The Edges of Resistance

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ABSTRACT: In *Morality for Humans*, Mark Johnson rejects what he calls moral fundamentalism as part of a sustained effort to challenge the dominant assumptions of modern Western philosophy, especially as they have emerged in the philosophy of language and mind in what we have come to call the analytic tradition. In this work, Johnson is also an inheritor of pragmatism. The resulting view is what Erin McKenna and I called a *philosophy of resistance* in our book, *American Philosophy from Wounded Knee to the Present* (2015). In this paper, I argue that Johnson's "embodied realism" is an example of a philosophy of resistance and provides the tools to better understand what philosophical resistance means. Using Johnson's conceptual tools, I show that a philosophy of resistance is such that it is not undone by what might be called the *paradox of resistance*, the objection that resistance itself is no more than a practical affirmation of the dominant system, and, as such, is part of the system's ongoing dominance. Instead, resistance, framed by what Johnson calls the "schemas of containment and source-path-goal," operates with a logic that makes resistance a complicated process that both affirms the dominant system and opposes it by providing the opportunity to go beyond it, operating at the edges.

Keywords: philosophy of resistance, Mark Johnson, George Lakoff, edges, C. S. Peirce

In *Morality for Humans*, Mark Johnson gives a personal narrative of his coming to reject what he calls moral fundamentalism. In the wake of this rejection, Johnson sought an alternative metaphysics, which he and his co-author, George Lakoff, call "embodied realism," that provides a starting place for rethinking the received philosophical problems of European-descended philosophy. "For real human beings," they write, "the only realism is an embodied realism" (1999, 26). The resulting view is what Erin McKenna and I called a *philosophy of resistance* in our book, *American Philosophy from Wounded Knee to the Present* (2015). A general claim in that book is that there are two strands of philosophical thought in the United States. The first strand descends directly (and explicitly) from European sources and operates not only within the academy but also in the intellectual life of American society and engrained in the concepts and methods used to understand the world and

solve its experienced problems. The examples of this strand are many and include the received notions of morality (often explicitly bound to the imported Christian tradition), critical thinking (central to present-day rationales for everything from standardized tests to a liberal arts education), and science (at least in its institutional forms of siloed disciplines and grant-funding agencies).

The second strand, we argued, encompassed a wide range of thinkers and activists who at once challenged the first strand and its dominance and offered various alternatives that were to affect, directly and indirectly, widely held conceptions and methods of problem solving. Included in this second strand are the classical pragmatists – Charles S. Peirce, William James, John Dewey, and Josiah Royce – along with a host of others – Simon Pokagon, Jane Addams, T. Thomas Fortune, Anna Julia Cooper, Elsie Clews Parsons, Horace Kallen, Alain Locke, Vine Deloria, Jr., James Cone, Noam Chomsky, John Kenneth Galbraith, Lewis Mumford and Rachel Carson – and, perhaps surprisingly, Rudolf Carnap, Otto Neurath, Gustav Bergmann, and May Brodbeck, and their neo-pragmatist successors Wilfred Sellars, W. V. O. Quine, Richard Rorty and Hilary Putnam. This last group counts as part of a tradition that struggled against one part of the dominant strand of philosophy only to end up embracing another part of that same strand. As a story of philosophy, the "strands" approach reads well. Our narrative locates thinkers in the vicinity of the problems of their day through what we call "signal events" and permits a kind of back-and-forth exchange that illuminates the developing philosophical views even where the thinkers did not actually talk to one another. But at another level, the thesis of two strands – a dominant one and a set of philosophies of resistance – begs the question. What precisely does it mean to resist in this sense? Is there a general character that philosophies of resistance display such that we students of philosophy might learn something about our practice in order to do it better or teach it well?

