

ART AND SOUL:

JAMES AND SCHELER ON PRAGMATIC AESTHETICS

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Max Scheler read pragmatic philosophy in the context of William James,¹ and there is excellent scholarship on his use of pragmatic notions in relation to the sociology of knowledge and philosophical anthropology, but his aesthetics has not been previously looked at with a pragmatic approach.² My understanding is that Scheler describes process aesthetics, of the sort developed later in the 20th century, which echoes James's views on pragmatism as including a valuation of lived experience.³ Such an investigation serves to further the conversation of virtues in aesthetics and, more specifically, in relation to art practice and reception.

Although neither thinker wrote protracted texts on art, I have found that both combine art and soul as lived experience, thereby assimilating the material effects of aesthetics with creative beliefs for the betterment of culture. To introduce Scheler's idea's into discussions on

pragmatic aesthetics I investigate how his ideas look toward artistic production and reception by studying philosophical discourse and looking at paintings.

To begin, Richard Shusterman investigates James' writings in a way that brings forward the aesthetic aspect of his philosophy in relation to embodiment and perception, thereby revealing the entwinement of aesthetics and art with lived experience. Shusterman sees a prominent dynamic of pragmatist aesthetics as

The continuity and combination of the aesthetic with the practical, a theme expressed in the integration of art and life, the recognition that bodily appetites and desires can also be aesthetic, and the appreciation of the functionality of art and aesthetic experience.⁴

I would say that there needs to be additional inclusion in the discussions on James' aesthetics of ideas and imagination. I would also suggest that Scheler's writings on aesthetics expand current notions in this regard. I look at three main comparisons between James and Scheler's aesthetics, thereby explicating a synthesis and disclosing a main axiom of Schelerian aesthetics, which is that ideas are embodied with things through reflection and materiality. For Scheler, aesthetics is not a matter of either perception or representation but of combined creativity, which involves an ongoing process of existential reflection or valuation. I continue with a pragmatic connection between Scheler and John Dewey (in that the latter's aesthetics is influenced by James), by paying particular attention to Thomas Alexander's writings on the moral imagination and community. Throughout this essay I think about aesthetics through paradigms of art and artistic making. The social critique of the painter Otto Dix is especially relevant in that his work raises moral issues, such as questions surrounding the virtues that are called for in living as an individual

¹ See, Kenneth W. Stickers' essay, "Dialogue Between Pragmatism and Constructivism in Historical Perspective", *John Dewey Between Pragmatism and Constructivism*, Ed. Larry A. Hickman et al (New York, Fordham University Press, 2009), pp 67-83. See also: Max Scheler, *Cognition and Work: A Study Concerning the Value and Limits of the Pragmatic Motivation in the Cognition of the World*, English translation unpublished manuscript, Zachary Davis (St. Johns University, Queens, New York City).

² Kenneth W. Stickers's reading in the Preface to *Problems of a Sociology of Knowledge*, trans. Manfred S. Frings, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980. As well as other essays; i.e. Larry A. Hickman's essay "The Homo Faber Debate in Dewey and Max Scheler", *Pragmatism as Post-Postmodernism: Lessons from John Dewey*. (New York, Fordham University Press, 2007), pp 231-240.

³ See Randall Auxier's general overview of process aesthetics in an essay critiquing Suzanne Langer. He quotes Langer, to explicate a central tenet of a "process aesthetic"; "since it is only when we are aware of the structure or form of a thing that it becomes available for comparison, the process of symbolization is dependent initially on the logical analysis of a single entity." *Process Studies*, 26 (January 1998), pp 86-106. Cf. Langer. *The Practice of Philosophy*, p. 115.

⁴ "The Pragmatist Aesthetics of William James", *British Journal of Aesthetics*, (2011) 51 (4), p. 356. "A key theme of pragmatist aesthetics is the continuity and combination of the aesthetic with the practical, a theme expressed in the integration of art and life, the recognition that bodily appetites and desires can also be aesthetic and the appreciation of the functionality of art and aesthetic experience."

and as a member of a community. I focus my interpretations through Scheler's understanding of art as self-contained in its own aesthetic structures yet imbued with imminent connections to the essential drives of life and the possible virtues of communal living.

If we think of pragmatism, as James did, as a method that finds meaning in notions and actions by tracing their practical effects, we can understand Scheler's views on art and aesthetics in a similar light. For Scheler, active virtues, which are given in experience (as meaningful approaches to life) engage and build aesthetic structures (ways that we feel and interpret things) that affect culture. This phenomenological approach uses a pragmatic lens by explaining creative experimentation as artistic endeavor. Scheler finds meaning in art through the influence of aesthetic intuition interacting with materials or mediums, and this process engages a 'working out' of values; e.g., "the painter "sees" with the point of his brush, a drawer "sees" with the point where his pen touches the paper he draws on."⁵ Through the creative making of art, the active medium participates with us bodily, telling us something about ourselves and opening up new possibilities for valuing existence. This is a phenomenology of art and culture that folds into pragmatist aesthetics.

