their language. So naming, or human language, is the embodiment we may say of a meaningful relation between people and our world; through it and through the language of all things we discriminate entities and enter into meaningful, functional relations with them.³

Benjamin is careful to distance his approach to language from a view of language as instrumental, or as a tool. He insists that neither we nor anything else communicate by or with language, but through or in it. So we may say that he has a relational and even transactional understanding of language as the communication of the mental or linguistic being of anything such that meaningful interaction is possible, but his is decidedly not a pragmatist view in that he rejects the idea of language as a tool or means of communication. In this regard we may say that Benjamin has a way, in his conception of language, of understanding how in experience we engage our world meaningfully that has similarities and differences with another approach to this question, I have in mind Dewey's, that appeared within a few years of Benjamin having written his. In

Dewey's case the relevant concept is not language, however, but inference.

In fact we will introduce here two other conceptions, namely Dewey's use of the term "inference" and Buchler's recasting of the concept of "judgment". In that both are attempts to point out how we meaningfully manipulate elements of our experience they make common cause with Benjamin's understanding of language, and the similarities and differences are instructive. We need first to explicate Dewey's and Buchler's approaches and then undertake at least a brief analysis and evaluation.

There is a disagreement in the history of the pragmatic naturalist conception of experience over how best to understand the manipulative aspect of experience, and by implication how best to understand its creative character. The disagreement is expressed most clearly in the differences between the respective approaches to this question by Dewey and Buchler. We will describe the difference and consider which approach among Benjamin, Dewey and Buchler's, if any, is sufficient to meet the goal of a fruitful understanding of experience and its place in our lives.

Unlike in relation to Benjamin, the differences between Dewey and Buchler concerning experience are a family disagreement. Buchler was standing on Dewey's shoulders, and inherited from him much of the general pragmatic naturalist approach to experience by contrast with the traditional empiricist or Kantian alternatives. Dewey and Buchler share the view that experience is fully an aspect of nature, moreover that it is the interaction of an individual with her environment, most broadly understood. They agree also that the traditional understanding of experience wherein sense data, or anything else, is "given", and then worked on or processed by the mind, is faulty and cannot issue in an adequate understanding of human being and our relations with the world. Furthermore, Dewey and Buchler both draw the distinction between the

³ *ibid.* p. 64.

assimilative and manipulative aspects of experience, though they do so at different levels of generality, in the sense that we both undergo and undertake in our ongoing interaction with our environments.

At this point they begin to diverge. Dewey introduces the distinction between primary and secondary experience, wherein primary experience is a more assimilative, immediate, non-reflective undergoing while secondary experience is a more manipulative, refined, articulated experience that contributes to an understanding of primary experience. The refinement and articulation that characterizes secondary experience is achieved, Dewey thought, through inquiry, and inquiry is the primary form of the active, manipulative aspect of experience. Inquiry is the more or less systematic application of intelligent, rational reflection on primary experience such that primary experience is rendered coherent and meaningful. Inquiry in this sense is as ubiquitous in experience as is meaning and knowledge. Nature, as the arena in and through which experience takes place, is imbued with meaning because inquiry is the way human beings engage their world and resolve the problems we face. For this reason Dewey said that when we understand experience properly we see that it "is full of inference", and that "there is, apparently, no conscious experience without inference; reflection is native and constant."⁴

Buchler's approach is significantly different. Like Dewey, as we have said, Buchler recognizes that in experience we both assimilate and manipulate. Though he is not inclined to make Dewey's distinction between primary and secondary experience, basically because he does not think that any sense can be given to the idea of immediacy, he is interested, like Dewey, in considering carefully the manipulative aspect of experience, as long as it is not radically separated from the assimilative, because it is in our manipulation of elements of our

environment that the creative character of our experience occurs. Here, though, is the critical difference between Buchler and Dewey: if for Dewey the manipulative aspect of experience is characterized above all by inquiry and inference, for Buchler the relevant concept is judgment.

This is not just a difference in words, or at least it appears not to be merely a difference in words if we take Dewey and Buchler at their word with respect to the language and concepts they use. In other words, if we assume that when Dewey talks about inquiry he means in fact the process that he painstakingly describes and explores in many of his works over many years; and if we assume that when he speaks of inference he means that function within inquiry whereby we move reasonably from one proposition to another, whether that specific form of reason is deductive, inductive, or abductive, then it is fair to say that Dewey wishes reason, inquiry, and inference to characterize the manipulative aspect of experience to a degree that Buchler thinks is far too extensive. From Buchler's point of view, the manipulative aspect of experience can take several forms, only one subset of which can appropriately be described as inquiry and therefore as inferential. In Buchler's opinion, then, Dewey misses too much of the manipulative and productive character of experience by focusing as he does on inquiry and inference.⁵

⁴ John Dewey, "The Need for a Recovery of Philosophy", *Middle Works*, Volume 10, Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1980 pp. 3-48; see p. 6.

⁵ Justus Buchler, *Nature and Judgment*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1955, pp. 103-105. Though there is relatively little secondary work on Buchler, there has been some, and some of that points to this feature of Buchler's relation to Dewey, i.e. his disagreement with Dewey's emphasis on inference and inquiry as too restrictive an approach to experience. Among the secondary literature where the point is made one might look to Richard Bernstein, "Buchler's Metaphysics", *The Review of Metaphysics*, 74:22, 1967, pp. 751-770, reprinted in Armen Marsoobian, Kathleen Wallace, and Robert S. Corrington (1991) *Nature's Perspectives: Prospects for Ordinal Metaphysics*, Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1991, pp. 29-47.; Robert G. Olsen, "Two Questions on the Definition of Man's Status in Nature" *The Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. LVI, No. 5,

Buchler's theory of judgment articulates an alternative, more finely grained account of the manipulative aspect of experience. In so far as in experience people manipulate elements of our environment, we are producing, which is to say that the manipulative aspect of experience issues in products. The process through which we produce in experience is what Buchler called judgment.⁶ This can be a misleading term because it has traditionally had meanings, several of them, that are much narrower than the sense in which Buchler uses it. His idea, basically, is that when we engage or interact with our environment such that we manipulate some of its elements we are effectively appraising the available possibilities and selecting from among any number of them. This selection is not necessarily a conscious process, but simply indicates that in any form of manipulation there are typically several possible processes that can be undertaken and products that can result, and in manipulating in one way rather than others we are appraising and 'selecting' from among those possibilities, and to that extent our manipulation is judgment.

In a nutshell, there are three modes of judgment: assertive, exhibitivite, and active. When we judge in the assertive mode we make a claim in some propositional

way, usually though not necessarily linguistic. Assertive judgments state something, something that can typically be assigned truth-value. The propositions that constitute the writings in most academic disciplines, for example, are assertive judgments, as are the typical contents of journalism, in general works of non-fiction, and much of normal discourse. Mathematical and logical propositions are also assertive judgments, though they are not expressed linguistically. Assertive judgments tend to issue in products that are assertions of which we can usually say they are true or false in a fairly standard sense of the term.