In gathering the strand of American philosophies of resistance, McKenna and I surveyed contemporary philosophers and included, in particular, the work of Mark

Johnson. In some sense this was recognition of Johnson's general stand on the received philosophy of the 1970s and 1980s. In an academy dominated by a philosophical approach that had given up its resistance in the 1950s, Johnson refused to operate within the expectations of his teachers and critics. Since the publication of his first co-authored work, *Metaphors We Live By* in 1980, Johnson has stood overtly outside what we have come to call the analytic tradition by challenging the dominant assumptions of philosophy of language and mind. Johnson is also an inheritor of the pragmatist strand of resistance. "I was introduced [to pragmatism] in the early 1980s by my colleague Tom Alexander in a seminar he was teaching on John Dewey's classic *Experience and Nature*. I began to see the pragmatism of C. S. Peirce, William James, and John Dewey as the most appropriate nondualistic and scientifically responsible framework for understanding human experience and cognition" (2017, 17). For Johnson, pragmatism, as he has taken it up, "is characterized by (1) a profound respect for the richness, depth, and complexity of human experience and cognition; (2) an evolutionary perspective that appreciates the role of dynamic change in all development (as opposed to fixity and finality); and (3) recognition that human cognition and creativity arise in response to problematic situations that involve values, interests, and social interaction" (2017, 96). At the same time, even as a resister, Johnson's work has stayed in many ways close to the problems debated by the dominant tradition and his solutions are often drawn from mainstream Western science. In this light, Johnson is part of the resistance, but in a qualified way that has also led to critiques by feminists and others for not resisting enough. Whether it is resistance enough, of course, is predicated on deciding that Johnson's work is a philosophy of resistance in the first place.

As a pragmatist, Johnson represents a renewed engagement with contemporary science. His work is also an opportunity to think again about the idea of a philosophy of resistance. It became clear that Johnson offered work that was not only an example of the strand of resistance in the American philosophical tradition that McKenna and I sought to describe, but his work also provides resources for understanding the outlines of the tradition of resistance in a clearer way than we managed in our book. Using Johnson's work, I will reconsider the idea of a philosophy of resistance. I will begin by arguing that Johnson's work in general has two characteristics we identified across the philosophies of resistance we examined in the American tradition. First, it emerges in the context of experienced problems, not received questions. Second, as a practice, Johnson's work involves the expectation of a pluralism of both results and methods, and the expectation that its conclusions are fallible. Using Johnson's conceptual tools, I will then argue that a philosophy of resistance is such that it is not undone by what might be called the paradox of resistance, the objection that resistance itself is no more than a practical affirmation of the dominant system, and, as such, is part of the system's ongoing dominance. Instead, resistance, framed by the schemas of containment and source-path-goal, operates with a logic that makes resistance a complicated process that both affirms the dominant system and opposes it by providing the opportunity to go beyond it, operating at the edges.

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In broadest form, a philosophy of resistance begins in the context of an indeterminate situation framed by conflicts among widely held beliefs experienced as disruption, dislocation, or confusion. In Johnson's case, the indeterminate situation was framed by the experienced conflict between the moral and metaphysical demands of his community and his own quest for meaning. "I was born and raised in… Kansas," he writes, "which contains the geodesic center of the country and which prides itself on being the *true* 'Heartland' of America" (2014, 5). His parents, he continues, "raised me to be a good Lutheran and, they fervently hoped, a good Republican. I failed them on both counts." The failure, which may be better understood as an act of resistance in the sense I will discuss, eventually led Johnson to "rethink" his

"whole conception of what it means to be human, along with [his] views about the origin of human moral values" (2014, 5). This sort of "rethinking" is, for Johnson and for McKenna and me, a quintessential example of doing philosophy understood as an activity that arises from experience in order to address problems at hand.

As a typical teenager, Johnson says, he was "naïve, parochial in my experience and vison, and mightily confused about love, life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" (2014, 13). These were not, however, only his problems "but rather represent basic issues attending any moral doctrine or theory that pretends to give ethical guidance by means of unconditional principles, laws, commandments, or standards of value" (2014, 13). Since experience is a situation framed by language, culture, history, embodiment, and the environment, philosophy arising from experience is not a transcendental practice engaged with the really real and truly true. Instead, for Johnson as for John Dewey in his essay "Philosophy and Civilization," the practice is "…approached with the antecedent idea that philosophy, like politics, literature, and the plastic arts, is itself a phenomenon of human culture" (1988, 3). As work within culture, within experience, Dewey continues,

> Philosophy thus sustains the closest connection with the history of culture, with the succession of changes in civilization. It is fed by the streams of tradition, traced at critical moments to their sources in order that the current may receive a new direction… But philosophy is not just a passive reflex of civilization that persists through changes… [P]hilosophy marks a change of culture. In forming patterns to be conformed to in future thought and action, it is additive and transforming in its role in the history of civilization. (1988, 7)

Philosophy, then, is a mode of inquiry into widely held beliefs and methods of solving problems that begins when established beliefs and methods are disrupted or fail.