Shusterman, as I have said, concentrates on James' perceptual orientation when referring to experiences that please or displease, and he quotes James as recognizing such experiences as far ranging, from the aesthetic pleasures of philosophy and wonderment to the pleasure of movement and consummated action. However, Shusterman leaves open the door for a phenomenological approach to aesthetic experience in regards to an intuitive sense of value. He recognizes in James's writing a reticence about 'aesthetics' in the abstract, schematic, cognitive sense while at the same

time tracing James' theory of a unity of consciousness to its influence on John Dewey's "seminal theory that aesthetic experience is essentially constituted by a nameless, unifying quality."⁶ Shusterman notes that James finds that the "nameless qualities of aesthetic experience make works of art so different in value and spirit."⁷ Such "nameless" qualities are explained indirectly through highlighting the perceptual aspects of embodied cultural habits. It seems clear that James's attention to the originality and understanding of embodiment goes further than the recognizably perceptual, and of what is presently evident in experience, by recognizing creative, imaginary qualities of the unity of commonly lived experience (pure experience). These qualities are unifying as well as being *in the making*, and this is a possible reason James talks of such qualities as unidentifiable.⁸ Scheler's insights into metaphysics, aesthetics and art can be read as answering James' "namelessness" in this respect. Hereafter, I describe this phenomenological creative opening of aesthetics as an artistic valuation of soulful action, and I explain how each thinker approaches this valuation.

⁶ Shusterman, p. 348.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ See John Daniel Wild, *The Radical Empiricism of William James* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1969, 1980), p. 395. I refer to John Wild's explanation of *pure experience* with reference to a phenomenological approach to James' thought. Wild clarifies, "In opposition to traditional rationalism, as well as traditional empiricism, James maintained from the beginning that relational patterns are directly felt and perceived. Immediate experience cannot be dismissed as a set of isolated data. It involves relational structures of the most basic kind, including selective attention, consciousness, continuous transition, and the search for truth. These patterns have always been a central concern of philosophy, because it is only through them that our discrete experiences are gathered together into a meaningful world. In the past, however, they have been identified with the sense-giving activity of a separated mind. According to James this supposition is unnecessary, for these patterns are already known by direct acquaintance independent of language and conceptual thought, and may become articulate and communicable by a certain kind of conceptual analysis."

⁵ "Metaphysics and Art", *Max Scheler (1874-1928) Centennial Essays*, edited Manfred S. Frings (The Hague: Martinus Nijhof, 1974), p. 112.

Throughout this discourse I find helpful some hermeneutic disclosures made through art history. Scheler and James advance a cultural dynamic with their views on aesthetics and lived experience in respect to creating a better world, and art helps trace this cultural experience.⁹ Both philosophers have the curious similarity of having been close friends with famous painters. John LaFarge was James's long time friend and painting companion, and Otto Dix enjoyed the company of Scheler.

The paintings of George Inness, which reflected the spiritual monism of Swedenborg's followers, surely influenced LaFarge and James. Swedenborgism is at the heart of the spiritualism James was taught by his father, Henry James Sr., and while he reacted against these teachings, they still influenced his concepts of "pure experience" and the "fringe" of experience.¹⁰ James thought of all experience, physical and mental, as interconnected and pluralistic, in that what is not paid attention continues to exist in relation to one's sense of the world. Psychologically James formulates a map of un-chartered territory into the unknown influences that

play on a consciousness rooted in a unity of experience. In a similar way, at the turn of the 29th century American painters explored what it meant "to have soul"¹¹ in relation to a unity of nature and spiritualism, and the Tonalist styles of Inness and LaFarge exemplify such queries. By way of a like-minded quest, Tonalism resembles the Germany Magic Realism painting of the fin de siecle.¹² In turn, German Post-expressionism and surrealism were partly influenced by these movements in painting in the early 20th century.¹³

While I am unable to fully describe these cross influences in this introductory exploration, I can make visual reference to Inness' late painting *Sunset in the Woods* (1891) as a metaphor for James' aesthetics.¹⁴ The painting is of the last light of a late afternoon in a New England wood, and it was completed in the artist's studio many years after its first conception.¹⁵ The oil on canvas emphasizes Inness's mastery of employing chiaroscuro and sfumato to capture photographic-like passages of atmosphere, while capturing a mood of the natural phenomenon. The sunlit area in the picture

⁹ In respect to James and community see John J. McDermott, "The Promethean Self and Community in the Philosophy of William James", *The Rice University Studies*, vol. 66, no. 4 (1980), pp 87-102. Although James's is know for his "individualism" of perception, the relational aspects of his psychology bring forth the common element between his views and Scheler's, i.e. that the individual's choices are not choices at all unless they are functional in society among the plurality of relationships.