Exhibitivite judgment differs in that when we judge exhibitivite we do not say something, rather we show something. In judging exhibitivite we do not assert but rather shape; we show rather than state. And the judgment is the shaping or showing. It is not a mental event in which we think about or in any way evaluate the showing; rather it is the showing itself. We may and often do think about and evaluate our exhibitivite judgments, our showings, and propositions we may frame in those rational instances are themselves assertive judgments. The showings or shapings themselves are exhibitivite judgments. The primary and more obvious examples of exhibitivite judgments are works of art. A painting, or a piece of music, or a dance, is an exhibitivite judgment. It demonstrates or portrays something. An exhibitivite product may be no less meaningful, and we may add cognitive, than the assertive product despite the fact that it is in no way propositional. We should add that among examples of exhibitivite judgments we need to include works of literature, both prose and poetry. These are judgments in which language is the medium for exhibitivite rather than assertive judgment. This is an important point because it enables us to avoid a good bit of confusion concerning how to understand the linguistic judgments in fiction and poetry. Some philosophers have been confused about this because they have assumed that uses of language are generally propositional, and then

February 26, 1959, pp. 208-214.; Beth J. Singer, "Introduction: The Philosophy of Justus Buchler", *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*, Special Issue on the Philosophy of Justus Buchler, Special Editors Beth J. Singer and Joseph G. Grassi, 1976, pp. 3-31.; and Beth J. Singer, *Ordinal Naturalism: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Justus Buchler*, Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell University Press, 1983, see pp 82ff.

⁶ To be more precise, Buchler's theory of judgment is one aspect of his broader theory of 'proception', which receives fairly thorough articulation in Justus Buchler, *Toward a General Theory of Human Judgment*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1951, and Buchler, *Nature and Judgment*, op. cit. The theory of proception is Buchler's way of dealing with what is traditionally meant by the term experience, though without what he thought were the inadequacies and conceptual confusions in the various ways experience has traditionally been understood. For our purposes we have continued to talk of experience rather than proception in order to minimize new and potentially puzzling terminology.

they have to come to terms with what they take to be the propositions that constitute fiction or poetry and their presumed truth-value. Much of the difficulty here fades away when we realize that the language in literature is not propositional at all because the judgments are not assertive but exhibitiv.

The third form of judgment is active, wherein it is actions themselves that are the products rather than any sayings or showings. When we hammer a nail or hit a golf ball or walk down the street we are judging actively. As in the cases of the other modes of judgment, in each such case there are alternative actions that might have taken place, and in acting as we do we appraise the possibilities and in the action itself select one possibility over others. Such actions, therefore, are judgments no less than other sorts of selections.

In many products in our experience we judge in more than one mode. A dance is an obvious example of a judgment that is both exhibitiv and active. Similarly, a piece of philosophy may be both assertive and exhibitiv, for example a work of Plato or Emerson that has both propositional and literary significance, or the conceptual structure of the Hegelian architectonic, which is as much exhibitiv recommendation as asserted proposals. The modes of judgment describe aspects of our productive experience rather than sharp categories into which we must fit experience.

We must also understand that some judgments, though not all, are exploratory. When I go for a walk I am judging actively, and perhaps even acting methodically if my walk is part of an effort to stay in shape or to lose weight, though there need not be anything exploratory about it. But when the astronomer points her telescope in a specific direction the active judgment is taking place within a broader process of exploration, in such a case typically systematic, methodic exploration. We sometimes, in other words, wish to explore or investigate something, and when we judge in the context of such exploration we engage in what Buchler

called query. This is an important concept for us because as we develop it the differences between Buchler and Dewey's understanding will become clearer. Sometimes exploratory judgment is assertive, but not always. When the physicist or philosopher or journalist puts a question to himself, the answer is likely to be a proposition with truth-value in the standard sense, which is to say an assertive judgment. The process of arriving at that judgment is a specific form of query that Buchler calls inquiry. Here he would be more or less in agreement with Dewey in that he understands inquiry as a rational process of gathering information and drawing inferences. He and Dewey both understood of course that there are many different ways that this happens, and that the physicist does it differently from the philosopher or the journalist, but they are all engaging in the process of drawing inferences and articulating propositions.

Dewey seems to think that all forms of exploration are forms of inquiry, which presumably is the reason he said, "there is no conscious experience without inference." Buchler, by contrast, says that inquiry and its inferential processes are only one form of query, and the reason he thought so is that some forms of exploration are not rational or inferential at all, but rather exhibitiv or active. An example of the sort of thing he had in mind is when a painter sets a problem to be resolved on the canvas, or when a student of music composition is assigned a problem in Baroque counterpoint. The products that result from these sorts of explorations are not assertions, nor is the process of exploration itself a matter of drawing inferences, yet the processes are indeed exploratory in that they are methodically resolving problems. This suggests that there is query in the sense of methodic exploration that is not inquiry.

So here we have the three different, though more or less overlapping, accounts of the manipulative, creative aspect of experience: in Benjamin's case the issue is communication and an understanding of language in which all meaning, communication and thereby

creativity in experience occurs; for Dewey it is inquiry that describes the creative aspect of experience because all reflective, secondary experience is a matter of inferential problem solving; for Buchler judgment describes the creative aspect of experience because not all forms of query are inferential, so a broader notion than inquiry is necessary if we are to understand experience adequately. How, we now ask, may we deal with these differences?

Perhaps the first question to ask is what is at stake in the disagreement? If we decide that nothing really turns on the differences then in a Jamesian spirit we may conclude that there are no relevant disagreements. But if we can see differences in application then we will have grounds for some sort of pragmatic valuation of the alternatives. And of course we should keep in mind the possibility that perhaps yet another alternative would be preferable.

So are there any differences in application? On the face of it, what is at stake here is our understanding of experience generally, and more specifically our understanding of the manipulative side of experience. At a less general level, also at stake is our conception of the place of communication, inquiry and rationality in experience, and by further implication our conceptions of knowledge and truth, and how knowledge and truth are related to rationality, science, language, and art. So, it would appear, there is a great deal at stake.

Benjamin's approach has features in common with Dewey and Buchler's. Most obviously, all three are very much interested in communication. Like Benjamin, Buchler regards communication to be at the heart of any conception of human being and experience, and he devotes a chapter in *Toward a General Theory of Human Judgment* to an understanding of communication. Dewey is equally sensitive to the centrality of communication, and all three hold, not surprisingly, that language must be understood if we are to have a plausible conception of communication and therefore of experience.

The primary difference among them is also what distinguishes the naturalism or pragmatic naturalism of Dewey and Buchler from the broader philosophical commitments of Benjamin, which at least at the time of his essay on language was a kind of mysticism. Perhaps the point can best be made by suggesting that in his conception of language Benjamin reads nature anthropomorphically by suggesting that the way all entities embody their potential meanings is through a feature of existence, if we may speak this way, that is properly attributable to human being. Benjamin explicitly denies this anthropomorphical reading, though I do not see any other available interpretation.⁷ In this respect Benjamin has more in common with Whitehead than he does with Dewey or Buchler. Whitehead read nature generally, in particular in his conceptions of actual occasions and entities, through the prism of experience, rather like Benjamin's attribution of communication and language to all natural entities. Neither Dewey nor Buchler would do this, and their approaches are the stronger for avoiding this sort of anthropomorphism. So while Benjamin treats the communicative and meaningful aspects of experience as characteristic of all natural entities, both Dewey and Buchler attempt to understand how the meaningful, communicative, manipulative aspect of experience contributes to what it is to be human. Both, like Benjamin, are interested in language as an aspect of the process, but neither will read language into nature as a trait of all natural entities.