The resulting philosophical practice is marked by the expectation that, whatever philosophical inquiries might find, they will be neither singular nor final. As a result, philosophers, from this perspective, recognize that the work the situation calls forth and its meanings must be

both pluralistic and fallible. What is pluralism in this case? In his incomplete last book, *Some Problems of Philosophy*, James recognized pluralism as a sort of disconnection that avoids complete unification ontologically and complete reduction epistemically. Pluralism, he wrote, "only has the negative significance of contradicting monism's thesis that there is absolutely *no* disconnection" (1977, 259). Johnson likewise describes his view in *Morality for Humans*, by three claims of negative significance: his view, he concludes, is *non-absolutist*, *non-relativist*, and *non-reductive*. He names a fourth, positive significance as well, amelioration, which lines up precisely with James's further claim that "pluralism… is neither optimistic nor pessimistic, but melioristic, rather" (1977, 269). When Johnson claims that, as a result of his philosophical inquiry, "moral absolutism is profoundly mistaken," he joins James in recognizing that there is not a single system, moral, epistemic or otherwise. Of course, what holds for moral absolutism holds for every specific claim that purports to have universal application: they can be mistaken. "There is," Johnson concludes, "no way of avoiding a plurality of reasonable moral systems and practices, so we should instead focus our attention on how a situated and fallible critical perspective would allow us to engage in reasonable moral appraisal" (2014, 15). The resulting approach is not only defined negatively, it simultaneously marks a view that is ameliorative in its application, that is, it is a view "predicated on the psychologically realistic hope that collective human reflection and agency can make things better through intelligent problem-solving" (2014, 196).

But is this view also a philosophy of resistance? Lakoff and Johnson, in their co-authored book, *Philosophy in the Flesh*, provide grounds for two concerns about what a philosophy of resistance could be following two spatial-relations schemas that seem to underlie the concept of resistance.

Johnson writes, "image schemas are the recurring patterns of our sensory-motor-affective experience by means of which we can make sense of that experience and reason about it, and they can also be recruited to

structure abstract concepts and to carry out inferences about abstract domains of thought" (2017, 127). On this view, all meaning emerges in organism-environment interactions and the specific patterns of interactions, for humans, provide the structure of embodied action and a "logic" for thinking about such action before and after the fact. Experiences of standing upright, moving in a particular direction, and encountering an obstacle generate "schemas" that provide a "logic" for thinking about up and down and movement toward a goal. "Because we must continually monitor our own changing bodily states, we are exquisitely attuned to changes in degree, intensity, and quality of feelings, which is the basis for our sense of scales of intensity of a quality (the Scalar Intensity schema). Because we must constantly interact with containers of all shapes and sizes, we naturally learn the 'logic' of containment (for the Container schema)" (2017, 129). The spatial logic of a container – the boundary between things inside and out, of putting things into something and taking them out – provides a pattern for thinking about the relations that frame our understanding of the abstract ideas of geometry and sets. Rather than explaining abstract concepts as a product of "pure" reason or a consequence of language, the study of image schemas shows that both reason and language are emergent aspects of human embodiment and so make abstract thought possible (2017, 132).

While Lakoff and Johnson do not discuss resistance directly, the concept appears in the context of moral strength and the process of willing. Here resistance emerges as a form of self-control, the ability to "stand up" for oneself, framed by the physical experience of standing. "When one is healthy and in control of things," they write, "one is typically upright and balanced" (1999, 299). The experience of physical resistance, as in standing up against forces that try to push you out of place, provides the schema that informs the conception of moral strength. Resistance then appears to be the experience of holding fast to a position one already occupies and a kind of self-control that is not about choice among alternatives, but rather against alternatives, as least

those presented by force of physical strength, reason, or passion. From this perspective, resistance is framed as a conservative force that aims to maintain the status quo and so a proper philosophy of resistance worthy of the name, in this sense, would be the obverse of a practice demanding change. If this is resistance, then McKenna and my idea that philosophies of resistance challenge the status quo would appear to be mistaken. The first objection to resistance as a proper characterization for a strand of philosophy that is oppositional is that resistance is conservative and not transformative.