¹⁰ Such influence is complex, but the thrust of Henry James Sr.'s influence on William James' philosophy lies in the area of virtues and metaphysics. Accordingly, this is the relevance of this matter in regard to this comparasion of William James and Scheler. For how the influence relates generally see Gérard Deledalle, "William James and His Father: A Study in Characterology", *The Philosophy of William James*, Walter Robert Corti, Editor (Felix Meiner, Hamburg, 1976). For explanations of the Swedenborgian influences on specific Jamesian concepts such as *pure experience* and *fringe* see Armi Värila, *The Swedenborgian Background of William James* (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedekatemia, 1977).

¹¹ See David A. Cleveland, *A History of American Tonalism 1880-1920* (New York: Hudson Hills, 2010).

¹² I refer those interested in this, to date, undeveloped connection to Dennis Crockett, *German Post-Expressionism* (Pennsylvania State University Press: Pennsylvania, 1999).

¹³ For a brief exploration into John Dewey's pragmatic aesthetics, which were influenced by James, and European art movements of the first half of the Twentieth Century see Krystyna Wilkoszewska, "Dewey's Philosophy of Art as a Challenge for European Aesthetics", *Pragmatism and Values, the Central European Pragmatist Forum*, ed. John Ryder and Emil Visnovsky (Rodopi, Amsterdam; New York, NY, 2004). Please note that Wilkoszewska can be debated on several accounts; mainly in regards to Dewey's association with progressive art trends and her omission of Dewey's important passages on aesthetics in *Nature and Experience*.

¹⁴ Corocoran Gallery of Art, Washington D.C., 1891, 48 ½ x 72 1/8 in (122.2 x 183.2 cm), Museum Purchase, Gallery Fund 91.10.

¹⁵ Orville O. Hiestand, *See America First*, Kessinger Publishers, before 1929. 77. Now part of the Guttenberg Project; Original url:<http://www.gutenberg.org/etext/3547>.

presents a clearing of verdure foliage, as it also presents the conscious attention of the artist and viewer. At the same time, the darkened forest shows what surrounds one's focused attention and what continues to spur the imagination. Similarly, the Jamesian notion of a unity of consciousness, which includes unknown aspects of consciousness, can be seen through his concept of *the fringe*, as a deepening or enrichment of lived, experiential, phenomena. Metaphorically the painting portends both the attention and curiosity of the artist and viewer, along with embodying a feeling of how one's mood is actively disposed through the art experience.

Although by way of a different style, there is an evocation of such phenomenological aesthetics to be experienced by viewing the paintings of Otto Dix. Dix lived and painted in Berlin during the Weimar Republic. Like George Grosz, he was named a *Verist* in that their work from that time was often social critique and included elements of graphic realism that revealed the hard truths and hypocrisies of post-war society. Yet along with employing techniques influenced by journalism and comic books such as collage and animation, Dix and Grosz drew with a hyper-naturalism of form and had a penchant for landscapes. Dix painted and drew as a social critic, by utilizing drama and techniques of magical realism. The romanticism of German paintings, the emergence of popular culture, and the urgency of social critique fused, thereby resulting in the outspoken socio/political/aesthetic movements of Dadaism and surrealism.

Culturally, prior to Hitler's rise Americanism was a key theme of the Weimar milieu, as the artists, intellectuals and citizens welcomed America's music and movies and its innovative spirit and progressive directions for society. Dix was a reader of philosophy and he knew Scheler well, even doing a famous portrait of him in the

late Twenties.¹⁶ As active members of the intellectual movement of the Weimar Republic, the Nazis considered both to be undesirables. Americanism also spread through philosophy and Scheler embraced pragmatism as perhaps no other German philosopher. However, both Scheler and Dix were critical of the calculating, competitive side of American culture, and they were skeptical of an emphasis on domination by wealth, mass production, and manipulation of the status quo. An interpretation of Dix's work, throughout this essay, brings Scheler's pragmatic aesthetics to light in relation to such paradoxes, specifically with regards to culture and human nature.

Scheler's treatise *Cognition and Work* exposes a love-hate relationship with pragmatism.¹⁷ On the one hand he criticizes the general pragmatic perspective as being too utilitarian and consequential, and on the other he champions James' thinking on the integration of the theoretical and the practical.¹⁸ In his essay on aesthetics, "Metapyschics and Art," he critically aligns general

¹⁶ Most notably Dix and Scheler shared an interest in Nietzsche's philosophy. Dix modeled busts of Nietzsche from bronze. See "Nietzsche and the Future of Art", *Hyperion: On the Future of Aesthetics*, a web publication of *The Nietzsche Circle*: www.nietzschercircle.com (December 2007). Copyright © 2003 Friedrich Ulfers and Mark Daniel Cohen.