There remain, however, important differences between Dewey and Buchler. We need first to keep in mind, as we mentioned earlier, that they both wish to distance themselves from the traditional empiricist and rationalist conceptions of experience, and the Kantian as well. One of the failures of those traditions they would have said is that each in its own way was a philosophy of the given, in which experience is understood as operation performed on sense data. Dewey's opposition to this

⁷ See Benjamin op. cit, p. 64.

approach to experience is in fact one of the reasons he wants to say that inference is not a mental act performed on something given, but reaches all the way down in experience. Buchler agrees with Dewey's misgivings about the tradition, but not with his solution. Another of the failures of the traditional approaches is that they construed experience almost solely in its relation to knowledge, or more precisely as the more or less reliable vehicle of knowledge.

Buchler thought, however, that despite Dewey's desire to develop an approach to experience that moves beyond the traditional views, he nonetheless remained too much captive of them. Specifically, Buchler thought that Dewey was too much predisposed to privilege reason in experience over other modes of methodic utterance and judgment. To see what he means we can look at the passage in "The Need for a Recovery of Philosophy" in which Dewey says that, to paraphrase, conscious experience is infused with inference. The general context in the first few pages of the essay is to distinguish the conception of experience Dewey prefers from the traditional view, which is to say his idea that experience is the ongoing interaction of a person with her environment over against the empiricist and rationalist views. Specifically, he suggests that the traditional view divorced thought from experience, in the sense that experience was something one 'had', on which thought then operates. It is in this connection that Dewey wants to say that this dichotomy is mistaken because "experience...is full of inference."

Interestingly, a few lines earlier Dewey also objected to the traditional conception of experience on the grounds that "In the orthodox view, experience is regarded primarily as a knowledge affair", a view of which he does not approve because experience should be taken more broadly, i.e. as "an affair of the intercourse of a living being with its physical and social environment."⁸ Buchler says, however, that despite Dewey's objection to the

overly epistemological flavor of traditional conceptions of experience, this traditional approach "held [Dewey] in its grip more than he suspected."⁹ What Buchler meant is that by describing conscious experience as "full of inference", and by casting secondary experience as a matter of thought and inquiry, Dewey ironically remained consistent with the tradition by defining experience in terms of knowledge.

It certainly appears as if Dewey does in fact understand experience in this way. As we suggested earlier, if we assume that by "inference" Dewey means what the word typically means, which is to say drawing a proposition according to logical principles from other propositions, and if conscious experience is full of inference, then conscious experience is primarily a matter of thought. But if it is primarily a matter of thought, then it is primarily a matter of knowledge or the pervasive attempt to acquire knowledge. That Dewey held this highly "epistemologized" conception of experience is also suggested by the fact that as an element of thought, inference occurs in the context of inquiry, and inquiry is, Dewey held, the process whereby we transform an indeterminate situation into a determinate one. Because we are continually engaged in the process of resolving indeterminate situations, we are continually engaged in thought and inquiry, and this, presumably, is why conscious experience is "full of inference".

Dewey saw that the traditional conceptions of experience were inadequate in part because they read experience as largely epistemological, but now it appears that Dewey holds his own version of an epistemologized conception of experience. The irony of course is that among the greatest and most influential philosophers Dewey stands out as being aware of and sensitive to the breadth of experience. One need only look at *Art as Experience* to see the point. Yet here he is interpreting experience, or at least manipulative

⁸ Dewey op. cit., p.6

⁹ Buchler, *Nature and Judgment*, op. cit., p. 141.

experience, as a matter of inquiry and inference. The question we have posed ourselves is whether this approach, i.e. that relies as heavily as does Dewey's on thought, inquiry, and inference, is adequate? Buchler thought not, and that is one of the reasons he developed his theory of judgment, i.e. to try to capture what Dewey wanted without the lapse into the tradition. The question then is whether there are good reasons to endorse Buchler's alternative?

As Buchler has put it, "'Thinking,' as activity, is only one instance of manipulation..." because in fact in experience we regularly engage the world manipulatively in ways other than those described by the processes of thinking, inquiry, and inference.¹⁰ A closer look at art an ordinary experience may help us see the point that there is something odd and strained in reading manipulative, and even reflective, experience as shot through with inference and as instances of inquiry.

On the face of it there does not seem to be any reason to describe what a painter does as a process of inquiry and drawing of inferences. Even when artistic production is consciously a matter of solving problems, formal or otherwise, as it has been and remains for many artists in many contexts, there appears to be something other than inquiry and inference at work. There is creative activity to be sure, and the process no doubt has some moments in common with inquiry as Dewey and Buchler understand it. The artist needs to clarify the problem, for example to determine whether it is a matter of formal elements, and if so which, or whether there may be matters of content and meaning involved in the problem. The artist needs to know the capabilities of the materials with which she is working and the tools available for solving the problem. These moments are, presumably, shared with instances of inquiry. What the artist typically does not do, however, is engage in the drawing of inferences as a primary way of resolving whatever aesthetic problem has been set. The artist may

even experiment, but she does so exhibitively rather than inferentially. And even in those cases, especially instances of narrative art, where a case is being made for an idea or set of ideas, the case is typically made through showing rather than inferring, and the case is exhibitively offered rather than propositionally. In other words, there are occasions of manipulative experience in which reflective and methodic interaction is undertaken but for which the concepts of inquiry and inference are not suitable descriptions. The same point might be made in those cases of artistic production that are not instrumental, something that is certainly a possibility.

The point also applies to cases of more ordinary, quotidian experience. We do things in the course of walking down the street, or cleaning the house, or eating dinner, that involve manipulation of our environment, and that may even be exploratory, but that do not necessarily involve inference. When, for example, we direct our attention to the taste of a particular dish at a meal such that we note, savor, and enjoy it, there are manipulations of our environment at work, there is even a sense of exploration in the savoring, but there is nothing inferential going on, at least not necessarily. Dewey well captures this sort of thing when he describes aesthetic experience, but his overly epistemologized sense of experience does not do justice to it. We may say something similar about the process whereby an athlete hones a particular skill, say a three-point shot or effecting a header off of a corner kick. The process is manipulative and even methodic, but it is not inferential. And on both Dewey and Buchler's terms, if a process is not inferential then it is not an instance of inquiry.

If it is adequate and reasonable to describe some instances of refined, manipulative, and even methodic experience – the examples we have given are in the creation of artworks, the enjoyment of eating, and athletic practice – which are not cases of inference and inquiry, then Dewey's idea that experience is full of inference in the sense that inference pervades conscious experience does not work, and his related understanding

¹⁰ *ibid.*

of secondary, refined experience as a function of inquiry is too narrow. What is needed is a conception that can account for this breadth in the manipulative aspect of experience, including its inferential moments. Buchler's theory of judgment appears to do just that. And if Dewey meant something different by "inference", for example something broader that might resemble Buchler's descriptions of judgment, then his theory is still not sufficiently finely grained because we remain in need of something that would distinguish among the various sorts of "inference". Again, Buchler's conception of judgment does that well.

