

PRAGMATISM TODAY

ISSN 1338-2799

The Journal of the Central-European Pragmatist Forum



Volume 15, Issue 2, Winter 2024

Pragmatism as Global Philosophy





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*This project would not have been possible without the
generous support of SAAP.*

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INTRODUCTION TO “PRAGMATISM AS A GLOBAL PHILOSOPHY”

Rebecca Farinas and Philipp Dorstewitz

“The basic momentum is a widespread loss of faith in American – in liberal democracy, with its promise of the construction of a classless society. For Rorty, the fact of such a ‘moral decline’ is evident” (Nyiro, 2009).

Miklos Nyiro wrote, in 2009, on Rorty’s cautionary turn towards a more romantic and imaginative type of Pragmatism.¹ According to Nyiro, Rorty’s prophetic warnings of a disposed American identity, loss of world significance, even loss of soul, has come to pass. Because of the economic divisions caused by capitalist globalization and the loss of faith in institutions because of post-modern critiques, America is teetering on the brink of democratic and spiritual collapse. Nyiro writes, “To that extent, the tendencies inherent in globalization not only threaten the social project of Enlightenment but are pregnant with the menace of turning it into its very opposite.”²

Globalization along solely transactional ideas, in relation to how we think and how we solve problems, is also a major factor in the dispossession of democratic freedoms. Therefore, Nyiro relies on Rorty to point towards a pragmatic approach to philosophy by which we reckon with the past with hope for the future, rather than depending on sham universal laws, which serve as foundations for class separation, positivistic and deterministic nature, pure, disinterested reason, and static religions. The recent election of 2024, of Donald Trump (and Elon Musk) in the United States suggests such a turn by voting citizens, towards a faith in money and power, possibly over-riding laws protecting everyone’s democratic freedoms.

Nyiro asks if philosophers might continue to employ pragmatic philosophical and cultural methods which can guide us, while we reconstruct our values, ends in view,

and educational programs. The authors of this issue of Pragmatism Today are asking similar questions. The concerns of our authors can be summarized with two central questions: do pragmatic theories remain relevant, and do such tools still hold practical applications? They employ many methods and focus on a variety of topics, analyzing today’s reach and effectiveness of pragmatism.

However, we would like to remind readers of what could hold as glue for melioristic hopes for philosophies of democracy. Emil Višnovský convincingly makes a generally applicable case for pragmatism as a global philosophy, quoting William James,

everything that exists is influenced in some way by something else..., and in general, it may be said that all things cohere and adhere to each other somehow, and that the universe exists practically in reticulated or concatenated forms which make of it a continuous and “integrated” affair (James 1981, 68).

As we turn our focus to the following chapters, we should note that one of pragmatism’s most meaningful and progressive tools is an ‘integrated’ and pluralist approach to reality, in theory and practical affairs.

Our collaborative inquiry began in Vienna, June, 2024, at the bi-annual conference of the Central European Pragmatism Forum. In this issue of *Pragmatism Today*, the Forum’s Journal, we have reviewed some of the papers from the conference, as well as other essays the editors feel are particularly relevant to the conversation at hand. Other papers from that conference, and the Key-note address by Professor Leonard Harris, will be published in later Issues. As editors we would like to thank all the conference attendees, as well as the authors who herein have graciously contributed their work.

We can perhaps take a moment to reflect on that conference. As editors, one moment that seems especially poignant in the context of our inquiry, was when we were briefly lectured by Markus Hueble, curator and art educator at the Austrian Gallery Belvedere. Upon viewing and discussing Gustave Klimt’s *The Kiss* (1907 and 1908, museum in the Upper Belvedere Palace) the

¹ Miklos Nyiro, “Rorty on Politics, Culture, and Philosophy: A Defence of His Romanticism.” *Human Affairs*, Issue 19, 60-67, 2009. DOI: 10.2478/v10023-009-0021-0,60-67, P. 62.

² Nyiro, p. 62.

Curator explained, "She leans off the cliff, as she is enraptured. She also faces us the viewer, in bold assertion of her courageous predicament." His profound sentiment, if not an exact quote, related to us as pragmatists, how we collectively feel as lovers of wisdom and democracy, while re-opening an inquiry into the global relevance of pragmatic philosophy. As editors, we hope readers will experience that urgency and courage.

The Issue begins with a chapter concerning pragmatism, democracy and higher education, in relation to perhaps the most romantic of pragmatists, Emerson. Questions about globally prevalent social class hierarchies are surely at play as James Campbell frames Emerson's reflection on a philosophy of education as a global philosophy. Yet, a philosophy not lacking a distinctive geographic and historical context but one contributing to a welter of expressions of human thought that speaks to issues of global relevance. The article hints at a noteworthy tension: Emerson's stark distinction between higher and lower human faculties, on the one hand giving priority to reason, understanding, and aesthetic reflection over the senses and, on the other hand, our merely practical strivings. His elevation of the scholar/educator as a "prophet," dedicated to those higher faculties, seem to set him up for an anti-democratic and elitist ideal of education. However, Campbell and Emerson arrive at quite the opposite conclusion. By postulating the "primacy of the common over the elite," Emerson champions the ideal of a liberal education where cautious, personal, and individualized attention to fostering those higher capacities of reasoning take precedence over a narrow vocational training.

Boyles tends to the ambitions of Dewey's educational philosophy, questioning whether such an emphasis serves as a global philosophy, not, however, as a model or blueprint but as an experimental laboratory that generates insights for designing educational practices, either to be endorsed or avoided. For Boyles, Dewey is conscious and reflective that education systems are

modeled after the image of underlying economic systems that drive their societies. Since Dewey's day, these complications lead to attempts of a military-industrial complex to encroach on a free democratic liberal education by reducing it to vocational training, conditioning humans as dispositive factors in the chain of commercial value creation. Dewey believes that educators are not powerless in this game and proclaims the positive need to answer such encroachments with critical, reflective engagement of students in business ethics. Only through such critical engagement of schools as democratic microcosm, do societies, then and now, have a chance to avoid the pitfalls of merely being "acquisitive" (individualist profit oriented and fragmented) and to become "functional" (oriented toward the definition of attainment of a common good).

Moving from ideas and practices of global education, Kristína Bosáková, asks questions about our approaches to health and well-being, as a matter of our conscious realizations and our interpretations of our experiences of pain and suffering. She asserts Gadamer's understanding of health as a general state of consciousness by which we do not identify a feeling of "the wholeness of the whole." She argues against Daniel Dennett's position, however, that practical and social affairs of health management are what is most prevalent in explaining our approaches to human suffering. Bringing Rorty's understanding of what lies beyond such a functional approach is important, in that with Dennett's assumption we can not truly know the pain of others, sympathy and empathy, so such is strictly a matter of rational understanding. She thereby theorizes a philosophy of mind as including our global context and our individual realizations in relation to health and medical practices. Moreover, we should consider practical means to end suffering, but also our heart-felt desired ends. Interpretations of our mental states include such empathy and sympathy. Bosáková writes, "As all the mental states are necessarily bound to the physical existence, they cannot be exclusively temporal but

non spatial. Rorty also rejects the borderline position of mind. According to him, there is not an intersection point maintaining communication between the body and the soul of a human person."

From our hermeneutics in terms of general understandings of other's feelings and experiences of health, we can travel a road of inquiry, asking why we are stuck with a world which experiences global genocides and ongoing hidden histories. Furthermore, why do we block reparation of the health of our international and neighborly communities, and our personal and national identities? How can we analyze the injustice of eradicating the meaningful lives of family, friends, neighbors, fellow human persona from our present experiences? For Marsoobian, denialism is often part of global representations of national narratives, but it can be combatted by a community of self-reflective individuals, who remember, interpret, and communicate, thereby finding justice in the face of injustice. Such human resources are milestones of pragmatic philosophy. Marsoobian employs pragmatic epistemic methods in relation to the work of Classical American pragmatists, Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Jane Addams. Gilman wrote an article in the 1904 inaugural issue of *Armenia* entitled "International Duties," so as to combat, on a global scale, the denialism of genocide and national displacement. Yet, our hermeneutic understanding, in context with our personal experiences as diverse and expressionistic, is often undermined by situated hermeneutics and structural identity inequality. We can fight against hermeneutic injustice by taking actions in terms of personal testimony and critique (knowledge), reeducation, and social justice. Marsoobian thinks it is high time epistemic injustices are taken seriously, thereby reexamining national narratives, and urging people to act in terms of studied yet urgent reparative justice.

"Regaining Consciousness," Skinner's chapter, returns us to a pragmatic philosophy of mind. Skinner takes seriously Dewey's pragmatic instrumentalities of inquiry to solve a problematic inquiry, as well as pointing out

inappropriate technologies. Consciousness for Skinner is regained by solving problems with a sense of shared rationality, "while the efficacy of the conclusions is established through their successful deployment in practice." Soft relativistic thinking is not a problem-solving resource, and Skinner goes on to assert that agreeing with relativistic assumptions is not helpful to solving global problems. We have decisions to make, and these decisions depend, whether our votes of privatized individuals or representatives, should be focused on global priorities for the well-being of all of us. Such decisions cannot be made solely in terms of physical matters, but scientists, engineers, power brokers, and law makers must also rely on the non-material aspects of our human experiences. Our natures are interconnected and immaterial, our spiritual expectations go beyond a sense of regional context or material gain. Skinner urges us to recognize the emerging evidence of quantum physics, as well as the advice of Dewey's (and Joseph Margolis') to assume our reality as "natural but not naturalizable". We must use all of our human resources to resolve existential global threats.

The final chapter, in the main section of papers, allows for the future hopes of democracies and caste free citizens. Stroud elucidates Bhimrao Ambedkar's Navayana pragmatism in relation to combatting class and race struggles bred through tradition and religion. Ambedkar's pragmatic approach began when he was a student of John Dewey. His development of his own pragmatic philosophy correlates with a pragmatic historicity based on pluralism, as a notion, according to Stroud that "theories and personalities are such that it is reasonable to hold or live with a tension between two or more contradictory concepts or ideals." Yet, Personality and "semi-transcendental ideas' of liberty, equality, and fraternity are ways to critique or measure *any* given historical society in terms of justice." Navayana pragmatism relies upon these human resources, to chart a new way forward for democratic minded people struggling against division and oppression. Stroud's essay on Ambedkar's

strong case for democracy finds our discussion at a hopeful, albeit cautiously optimistic, point in time in terms of pragmatic philosophy having a place in discussions about global choices and trends.

This Winter Issue offers other engaging and scholarly essays on pragmatic thinking more generally. Saharrea and Viale's chapter puts forward new theories in terms of the epistemologies of Dewey and Rorty. Their investigations of methodologies and education augment approaches taken by the authors of the first section of papers. Both book reviews included in the issue are timely additions. Auxier examines, critiques, and adds to

the novel book co-edited by Hyeongjoo Kim and Dieter Schönecker, *Kant and Artificial Intelligence*. Stroud's book on Ambedkar's philosophy, which is a longer explication of the matters discussed in his essay herein, is reviewed by Hamid. Hamid maps new paths for practically applying Ambedkar's ideas, while giving us deeper insights into Stroud's scholarship.

Once again, as editors, we are indebted to all of the authors, and we thank them most sincerely. As well our gratitude goes to Ľubomir Dunaj. Also, we extend special thanks to Dóra Szauter.



CHAPTERS

EMERSON AND EDUCATION¹

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ABSTRACT: This essay is an attempt to reconnect our understanding of Ralph Waldo Emerson with his pragmatic roots through an emphasis upon his educational thought. After a brief introduction that emphasizes the importance of breadth for any philosophy, it considers the interactions within his value triad of Transcendentalism, Pragmatism, and Democracy. Turning more specifically to what education is and might be, we see Emerson's emphasis upon respect for the student. Emerson develops this most clearly in "The American Scholar," where he details the sources of education in nature, others, and action. Next comes a consideration of what he sees as the educational tasks of the scholar: to advance novelty and faith, to provide guidance and criticism, and to allow for self-exploration. Throughout Emerson's discussions of education, he always preserves the global implications of the philosophical life.

This essay is one of an ongoing series of attempts to explore what I take to be the pragmatic core of Emerson's work.² I have been particularly interested in understanding why later pragmatists (especially William James and John Dewey) were drawn to Emerson's thought, in the hope of recognizing his continued value to us.

This inquiry was inspired in part by my reading long ago of two volumes by Eduard Baumgarten (1898-1982), whose planned three-volume study of the American mind-set, *Die geistigen Grundlagen des amerikanischen Gemeinwesens*, was never completed. The published volumes were: Volume I - *Benjamin Franklin: Der Lehrmeister der amerikanischen Revolution* (1936), and Volume II - *Der Pragmatismus: R.W. Emerson, W. James, J. Dewey* (1938).

¹ In this essay, I will be drawing upon the following pieces by Emerson: "Address on Education" (1837), *Early Lectures* [EL], 2:194-204; "The American Scholar" (1837), *Essays and Lectures* [E&L], 51-71; "Being and Seeming" (1838), EL 2:295-309; "Literary Ethics" (1838), E&L, 93-112; "Education" (1840), EL 3:286-301; "Man the Reformer" (1841), E&L, 133-150; "Lecture on the Times" (1841), E&L, 151-170; "Intellect" (1841), E&L, 415-428; "The Transcendentalist" (1842), E&L, 191-209; "Politics" (1844), E&L, 557-571; "New England Reformers" (1844), E&L, 589-609; "The Man of Letters" (1863), *Complete Works* [CW], X:239-258; "The Scholar" (1876), CW X:259-289; "Education" (1883), CW X:123-159.

² Cf. Campbell, 2006, 2020, 2022.

The third volume, which proposed to explore other aspects of American intellectual life incorporating such figures as "Winthrop, Cotton, Ward; John Adams, Hamilton; Calhoun and so on; and perhaps Josiah Royce and others,"³ was never completed. With specific regard to the pragmatism that is the subject of this paper, Baumgarten writes: "In the textbooks of philosophical history, Emerson is not included under the heading of pragmatism, but rather as an offshoot of German idealism. Certainly there lived in him a higher idealism, but it was independent of influences of a more formal and extrinsic sort, like Kantian or Hegelian. His was an idealism of an unmistakably pragmatic sort."⁴

I will begin with two points. The first is that the notion of "global philosophy" that is shaping our gathering conjures up for me a pair of different meanings. One is of a philosophy that is appropriate and useful anywhere on the globe, not tied to any specific locale, culture, or population. Of course, each of us is more-or-less grounded in one (or more) of these specifics; but each of us also has the possibility of transcending that narrowness. For my part, I will be presenting my ideas in terms of my own background in American philosophy; but I do not believe that these ideas are in any way fatally constrained by these roots. Rather, by explicitly recognizing our diverse roots, I think that we can increase interaction and foster outreach. A second understanding of "global philosophy" is of a philosophy that aims to analyze the full spectrum of familiar topics and problems. This ambitious goal may be delusional; but it remains important to recognize that all of our mental efforts are of potential global value, and that any approach to philosophy—whether it be in the fields of ethics or logic, or aesthetics or cosmology—that rejected in advance the possibility of global value would be a self-confessed failure.

My second point is that the philosophical pragmatism that is also guiding our efforts incorporates a broad spectrum of related perspectives. On the one hand, there are

³ *Die geistigen Grundlagen*, I:17n.

⁴ *Ibid.*, I:239.

those perspectives prominent in the work of such figures as C.S. Peirce, C.I. Lewis, W.V.O. Quine, and Hilary Putnam, that incline toward logic, mathematics, science and technology. On the other, there are those perspectives within pragmatism that rest more comfortably adjacent to the humanities and the arts, and are represented by the work of such figures as Benjamin Franklin, William James, John Dewey—and Ralph Waldo Emerson.⁵ Differently phrased, I find that there are two poles to the pragmatic approach to philosophizing that can be very roughly characterized as scientific pragmatism and social pragmatism. As will become apparent, I am personally more comfortable with the latter. My championing of Emerson here as one of the central pragmatists further requires our rejection of any evaluation of him as purely a transcendentalist.⁶ My aim is also to rethink our sense of the larger relationship among Transcendentalism, Pragmatism, and Democracy, and thus Emerson's role within this triad of values.⁷ One place where Emerson's

contribution to this triad is particularly clear is in the area of educational philosophy. Although often discounted within philosophical circles, educational philosophy is behind all of my efforts today to recognize the value of pragmatism as a global philosophy.⁸

II

To explore this educational stance, we can consider a series of themes in Emerson's work that incorporates at various levels Transcendentalism, Pragmatism, and Democracy. I will begin with the following trio: the superiority of Reason to the Understanding, the role of the scholar as a prophet, and the primacy of the common over the elite.

One dominant aspect of Emerson's work is a clear metaphysical distinction between what he takes to be levels of higher and lower importance, grounded in his sense of the roles of Reason and the Understanding. This distinction allows for a contemplative appraisal of more central values—intellectual, religious, and aesthetic—found in his broad approach to nature, and a discounting of the resulting lesser values. We can consider a pair of examples. In his June 1837 "Address on Education," as well as elsewhere in his thought, Emerson urges his audience to recognize the superiority of the higher over the lower faculties. "The disease of which the world lies sick," he stresses on this occasion, "is, the inaction of the higher faculties of man" that allows for "the usurpation by the senses of the entire practical energy of individu-

⁵ For my take on this approach to pragmatism, see my volumes: *Recovering Benjamin Franklin* (1999); *Naturalizing Ralph Waldo Emerson*, [in preparation]; *Experiencing William James* (2017); and *Understanding John Dewey* (1995).

⁶ Emerson himself admits in 1842 that "there is no pure Transcendentalist" but only "prophets and heralds of such a philosophy," only "harbingers and forerunners." The key to developing transcendentalism further, he continues, is "to respect the intuitions, and to give them, at least in our creed, all authority over our experience." He believed that we consequently need more Reason-based people. He writes: "in society, besides farmers, sailors, and weavers, there must be a few persons of purer fire kept specially as gauges and meters of character" whom we should "tolerate" as "solitary voices in the land, speaking for thoughts and principles not marketable or perishable ..." ("The Transcendentalist," 197,199, 208).

⁷ Here I am expanding on the dyadic position of Robert Dale Richardson, who writes: "there are two Emersons—one transcendental and idealistic, the other pragmatic and practical" (*First We Read*, 33). An earlier dyadic understanding of Emerson can be found in Frederic Ives Carpenter, who notes in 1934: "All of his essays had as their main theme the application of the scholarship, or wisdom of man, to the problems of the present." In this way, he continues, "Emerson's philosophy may perhaps be described as Pragmatic Mysticism. It is idealistic in that it puts the mystical experience first. It is dualistic in that it looks both ways from its position on the bridge between the soul and nature. It is monistic in that it maintains that this bridge is the only reality. But it is pragmatic in that it tests all truths (including the mystical belief in the value of life) by experience... It remains to suggest that this pragmatic mysticism is essentially *the* American philosophy, or, as it has been called, 'the American Dream'" ("Introduction" to *Selections*, xiv, xxxvii).

⁸ For John Dewey, all philosophy should be considered educational philosophy. He writes in "From Absolutism to Experimentalism" in 1930 that "philosophers in general, although they are themselves usually teachers, have not taken education with sufficient seriousness for it to occur to them that any rational person could actually think it possible that philosophizing should focus about education as the supreme human interest in which, moreover, other problems, cosmological, moral, logical, come to a head" (LW 5:156). He continues in this theme in "The Relation of Science and Philosophy as the Basis of Education" in 1938 that "[t]he philosophy of education is not a poor relation of general philosophy even though it is often so treated even by philosophers. It is ultimately the most significant phase of philosophy" (LW 13:282).

als.” This failure results in the “prevalence of low and unworthy views of the manly character” (EL 2:196).⁹ While he opines that America in the late 1830s was in a period of economic prosperity that was “without example in history,” for him this progress represented the lower activity “of the senses, and devotion to the senses.” This prosperity was thus confined to advances in fields of lesser importance like industry, technology, and economics; and it was combined with a “great hollowness in literature, politics, and religion” (EL 2:197). As a result, he believed that, in this purported progress humans were not elevated but degraded. As another example, we can consider a piece from 1840 simply entitled “Education,” in which Emerson suggests how we might rectify these failings in value. He calls upon the members of his audience to recognize that their goals, especially their educational goals, were inadequate: “what is called Education in the world fails because of its low aim.” He indicates that we need, instead to “draw on the eternal and universal Soul ...” which “lies within,—it lies behind us all,” available to “the dullest drone, the shallowest fop” (EL 3:299-300). His comments here might seem anti-democratic, except for his ongoing respect for the potential of all.

A second aspect of Emerson’s position is his understanding of the scholar as prophet. In a brief Civil War era piece, “The Man of Letters” (1863), he presents the scholar as a forerunner of a better future. The scholar is “too good for the world,” he writes, “he is in advance of his race; his function is prophetic.” The scholar, he continues, “belongs to a superior society,” but was “born one or two centuries early” and does not fit in with “the rough and sensual population into which he is thrown.” As the representative of a better future, the scholar must emphasize the role of Reason and challenge the dominance of the Understanding, even while he admits that so far “nothing has been able to resist the tide with which

the material prosperity of America in years past has beat down the hope of youth, the piety of learning.” As a result, he continues, at the present time the potential contributions of the scholar are largely stillborn in America. In our industrial society, the pursuits of “convenience and luxury” have perverted our values, thus turning “the eyes downward to the earth, not upward to thought.” He continues that “it is agreed that we are utilitarian; that we are skeptical, frivolous,” and that in spite of “universal cheap education,” our theology is “stringent” and our religion is “low.” As a specific example of our failings, he offers the following: “Our profoundest philosophy (if it were not contradiction in terms) is skepticism” (CW X:241-245). Emerson concludes this piece on living the life of letters by reminding his audience that scholars “are idealists, and should stand for freedom, justice, and public good.” From this standpoint of rationality and morality, he urges them to reject the failed servants of democracy in their contemporary society: “[t]he clerisy, the spiritual guides, the scholars, the seers [who] have been false to their trust” (CW X:254). In their place, he would have his listeners follow their own insights. “Rely on yourself,” he proclaims. While admitting that “[t]here is respect due to your teachers,” he reiterates that “every age is new, and has problems to solve, insoluble by the last age.” As a result, he asserts that former guides—those whom he describes as “over forty”—cannot serve as “judges of a book written in a new spirit” (CW X:254-255).¹⁰ Primary must be their own ideas. “Neither your teachers, nor the universal teachers, the laws, the customs or dogmas of nations, neither saint nor sage,” he writes, “can compare with that counsel which is open to you.” As a sign of the failures of these supposed leaders to follow their own insights, Emerson points out that they “were utterly ignorant of that which every boy or girl of fifteen knows perfectly,—the rights of men and women” (CW X:255-256).¹¹

⁹ Throughout all of the pieces that we will be considering, Emerson makes frequent and uncritical use of masculine forms and attributes to encompass all of humanity, an unfortunate practice that then represented culturally-supported style.

¹⁰ Emerson (born on 25 May 1803) was himself over sixty years of age at this point.

¹¹ William James writes in 1897 that “Emerson’s creed that everything that ever was or will be is here in the enveloping now;

A third aspect of Emerson's larger perspective is his democratic defense of the common and the ordinary against the power of elitism. He concludes his 1837 piece, "The American Scholar," with an explicit statement that an effective revaluation of our lives and our position within nature has to begin with a re-appreciation of the everyday and the normal as sources of insight. Not "the sublime and beautiful," he writes, but "the near, the low, the common" should be explored and poetized.¹² He continues that "[t]he literature of the poor, the feelings of the child, the philosophy of the street, the meaning of household life, are the topics of the time." In this spirit he announces that "I embrace the common, I explore and sit at the feet of the familiar, the low." In line with this praise of the *here*, Emerson urges us to better appreciate the *now*. "Give me insight into to-day, and you may have the antique and future worlds," he writes. Thus, our knowledge needs should not focus upon the distant in time and place but "[t]he meal in the firkin; the milk in the pan; the ballad in the street; the news of the boat; the glance of the eye; the form and the gait of the body" (E&L, 68-69).¹² Emerson's political corollary is his endorsement of "the elevation of what was called the lowest class in the state" (E&L, 68). This revelation

that man has but to obey himself ... is in like manner nothing but an exorcism of all scepticism as to the pertinency of one's natural faculties" (*The Will to Believe*, 74). James maintains this because, as he continues, for Emerson "[t]he great Cosmic Intellect terminates and houses itself in mortal men and passing hours. Each of us is an angle of its eternal vision, and the only way to be true to our Maker is to be loyal to ourselves." As a consequence, "there is something in each and all of us, even the lowliest, that ought not to consent to borrowing traditions and living at second hand." James concludes by reminding us that "Emerson's revelation" is that "[t]he point of any pen can be an epitome of reality; the commonest person's act, if genuinely actuated, can lay hold on eternity" ("Emerson," 111, 115).

¹² The parallels here between Emerson and Walt Whitman should be obvious. Consider, for example, Whitman's emphasis upon insight over external authority: "That which really balances and conserves the social and political world is not so much legislation, police, treaties, and dread of punishment, as the latent eternal intuitional sense, in humanity, of fairness, manliness, decorum, etc. Indeed, this perennial regulation, control, and oversight, by self-suppliance, is *sine qua non* to democracy; and a highest, widest aim of democratic literature may well be to bring forth, cultivate, brace, and strengthen this sense, in individuals and society" (*Democratic Vistas*, 377).

of their and our situation requires the recognition of the primacy of the common individual, "the new importance given to the single person." Here he calls on us "to insulate the individual" from the powerful forces of elitism, "to surround him with barriers of natural respect, so that each man shall feel the world is his, and man shall treat with man as a sovereign state with a sovereign state." The scholar is for him that individual "who must take up into himself all the ability of the time, all the contributions of the past, all the hopes of the future. He must be an university of knowledges." For the scholar, insight is the key: "in yourself is the law of all nature, ... in yourself slumbers the whole of Reason" (E&L, 70).

III

To enact these ideas on the superiority of Reason to the Understanding, the role of the scholar as a prophet, and the primacy of the common over the elite, Emerson believed that it was necessary to rethink our approach to education and to abandon many of the misguided practices that we had inherited.¹³ In his 1838 piece, "Being and Seeming," for example, he presents a series of relevant themes. One of these is a criticism of contemporary efforts in the schools. We educate poorly because we repeat old ways of education, he writes, and we have no trust in ourselves to create better ways. We need to develop "a greater faith in human nature" that would enable us to "discriminate between what appears and what is," between that "which is the real and which the apparent" (EL 2:297). For Emerson, each individual must decide on his own path, "follow his own taste," even in the shadow of others' seemingly grander approaches. Living with such self-confidence will enable the young individual to resist the temptation "to feel ashamed of his inaction

¹³ Benjamin Franklin writes in 1789 that "there is in Mankind an unaccountable Prejudice in favour of ancient Customs and Habitudes, which inclines to the Continuance of them after the Circumstances, which formerly made them useful, cease to exist" ("Observations relative to the Intentions of the Original Founders of the Academy in Philadelphia," 30).

and the slightness of his virtue when in the presence of the active and zealous leaders of the philanthropic enterprises, of Universal Temperance, Peace, and Freedom” (EL 2:299). Persons must be true to themselves.

In his 1840 piece, “Education,” Emerson considers the unfortunate products of this current system of mis-education. “What gloomy wrecks we daily meet drifting along this sea of life,” he writes. “What parrots of routine, what men of pasteboard, what triflers, what madmen whose culture is only a paint or enamel that never ennoble the lump.” The consequence of our failings is that the unfortunate students “are shut up in schools and college recitation rooms for ten or fifteen years and come out at last with a bag of wind, a memory of words, and do not know a thing,” including how to use their hands, legs, eyes, or arms. The product of such mis-education is wasted lives; and he emphasizes “the sad spectacle” of a youth who, after years of “public education,” leaves school unprepared “for his voyage of life” because the framework of that education was inadequate. A related pragmatic theme in this essay is his call for us to avoid what he sees as the inherent flaws of mass education. Emerson maintains that education should be an individual project. “Our modes of Education,” on the contrary, “aim to expedite; to save labor; to do for the masses what can never be done for masses.” Proper education, however, “must be done reverently,—one by one,” because “the whole world is needed for the tuition of each pupil.” When we attempt to educate on a larger scale, however, we are required to impose homogeneity on the developing individuals, and to “sacrifice the genius of the pupil, the unknown possibilities of his nature to a neat and safe uniformity” (EL 3:288-290). As he writes in “Education,” published posthumously in 1883, when “[y]ou have to work for large classes instead of individuals; you must lower your flag and reef your sails to wait for the dull sailors” (CW X:150).

Only when we recognize that education is an individual process, he writes in that same essay, can we demon-

strate that “the secret of Education lies in respecting the pupil” as “the new product of Nature.” Emerson rejects the view that it is our job as parents and teachers “to choose what he shall know, what he shall do.” On the contrary, he continues, each child “holds the key to his own secret”; and our role does not extend beyond guiding the student’s choices. “Be not too much his parent,” he continues. “Trespass not on his solitude.” The notion of guidance is, of course, a difficult one to flesh out amidst ongoing calls from different segments of society for both expanding control and expanding freedom. Even so, we know that he would not have us “throw up the reins of public and private discipline.” The teacher must remain a guide and it would be a mistake to “leave the young child to the mad career of his own passions and whimsies, and call this anarchy a respect for the child’s nature ...” Rejecting this pedagogical anarchy, Emerson responds: “Respect the child, respect him to the end, but also respect yourself” (CW X:143-144).¹⁴ Summarizing his criticism of “the institutions and systems of education,” he concludes, in “Education” in 1840, that effective education “transcends” the various methods on which our teachers have relied. In place of these mechanisms, he maintains that effective education is only possible if we turn to “higher sources than any routine of classbooks or academical exercises can ever supply” (EL 3:294), and make way for the possibilities of insight.