<http://www.nietzschercircle.com/hyperion0728.html>
09/29/2012: 5:24 pm Central Europe Time.

¹⁷ Scheler, *Cognition and Work*, 293. Scheler makes clear his critique; "Pragmatism bears a close affinity to the advancement of Kantian philosophy, an advancement Fichte had completed. For pragmatism, the world is only the material for a free activity of the ego, and, under pragmatism, the task of theoretical cognition loses its independence from the practical, moral consciousness. Also for pragmatism and its modern successors such as Chr. V. Sigwart, W. Windelbrand, H. Rickert, H. Münsterberg, the concept of being is reduced to the concept of value, the concept of 'object' is reduced to the experienced ought of the recognition of a content through the judgment that should be a type of 'assessment.'" We will describe in the future the above mentioned theses as pragmatism in the broader sense to which we contrast, as pragmatism *in the stricter sense*, the pragmatism of James, Schiller and Dewey."

¹⁸ Stickers, p. 76.

pragmatism with empiricism and a latent, passive subjectivity, while conversely going on to outline an aesthetics that echoes James's approach.¹⁹

Scheler's general use of the term pragmatism does not fit with James's method of understanding meaningful cognitive particulars conjoined with practical experience. James distinguishes contextual ideas from the kind of redundancy of thought and action Scheler infers by asserting that we select and focus on particular relationships that our ideas have with things through testing those relationships.²⁰ Scheler would be wrong if he suggests that pragmatic aesthetics focuses on either a theoretical or an associative stance that would measure art merely by its symbolic value or social capital, in that James recognizes all aspects of cognitive *and* practical experience that stand out as significant as a matter of chosen, meaningful relationships.²¹

Regardless of Scheler's objections to what he terms general pragmatism, he understands aesthetics (feelings and emotions, which are enlivened in experience specifically through artistic practice and reception) as pragmatically constitutive of embodied meanings and collective values that have immediate effects in the world.²² Scheler's aesthetic philosophy is pragmatic and similar to James' on three interconnected accounts. Initially, there is the vital connection between the functionalization of values through objects, which can be compared to James' notion of *ideas cum rebus* or ideas with things. Further,

Scheler proposes a top down valuation that explains the artistic embodiment of value and a materiality of value making. This is an active yet cognitive aesthetic, similar to James's preferring of one way to look at our experience over another as a means to better the world. Finally, Scheler's notions on the *vital soul* and *fantasy* have a curious connection to James's belief in the possibilities of experience. While James and Scheler have nuanced views on imagination, they both agree that the unifying aspects of aesthetic structures and art are creative, directional, and purposeful.

All three comparisons imply virtues or meanings that interweave with values of community. Despite the emphasis on individualism throughout James' mostly psychologically oriented writings, acknowledging the self as a character built on active, productive relationships necessarily understands the individual and culture in a community minded respect.²³ Similarly, Scheler's personalism is built on individual dignity and responsibility to the solidarity of cultural relationships. Aesthetically, for James and Scheler, art and soul (as lived experience) are pragmatic in both individual and communal respects.

Ken Stickers explains the connection between Scheler's thinking and James's notion of *ideas cum rebus*, saying that both realize that unless ideas are "with things" they are idle and non historical. There is no object/subject divide in that ideas are "with things" rather than coming before the physical world, as with Platonic Forms, or after, as with a positivist bias.²⁴ In this respect, James understands the agent as creatively sketching her world. James also describes an ongoing process of meaning making that has a place in the world because of the

¹⁹ Scheler, "Metaphysics and Art", *Max Scheler (1874-1928): Centennial Essays*, ed. Manfred S. Frings, The Hague: Martinus Nijhof.

²⁰ Shusterman, p. 350.

²¹ See William James, *Meaning of Truth* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1911), p. 210.

²² Ibid. As mentioned, James thinks of these intuitions as harmonies between "objects of thought", and Scheler thinks of intuitive feelings or emotions as apriori. However both understand that the agent is pulled toward immediate experience by an aesthetic valence that is preferred, and that is consequentially acted on.

²³ See William James, "A World of Pure Experience (1904)", first published in *Journal of Philosophy, Psychology, and Scientific Methods*, 1, pp 533-543, pp 561-570 and McDermott, "The Promethean Self and Community in the Philosophy of William James" as cited in ft 9 of this essay.

²⁴ Stickers, p. 77.

world's state of affairs.²⁵ In such an aesthetic process, practice and ideas evolve with the making and using of objects to bring forward contrasts, critiques, and similitude from the flux of experience, not merely as practice but as a utilitarian implementation of *homo faber*. In relation to art, such ideas and habits are not a matter of stored knowledge but of directional action or making, that is done to explore the effects of what is preferred in cognition and brought into focus creatively from the absolutely real, or what James terms *the fringe*. *The fringe* is a description of the 'givenness' of the world where we find the acting, emotional person already in experience. This Jamesian view seems to echo through Scheler's mode of phenomenology, which is attitudinal rather than eidetic.