By identifying several modes of judgment, in this case three, and by accommodating the fact that methodic exploration occurs in all of them, the theory enables us to account for the breadth of experience as we find it. When the philosopher attempts to work out the meaning and ramifications of an idea, as we are doing here, there is clearly inference and inquiry in a process of methodic exploration. When the artist works out the relation of colors or rhythms there is also methodic exploration, but in that case there is likely not to be inference and inquiry at work, but query of an exhibitiv kind. And as the basketball player perfects her three-point shot, there is methodic, even exploratory active query taking place, but it is not inferential and it is not inquiry in any standard sense of the term, or at least it is not enough to call it inquiry if we wish to understand how it works in experience.

Moreover, this broader understanding of judgment and query allows us to develop a more adequate epistemology than is available otherwise. One of the problems with traditional, especially analytic, epistemology is that it has assumed that all knowledge is propositional, and that knowledge is available to us only through those forms of exploration that engage in inquiry through some combination of empirical grounding and rational articulation. The natural and social sciences, mathematics, and even philosophy for the more broad-minded of such epistemologists, can be

said to issue in knowledge. This is good as far as it goes, but it leaves out far too much. We have every reason to say, for example, that the arts have a cognitive dimension such that knowledge is available without inquiry as traditionally understood. Given that knowledge is available in exhibitiv judgment, and we may add in active judgment as well, and that methodic query in those modes of judgment differs importantly from inquiry, an adequate conception of knowledge must be able to accommodate knowledge arising in these plural ways. By implication, we will also need a broader conception of truth than that which is applicable only or primarily to propositional knowledge. These broader notions of knowledge and truth can be articulated through the theory of judgment, and they are more likely to be curtailed through a conception of experience that places too much emphasis on inquiry and inference. It is also, in the end, preferable to a conception of communication and language that is grounded in a mystical sense of experience and that anthropomorphizes critical aspects of experience.

Both Benjamin's understanding of language and Dewey's theory of inquiry and experience are of course much more thorough and rich than we have been able to explore here. In their richness both offer virtues that we would be sorely mistaken to overlook or abandon. With respect to their overly broad conception of language and too focused an emphasis on inference and inquiry respectively, however, we would do well to attend to Buchler's more adequate theory of judgment.

We may end by reiterating the import of these considerations. Dewey developed a theory of experience for several reasons. One of them was that traditional approaches were inadequate to an understanding of human being. Another reason was that he felt, correctly and importantly I think, that a defensible theory of experience was necessary for a theory of education. And there was also the fact that he understood the importance of the aesthetic dimension of experience, of which there was no sufficient way to account in the

context of traditional theories of the given and of experience. These and others were and remain good reasons to sustain a strong theory of experience. But if Dewey's theory is flawed in the ways that Buchler proposed, and I have argued that there is reason to endorse Buchler's objections, then we are in need of further development of a theory of experience. Buchler's contributions to that effort are in his theories of perception and judgment. But those efforts are not the end of it either. We stand in need of a reformed theory of experience that embraces both Dewey's and Buchler's insights, that resonates with current work in the ideas of the embodied and embedded mind, that answers to aspects of experience that their theories do not encompass, and that revisits critical issues in experience such as knowledge, truth, power, and other central features of our lives. There is, in other words, a good deal of work left to do.¹¹

¹¹ Mark Johnson in *The Meaning of the Body: Aesthetics of Human Understanding*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2007 goes some distance in the right direction.

ANSWERING EMANCIPATION¹

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ABSTRACT: *I argue that the objective standing of moral, political, civilizational, and related norms are, essentially, committed to "second-best" convictions: sittlich, partisan, constructed not discovered, consensually tolerable approximations to a modus vivendi among rivals. I offer a post-Darwinian account of the artifactuality of the human person (as distinct from the human primate), who can claim no discernible natural telos in the real world. I distinguish two sorts of norms: agentive and enabling and demonstrate their very different "logics." I bring the argument to bear, for illustrative purposes, on the defense and criticism of liberal capitalism and the upsurge of the opposed values of ISIS.*

I.

I trust you will not mind if I begin by confessing my own bewilderment. I can only suppose the conveners of this conference were aware that I often speak in an unguarded way; hence, that in disclosing the main themes of my unsettled grasp of the philosophical puzzles our question will not permit us to ignore may actually capture something of the dawning worry all of us surely share, however diversely. In short, my conviction is that moral philosophy has gone wildly wrong—but not, in the same sense, our moral intuitions.

That, as I shall argue, signifies that we are becoming increasingly aware that a reasonable theory of norms and normative judgment affecting practical commitments—moral, political, economic, civilizational concerns—cannot fail to accommodate in a robust and systematic way the actualités of our historical present and partisan interests. That may strike you as mildly sensible. For my own part, I'm persuaded that it's an admission that should, surely, lead us away from the long-standing habits of thought of academic moral and similarly oriented theories—more often than not confidently cast in Kantian and Aristotelian language.

"Emancipation" itself is a term of art rather cunningly selected to straddle the need to reconcile practical and conceptual demands in a way that nudges us in the direction of one or another bit of prior substantive accord that we may count on without actual labor. I should like to upset, politely if I may, any premature such expectations. I think the stakes, worldwide, are simply too high for the usual skillful insider jousting. "Emancipation," possibly even more than "capacitation" (in Amartya Sen's sense) challenges our ordinary philosophical notions of adequate conceptual closure effectively separated from the salient worries of our day, especially where it appears otherwise.

Our question has its own life and lesson, of course, which we innocently misrepresent when we take ourselves to be the vanguard of an incipiently global community of well-intentioned citizens of the world who may already rightly claim to have grasped and championed one or another infeasible norm of human life, on the assurance of which the emancipation of humanity may be reliably defined—say, in the same spirit of rational optimism with which, cooperatively, we suppose we may disarm all the dangers of nuclear waste worldwide and, correspondingly, reduce the unjust extremes of wealth and poverty in our world.

The trouble is, these two issues (these two kinds of issues) are entirely different, often not even commensurable; and the resolution of the one may not help us with the resolution of the other.

Both require answers of a normative cast, but the norms in question are not at all of the same kind. We need both, but we must keep them apart: norms of the emancipatory or injustice kind are (largely) what I call agentive; those of the nuclear-waste sort or of medicine or logic are (largely) of the kind I call enabling. I insist on the distinction, though it may seem picayune or merely verbal or mistaken, because even if what happens to serve the first function may be pressed into service to fill the second, the functions themselves are essentially different and require very different lines of thinking—very different "logics," as we say.

¹ I must add that the paper before you is a reflection on Charles Peirce's judgment that Kant is essentially "a confused pragmatist."