But this is only one possibility for the meaning of resistance. It is also possible to understand resistance as framed by the source-path-goal schema (1999, 33–34) in which obstacles to the trajectory emerge in route to the goal and block or otherwise interfere with the effort to reach the goal or end-in-view. Moral strength appears again, this time as a means of achieving a purpose. "And because strength enables us to achieve our goals and overcome obstacles, we see moral strength – strength of will – as what makes it possible to confront and overcome evil" (1999, 291). In this case, resistance is acts of not yielding to forces that would interrupt the process. To set a goal of growth or social transformation, for example, and then have others contrive to block or undermine that path, calls for resistance. But for resistance of this sort to occur, opposition is both in relation to a present force or obstacle *and* in relation to some not-yet-achieved state. This suggests the second worry about the concept of resistance: that resistance emerges framed by the source-path-goal schema. If the goal that frames the resistance itself is a goal adopted from (or imposed by) the dominant system, then resistance is again only apparently oppositional and practically is as much a part of the dominant system as resistance that only seeks to conserve the existing order. Resistance, rather than actually seeking some new state steadfastly, is really a part of a larger system of power. Given either the first worry or the second, philosophies of resistance appear not to be a challenge to the dominant system they purport to oppose, but rather are part

of a perpetuating power – this is the *paradox of resistance*.

These objections to the possibility of a philosophy of resistance as means of social transformation – that resistance is at best a conservative force or it is at worst an unconscious process that reinforces the dominant system – are compelling and call for a response. However, using resources from Johnson's work, it can be shown that these objections only hold if the system of philosophies is closed, that is, where resistance and what it opposes form a dyad. Instead, if the framing metaphor is recognized as the triadic container schema that includes internal relations, external relations and a boundary, a different notion of resistance emerges. Rather than being a dyadic term that serves to affirm that which it opposes, resistance can be seen as a third element that is neither inside nor outside and both inside and outside at once. What Johnson's work suggests – and what helps to define the tradition that McKenna and I sought to present – is that resistance emerging at the boundary between communities and ways of thinking has the character of being necessarily pluralistic in experience and method and necessarily fallible in outcome. In short, I argue that resistance is at the edges.

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What does it mean to say that resistance is at the edges? In *Philosophy in the Flesh*, Lakoff and Johnson make the bold claim that "every living thing categorizes" (1999, 17). To the extent that categorizing is a mode of action, things that categorize are also agents. For Lakoff and Johnson, categorization is an evolutionary consequence: "if we hadn't [evolved to categorize], we would not have survived" (1999, 17). Even though it is not their concern, it is possible to generalize the concept of categorizing even further and see categorizing as *a process of maintaining a thing as itself in relation to other things*. From this angle, then, it would appear that not only living things categorize, but every *thing* categorizes. The process, as it emerges in the life activities of organisms, operates in the form of the container schema that divides the relevant world into things contained or included – things inside – and things excluded – things outside. The container schema by itself, if only understood as a relation of two terms, inside and outside, masks the more complex process of categorization that depends on processes of selection.

Even as categories operate on the schema of physical containment and exclusion, categories are not containers in a rigid sense (where everything is or is not in the category). In practice, "Human categories are typically conceptualized in more than one way, in terms of what we call prototypes" (1999, 19). A category – even if it is narrowly defined – is nevertheless a concept that directs our attention to a range of particulars where some serve as prototypes or exemplars of the category and other things that are "in" the category are similar but differ by degree from the exemplars. Categories on this view are rather more vague than the container metaphor would promise, serving to guide selection but not fully determine every result. The boundary of a category – understood in human categorizing as an indefinite fringe of things sufficiently like a category's prototype – forms a third element of the process and leads to the concept of "radial categories." "Instead of there being literal concepts defined by necessary and sufficient conditions," Johnson argues, "our concepts tend to have a rich internal structure that lacks any single univocal core and is rooted in our bodies, brains, and social interactions … The empirical research shows that our abstract concepts are defined by multiple, often inconsistent metaphors, resulting in a complex radial structure of our concepts and categories, with central category members connected to noncentral members by various principles of extension (e.g., propositional, image schematic, metonymic, and metaphorical…)" (Johnson, 2018, 28).