Although Scheler states that art "with ideas" is a falsification, because art symbolically represents or points to an ideal realm "through concrete contents of intuition", he does take up a concept similar to *ideas cum rebus*, by explaining the functionalization of essences/values in the making of art.²⁶ Scheler understands an apriority that is functional through individuals' dispositions, revealing a hierarchy of values that are the personal and the ethical responsibility of the person. This hierarchy is axiological in that it is based on a formal, abstract apriori, but it is relative to lived experience and action. Each person has a value disposition coming from the core values of utility, pleasure, life and nobility, spirit and the divine. However, I must stress that Scheler's axiology is dependent on democratic, free actions within lived experience. His notion of art as "*poiein*", meaning an activity of embodied making, stands at the center of his process aesthetics as an ongoing, embodied yet constructive

functioning of such existential values. Scheler's understanding of artistic making is as follows,

Art is "*poiein*" building, the producing of a sense structure out of material, a structure that at least cannot be matched for its correspondence with the "fortuitous reality" of the world.²⁷

Scheler sees the artist as both an idealist *and* a realist who realizes experimental ideas that posit values, or "aesthetically worthy meanings," that are conscious.²⁸ Moreover, art objectifies ideas and/or values through an aestheticizing process that is *telic*, as art changes reality by directing dispositions to a goal of understanding and appreciation. Scheler sees art as more than experimental and as truly creative. Art is more intelligent than the descriptive exercises of metaphysics or science, since those discursive structures are based on the "fortuitous reality" of the world, whereas art is based on the perfecting of a new world made with virtuous ideas.

For example, a landscape painting does not describe or symbolize nature as geographical data; it transfigures the ideas, factors, or virtues of nature of a particular time and place through its medium and aesthetic structure, leaving an indication of an aesthetic/value structure to be acted upon by its reception. For Scheler, the *vital-soul* and *fantasy* are primal life forces entering into the service of the values of culture and community through creative, aesthetic productive imagination, and such value-laden aesthetic structures can be seen in the landscape paintings of the German Magic Realists.²⁹

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ See Scheler. "Metaphysics and Art", pp 116-119. For a precise explanation of creative, aesthetic productive imagination that includes valuation of life, Scheler provides a full description of his thinking, i.e. "On the contrary, there is *productive* imagination in every living being of higher, more complex structures – driven forward through the automotoric functions of drives in the vital soul. Only gradually does this imagination become subjected to correction, critique, or selection, during the maturation of sense perception and noetic acts of the mind. It is not extinguished, however, in the mature and optimal state of a human being. Rather, it

²⁵ See William James, "The Dilemma of Determinism," *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy*, ed. Frederick Burkhardt et al., *The Works of William James*, vol. 6 (1897; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), p. 115.

²⁶ Scheler, "Metaphysics and Art", p. 106.

Dix's "Randegg in the Snow with Ravens" (1935), makes clear a contrast between the virtues of the ideal *Gemeinschaft* and the society of ravens that feign the fire and warmth for life outside of community. When he painted this landscape-portrait, Dix was separating himself from the Nazi regime while living with his family in the Swiss borderlands. His painting immerses the viewer in the scene with the mood of a foreboding, snow-laden sky, and a somewhat shallow perspective of distance that reflects on itself, continually returning the viewer to the action in the foreground. Here the ravens dive bomb for a patch of food in the snow. Yet, at the center of the picture are the village's hearth and a wagon with winter reserves, depicting a feeling of community virtues alongside the life of the ravens. Unlike a geographical map, the viewer experiences direction toward the existential significance of the ideal world. Are the virtues of community that are shown in the picture's contrast eternal? One could say so for this picture, not in the sense of being detached from the physical existential world, but through an ongoing relationship of feelings about a perfected world, in contrast to a society where values and virtues are less understood as relational.

This brings us to the second major aspect of comparison: both James and Scheler think of aesthetics as relative to a world more valued than the present world. Scheler explains a top-down aesthetics that is "a building of what is not there, but what would be worthy to be there according to aesthetic ideas of value,"³⁰ and this is comparable to James' notions of meliorism. The major crux of the comparison here returns the discussion to Scheler's thinking on art as funding and being founded on primordial essences of virtues that are soulful or

more and more enters into the service of the mind which, in the function of reasonable willing, restrains and regulates drive-impulses and directs fantasy to the mind's own goals: through spiritual, aesthetic value-feeling fantasy enters into the service of aesthetic goals."