Enabling norms—logical, causal, instrumental (whether, say, in medicine or inference or acquired skills)—are usually acceptably replaced by suitable non-normative paraphrases that service all our guesses at what the true agentive norms may be thought to be; whereas agentive norms, which we would like to believe capture the ultimate or essential telos of human life, cannot be confirmed beyond hope or belief or conviction or self-deception and cannot be replaced by any form of non-normative paraphrases. They can only be defined (if defined at all) by what, accepting an ingenious clue in Plato's Statesman, may be named a "second-best" resolution: an ideology, myth, invention, consensus, custom, prejudice, life-giving illusion (call it what you will) that we have no reason to expect will ever overcome the sheer scatter of history, fashion, diversity of experience, Bildung, or the hegemonic and contentious tendencies of human life itself. That's to say, we cannot live without agentive norms, but we have no assured way of confirming them: they are forever at war among themselves.

Norms of any kind are, I claim, thoroughly discursive, that is, enlanguaged—hence, also, as I shall try to show, artifactual; hence, also, reflexively constructed, not discovered in any manner open to the kind of testing favored in the empirical sciences. The conviction that we've captured (or approximated) the ultimate logic of human reason in these matters has never shown—and I believe cannot show—that there are, and must be, normative invariances of the right kind embedded (somehow) in the world or human nature, ripe for discovery. It's part of the slim argument I wish to recommend that such a conviction is hardly more than self-deception—a particularly dangerous delusion at this moment of history.

Conveniently, the normative comes in two forms: the agentive and the enabling. The agentive we require prescriptively, being the creatures that we are; but we cannot find a settled answer as to the validity of determining such claims. Agentive norms may be as

compelling as you please, according to our lights; but their affirmation cannot yield exclusionary normative truths, apart from congruities involving enabling values and partisan conviction—for instance, with regard to viability and human tolerance and choice, which, accordingly, must make room for irreconcilable agentive norms that we find we must live with, seeing that we live among diverse societies that are likely to oppose our particular way of life. I take this to be the glory and courage of Hobbes's first concern (as Bernard Williams puts it), though Hobbes would have been more than merely mystified by the convictions of, say, ISIS, which, as far as I can see, might have proved to be the anticipation (on Hobbes's part) of a deeper polemos of agentive options fitted to an unruly world.

I'll come to the supporting argument in a moment: it cannot have been plausibly constructed on empirical grounds before the work of post-Darwinian paleoanthropology, though Plato's Statesman may be read prophetically enough. The human herd must rule itself, Plato suggests, though it cannot claim to have discovered the correct rules by which to do so! I view this as a much deeper finding than Hobbes's. Also, though read along Darwinian lines, it finally leads to the same Heracleitean conclusion. By contrast, enabling norms, precisely because they are paraphrasable in non-normative terms (broadly speaking, logical or causal: that is, instrumental) may be as easily fitted (interpretively) to intelligent animal life as to our own, though animals, lacking language, cannot ponder normative alternatives as such. As we shall soon see, this is a remarkably important finding, one (may I say) that defeats Kant's model of the determinate discursivity of rational judgment at one stroke.

We are, then, creatures of habituation and opportunistic loyalties that typically masquerade as approximations to some changeless order of things. Ultimately, this explains the insuperable paradox of human self-legislation, which, then, obliges us to consider the prospects of a more modest reading of emancipation than our own ardor longs for.

The paradox may be grasped through different formulations. But what it finally discloses is the decisive fact that the very formation of "the human being" cannot be captured in exclusively biological terms: that is, the formation of the human primate simply does not conform to the model suited to the evolutionary account of any other animal species: the human animal is seriously "unfinished" at birth, and its standardly expected, reasonably complete formation requires the lengthy process of artifactually transforming (in good part, reflexively) infant primates into functional persons—a surmise that holds that the final phase of human evolution is already a hybrid phenomenon that disallows the separation of biological and cultural (that is, enlanguaged) formative processes. Where, of course, the invention of language and the transformation of the human primate into an apt person are simply the recto and verso sides of the same process.

This is a hypothesis distinctly bolder than, but indebted to, the conjectures of figures like Adolf Portmann and others associated with the "philosophical anthropologists"—and even Noam Chomsky's still largely biologized linguistics (to judge from his latest analysis of language). I claim, in short, that the analysis and validation of "emancipatory" norms and associated societal reforms (featuring, say, equality, justice, human flourishing) cannot be convincingly pursued without an appraisal of the import of Darwinian and post-Darwinian discoveries.

The upshot is that the question of emancipation, as with other moral and civilizational matters, is profoundly—incluctably, benignly—circular. I don't intend this to be read as defeating our attempts to answer the agentive question—any more than I would be willing to regard the inherent petitio of the epistemological regress to discount the evident achievement of our natural sciences. I hold instead that skepticism and knowledge (or understanding) are provisionally compatible in moderation: indeed, inescapably linked; so that a "second-best" solution of normative matters is inevitably

matched by a cognate modesty among the sciences as well. I call that concession, pragmatism, or an essential part of it—or the main thrust of its most promising contemporary innovations. It aims, not at "the true norms," but at a modus vivendi among disputed norms and functions cognitively in that sense.

We do have our normative convictions, to be sure: predictably, mine are probably much like yours, assuming (as I do) that we've been gebildet by similar caretakers—variants of the liberal tradition of the West. But I'm also persuaded that, even so, I must be speaking as a partisan or ideologue when I advance any first norm of how we should live our lives, no matter what that may prove to be. In fact, I take it to be the unintended lesson of John Rawls's transparent slippage from his A Theory of Justice to Political Liberalism and The Laws of Peoples. He makes a number of different starts, settling finally on his vision of a "decent" people (his term), which he realizes he cannot legitimate, except circularly, unless honest conviction is all we ever need. But would Rawls be willing to extend his gift to the Islamic State? (Somewhere, Rawls acknowledges that he includes the Muslims among his "decent" peoples.) But if he extended the courtesy to ISIS, he would have to deny even the "second-best" standing of his liberal vision. Hence, something close to "ultimate" agentive conviction separates ISIS from ourselves. I cannot see that rational conviction or decency or authentic revelation helps us here, except to sort out congenial and uncongenial convictions—viewed from our own vantage. Stalemate is essentially philosophical, certainly not political. Because war (of one sort or another) is a permanently pertinent political possibility that we can never completely discount. The partisans of moral confidence have never come to terms with the denial of foundational or privileged resources in either the sciences or morality. We discover the ideologies we and others are prepared to live by and with; but we cannot convincingly claim to have discovered which agentive norms are the true ones.

If you concede the point, then globalism and universalism (which are hardly the same) cannot be more than the conceptual space in which emancipation (or equality or the ultimate dignity of the human being or the natural rights of man or any other agentive vision) confronts its equally committed opponents in terms of some potentially irreconcilable strife. I see no way of eluding the verdict, if Rawls's mildly conceded failure applies to every canonical moral philosophy. It's in this sense that we have never satisfactorily answered the frontal question of the conditions of possibility of any discourse intended to confirm the straightforward validity of one or another agentive norm. The Kantian phrasing is as good as any, provided we avoid Kant's own apriorist reading.