The concept of radical categories recalls Peirce's concept of a type or a "general." On his account, generals or types are real aspects of the world and provide both the structure needed for identifying the categories of things

encountered and at the same time provide the character of the things that do the categorizing. As a result, the process of using a category is a process of an emerging triadic relation that involves the interaction of the thing encountered, the categorizing agent, and the general or type that is produced or found in the interaction. Rather than containing a determinate set of particulars, categories are general and so are a range of possibilities. "In short," Peirce said, "the idea of a general involves the idea of possible variations which no multitude of existent things could exhaust but would leave between any two not merely *many* possibilities, but possibilities absolutely beyond all multitude" (1931, 5.103). Agency for Peirce is this categorizing process or, as suggested by T. L. Short, agency is the process of selecting for a type or purpose (Short, 2007, 110). Things, on this account, seek their own future by being at once a present particular that is moving (changing, transforming) into some next state constrained by their type.

A near analog of Peirce's conception of type is the character of a person. You are yourself at the moment, sitting where you are, thinking what you are thinking, breathing the air around you, seeing whatever you might see and hearing whatever you might hear at this moment. But as you persist, you begin to think about the end of this paper, your desire for a change in scenery or to carry out some other task you have set for yourself. The trajectory of your persistence is controlled by your character framed by the desires and habits that make you who you are. Your character, in short, directs your experience but does not fully determine it. You will consequently act in a range of ways, some closer to type and others further away. When interacting with other persons, our ability to recognize them is an embodied process of perception *and* the activities of those we perceive. The types of people we encounter are in part determined by the categories that frame our perceptions and likewise depend on what we encounter, and those things, in turn, depend on their own histories of categorization, both as the agents categorizing and as beings categorized.

As containers, categories are not simply things contained and things excluded. The operation of prototypes and the act of selection, as I said a moment ago, mark a third element of the container schema: boundaries. As Lakoff and Johnson observe,

> [W]e all have a central category of bounded physical objects that is extended as we grow older. Neural optimization extends the central subcategory of bounded physical objects to a radial category on the basis of existing conceptual metaphors and other neurally based cognitive mechanisms. The result is a radial category centered around bounded physical objects (persons, places, and things) and extended from this simple center in many ways. (1999, 500)

Here physical objects are engaged as containers including their inward stuff (possibly obscured), their surroundings, and the boundary that makes them what they are in our experience. This experience of boundaries is generalizable so that Johnson can declare in *Morality for Humans* that "Virtually all of my critical arguments… are based on the inescapable primacy of organism-environment interactions as the basis of our values, meanings, thought, and actions" (2014, 217). These inescapable interactions are understood as marking boundaries. Johnson paraphrases Damasio: "an organism must establish at least a minimal permeable boundary that separates it from and simultaneously keeps it in contact with its environment… Without a boundary, there would be no organic integrity" (2014, 54). Boundaries in this case must not be understood as either/or constructions but as ones that both include and exclude – that are permeable (see 2014, 77). But permeability is not the same as finding boundaries dispensable. In the process of deciding values, Johnson argues, boundaries are less permeable because they mark the gap between the problematic structure of the present situation and the larger or wider perspective that is necessary for the operation of moral inquiry.

Considering the changes in the moral view of chattel slavery, Johnson concludes that the recognition of a "wider scope for the term 'moral person'" was "essential in bringing about the abolition of slavery" (2014, 126).

The recognition of a "wider scope" depends at once on the recognition of a boundary – of different concepts of moral persons in this case – and the recognition of something beyond it. This does not require, as Johnson observes, a "Gods-eye view of [reality's] essential nature. We are ineliminably perspectival creatures who find themselves embedded in processes of a changing world" (2014, 123). But such finding requires the reality of present boundaries, types, or categories that frame our reflection and our resistance. Boundaries, in this sense, are not arbitrary nor are they dispensable in the context of valuation and they are central to categorization and so to the ontology of agents.

The centrality of boundaries is not a new claim either for Johnson or for the American tradition. James, in his essay, "A World of Pure Experience," identified the boundaries between things – their edges – as necessary for the very possibility of life itself.