³⁰ Ibid.

driven by meaning in lived experience, and James has a very different take on essences and essential values. In Scheler's *Formalism in Ethics and Non-Formal Ethics of Values*, the value essences are ranked in an *ordo amoris*, which is a non-rational order that is in accordance with a love of all that exists. Preferring certain values to others exemplifies the advancement of a person's disposition through the apriori that the ideal points to, yet the practical realm remains unintentional until it is affected by art and action. However, as has been said, these values do not present an abstracted reality, rather they are embodied through persons in lived experience and are signified and built upon by art. These values can direct the free *vital soul* and *fantasy*.

Scheler finds that art has its own aesthetic values that bind value-laden autonomous worlds. The process of creating these worlds is a matter of presentation by which we add value to the real world. The aesthetic values of art serve as "leading and guiding factors of selection and composition."³¹ Proceeding with the primal values each artist is best able to work with, the artist works through conscious intuitions which through sensation take on forms, such as language and signs, to create a new world in which primordial essences are vital and active. The artist is never "disinterested" in setting the actual world aside, and the process of lived experience has its effects in the art's "immediacy of givenness" of its essence of value.³² This ontology develops an aesthetic anthropology of sorts, not a judgment of taste. In the same respect, art history is a matter of revealing the wonderings of our hearts and souls as being involved with the "variations of creative feelings of style – and not variations of the 'taste' which forms itself only on the basis of the works of art created and enjoyed."³³ So artists create worlds free of judgment, yet more aesthetically valued than the present world.

³¹ Scheler, "Metaphysics and Art", p. 113.

³² Scheler, "Metaphysics and Art", p. 106.

³³ Scheler, "Metaphysics and Art", p. 114.

Pure experience is the complete flux of life and world, and according to James someone's disposition is made through relating to certain aspects of this flux. Essences, if there are any, are valued properties that are selected psychosomatically from amongst the relationships of experience, and they differ from situation to situation and person to person. Therefore, trust and belief in the possibilities of experience and an inter-connected community of human affairs is foundational to the values of a meaningful reality.³⁴ James also points out that these relational properties or essences are not associative or static but able to be analyzed, and they are directional for the course of the state of affairs.³⁵ Likewise his notion of *ideas cum rebus* includes a notion of an ideal world alongside an absolute world that can be perceived by many people knowing the same value of the meaning of a thing in a myriad of reflections. In relation to art making and reception there is a preferencing from this common sense that can be understood as a striving for what Shusterman explains as "better worlds of experience."³⁶ Shusterman references James from *The Principles of Psychology* on this point:

The world of aesthetics is an ideal world, a Utopia, a world which the outer relations persist in contradicting, but which we as stubbornly persist in striving to make actual. (pp 123-125)³⁷

The upshot of the comparison here, in light of their differences concerning a priori essences and common meanings, is that James, as Scheler, finds utopian worlds of art not abstracted from the real, but made of the real, in respect to an ideal.

A third aspect of Scheler's philosophy of art that relates to pragmatist aesthetics is his thinking on the creative autonomy of *fantasy*. *Fantasy* is the activity of the imagination, yet *fantasy* and imagination can hardly be

separated in that conative action is Scheler's ground of aesthetics. *Fantasy* is active as a matter of consciousness partly based on memory in order to reproduce feelings or sensations; it is a sense and a way of being. Furthermore, it is a source of creativity funded from the *vital soul* of life, and through *fantasy* we "can feel what we never experienced, and wish what we never encountered."³⁸ Values imbued with drives are given to experience in the working out of *fantasy*. It is what one is driven to act on from the utopias of fantasy that persists against chance events of the world, which are often not experienced artistically.

This view might seem to be in contrast with James' concept of imagination in his early writings in *The Principles of Psychology*, wherein imagination is based on memories that are rearranged in novel ways. Yet James was consistently opposed to associationism, and he comes to add value to imagination by way of the creative agent finding new directions in the continuity of experience that are valuable. For James' radical empiricism, the imagination is praxial as it finds the world a phenomenon to be acted upon creatively. The difference between a thinker like Hume (who searches for sources of value in a reconstructive imagination) and James is that the latter finds the reconstruction of imagination to be valuable in an experimental sense, since we invest our actions not only through the actual, but also through the possible. James' core aesthetic value is how persons look toward a ground of belief for our ideas, experiments and dreams within lived experience. In *The Principle of Psychology* this is what James calls *Soul*.³⁹ For James *Soul* is a relational aesthetic ground of belief in the possibilities of actuality. James describes his meaning of *Soul* in the *Principles of Psychology*,

³⁴ James, *Principles of Psychology* (New York: Henry Holt 7 Co., 1890), vol. II, p. 329.

³⁵ James, *Principles of Psychology*, vol. II, p. 333.

³⁶ Shusterman, p. 355.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Scheler, "Metaphysics and Art", p. 118.