Here, other first findings begin to make themselves felt. For instance, the very formulation of the emancipation issue pretty well signals that, faute de mieux, its resolution requires assuming (or approximating to) the primacy of one or another version of the liberal democratic cause, even on the part of serious critics of liberalism unwilling to endorse Rawls's best proposals: Bernard Williams, for instance, or Raymond Geuss or Nancy Fraser or Axel Honneth or Richard Rorty or even Amartya Sen or Thomas Piketty. And, of course, if you admit that much, you cannot fail to find yourself entrapped in the decline of the supposedly confirmable liberal ethic into one or another of the sittlich ideologies congenial to the enabling vision on which a doctrine like that of Rawls's original thesis itself relied. I shall offer a stronger argument shortly. But consider, for the moment, that the emancipatory norm, however noble it may appear to be (in utopian abstraction), may be an essential thread within the contingent practices of Western liberal capitalism that can be shown to block its own realization through one "contradiction" or another.

I'm not clever enough, I confess, to invent an economy or politics to correct what many of us—again, within the familiar (that is, the tested) terms of the known variants of the union of liberal democracy and a capitalist

economy—deem to be largely responsible for the injustices remarked: say, the stubborn but ever-widening disparity between the extraordinary wealth of a very few families at the top of the system, the seemingly irremediable poverty of a growing multitude at the bottom, and the noticeable disappearance of any gradually graded continuum between the two extremes. I'm obliged to ask the champions of emancipation how they can escape the charge of settling for no more than a utopian gesture, if they must address their best proposals to the same culprits they must ultimately oppose.

The divide may be on its way to becoming a structural defect of an evolving global economy in which the rational connection between promissory increases in money and credit (by financial and monetary stipulation) and real income (however construed) threatens to be effectively severed in fragmented and diverse ways that may become increasingly difficult to detect or control in real time, though its effects may be relied on to impoverish the already impoverished, as well as those of the so-called middle class close to the lower end of the range of earned wages, and also to increase the likelihood of ever-riskier extensions of credit and debt that no merely reactive market can expect to escape without succumbing to more and more disastrous collapses. Apparently, if we fail to set aside capital reserves large enough to offset anticipated such crises, we can expect to sustain losses, periodically, beyond the 2007-08 crisis, which might already have compared "favorably" with the Great Depression, if our questionable countermeasures had not succeeded at all.

If, then, you also allow for anticipated and unforeseen large and global accidents—the refugee problem in the Middle East, for instance, the increasing threat of failed states and radical Islam, the incipience of an unmanageable Ebola epidemic, the decline of the world's reserve of potable water, the rise in the level of the seas and oceans, resistance to curbing the disparities of wealth and poverty worldwide, the potential

extinction of marine life, the pollution of our living space, the sheer contingency of abrupt, unanticipated changes in (and the global consequences of) local power and market strategies and the inseparability of politics and economics locally and worldwide—then, even if we ignore specifically ethical questions, the increasingly brittle and unruly economy we now inhabit argues the unlikelihood that the corrective measures we still seem capable of enacting will be resourceful enough (under present conditions) to stave off the increasingly profound, long-term disasters the 2007 collapse is said to warn us to expect.

To read all this in the mildest way, with the question under discussion in mind, I frankly cannot see any non-utopian conjecture that does not anticipate the need to consider revolutionary changes affecting the conditions under which the emancipation issue has itself become wedded to the structural limitations of liberal capitalism.

I confess I'm not in the least attracted to the Islamic State's corrective vision. But its virtue—if I may speak this way—is its utter contempt for the rampant greed and self-deception of the entire Western vision, whatever the West's secular and religious variants may be. ISIS claims to be following God's absolute law—as opposed to man's worldly deceptions—but it itself proceeds (as of course it must) in a decidedly worldly way. I see no reason to believe its conviction is a fraud, though I also cannot see how the world can be expected to remain loyal to such a vision. Nevertheless, ISIS's response is, effectively, a non-utopian counterproposal to the West's market vision—the so-called caliphate—the full significance of which we have yet to fathom. There's nothing comparable (along naturalistic or revealed lines) arising in the West that seriously addresses its own inherent "contradictions." I say we dare not ignore the alien charge, though even that must ultimately be decoded in terms more legible to the Western mind.

Certainly it's hopeless to consider ISIS's charge and claim in terms of its own revelation. It's not a question of its

being stronger or weaker than Judeo-Christian claims; it's just that there are too many agentive absolutes of an utterly undebatable kind to conjure with. I freely acknowledge that, in the aggregate, in debating ultimate agentive norms, human beings are noticeably unlikely to restrict their arguments to the limits of naturalism, though capitalism (including state capitalism) is, effectively, the operative practice and vision of most of the world.

The contradictions of the capitalist ethos are at least as obvious in Islam as in Judaism and Christianity: one has only to keep the entire career of each of these religions in view to begin to grasp the remarkable uniformity of the viable peoples of the Earth. Slavery and peonage have reappeared in force, often in hidden forms, throughout the world, though certainly in the West, where it is usually denied; jihad and crusade are disturbingly similar; and the option of compulsory conversion to the true faith or summary execution of one sort or another, which was once famously enforced by Christianity, is now enforced by ISIS and similarly inspired movements.

Behind the historical gossip, the strongest premises constraining agentive norms include, I would say, the following at least: (i) there is no convincing channel of inquiry—cognitive, rational, instinctive or intuitive, sentimental, revelatory, or otherwise supported—on which the true and ultimate norms of human life can possibly be discerned or confirmed; (ii) the human species has no natural telos that can be reasonably and uniquely assigned the members of the species; (iii) the human species has no ecological niche or Umwelt, or place or function in nature, comparable to that of the regular cycle of life of other animal species, that can be said to constrain in any pertinent way the morally or normatively correct selection of one or another career among all conceivable options; and yet, (iv) fully formed human beings seem unable to pursue their lives without serious or sustained attention to the reasoned choice and defense of agentive norms, which, given the force of

conditions (i)-(iii), I would characterize as never more than "second-best." That's to say, norms that humans find viable or tolerable or reasonable or answering to their apparent interests, under the material conditions under which they actually live.

I account for the validity of items (i)-(iv) largely in terms of the findings of post-Darwinian paleoanthropology and of the developmental and cultural contingencies (historical, enlanguaged) that, in endlessly diverse ways, significantly qualify the unique form of human evolution. The single most important finding confirms that the evolution of *Homo sapiens* cannot be expressed solely in biological terms, but depends instead on the final intertwining of the processes of biological and cultural formation responsible for the emergence (transformation) of human primates into artifactually formed persons— on the strength of which the human preoccupation with moral or agentive or civilizational norms itself depends. Also, improbable though the facts may seem to be, the "post-Darwinian" argument I favor depends almost entirely on empirical discoveries (prompted by Darwin's theory in the late nineteenth and a good part of the twentieth centuries; so that nearly the whole of the history of Western philosophy concerned with the analysis of human nature in modern terms can now be seen to have been essentially deprived of just those momentous considerations on the acceptance of which nearly all canonical theories of the human and the normative cannot fail to be significantly qualified—that is, reduced in their pretensions of objective discovery, without being utterly denied. The paleoanthropological evidence leads us to acknowledge the artifactuality of persons—accordingly, the artifactuality and diversity of agentive norms: alternatively, the thoroughly ideological, interest-driven status of such norms, within the shared space of other similarly qualified (and potentially opposed) norms and practices.