¹⁴ In support of an Emersonian role for guidance in education, John Dewey notes, in *The Child and the Curriculum* (1902), that “[t]he radical fallacy ... is the supposition that we have no choice save either to leave the child to his own unguided spontaneity or to inspire direction upon him from without.” For him, on the contrary, “[g]uidance is not external imposition. *It is freeing the life-process for its own most adequate fulfillment*” (MW 2:290, 281). In *Democracy and Education* (1916), Dewey continues that we must recognize “one of the special forms which the general function of education assumes: namely, that of direction, control, or guidance. Of these three words, ... the last best conveys the idea of assisting through cooperation the natural capacities of the individuals guided” (MW 9:28). Later, he writes in *Experience and Education* (1938) that “guidance given by the teacher to the exercise of the pupils’ intelligence is an aid to freedom, not a restriction upon it” (LW 13:46).

IV

Turning to a consideration of what Emerson believed education might become, he points, in “The American Scholar,” to a series of three potential influences on the mind, of which the first—“[t]he first in time and the first in importance”—is nature. Our place within nature opens us to its systems. “Every day, the sun; and, after sunset, night and her stars,” he writes. “Ever the wind blows; ever the grass grows.” He continues that the scholar is the person “whom this spectacle most engages,” because it is the scholar who has learned to recognize the complexity of the system. “To the young mind, every thing is individual, stands by itself,” he writes. Gradually, the developing mind “finds how to join two things, and see in them one nature; then three, then three thousand.” Drawn by “its own unifying instinct,” the young mind “goes on trying things together, diminishing anomalies, discovering roots running under ground whereby contrary and remote things cohere, and flower out from one stem.” The history of humanity “has been a constant accumulation and classifying of facts” by means of which we perceive “that these objects are not chaotic, and are not foreign, but have a law which is also a law of the human mind ...” (E&L, 55).¹⁵ If we hope to uncover the laws of our Divine System, we cannot confine our scholarly lives to narrow studies as the means to a practical career. Emerson requires that we attempt to experience the wholeness of nature via Reason, rather than limiting our intellectual analysis to the narrower means of the Understanding. As he writes, “[s]o much of nature as he is ignorant of, so much of his own mind does he not yet possess” (E&L, 56).

The second influence on the scholar to which Emerson points is the shared set of ideas that is transmitted

via institutions like literature, art, lectures and especially books. In particular, he believes that we must not treat books as catalogues of information to be absorbed and later regurgitated. A book should function for us as a “guide,” not as a “tyrant” (E&L, 57).¹⁶ “The theory of books is noble,” he writes. “The scholar of the first age received into him the world around; brooded thereon; gave it the new arrangement of his own mind, and uttered it again.” The world “came into him, life; it went out from him, truth. It came to him, short-lived actions; it went out from him, immortal thoughts. It came to him, business; it went from him, poetry” (E&L, 56). Emerson cautions us, however, that there is a great potential problem with books because of their second-handedness. By means of books, the sacredness of creation—something in which we all should participate—can be forgotten or transformed into the worship of the creations of others. Thus, he points to the ongoing need for each generation to “write its own books; or rather, each generation for the next succeeding.” Our failure here results in the idolization of past products to the detriment of the creative process. Consequently, he suggests that, even though the original author was thought to be “a just and wise spirit,” we must be careful neither to let the book itself be seen as “perfect,” nor our “love of the hero” be corrupted into “the worship of his statue.” Should this happen, “the book becomes noxious.” This is why, he continues, “[m]eek young men grow in libraries, believing it their duty to accept the views, which Cicero, which Locke, which Bacon, have given, forgetful that Cicero, Locke, and Bacon were only young men in libraries, when they wrote these

¹⁵ John J. McDermott develops this theme further in 1986: “Being in the world is not a position of stasis. It is active, energizing, and potentially creative... . For those of us who wish to become persons, the world does not come ready-made... . The lattice-work of nature is intriguing. Still more intriguing is the set of relations which we ourselves fashion, knead, and impose” (“Experience Grows by Its Edges,” 388-389).

¹⁶ William Ellery Channing writes in 1838 that “[b]ooks are chiefly useful as they help us to interpret what we see and experience.” He continues that it is largely “through books that we enjoy intercourse with superior minds, and these invaluable means of communication are in the reach of all. In the best books great men talk to us, give us their most precious thoughts, and pour their souls into ours.” As such, books “are the voices of the distant and the dead, and make us heirs of the spiritual life of past ages. Books are the true levelers” (“Self-Culture,” 21, 23). In 1854, Henry David Thoreau writes in much the same fashion that “[b]ooks are the treasured wealth of the world and the fit inheritance of generations and nations” (*Walden*, 97).

books" (E&L, 56-57).¹⁷ In consequence, Emerson urges us to find our own truth rather than to blindly mimic the philosophies of others. "Leave me alone," he writes in "Literary Ethics" (1838), "do not teach me out of Leibnitz or Schelling, and I shall find it all out myself." We should, of course, appreciate the inspirational work of our literary and philosophical heroes as "glorious manifestations of the mind" that gives us the courage to do our own work; but we should never see their work as constituting a set of final answers. Rather, we must recognize that "each admirable genius is but a successful diver in that sea whose floor of pearls is all your own" (E&L, 98).¹⁸

Returning to "The American Scholar," Emerson warns that, because of this worship of books, instead of developing into "Man Thinking," the misguided student can develop instead into "the bookworm"; and "the book-learned class"—those "who value books, as such; not as related to nature and the human constitution"—can produce "the bibliomaniacs of all degrees." He continues that we must recognize that books can be used well or ill. "Books are the best of things, well used; abused, among the worst." For him, the proper use of books is

"to inspire" us to find our own way. Thus, he continues, "I had better never seen a book, than to be warped by its attraction clean out of my own orbit, and made a satellite instead of a system" (E&L, 57).¹⁹ Rejecting the passivity of the satellite, he calls for activity. "The one thing in the world, of value, is the active soul. This every man is entitled to; this every man contains within him, although, in almost all men, obstructed, and as yet unborn." The importance of the "soul active" is that it "sees absolute truth; and utters truth, or creates." In its activity, the soul is "genius" and "progressive" (E&L, 57).

In attempting to overcome the conservative power of our inherited institutions, it should be of great concern to the scholar to realize, Emerson writes, that "[t]he book, the college, the school of art, the institution of any kind, stop with some past utterance of genius." These carry-overs from past experience, despite their general value, can only "look backward and not forward." For him, however, the important part is that "genius looks forward: the eyes of man are set in his forehead, not in his hindhead" (E&L, 57-58). Thus, he would have us recognize that books are most valuable when they are used as tools to reinvigorate us during our intellectual downtimes. "Books are for the scholar's idle times," he writes, for "the intervals of darkness." When we are fully cognizant of our place in nature and we can "read God directly," however, "the hour is too precious to be wasted in other men's transcripts of their readings." He continues that we must recognize that, "as the seer's hour of vision is short and rare among heavy days and months, so is its record, perchance, the least part of his volume." To avoid the mounds of chaff, he suggests that in reading Plato or Shakespeare, for example, "[t]he discerning" individual will aim to find "the authentic utterances of the oracle" and to pass over all of the authors' other remarks, however accurate (E&L, 58-59).

¹⁷ Elsewhere, Emerson writes in 1841: "The Bacon, the Spinoza, the Hume, Schelling, Kant, or whosoever propounds to you a philosophy of the mind, is only a more or less awkward translator of things in your consciousness, which you have also your way of seeing, perhaps of denominating. Say, then, instead of too timidly poring into his obscure sense, that he has not succeeded in rendering back to you your consciousness. He has not succeeded; now let another try. If Plato cannot, perhaps Spinoza will. If Spinoza cannot, then perhaps Kant. Anyhow, when at last it is done, you will find it is no recondite, but a simple, natural, common state, which the writer restores to you" ("Intellect," 427). John Dewey continues in a similar fashion in 1903: "The Bacon, the Spinoza, the Hume, Schelling, Kant, is only a more or less awkward translator of things in your consciousness. Say, then, instead of too timidly poring into his obscure sense, that he has not succeeded in rendering back to you your consciousness" ("Emerson," 188).

¹⁸ Emerson continues that, unfortunately, many young scholars, intoxicated with their "admiration of a hero," are unable to realize that their admiration reflects "only a projection" of their own souls. He recognizes, however, that "I am tasting the self-same life,—its sweetness, its greatness, its pain, which I so admire in other men." He continues that "[t]he vision of genius comes by renouncing the too officious activity of the understanding, and giving leave and amplest privilege to the spontaneous sentiment" of Reason. When people "desert the tradition for a spontaneous thought, then poetry, wit, hope, virtue, learning, anecdote, all flock to their aid" ("Literary Ethics," 99-100).

¹⁹ William Ellery Channing concurs: "When they [books] absorb men, as they sometimes do, and turn them from observation of nature and life, they generate a learned folly, for which the plain sense of the laborer could not be exchanged but at great loss" ("Self-Culture," 21).

Building upon his comments on the active soul, Emerson presents the life of action as the third influence on the scholar. He wants the scholar—indeed all of us—to become complete persons, to live life at first-hand and to experience life directly and fully. The life of the scholar is thus not to memorize and reproduce the thoughts of prior teachers, although we all have known teachers who expected exactly that from us. Our life as scholars requires that we find out for ourselves by means of practical engagement with nature and society. “There goes in the world a notion,” he complains, “that the scholar should be a recluse, a valetudinarian.” Such a sickly person would be “as unfit for any handiwork or public labor, as a pen-knife for an axe.” As a result of this misguided notion, “[t]he so-called ‘practical men’ sneer at speculative men, as if, because they speculate or *see*, they could do nothing.” While Emerson allows that this jaundiced view might offer an accurate accounting of the lives of some would-be scholars, he continues that it “is not just and wise” for the scholar to follow such a path. As he writes, “[o]nly so much do I know, as I have lived,” only so much “as I know by experience.” Thus for him, “[a]ction is with the scholar subordinate, but it is essential” (E&L, 59-60).²⁰ By means of interaction with diverse aspects of the world, the scholar grows. “Life is our dictionary,” he writes. “Years are well spent in country labors; in town,—in the insight into trades and manufactures; in frank intercourse with many men and women; in science; in art; to the one end of mastering in all their facts a language by which to illustrate and embody our perceptions.” Life thus becomes for us “the quarry from whence we get tiles and copestones for the masonry of to-day” (E&L, 61-62).

²⁰ Ralph Leslie Rusk writes in 1949 that “for the benefit of the scholar,” Emerson included in “The American Scholar” material that “might have served as a prospectus of William James and John Dewey: ‘Action is with the scholar subordinate, but it is essential’” (*The Life of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, 264).

V

Returning to “Literary Ethics,” we find Emerson considering what are to be the tasks of the scholar. He cautions us, first, not to assume that all the necessary work has been done already by prior scholars. In fact, he believed that the opposite of this conservative stance is the more accurate one. For him, it is a mistake to maintain “that all thought is already long ago adequately set down in books,—all imaginations in poems,” or that our contributions only confirm the content “of this supposed complete body of literature.” On the contrary, he notes, novelty is the essential point. As he writes, “all literature is yet to be written” and “[p]oetry has scarce chanted its first song” (E&L, 101).²¹ If we study nature directly and minimize our dependence on the reports of others, however, we will recognize that “[t]he world is new, untried.” We should not “believe the past,” but realize that each of us receives “the universe a virgin to-day.” The work of the scholar is thus to create this new literature. He urges us to avoid the misleading nature of our inherited ideas and to “go into the forest,” where we can find everything “new and undescribed.” In this way, the scholar whose experiences are his own “seems to be the first man that ever stood on the shore, or entered a grove, his sensations and his world are so novel and strange.” On the other hand, “[w]hilst I read the poets, I think that nothing new can be said about morning and evening.” My personal, experiential encounters with “the daybreak” cannot be explored adequately at second-hand, even through the visions of Homer, Shakespeare, Milton, or Chaucer. Instead, when we are fully alive, we recognize how Emerson points us in the direction of the lonely and hard beauty of nature. “The noonday darkness of the American forest, the deep, echoing, aboriginal woods, where the living columns of the oak and the fir tower up from the ruins of the trees of

²¹ This is one of the many places where Emerson’s overheated surges of hyperbolic rhetoric can eclipse his sense of standard, but boring, logic.

the last millennium," he writes, offer us a different beauty. This "haggard and desert beauty," while available to all who remain open to experience, is a beauty that "has never been recorded by art" (E&L, 101-102).

In "The Man of Letters," Emerson calls for our recognition of new possibilities. "You are the carriers of ideas which are to fashion the mind and so the history of this breathing world." He continues that "[e]very man is a scholar potentially, and does not need any one good as much as this of right thought." Such right thought, however, does not automatically emerge from whatever manages to germinate in the naive minds of the uninformed. For him, a successful democracy requires the leadership of educators. "As certainly as water falls in rain on the tops of mountains and runs down into valleys, plains and pits, so does thought fall first on the best minds, and run down, from class to class, until it reaches the masses, and works revolutions" (CW X:248-249). Although this may appear to be a top-heavy variant of democracy, Emerson's conception does not allow for dictation to us by our supposed superiors any more than it would allow us to act without forethought and evaluation. His aim is to maintain the balance of a critical democracy that allows for mutual guidance among the members of the citizenry. In this larger process, the scholar represents "[t]he organ of ideas, the subtle force which creates Nature and men and states." In this role, the scholar functions as "consoler, upholder, imparting pulses of light and shocks of electricity, guidance and courage" (CW X:250). Rather than inclining the purpose of education toward the development of the students' "undertandings to the apprehension and comparison of some facts, to a skill in numbers, in words"—that is "to make accountants, attorneys, [and] engineers"—the posthumous essay, "Education," presents Emerson's aim simply to be "to make able, earnest, great-hearted men" (CW X:135). For him, "the end of human life," as he presents it in the "Address on Education," is similarly not to "make a fortune and beget children whose end is likewise to make fortunes." The "chief end

of man" is "that he should explore himself" (EL 2:199). As he continues, again in the posthumously-published essay "Education," "[t]he great object of Education should be commensurate with the object of life." This means that the end of education "should be a moral one"—it should be "to teach self-trust: to inspire the youthful man with an interest in himself" (CW X:135).

Emerson explores in "The American Scholar" the question of the duties that the scholar has to self and others. Here, the scholar's aim should be to approximate what he calls "Man Thinking." He writes that "[t]he office of the scholar is to cheer, to raise, and to guide men by showing them facts amidst appearances." This task of leadership and criticism thus commits the scholar to "the slow, unhonored, and unpaid task of observation," a painstaking process that in our world often gains the scholar only "poverty and solitude." Rejecting "the ease and pleasure of treading the old road, accepting the fashions, the education, the religion of society" (E&L, 63), he calls upon the scholar to attempt to find the truth, and to help others find it as well.²² The "offset" from this tougher life to which Emerson points is that the scholar will "find consolation in exercising the highest functions of human nature," in living the life of Reason. In this way, the critical scholar will be able "to resist the vulgar prosperity that retrogrades ever to barbarism" and the pursuit of "private considerations," and to fashion a life that "breathes and lives on public and illustrious thoughts." His scholar is thus "the world's eye ... the world's heart," who can satisfy his duties by "preserving and communicating" (E&L, 63-64) the achievements of humanity and by recognizing the ongoing pronouncements of the Spirit.

On 28 June 1876, the 73 year-old, Emerson spoke at the University of Virginia.²³ He chose as his title on this oc-

²² John Dewey writes in 1903: "Against creed and system, convention and institution, Emerson stands for restoring to the common man that which in the name of religion, of philosophy, of art and of morality, has been embezzled from the common store and appropriated to sectarian and class use" ("Emerson," 190).

²³ There is a long-recognized problem lurking in all of Emerson's later work. James Elliot Cabot notes in 1883, a year after Emer-

casation "The Scholar," and his focus was the topic of "the natural and permanent function of the Scholar, as he is no permissive or accidental appearance, but an organic agent in nature." As such, the scholar is "to be the beholder of the real; self-centred amidst the superficial." The scholar must recognize and "revere the domination of a serene necessity and be its pupil and apprentice." In this way will the scholar "be sobered, not by the cares of life ... but by the depth of his draughts of the cup of immortality." Descending from these lofty phrases, Emerson admits that too often scholars feel "ashamed of their intellect," and wish to appear to be more like average people, dealing not with "the wise life" but with what they take to be "real life." On occasion, however, better scholars do pursue true success by "the piercing of the brass heavens of use and limitation" to admit "a beam of

son's death, that in the early 1870s Emerson was attempting, without much success, to assemble a collection of his writings that eventually appeared in 1875 as *Letters and Social Aims*. Cabot continues that "a sense of inability, more real than he knew, ... was beginning to make itself felt" (CW VIII:ix-x). In addition to his diminished mental capacity, Emerson's house in Concord burned on 24 July 1872. The disruption caused by the destruction of his home, and the resultant chaos of his books and papers, worsened his mental problems. His subsequent trip to Egypt and Europe (October 1872-May 1873) may have brought some tranquility to his life, but it did not advance his work. Cabot continues that "[t]he proof-sheets showed that already before this accident his loss of memory and of mental grasp had gone so far as to make it unlikely that he would in any case have been able to accomplish what he had undertaken." Only "[b]y degrees and with some reluctance" did Emerson come to admit "the necessity of some assistance" (CW VIII:x-xi).

Fulfilling this role to assist Emerson in this project, Cabot worked almost alone, trying to produce a volume out of the collection of materials with which he had been presented (VIII:xi-ii). He remained committed to follow his conception of Emerson's intent and "to bring together under the particular heading whatever could be found that seemed in place there, without regard to the connection in which it was found." As a result "it happened sometimes that writing of very different dates was brought together." Cabot, however, denies making any additions to Emerson's pages: "There is nothing here that he did not write, and he gave his full approval to whatever was done in the way of selection and arrangement." Still, Cabot is forced to admit that he "cannot say that he [Emerson] applied his mind very closely to the matter. He was pleased, in a general way, that the work should go on, but it may be a question exactly how far he sanctioned it" (CW VIII:xii-xiii; cf. Cabot, *A Memoir of Ralph Waldo Emerson*, II:651-656).

Edward Waldo Emerson continues the narrative in 1904, noting that in July 1874 it became obvious "that Mr. Emerson's working days were over; it was more and more difficult for him to apply his mind, and his memory was failing" (CW VIII:vi; cf. viii).

the pure eternity which burns up this limbo of shadows and chimeras in which we dwell" (CW X:264-266).

VI

I have been suggesting throughout this paper that Emerson's thought is grounded in a triad of fundamental values: Transcendentalism, Pragmatism, and Democracy. At times, he seems to emphasize all three as an integrated set of values; at other time his emphasis is more selective. At no time, however, is one of these values either completely supreme or completely omitted. Along the way, of course, there are some potential conflicts within this triad. Let me consider explicitly some occasions when he seems to downplay pragmatism or democracy in favor of transcendentalism.

We can begin with instances when his transcendentalism largely displaces his pragmatism.²⁴

Beginning with his emphasis upon contemplation rather than more practical attempts at problem-solving, we can examine his 1841 piece, "Intellect." Here, he defends a scholarly approach to life that is more passive than active. He considers intellect to be related to contemplation, and thus divorced from the practical problems of daily living. "Every man beholds his human condition with a degree of melancholy," he writes. "As a ship aground is battered by the waves, so man, imprisoned in mortal life, lies open to the mercy of coming events." He believes that recognizing the higher meaning of our lives requires that we step back and adopt a stance of contemplative analysis, using as our primary tool the mind rather than the senses. Our goal in this process should be to find Truth. As he writes, "a truth, separated by the intellect, is no longer a subject of destiny. We behold it as a god upraised above care and fear." These transcendental em-

²⁴ For me, unlike for John Updike, Emerson's pragmatic aspects are a positive factor. Updike has a different view: "The famous American pragmatism and 'can do' optimism were given their most ardent and elegant expression by Emerson; his encouragements have their trace elements in the manifest sprawl we see on all sides" ("Emersonianism," 161).

phases are matters of intellectual consideration. “What is addressed to us for contemplation does not threaten us, but makes us intellectual beings” (E&L, 418).

We can point further to his position that the scholar, the intellectual, must pursue Truth rather than solutions of a pragmatic sort. As he writes, “[a] self-denial, no less austere than the saint’s, is demanded of the scholar.” The intellectual “must worship truth, and forego all things for that,” and even accept “defeat and pain, so that his treasure in thought is thereby augmented.” He also presents this transcendental point in a more poetic vein. “God offers to every mind its choice between truth and repose. Take which you please,—you can never have both.” As an example, he offers the individual “in whom the love of repose predominates.” Such a passive individual will never feel challenged to seek Truth, but “will accept the first creed, the first philosophy, the first political party he meets,—most likely his father’s.” Whatever short-term values he may gain in this way, “he shuts the door of truth.” On the other hand, however, the person “in whom the love of truth predominates will keep himself aloof from all moorings” and thereby “will abstain from dogmatism.” The true scholar is able to tolerate “suspense and imperfect opinion” because, as “a candidate for truth,” he is attempting to follow “the highest law of his being” (E&L, 425-426).

Emerson also believes that intellectual growth is spontaneous, through our relation to the Over-Soul. “The mind that grows could not predict the times, the means, the mode of that spontaneity,” he writes. “God enters by a private door into every individual.” Importantly, these spontaneous insights are pre-reflective, rather than the result of directed rationality. “Long prior to the age of reflection,” he continues, “is the thinking of the mind,” which arises “[o]ut of darkness ... into the marvellous light of to-day” (E&L, 418). Moreover, because these insights are spontaneous, they are also necessarily intermittent. “There is an inequality, whose laws we do not yet know, between two men and between two moments

of the same man, in respect to this faculty.” He continues that, while “[i]n common hours, we have the same facts as in the uncommon or inspired,” these facts “do not sit for their portraits; they are not detached, but lie in a web” (E&L, 423). Both with regard to contemplation and to spontaneity, where Emerson downplays his pragmatic instincts in favor of his transcendental instincts, he never fully rejects the importance of his pragmatism.

Similarly, we can consider instances when Emerson downplays his democratic instincts in favor of transcendentalism. For example, he distinguishes two aspects of the intellect that he characterizes as “constructive” and “receptive.” All of us, he writes, possess the latter, receptive, intellect that enables us to discern and appreciate the valuable work of others; but fewer of us are able by the use of the constructive intellect or genius to produce novelty on our own. “The constructive intellect ... is the generation of the mind, the marriage of thought with nature” that “produces thoughts, sentences, poems, plans, designs, systems” (E&L, 422); but he grants that “the constructive powers are rare, and it is given to few men to be [e.g.] poets.” Still, he maintains that “every man is a receiver of this descending holy ghost, and may well study the laws of its influx.” This limited range of inspiration explains why there are very few good books even though there are so many writers. Or, as he phrases it, although “the world has a million writers,” we are still able to “count all our good books.” From the opposite point of view, because we all have this receptive intellect, there are “many competent judges” although there are but “few writers of the best books” (E&L, 424-425). While this potentially elitist emphasis upon the constructive intellect might seem to narrow the importance of democracy and democratic social processes, Emerson never abandons the egalitarian significance of the receptive intellect to sort through what has been presented to the minds of the citizens.²⁵ His central emphasis remains on

²⁵ See also Merle Eugene Curti’s 1943 emphasis on the democratic aspects of transcendentalism: “Transcendentalism did

experience over doctrine,²⁶ and on the role of the triad of Transcendentalism, Pragmatism, and Democracy.

In spite of his overriding call to us to reform our personal lives, Emerson is still generally favorable to social reform movements; but, because of the intricate relationships among the triad of Transcendentalism, Democracy, and Pragmatism, he has a complex approach to the role of reformer. In his 1841 piece, “Man the Reformer,” he wonders, “[w]hat is a man born for but to be a Reformer, a Re-maker of what man has made; a renouncer of lies; a restorer of truth and good”? He believes that the reforming individual is just “imitating that great Nature which embosoms us all, and which sleeps no moment on an old past, but every hour repairs herself, yielding us every morning a new day, and with every pulsation a new life ...” (E&L, 146). Three years later, in “Politics,” he offers a number of specific points indicating how he believed we should respond to our inherited political state. Among these points are the following: “that its institutions are not aboriginal, though they existed before we were born,” “that they are not superior to the citizen,” “that every one of them was once the act of a single man,” that “every law and usage was a man’s expedient to meet a particular case,” and that all of its laws “are imitable, all alterable; we may make as good; we may make better.” As a result of our recognition of all of its flaws, he continues that “[e]very actual State is corrupt,” and it would thus be a grave mistake if “[g]ood men” were to

“obey the laws too well” (E&L, 559, 563).²⁷ In spite of this generally-favorable account of reform, Emerson qualifies his position that same year in “New England Reformers” by suggesting a slightly-revised stance on reform. Here he maintains that all of our institutions have been corrupted. He writes that “there is no part of society or of life better than any other part. All our things are right and wrong together. The wave of evil washes all our institutions alike” (E&L, 596). Still, it seems to be a significant jump for him from the position that all of our institutions are *partially* evil to the position that all are *equally* evil, and thus that all reform would seem to be futile. A more balanced interpretation—a more Emersonian interpretation—would be that, as he continues in his “Lecture on the Times” that same year, “[t]he history of reform is always identical; it is the comparison of the idea with the fact.” We recognize that “[o]ur modes of living are not agreeable to our imagination,” and we suspect that it is our modes of living, and not our ideas, that are “unworthy” (E&L, 159) and in need of reform.

With regard to tactics, however, Emerson continues that “[t]he Reformers affirm the inward life, but they do not trust it, but use outward and vulgar means” (E&L, 162). Thus, “the reforming movement is sacred in its origin,” but “in its management and details timid and profane.” The reformers mistakenly “hope to raise man by improving his circumstances; by combination of that which is dead, they hope to make something alive.” Here, he believes that they are operating “[i]n vain” (E&L, 164), or at least with diminished faith. In good pragmatic fashion, however, in a world of process, we should not expect any of these reforms to provide permanent solutions, only means toward melioration.²⁸

not appeal in its philosophical form to the masses, yet there was much that was democratic in it. The exaltation of man, of all men; the doctrine that all power, all wisdom, comes from nature, with which man must establish an original and firsthand relationship; the relegation of books to a secondary place in the hierarchy of values; the insistence that instinct is good and must be obeyed rather than curbed in accordance with conventions and authority—all these ideas were closely related to the democratic impulse” (*The Growth of American Thought*, 304).

²⁶ Lawrence Buell writes in 1993 that Emerson was “guided by the view that formal argument counts for less than experience, and by the good Unitarian principle that beliefs are to be tested by their life-results. Emerson is therefore rightly seen as a harbinger of America’s most distinctive philosophical tradition, pragmatism, several of whose major figures have claimed him as forefather” (“Introduction,” 2).

²⁷ As Henry David Thoreau writes in 1849, “[i]t is not desirable to cultivate a respect for the law, so much as for the right. The only obligation which I have a right to assume is to do at any time what I think right” (“Civil Disobedience,” 669).

²⁸ Benjamin Franklin displays pragmatic meliorism in 1751 when he writes: “We are in this World mutual Hosts to each other; the Circumstances and Fortunes of Men and Families are continually changing; in the Course of a few Years we have seen the Rich become Poor, and the Poor Rich; the Children of

Nor should we abandon our faith in the possibilities to be found in the sprawling approach of Emerson.²⁹ He writes of the promise of democratic education that: “the poor man, whom the law does not allow to take an ear of corn when starving, nor a pair of shoes for his freezing feet, is allowed to put his hand into the pocket of the rich, and say, You shall educate me, not as you will, but as I will: not alone in the elements, but, by further provision, in the languages, in sciences, in the useful and in elegant arts” (CW X:125). While we have yet to see the realization of this promise, its power remains central to any vision of democratic education.

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the Wealthy languishing in Want and Misery, and those of their Servants lifted into Estates, and abounding in the good Things of this Life. Since then, our present State, how prosperous soever, hath no Stability, but what depends on the good Providence of God, how careful should we be not to *harden our Hearts* against the Distresses of our Fellow Creatures” (“Appeal for the Hospital,” 363).

²⁹ For Robert Ernest Spiller, writing in 1943, Emerson “reduced religion to practical ethics and he tested conduct by experience. Emerson, a mystic by temperament, founded his ethics, as his Puritan forefathers had done before him, on the same pragmatic base. It was left for William James to return to the foundations which Franklin had laid by the pattern of his life and to formulate a theory which Franklin had lived without formulation. There is much reason to believe that this modern pragmatism is the characteristic American philosophy, the one which our experience has dictated from the start” (“Benjamin Franklin,” 102-103). Francis Otto Matthiessen writes in 1941 that James’s hand-written notes in his copies of the Emerson volumes “show that he read with attention nearly everything that Emerson wrote; and ... there is ample evidence that Emerson’s idealism provided a more central root for pragmatism than has generally been assumed” (*American Renaissance*, 53n).

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DEWEY, GLOBALISM, AND EDUCATION: PRAGMATISM'S CHALLENGES AND CHALLENGES TO PRAGMATISM

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ABSTRACT: This paper explores connections between global capital and ethics to argue for a critical pragmatist, Deweyan reconstruction of democratic education. Given the wide diversity of educational aims around the world, including aims antithetical to freedom of thought, inclusivity, and intellectual depth, this task is both challenging and necessary. The task is challenging because of the wide spectrum of international contexts, including the tensions among and between nation-states, religious fundamentalism, and economic manipulations. The task is necessary because the consequences of immigration, warring countries and groups, and neoliberalism represent no less than existential threats to human existence.