³⁹ James, *The Principles of Psychology*, pp 345-346.

But what positive meaning has the Soul, when scrutinized, but the *ground of possibility* of the thought? And what is the 'knocking' but the *determining of the possibility to actuality*? And what is this after all but giving a sort of concreted form to one's belief that the coming of the thought, when the brain-processes occur, has *some* sort of ground in the nature of things? If the word Soul be understood merely to express that claim, it is a good word to use.⁴⁰

James's *Soul* is the source of imaginative action, just as the *vital soul* is the drive behind *fantasy* for Scheler.

Thomas Alexander credits James with producing one of the most, if not the most, rational understanding of thinking as aesthetic imagination. Alexander reflects on James' impact on epistemological theories;

Our rationality is a process then, which is driven by an aesthetic eros. For James this includes a banishment of uncertainty towards the future, a harmonious anticipation of the world acting "congruously with our spontaneous powers." (In quotation William James, *Will to Believe*, pp 75-76/66).⁴¹

But this certainty of belief is not unconnected with the real world of situational flux, and as Alexander rightly points out James was not putting forward a "voluntaristic nihilism". Instead James is explaining that people's creative thinking on life's problems matter in realizing possible worlds of experience. Alexander looks towards John Dewey to extend James' notions of the possibilities of experience to a moral community.⁴²

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Thomas M. Alexander, "Pragmatic Imagination", *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, vol. 26, no. 3 (Summer, 1990), p. 333.

⁴² See Alexander, "Pragmatic Imagination", p. 335. Alexander connects James with community as do other scholars such as McDermott. He does this on an aesthetic basis and he then traces this pragmatic aesthetic to an influence on Dewey's aesthetics of experience and the formulation of what he calls the "moral imagination." For a full understanding of his term "moral imagination" see Thomas M. Alexander, "John Dewey and the Moral Imagination: Beyond Putnam and Rorty toward a Postmodern Ethics", *Transaction of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, vol. 29, no. 3, (1993), p. 391. "A moral imagination requires experience, a body of

Dewey brings the imagination into the matter of choosing possibilities because we have learned how to make choices in relation to others. According to Alexander, Dewey's realm of imagination is primarily a matter of community".⁴³ In fact Alexander views all three of the classical pragmatic thinkers, Peirce, James and Dewey, as finding community building as necessarily indebted to imagination and aesthetics. For these thinkers, inquiry into perceptions of experience and the testing of new innovations through experience is a matter of creative action as learned with others. Alexander explains,

To acquire sensitivity to the developmental meanings of events, which define the significance of the situations in which we find ourselves and the values they possess, is what I have called here "the moral imagination."⁴⁴

Values for Dewey are the qualities of continued practice that persist, as the past takes on the expectations of the future in the present moment. Dewey's aesthetic experience involves a unity of meaningful value-laden habits that allow for improvised projections into an innovative future. Dewey conceived imagination as a source of social and moral growth, in that it is an artful approach to life. This is a democratic ontology in that creativity factors in practical qualities of experience as recurring because they are consistent with communities' active values and conditions. Alexander makes Dewey's intentions clear, "The democratic community for Dewey is the community which understands itself as actively pursuing life as art."⁴⁵

Scheler also saw an artful existence as the most imaginative approach to bettering the moral and social fibers of communities. In his axiology Scheler's theories

developing habits, education, an ability to understand the way other people think and live, and the ideal of discovering through cooperative action solutions to conflicts."

⁴³ Alexander, "Pragmatic Imagination", p. 340.

⁴⁴ Alexander, "Pragmatic Imagination", p. 390.

⁴⁵ Alexander, "Pragmatic Imagination", p. 341.

place cultural values of the *life-community* as the second highest tier of virtues. Without cultural solidarity of belief in the betterment of community, there is no possible ground for actual moral progress or creative artistic experience. However, communities must constantly reflect on what their world “ought” to be and are responsible for making that belief a reality. Art is a testing ground for stronger values and a moral compass as well, and it can be understood as a pathway to understanding and comprehending the possible virtues imbued in the existential activities of life. Scheler exclaims,

A work of art says, as it were: “This, You Eternal Ground of all Things is what You just wanted to tell me – be it without quite being able to do so, or, being able to do so in Your rational and Impenetrable ‘Fiat’ of Your willing”. Or it addresses us by saying: “This also You could have told us without violating the idea of a possible world of essence”.⁴⁶

By recognizing Scheler’s aesthetics as a positing of qualities that are embodied forms, which function as they are conceived intuitively through belief and imagination, we can deem a close relationship between his aesthetics, James’ sense of meliorism, and Dewey’s moral imagination. For James and Dewey aesthetic experience is the forward-looking aspect of life and for Scheler “art creates a *new* world added to the real one”.⁴⁷ Aesthetics and pragmatism take on a unique voice through such views on *fantasy* and imagination, as art and soul work together through the creative, directional and experimental actions of the artist. How does this experimental yet value-laden aesthetics play out in practice? Let us turn to another example in the paintings of Dix to disclose the directional qualities of artistic valuation.