I venture to say that the entrenched patterns of canonical moral philosophy, pursued most doggedly in our own time by figures like Christine Korsgaard, who

claims to demonstrate that whatever may be salvaged from "Aristotelian" theories may be perspicuously subordinated to the evident validity and adequacy of freestanding "Kantian" accounts, and by attempts like those by Alasdair MacIntyre, committed to demonstrating just the opposite conviction along Aristotelian lines, have simply lost their seeming self-evident objectivity. Once you concede items (i) - (iii) of the tally already rendered, the standard colonizing tricks of academic views of normativity (ranging over every aspect of the philosophy of human nature) suddenly become transparently parochial, self-serving, drab, completely verbal. You may of course contest Darwin's theory; but you cannot merely deny or dismiss the philosophical consequences of acknowledging the rough adequacy of the neo-and post-Darwinian corrections of Darwin's original hypothesis. They oblige us to answer the charge that every would-be attempt to discover the ultimate agentive norms of human life may or must be irremediably delusive—without, however, disallowing some sort of reasoned construction of humanly acceptable norms under conditions of radically contingent history, Bildung, diversity of perceived threats and resources and entrenched convictions. (These are the constraints that confine us to "second-best" norms.)

Theories like Korsgaard's and MacIntyre's cannot satisfy us any longer regarding the legitimation of first philosophy (post-Kant)—hence, regarding the effect of self-evidence of the normatively ultimate. They now appear as conceptual non-starters, once we admit the force of item (i) of the tally already rendered or whenever we admit that the choice of a satisfactory ethic cannot be separated from real-world contexts in which political, economic, and similar conditions of material existence qualify in an essentially local way the rational grounds on which agentive norms may be validated at all—at best of course, as "second-best." In short—add this as item (v) to our lengthening tally—a "second-best" validation of agentive norms requires our avoiding any merely utopian reading of the matter, as

well as accommodating the straightforward accessibility of matched enabling norms (as, notably, in Sen's advocacy of "capacitating" provisions, in opposing Rawls's argument regarding minimal human entitlements).

A second-best defense of agentive norms requires a proper sense of the viability of such norms; and, thus, in existential contexts, it requires as well a congruent account of their pertinently enabling norms. Construed this way—item (vi) let us say—the validity of agentive norms must be at least sittlich, or adapted from the sittlich (what may be called "customary morality": practiced but not evidentially confirmed as straightforwardly objective—unless circularly), prone to being accepted as itself sittlich, if it is not to appear to be merely arbitrary or the result of no more than one or another effective form of rearing or cultural entrenchment.

Of course, as already remarked—an objection directed against Rawls—this obliges agentive commitments to be deeply historied if viable at all, among the singular features of whatever we choose to save or serve or improve within the sittlich. One sees here the clear parallel between partisan enablement and Sen's treatment of the human rights issue in the defense of capitalism, under the terms of championing a liberal democracy. Think, for instance, of the resistance of large banks and states against continually strengthening (always laggardly) given financial reserves against excessive risks (the so-called Basel accords, for instance) in the face of forever-emboldened market ventures in need of inflated paper credits. All of this centers (in my idiom) on no more than enabling norms, without reference to the full-blown question of agentive norms. It's in the context of choosing agentive norms that the post-Darwinian evidence is particularly compelling, philosophically; and, of course, emancipation itself is largely a proxy for every familiar norm of liberal capitalism. In this sense, as I say, even enabling norms cannot entirely escape their being linked to the analysis (and choice) of agentive norms.

II.

My own argument on normative questions depends entirely, if I may propose a conceptual economy, on the reasonableness of a single conjecture: namely, that the human person is not a natural-kind kind, but rather an artifactual, hybrid, though also perfectly natural transform of the natural-kind primate (ourselves) that we classify as Homo sapiens sapiens (interbred, it seems, fairly early in its prehistoric career, with Homo Neanderthalis, now extinct).

That thesis is inseparable from the critique of Darwin's own account of animal evolution, since, following the promising but too hasty or (still) too conservative a biologized treatment of the human person among the "philosophical anthropologists," the Darwinian model cannot possibly account, in any canonically convincing way, for the uniquely baffling features of the career of humankind—which is to say, with the emergence of the novel powers of the human person. For, biologically considered, the evolution of Homo sapiens, including the state of the human infant at birth, may be characterized (if you permit a figure of speech) as "anticipating" its own completion through the iterated mastery of language (among its infant cohorts), by way of the socially artifactual Bildung of its offspring.

Put more simply: it's my conjecture that the evolution of the human person (hence, the effective evolution of the human primate) and the evolution of natural language (hence, the evolution of the novel competences acquired, socially, by human beings) are the matched faces of one and the same evolutionary process, which yields a radically novel form of evolutionary emergence among animals. In my view, this strange turn accounts for the prominence of normative questions among humans—since, as I see matters, normativity is inherently discursive (enlanguaged), whereas animal interests (involving values and valuing, even the comparison of values, even a form of inference confined to the perceptual) never takes a specifically normative form (or does so only in the most minimal degree, in the

sense that the communicative development of monkeys and apes—perhaps, also, of elephants and cetaceans—may manifest only the most rudimentary beginnings of true language in the wild). Given this much, normativity (the application of which requires a developed ability to manage telically qualified processes of thought) must be fundamentally artifactual. There's more to the story that needs to be mentioned, but here, at least, you glimpse the often neglected premise on which the entire matter of the status of moral, political, economic, religious, educational, and civilizational values depend.

They depend, I say, on the ability of the sittlich to fill a conceptual void created by the distinctive oddities of human biology, which (in turn) expose the inflexibility and inadequacy of the Darwinian model when specifically applied to the evolution of the human.

A number of considerations seem particularly instructive here. For one thing, it is most unusual (almost unheard of) to invoke Darwinian and post-Darwinian factors negatively, as regards the determination of agentive norms; that is, as not supporting (in any evidentiary way—indeed, as subverting) the very idea of discovering the true agentive norms of the species. This seems to be the proper lesson to be drawn from the pioneer work of figures like Helmuth Plessner, Arnold Gehlen, and Adolf Portmann, collected as the "philosophical anthropologists." Call that the "artificiality thesis," meaning by that that agentive norms cannot, on Darwinian grounds (contrary to the usual assumption), be derived in any way from a review of human nature construed in merely biological terms. I freely admit that general enabling norms—for instance, medical norms—may be reasonably ascribed the human species. But medical and other enabling norms are bound to be conditioned by prior agentive decisions or homeostatic or self-maintaining regularities thought to be needed for just about any effective agentive commitment.

Secondly, on Darwinian grounds, the human primate utterly lacks an ecological niche, an Umwelt (all but obligatory for advanced animals), in accord with which

something akin to norms of natural flourishing may be thought to accord with the imputed telos of each species (reconciled with a thoroughly non-teleological reading of natural selection).