Keywords: pragmatism, globalism, economics, democratic education

Introduction

John Dewey's relatively famous forays around the globe are well-known to academic pragmatists. His trips to Japan, China, Russia, Turkey, and Mexico are well-documented. (Dewey and Dewey, 1920; Brickman, 1964; Wang, 2007; Cochran, 2010; Waks, 2007; and Popkewitz, 2005) His application of democratic theory to international contexts, while not without controversy, is also widely known by Dewey scholars. Some thinkers have addressed Dewey's cosmopolitanism, his economic concerns regarding capitalism, and the social and ethical threads that connect these important lines of inquiry. (Bray, 2011; Hansen, 2009; Beech, 2020; Kassner, 2021; Pearce, 2020; and Pappas, 2008) I draw on much of this work to update a critical application of Dewey's philosophy to contemporary global issues. Specifically, I explore connections between global capital and ethics to argue for a critical pragmatist, Deweyan reconstruction of democratic education—with a proviso. Contrary to Dewey's meliorism, I offer a sobering skepticism about the task

at hand. Said differently, while I applaud Dewey's vision of global democratic engagement, the realities of the current international climate make Dewey's goals nearly implausible for at least two reasons: 1) the U.S. context in which Dewey based at least some of his optimism; and 2) the continuation of nation-state wars.

Given the wide diversity of educational aims around the world, including aims antithetical to freedom of thought, inclusivity, and intellectual depth, Dewey's task is nevertheless both challenging and necessary. The task is challenging because of the wide spectrum of international contexts, including the tensions among and between nation-states, religious fundamentalism, and economic manipulations. The task is necessary because the consequences of immigration, warring countries and groups, and neoliberalism represent no less than existential threats to human existence. I begin the paper by highlighting Dewey's globalism and the ethical issues he considered. I then explore links between Dewey's ethics and schooling that bridge U.S. and global contexts. I end the paper by highlighting pragmatism's challenges and challenges to pragmatism that Dewey's philosophical commitments face in the 2024 national and international milieu.

Dewey's Globalism

For this paper, I mean by "Dewey's Globalism" his interest in human nature and culture. (Dewey, 1922; Dewey, 1988a; Dewey, 1988b; Dewey, 1988c; and Dewey, 1989) For whether one is a detractor or admirer of Dewey, it is uncontroversial that he demonstrated a genuine interest in a wide range of questions, topics, issues, causes, contexts, and places. He was also committed to challenging traditions that, on his view, risked atrophying into "the dead wood of the past." Still, I think it an accurate claim that Dewey was not only *not* a comparativist, professionally speaking, but that his views about Russia, China, and Turkey, especially, were somewhat naïve. He even suggested as much three years after his *Impressions of So-*

viet Russia was published. In a *New Republic* review he wrote of *Educational Policy in the Soviet Union*, in 1932, he noted that the authors “supplied a needed addition to and correction of accounts (including my own) written a few years earlier.” (Dewey, 1932; Brickman, p. 30) Similar revisions are seen in his forays in China and Turkey, as well as in Japan and Mexico. Nonetheless, globalism is a concept Dewey approaches through what he thinks is a uniquely “American” view: diverse immigrants navigating their differences living more or less amicably together in productive and meaningful ways. As Len Waks (2007) argues, Dewey “had since 1888 been developing an ethical theory in which the ‘moral’ and the ‘democratic’ were coterminous, in which democracy was a synonym for the ethical ideal: the harmonious development of the individuals in society, secured by their mutual awareness and their free choice to cooperate” with one another. (p. 30) Dewey’s ethical theory held that morality requires mutuality. Accordingly, we are ethical agents when we share, cross borders, open ourselves to commentary and consideration/reconsideration. Waks (2007) again:

From this conceptual starting point, Dewey argues that the historical development of the moral community has been its expansion—the emancipation of individuals from parochial constraints that results when their social contacts are broadened. The extension of the size and diversity of the interacting group brings with it a necessary expansion of individual responsibility, because the larger and more diverse group implies more varied and complex demands for explanation and justification of one’s conduct from those to whom one is answerable. (p. 30)

At the risk of inserting my skepticism too early in this paper, it is notable that the U.S. context upon which Dewey based his vision has altered dramatically in the past eight or so years. The U.S. is arguably more divided in 2024 than any time since either the Civil War or the civil rights movement. A nation of immigrants—a key theme Dewey highlights—faces a crisis of immigration. The U.S. is not alone in this situation, of course, as immigration has been a topic of fierce debate in many other countries.

But Dewey’s reliance on mutuality is strained in the current U.S. context. If morality requires mutuality, where do we find ourselves?

Dewey, perhaps ironically, addressed this question in his demonstration of sharing, openness, and border crossings—both figuratively and literally—in his global excursions. As is well known, Dewey visited Japan in 1919, spending months in the country, before, somewhat by happenstance, visiting China during revolutionary events in that country. In *Letters from China and Japan*, Dewey documented everything from gardening and gastronomy to protests and arrests. Regarding Japan, he wrote, rather humorously, that “The gardens here are full of cherry trees in blossom—and the streets are full people too full of saké [sic]. The Japanese take their drunkenness apparently seasonally, as we hadn’t seen drunken people till now.” (Dewey and Dewey, 1920, p. 95). Regarding China, “‘You never can tell’ is the coat of arms of China.” (p. 164) He explained the activism he witnessed in China as follows:

The Chancellor of the University was forced out on the evening of the eighth by the cabinet, practically under threat of assassination; also soldiers (bandits) were brought into the city and the University surrounded, so to save the University rather than himself, he left—nobody knows where. The release of the students was sent out by telegraph, but they refused to allow this to become known. It seems this Chancellor was more the intellectual leader of the liberals than I had realized, and the government had become really afraid of him. He has only been there two years, and before that the students had never demonstrated politically and now they are leaders of the new movement. So of the course the government will put in a reactionary, and the students will leave and all the honest teachers resign. Perhaps the students will go on strike all over China. But you never can tell.” (Dewey and Dewey, 1920, pp. 164-165)

The “new movement” to which Dewey refers is the result of the end of the Qing dynasty, the establishment of the Republic of China, and the protests over the Paris Peace Conference’s finding that Japan could continue to hold Germany’s rights and possessions in Shandong after their defeat in WWI. Strife and struggle were not alien to Dewey’s global forays.

In what I think is an insightful event, Dewey's Chinese guides ("returned students" from the U.S.) took him to see a cotton mill. Wrote Dewey (1920), "They took us to see a Chinese cotton spinning and weaving factory. There is not even the pretense at labor laws here that there are in Japan. Children six years of age are employed...and the wages of the operatives in the spinning department, mainly women, is thirty cents a day." (p. 150) Compare those wages to the average woman's wage as a spinner in 1920 U.S. factories at fifty cents an hour. (U.S. Department of Labor, 1931, p. 4) Dewey was well-aware of economic inconsistencies, if not disparities, in the global context he explored. Indeed, in a footnote he added to the book version of *Impressions of Soviet Russia* (1929; Brickman, 1964) he claimed that he "should not think of denying that the political aspect of the economic revolution in elevating labor, especially the interests of the factory workers, from the bottom of the social scale to the top is an integral factor in the psychological and moral transformation." (Brickman, p. 50n) Dewey's optimism, an optimism I already question, led to his view that nation-states should yield to an international mode of governance. Without an integrated, democratic global community, we would repeat historical struggles and warring factions would be commonplace. According to William Brickman (1964), "What made Dewey's views attractive to European educators at the turn of the twentieth century and subsequently was...the various changes in society due to accelerated industrial and economic development." (p. 8) Among the difficulties that follow from this point are the tensions between politics and economics—and what counts as "development." For Dewey's globalism to function, democracy would be the form of government and socialism would be the economics in play. It is this stipulative qualification that requires education of a particular sort and I now turn primarily to Dewey's *Ethics* to highlight some of the economic and political implications of his globalism for schooling.

Global, Economic, and Ethical Considerations

In *Ethics*, Dewey provides five chapters with the following titles: "Ethical Problems of the Economic Life," "Collective Bargaining and the Labor Union," "Moral Problems of Business," "Social Control of Business and Industry," and "Toward the Future." (Dewey, 1988a) I begin where Dewey ends and then tease out key elements from these chapters to show what arguments he makes and what might follow from them for contemporary global society and schooling. Dewey concludes that if economic considerations are the driving force in humans' lives, something is tragically wrong. His worry is that "the finer things" of life, like love, joy, contemplation, etc., will be distorted by an unrelenting focus on materialism, commercialism, and economic domination. Here is Dewey's summation: "If the economic dominates life—and if the economic order relies chiefly upon the profit motive as distinguished from the motive of professional excellence, i.e., craftsmanship [sic], and from the functional motive of giving a fair return for what is received—there is danger that a part of life, which should be subordinate or at most coordinate with other interests and values, may become supreme." (1988a, p. 36) Dewey's caution is informed by historical symbols. He begins his analysis of economic life by pointing to architecture and how, in important epochs, buildings symbolized what society valued most. For Athens, it was the temples on the Acropolis. For Rome, it was the forums and temples to government. Medieval cities had cathedrals towering above the marketplace. But the "modern" city, Dewey laments, is filled with corporate basilicas, sprawling manufacturing plants, and banks. "Government is less prominent," he writes, "the churches follow the residences into the suburbs; business reigns." (1988a, 373). Dewey's concern is that nearly "half our citizens neglect to vote; at least as many abstain from the services of the churches; but business and industry admit no absence." (1988a, 373) We do not escape commercialism and consumerism.

Dewey then lays out how we arrived at the current condition of business dominating U.S. society. He highlights the rise of industrialism, manufacturing, and resulting factory work. Importantly, he straddles the progressive benefits of industrialization while also raising serious questions about the consequences of that same industrialization. He notes, for example, that earnings increased from the nineteenth to the twentieth centuries, but not without struggles over horrible working conditions. People may have had more money to spend, but Dewey questions the meaningfulness of lives that endure repetitive motions within environments that increase risks of physical injury and mental monotony. The cotton mill he visited in Japan and comparisons to U.S. factory work comes back to mind. With earnings from such work, what are those wages used for? In some cases, workers' housing was rented from the factory and food had to be purchased from company stores. Wages were cycled back to industry in a commercial loop of corporate-self-interest. Whither the public good?

More will be made of this point in the next section but note how U.S. schools conform to a similar cyclical function: perpetual preparation and training of future workers to compete in a global economy reinforces the idea that U.S. public schools exist primarily for private enterprise. Note, too, how "global economy" refers to capitalist competition. In chapter 18, "Ethical Problems of the Economic Life," Dewey provides a broad outline of the rise of industrialization in the U.S. and some of the consequences that followed. The conditions of work significantly altered such that the economic imperatives of capital redefined priorities and individual power. Importantly, Dewey is not arguing against the industrial revolution, per se, nor arguing that feudal life was egalitarian and bucolic. He is arguing against the effects of the way the industrial revolution was carried out: not only were monopolies funneling enormous wealth to a very small number of industrialists, but the social and collective interaction of communities was fundamentally and re-

ductively changed. Again, it did not change from utopia to dystopia, but, as Dewey notes, "it makes a difference whether [our] relations with [our] fellow workers or employers are of a family or neighborly or friendly character, or whether the relation is purely impersonal and the motive for work is the acquisition of money in some form as wage or salary or profits." (1988a, p. 375)

Here Dewey returns to a vision of human *being* that is not encased in materialist drudgery. His point is that the more materialist our lives become, the less likely we are to enjoy what it means to be more fully human. Note the qualifiers. Dewey is not arguing against work or jobs or making a decent (i.e., beyond subsistence) wage. He is arguing for a global society that is communal, fair, and filled with the kinds of artful serendipity and generative expertise that make us laugh and appreciate existing. What makes this view not utopian is the functional anchoring that comes with democratic socialism. Problems still exist. Chores must still be done. Threats endure.

Addressing these realities is best done, though not perfectly so, by a democratic socialist ethos tethered to a pragmatist vision of the world. In place of Adam Smith's elevation of individuals, Dewey sees individuals interested in more than self-preservation or, worse, self-promotion. Dewey also sees nation-states as "meta-individuals" insofar as they operate as competitive units set against trading partners and blocs. Indeed, Dewey distinguishes between functional and acquisitive societies as follows: functional societies have individuals performing their own parts or roles, where these parts and roles are inseparable from the total society and its growth and security; acquisitive societies have individuals performing their own parts or roles, where these parts and roles are the focus at the expense of a greater good. Functional societies require interpersonal collaboration. Acquisitive societies pit individuals against one another to secure financial superiority in constant competition and comparison to others. Functional societies require altruism. Acquisitive societies valorize selfishness at the same time

as they play on the trope of meritocracy. (1988a, pp. 410-411) How does a functional global society come about, then? The answer, for Dewey, is partly through a public schooling process that bridges inquiry and content not divorced from the social and economic realities students (and teachers) already embody in schools. Beyond cliché, schools as embryonic communities are not separate from the publics in which they reside. Social, political, and economic factors already color what school does and what school means. An unreflective view yields schools continuing to reinforce order, control, and a view of preparation that narrowly ties the purpose of schooling (and the purpose of living) to job skills, training, and employment. Dewey challenges this view by arguing that the problems of classism and income inequality should become part of the curriculum. Students should not be taught that there are “free markets,” when the markets operate in constant mediation of political and regulatory fluctuations to the continued advantage of the rich and at the expense of everyone else. (Oxfam notes that 1% of the wealthiest people have more than 50% of the wealth of the rest of the global population combined. [Oxfam, 2023])

Bridging Structural Differences in Economics and Education: Dewey in 2024?

Dewey's *Ethics* was first written as a textbook with James Hayden Tufts in 1908. It was updated, also as a textbook, in 1932. Given World War I and the Great Depression in the intervening years, not to mention overlooked-but-significant U.S. court cases like *Adair v. U.S.* and *Coppage v. Kansas*,¹ are there significant structural differences between the economics of Dewey's time and the global economics of the present? The short answer is yes, but there are also some important similarities that

are striking. For instance, in Chapter 21 (“Social Control of Business and Industry”), Dewey writes about the Great Depression, but seems prescient regarding the 2007-8 start of the Great Recession. He writes that a

...complete change in economic conditions is slowly compelling recognition of the fact that men [sic] are likely to be thrown out of work by a general business depression without the least fault or possibility of escape on their part. It is also apparent that, in so far as labor is regarded as a commodity to be bought in the cheapest market and scrapped like a machine when it is no longer at its maximum efficiency, the older protections against poverty and old age—which existed when the employer had a personal interest in his workmen [sic]—no longer exists. A society which claims to be just, to say nothing of being humane, must take account of these changed conditions and make provision, either through the industries themselves, or through government administration, against those contingencies which the present development of industry has brought about. The old maxim was, “Where the tree falls, there let it lie.” The modern conscience believes that a society which makes any pretense to understand what it is about should prevent trees from falling—or when this is not possible should at least prevent the fall from crushing the helpless members of the commonwealth. (1988a, p. 414)

Dewey is arguing against *laissez faire* libertarianism and for an economic system that safeguards basic work and living conditions. While it might be argued, in 2024, that democratic socialism is enjoying a resurgence in some public discourse, it faces the same kind of negative reaction and negative characterizations that existed in Dewey's time. As he noted in the chapter “Toward the Future,” it “is absurd to object to a national plan for mitigating suffering and injustice on the ground that it was first tried in Europe. The argument that social insurance is ‘paternalistic’ or ‘socialistic’ or ‘German’ is convenient hokum.” (1988a, p. 433)

The structural differences between global economics and education are few. Given Frederick Taylor's time-and-motion studies merging manufacturing plants and schools, the rise of David Snedden's social-efficiency advocacy in early twentieth-century U.S. debates about the purposes of schooling, and the increased conceptu-

¹ *Adair v. U.S.* was a Supreme Court case overturning an 1898 law barring employers from firing employees because they joined a union. See <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/208/161/>; and *Coppage v. Kansas* was a state case arguing the same point. Employees lost in both cases, securing business rights over workers' rights. See <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/236/1/>.

al substitution of education for training, schools operate far more like factories than communities of learners. (Kliebard, 2004; Wirth, 1979) This point goes beyond bell schedules and the curriculum. The point is that nearly 60 percent of adults in the U.S. believe that schools should focus more on career and technical skills-based classes than on more honors and advanced academic courses. (PublicAgenda.org, 2023) Such preferences indicate the culmination of a century-old effort in the U.S. to see schools as work force training sites, even if the majority of schools are not, strictly speaking, named technical and vocational institutions. Globally, there have long been distinctions between what I will call mainly “academic” instruction and vocational training. (Eichhorst, Rodríguez-Planas, Schmidl, and Zimmermann, 2012; Renold, Bolli, Caves, Bürgi, Egg, Kemper, and Rageth, 2018) As Dewey noted in *Democracy and Education* (1916), however, a “democratic criterion requires us to develop capacity to the point of competency to choose and make its own career [but] this principle is violated when the attempt is made to fit individuals in advance for definite industrial callings, selected not on the basis of trained original capacities, but on that of the wealth or social status of parents.” (p. 119). He continues:

As a matter of fact, industry at the present time undergoes rapid and abrupt changes through the evolution of new inventions. New industries spring up, and old ones are revolutionized. Consequently an attempt to train for too specific a mode of efficiency defeats its own purpose. (p. 119)

At least two historical points are worth considering in order to compare and contrast Dewey’s time to today: The Smith-Hughes Act and globalization after World War II.

Briefly, the Smith-Hughes Act was one of the first times U.S. federal money was spent on state schooling. Constitutionally, there is no national provision for education in the United States. Each U.S. state constitution has a clause regarding education, but not the U.S. Constitution. In 1905, the U.S. state of Massachusetts studied the need for vocational training and a national

discussion followed concerning agriculture, industry, and home economics. The Smith-Hughes Act embodied social determinist theory to identify those unable to do academic work but who were identified as future workers for industry. The debate then, as now, was between technocratic indoctrination or humane development of community. (Wirth, 1974; Hillison, 1995; Hart, 1951; and Hyslop-Margison, 1999) As Emery Hyslop-Margison (1999) notes:

The debate between Snedden and Dewey...reflects many of the arguments...on both sides of the vocational education divide. Snedden considered specific skill training an essential educational element to meet existing labor force demands, enhance national competitiveness, and promote economic progress. Advancing an argumentum ad populum to support his position, he suggested if Americans were forced to choose between social efficiency and democracy as the basis for public education, they would invariably select the former. Not unlike current social efficiency advocates, then, Snedden equated vocational education with providing students the skills, values and attitudes required by industry. From Dewey’s perspective, however, vocational education should be designed to meet student instead of corporate needs and prepare the former for the various challenges of social life rather than for specific occupational roles. (pp. 8-9)

Then, as now, arguments in favor of job preparation saturated media. Fomented by groups like the National Association of Manufacturers, patriotism became synonymous with industrialism. Citizenship narrowed to work-force preparation and jobs became the primary focus of family support. With World War II, a shift to national defense further reinforced the idea that national interests centered around manufacturing. The military-industrial complex became entrenched, and schools were further regarded as sites to produce future workers. The Soviet’s launching of the Sputnik satellite and the resulting National Defense Education Act of 1958 only reinforced this direction.

After World War II, economists associated with the Mont Pèlerin Society (MPS) exploited post-war Europe in a concerted effort to expand classical, monetarist

economic thought. (Mirowski and Plehwe, 2015) Milton Friedman, Friedrich von Hayek, and Ludwig von Mises were leading members of the MPS who argued vehemently against government intervention into “free markets,” championing instead a vision of capitalism that promoted individualism and competition. Where John Maynard Keynes argued for ordoliberal government expenditures, the MPS essentially argued, and Friedman specifically did, that profit is the only purpose of business.² Dewey, though not perfectly aligned with Keynes, viewed business with deep suspicion. In writing about the havoc wrought by the cycles of surplus-recession-depression associated with MPS-like capitalism, Dewey (1988a) lamented that “it is doubtful whether there will be any escape from the cycle so long as business and industry are left to the unlimited control of the profit motive.” (p. 383) The consequences, according to Dewey, reinforce a bizarre reality. “Business wants to be left alone by government, but at the same time it virtually admits that it has no plan, except to make as large profits as possible in times of prosperity, and when depression comes to throw the burden of unemployment upon charity” or the very government it eschews. (p. 383) This point is another link to understanding how U.S. schools are arguably exploited by market and business interests.

U.S. Schools as Democratic Public Spheres to Critique Business Ethics?

U.S. schools find themselves in a double-bind insofar as state governments lure companies to headquarter or relocate to their area by offering significant tax incentives. Amazon is a recent example, but only because it was so large. Many smaller “deals” are constantly made as part of the globalization/MPS-approach to trade. As Tyler Mac Innis and Juan Carlos Ordóñez (2016) note, however, us-

ing the U.S. state of Oregon to illustrate the issues facing all states:

Over the decades, the Oregon corporate income tax has declined dramatically as a source of revenue. This is evident from several perspectives. First, as a share of the state’s economy, corporate tax contributions have shrunk by more than half since the late 1970s. Second, as a share of all income taxes collected in Oregon, corporate income taxes have also contracted. Third, corporate income taxes have eroded to such an extent that the Oregon Lottery now brings in more revenue than the corporate income tax. And fourth, in recent years many profitable corporations have paid nothing or next-to-nothing in income taxes. (p. 2)

The result is that U.S. public schools are structurally underfunded and, because of that underfunding, are then used in “school-business partnerships” where companies call attention to their generosity. I call this false philanthropy. Dewey called it charity. He also found it ethically dubious when he argued (1988a) that “to resort to charity to remedy a situation which ought to be prevented by the economic system is a confession of weakness. For charity places the burden not on those who are able, nor on those who have profited most from previous prosperity, but on those who are willing.” (p. 382) Partnerships can be terminated and “grants” to schools from corporations can be withdrawn. Budgets can be cut, too, of course, but tax revenue is far more reliable than donations.

Schools as charities are certainly not what Dewey had in mind when he argued for embryonic, democratic communities where students and teachers engaged in solving social problems. Using corporate tax subsidies and school funding as projects for inquiry and critique is much more in keeping with Dewey’s view. By studying economics as a contested field, Dewey was rejecting the nineteenth-century effort to view economics as akin to physics. Part of Dewey’s point is that capitalism did not appear out of thin air. Free markets do not naturally occur. They are social vestiges of value: moral commitments that are made and re-made for purposes of power and control. When students understand that economics is not an objective

² There were differences between neoliberals and ordoliberals within MPS, to be sure, but the society is staunchly monetarist and exclusionary of state intervention, at least in theory. See Mirowski and Plehwe, 88-123.

science, they challenge what is otherwise accepted as an “all-knowing” specialization. Belief in antecedent, a priori market ideals masquerading as a physics-like science is arguably part of the reason economists are interviewed and quoted so much, even though they are wrong much of the time. (Fourcade, Ollion, and Algan, 2015)

Learning that economics is debatable, ideological, and value-laden means taking the field down from its constructed “perch” and democratizing the thinking about the function of economics globally. Accordingly, learning communities and schools, too, are made and constructed and are never pure and wholly good. They are like nature, for Dewey—evolving contexts requiring constant checks and revisions for the purpose of justice beyond liberty. (Popp, 2007) For a society to advance economic justice, the law and political institutions will need to re-think the purpose of economic policy and practice. For Dewey, there must also be a rethinking of the purpose of education such that economics is tested and re-thought by students and teachers in schools. In the chapter, “Toward the Future,” Dewey (1988a) stipulates the five central problems to be taken up by schools re-evaluating economics for justice: 1) production and waste; 2) security; 3) worker protections; 4) elevating understanding and taste on the part of consumers; and 5) “problems of a juster [sic] distribution of the enormous gains in economic processes—juster both as measured by service to the community, and as measured by the requirements of a functional society.” (p. 430) Perhaps this point is the one Dewey advocates most in *Ethics*: functional societies utilize ethics in determining a good life. Regarding economics and ethics, I return to the central question of this essay. Does Dewey’s pragmatic view of basic economic justice run counter to how public schooling operates in the U.S.? Yes. It does. It is pragmatism’s challenge as well as a challenge to pragmatism.

Dewey’s pragmatism is one in which schools are laboratories for critique, investigation, and critical inquiry, including—as stipulated in this paper—economics as a field

and as a subject. Current schools teach economics largely from one view, i.e., MPS-like neoliberalism. Accordingly, like other content areas, teaching is essentially telling students “The way the world is.” When the U.S. state of Texas’ state board of education voted to get rid of the term “capitalism” in the state’s economics curriculum, it was so epithets could not be attached (think “capitalist pig”). (Perrillo, 2018) The phrase that replaced the term was “free market economics” and might represent what Nancy MacLean (2017) identifies as “intentional design.” (p. 217) Who would argue against the idea that there are “free markets?” According to this view, the marketplace and competition decide which businesses continue and which fail. Consumer choice determines where money is spent. Except the Covid-19 pandemic ruptured the theory. Delta Airlines, headquartered in my hometown of Atlanta, Georgia, received \$5.4 billion from the federal government to keep it from going bankrupt during the pandemic. I am not arguing that it should not have received the money. I am arguing that the federal capital outlay undermines the neoliberal idea that there is a “free market” and that centralized government has no legitimate (ordoliberal) role to play.

Coordinating efforts between the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), the Charles Koch-funded State Policy Network, the Cato Institute, the Foundation for Economic Education (FEE), and the Independent Institute has meant a barrage of misinformation about climate change, taxes, and the role of public schools in U.S. society. (MacLean, 2017, p. 207ff) If the role and function of public education is to advance a largely one-sided view of job preparation, individualism, competition, and selfishness, then Dewey’s view of economic justice has been overtaken by an ethics of business that sees society as merely a grouping of consumers and global trade as a “winner take all” competition. As he noted (1988a), the “point...is that exclusive reliance upon the profit motive and upon the supreme importance of wealth tends to distort the proper perspective for life as a whole.” (p.

437) Schools subvert this goal of the public good by reifying and promoting individualist competition tied almost exclusively to job training and future employment. To challenge such a reality requires changing what it means to teach and to learn from acceptance to critique. It also requires re-imagining the function of schools to be places where ethics become central to various fields of inquiry. Otherwise, the public good is merely a shibboleth.

And this leads me back to a central tension I noted at the beginning of the paper: endorsing Dewey's global, critically pragmatic democratic goals but realizing neoliberal and nationalistic tendencies inhibit or deny altogether those very goals. Dewey wanted an international order and global executive. He also wanted the "laboratory of democracy," the U.S., to represent a working hypothesis for the world. To be clear, he was not interested in offering the U.S. as perfect "model" or "rubric" to follow. But he was offering the U.S. as a context for pragmatically working out modes of associated living to benefit the globe. If, as I fear, the U.S. in 2024 is riven by a creeping fascism—both far right *and* far left—Dewey's experiment will have to change. My suggestion is that his meliorism should be modified by the harsh realities of division we currently face around the globe. Instead of ending with my pessimism, however, I refer to Eddie Glaude's (2007) caution to me and I will close by giving Dewey the final word.

Glaude suggests that there are plenty of scholars who "hold the view that Dewey's version of pragmatism is marred by a naively optimistic faith in in science of a grievous lack of attention to the operations of power... But how we understand the place of contingency in Dewey's overall philosophical outlook frames how we ought to understand the scope of human agency in his thinking, as well as its tragic dimensions." (p. 18) In *Freedom and Culture* (1989), Dewey seems prescient in warning us that "Authoritarian methods...recommend adoption of a totalitarian regime in order to fight totalitarianism." (p. 133) In opposition, and finally, Dewey offers the following:

Our first defense is to realize that democracy can be served only by the slow day by day adoption and contagious diffusion in every phase of our common life of methods that are identical with the ends to be reached and that recourse to monistic, wholesale, absolutist procedures is a betrayal of human freedom no matter in what guise it presents itself. An American democracy can serve the world only as it demonstrates in the conduct of its own life the efficacy of plural, partial, and experimental methods in securing and maintaining an ever-increasing release of the powers of human nature, in service of a freedom which is cooperative and cooperation which is voluntary. (p. 133)

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PERCEPTION AND UNDERSTANDING OF HEALTH, ILLNESS AND PAIN RORTY BETWEEN GADAMER AND DENNETT¹

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ABSTRACT: The aim of the paper is to analyze and compare the perception and understanding of health, illness, and pain from the perspectives of philosophical hermeneutics, pragmatism, and the philosophy of mind, with an accent on the middle position of Rorty's pragmatism between the philosophical hermeneutics and the philosophy of mind. Although Gadamer tends to prefer the contextual understanding of health, more than of illness and pain, his claims about the universal rational legacy of hermeneutics seems to situate him into the proximity of the theory of privileged representations. On the other hand, both Gadamer and Rorty agree on the unity of body and mind and in consequence also on the equality between the natural and the social sciences in their representation of the reality. Dennett is as sceptical as Rorty towards the theory of privileged interpretations practiced among others also in the contemporary medicine, but his understanding of human consciousness, described frequently as a software, is placing Rorty closer to Gadamer's hermeneutics than to the philosophy of mind.

Keywords: illness, suffering, pain, health, consciousness

Is There a Common Space for Pragmatism, Modern Hermeneutics and the Philosophy of Mind?

Richard Rorty's pragmatism has generally been considered some sort of middle position between the continental philosophical tradition and the American analytical tradition. As Bouma-Prediger claims in his paper, "Rorty's Pragmatism and Gadamer's Hermeneutics":

Rorty argues that since knowledge involves neither accurate nor privileged representations, the idea of mind is a fiction.² And if there is no such thing as a mind, then the notion of philosophy as the foundational discipline which adjudicates disputes about the mind and prescribes the correct or appropriate epistemological methods can and must be abandoned. Philosophy must in Rorty's words *be therapeutic rather than constructive, edifying rather than systematic.* (1979:5). It must

give up entirely the whole business of epistemology and become instead a form of hermeneutics. (Bouma-Prediger 1989, 313)

On the following pages of his paper, Bouma-Prediger further explores what Rorty and Gadamer have or don't have in common, commenting on Rorty's understanding (or according to his opinion misunderstanding) and appropriation of philosophical hermeneutics. But the significance in this context is the therapeutic approach and impact of philosophy. This is explicitly articulated in Rorty's *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*; he mentions the word therapy there five times and always in connection with the main task of philosophy. The same can be said about Gadamer's hermeneutical essays on the history, theory and philosophy of medicine, issued in the collected volume under the title, *The Enigma of Health*. Despite the rejection of the universally given concept of mind, Rorty, Gadamer and all the other post-metaphysical philosophers still have to deal in some way with the concept of consciousness, especially in the moments when it makes us painfully admit the awareness of our suffering or illness.