> [T]here is in general no separateness needing to be overcome by an external cement; and whatever separateness is actually experienced is not overcome, it stays and counts as separateness to the end. But the metaphor [of a mosaic] serves to symbolize the fact that Experience itself, taken at large, can grow by its edges. That one moment of it proliferates into the next by transitions which, whether conjunctive or disjunctive, continue the experiential tissue, can not, I contend, be denied. Life is in the transitions as much as in the terms connected; often, indeed, it seems to be there more emphatically, as if our spurts and sallies forward were the real firing-line of the battle, were like the thin line of flame advancing across the dry autumnal field which the farmer proceeds to burn. In this line we live prospectively as well as retrospectively. It is of the past, inasmuch as it comes expressly as the past's continuation; it is of the future in so far as the future, when it comes, will have continued it. (1977, 212–213)

Johnson, and John Dewey, agree with James on this point but add to it. For them, the character of life is also marked by a process of growth and, as such, a process of unification. "The key," Johnson writes, "to whatever freedom we are capable of is knowing the meaning of our situation so that we can affect change for the better" (2014, 201). To make situations better, Johnson continues, "we want to unify our situation, which means resolving, as far as is humanly possible right now, whatever is at odds within and without us. Unification of experience is an ongoing dynamic ordering… of our situation" (2014, 202).

Which brings us back to resistance. Resistance at the edges still brings with it the possibility of perpetuating rather than undermining the system it set out to oppose. Unification, in this case, sees boundaries as the things to be crossed in order that experience can grow. Dewey writes in *Democracy and Education*, that education is "emancipation from local and temporary incidents of experience, and the opening of intellectual vistas unobscured by the accidents of personal habit and predilection" (1980, 230). And a society is properly free when "each individual gets an opportunity to escape from the limitations of the social group in which he was born, and to come into living contact with a broader environment" (1980, 24–25).

Boundaries, in this sense, are essential to freedom because they are things to be overcome. Being at the boundary, on the edge, might mark resistance, but this is at worst a temporary state since also boundaries mark a process of unification. This again raises the specter of the paradox of resistance. Consider Lakoff and Johnson's discussion of the metaphor of being *on the edge*. To be on the edge combines two basic schema – containment and source-path-goal – and marks the experience of standing at a boundary and looking back, looking toward the inside of the container of which one has been a part. "If you are *on the edge* of a bounded region," they write, "then you are close to being in that bounded region" (1999, 181). "Being on the edge of madness," relying on the same structure, "means being at the boundary of a state facing toward the interior. The issue is whether you *go over the edge*" (1999, 180). The orientation of being on this edge is not toward some transformative alternatives or even more experience, but "backward" toward what has been. Being at the edge reinforces the relation of inside and outside: it marks at once a dangerous place to be and a sharp transition to another state. Bounda-

ries, in this sense, are to be feared or permanently left behind. Either way, to resist at the edges appears to make resistance finally a process that demands an end to being on boundaries, leaving the thing resisted intact and the paradox in place.

The idea of an edge, however, is not a two-term relation. It takes as significant both containment and the relation of source-path-goal. An edge, understood in the context of a dyad, seems to present us with limited possibilities: fear or unification – affirming an uncrossable divide or setting it aside. But the edge of madness illustrates that edges are not simple boundaries but rather involve "facing," involve a direction. The presence of a goal or an end-in-view reframes the edge from a simple boundary to a location with a future and a past. Being on the edge is not only a dangerous place, it also a place of hope or at least the possibility of choice. Of course, edges have this character because they are framed by ends-in-view that emerge from the situation as it is experienced. "The aim set up," Dewey says, "must be an outgrowth of existing conditions. It must be based upon a consideration of what is already going on; on the resources and difficulties of the situation" (1980, 111). If this is so, then boundaries can neither disappear (since they define the situation that gives rise to the ends in the first place) nor can they block the passage beyond the situation (since they are ends that also frame movement away from the source). Resistance understood as emerging from experience marks the boundary of a recognizable dominant system and becomes an edge that also marks the possibility of change in the direction of something beyond. It is important to see that the boundaries do not vanish, however, and whatever unification there is, comes only by degrees. Consequently, the paradox of resistance is both rejected and affirmed: that which is resisted does not disappear, but it also does not exert complete control, absorbing the resistance into itself. The result is resistance that recognizes that there are some disconnections – and so pluralism and its consequent fallibilism – and that there remains a process of change that seeks something better beyond.