If the human species were a standard species (which it is not), then agentive norms might be plausibly projected from the normal functioning of primate life—but not as matters actually stand, for instance in terms of the human neonate's utterly lacking the usual survival skills herd animals exhibit very shortly after birth. Call that the "positionality thesis," meaning, in opposing Plessner's inadequate formula about the human person, that neither the human primate nor the human person has any "natural place" in the world, which we could otherwise take for granted and from which we could derive man's essential agentive norms.

Thirdly, it's precisely the complete, prolonged dependence of the human infant's survival and development on the executive initiative and convictions on the part of mature members of the species (regarding the care and Bildung of neonates) that decides what to count as the agentive norms that are or ought to be in play. Accordingly, their objective standing depends entirely on the commitments of the guardian members of the species, those effectively responsible for the Bildung of children. But these are just the mature members of the species who have already been successfully transformed into functional persons—hence, provided with agentive norms effective for the survival of the enabling society. Call that the "Sittlichkeit thesis," meaning by that that infants are born into societies of already transformed, artifactually hybrid persons, who, in mastering the language and enabled culture of their home society, acquire a grasp of its norms and enabling cognate practices. Here, as is well-known, the decisive consideration is that there is almost no pattern of entrenched agentive norms, favored by humankind, that is not compatible with a tolerable form of societal survival. (This counts, for example, against the rather lame efforts of Axel Honneth—drawing on

Heidegger's resources, for one—to retrieve some form of an ethics of love or care from what Honneth identifies as the biologically grounded phenomenon of "recognition"—the recognition of intrinsic worth, apparently—meant to offset Marxist attacks on capitalist "reification"! I put this thesis in the same conceptual bin as MacIntyre's speculations about the phronesis of dolphins!)

This makes a tidy reckoning of the appearance of viable norms. But it makes it impossible to eliminate the heartfelt strife of fundamentally opposed agentive norms, particularly where Bildung includes convictions of revelation. Once you allow religious differences to have standing in the sittlich sense, it becomes impossible to suppose we could ever find our way to a strong convergence on agentive norms—unless by the vicissitudes of war. I take civilizational or religious wars (Samuel Huntington's conjecture) to be a palpable possibility. But if so, then, to my way of thinking, the revolutionary transformation of capitalism as a liberal-democratic politics (very possibly only possible by way of war) bent on controlling the excesses of capitalism itself, may, as we now understand matters, be, itself, an attractive sittlich utopia that eludes us.

I find a philosophical lesson of the first importance here, a lesson almost universally neglected: namely, that there cannot be a convincing explication of the validating grounds of any society's (or any individual's) agentive norms that is not in general accord with the historied interests and ideological convictions of such societies and individuals—or, realistically projected from the sittlich norms embedded in a given or neighboring society's mode of Bildung. It's not part of my theory that this directly yields the right way to determine valid agentive norms; but it is (I believe) the only way to secure their viability and enabling resources, in the light of the evolving history of similarly gebildet societies capable of both oppositional and congruent behavior. It's in such a complex setting—and only "second-best," as I say—that the "objective" standing of agentive commitments can be vouchsafed at all.

Questions of morality and politics, therefore, are more nearly questions of sittlich expectation under the actual conditions of societal life than of relying on the findings of any supposedly independent confirmation of prescriptively objective norms. There are no universally valid agentive norms to be found. All pertinent claims are open to challenge (on conceptual grounds and) on grounds drawn from the relentless flux of history. The best—the "second-best"—resolution of agentive disputes (individual, inter-or intra-societal) tends to favor a modus vivendi, that's to say a modification of sittlich norms already tolerated as reasonably acceptable. A second-best resolution signifies, therefore, that, for one thing, the revision of a sittlich norm may reasonably aspire to acquiring sittlich standing itself; second, that, in doing so, it matches the standing of entrenched such norms; and, third (and most important), the theory confirms that moral and political (and related) disputes are, qua "objective" at all, dependent on the judgment of consensually committed, interested, partisan, ideologically persuaded agents willing to adjust their shared norms and practices, rationally (we may say), in conformity with their prevailing vision of the telic import of their executive form of life. Otherwise, their validating rationales (also sittlich) may require some form of war. I would not regard that as moral failure.

I cannot see how any program of liberally construed "emancipation" could possibly claim firmer grounds than these. I'm perfectly prepared to endorse such norms. The fact that a very large part of the population of the world is fairly robustly committed or attracted to such norms confirms their viability and second-best status. But the days in which its unconditionally "realist" or "rational" standing might have been taken for granted (or deemed to have been convincingly confirmed or seen to be self-evident) are simply gone: the Bill of Rights, the UN Declaration of Human Rights, and all similar affirmations are ideological avowals, not established truths or verdicts of any kind. To insist otherwise, I should say, given broadly post-Darwinian grounds,

counts as little more than a conceptual blunder—a dangerous, but also perhaps a comparatively noble, prejudice. We function always as partisans, among societies of diverse partisans. The philosophers of the West have simply exceeded the resources of accountable argument. The correction is more promising, functionally, than may at first appear: it dampens, for instance, the presumption of indefeasible moralities (or laws). It also concedes in a qualified way that the "objectivity" of pertinent disputes cannot exclude the pertinence of the contingent bias of our actual convictions. I'm prepared to argue that much of what we regard as the paradigmatic objectivity of the sciences is hostage to important parallel considerations, that rely, more benignly, on diverse interpretations of our approximative practices. There are prudential constraints on all such disputes that qualify both agentive and enabling quarrels. But, of course, we live (and survive) transiently.

The most profound and compelling consequence of this otherwise quite ordinary speculation is, of course, that morality (and its political, economic, educational, religious, civilizational analogues) is insuperably partisan, historically contingent, responsive to what may be called the evolving "technologies" of our world. Rationally, we cannot fail to support our convictions and commitments as best we can. But we do so with an eye to the competing rationales of all the peoples of our neighboring world. Our arguments cannot be neutral. And the relative objectivity of enabling norms can never be adequate to any would-be cognate demands regarding agentive norms. There is, to be sure, a considerable consensus about possible candidate interests, prudential concerns, the fundamental conditions of any sustained life. In principle, such constraints may be taken, very abstractly, to qualify (always second-best) our rational options along the lines of a modus vivendi (wherever signaled); but plainly, even compromise intended to secure survival may be deemed indefensible. Where is the evidence that verdicts of this kind are inherently evil or irrational? Moralities, markets,

religions are themselves fresh instruments and forms of potential war. I take that to be the most implacable lesson of our time.

Moral relativism, for instance, is not committed to the truth of incompatible norms, but (at least minimally) to the wager that no argument that can validly support the second-best reasonableness of any agentive norm can convincingly disallow a comparable defense advanced in favor of an opposed and incompatible norm; also, every pertinently strengthened such defense invites a matched strengthening of the claims of its mortal rivals. The point is not to dither about the logic of moral convictions but to realize that our world and our perception of our world have changed radically. Changes in the analysis of the logic of moral dispute are a function of what we suppose are the pertinent facts we agree on. Those that seem decisive now concern our understanding of our own nature. And these, as we cannot fail to see, are tethered to the intertwined possibilities of biological change and barely glimpsed new technologies.

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