In Dennett's rationally and rather materially oriented philosophy of mind, there are two sorts of concepts: the ones which depend on historical and cultural context to be understood, and the ones which mostly do not depend on any context. While the impact of the words like love or consciousness changes in time according to our understanding of them, the words health, suffering, illness and pain belong to the second group, to the concepts with the stable meaning and almost unchanging impact within the history of humankind. The understanding of categories of health, illness, suffering and pain then does not have anything to do with the understanding of the contextually interpreted concepts like for example consciousness, or with the other the categories that are expressing different states of body and mind, the feelings and emotions, because the meaning of the second ones is relational and contextually given and can in consequence be changed within the changing social practice in the history of humankind.

¹ A version of this paper was presented at the Central European Pragmatist Forum, June 10-14, 2024.

² See for example: (Rorty 1982, 323-348.)

The aim of this paper is hence to analyze and compare the perception and understanding of health, illness, and pain from the perspectives of philosophical hermeneutics, pragmatism, and the philosophy of mind, with an accent on the middle position of Rorty's pragmatism between the philosophical hermeneutics and the philosophy of mind. Another, not less important question is, where to place Dennett's philosophy of mind. Some thinkers consider Dennett's philosophy of mind one of the branches of the analytical tradition. They see Dennett as making interventions within analytic philosophy of mind and its discussions on consciousness. This is a difficult and much broader problem, and it involves the question about whether the philosophy of mind is a separate discipline, or it is only one branch of the analytical philosophy or if there are analytical and non-analytical approaches in the philosophy of mind itself. Another thing is the theory of the privileged interpretations, accentuated by Wittgenstein, Searle or Quine. But Dennett is as critical as Rorty towards the theory of privileged representations, and he is much less concerned with the linguistic structures of these representations than with the relationship between the body and mind or with the problem of intuition and intentionality that might have a presumably phenomenological character. On the other hand, Dennett ironically calls himself as an analytical philosopher in his *Comments on Rorty* (Dennett 1982, 349) and his essay *Quining Qualia* (Dennett 1988) is often read in analytical philosophy courses. Nonetheless, the content of his texts is significantly pointing at the phenomenological and the naturalist approach in his theory of mind, therefore he should be perceived as a non-analytical philosopher. However, the question of which philosopher should without any doubt be considered as the member of the analytical philosophical tradition remains complicated and not easy to be answered.³

When it comes to the theory of privileged interpretations, Rorty and Dennett⁴ are formulating their critique

explicitly, (Gutting 2003, 41-60) what Dennett formulates in the following way: "I recognize that this is a very bad line of reasoning - and would be a bit of backsliding on my part if I were to fall for it, for I agree (74.2%) with Rorty about the nature of the hermeneutical enterprise, and join with him in cheering the plummeting stock - if not yet declared bankruptcy - of the idea of privileged representations." (Dennett 1982, 350) On the other hand, there are some similarities between philosophical hermeneutics and analytical philosophy especially when it comes to the primary position of the question, but there are also some significant differences in their understanding of contextuality, which will be explained further on in the part dedicated to ethics and epistemology. For this reason, the aim of this paper will be to show that rather than a middle position between the continental and the analytical philosophical tradition, Rorty occupies the middle position between the philosophical hermeneutics, which in some points stands closer to the analytical philosophy than we are often willing to admit and the philosophy of mind.⁵ The "analytic-continental" distinction seems a bit outdated and leaves the content of discourse out of the discussion. Therefore, I will be focusing on the overlap of the content here instead by focusing on the particular claims and context of the authors instead.

The Unconscious Health and the Painful Consciousness of Suffering and Illness in the Hermeneutical Approach of Gadamer.

In the collected studies, *The Enigma of Health*, Gadamer is concerned with the question, "What actually is the phenomenon we call health?". He also asks whether the subject of health can be understood and defined at all

consciousness has a special structure that enables humans to access the things as they substantially are. This theory was developed and accentuated by Anglo-American analytic philosophy.

⁵ This paper is consciously trying to avoid the comparison of these three important branches of the 20th century philosophy with the analytical philosophy, as all of them are extensively critical towards the analytical approach.

³ See for example: (Glock 2008)

⁴ Theory of the privileged representations claims that human

from a point of view that is neither that of a doctor nor that of a patient, that is, from the point of view of a philosopher. What is health? According to WHO, health is “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely freedom from disease or infirmity”⁶. “Health,” says Gadamer “is not something that can simply be made or produced. But what then is health itself?” (Gadamer 2004, p. vii), he asks in the preface to his book. What is it, then, that when we have it, we don’t really feel it, and of which we don’t even become aware until we lose it? Only when we get sick and feel the loss of health in pain, suddenly we realize that we were healthy before. But this understanding also does not come from itself, it does not emerge from the void but is formed in the context of our view of the world, in the context of how we see the world around us and our place in it based on our past experiences, which include pre-understanding and pre-judices.

In his study, *Bodily Experience and the Limits of Objectification*, Gadamer deals with the subject of the body, corporeality, embodiment and objectification. Here, he refers to the embodiment, the experience with our living body, as one of the most essential experiences of our existence, when he defines the concept of health in the following way:

Something that has long guided me in my reflections about such things is a famous passage in Plato’s *Phaedrus*.⁷ This concerns the recognition that, as certain famous Greek physicians had observed, the body cannot be treated without at the same time treating the soul. It is further suggested that perhaps even this is not enough, that it is impossible to treat the body without possessing knowledge concerning the whole being. In Greek the whole of being is *hole ousia*. Anyone knowing this phrase in Greek will also hear, alongside the expression ‘the whole of being’, the suggestion of ‘hale and healthy being’. The being whole as the whole and the being healthy

as the whole, healthiness of well-being, seem to be most intimately related. In German when one is unwell, one says ‘Es fehlt mir etwas’ – literally, I am lacking in something. What can we learn from these etymological considerations? We need to recognize that it is only through disturbance of the whole that a genuine consciousness of the problem and a genuine concentration of thought upon it can arise. (Gadamer 2004, 73)

The health according to Gadamer, is the wholeness of the whole, in the being healthy which at the same time is the well-being, is an attitude in which nothing seems to be missing to us, in which we feel the vitality of our body so automatically and subconsciously that we do not feel it at all. This is the feeling of health, the feeling of the undisturbed perfection of life in and around us. This understanding in Gadamer is inspired as much by Greek philosophy, not only by Plato but also by Aristotle, who characterized the soul as “nothing more than the living character of the body” (Gadamer 2004, 71), as by phenomenological anthropology, which saw in the concept of corporeality the access to the objective lifeworld. As long as we are healthy, we do not doubt our aliveness, which comes naturally to us at the moment of health. (Creller 2018, 2 – 4)

This changes in the moment when we become ill and perceive the disturbances in the feeling of perfection. Gadamer asserts,

I know only too well how illness, can make us insistently aware of our bodily nature by creating a disturbance in something which normally, in its very freedom from disturbance, almost completely escapes our attention. Here it is a matter of the methodological primacy of illness over health this disturbing factor in something that in its undisturbedness almost completely eludes us, makes our corporeality present to us to the point of obtrusiveness. We are dealing here with a methodological primacy of illness over health. (Gadamer 2004, 73)

As Gadamer correctly adds, there is the alienation of the sick person from its own body, and later often from the whole world, caused by the illness, suffering and pain. For a sick person, the subjective body (Leib) suddenly becomes the body (Körper), when corporeality no longer

⁶ <https://www.who.int/data/gho/data/major-themes/health-and-well-being>

⁷ There is certainly a connection between Plato’s *Phaedrus* and the texts attributed to Hippocrates and the role of the inquiry into nature, *phusis*, in treatment. (Schiefsky 2005, 19-25), (Kleisiaris, Sfakianakis, Papathanasiou 2014).

means the well-being of aliveness. Gadamer expresses it as follows: "In German a doctor will begin by asking 'Na, wo fehlt's den?' or 'what's the matter with you then?', literally, 'what are you lacking?'. Or we ourselves may ask, 'Was fehlt mir eigentlich?', literally, 'what am I lacking?'" (Gadamer 2004, 75) This is a question which we as patients can address to a doctor who is about to examine us or give us advice.

It is not an extraordinary thing that the lack of something, although we do not know precisely what it is that is lacking, can reveal the miraculous existence of health? It is only now, in its absence, that I notice *what* was previously there, or more precisely, not what was previously there but *that* it was there. This something, that was previously there, is what one calls well-being. Meanwhile health is for Gadamer a matter of interpretation, sickness, suffering and pain are felt and perceived directly and without any doubt. Although he does not believe in the primacy of the strictly technical approach to the four above mentioned categories, putting an accent at the idea of health as a whole being might evoke an impression of an attempt to privilege representation. Why is this the case in the category of health? Mainly because of the direct and very individual perception of sickness, suffering and pain in contrary to the not directly perceived health, whose universal representation becomes the concept of *hole ousia*.

Dennett's Definition of Undefinable Consciousness. Are Health, Illness, Suffering and Pain Objective Phenomena or Are They States of Mind?

Dennett does not believe in the possibility of any bulletproof definition, independently of what one is trying to define, but the question of health for him, in contrast to Gadamer, is not the matter of interpretation, at least not in the way love or consciousness is. In his quite controversially received book, *Consciousness Explained*, he argues:

Compare love and consciousness with two rather different phenomena, diseases, and earthquakes.

Our concepts of diseases and earthquakes have also undergone substantial revision over the last few hundred years, but diseases and earthquakes are phenomena that are very largely (but not entirely) independent of our concepts of them. Changing our minds about diseases did not in itself make diseases disappear or become less frequent, although it did result in changes in medicine and public health that radically altered the occurrence patterns of diseases. Earthquakes may someday similarly come under some measure of human control, or at least prediction, but by and large the existence of earthquakes is unaffected by our attitudes toward them or concepts of them. With love it is otherwise. (Dennett 1991, 24)

Unlike our interpretation of love and consciousness, which might change the phenomenon itself according to our perception of its content, the changes in understanding of the concept of health do not have any impact on the frequency of its presence in our lives. But is it really that easy? Had not our current definition of health, for example the perception of vaccination as part of healthcare, helped to almost extinguish the child mortality at least in the richer regions? Didn't the fear of the vaccines significantly rise the mortality rate during the covid-19 pandemic? And there is a plenty of other examples. In this case, although I do not agree with any privileged definition of health, I would argue against Dennett and claim that unlike between the understanding and the frequency of the earthquakes, there is definitely a connection between the interpretation and the concrete presence of health in the population. And what about illness, suffering and pain? If health is real and its reality does not depend on its possible understanding, how does it then look like with pain?

"Are pains real?" (Dennett 1991, 460), Dennett is asking and at the same moment he is giving an answer: "They are as real as haircuts and dollars and opportunities and persons, and centers of gravity, but how real is that? These dichotomizing questions all grow out of the demand to fill in the blank in the quantified formula above, and some philosophers think that one develops a theory of mind by concocting a bulletproof proposition of that

sort and then defending it" (Ibid). Dennett does not attribute to pain more reality than he is attributing to most of the phenomena that in our lives share their dependence on our mind. Meanwhile health is a real, objective phenomenon, illness, suffering and pain are according to him the states of mind, no matter how close to the material or corporeal damage they might be related. They are primarily witnessed and evaluated in and by the conscious mind, into which they are transported through the neurotransmitters, just like all the other perceptions from the external, internal or emotional world. Dennett describes this triple experience of mind in the following way:

Our phenom is divided into three parts: (1) experiences of the "external" world, such as sights, sounds, smells, slippery and scratchy feelings, feelings of heat and cold, and of the positions of our limbs; (2) experiences of the purely "internal" world, such as fantasy images, the inner sights and sounds of daydreaming and talking to yourself, recollections, bright ideas, and sudden hunches; and (3) experiences of emotion or "affect" (to use the awkward term favored by psychologists), ranging from bodily pains, tickles, and "sensations" of hunger and thirst, through intermediate emotional storms of anger, joy, hatred, embarrassment, lust, astonishment, to the least corporeal visitations of pride, anxiety, regret, ironic detachment, rue, awe, icy calm. (Dennett 1991, 45)

Perception of pain is then the same result of evolutionary process like the development of consciousness till certain grade in some sorts of animals and to the highest grade in human mind. Moreover, Dennett claims that the intensity of the feeling of pain is proportionally linked to the intensity of consciousness development, which means that the species with less developed consciousness are more likely to feel less pain than the more conscious ones. Even though illness might be the feeling of lacking something, as Gadamer it describes, in Dennett's opinion it is not that lacking itself, which makes us suffer, but it is the alarm system represented by pain. This alarm system is again more active and more sensitive in case of the more conscious creatures.

"There can be no doubt that having the alarm system of pain fibers and the associated tract in the brain is an

evolutionary boon, even if it means paying the price of having some alarms ring that we can't do anything about. But why do pains have to hurt so much? Why couldn't it just be a loud bell in the mind's ear, for instance?" (Dennett 1991, 61) And there is another question that Dennett is trying to answer in agreement with the evolutionary biology. It is the problem of pains in the formerly incurable but now curable and the absence of pain in the still incurable diseases. It does not seem very logical that the gallstones that luckily, we are able to treat nowadays are causing such an incredible pain and the cell mutations in the beginning states of almost all types of cancer do not hurt at all. And when they start to hurt, it is usually too late.

How does the alarm mechanism of pain function in these situations? What is it warning us from? On the basis of these experiences, would it not be more appropriate to understand the pain rather as an omnipresent perception of incompleteness than an evolutionary alarm warning us from the upcoming threats? For Dennett this might not be the case, and he is demonstrating it right away on the case of aphasia, the loss or damage of the ability to speak (Dennett 1991, 249). He is arguing that despite its definition as an undoubtedly serious illness, only some of the patients are perceiving their sudden inability to speak as a significant loss and are in consequence suffering from anxiety, the other ones do not feel any important loss or damage, in contrary their feeling of completeness is not impacted at all.

Even more complicated is the situation with empathy and sympathy. These are, as we will see later in Rorty, always given in and by the relation to something or someone. Dennett explains it as the same sort of vibrations, that can be transmitted from one person to another, just like the vibrations of two different music instruments. He says, "Etymologically, the word means suffering-with. The German words for it are Mitleid (with-pain) and Mitgefuehl (with-feeling). Or think of sympathetic vibration, in which one string of a musical instrument is set to humming by the vibration of another one nearby, closely

related to it in that both share a natural resonance frequency" (Dennett 1991, 62). But again, is it really that simple? Are empathy and sympathy only states of mind that are transmitted from one consciousness to another through the resonance, the frequency of which can be proven? Should not we, before we start feeling sympathy to someone have ourselves the experience with pain, have a direct experience with painfulness, "the intrinsic awfulness of pain" (Dennett 1991, 64), rather than a knowledge of the neuroscientific mechanism of pain or its meaning within the evolutionary development of living organisms? This kind of knowledge can be helpful for the medical professional, in order to fight the causes of pain more efficiently, but not for the person, who is literally in pain and surrounded by pain till such a grade that this person becomes isolated from the outside world.⁸

Dennett is obviously aware of this fact, when he writes about very poor possibilities of reflecting on pain, once we are feeling it: "Ordinarily, though, I would not have such a third- order thought and hence would not be conscious of such a second- order thought; I would express it, in saying 'I am in pain'" (Ibid). Another aspect of empathy is sympathy with animals, which according to Dennett is more a matter of convention, habits and culture, than the matter of vibrations between different, but still living creatures. "These reasons are somewhat independent of the facts about just which animals feel which kinds of pain. They depend more directly on the fact that various beliefs are ambient in our culture, and matter to us, whether they ought to matter or not. Since they now matter, they matter" (Dennett 1991, 454).

It is clear that Dennett failed in explaining the concepts like pain, health, suffering, sympathy or consciousness outside any purely functional pattern. This is mainly because, in contrast to Gadamer, whose understanding is predominantly contextual, Dennett was applying only a limited relational approach in his investigations. However,

as he adds at the end of his book, that does not mean that consciousness, amongst other phenomena, cannot be explained one day (Dennett 1991, 455).

"Pain should be minimized.": Richard Rorty's Borderline Position between Gadamer and Dennett.

Rorty's perception of health, illness, suffering, and pain, is as contextually based as Gadamer's. However, contrary to Gadamer, Rorty's pragmatist approach does not apply the universal rational legacy that can be grasped by everyone as the category of common sense. Instead, he is accentuating the relationality of an individual in each hermeneutical situation. In his argumentation he starts with tearing apart the three areas of the spatio-temporal perception, denying "the threefold distinction" (Rorty 1979, 20), where "the physical is spatio-temporal; the psychological is non spatial but temporal; the metaphysical is neither spatial nor temporal" (Ibid.). As all the mental states are necessarily bound to the physical existence, they cannot be exclusively temporal but non spatial. Rorty also rejects the borderline position of mind. According to him, there is not an intersection point maintaining communication between the body and the soul of a human. He claims:

This brings us almost full circle, for now we want to know what sense it makes to say that some states of a spatial entity are spatial and some are not. It is no help to be told that these are its functional states-for a person's beauty and his build and his fame and his health are functional states, yet intuition tells us that they are not mental states either. To clarify our intuition, we have to identify a feature shared by our pains and beliefs but not by our beauty or our health. It will not help to identify the mental as that which can survive death or the destruction of the body, since one's beauty can survive death and one's fame can survive the destruction of one's body. (Rorty 1979, 20-21)

Health in Rorty is neither an independent phenomenon nor the feeling of completeness, but a functional state of the person, it has a pragmatic purpose, and it is beneficial for the individual in both, the physical and the psycholog-

⁸ See for example (Crittenden 2009, 121 – 145)

ical aspect. Unlike beauty or fame, health cannot survive the physical death of the person, but it is the same expression of the relationship between the individual body parts and the body as a whole within certain contexts (Rorty 1979, 26). Illness, in consequence, means a disbalance or disharmony between the whole and its parts in the given conditions. This interpretation allows Rorty to stay in the middle position between Gadamer, who is accentuating the feeling of completeness, and Dennett, who is adding the observation that despite the objectively missing parts or functions of the body, in certain conditions, the perception of *hole ousia* by the patient might remain untouched.

Rorty is showing precisely that the three above mentioned distinctions cannot work because the body and mind are interwoven and do not fit into the mere categories of temporality or spatiality. The main problem for Rorty is not this unity of body and mind, something that neither the philosophy of mind nor the philosophical hermeneutics is denying, but the question of how this unity functions. He does not agree with the theory that a more complicated neurological system creates a more conscious being, which is accordingly more rational and more sensitive to the perception of pain, should it be its own pain or the pain of another being with the same vibrations. In the same way he disagrees with the strictly common-sense-based interpretation of the body-mind problem, which finding its origin in the Platonic concept of immortal soul and his rational justification of moral rules is articulated in the philosophical hermeneutics and its approach to pain. Rorty uses here his famous argumentation about pigs and koalas. In this context, the well-known statement "Pain must be minimized", receives an entirely new interpretation:

The moral prohibitions are expressions of a sense of community based on the imagined possibility of conversation, and the attribution of feelings is little more than a reminder of these prohibitions. This can be seen by noticing that no body except philosophers of mind cares whether the raw feel of pain or redness is different for koalas than for

us, but that we all care quite a bit about a koala when we see it writhing about. This fact does not mean that our or the koala's pain "is nothing but its behavior"; it just means that writhing is more important to our ability to imagine the koala asking us for help than what is going on inside the koala. Pigs rate much higher than koalas on intelligence tests, but pigs don't writhe in quite the right humanoid way, and the pig's face is the wrong shape for the facial expressions which go with ordinary conversation. So, we send pigs to slaughter with equanimity, but form societies for 'the protection of koalas. This is not "irrational," any more than it is irrational to extend or deny civil rights to the moronic (or fetuses, or aboriginal tribes, or Martians). Rationality, when viewed as the formation of syllogisms based on discovery of "the facts" and the application of such principles as "Pain should be minimized" or "Intelligent life is always more valuable than beautiful unintelligent beings," is a myth. (Rorty 1979, 190 – 191)

Knowledge and empathy are for Rorty not the result of rationality created and articulated through the conscious mind, but the result of widely spread social acceptance. "Thus, we shall not be tempted to think that the possession of an inner life, a stream of consciousness, is relevant to reason. Once consciousness and reason are separated out in this way, then personhood can be seen for what I claim it is—a matter of decision rather than knowledge, an acceptance of another being into fellowship rather than a recognition of a common essence" (Rorty 1979, 37). Only, what is accepted as knowledge, will be considered as knowledge, only the living organism or another human being that is accepted as a fellow creature, will be considered as the one that is worth empathy.

Epistemological or Ethical Perspectives?

It is interesting that Rorty is placing Dennett into the same box with Gadamer, and Dennett in his *Comments on Rorty*, (Dennett 1982, 355) is adding Gadamer to the group of relativists, into which he has already placed Rorty. What is then the appropriate position of Richard Rorty, who coming from the analytical philosophical tradition decided to leave its strictly logical analysis of the linguistic structures and move towards the evolutionary

and more contextual understanding of language? The answer might be the division of the question of health, sickness, suffering and pain in two parts, the epistemological and the ethical one, as each of them is pushing Rorty's pragmatism in an opposite direction.

First, it is necessary to explain the epistemological proximity of Gadamerian hermeneutics to analytical philosophy. This proximity consists in the primary position of the question before the answer and the way the question should be put. Just like in analytic philosophy, in the hermeneutics of Gadamer the ontological and the linguistic structures are closely interconnected. Our being in the world is defined exclusively by our understanding of the world around us and this understanding occurs only through language and within the linguistic structures that in both philosophical branches are expressed in the dialectic of question and answer.

We will now examine the logical structure of openness that characterizes hermeneutical consciousness, recalling the importance of the concept of the question to our analysis of the hermeneutical situation. It is clear that the structure of the question is implicit in all experience. We cannot have experiences without asking questions. Recognizing that an object is different, and not as we first thought, obviously presupposes the question whether it was this or that. From a logical point of view, the openness essential to experience is precisely the openness of being either this or that. It has the structure of a question... The essence of the question is to have sense. Now sense involves a sense of direction. Hence the sense of the question is the only direction from which the answer can be given if it is to make sense. A question places what is questioned in a particular perspective. When a question arises, it breaks open the being of the object, as it were. Hence the logos that explicates this opened-up being is an answer. Its sense lies in the sense of the question. (Gadamer 2006, 356)

In consequence, both are working with the presupposition that the correctly asked question is always followed by the correctly formulated answer, even though language and the idea of the question is very robust in Gadamer (e.g., the linguisticity of understanding) compared to a much more deflated or thin sense of language

in the analytic tradition because of the anti-metaphysical push of the linguistic turn and the influence of positivism. But 'correct' means again for both a logical and rational universal legacy that can persist for many generations and survive even the most dramatic events throughout history. This universality should be enabled by the specific capacity of the human consciousness, which is able to produce privileged interpretations, presumably understandable to all members of the humankind. However, there is one significant difference. For analytical philosophy, the logical correctness of the question and its answer is crucial; meanwhile, in Gadamer's hermeneutics, despite its very rational setting, the space between the question and the corresponding answer can still be filled out via contextuality and interpretation. This contextuality is mainly applied in ethical issues and that is the moment that brings Rorty much closer to Gadamer than to Dennett.

In contrast to Gadamer and analytical philosophy, Rorty and Dennett categorically refuse to admit the existence of privileged interpretations as any sort of the solid epistemological base, or as Dennett calls it, the epistemological bedrock. He claims:

To insist that there is no such epistemological bedrock to be found here is, of course, only to insist on a special case of the doctrine that Quine and Wittgenstein - and others - were advancing in general, but seeing how one could manage to be a good Wittgensteinian or Quinean in the special case of presumed knowledge of one's own mind has taken some doing. In particular, we have had to come up with a detailed and plausible diagnosis of the undismissable first-person asymmetry - a diagnosis which even acknowledges that it is an epistemological asymmetry, but one that yields no foundations. That diagnosis is still, alas, controversial, and a cloud on the horizon of Rorty's revolution that I think he underestimates. (Dennett 1982, 351)

Where, then, can be seen the similarity between Rorty and Dennett? Predominantly in Rorty's own definition of 'rationality'. If the purpose of knowledge and empathy are socially contextualized, rationality still maintains a functional role. It is hence the use of a functional descrip-

tion, which is a worthwhile overlap between Dennett and Rorty, even though they disagree about the basis of that rationality, the understanding of which may still be evolutionary in both cases. Meanwhile Dennett is presenting a merely functional explanation of health, illness, suffering, and pain in his naturalist phenomenological description of their meaning throughout the process of human evolution, without involving any ethical perspectives into his theories, unless an ethical behavior does not have severe functional consequences. The situation is different in Gadamer and Rorty (Elshtein Bethke 2003, 139-157).

Not only do they, contrary to Dennett, admit the contextuality of human knowledge and action, but they also insist on the ethical and social consequences of an inadequate approach to health, illness, suffering, and pain. Gadamer, Dennet, and Rorty are all interpreting the concept of healthiness as a capacity of being fully functional in life, although their understandings of functionality may vary. The specific contribution of Gadamer and Rorty into the discussion about functionality is an implication of the ethical perspectives. Both agree on the therapeutic character of philosophy and see its main task in improving the life of an individual in the society and of the society as a whole. Part of this seems to be also dependent on how they define "ethical", though. These are ethos driven sense of ethical perspective, rather than principle-applying notions of ethics that we might see in contemporary analytic approaches to ethics. Although none of the two claims there is a perpetual ethical progress or moral perfection, they are firmly convinced about the possibility of individual and social change through the philosophical reinterpretation and reevaluation of our convictions and beliefs (Warnke 2003, 105-123). For this reason, no matter how adequate or inadequate explanation of the phenomena of health, sickness, suffering and pain, appears on one hand as insufficient in its consequences, as it on the other hand represents the significant starting point for any further discussions.

Conclusion

Although Gadamer tends to prefer the contextual understanding of health, illness and pain, his claims about the universal rational legacy of hermeneutics based on the primacy of correctly asked question, seems to situate him into the proximity of the theory of privileged representations. On the other hand, both, Gadamer and Rorty agree on the unity of body and mind and in consequence also on the equality between the natural and the social sciences in their representation of the reality. Dennett is as sceptical as Rorty towards the theory of privileged interpretations (Dennett 1982, 351) practiced among others also in the contemporary medicine, but his understanding of human consciousness, described frequently as a software, which is generating reason and feeling and the lack of ethical perspectives in his naturalist and functionalist philosophy are placing Rorty closer to Gadamer's hermeneutics than to the philosophy of mind. However, except of offering some possible answers at the question about the Rorty's philosophical position, this paper has also opened several new questions. Some of them might be: What is the connection between the therapeutic role of philosophy and the idea of health? In other words, is the sense of health that we are talking about with seeing a doctor connected to the notion of therapy in these two approaches to philosophy? These questions should be investigated in the possible future papers.

This paper was supported by funding from the Agency for the Support of Research and Innovations based on Agreement APVV-20-0583 (Possible Worlds and Modalities: Contemporary Approaches)

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DENIALISM AND ITS CONSEQUENCES: THE EPISTEMIC INJUSTICE OF NATIONAL NARRATIVES

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ABSTRACT: An analysis of how national narratives are inevitably forms of epistemic injustice, depriving individuals of epistemic and moral agency. Denying access to knowledge about the past is a tool of all autocratic regimes, commonly used for the purpose of retaining power and exerting dominance over individuals or groups subordinate to the ruling elite. Yet such narratives and the falsifications used to buttress them, are not the exclusive instruments of autocracies but can be found to pervade the national narratives of what we often nominally label as democracies. The denial of crimes against humanity and genocide are the most egregious examples of the harms perpetrated against victims and survivors. Miranda Fricker's writings on epistemic injustice are employed in the analysis. Turkish and Azerbaijani genocide denial of the Armenian Genocide are used to illustrate how epistemic injustice lies at the heart of denialism.

Keywords: epistemic injustice, Miranda Fricker, denialism, genocide, Melanie Altanian, national narratives.

Introduction

When history is weaponized by those determined to hold on to power, serious harms and deprivations of minority rights occur, often taking the form of violence, and in extreme cases, genocide. Histories of discrimination and oppression are willfully distorted by perpetrators to maintain their positions of power. Perpetrators and their successors will erase all markers of an alternative national narrative as they construct their national myths. This was the case with Türkiye's century-long denial of the Armenian Genocide, Azerbaijan's pseudo-history of the Caucasus leading to the genocide of the Armenians of Artsakh, and the Serbian denial of the Bosnian Genocide.¹ The United States was not immune to such

¹ I have adopted the historic name "Artsakh" for the region in the South Caucasus where Armenians have lived for 3,000 years. Under the rule of the Czarist Russian Empire, this region became known as Nagorno-Karabakh, a name often used by non-Armenian sources when referring to the Soviet oblast (province) of Nagorno-Karabakh.

national mythmaking, evidenced in the Civil War Lost Cause narrative as it spread into mainstream media and came to dominate how history was taught in most of the nation's South.² The phenomenon I am describing is denialism. While not providing a comprehensive account of the harms of denialism, I will argue that such harms extend beyond the physical and psychological harms perpetrated against victim groups. My focus is denialism as it primarily pertains to crimes against humanity, atrocity crimes, and genocide. In diagnosing these harms, I will turn to the work of social epistemologists such as Miranda Fricker and Melanie Altanian who provide invaluable tools for investigating how epistemic injustice contributes to the harms of denialism. Many other contemporary epistemologists and social thinkers have contributed to the deepening our understanding of epistemic injustice and expanding its application to a broader range of social problems. Combating denialism is a complex endeavor, one that can only begin when the phenomenon is more fully understood.³

² See my *Pragmatism Today* article, "Why Controlling the Historical Narrative Matters: A Jamesian Response," (Marsoobian 2020, 93-107) in which I argued that the distortions of national narratives, both in the United States and internationally, engender harms to subaltern groups. Using William James' dedication oration for a Civil War memorial to Colonel Robert Gould Shaw and the 54th Regiment of the Massachusetts Infantry, I traced how the history of U.S. slavery was whitewashed into a benign chapter in American history, known as the Lost Cause. The Southern states secession from the Union was sacralized, and in many ways, permeated the broader national narrative of the United States. This narrative served to perpetuate many of the harms that impacted African Americans for the next hundred years, the chief of which was racial discrimination and violence under Jim Crow.