This idea of resistance appears again in Johnson's call for a response to the "Lure of Moral Fundamentalism" (2014, 164). "The linchpin for the whole orientation of moral fundamentalism," he writes, is "the idea that our moral concepts (e.g. *person*, *murder*, *lie*, *promise*, *right*) must be pre-given, literal, fixed, and highly determinate, in order for our moral reasoning to apply to concrete cases in experience" (2014, 170). Those committed to one or another form of such fundamentalism, enact the concept of "moral strength" by seeking "stable" "social arrangements" that "insure near fixity of beliefs and practices for extended periods of time." "Only under such conditions of resistance to change," he continues, "could one have the slightest hope of there being univocal foundational moral concepts grasped equally by all" (2014, 172). "Resistance," in this sense is to change while conserving a set of commitments already in place. But change, he notes, "is basic to the very possibility of experience" and "requires flexibility of thought, adaptation to changed conditions, and reconsideration of fixed habits, conceptual systems, and sometimes even moral principles" (2014, 189). In other words, action in a changing world requires a source, path and goal that can adjust to circumstances and overcome obstacles, including the obstacle of "immoral" moral fundamentalism. As such, moral agents must resist on the edge, poised between fixity and what will come next, organized by purpose and ready to respond to success and failure. Moral judgment as resistance in this sense is not framed by "an either/or logic that offers us only two radically opposed and equally mistaken" options where "either we *find* those moral values objectively existing in the world, or else we just *make them up!*" (2014, 194).

Moral judgment as resistance rather marks an interaction, a line where others also have their say, where no universal right of crossing has been issued. Perhaps we will be invited across or strike an ameliorative deal where, here at this place, we will have the chance to unify. Or perhaps we will recognize sharp differences and a few common concerns that produce not unification but an opening, a permeable boundary. Or perhaps

we will encounter an edge where we do not unify, where our efforts to connect are refused. Our heightened attention, our wariness at the border, will allow us to notice that we are not welcome and we stand back, not up or against. Johnson's ethical naturalism, read as a philosophy of resistance, has the potential to place us at the edge of systems of domination in order to inquire and cross or inquire and step back.

In the end, Johnson provides both a way to understand the idea of a philosophy of resistance and an example of such a philosophy. To resist is to oppose but, in opposing, it is to be at a boundary where our actions and the actions of the others who live there will decide how experience unfolds. Our lives will not be predetermined by dogma nor will we be free to act without constraint. Johnson captures this place well as he summarizes the stance, he takes toward the moral principles we inherit from the Western philosophical tradition. "Moral principles are not to be taken lightly, but neither are they to be taken as absolutes. They are guides to important considerations that ought to be tried out and tested in ongoing deliberations" (2014, 189). The resulting ethical naturalism, Johnson concludes, a is *non-absolutist* in "that there are no non-perspectival, ahistorical, or... a priori... sources of moral values or principles;" *non-relativist* since reasons can always be given for the choice of a "better" action; and *non-reductive* since "no one method, or single type of explanatory framework, is by itself adequate to the complexity of experienced situations" (2014, 196). It also marks a teleological commitment, *amelioration*, "predicated... on the hope that collective human reflection and agency can make things better" (2014, 196). "Better" in this case names Johnson's (and the long-standing pragmatist) normative principle of growth. Recalling the schema of motion, Johnson concludes "If we are to move forward, we need an enriched understanding of all the factors operating within our situation and all of the possibilities open to us for harmonizing our competing ends, principles and values. In a very real sense, we need to go beyond our present self-identity" (2014, 199). The edge of resistance

marks the boundary between ourselves and the world we navigate. Resistance here calls for one to "move forward" *beyond* ourselves, not back toward the places where we simply *stand up* for ourselves.

The philosophies of resistance that McKenna and I sought to describe are of this sort. They are ways of thinking and acting that reject dogma and recognize fallibilism and hope for a better future. But they also recognize that this can only occur in the context of a pluralism of method, knowledge, culture and place. As we said in *American Philosophy*,

> When [W. E. B.] Du Bois declared that the goal of racial groups in the United States was to embrace the 'unifying ideal of race', 'he (like [James] Cone after him) proposed a kind of power that both separated and united America along the edges of its parts. Such power... would not seek a final unity but a process of uniting with others here and there where the boundaries encountered would be the source of new life and experience... American philosophies of resistance, by attending to the situation at hand, became obstacles to the system, wrenches in the works. (2015, 374)

And in turn these philosophies of resistance sought to overcome the obstacles of the dominant culture and its ways of thinking and meaning. Johnson's work from his first dissent from the dogma of the church to his most recent work gives us a model of the struggle to live in a pluralistic world, a model of the edges of resistance.

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