In Scheler’s and Dix’s era, human drives were played out through a full throttle madness, as two World Wars and

a cultural disintegration ended in a kind of mass suicide of the Nazi regime. In Dix’s “Lustmord” of 1929⁴⁸ we find the fascination of the Weimar culture with the procreative and destructive, mixed with Dix’s method of painting that he claims unleashes a Dionysian spirit. Maria Tatar’s interpretation informs the viewer that Dix, like his Weimar milieu, associates “woman” with the unruliness of biology and earth, while the bourgeois setting of the room and architecture outside of the window depicts the opposite, showing the *Geist* of spirit and mind. Tatar thinks the murderer is victimized by what is perceived as the woman’s disruptive and disorderly dead presence. This is a probing and complex interpretation and it deserves mention in light of the rationalization of murder that is a cultural phenomenon during war, and in respect to feminist concerns. However, in relation to an aesthetic that looks to purge such drives, thereby acting as a deterrent, as Dix proposed, one can think of the murder scene as a contra-ideal world.⁴⁹ In an interpretation that reflects Scheler’s aesthetics, which is not necessarily completely contrary to Tatar’s, Dix acts as a surrealist and social critic. It is clear that the overturned chair to the left of the gashed and violated victim shows that the viewer flees from the scene of the crime, both from the reality of the cultural sleaze that surrounds it and from the false solutions that serve only to devastate all virtues of the heart. There is a subversion of love and togetherness, both with the macabre murder and the vacant urban setting. Talking about Dix’s painting, the Weimar art critic Ilse Fischer wrote:

And he attacks everything, though without any sort of system. With persistent brooding he strives to scrutinize all things chance pushes to

⁴⁸ Otto Dix, *Lustmord (Sex Murder)*, 1922, oil on canvas, 165 x 135 cm (65 x 53 1/8 in.). Missing. The quote was gathered by the art historian Olaf Peters. It makes clear the re-valuation of values converging with phantasm that is depicted in opposition to the ideal.

⁴⁹ Maria Tatar, *Lustmord: Sexual Murder in Weimar Germany* (Princeton University Press: New Jersey, 1995), p. 19.

⁴⁶ Scheler, “Metaphysics and Art”, p. 108.

⁴⁷ Scheler, “Metaphysics and Art”, p. 109.

the forefront of his restlessly groping mind, searching for their true reasons. He pounces violently and impulsively on his object – never mind whether person or thing – brutally eliminates all decorative trimmings, rummages cruelly and critically around the exposed strands, disintegrates, dismembers, dissects everything he encounters with the ecstatic thrill of the sex killer. But like the latter, who horribly sobered walks empty from the crime, he too stands, in the end, before things and people, before himself, sobered, hopeless. Do you now understand the dreadful truthfulness of his sex killing pictures, you who think a bit contemptuously of the choice of such a motif, a motif that seems dishonest to you, unnecessary, because you know very well that this good-natured fellow will never murder a woman?”⁵⁰

Dix’s art makes such a terrible and pointless crime meaningful and despicable. Dix does not depend on a psychic distance in order to create a facsimile of activism to cure social evils; he critiques in the strong terms of an ideal world by revealing the problems of the real world. He creates a morality tale based on the possibilities of a particular act, and shows the destructive side of aesthetic experience in terms of virtues. The painting presents a view of aesthetics based solely on egoistic desires, in that there is no understanding here of the values that make life possible for the *life-community*.⁵¹ Scheler and Dix imagine the implications of the Dionysian woman/man in that a realization of the anti-rationalistic life force can push woman/man to revalue its values. In this regard Dix asks here a question that Scheler answers pragmatically; namely, if one separates spirit from the forces that drive the *vital soul* there is a lesser valuation of lived experience. And as importantly, the drives of the *vital soul* depend on valued feelings and shared actions in respect to community.

Community as a cultural space of sympathy and caring must be built on respect for the otherness of others, and

on the foundations of trust and belief in one another, as well as a love of life that gives persons a disposition to assume such mutual respect. This is a big order if there is no imagination through an active manner of relationships. Scheler and James practiced a pragmatic aesthetic that finds such creative values in the making through art, as an embodiment of people’s ideas about community and a life well spent together. Art and soul work together to actualize such a creative realization and participation in life.

⁵⁰ “Painting, A Medium of Cool Execution”, *Otto Dix*, ed. Olaf Peters, Munich et al.: Prestel, p. 102.

⁵¹ For a full account of the *life-community* and its virtues see: Max Scheler, *Philosophical Perspectives* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958), p. 89.