³ While my essay is limited to philosophical work, other disciplines have engaged in combating denialism. Such work is too numerous to mention, but examples can be found in history, social psychology, and the law. With regard to genocide denial, historians have turned to archives and perpetrator evidence to debunk denialism, while social psychologists have explored the testimonies of victims and perpetrators. Law has long grappled with the conflicting issues of hate speech, free expression, and legal sanctions against genocide denial. One example from social psychology is: Bilali, Rezarta, Yeshim Iqbal, and Samuel Freel, 'Understanding and Counteracting Genocide Denial', in Leonard S. Newman (ed.), *Confronting Humanity at its Worst: Social Psychological Perspectives on Genocide* (New York, 2019; online edn, Oxford Academic, 21 Nov. 2019), <https://doi-org.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/10.1093/oso/9780190685942.003.0011>, accessed 26 Oct. 2024. An important collection of essays from the legal perspective is: *Denialism and Human Rights*, edited by Ro-

Miranda Fricker's 2007 book, *Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*, significantly reoriented analytical epistemology in recent years. New and important topics of epistemological investigation have opened, focusing on the harms inflicted against subaltern groups, such as racial and ethnic minorities, women, and Native peoples. Critical race theorists, feminist epistemologists, and political philosophers have successfully explored the sources of injustices that have silenced the voices of many whose contributions to knowledge remained invisible for far too long. The philosopher Ben Almassi provides a useful taxonomy of the work that has emerged in the years since Fricker's work. My focus in this essay is upon the first two Almassi's categories, which he identifies as "phenomena of epistemic injustice and the nature of wrongdoings involved" and the "attendant consequences and repercussions of the wrongdoings of epistemic injustice." He has also identified "individual and structural changes to prevent or mitigate" epistemic injustice.⁴ The fourth category, "restorative" or "restitutive measures," I addressed in an earlier article I published on reparations.⁵

I will not attempt to widen the focus to all such forms of silencing but will primarily focus on the harms of denialism, specifically on the denial of crimes against humanity and genocide in their relationship to the creation of national narratives. While my approach expands upon Fricker's work in one particular direction, I will not take

up possible shortcomings in the initial theoretical framework she laid out. Shannon Sullivan has provided a critical modification of Fricker's approach to epistemology by employing John Dewey's transactional pragmatist epistemology as a more useful substitute for analytic philosophy's commitment to representational models, models that were successfully critiqued by Richard Rorty in the 1970s and 80s.⁶

Denialism's Consequences: Crimes Against Humanity and Genocide

Part of my motivation to discuss epistemic injustice comes out of a need to understand the conditions that foster the high levels of violence we have been experiencing around the globe in the post-Cold War period. The roots of many of these conflicts can be found decades earlier, especially in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a period which saw the rise in the nation state and the decline of multiethnic empires. Mass violence, such as genocide, does not spring up overnight. How the past is remembered, and in many cases manipulated, plays an oversized role in the course and nature of the violence. Historical wrongs are erased and minimized; perpetrators are rehabilitated and, in many cases, glorified. Societal structures, such as educational systems, media, and law, are used to construct new narratives and suppress alternative narratives and testimonies. It is here that Fricker's conceptual framework for epistemic injustice is most helpful. The case studies I use to illustrate my claims are taken from the Turkish and Azerbaijani state denial of the genocides perpetrated against the Armenian peoples in the early twentieth century and most recently in the first quarter of the twenty-first century.⁷ Parallel illustrations could be drawn to the con-

land Moerland, Hans Nelen, Jan Willems. Cambridge University Press, (2016). See especially the chapters by Sévane Garibian and Rob Kahn.

⁴ Almassi writes: "we consider this burgeoning literature on epistemic injustice, the greatest amount of attention has been given to the following areas, in roughly descending order of emphasis:

1. phenomena of epistemic injustice and the nature of wrongdoings involved;
2. attendant consequences and repercussions of #1;
3. individual and structural changes to prevent or mitigate #1;
4. restorative, restitutive, or retributive responses to #1."

"Epistemic Injustice and its Amelioration: Toward Restorative Epistemic Justice," *Social Philosophy Today* 34 (2018): 95.

⁵ "The Social Self and Social Death: Rethinking Reparations for Genocide and Crimes Against Humanity," *Pragmatism Today*, vol. 11, no. 2 (Winter 2020).

⁶ Shannon Sullivan, "On the Harms of Epistemic Injustice: Pragmatism and Transactional Epistemology," in the *Handbook of Epistemic Injustice*, Routledge, 2017.

⁷ There are many objective (non-Azerbaijani) sources that describe the genocide against the Armenians of Artsakh that began in 2020 during the Second Karabakh War and culminated in the ethnic cleansing of 150,000 Armenians from their historic

flicts in the Balkans, the Middle East, and most recently in Ukraine.

Fricker and Epistemic Injustice

Let me briefly layout the two central components of epistemic injustice as they were formulated by Fricker back in 2007. The first is “testimonial injustice.” This occurs when the speaker’s credibility is questioned while she is making a claim to knowledge (i.e., “testifying”). The withholding of credibility is due to a prejudice based on the “negative” identity of the speaker, often this is an unconscious prejudice on the part of the hearer. Such prejudices persistently and systematically cause the hearer to withhold credibility or set an unattainably high standard to warrant belief in the speaker’s testimony. In Deweyan terms, the transaction between speaker and hearer does little to further inquiry. At a more sophisticated level in debates about historical events, the ethnic identity of both witnesses and the scholars who employ such testimony, is used to question the objectivity of the account, often leading to its dismissal as prejudiced and inherently nationalistic. This was the case when Armenian historians first began publishing about the Armenian Genocide. In the eyes of some academics, this withdrawal of credibility did not change until a few – a very few -- Turkish historians themselves began to publish on the genocide, some of whom were brave enough to publish in Turkey.⁸

The second component of epistemic injustice is “hermeneutical injustice.” This injustice relates to our incapacity to interpret aspects of our social experience. In Fricker’s words: “[This is] the injustice of having some

significant area of one’s social experience obscured from collectively shared understanding owing to a structural identity prejudice in the collective hermeneutical resource” (Fricker 2007, 155). Certain members of a society are thus deprived of any role in the social process of meaning-making in the world (Fricker 2013, 49).⁹ This is where the educational system and the pressures of conforming to the social norms of the hegemonic community, whether based on gender, ethnicity or religion, play an oversized role. The hermeneutical resources of the community lack the conceptual tools to make sense of an important aspect of one’s experience. All members of the greater community, whether in the subaltern or hegemonic group, are conceptually impoverished. Hermeneutical injustice thus plays a key role in the mythmaking of national narratives that are used to oppress minorities and keep the dominant elites in power. I will illustrate this further toward the end of my essay.

To illustrate hermeneutical injustice, Fricker uses the concepts of “sexual harassment” and “marital rape.” Sexual harassment training, which many of us in academia undergo on a regular basis, is a hermeneutical resource to help us identify the harm of sexual harassment and not dismiss such behavior as merely harmless flirting (Fricker 2007, 153). Nonconsensual sexual intercourse with a marital partner was a behavior not often questioned by women because the concept had no traction in family and religious traditions, and certainly was not prohibited by law – and still isn’t in many parts of the world. Change in this regard has been slow.

Early Feminist Pragmatists and Epistemic Injustice

Fricker’s framework and the examples she draws from women’s experiences have played an important role in

homeland in September 2023. A document with hyperlinks to such sources can be found on the International Association of Genocide Scholars website under IAGS Resolution on Nagorno-Karabakh, September 2024: <https://genocidescholars.org/publications/resolutions/>.

⁸ Taner Akçam, a historian currently at UCLA, has a long list of articles and books that have established the now accepted judgment that the Ottoman Turkish government carried out a pre-planned and systemic extermination of its Ottoman Armenian citizens. He suffered personal and professional threats as a result.

⁹ Miranda Fricker, “How is Hermeneutical Injustice Related to ‘White Ignorance’? Reply to José Medina’s ‘Hermeneutical Injustice and Polyphonic Contextualism: Social Silences and Shared Hermeneutical Responsibilities.’” *Social Epistemology Review and Reply Collection*, 2 (8) 2013: 49-53.

the contemporary development of feminist philosophy, especially in the analytic tradition. We should note that social reformers during the progressive era in the U.S., especially those who are now recognized as pragmatists, whether they used the label or not, were fully aware of the asymmetric power relationships that contributed to epistemic injustice. One such reformer, Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1860-1935), is now widely accepted as an important feminist philosopher and social reformer whose work complements the early pragmatists. Katrin Wille, in a recent article in a symposium on "Democracy as a Form of Life," makes a persuasive argument for the importance of Gilman's descriptive identification and analysis of what Wille calls the cognitive function of the sentiment of "unease."¹⁰ Wille argues for conceptualizing "unease" as a powerful sentiment for understanding the experience of asymmetrical power relationships between dominant and subaltern groups, such as happens to women and racial minorities. For some, this unease may result in a loss of self-confidence, a questioning of one's worth. As Fricker writes: "[This] dissonance between received understanding and your own intimated sense of a given experience, [...] tends to knock your faith in your own ability to make sense of the world, or at least a relevant region of the world" (Fricker 2007, 163). Yet for some like Gilman, who were able to conceptualize the unease, this powerful sentiment motivated them to question the hermeneutical resources of their time and place. Gilman, like her fellow reformer Jane Addams, was able to take a global perspective regarding the injustices generated by power asymmetries. She saw how the concept of state sovereignty contributed to the harm experienced by subaltern groups, especially ethnic and racial minorities.¹¹ She was a strong advocate for the es-

tablishment of international law and global governance well before the World Wars brought the world community to see the value of international humanitarian and human rights law, let alone global organizations such as the League of Nations and the United Nations. She and Jane Addams were the forces behind the establishment of the Women's Peace Party in January 1915 that arose in response to the First World War. More than ten years earlier, she wrote the lead article in the 1904 inaugural issue of a magazine entitled, *Armenia*, a magazine on which she served as honorary editor. In this article, titled "International Duties," she wrote:

A growing perception of inter-personal relation has been followed by the legal enforcement of a certain standard of conduct on all citizens for the common good; and that is what is beginning to take place in our growing perception of international relations. Nations can be "bound over to keep the peace" as well as individuals; and will be presently, when we are stronger in our grip on this new social concept of a well-ordered world. (Gilman 1904, 11)¹²

The magazine was dedicated to bringing issues related to the on-going persecutions and massacres of the Armenians of the Ottoman Empire to the attention of the American public. She and other social reformers such as Julia Ward Howe, Lucia Ames Mead, and William Lloyd Garrison, contributed articles highlighting the cultural contributions of Armenians to world civilization and the steps needed to prevent the loss of such world-historical

a common faith. Each "sovereign state" was held to be sole arbiter of the destinies of its people, and no other state had any right to interfere. Whatever oppression, injustice, cruelty went on inside the borders of a given country, might call for individual disapprobation among citizen, but not for national recognition. The nation could only act when another nation offended it which is like a period of inter-personal justice when each resented a man's assault on himself, but allowed him to maim, slay and torture his own family, or to live in filth and indecency, unobstructed. A growing perception of inter-personal relation has been followed by the legal enforcement of a certain standard of conduct on all citizens for the common good; and that is what is beginning to take place in our growing perception of international relation. Nations can be "bound over to keep the peace" as well as individuals; and will be presently, when we are stronger in our grip on this new social concept of a well-ordered world" (Gilman 11).

¹² Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "International Duties," *Armenia*, no. 1, 1904.

¹⁰ Katrin Wille, "Unease as a Feminist-Pragmatist Concept," *European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy*, XII-2, 2020.

¹¹ I full statement of her case against state sovereignty is captured in the same essay: "Up to this age the largest social concept common to us was that of the nation, with some faint sense of outlying responsibilities in a common racial stock, or

knowledge.¹³ Gilman established the conceptual foundations of humanitarianism and the human rights movement by thinking globally.

The Epistemic Injustice of Turkish Denial of the Armenian Genocide

Returning now to the issue of hermeneutical injustice, I would like to shift the focus slightly and take up where Gilman left off. This relates to an experience with students and academics I commonly encountered during many years of work within and outside of Türkiye. These were individuals who had been brought up in that nation's centrally controlled national education system. An often-heard refrain was, "I had never heard of the Armenian Genocide or anything that would come close to resembling a genocide of Armenians" or simply, "Why had I not heard of this?" This ignorance is the result of impoverished hermeneutical resources, resources centered around the concept of genocide. Often, Turkish students do not learn about the darker aspects of their nation's history until pursuing higher education abroad or do so surreptitiously in some select university course that operated under the radar. What students do learn about genocide is through a highly filtered treatment of the Nazi Holocaust. This treatment is filtered through the lens of their country's "noble effort" to rescue and protect Jews fleeing Nazism. While some of these rescue efforts can be documented, a darker picture is suppressed of the republic's collaboration with the Nazi regime. This collaboration is symbolically captured in the repatriation by Hitler of the Talaat Pasha's remains from Berlin to Istanbul for a state funeral in 1943.¹⁴ Talaat, the chief architect of the Armenian Genocide, was convicted

and sentenced to death in a Turkish military tribunal in 1919 for his crimes against the Armenians but had fled to Berlin and was assassinated by an Armenian Genocide survivor. Mustafa Kemal, after his successful war against Greece and the allies and his abrogation of the Treaty of Sevres, began the process of rehabilitating the genocide perpetrators of the Committee of Union and Progress (the Young Turks). According to the historian Hans-Lukas Kieser¹⁵, Talaat Pasha's reburial symbolized his being "fully rehabilitated and installed as an outstanding figure in public Turkish history" (Kieser 2018, 420). In the national curriculum, the genocide perpetrator is now made an innocent victim of an Armenian terrorist. Armenian terrorism, backed by Russian Czarist power, was used at the time of the genocide to justify the deportation of the Armenian civilian population away from the "so-called" war zone. The false claim of military necessity was part of the denialist strategy at the time of the genocide in 1915. Approximately one and a half million Armenians died through massacres, executions, and starvation as a result. This is the same claim of terrorism that fifty years later became connected to the Armenian terrorist campaign that targeted Turkish diplomats for assassination in the 1970s and is now used to demonize most Armenians in the diaspora. The descendants of the genocide survivors in the diaspora are the "bad Armenians," while the small number of Armenians who still currently live in the country as Turkish citizens are the "good Armenians." It is these same "good Armenians" whose voices are silenced when they attempt to publicly commemorate the Armenian Genocide every April 24th. Testimonial injustice is at play here, but it is not just the Armenians of Türkiye who experience this harm. For the average Turkish citizen also experiences this harm. For a Turk who might otherwise be sympathetic to fellow human beings commemorating the loss of their ancestors, the concept of genocide is unavailable. An impoverished hermeneutical resource op-

¹³ In a passing reference in this same article, she draws an analogy between the mistreatment of subject minorities and Native Americans. She writes, "Our Indian policy, for instance, would profit much if we committed ourselves to a high standard of international agreement on the treatment of subject races" (Gilman 12).

¹⁴ See Stefan Ihrig's important contribution in this regard, *Justifying Genocide: Germany and the Armenians from Bismarck to Hitler*, Harvard University Press, 2016.

¹⁵ Kieser, Hans-Lukas (2018). *Talaat Pasha: Father of Modern Turkey, Architect of Genocide*. Princeton University Press.

erates that prevents them from properly understanding the experience of their fellow Turkish Armenian citizens. Again and again, reinforced in the news media, in the educational curriculum, in fictionalized television and film entertainment, and in pronouncements from the government and politicians, genocide is equated with the Holocaust. Simply put, the nationalist narrative proclaims that there were no death camps, no gas chambers, no Auschwitz in Türkiye, so there was no genocide. Ottoman Turkey was fighting for survival against foreign invaders and a civil war was taking place in their midst with the Armenians, Assyrians, and ultimately, the Pontic Greeks as the chief antagonists. As the denialist say, there were deaths on both sides, Muslims and Christians alike.

As an aside, the great irony here is that in 1950 Türkiye was among the first twenty countries to ratify the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. These twenty ratifications brought the Convention into force in January 1951, 37 years before U.S. ratification. Yet most Turkish citizens do not understand the scope of the law and how it extends far beyond the biological destruction of individuals, nor do they understand that the chief architect of the concept of genocide, Raphael Lemkin, began developing the concept well before the Holocaust in response to the Armenian Genocide and the 1921 Berlin trial of the assassin of Talaat Pasha. I have written on these issues before but only raise them here to highlight what is left out when national narratives come to dominate the educational process in a nation state.¹⁶ Such historical erasures should be a warning, not just for authoritarian states such as Türkiye, but even for ostensible democratic states such as the United States. As I warned in my 2022 *Pragmatism Today* article referenced earlier, there is a backlash against

opening the U.S. history curriculum to “voices who have been silenced, especially African Americans and Native Americans.” The “bête noire” of this rightwing attack has been the 1619 Project and what certain political leaders label “woke ideology.” This backlash has only accelerated since I wrote those words in 2022.

The Harm of Epistemic Oppression

Returning now to Fricker, we need to sum up how the two components of epistemic injustice work together. Testimonial and hermeneutical injustice, operate together to contribute to epistemic oppression and the inequality it entails. I quote Fricker’s summary:

[T]he primary harm of hermeneutical injustice consists in a *situated hermeneutical inequality*: the concrete situation is such that the subject is rendered unable to make communicatively intelligible something which it is particularly in his or her interests to be able to render intelligible. This reveals another deep connection with the wrong of testimonial injustice. The primary harm of . . . testimonial injustice concerns exclusion from the pooling of knowledge owing to *identity prejudice on the part of the hearer*; the primary harm of . . . hermeneutical injustice concerns exclusion from the pooling of knowledge owing to *structural identity prejudice in the collective hermeneutical resource*. The first prejudicial exclusion is made in relation to the speaker, the second in relation to what they are trying to say and/or how they are saying it. The wrongs involved in the two sorts of epistemic injustice, then, have a common epistemic significance running through them—prejudicial exclusion from participation in the spread of knowledge. (Fricker 2007, 162, emphasis added)

While I have some reservations with her chosen non-transactional phrase, “the pooling of knowledge,” her point is well-taken. Much good philosophical work continues to evolve in response to Fricker’s work on epistemic injustice. I chose to illustrate my point with examples taken from the denialism that is central to the genocidal processes during and in the aftermath of the Armenian Genocide, but as a scholar who works in the field of genocide studies more broadly, I could easily illustrate similar epistemic oppression as evidenced

¹⁶ See: “Breaking the Silence: Digital Memorialization and Cultural Reparations in the Aftermath of the Armenian Genocide,” in *Mass Violence and Memory in the Digital Age: Memorialization Unmoored*, Eve Monique Zucker & David J. Simon, eds. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020.

in treatment of indigenous peoples in North America. While many are aware of massacres such as Wounded Knee, probably less so the 1637 Pequot genocide in my home state of Connecticut, few, until recently, were aware of the epistemic oppression of the U.S. and Canadian boarding school system that operated for Native children for over a century. Under the guise of “civilizing the savage,” the rich heritage of indigenous knowledge was suppressed, and many native languages were lost. The loss of language is a form of hermeneutical injustice that deprives future generations of Native Americans the ability to understand and pass on the knowledge of their ancestors. Such knowledge may well have changed the trajectory of the climate crisis we are now facing.¹⁷

The Epistemic Harms of Turkish and Azerbaijani Denialism

In groundbreaking work by Turkish-American philosopher Imge Oranlı and Armenian-German philosopher Melanie Altanian, Fricker’s framework of epistemic injustice has been applied to the case of the Armenian Genocide. I cannot adequately summarize all their insights here that first appeared in a special issue of journal *Social Epistemology* on “Epistemic Injustice and Collective Wrongdoing.”¹⁸ Altanian has further developed her analysis in her 2024 book, *The Epistemic Injustice of Genocide Denialism* (2024).¹⁹ I briefly take up her insights at the conclusion of my essay.

As a number of highly credible historians have argued in recent years, the current Turkish state has much invest-

ed in keeping alive the national narrative first articulated by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in the early days of the Turkish Republic. Atatürk laid out the story of the founding of the Turkish Republic in his 1927 speech, the Nutuk.²⁰ The narrative soon became sacralized. Deviations from the strict storyline were quickly suppressed. Just one example: The Nazis banned Austrian-Bohemian writer Franz Werfel’s story of Armenian Genocide resistance as portrayed in his historical 1933 best-selling novel, *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh* (*Die vierzig Tage des Musa Dagh*). The popularity of this work was a danger to the Turkish Republic’s narrative of its founding that required the erasure of the genocide of its Armenian citizens. The fact that this book could reach its own citizenry, required action to make this hermeneutical resource unavailable. Copies were suppressed and translations forbidden.²¹ This painful episode culminated with the coercion of Istanbul Armenians into staging burnings of Werfel’s book in the courtyard of the St. Pangalti Armenian Church. In the words of Ayda Erbal and Talin Suciyan, “As a last act of symbolic perversion forced upon them, [Turkish Armenians] would not only denounce the author, but also denounce the book’s content, hence denouncing themselves and denying their own history.”²² This act of hermeneutical injustice was globalized when Turkey pressured the U.S. State Department and Hollywood’s MGM studios to shelve the novel’s adaptation into

¹⁷ Subsequent to writing these words, U.S. President Biden took a major step forward in formally apologizing for the federal government’s role in establishing and operating the Native boarding school system. On October 26, 2024, he apologized for the systemic abuse endured by generations of Indigenous children in boarding schools at the hands of the federal government. He forcefully condemned the crimes that were committed in the system and called for the incorporation of the truth of these crimes into U.S. history. See: <https://www.youtube.com/live/9EQpfpd-JY?feature=shared>

¹⁸ Issue 2: Epistemic Injustice and Collective Wrongdoing; Guest Editors: Melanie Altanian and Nadja El Kassar, *Social Epistemology: A Journal of Knowledge, Culture and Policy* Volume 35, 2021.

¹⁹ Melanie Altanian, *The Epistemic Injustice of Genocide Denialism*, Routledge, 2024.

²⁰ According to Turkish sociologist Fatma Müge Göçek, the speech was “adopted as the official Turkish national narrative and became sacralized by the state”. Göçek stated that, because the law criminalizes insulting Atatürk, Turkish historians have been unable to analyze the speech critically. She said: “It is evident that the text commences the birth of the Turkish nation with 1919, removing in the process the demise of the Armenians in 1915 through state violence to the realm of Republican prehistory.” Göçek, *Fatma Müge* (2011). “Reading Genocide: Turkish Historiography on 1915”. In Suny, Ronald Grigor; Göçek, Fatma Müge; Naimark, Norman M. (eds.). *A Question of Genocide: Armenians and Turks at the End of the Ottoman Empire*. Oxford University Press. pp. 42–52.

²¹ It wasn’t until 2007 that the first Turkish translation of the novel was published in the Türkiye. The publisher was subsequently criminally prosecuted.

²² Ayda Erbal and Talin Suciyan, “One Hundred Years of Abandonment,” April 2011 Magazine, *Armenian Weekly*, April 29, 2011. <https://armenianweekly.com/2011/04/29/erbal-and-suciyan-one-hundred-years-of-abandonment/> Accessed 10 September 2021.

a major motion picture starring Clark Gable in 1934. Such pressures continue today. Delegitimizing group identity by erasing the history of the group facilitates the reversal of the perpetrator – victim relationship in genocide. A similar erasure has occurred in Türkiye's ally Azerbaijan. The full resources of the oil rich Azerbaijani state have been marshalled for more than three decades in a campaign of denialism. The rhetoric of the İlham Aliyev regime buttressing their claims that they are the victims of Armenian settler colonialist ambitions in the South Caucasus is used to justify their aggression against the indigenous Armenians of Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh) – an aggression that culminated in September 2023 in what many legal scholars argue was the genocide of the Armenians of the region. As a price for peace Azerbaijan, backed by Türkiye, now demands that the Republic of Armenia remove all references to the genocide from the preamble to its constitution and remove the image of Mount Ararat from its national coat of arms. As Altanian argues, the ruling regimes in Türkiye and Azerbaijan have much invested in keeping their nationalist narrative alive:

In the case of Turkey, the maintenance of the social order imposed under Turkism and Turkish nationalism is dependent on long-term genocide denialism. From the perspective of those in power, acknowledging the Armenian genocide would ostensibly (a) jeopardize the legitimacy of the state and its institutions and (b) uncover unjust power imbalances. Genocide denialism misinterprets and conceals genocide survivors' and descendants' experiences to perpetuate domination. However, it does not necessarily prevent them from comprehending their experiences. Marginalized persons often find their own ways to express their suffering and speak out against their oppression. (Altanian 2024, 97)

Resistance against epistemic oppression continues. Despite the Nazi and Turkish attempt to suppress the *Forty Days of Musa Dagh*, the novel became a world-wide sensation and the most-read book in the Warsaw Ghetto, and some have argued, helped inspire the Warsaw ghetto uprising. Yet as we all know, the threats against minorities or subaltern groups, did not end with the defeat of National Socialism. The support by Western democratic

states of autocratic regimes around the world marked Cold War dynamics for the decades following the end of the war. This was true with Türkiye. Rightwing military dictatorships and ostensibly democratic parliamentary governments adhered to the national myths and continue to deny the Armenian Genocide along with the genocides of the Assyrians and Pontic Greeks.

Protesting epistemic oppression and revising national narratives have had mixed results since the end of the Cold War. While there was a small opening within Türkiye to reexamine its history in the period between 2005 and 2013, this space quickly closed in the years following the suppression of the Gezi Park protests in May 2013. Public civil protest for all intents and purposes no longer exists in Türkiye. When it does occur, it is violently suppressed. We have seen this in countless other authoritarian regimes, such as those in Azerbaijan, Iran, Myanmar, Venezuela, and Afghanistan, in which alternative voices have been effectively suppressed. Reparative justice, so central any process of transitional justice, is effectively impossible under the conditions we find in these regimes. In democratic or semi-democratic societies there have been varying degrees of success in opposing epistemic injustice and in re-examinations of national narratives.²³ In the United States progress was made in the aftermath of the Black Lives Matter protests, but a strong backlash is taking place evidenced by the support for rightwing autocratic politicians we are witnessing today. Internationally, geopolitical dynamics complicate progress. Given the imbalance in the power dynamics of the region, no one can predict the fate of the Armenians in the Caucasus, I hope that the resistance will continue, and a different outcome from that of the Warsaw ghetto uprising, will result.

²³ While the insights of such philosophers as José Medina may be useful in analyzing the dynamics of protest movements in some societies, the complete or near complete shutdown of public space for protest in regimes such as Azerbaijan and Türkiye make it difficult to see how these ideas can be carried out in these countries. See his, *The Epistemology of Protest: Silencing, Epistemic Activism, and the Communicative Life of Resistance*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2023.

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REGAINING CONSCIOUSNESS

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ABSTRACT: This paper draws on the central ideas of John Dewey's 'pragmatic technology' – as explored by Larry Hickman in his book of that name published in 1992, and, secondly, on the understanding that reality can be understood to be 'natural but not naturalizable' (Margolis, 2002). It thus takes issue with the 'naturalizing' assumptions (specifically the 'causal closure of physics') which deny any initiating role for the mind, currently prevalent within biologist understandings of cognitive science, Rortyan neo-pragmatism, and interpretations of the future role of Artificial Intelligence. I argue both that any attempt to resolve the 'mind-body problem' in naturalizing terms is logically untenable in terms of Dewey's pragmatic 'tools of enquiry', and further that the ongoing attempts to resolve/ discuss the problem while ignoring this impasse, have resulted in some significant negative consequences within the real world. The paper acknowledges more recent work on consciousness within the pragmatist tradition, but argues that this is either compatible with Dewey's understanding of body-mind, and thus widens the argument without changing it, or else it differs in ways which may be incompatible with the arguments of the paper, which seek to engage with dominant thought systems *outside* of pragmatism. I argue that a relativist stance will disallow this wider engagement. The paper concludes with a discussion of current arguments concerning alternative 'natural', immaterial (and thus not physical) approaches to understanding consciousness.

Keywords: pragmatic technology; consciousness; naturalism; relativism

Introduction

According to biological determinist thinking in cognitive science, 'however complex the connectivity, the mind is just chemistry and physics' (Plotkin, 1998:98) and in Rortyan neo-pragmatism: 'Physicalism is probably right in saying that we shall ... be able to predict every movement of a person's body (including those of his larynx and his writing hand) by reference to microstructures in his body' (Rorty, 1980: 354) – that is, the mind and the body are both 'naturalizable', the mind has no independent initiating capability, and the discussion is locked into this constrictive materialist framework. My central question

is then 'but what if the mind is *not* material, and is therefore *not* definable in terms of (Newtonian) chemistry and physics?' It seems we must then look for an alternative philosophical method, able to accommodate an immaterial mind and consciousness along with a material body – we must, in other words, seek an answer which is 'natural but not naturalizable'.

Drawing on Dewey's pragmatic technology I argue that any solution to the problem in its current form fails as 'the appropriate transformation of a problematic situation by means of [intelligent] instrumentalities of enquiry, whatever form those instrumentalities may take' (Hickman, 1992: 45). Dewey's all-encompassing concept of 'technology', developed from his earlier ideas of the significance of 'experiment' in reaching the truth, achieving consensus, and thus resolving 'problematic situations', provides a dynamic conceptual framework within which to assess human endeavor and advance very widely. His 'instrumentalities' are the 'tools of enquiry', his 'technology', and his philosophical 'method' as the 'criterion for theory selection'. [It is interesting to note that in philosophy Nietzsche believed that 'The most valuable insights are methods' (Nietzsche, 1901)]. This 'technology' is the method I employ in the arguments which follow, while my additional, and equally important, concern is with the more often ignored situation of *inappropriate* tools or 'technologies' of inquiry. Concerning these Hickman explains Dewey's position as follows:

When what is commonly called technology fails to be intelligent it does not, strictly speaking, deserve the name 'technology'. It should instead be termed repetition of habitual behavior, acquiescence to the temptation of personal gain in economic or political spheres, or perhaps even laziness or stupidity (Hickman, 1992: 11-12).

I hope to show that the tools of enquiry employed to discuss/ resolve the mind-body problem in its present 'naturalizing' incarnation do 'fail to be intelligent' – that they can be shown to be inappropriate, and that they may be seen to fall very neatly into the categories of failure identified above. But first we should remember that Dewey

himself saw no distinction between the mind and body – they were a single concept, ‘body-mind’. Also, he saw no issue arising from the fact that the mind is ‘not physical’ (Hickman, 1992: 44). It has only been others, from Rene Descartes to the present, who have been so concerned by this issue – and, I believe, with some quite serious unintended consequences.

My exploration starts with the question: ‘if successful tools of enquiry – from the sticks selected by Neanderthals, to the mathematics and physics required to discover quantum mechanics – are selected on the grounds of their known suitability for solving a particular problem (known because reason and prior experience point clearly in that direction) what tool can be selected to enable productive enquiry into the relationship between body and mind, when we are endeavoring, more insistently than ever, to rely on the limitations of the ‘causal closure of physics’? *Mechanisms* of mind are extensively and increasingly understood, but intelligence and consciousness are not. We can operate brilliantly within the physical sphere, but we cannot initiate the life force of, for instance, the stem cell, nor can we examine consciousness in terms of genetic codes, as their discoverers, Watson and Crick, emphasized that such coding has no handle on consciousness (although Watson reneged somewhat on this concession later (Lewontin, 2000:147)). In fact ‘Genetic material is quite inert’ (Lewontin, 2000:141). ‘It is not self-reproducing...it makes nothing and...organisms are not determined by it’. And if mind and consciousness are *not* material how can their relationship with the body be solved in purely material (physical) terms?

Naturalizing

The idea of ‘naturalizing’ is explored by Joseph Margolis in his book *Reinventing Pragmatism* (2002). He explains:

Nearly all naturalists (that is ‘naturalizers’) support the following doctrines: (1) truth-bearing explanation is ultimately causal; (2) causal explanation is constrained by ‘the causal closure of

the physical’; (3) all description, analysis and explanation of mental and cultural phenomena are paraphrasable in accord with doctrines (1) – (2) if admissible at all, or else they conform to some version of supervenientism, that is with the notion that there cannot be a determinate change at the mental (or cultural) level without a corresponding change at the physical level (Margolis, 2002: 6)

He concludes that “‘natural but not naturalizable’ may yet prove to be the best short statement of pragmatism’s late discovery of itself. In a fair sense that is what Putman and Rorty disputed – and what the entire Eurocentric world has, in modern times, always debated” (2002, 6 – 7).

Those within the naturalizing school will of course allow for a difference between the nature of mind and the nature of body – but only insofar as the material body remains the initiating mechanism – whether it is seen as either ‘epiphenomenal’ or ‘supervenient’ the mind cannot independently initiate anything. And both of these explanatory terms are notoriously hard to pin down as they involve a conception of mind as dependent upon the body but whether caused by, or simply accompanying, the physical phenomenon is unclear. The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (2019) claims that ‘most current writers presume that epiphenomenalism is to be avoided, and they go to great lengths to try to show that they have avoided incurring that anathema, despite maintaining the sufficiency of physical causation’. Concerning supervenience the same source explains that “Some philosophers believe it possible for some A to supervene on some B without being entailed by B. In such cases it may seem puzzling why A should supervene on B and equivalently why changes in A should require changes in B. [An example is] the supervenience of mental properties (like the sensation of pain) on physical properties (like the firing of ‘pain neurons’)” (Encyclopedia of Philosophy, Stanford, 2019). Thus, some confusion arises concerning these terms even within the ideas of their protagonists and of those authorities who comment upon them.

We may take Richard Rorty as perhaps the most prominent member of the neo-pragmatist naturalizing school.

In *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* he initially uses traditional analytical philosophical tools to dispel any idea of an independent mind. He concludes that “we shall treat the intentional as a sub-species of the functional” (Rorty, 1980:32) and that “insofar as dualism reduces to the bare insistence that pains and thoughts have no places, nothing whatever hangs on the distinction between the mind and the body” (Rorty, 1980: 22). To be fair, Rorty admits that he is “painfully aware of the lacunae in the story [he has] told”, and he continues his defense of materialism later in the book when he argues that “the fact that people discourse whereas things do not” is only a trivial difference because “once we can figure out how to translate what is being said there is no reason to think that the explanation of why it is being said should differ in kind (or proceed by different methods) from an explanation of locomotion or digestion” (Rorty, 1980:347). In *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity* he goes further in expressing a positive aversion for reason: “One way of seeing edifying philosophy (his substitute for epistemology) as the love of wisdom is to see it as the attempt to prevent conversation from *degenerating* into enquiry” (Rorty, 1980: 372) (emphasis added). Here the opposition between the stances of Rorty and Dewey is perhaps most starkly illustrated. For Dewey productive enquiry is the crux of discovery and knowledge, leading to human advance in all fields, with intelligent reasoning being its essential element, while for Rorty productive enquiry is impossible. Philosophical issues will find different paradigms and will in time simply ‘fade away’. Within such thinking, there would seem to be no place for ‘productive enquiry’ and no possibility of coming to any conclusion concerning the relationship between mind and body – beyond a pre-determined elevation of the physical body to unassailable dominance, since all things are deemed physical. It would also seem to entail that, from a Deweyan perspective, any conclusion concerning the mind-body problem, or indeed any other problem, within this thinking, must lack appropriate tools of enquiry, since ‘conversations’ are all we can have, and

these must not ‘degenerate into enquiry’ – in other words intelligent selection of the tools of enquiry is impossible.

Rationality and Relativism in Contemporary Pragmatism

Recent additions to ideas of consciousness within the pragmatic naturalist tradition are generally supportive of Deweyan conceptions of body-mind, in that the body and mind are seen as interdependent. Regarding perception, imagination and conceptualization as “poles on a continuum,” Mark Johnson, for instance, considers imagination as central to human meaning-making and rationality (Johnson, 2013: 167). He understands imagination as not simply an adjunct of, but necessarily constitutive of, understanding, while Richard Shusterman’s heightened consciousness of the body and John Ryder’s arguments for the significance of both aesthetic awareness and power in addition to knowledge, in constituting human consciousness, all enrich conceptions of consciousness without delving into the material or physical nature of consciousness itself. They suggest however that single, unassailable claims to truth will be unattainable, as has traditionally been the stance of pragmatism.

While each of these examples may be seen as broadly compatible with Dewey’s conception of body-mind, there remains an unexamined aspect of current pragmatist thinking which is, I believe, of greater ultimate significance. There is no space in this paper to assess the increasing intrusion of ‘soft’ relativism within contemporary pragmatist thinking, but its pervasiveness is suggested when a thinker in this tradition believes that “As a pragmatist I remain committed to the possibility that the skeptics could be right” (Thompson, 2021: 95). He sees this as inhibiting his ability to refute a claim which troubles him, despite its proponents’ rejection of scientific proof. While pragmatism has always challenged dogmatic positions, a ‘soft’ relativism such as this would undercut the force of any arguments which could be put forward in defense of, or in opposition to, currently popularly ac-

cepted knowledge claims. More worrying still may be the contention of another leading thinker in the pragmatist tradition who argues that we cannot challenge Chinese citizens who defend their form of government as preferable to western democracy (Ryder, 2024). Here, I would argue that, with a single blow, Dewey's painstaking project of building democracy, of seeing it as a project 'yet to be achieved' is undercut. Pragmatism has no further handle on it.

For the purposes of the arguments in this paper, and in order to engage with currently dominant thought systems *outside* of the pragmatist tradition, an understanding of pragmatism must be established which avoids 'soft' relativism while at the same time avoiding dogmatic claims to truth. Such a position is established by Joseph Margolis both within his concept of 'robust relativism' (Margolis, 1991) and in his later development of Pierce's conception of 'adaptive truth' (Author 2020; 2022). Importantly both positions acknowledge intelligent rationality to be a shared human quality enabling a consensus about the 'best available' truth to be reached within context. I would argue that this position is also strongly implied by Dewey's pragmatic technology in which intelligence is an essential element in resolving 'problematic situations' and, in interacting with other organisms through language (which Dewey understood as the 'tool of tools' (Hickman, 1992:44)) is able to reach consensus. Unless a shared rationality is assumed, no consensus could be reached through this 'technology' while the efficacy of the conclusions is established through their successful deployment in practice.

The consequences of 'carrying on regardless'

While consideration of issues concerning the acceptance of an immaterial mind being compatible with a material (physical) body, might be deemed purely 'academic' I contend that they have had some serious consequences in the real world. These are particularly consequent upon

the 'biologism' which dominates much contemporary thinking. Some of these are explored in detail by Richard Lewontin in his book *It ain't necessarily so – the dream of the human genome and other illusions* (Lewontin, 2000).

As he contends:

Intelligence, acquisitiveness, moral rectitude are not *things*, nor the natural attributes of things, but mental constructs, historically and culturally contingent. The attempt to find their physical site in the brain and to measure them is like an attempt to map Valhalla. It is pure reification, the conversion of abstract ideas into things and their natural properties. While there may be genes for the shape of our heads, there cannot be any for the shape of our ideas (Lewontin, 2000:9)

However, it is exactly this kind of mistaken reasoning which a general understanding of all things as physical currently allows. Lewontin argues that the understanding which was encouraged by the promise of mapping the human genome created an unfounded speculation that it would lead us to understand of "what it is to be human" and that it would "transform our capacities to predict what we may become" (Lewontin, 2000:137). It also created, as Lewontin argues, "a medical model of normalcy, including social normality, and it dictated a therapeutic, or preemptive, attack on deviance" (p150). Thus ideas of racial and class distinctions could gain legitimacy once again and the political agenda of eugenics reappeared when human deviance appeared to gain a new foothold. Lewontin gives the following example to illustrate that this confusion had penetrated to the highest level of scientific understanding: he explains that "when the editor of *Science* was asked why the funds devoted to the human genome project should not rather be given to the homeless, he replied 'what these people don't realize is that the homeless are impaired... indeed no group will benefit more from the application of human genetics'" (Lewontin, 2000: 165). That is, social misfits are in that condition because of some physical/ mental impairment. Here Dewey's concern for inappropriate tools of enquiry leading to "acquiescence to the temptation of personal gain in ... the political sphere" is given legitimacy – as the

politics underpinning eugenics has a dark history. Even those with an innocent wish to understand or enhance human wellbeing through a revived interest in the field are mistaken when basing their enquiries on genetic insights into human behavior or intelligence. The confusion that currently exists can be illustrated by the entry for 'eugenics' in Wikipedia which refers to the resurgence of interest in the field sparked by the mapping of the human genome, but notes that "applications generally are more focused on the reduction of genetic diseases than on improving intelligence" — the implication being, however, that either would be a viable field of enquiry given our new genetic understanding. Similarly, the economic temptation of personal gain which Dewey recognized can be identified in the excitement amongst pharmaceutical companies anticipating the profits which would follow from the completion of the sequencing of the human genome, despite the known facts of genetic material failing to point to many of the hoped-for profitable outcomes.

Further, in regard to the selection of inappropriate tools of enquiry within this same field, potentially the most tragic of all may have been the decision taken in 1993 by the US Congress to cancel the 'Supercollider' particle accelerator project after about US\$2 billion had already been spent on it. This decision might, at a pinch, be categorised as falling into Dewey's catch-all category for inappropriate technologies — that some are selected on grounds of either 'laziness or stupidity'. Let me explain further. The potential of the Supercollider Project included the achievement of nuclear fusion (as opposed to nuclear fission) and through this to the discovery of a source of a limitless and safe energy. Although this potential outcome was never guaranteed, the premises of the enquiry were founded on the same acknowledged scientifically valid principles as the early discoveries of relativity and quantum mechanics which made the end of the 19th and first half of the 20th centuries such a highly productive and exciting times for human advance. They were thus an appropriate technology in Deweyan terms

for attempting to achieve this scientific breakthrough. However, delving into this field on the internet nowadays yields almost nothing to suggest this objective of the supercollider project, nor is the fact mentioned that one of the chief incentives for Congress re-directing the funds was to reinvest them in — the human genome project. Perhaps that is just too bitter an understanding to take on board in the year 2024, but for the purposes of this paper it is an ultimate example of the application of an inappropriate technology in Deweyan terms, 'lazy' because the mechanistic limitations of the human genome were known, but not taken into account, and 'stupid' because an informed search for such a source of limitless energy could have been seen as worth spending almost anything to achieve, while several additional discoveries in the field of physics were also becoming available through the project but could not be followed through. Let me hasten to add that I appreciate that many useful medical advances have been achieved through greater genetic understanding, just not any related to human existence or human nature beyond the purely physical, and certainly nothing as significant as the potential reversal of climate change.

A more recent development, also illustrative of concerns which can be raised by a narrow biologism, concerns Artificial Intelligence (AI). Popular understanding, as well as the understanding of leading actors in the field, have been responsible for a widespread belief in the continuity between artificial and natural intelligence, ignoring the aspects of intelligence and consciousness which are non-material and which involve such attributes as intuition, individual ethical awareness, compassion and the ability to judge the wider influence and value of AI programmes themselves. Since understandings of the nature of intelligence as simply part of a biological system and 'nothing more than chemistry and physics' also ultimately eliminate these attributes, the gulf between artificial and human intelligence is elided. Arguments can have little power to convince the public that the highly advanced al-

gorithms underpinning present and future AI programmes are all mechanistic and all initially established by human agency. No natural 'life force' exists to give them immaterial, independent mindfulness. They will however be accepted as natural to the extent that their origins are 'naturalizable' and their initiators are hidden. Prominent figures in this field currently encourage this stance. For instance, Elon Musk considers that "for the moment, AI has a lot of shortcomings and still requires human assistance". He believes, however, that while "Biological intelligence can serve as a backstop, as a buffer of intelligence, [in the future] almost all intelligence will be digital" (Musk, Milken Institute, 27th Global Conference, 2024).

Alternative 'natural' positions

The evidence for an immaterial mind and consciousness is intuitive, it is 'common sense', but it is still inconclusive in philosophical or scientific terms, although the evidence in its favour is gaining momentum. It was a conclusion of my paper published in *Metaphilosophy* in 2006, where I argued that 'to try to explain advanced consciousness entirely in terms of the material and physical mechanisms that predate life and the central nervous system itself must be a severely inadequate strategy' (Author, 2006: 80). (I could have added that emergentist arguments are inadequate here as the two entities in question are from entirely different categories of existence).

I also argued that currently we are concentrating purely on what *makes* the difference within biological systems, ignoring the lack of any understanding of what *is* the difference – that is, the difference between organic life and inorganic life – and between consciousness and unconsciousness. This elision would also seem to entail that we recognize *no* definable difference between the organic and the non-organic which again would seem to entail that there *is* no difference between life and non-life. Common sense is surely severely strained here. An interesting small example of how scientists at the highest

level assume that non-materiality cannot be grasped as real in itself, was given in a 2017 issue of the Cambridge alumni magazine CAM, whose leading article concerned the force of gravity. The author noted concerning gravity that 'we know what it *does* but we do not know what it *is*', implying that the non-material cannot be known unless definable in material terms.

This is a theme taken up by Thomas Nagel in 2012 in his book *Mind and Cosmos: Why the Neo-Darwinist Conception of Mind is Almost Certainly False*. He argues that "one of the legitimate tasks of philosophy is to investigate the limits of even the best developed and most successful forms of scientific knowledge". He also believes that "we must resist the temptation to assume that the tools of the kind we now have are in principle sufficient to understand the universe as a whole". He asks "if physics and chemistry cannot fully account for life and consciousness, how will their immense body of truth be combined with other elements in an expanded conception of the natural order that cannot accommodate those things?" Nagel here is clearly in agreement with Dewey (and Margolis) in that he believes in "the aim of finding an integrated, naturalistic explanation of some kind". He also believes we should consider alternatives that "make mind, meaning and value as fundamental as matter and spacetime in an account of what is"¹.

But it seems that the beginnings of a new epistemology and of a new ontology are appearing, assisted by the discoveries of quantum theory, which classical pragmatist philosophy should have a strong interest in pursuing. That this link should come to us through the experimentation sparked by an exemplary Deweyan 'problematic situation' is appropriate for the arguments in this paper. James Clark Maxwell one of the nineteenth century's most respected theoretical physicists, noted that "the real reward for the labour of careful measurement" is "the discovery of new fields of research" and

¹ The absence of page numbering for the Nagel book is due to its access being from a Kindle copy.

“the development of new scientific ideas” (Kumar, 2009: xviii) – an idea overlapping neatly with Dewey’s pragmatic technology. In the 1890s leading physicists in Germany were intent on solving the ‘blackbody problem’ or the relationship between temperature, range of colours and the intensity of light emitted by a hot iron poker. This was part of the intense commercial rivalry in the field of electricity between Germany, Britain and the USA. It was eventually solved by Max Planck in the year 1900 with the added discovery that energy comes in distinct ‘packets’ known as ‘quanta’ – thus founding the science of quantum mechanics.

The nature of reality revealed by sub-atomic physics has enabled ideas of an isomorphism being increasingly considered between the apparent nature of mind and consciousness and that suggested at a physical level by the very different world of quantum mechanics (different, that is, from the purely material, mechanistic, world of Newtonian physics). This is perhaps the link which we need to enable a scientific breakthrough to a holistic understanding of body-mind. Quantum mechanics, while still an incomplete system of thought, includes the apparent influence of the observer on outcomes of observation, it indicates non-local reality and the indivisibility of matter – a different reality than is available to us through Newtonian physics and one consistent with the immaterial nature of mind. It is a theme I touched on in the *Metaphilosophy* article and it has been explored at some depth more recently by George Williams in an article: ‘Quantum Mechanics, Metaphysics, and Bohm’s Implicate Order’ (Williams, 2019).

Williams discusses how David Bohm, distinguished professor of physics at UC Berkeley and friend and associate of Albert Einstein, developed ideas of an ‘implicate order’ involving an indivisible stratum of matter, consciousness and intelligence. He notes:

Bohm also took a bold, additional step by arguing that this high-dimensional space is foundational to both matter and consciousness. Bohm (2002) described his implicate order as a version of neu-

tral monism, which takes the fundamental basis for both consciousness and matter as neutral, neither mind-like nor material: So we are led to propose further that the more comprehensive, deeper, and more inward actuality is neither mind nor body but rather a yet higher-dimensional actuality, which is their common ground and which is of a nature beyond both’ (Williams, 2018: 265)...And therefore active information, based in the implicate order, could also be seen as an important link or bridge between mind and matter. Thus, our thoughts and feelings can also be characterized as a continuing of unfoldment and enfoldment from the implicate order. Bohm (1990) also noted that the implicate order may serve as a means of expressing consistently the actual relationship between mind and matter, without introducing something like the Cartesian duality between them (Williams, 2018: 273).

Williams also argues that “All facts we possess about the world (objective or subjective) arrive to us through our consciousness. Thus, our conscious experience possesses a stronger ontological status than...mathematical abstractions [and] this argument applies to all of our world’s ultimates (electrons, quarks, strings) for which our understanding is still incomplete...All facts we possess about the world (objective or subjective) arrive to us through our consciousness”.

Conclusion

These ideas of immateriality thus remain speculative, or else they are based on logic and everyday experience, while the conception of naturalizing involving the ‘causal closure of physics’ appears rather to represent a clinging to well established scientific facts and a fierce denial of the immaterial as perhaps smacking of the spiritual, if not the occult. While all of the arguments remain inconclusive, the weight of evidence appears currently to be moving in favour of immateriality.

This paper has, therefore, sought to lay a tentative foundation for Margolis’s idea that “‘natural but not naturalizable’ may yet prove to be the best short statement of pragmatism’s late discovery of itself”. It has demonstrated through Dewey’s pragmatic technology the value

of productive enquiry into contemporary issues beyond philosophy itself, and used Joseph Margolis's carefully crafted ideas of 'robust relativism' and 'adaptive truth', to avoid dogmatic positions in a productive enquiry which enables the 'best available' truth to be established, while at the same time avoiding a self-defeating relativism. I believe that this is within the spirit of the classical pragmatists, and especially of John Dewey, whose encouragement to engage with global issues could not be more pertinent at a time when the world faces existential threats as never before.

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THE POWER AND PROMISE OF BHIMRAO AMBEDKAR'S NAVAYANA PRAGMATISM

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ABSTRACT: Most accounts of pragmatism's global travels miss its past—and future—in India. As the world's largest democracy, India offers an exciting opportunity to explore new potentials of pragmatism as a practical philosophical approach. This article explores the pragmatism of Bhimrao Ambedkar, an anti-caste reformer and political leader. Ambedkar was not only one of the chief architects of the Indian constitution in the 1940s; he was also a devoted student of John Dewey's from his days at Columbia University in 1913-1916. There are historical and conceptual reasons to count Ambedkar as part of the diverse pragmatist tradition. Furthermore, his "new vehicle" or *navayana* pragmatism represents a novel philosophy that foregrounds human personality and the shared social values in unified communities to resist sources of oppression such as caste in a democratic society.

Keywords: Ambedkar, India, caste, Dewey, democracy

The engagement of Chinese intellectuals and activists such as Hu Shih with John Dewey's philosophy is by now a common part of our tales of pragmatism's global fortunes. While one can make an argument that the philosophy promulgated by the classical pragmatists—Charles S. Peirce, William James, and John Dewey—is unique to the American context in some important way, their engagement with global currents of philosophical thought is unmistakable. For instance, both Dewey and James wrestle with a distinctive Hegelian legacy in their own fashions. But the question remains: what unnoticed global roots—and future branches—of American pragmatism might we have missed? What more can we say about the global nature of pragmatism?

In this article, I want to focus on one part of the story of pragmatism that's only recently received sustained attention: its fate in India. The story of pragmatism in China is well known (Keenan 1977; Wang 2007). While the fortunes of pragmatism waned in China after the 1950s, and now grow in a certain manner independent of the

country's politics, pragmatism ultimately lost out to communism in that 20th century battle. Hu and his compatriots did an admirable job spreading Dewey's gospel of science and democracy throughout China, but Mao—who was a note taker for some of Dewey's speeches—would ultimately position pragmatism and Dewey (and Hu) as enemies of the Chinese state after his successful capture of power. But in India, Bhimrao Ambedkar (1891-1956) would take what he learned in Dewey's classes and books into Indian politics, and spearhead the drafting of India's democratic constitution in the 1940s. In a certain way of looking at matters, pragmatism (and democracy) lost in China and won in India. Yet we have not fully explored the story of Dewey's engagement with India through his student, Ambedkar. If we do so, we shall see both a historical story of influence and adaptation, and a conceptual story of how pragmatism's emphasis on reconstruction can be applied even to its core texts and figures such as Dewey.

There are obvious clues that Ambedkar saw himself as fitting into the tradition of Dewey's form of pragmatism. On his way to New York in 1952 to receive an honorary degree from Columbia, Dewey died. Writing to his wife, Savita, from New York upon learning this news, Ambedkar lamented that "I was looking forward to meet[ing] Prof. Dewey. But he died on the 2nd [sic] when our plane was in Rome. I am so sorry. I owe all my intellectual life to him. He was a wonderful man" (Rattau 1995, 74-75). Ambedkar was not prone to such grand statements about his intellectual influences like this, so we must take it seriously. Taking it seriously means looking into Ambedkar's connections with Dewey, and what emphases appear when we place his original thought in some sort of relationship to Dewey and pragmatism. I have started this in-depth exploration in recent work (e.g., Stroud 2023), but there is much more to say on the evolution of pragmatism in India.

This article will explore the evolving nature of pragmatism in India, with a particular eye on what is unique about the pragmatism that results from Bhimrao Ambed-

kar's reception of Dewey's philosophy. Make no mistake about it: Ambedkar is a unique and creative thinker who ought to be added to the pragmatist tradition and philosophy in general on his own terms. He was no mere copier of Dewey's thought. But the reconstructive method he employed and the values he advocated did not fall from the sky. Pragmatist thinkers believe and argue for many things, but they almost all share an emphasis on the reconstructive potential of individual or group inquiry to make future experience better or more satisfying than past experience. Ambedkar shares in this quest with his unique form of Indian pragmatism, and shows how pragmatism's adaptation to issues such as caste oppression further fills out our narratives of its global evolution.

The Roots of Ambedkar's Indian Pragmatism

Ambedkar's road to pragmatism was far from predictable. He was born a poor "untouchable" (now called "Dalit") child in India, and experienced the crushing realities of the caste system through his early years. Much later (in the 1930s) he would pen a series of short autobiographical essays recounting the discrimination and harassment he faced as one consigned—through a prevalent interpretation of the theory of *karma* and rebirth—to a putatively degraded birth. His touch and presence were counted as polluting and as something to be absolutely avoided. Needless to say, Ambedkar's younger years were not a source of inspiration for him. Instead, they showed him what his experience *lacked*, and what moral standing he was *missing*. Yet young Ambedkar worked hard and became infatuated with learning.

Through a combination of lucky encounters (namely, with the reformer and teacher K.A. Keluskar) and hard work, Ambedkar earned the support of Sayajirao Gaekwad III of Baroda, a nearby princely state. The Gaekwad was devoted to social reform, and therefore ran a sort of affirmative action program in his realm for so-called untouchable persons. He also was taken by American ed-

ucation, largely because it had a sheen of progress and useful rebellion against the past that the British overlords didn't quite like; the Gaekwad was in a habit sending young Indians to America to be educated (see Gopal 2023; Rathore 2023; Stroud 2024). Ambedkar would be one of the beneficiaries of this policy, leaving for Columbia University in the summer of 1913 with the Gaekwad's support.

It was at Columbia that Ambedkar stumbled into pragmatism. According to the agreement he signed with the Gaekwad, Ambedkar was not supposed to audit or take any courses besides ones in his field of economics. But somehow he ended up in John Dewey's 1914 Philosophy 231 course focused on "Psychological Ethics." This course was a standard offering of Dewey's since his time at the University of Chicago. The content of this course, however, changed every few years as Dewey's own pragmatism developed. By the time that Ambedkar heard the American opine on ethics and psychology, Dewey had moved past his earlier neo-Hegelian tinged psychology of the 1890s and was even moving beyond the individualistic focus in his 1908 book with James Tufts, *Ethics*. Ambedkar heard a whole semester of Dewey talking about ethics from the individual standpoint, but this was the individual as social organism, one who took habits and customs from a group that greatly affected the individual's interaction with an environment. In other words, Ambedkar heard Dewey engage the naturalistic psychology that undergirded *Democracy and Education*, a book that also greatly influenced Ambedkar's own pragmatist vision. Ambedkar would take from this course, as well as from his own heavily annotated copies of the *Ethics* (1908) and *Democracy and Education* (1916), the idea that individual habits mattered for experience and for the achievement of social justice. Habits can be intelligent and well-adjusted to social and natural environments, or they could be badly adjusted; education could be one way of making these latter habits better. While Dewey did not reference the graded hierarchy of caste

in these lectures, Ambedkar was surely thinking ahead to the applicants of this melioristic psychology.¹

In his final year in residence at Columbia during 1915-1916, Ambedkar would take Dewey's year-long Philosophy 131-132 "Moral and Political Philosophy." This series of courses was another regular offering that he alternated with "Psychological Ethics" since teaching at Chicago. It was a rare foray into the philosophy of law for Dewey, as half of the course was designed to deal with the interrelationship of law with social customs. The first portion of the course surveyed the functioning and formation of customs in the west through the lens of the alternating development of various social philosophies. Dewey was particularly enamored with the long-standing debate between individualism and communitarianism, even though he did spend considerable effort unpacking certain traditions—such as the tradition winding its way through Kant, Fichte, Hegel, and Marx—that engaged nationalism from the position of the formation of the modern state. This year-long series of courses was important for pragmatism's global prospects, since the Chinese reformer, Hu Shih, was attending the same small seminar as was Ambedkar.

Building on these significant courses by Dewey, Ambedkar would continue a life-long engagement with pragmatist thought. Even though there's no evidence that he wrote to or met with Dewey, even when he briefly returned to New York for a few weeks at the end of 1931 (Stroud 2023b), he took pains to keep up on Dewey's thought from afar by collecting his books. By my count of what remains in his personal library preserved in archives, Ambedkar owned twenty-two books by or about John Dewey. Some of the books by Dewey that he possessed are: *Ethics* (1908), *The Influence of Darwin on Philosophy* (1910), *German Philosophy and Politics* (1915), *Democracy and Education* (1916, 1925), *Essays*

in Experimental Logic (1916, 1953), *Experience and Nature* (1929), *The Quest for Certainty* (1930), *Freedom and Culture* (1939), *Education Today* (1940), *Problems of Men* (1946), *Human Nature and Conduct* (1948), and Joseph Ratner's edited collection of Dewey's works, *Intelligence in the Modern World: John Dewey's Philosophy* (1939).² Ambedkar would heavily mark most of these books, and passages from some of them—especially *Democracy and Education* and the 1908 *Ethics*—would serve as a sort of raw material in the construction of his own specific vision of pragmatism. What sort of pragmatism did he distill from his lifelong engagement with parts of Dewey's philosophy?

The Contours of Navayana Pragmatism

Ambedkar's complex thought developed in a sustained confrontation with elements of Indian society that upheld caste customs. These are the interpretations of Hinduism that place particular emphasis on one's birth being dictated by past *karma* or moral merit, and the overall ranking of these birth groups by privilege and worth. As Ambedkar would describe it, caste implied a graded hierarchy of value. Each caste looked down at those "lesser" than its own members, and those members in turn were looked down upon by those higher in the hierarchy. At the top, Ambedkar maintained, were the Brahmins, a group that had been traditionally entrusted with the continuation and interpretation of religious texts and rituals. Ambedkar fiercely argued that much of what was taken to be Hinduism was really *Brahmanism*, a religion shaped by Brahmins and allied castes for the benefit of these same power holders. At the bottom of this hierarchy were the outcastes—so called "untouchables" like Ambedkar, who were feared as religiously polluting by their touch or presence (for more on Ambedkar's engagement with the history of caste, see Teltumbde 2018).

¹ We know exactly what Ambedkar was taught through recently unearthed archival materials from Dewey's classes. See Stroud 2023, 68-102.

² For a complete list of Ambedkar's pragmatism-related books, see Stroud 2023a, 5.

Ambedkar developed a body of thought on caste and its harms for community formation alongside his legislative and civil efforts to resist it. Thus, his scholarship in books and articles dovetailed naturally with his on-the-ground activism and protest organizing. His collected works span some four million words in English, and this does not count the millions of other words he penned in Marathi and Hindi, and in the course of his tumultuous career as a journalist and newspaper owner. Capturing Ambedkar's philosophy is a challenge, but it is not unexpected. Even with professional philosophers like Dewey, a philosophy might be usefully extracted or hypothesized, but never at the cost of thinking that a complex thinker always maintained the same foci and commitments over a body of ever-evolving thought. For instance, Ambedkar's writings and arguments evolved over his many decades of thinking and acting, and his concerns and positions often matched the challenges of specific situations. Thus, we can speak of Ambedkar's *philosophy*, but we ought to recognize that there's room for examining the evolution and tensions within this abstracted body of thought. Let us examine his unique form of pragmatism with an eye to constructing a more general philosophy, albeit one that does not maintain that these themes and commitments are there in this same form in all of his periods and all of his works.

Why consider Ambedkar's thought as a form of pragmatism? First, he was inspired by parts of what he heard Dewey teach and what the American advocated in his books. Ambedkar was also inspired by what Dewey *ignored or got wrong*. We must resist accounts that exclaim the rather obvious point that Ambedkar's thought "moves beyond Dewey" (e.g., Berg & Midtgarden 2020) as a demur to understanding Ambedkar in the wake of Dewey's pragmatism. Such a naive approach leaves unexamined three vital assumptions: that Dewey's thought is one constant doctrine, that Ambedkar's philosophy is one doctrine and is wholly different from (or "beyond") any part of Dewey's consistent philosophy, and that matters of influence within a tradition mandate homogeneity.

Upon reflection, one can see how these assumptions are all unwarranted. Ambedkar and Dewey's thought evolved and changed. Any description of their thought is a provisional capturing an ever-changing movement of ideas and actions. But there are undeniable points of contact, extension, and refusal. In our discourse, inclusion within a tradition as a way to denote influence and continuity is by no means a claim to identity or sameness, even if the thought of the thinkers in question could be determinatively reduced to one and only one doctrine. Ambedkar, like Hu Shih and William James, was a pragmatist precisely because he differed from figures like Dewey within a tradition filled with discourse, disagreement, and alteration.

There are many ways to see Ambedkar's philosophy, but when we use the label of "pragmatism," we are drawing attention to Ambedkar's acts of extending, changing, adding to, or resisting themes in previous iterations of pragmatism such as Dewey's own evolving body of thought. We draw historical and conceptual attention to certain parts of his thought, whereas looking at him as a lawyer, a civil rights activist, a politician, or a Buddhist calls for attention to other constellations of facts, arguments, and commitments. Thinking of him as pragmatist foregrounds parts we overlook as well. For instance, we can see how Ambedkar's thought prized the practical, and the practical import of theorizing. Notice can be given to the fact that this emphasis even served as a framework for much of his critical theorizing about caste's history and conceptual functioning. We can make a new sense out of his approach to the issues of his day and its reconstructive intent. Like Dewey, his unique thought subscribed to a general path of meliorism or the improvement of lived experience. He telegraphed this melioristic focus in his late work, *Riddles in Hinduism*. There, he maintained that

Philosophy is no purely theoretic matter. It has practical potentialities. Philosophy has its roots in the problems of life and whatever theories philosophy propounds must return to society as instruments of re-constructing society. It is not enough to know. Those who know must endeavour to fulfil. (Ambedkar 1987b, 286)

We can see these constellations of commitments, ideals, approaches, and historical influences if we consider taking Ambedkar as part of the pragmatist tradition. These are just some of the reasons why thinking about Ambedkar as a pragmatist allows us to see him in new, and hopefully useful, ways, further magnifying the contribution his thought can make.

In the following sections, I will organize his philosophy—what I call his *navayana* (or “new vehicle”) *pragmatism* into abstract and distinct commitments. Of course, much more detail can and should be unearthed on each of these issues. And these aren’t the only axes on which to analyze and generalize Ambedkar’s complex body of thought. More can and must be said in future studies on his pragmatism in reference to his Buddhism—as I have discovered, there is good evidence that he wanted to *combine* elements of Dewey’s account of democracy with traditional Buddhism as early as 1914 (Stroud 2023a, 7-12). Nevertheless, it’s a useful endeavor to consider Ambedkar as a unique sort of pragmatist and answer the initial question—what are the general contours of Ambedkar’s vision of pragmatism? In doing so, we can establish some of the unique contributions of Ambedkar’s *navayana pragmatism* to the global history of pragmatism. Only after such contours are determined can we fully explore other aspects such as his synthetic reading of Buddhism later in his life.

Theme 1: The individual personality matters

All accounts of Ambedkar’s life, thought, and mission begin, and often end, with the target of his ire—*caste*. Ambedkar was a so-called untouchable (now, denoted by the self-chosen term “Dalit,” Marathi for “crushed”). This caste status was assigned and determined by birth placement—Ambedkar’s parents were of this caste, and so was he. Untouchability is a complex topic, but as Ambedkar discussed it, it mattered to his life since it rendered his presence and touch as ritually polluting. Throughout his

youth—and his adulthood—he encountered situations where individuals resisted sharing water sources with him, refused to cut his hair, and refused to do business with him. All of these concerns were out of concern for maintaining caste distinctions and avoiding contact with an “untouchable.” Ambedkar spent much effort tracing out the sources of untouchability in the ancient *Vedas* of India, and in classical texts such as the *Bhagavad Gita*. His concern was always with the customs of Hindus—based upon a hierarchical interpretation of caste in their religious texts—negatively affecting himself and other low-caste or outcaste individuals. Caste dictated not only negative characteristics as pollution or repulsion, it also laid the path to what sort of occupation an individual was allowed to take. As Ambedkar put it in his *Annihilation of Caste* text, the “Caste System is not merely [a] division of labour. It is also a division of labourers” (Ambedkar 1979a, 47). It offered a graded hierarchy of caste groups, often divided by occupation, that placed some as more valuable and normatively desired than others.

But what was so bad about the caste system for Ambedkar? One answer is suggested by pointing to its harms—it literally excluded Ambedkar from the immediate scene of education, for instance, since he had to sit outside the classroom for fear of polluting his fellow students (Teltumbde 2024). But even when caste wasn’t overtly harmful, Ambedkar still saw it as an awful social invention. It struck at a basic respect that each person was due. If one attends to some of the common arguments he made, one can see that the basis to his critique of caste hierarchies involved the concept of *personality*.

Ambedkar would often refer to the violation that caste represented to the personality of individual Dalits. For instance, in one of his first public appearances as an anti-caste activist, he testified in front of a British-led commission considering the extension of the franchise in India. In 1919, Ambedkar tied caste and society’s highest aims together in the concept of personality:

The growth of personality is the highest aim of society. Social arrangement must secure free initiative and opportunity to every individual to assume any role he is capable of assuming provided it is socially desirable. A new [role] is a renewal and growth of personality. But when an association— and a Government is after all an association— is such that in it every role cannot be assumed by all, it tends to develop the personality of the few at the cost of the many— a result scrupulously to be avoided in the interest of Democracy. (Ambedkar 1979b, 251)

Caste hierarchies left Dalits—and lower castes in general—out of the decision-making processes. This was harmful because such political and social empowerment was necessary for growing as a person, as a personality. Even given legal protections, the social machinations of caste still precluded this growth: “Legally the Untouchable is a freeman. Yet, socially he has no freedom for the growth of his personality. This is indeed a very glaring paradox” (Ambedkar 1989, 91). Later in his life, Ambedkar would return again to the notion of personality, claiming in 1942 that the struggle against caste oppression was about development, respect, and growth: “For ours is a battle, not for wealth or for power. It is a battle for freedom. It is a battle for the reclamation of human personality which has been suppressed and mutilated by the Hindu Social System” (Ambedkar 2003a, 276).

Thus, a central value in Ambedkar’s pragmatism must be enunciated as the concept of *personality*. But what exactly is personality? For both Dewey—especially in his earlier years—and Ambedkar, it pointed at the unique set of impulses and potentialities an individual human organism had in its social functioning. It was also normative, gesturing at what that individual *might become* if social and natural environments were so structured as to let their will and agency count for something. Caste, with its degrading of the low and lower, and with its strictures placed on movement and occupation, limited vital channels for such self-development. The individual could not flourish in the function between their own impulses and desires and the social environment that mediated these organic pushes outwards. The habits and customs

of caste dominated the individual, and his or her desires, projects, and hopes. Their personality was truncated along with this freedom, since the autonomy of choice only matters so far as it was directed by and reflected upon their unique self.

Caste stratification destroyed the chances for the growth and development of personality, and this was a central concern for Ambedkar’s navayana pragmatism. Personality was what made each individual unique; it was even precluded by the earlier system of caste known as *chaturvarna*, where individuals are said to belong to one of four groups based upon inner worth: *brahmins* (priests), *kshatriyas* (warriors), *vaishyas* (merchants), or *shudras* (servants). Ambedkar acknowledged that the modern system of caste was a later evolution from this *varna* system, but he argued that both divided people based upon what was antecedently “inner” in way that held back novel individual development.

Anticipating that critics like Mohandas Gandhi would oppose caste (and untouchability), but not the *varna* system of societal division, Ambedkar harshly criticized the more limited groupings of *varna* as just as problematic as the thousands of castes that were operative in colonial India. The problem for both practices was that individuals were stuck into a limited range of discrete classes based upon qualities bestowed upon them at birth. Both *varna* and modern practices of caste said that each person had an essence or essential quality from a set list of such qualities; furthermore, this inner quality was there putatively since birth, and merely had to be discovered in order to ascertain a path of development or use. In his *Annihilation of Caste* text, Ambedkar likens the *varna* system approved of by Gandhi and others to Plato’s tri-fold division of individuals in his republic. Both fail because they misread the value and uniqueness of personality in each human individual:

The chief criticism against Plato is that his idea of lumping of individuals into a few sharply marked-off classes is a very superficial view of man and his powers. Plato had no perception of the unique-

ness of every individual, of his incommensurability with others, of each individual forming a class of his own. He had no recognition of the infinite diversity of active tendencies and combination of tendencies of which an individual is capable. (Ambedkar 1979a, 60)

Class-based analyses suffered from this tendency—the erasure of individual difference, and the further development of new individual differences as the course of experience progresses. Ambedkar's pragmatism valued personality primarily because it offered a check on customs such as *varna* and caste, as well as theoretical moves that smashed individuals into groups all sharing the same putative characteristics (as was his problem with Marxist class analysis).

Ambedkar's pragmatism, following a similar path to Dewey's pragmatism, connected the development of personality with social organization. In that early 1919 testimony, Ambedkar was explicit that social environments such as that fostered by participatory democracy mattered because they enable the growth of personality in individual agents:

It will be granted that each kind of association, as it is an educative environment, exercises a formative influence on the active dispositions of its members. Consequently, what one is as a person is what one is as associated with others. A Government for the people, but not by the people, is sure to educate some into masters and others into subjects; because it is by the reflex effects of association that one can feel and measure the growth of personality. (Ambedkar 1979b, 251)

Ambedkar saw the role this term played in Dewey's early thought. For instance, Ambedkar was always taken by Dewey's early essay, "The Ethics of Democracy" from 1888. He echoed part of this essay in the early 1930s in one of his speeches, and pestered a young student in London (V.B. Kadam) to transcribe a copy for him in 1954 as he couldn't find his own copy of the work. In this early work—one from Dewey's neo-Hegelian phase—Ambedkar saw Dewey weave this concept into his early ethics of self-realization; he would also observe Dewey extolling its value, as he would write in this 1888 essay that "democracy means that *personality* is the first and final real-

ity." It is in this early work that Dewey connects the ideal of personality "with the other notes of democracy, liberty, equality, fraternity," which together form the "highest ethical ideal."³ Ambedkar would extend the meaning of personality into a realm Dewey barely thought of—the socially deforming powers of caste hierarchy.

Theme 2: Democracy is way of life

Personality and individual uniqueness—or incommensurability—is not the only aspect for Ambedkar's social philosophy. As he puts it in *Annihilation of Caste*, "In the world of action, the individual is one limit and society the other. Between them lie all sorts of associative arrangements of lesser and larger scope—families, friendships, cooperative associations, business combines, political parties, bands of thieves and robbers" (Ambedkar 1979a, 64). Ambedkar, like many other pragmatist thinkers, saw individual habits and group customs as interwoven and as vital parts to diagnosing political and ethical problems—and to meliorating them. While many might be tempted to begin and end exposition of "democracy" at the institutional level, or at the level of decision-making processes, Ambedkar followed his teacher Dewey in placing democracy's primary concern in our habits of engaging others. For instance, Ambedkar was fond of echoing Dewey's line in *Democracy and Education* that "Democracy is not merely a form of Government. It is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience" (Ambedkar 1979a, 57; Dewey 1985, 93). Dewey moved "democracy" beyond a form of government and into the realm of our habits; Ambedkar pushed this further, noting that "It is a form of the organization of Society. There are two essential conditions which characterize a democratically constituted society. First is the absence of stratification of society into classes. The Second is a social habit on the part of individuals and groups

³ I detail the evidence for Ambedkar's sustained engagement with this early work by Dewey in Stroud 2023a, 189-191.

which is ready for continuous readjustment or recognition of reciprocity of interests.” (Ambedkar 1987b, 281).

For Ambedkar’s pragmatism, our habits help determine if we share interests and form unified communities. If our habits, and our group customs, divide us and denigrate others, then community is not formed; antagonistic subgroups are. Our habits of seeing others as equal to us and as worth associating with hold out the hope of creating democratic society, and with it, democratic government. But make no mistake, Ambedkar is clear that government functioning depends on social and psychological realities: “Unfortunately to what extent the task of good Government depends upon the mental and moral disposition of its subjects has seldom been realized. Democracy is more than a political machine. It is even more than a social system. It is an attitude of mind or a philosophy of life” (Ambedkar 1987b, 283).

What characterizes an equal and unified community for navayana pragmatism? Ambedkar relies on Dewey’s standard from *Democracy and Education* in his own *An-nihilation of Caste* (1936). There, echoing Dewey, he argues against caste division by pointing to the criteria of shared interests and communication:

The question to be asked in determining whether a given society is an ideal society; is not whether there are groups in it, because groups exist in all societies. The questions to be asked in determining what is an ideal society are: How numerous and varied are the interests which are consciously shared by the groups? How full and free is the interplay with other forms of associations? Are the forces that separate groups and classes more numerous than the forces that unite? (Ambedkar 1979a, 64)⁴

Caste, as Ambedkar forcefully argues in such texts as *An-nihilation of Caste*, “is a notion, it is a state of the mind. The destruction of Caste does not therefore mean the destruction of a physical barrier. It means a notional

change” (Ambedkar 1979a, 68). These habits, taken from the perspective of common group traits and tendencies of action, become the *customs* of caste of certain groups.

Caste is harmful for Ambedkar because it separates groups and limits the possibilities for forming the unified communities of shared interest that democracy as a way of life or associated living entail. At the individual level, the habits and customs of caste truncate the growth and realization of human personality. The shared, supportive environment of democratic community, with its numerous and varied contacts among groups, is precisely what allows for this expansion and development of each unique personality. Democracy is a way of life insofar as it represents a collection of habits of how we see, value, and interact with others in our de facto communities.

Theme 3: Communities are measured by their balancing of liberty, equality, and fraternity

So far, we have seen that Ambedkar’s navayana pragmatism has a strong commitment to the ideal of human personality developing unencumbered by social strictures. We have also sensed that social environments matter in enable or disabling this growth of personality. The sort of social arrangement created by widespread habits that compel more unity, integration, and engagement with other individuals and groups is what Ambedkar (and Dewey) would identify as “democratic.” But how can we determine if prevailing habits and customs are democratic in this way? How can we cognize and discuss the specific ways they fall short of the ideals of developing individual personalities and creating unified communities?

The point Ambedkar’s pragmatism stresses is that political democracy relies upon certain habits that form a way of life among others. In a speech presenting the draft constitution he helped write in 1949, he warns that “Political democracy cannot last unless there lies at the base of it social democracy.” He then asks, “What does social democracy mean?” His answer is revealing: “It means a way of life,” he continues, “which recognizes liberty, equality

⁴ This passage is an “echo” of a passage from Dewey 1985. See Stroud 2023a for an explanation of how Ambedkar’s rhetorical technique of echoing and appropriating specific portions of Dewey’s text for his own unique argumentative purposes functioned.

and fraternity as the principles of life. These principles of liberty, equality and fraternity are not to be treated as separate items in a trinity. They form a union of trinity in the sense that to divorce one from the other is to defeat the very purpose of democracy" (Ambedkar 1994, 1216). This is an extension of what he argued in 1936 in *Annihilation of Caste*, where he asserts his standard for an ideal society: "If you ask me, my ideal would be a society based on Liberty, Equality and Fraternity" (Ambedkar 1979a, 57.)

What has changed from 1936 to 1949 is that Ambedkar has made the habitual, personal basis of ideal society more explicit. It was there in 1936, of course, but explicit talk of democracy as "a way of life" was not present. But these evocations of these three values show us something about his general philosophy of democracy in general. A just or ideal society is one that respects individual growth *and* the unity of groups at various levels in such a way as to *balance* individual freedom (liberty), the relative worth of each in social considerations (equality), and shared interests among individuals as group members (fraternity). Ambedkar accuses Hinduism, especially in the form that privileges Brahminical hierarchies, of being opposed to key parts of this triad of values—namely, fraternity among all and the equality of all.

Where do these values come from? This is a challenge for pragmatists. Both Dewey and Ambedkar rebelled against appeals to certain and special arenas of knowledge. You can't derive morality from pure reason, or have it delivered from God. For Ambedkar, the caste system was said to be related to the holy scriptures or *shastras* of the Hindu tradition, and thus divinely ordained. It was beyond criticism or alteration, as it was part of *santan dharma* or a timeless teaching. Ambedkar's struggles were similar to Dewey's resistance to Christian attacks on social change and new scientific approaches; both resisted those who claimed that traditions of the past had a divine sanction and were outside of the realm of improvement. But both thinkers needed *ideals* to guide and measure the worth of change and alteration.

Dewey's standard solution was to find the ideals that guided ethical growth *within* parts of a tradition. They did not reside in some ahistorical realm outside of tradition. But this solution would not work for Ambedkar, since he saw the majority of tendencies within his native tradition of Hinduism as not enabling the sort of caste critique he so desperately desired. This is where the three values of the French revolution came in. These are not *dharmic* concepts from the Sanskrit tradition. Ambedkar nowhere claimed they had some divine certainty, or even that they sprung from the human powers of mind like Kant's appeals to pure practical reason seemed to assert. Later, he would claim they came from the Buddha's teachings, although it is clear that these are English translations of French concepts that he (most likely) heard for the first time in Dewey's spring 1916 moral and political philosophy course (Stroud 2023a, 54).

The point that seems evident to me is that Ambedkar found a *usefulness* in these three values; that reconstructive value was all the warrant he needed for applying them in a critique of Hindu social structures. I call these concepts *semi-transcendent ideals*, since they reside outside of the dominant Hindu tradition or any tradition that Ambedkar is enmeshed in. This motto associated with the French revolution does not arise from Ambedkar's cultural placement and these values do not historically derive from Sanskrit or Pali concepts (although Ambedkar later relates them to the philosophy of the Buddha), so they are not strictly *immanent* values in any straightforward way. Of course, he also doesn't tie them closely to their original contexts in French philosophy and culture. But they are not *transcendent* since they have no claim attached to them for a validity that goes beyond human society and conceptual contingency.

Ambedkar's pragmatism recognized both the necessity of ideals and the danger associated with taking them as transcendentally justified. "Ideals as norms are good and are necessary," Ambedkar argued. "Neither a society nor an individual can do without a norm," he con-

tinued, “But a norm must change with changes in time and circumstances. No norm can be permanently fixed. There must always be room for reevaluation of the values of our norm. The possibility of revaluing values remains open only when the institution is not invested with sacredness. Sacredness prevents reevaluation of its values. Once sacred, always sacred” (Ambedkar 1990, 31). The ideals of caste and *varna* were too sedimented, too holy. They could not be flexibly applied in a way separate from their divine certainty. The trio of equality, liberty, and fraternity could be extracted from the French context—and away from the justifications given by French philosophers—and applied to Hinduism or correlated with other traditions such as Buddhism. There was a contingency to these ideals that attracted Ambedkar.

These values occupy a middle ground—between the confines of a specific cultural context and transcendent universality—that allows Ambedkar to criticize the traditions that oppress him and fellow untouchables in India without asserting his own claim to a timeless standard or source of knowledge and value. In short, this trio of semi-transcendent values is useful because it can be applied to *any* group or *any* community. This application is by choice, and not forced by some necessity of reason, though. Ambedkar simply chooses them to make his point, and he thinks we will see in their functioning a usefulness that justifies this choice of ideals. How do they function in such a manner? They derive their usefulness from the tension among them—they point to features that emerge in almost any situation featuring individuals living among others. How much does the individual matter in terms of their ability to act? Does this liberty occlude and oppress the freedom of others? If so, there is a lack of balance among the individual concern of liberty and the more communal concern of equality among group members. In other words, liberty is out of balance with equality. Does a state of affairs create group unity and shared interests at the expense of too much individual liberty? If so, fraternity is not optimally balanced with liberty. The power of

these ideals is not in some distracting claim of an origin in divine or pure sources; their functioning instead resides in how they focus our attention to important values and capacities in our experience, and how we might better optimize or balance each among the others.

Theme 4: Fraternity imposes certain limits on the pursuit of justice

Let us focus on one of the semi-transcendent ideals that Ambedkar advocates: fraternity. This value is often taken to detail the endpoint of Ambedkar’s pursuit of social democracy. When we achieve fraternity, fellow-feeling, or *maitri* toward others, we will have the sort of unified, supportive community animated by vital shared interests that democracy as a way of life postulates. This is accurate, but it misses an important aspect to Ambedkar’s pragmatism. Fraternity denotes a habit and a check on the *means* available to get to such an end state. It is both an *end* in Ambedkar’s social philosophy and a means—or perhaps, a limitation on the means we might consider.

To explain this point, let us turn toward an unpublished book Ambedkar authored in the last few years of his life—*Riddles in Hinduism*. This book and its history is complex, and I’ve detailed parts of that story elsewhere (see Stroud 2022). In this work, Ambedkar emphasizes the habitual basis for democracy. “Whether the Democratic form of Government will result in good,” Ambedkar writes, “will depend upon the disposition of the individuals composing society. If the mental disposition of the individuals is democratic then the democratic form of Government can be expected to result in good Government” (Ambedkar 1987b, 282-283). After evoking Dewey and the pragmatist conception of democracy as community formation, he turns to the triad of semi-transcendent values taken from the French revolution. He then precedes to answer an odd, but important, implied question: which one of these values is more important?

This is an odd question because he is clearly committed to these values as equal and in need of *balancing* in

a just society. But it is a very human reaction to seek out the *really* important factor and lift it above the crowd. This is precisely what happens in much of the modern discourse about caste—caste oppression is noticed because of the inequality present, so appeals for justice emphasize *equality* as seemingly the most important concept to focus on. Ambedkar seems to be anticipating such a reasonable reaction, since our felt lacks focus our attention like no other incentive many times. In this book addressing Hindu readers, he opines that “some equate democracy with equality and liberty.” These values are “no doubt the deepest concern of Democracy. But the more important question is what sustains equality and liberty” (Ambedkar 1987b, 283)? Answering this second question, Ambedkar argues that “What sustains equality and liberty is fellow-feeling,” or “what the French Revolutionists called fraternity” (Ambedkar 1987b, 283).

If Ambedkar is truly committed to a balancing account of these three values, it seems odd to advocate such a primary role for fraternity. While others have explored some of the tensions and historical evolutions of these three values in Ambedkar’s thought, I want to explore why he was tempted to place fraternity in such a role in this later appeal for democracy as a habit or way of life.⁵ Looking at his reasoning in *Riddles in Hinduism*, we see intimations that fraternity has a role to play as a *means* or *instrument* for creating—or sustaining—certain end states or social goals. “Without Fraternity,” Ambedkar continues, “liberty would destroy equality and equality would destroy liberty. If in Democracy liberty does not destroy equality and equality does not destroy liberty, it is because at the basis of both there is fraternity.” “Fraternity,” Ambedkar emphasizes, “is therefore the root of Democracy” (Ambedkar 1987b, 283).

There is something important behind this emphasis on fraternity, something vital for understanding Ambedkar’s navayana pragmatism. Like Dewey’s pragmatism

(e.g., Dewey 2008), I believe that Ambedkar is committed to the idea that democratic ends require democratic means. Fraternity, fellow-feeling, or the Buddhist concept of *maitri* is how Ambedkar enunciates this common commitment. To fully understand this reading of fraternity, we must understand Ambedkar’s account of force. From as early as 1918, and as late as the 1950s, Ambedkar was consistently intrigued by the question of how much force a reformer could employ against oppression and not create new states of injustice. In a 1918 review of a book by Bertrand Russell (Ambedkar 1979c), the young Indian reformer enunciated his “Professor Dewey’s” distinction between force as energy and force as violence. He also referred to this same distinction in his final years as an older Buddhist reformer in an unpublished work titled *Buddha or Karl Marx* (Ambedkar 1987a). In both of these works, he makes the point that he heard Dewey explain to him (and Hu Shih) in the Philosophy 132 course in 1916: one must use force to get anything done, but some uses of force destroy more than they achieve or create. In the sense of reform or social change, force as violence fixates so much on one end (the reformer’s goal or interest) that other valuable goals of other agents are degraded, ignored, or destroyed. In other words, Ambedkar was committed to the pragmatist theme that solutions to problems in community settings must be both intelligent *and* sustainable; accomplishing something today should not set up new problems or battles tomorrow.

Fraternity as a means-relevant concept focuses Ambedkar’s pragmatism on this aspect of sustainable action in settings with diverse arrays of individuals and projects. In other words, fraternity implies another sense of balance that must be struck in *creating* the balanced and just society that one desires. One must balance their ends and how they are pursuing them with the ends that others—including one’s opponents—hold. Ambedkar, like Dewey, believed that community meant sharing interests and mutual respect with like-minded *and* disagreeing others. In 1947, Ambedkar advised the student

⁵ For an excellent account of Ambedkar’s use of these three values, see Gokhale 2016.

government leaders at Siddharth College (an institution founded by him during the previous year) that they ought to pay attention to how they treat their “enemies” in getting the legislative change they so desire: “You cannot win over a majority in this House by giving a black eye to your opponent... You will have to carry a proposition only by the art of speaking, by persuading [your] opponent, by winning him over [to] his side by argument, either gentle or strong, but always logically and instructively” (Ambedkar 2003b, 378). Logic and persuasion, not blunt force, is what carries today—and tomorrow—for Ambedkar. What he’s getting at here is the notion of fraternity: we must solve problems while maintaining the possibilities for fraternity with those we consider friendly, *and* those we consider foes or oppressors.

In *Buddha or Karl Marx*, a work left unpublished due to his demise, he argues for something similar. Buddha and Marx, Ambedkar claims, both focus on the problem of inequality and poverty; both see private property and greed as part of the cause of the suffering doled out by this inequality. But the Buddha is distinct from Marx, Ambedkar claims, *and superior*, because of his attention to the ethical limitations on means in getting to these ends. In a pragmatist fashion, Ambedkar worries about the sustainability and scope of the Marxist commitment to any means necessary for resolving class conflict. “We welcome the Russian Revolution,” Ambedkar writes, “because it aims to produce equality. But it cannot be too much emphasized that in producing equality society cannot afford to sacrifice fraternity or liberty. Equality will be of no value without fraternity or liberty.” The problem wasn’t with communism’s pursuit of equality, it was in the unlimited means used to achieve this; they segued into force as violence, and truncated too many other valued ends others held. For instance, it chose to sacrifice the liberty and fraternal feelings of those deemed as class oppressors. As Ambedkar concludes, “It seems that the three [values] can coexist only if one follows the way of the Buddha. Communism can give one but not all” (Ambedkar 1987a, 462).

As Ambedkar noted, the Buddha relied on means that respected others and their ends, thereby upholding the limits bestowed by the value of fraternity. Again, Ambedkar turns toward willful persuasion and free acquiescence to persuasive messages as means. “The Buddha’s method was different,” Ambedkar indicates; “His method was to change the mind of man: to alter his disposition: so that whatever man does, he does it voluntarily without the use of force or compulsion” (Ambedkar 1987a, 461). He wanted to induce reflection in the targets of persuasive advocacy concerning the usefulness of their habits and customs, especially those of caste hierarchy. This approach of Buddha was superior to Marx’s wide approach, Ambedkar argues, since Buddha de-emphasized force and coercion and instead focused on the communicative method of the “constant preaching of his Dhamma [philosophy]” to “alter the disposition of men so that they would do voluntarily what they would not otherwise do” (Ambedkar 1987a, 461). Ambedkar’s navayana pragmatism recognized that force was always needed, but it also focused on the ideal of fraternity and how it mediated or even limited the use of force for good ends. For Ambedkar, democratic ends required democratic—and fraternity preserving—means.

Theme 5: There is a plurality of means to reach the endpoint of justice

The final hallmark of Ambedkar’s navayana pragmatism and its approach to securing just outcomes in situations of oppression is the notion of *pluralism*. Many pragmatists spanning from William James to John Dewey might be considered pluralists. What does it mean to be a pluralist? Simply put, it means that their theories and personalities are such that it is reasonable to hold or live with a tension between two or more contradictory concepts or ideals. For instance, James seems ready to live with or accept a range of inconsistent readings of the meaning of life, or of the religious vocation. We can identify this as *ends-pluralism*, or the idea that there are

a range of acceptable ends that people may pursue that don't always consistently fit together; the pluralist in this case recognizes that we lack a truly determinative way of sorting through these conflicting ends to find the *right* one. Ambedkar is probably best labeled something other than an ends-pluralist, since he clearly thinks that certain religions, say, are better than others in their visions of the just society. For instance, he clearly prefers Buddhism over Brahminical Hinduism as a way to structure society and individual action. But what kind of pluralist is he?

Ambedkar's pluralism shines through in his respect for a range of means to reach the just end state denoted by the ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity. Ambedkar thinks there is a variety of ways to get closer to the just balancing of these three ideals so often in tension. For instance, Ambedkar is famous for his work in spearheading the drafting of the Indian constitution. He clearly put much faith in legal means to combat untouchability. But why did he lead a massive conversion effort in his last seven years of life, pleading with enormous conferences of Dalits to make the *individual* choice to convert to Buddhism? Conversion taken as a larger movement was a political move, but his rhetoric demonstrated it had an individual side: it was aimed at shifting the orientations and habits of self-conception of individual Dalits. Add to this his never-ending advocacy in his own newspapers for Dalit equality and self-respect, and one has a challenge: how do all these disparate projects and paths make sense together?

If we see Ambedkar as a *means-pluralist*, we can make sense of his various, and sometimes contradictory, efforts to combat caste. Caste could be (somewhat) undone by legislative action; caste could be (somewhat) undone by individuals choosing to self-identify as Buddhists instead of untouchables. There is only a conflict here between these larger systemic actions and the individual choices involved in religious belief if we insist there is only *one* solution to a complex problem like caste inequality. For Ambedkar, many methods ought to be tried;

as long as they did not push the anti-caste caravan backwards, each offered a way to address the complex challenge of social inequality. The theme that emerges here for Ambedkar's navayana pragmatism is straightforward: while it is committed to a vision of the good connected to that trio of semi-transcendent values, it recognizes a wide latitude of ways to actualize such a balance. And, as the metaphor of balancing intimates, justice is not a state that is self-sustaining—force as energy and constructive means must continue to be applied to make sure these values are in balance, and that one is not sacrificed in pursuit of the others.

Pragmatism's Past and Future in India

Much more is left to be said about pragmatism's past—and future—in India. As we have seen, Ambedkar was a foundational figure for modern India and its quest for independence and democracy. He was also significantly influenced by his teacher, John Dewey, and his pragmatism. As I have argued, one can consider Ambedkar's complex and evolving thought as a form of pragmatism in India. This *navayana pragmatism* reveals something new in the pragmatist tradition, and henceforth points toward the future. It shows us ways that pragmatism can engage divisive but deep religious customs, and can adapt means to combat these anti-democratic tendencies without spawning new forms of oppression just as bad as the initial inequality. How Ambedkar's navayana pragmatism does this is through its innovative use of psychological ideals as "personality," as well as his postulating of useful but only semi-transcendent ideals such as liberty, equality, and fraternity as ways to critique or measure *any* given historical society in terms of justice.

As mentioned earlier, this study leaves out Ambedkar's creative refashioning of Buddhism in his last few years. It does this from the pragmatic concerns that one cannot fit all of Ambedkar's thought, even in contingently abstracted forms, in one article. I also maintain that

those who study pragmatism can learn valuable lessons about the nature and diversity of the pragmatist tradition by simply considering Ambedkar's thought as a form of pragmatism. Other studies can add Ambedkar's Buddhism to this account as a further evolution of his pragmatism. What one ought not to do is to make the mistake of thinking that his pragmatism gave way to his Buddhism; much of the account of democracy as a way of life given in this article continued late in his life, and was coterminous with his advocacy of Buddhism.

There's yet another reason why I consider Ambedkar's navayana pragmatism (here, at least) with minimal reference to specific parts of his Buddhism (such as those developed in his final work, *The Buddha and His Dhamma*). There is a tension in the question of the extent of Buddhism and conversion as a means to realize deep democracy. For instance, must all of India become navayana Buddhist (Ambedkar's form of Buddhism)? Different answers can be given to this question, but I believe that Ambedkar is *not* committed to such a position. Buddhism might be the most democratically *useful* of religious-philosophical traditions for him, but there's still a conceptual distance between Buddhism and his account of democracy in general. It's this distance or conceptual separation that this article exploits in discussing themes of his navayana pragmatism; other uses and other studies might leverage the overlapping parts of his Buddhist thought and the account of democracy resident in his life-long critiques of caste oppression. As pragmatists always maintain, it's a matter of purpose and endpoints. Such is the contingency of life and intellectual exercises like this. But pragmatists can learn about the historical evolution of the pragmatist tradition—as well as of new conceptual possibilities—by considering Ambedkar as a general theorist and advocate of democracy. They can also gain from puzzling over the conceptual necessity (or lack thereof) of Buddhism in his general philosophy of democracy.

I have tried to avoid other missteps in accounting for Ambedkar as a pragmatist. Even though Ambedkar's

thought resulted from his struggle with caste, it does not end there. We should recognize Ambedkar as a Dalit intellectual, but not consign him to the fate of being *only* a Dalit intellectual. We can and should see Ambedkar as a theorist of democracy in his own right, one in conversation with recognized figures in many of our courses such as Dewey, Gandhi, and Marx. Ambedkar's pragmatism brings caste into our discussions of social justice, but it also shows us a unique theoretical apparatus that resists claims to certainty all while usefully criticizing inequality. And it is also a democratic pragmatism for our times, given its emphasis on fraternity as both a desired end *and* a concern about the force of our means. Can we solve our problems of division and oppression now, without creating stronger or newer problems tomorrow? This is an important worry for pluralistic democracies like India and the United States of America, and Ambedkar is well-poised to help us think through such problems in a pragmatic fashion. Ambedkar's navayana pragmatism is of great historical importance for understanding India's recent past, and it also promises a great future yield if we but listen to it and include it in our global narratives of pragmatism's spread and evolution.

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VARIA

PRAGMATISM, METHOD AND EDUCATION: DEWEY AND RORTY ON *HOW WE THINK*

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ABSTRACT: In this article we address Richard Rorty's (1931-2007) critique of John Dewey's (1859-1952) appeal to the "experimental method". We argue that Rorty's categorical dismissal of the link between Dewey's pragmatism and his conception of method would have been either nuanced or radically different, had he seriously considered the importance that reflection on education had for Dewey. Our strategy is based on Henry Cowles' recent reassessment of Dewey's appeal to the experimental method in *How We Think* (1910 first edition, 1933 second edition) –one of his most important educational texts– where the relevant links between pragmatism, evolutionism, and method are emphasized. This historical-conceptual framework will allow us to question Rorty's reconstruction of this aspect of Deweyan philosophy both in his interpretation of *How We Think* as a text that is beset with an unsolved tension and by taking into account his defense of an approach to education that is not a systematic educational theory. Accordingly, the reasoning in this article is twofold: firstly, we argue that the conceptual tension that Rorty attributes to Dewey in *How We Think* takes into account neither the links between method and education on the one hand nor those between method and evolutionism on the other. Likewise, we emphasize that evolutionism clearly provides an anthropology that is one salient feature of Deweyan philosophy. Secondly, we set forth Rorty's reflection on education as it appears both in his educational writings and in references to experimentalism and education in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* and *Consequences of Pragmatism*, to flesh out certain relevant differences but also similarities between Dewey's and Rorty's views about the role of method in education. Even though Rorty shares with Dewey a criticism of the myth of the scientific method and a similar interconnection between a general conception of education (education as *Bildung*) and democratic culture, he rejects any appeal to the method and downplays the "experimental approach" to the method that Dewey offers in *How We Think* as a "clue of unity" for the school curriculum.

Keywords: Richard Rorty, John Dewey, Method, Pragmatism, Education

Introduction and Delimitation

Although Rorty's reassessment of the figure of Dewey has always brought about controversies in the lit-

erature (Hickman, 2007; Voparil; 2014 and Margolis 2014, among others), educational topics –especially those referring to the link between education and method in Dewey– have not had an exhaustive treatment in the literature as far as we know.¹ The question of method is the main point of disagreement of contemporary pragmatists. The debate is presented as a dichotomy: either to prioritize a 'linguistic pragmatism', which overcomes the objection that Wilfrid Sellars called "the Myth of the Given", or to opt for a pragmatism that emphasizes the role of experience as a requirement for a practical context in knowledge. As usually happens, a dichotomy leaves aside nuances that could be proved fundamental. In this respect, various attempts have been made to question the reading of classical pragmatism done by linguistic pragmatists such as Rorty's (1979) and Brandom's (2011): exposing the limits of this opposition in Rorty's reading of "traditional" or "Cartesian" epistemology by appealing to novel approaches to the epistemic role of experience (Kalpokas 2014) or defending rehabilitation of the Deweyan notion of experience by pointing to its qualitative character and its impact on the notion of inquiry (Pappas 2014). However, Henry Cowles' *The Scientific Method* (2020) reveals a unique aspect related to the reflection on method: the link between the appeal to method, pragmatist philosophy, and pedagogical reflection both in its theoretical and empirical aspects. Within this framework, our interpretative hypothesis is the following: Rorty's dismissal of the link between Dewey's pragmatism and conception of method would have been either nuanced or radically different if he had seriously considered the importance that reflection on education had for Dewey. In this context, our approach is supported by Cowles' reassessment of Dewey's appeal to the experimental method in *How We Think* (1910 first

¹ As regards Dewey's works, we take as our main reference the edition directed by Jo Ann Boydston: *The Collected Works of John Dewey* (1969-2008). These are divided into *Early Works* (EW), *Middle Works* (MW) and *Later Works* (LW).

edition, 1933 second edition). Cowles emphasizes the links between pragmatism, evolutionism, and method and this historical-conceptual framework will allow us to challenge Rorty's reconstruction of this aspect of Deweyan philosophy.

To do that, we have divided the present article into three parts. In the first, we focus on three axes: first, we expose the concept of experimental method as it emerged from both versions of *How We Think*. Then, we point out that Dewey's appeal to the method does not involve a commitment to the "scientific method", as it is usually conceived ("the myth of the scientific method" in Cowles' terms). Finally, we set forth the links between method, experimentation, and evolutionism in *How We Think*. In the second part, we argue that the conceptual tension that Rorty attributes to Dewey takes into account neither the links between method and education on the one hand nor those between method and evolutionism on the other. Likewise, we emphasize that evolutionism provides an anthropology that is one salient feature of Deweyan philosophy. In the third part, we present Rorty's reflection on education as it appears both in his educational writings and in references to experimentalism and education in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (hereinafter PHN) and *Consequences of Pragmatism*. We point out that Rorty underestimates the vindication of an experimental approach to the method that is a fundamental aspect of the influence of Darwinism on Dewey's school curriculum. Finally, we draw some conclusions.

The appeal to method

It is almost commonplace to say that classical pragmatists have conceded (even with their nuances and differences) a crucial relevance to the results of scientific work (Bernstein, 2010). Dewey, in particular, was categorical with regard to this. In *How We Think* (here in after HWT)

he defends and promotes what he calls an "experimental method" (MW 6, pp. 259-300), a "scientific method for experimentation" (MW 6, p. 300), "experimental way of thinking" (MW 6, p. 299) or alternatively "active or experimental method" (MW 6, pp. 297-8). This way of conceiving the question is for Dewey an indispensable element in defining intelligence, both at its most basic, practical, or ordinary level, and at the sophisticated level of scientific research. Although HWT is not the only text where Dewey appeals to the scientific method, it is the most characteristic due to its influential receptions in American formal education. These can be exemplified by two extremes: on the one hand the reception, linked to the "Chicago General Science Movement". It is an educational branch which Dewey himself contributed to found, devoted to introducing high school and college students to concepts of scientific *praxis*. Chronologically was the first to have an impact on the North American school environment.² On the other hand, HWT was a foundational text for the *Critical Thinking* movement (initiated in the 1970's), with an impact on the United States and Canada, which aimed to introduce elementary and high school students to the practice of argumentation, rescuing the Deweyan aspiration to avoid any dogmatic and unreflective belief (see Johnson, 2012). Of these two positions, the first contributed to associate Dewey with the profile of a scientist-educator interested in conveying a scientific method. For its part, *Critical Thinking* movement,

² The "General Science Movement in Secondary Education (which) was developed and promoted by an emerging class of professional educators who sought to offer a version of science that they believed would both excite public interest and prove useful in the everyday lives of the masses of students streaming into the rapidly expanding institution of secondary education" (Rudolph, 2005, p. 353). This led to the proliferation, especially from the second decade of the twentieth century, of General Science courses, first for university entrance exams and then for high school. The historian of American education, John Rudolph, describes the scope of this movement, particularly in Chicago, and he places *take* as a key text of the movement "The impact of *How We Think* -he holds- on the thinking and practices of the educational community was significant. In December 1910, for example, the Central Association of Science and Mathematics Teachers adopted a resolution calling for "problem solving" to become the central concern of science education" (p. 373, footnote 42).

though it did a much more charitable reading of HWT, left unaddressed aspects related to practical teaching skills, which Dewey considered crucial to his pedagogical proposal. Finally, regarding the impact of this work on the studies about the pragmatist tradition, Rorty places it as one of the central reference points against a linguistic pragmatist or a “Pragmatism without Method” (1983) (LW 8,1933, pp. x-xviii; Rorty,1991, p.35, n.30).

In HWT Dewey offers two definitions of the experimental method, and both arise from the contrast with what he calls the “empirical method” of thinking, which consists in the mere recognition of the conjunction of two regular events (MW 6, p. 297).³ Firstly, this also called “empirical thinking” is introduced through the following example: “A says, “It will probably rain tomorrow.” B asks, “Why do you think so?” and A replies, “Because the sky was lowering at sunset.”” (MW 6, p. 293). The mere conjunction of an overcast sky in a certain cardinal point with the fact of rain, and the previous repeated confirmation of the results of such a coincidence, legitimize as correct the conclusion that tomorrow it is going to rain. However, despite being an inductively valid conclusion, this way of thinking has a shortcoming: beyond the mere conjunction it cannot explain why it is going to rain. In Dewey’s words:

He (who reasons this way) does not perceive any *connection* between the appearance of the sky and coming rain; he is not aware of any continuity in the facts themselves—any law or principle, as we usually say (MW 6, p. 293).

Though he acknowledges in 1910 that “Our beliefs about human nature in individuals (psychology) and in masses (sociology) are still very largely

of a purely empirical sort” (MW 6, p. 294) the predominance of this kind of thinking corresponds to social practices prior to the scientific revolution of Modernity. Among further shortcomings of the empirical method are the habits that promotes: “Mental inertia, laziness, unjustifiable conservatism” (MW 6, p. 297). These habits in an educational context will be considered undesirable effects to be avoided by «critical thinking» (MW 6, pp. 238, 244) whose fostering articulates HWT. The exposition of the empirical method as a tendency implies that partly it is a practice given by nature. However, the social milieu contributes to promote those effects. Considering this, critical thinking involves discouraging “Tendencies Needing Constant Regulation” (our emphasis) (MW 6, p. 196). The role of education arises here, precisely, to contribute to such regulation in order to avoid empirical method.⁴

Reflective thought, for its part, requires the application of the experimental method to students’ diverse interests, which should be taken into account and nurtured by teachers. In the prologue to HWT Dewey anticipates this:

[T]he native and unspoiled attitude of childhood, marked by ardent curiosity, fertile imagination, and love of experimental inquiry, is near, very near, to the attitude of the scientific mind. (MW 6, p. 179)

In contrast to the empirical method, the experimental method aims at capturing “a comprehensive fact”:

Scientific method replaces the repeated conjunction or coincidence of separate facts by discovery of a single comprehensive fact, effecting this replacement by *breaking up the coarse or gross facts of observation into a number of minuter processes not directly accessible to perception.* (MW 6, p. 296, in italics in the original).

³ “Belief” is one of the key terms of the pragmatist vocabulary. From Peirce’s foundational text “The Fixation of Beliefs” (1877), through James’ “The Will to Believe” (1896), to Dewey’s “Theory of Valuation” (1939), the three main exponents of classical pragmatism referred to it in detail. In this respect, a similar path is followed by the theorizations of Peirce’s and Dewey’s, who replace “belief” as a basic concept of their philosophies (throughout the development of their works) by other terms, due to its unassailable mentalistic character, extremely difficult to resignify. It is beyond the scope of this article to explore, even briefly, this issue.

⁴ Dewey relies here on the analysis by John Locke and Francis Bacon to point out “the main sources of error in reaching beliefs” (MW 6, p. 198). In both cases, these sources are related to the social milieu and at the same time it is taken for granted that education should promote actions to avoid such tendencies. From this, however, it does not follow that Dewey defends a Modern conception of method, as we will see throughout this essay.

Dewey accounts for this definition by appealing to a contrast. It is an observable fact that, if placed at certain height above sea level, a water pump stops working. A neophyte (following the empirical method) reports that water rises by “suction” until the pump reaches certain height, and he concludes that above that level water does not continue rising. On the other hand, a specialist—in line with an experimental spirit—breaks down the situation into “data” and poses the idea that lack of suction at a certain height is not necessarily an “anomaly” but a “variation in the conditions” under which the suction pump works. As a consequence of that, the latter can “progress”. The specialist when faced with a variation in the conditions can still offer an explanation for what he/she is experiencing. Such explanation would not be possible through the empirical method since it is based on previous conjunctions of facts, not tolerating variation or novelty as in this case of the pump that, as a product of a rise in the sea level, stops working and pumping normally (MW 6, p. 297)

It is no coincidence, then, that the second definition of experimental method depends on the ideas of “analysis” and “synthesis”. Dewey holds: “(E)xperimental thinking, or scientific reasoning, is thus a conjoint process of *analysis and synthesis*, or, in less technical language, of discrimination and assimilation or identification” (MW 6, p. 299, in italics in the original). This scientific habit of thinking aims to provide a “clue of unity” (MW 6, p. 180) to organize formal learning. This appeal to a “centralizing factor” (id) was based on Dewey’s years of experience at the University of Chicago Laboratory School. This way of associating method with education is a clear example of a general conviction: scientific method should be applied to solve practical problems in ordinary life⁵. This appeal is a constant in

important subsequent works by Dewey, such as *Democracy and Education* (1916) (e.g. MW 9, p. 5), and *The Reconstruction in Philosophy* (1920) (1993, e.g. p. 101), in the latter case often preceded by the qualification of “new method”. This treatment of method acquired a very different connotation in the reception of HWT related to General Teaching of Science. The idea held by Dewey involved a continuity between the knowledge proper to everyday life and scientific knowledge. Currently, on the other hand, the scientific method alludes to an exceptional, abstract, and privileged way of thinking (typical to expert judgments mostly different from ordinary ways of reasoning). That exceptional way does not have a correspondence in scientific practice although it does hold a certain “fascination” (Cowles, 2020, p. 2). Following Cowles’ recent analysis in *The Scientific Method*, we can call this an exceptional approach to “the myth” of the scientific method according to which it is “[...] a simple set of steps that binds everything called “science” together” (Cowles, 2020, p. 1). The core thesis of Cowles’ book is precisely that the idea of method, which in the nineteenth century was enriched by the reception of evolutionism (including the reception within pragmatism), was replaced by, or slid to this latter conception (Cowles, 2020, pp. 1-3).

In that slippage, as Cowles shows, the reception of HWT by the educational system resulted in a distortion of Dewey’s pedagogical conception. In other words, HWT was used as a teaching text for the scientific method (in its mythical version). Thus, an enumeration where Dewey, in fact, reconstructs the process of inquiry, was taken under the idea of “a complete act of thinking” (id 237), and it was arbitrarily associated with a universal operating rule for scientific knowledge. The latter is something that Dewey decidedly did not intend (Cowles, 2020, pp. 1-2). The enumeration is the following:

- (i) a felt difficulty; (ii) its identification and definition; (iii) suggestion of its possible solution; (iv)

⁵ This conviction appears recurrently in Dewey’s work. Just to name two examples, this can be seen in “*The Need for a Recovery of Philosophy*” (MW10, p. 16) and *The Reconstruction of Philosophy* (1920) (1993, p. 101).

development through reason of the implications of the suggestion; (iv) further observation and experimentation leading to its acceptance or rejection, i.e., to the conclusion of belief or disbelief (MW 6, p. 237).

This paragraph pretends to be a recapitulation of the well-known Deweyan process of inquiry and even it could be taken as a reformulation of the pragmatist conception of belief. This last attribution comes up from the use of the notions like “habit”, “problem”, and “control” (referring to action) in Dewey’s development that is continuing with the treatment of action and thought by Peirce and James. Nonetheless this enumeration helped to fuel the “myth” of the scientific method which has not lost its relevance at present. However, attending to the HWT project, the result of its consolidation was the separation between scientific and ordinary reasoning. Cowles contributes to point out that this separation made invisible the contribution of Darwinian evolutionism (as the revolutionary thought matrix of the time) to the conception of mind and knowledge.

Evolutionism is an insight to understand Dewey’s *permanent* need to appeal to method. Cowles wants to retrieve the bearings of that influence which, though quite evident from Dewey’s texts, tends to be left. On the basis of this contribution, it is our interest to underline the incidence of the method presented in response to the demands of the educational theory. For that purpose, let us note some points of evolutionism: first of all, at the end of the nineteenth century there was a wide influence of Darwin’s ideas on the post-Civil War American intellectual climate. In this context, debates arise from the publishing of *On the Origins of Species* (1859) which paved the way for the development of an experimental view of nature and a naturalization (so to call it) of both the research objects of various disciplines and of the scientific practice itself (Cowles, 2020).⁶

⁶ In the final paragraphs of his book and to summarize this process Cowles speaks in terms of a “natu-

Dewey came to be interested in this change, to the point of devoting an article to expose the implications of Darwinism for philosophical reflection (“The Influence of Darwinism on Philosophy”, 1909), where he places Darwin’s ideas as “latest scientific achievement” of a series oriented “to question the classic philosophy of nature and of knowledge” (MW 4, p.7). We could appreciate the scope of evolutionism “in laying hands upon the sacred ark of absolute permanency, in treating the forms that had been regarded as types of fixity and perfection as originating and passing away.” (MW 4, p.3) This achievement allowed something transcendental for the interests of Dewey: to transpose from biology an experimental scheme to think about various human issues (psychological, educational, moral and political).⁷ When Dewey describes this broadening, he refers to the “new scientific method” or “new logic” as a way of approaching research now also focused on human affairs.

The idea of evolution captures Dewey’s interest mainly because it allows to question, from a science perspective, a certain conception of nature as eternal and immutable. At the same time, Dewey appeals to the idea of experimental method to understand two more questions from a novel perspective: on the one hand intelligence or thought, situating the mind as an evolving organ; on the other hand, knowledge as the effect of the success of theories in the intervention on the environment. In anticipating his study on the way in which the notion of method evolved between 1830 and 1910 Cowles highlights these three points in the following paragraph:

Before any of this began, before “science” was a tool for thinking, the term was closer to something like knowledge. That is, the term signaled more content than process, an accumulation of facts and theories you could almost point to.

ralization of science” as the effect of evolutionism on science (Cowles, 2020, p. 267).

⁷ The paragraph by Dewey that we quoted continues as follows: “*The Origin of Species* introduced a mode of thinking that in the end was bound to transform the logic of knowledge, and hence the treatment of morals, politics and religion.” (Dewey, MW 4, p.3).

This stable vision soon fell apart, as science went from meaning the products of mental work to the mental work itself. This is how science came to seem less like knowledge, a category that was (and is) of little use to psychologists, and more like thinking—an embodied, organic, measurable activity. Because the sciences of mind zoomed in on such activities in the nineteenth century, and because they often did so in the language of evolutionary theory, scientific thinking came to seem more and more *adaptive*. *That is, it took on the qualities of natural selection as that account was applied to studying minds. As theories of mind changed, so did methodology. This intertwining of evolution and experiment, the back-and-forth between accounts of mental adaptation and scientific method, played out on cultural and cognitive levels at once* (Cowles, 2020, pp. 6-7 our emphasis, except for “adaptive”).

A year earlier, in “The Bearings of Pragmatism Upon Education” (1908-1909), Dewey had already stated that Darwin’s evolutionism allows us to think of the mind as an “*an instrument or organ of successful action*” (MW 4, p. 180, in italics in the original) and of knowledge as a tool rather than a means of representation⁸. In Dewey’s interest in practical affairs, the education of his time could be seriously modified in the light of this Darwinian milestone. He sustains that every educational conception depends on a notion of mind that articulates it. In this regard, he says:

[s]ince one of the main offices of education is the training of mind—since, indeed, this is the only office of education when we consider mind in its organic connections with character—a *changed view of the nature and purpose of mind carries with it a very great change in educational ideas and practices*. (MW 4, p. 182, our emphasis).

The various notions of mind (we could say, broadly speaking, anthropological perspectives) underlying education-

al practices had an impact on social division. In fact, the two prevailing conceptions of the mind in Modernity had practical implications for education. Thus, for example, while empiricism fostered an education tied to manual labour for the vast majority of the popular classes, rationalism encouraged a division of labour between intellectual and practical work, considering “culture” as pure knowledge, independent of experience and action. In contrast to these two approaches, evolutionism entailed as a practical consequence an active learning not falling into dichotomies such as the sharp division between manual and intellectual labour.

Dewey understands that and given that his social milieu pose other challenges to education, evolutionism allows elaborating an appropriate view of the educational practices. Since the mind is an *evolutionary* organ, and knowledge or theories are instruments of it, among the advantages that we could enumerate of democracy, as a way of life, is that it consolidates a system whose experimental structure fits mind development or evolution.

After offering this overview of the experimental method in *How We Think*, there are three aspects that we consider important to highlight: 1) Dewey expounded an idea of method which is in line with his idea of inquiry and overall with pragmatist conception of belief; 2) in that exposition evolutionism has a remarkable influence, to the point of consolidating the idea of experimental method; 3) the reception of *How We Think* within *General Science Movement*—perhaps initiating a series of unfortunate pedagogical receptions of Dewey—distorted aspects of his pedagogy and fuelled the myth of the scientific method. Attending to these three points, we will now address Rorty’s critical reconstruction of this issue in order to examine the scope of his objections and to ponder to what extent he disagrees with Dewey in his criticism of the idea of the scientific method once we highlight similarities and differences between Dewey’s and Rorty’s educational conceptions.

⁸ In this text, moreover, for the first time Dewey explicitly ascribes himself to pragmatism. In his words: “Now the pragmatic view of mind and knowledge [...] regards mind as a development and lays a great stress upon the relation between organism and the environment. But it regards the evolution of mind as a growth out of the constant tendency of life to sustain and fulfill its own functions through subordinating environment to itself rather than by passively accommodating itself to a coercion working from without. It does not regard intelligence, therefore, as merely a result of evolution, but as also a factor in guiding the evolutionary process; for it regards intelligence as an evolution of the functions of life to the point at which they can be performed most effectively. (MW 4, p. 180).

Rorty and his reading of *How We Think*

Richard Rorty's criticism of Dewey's experimentalism already appears in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (1979), in the form of a generalized distrust of any claim to a privileged access to knowledge.⁹ In this work Rorty relates the adoption of a privileged method of investigation to one of the expressions in which philosophy presents itself as a "mirror of reality":

Philosophy as a discipline capable of giving us a "right method of seeking truth" depends upon finding some permanent neutral framework of all possible inquiry (...). The mind as Mirror of Nature was the Cartesian tradition's response to the need for such a framework (Rorty 1979, pp. 211-212).

However, his objections against the "exaltation of scientific method" (Rorty 1986, 17 footnote 30) are developed years later. They are concentrated in two 80s articles ("Pragmatism without Method" (1983) and "Is Science a Natural Kind?" (1988)) on the one hand and more specifically in the introduction to the second edition of *How We Think* (1933) (LW 8, 1933 (1986), pp. x-xviii) on the other¹⁰.

Our general aim is to argue that Rorty's criticism emerges from not distinguishing in Dewey's approach to experimentalism two different aspects: 1) the criticism of the myth of the scientific method (an issue that Rorty and Dewey definitively share) and 2) Dewey's anthropological conception that includes a vindication to an experimental method. Far from being a nomenclature issue, the appeal to an experimental method that Dewey highlights and Rorty puts aside, makes room for a non-metaphysical conception where both the mind and knowledge are the result of interactions with specific circumstances or situations. Dewey and Rorty share a criticism on foundationalism and a naturalistic way of conceiving mind and

knowledge.¹¹ However, Rorty's rejection of this experimental method can be challenged if we take into consideration the links between method, education, and evolutionism that Cowles offers. If Rorty would consider these links (above all the role of educational ideas in Dewey's enthusiasm for Darwinism) he could accept that in Dewey's perspective experimental method is a naturalistic way of talking about the mind and knowledge.

According to Rorty, the appeal to method is an antiquated feature of Dewey, which ultimately has nothing to do with confidence in scientific inquiry. In the introduction to the first volume of his *Philosophical Writings* he states:

I took the line that the scientific, method-worshipping side of Dewey, his constant exaltation of something called "the scientific method," was an unfortunate legacy of Dewey's youth, a youth spent worrying about the warfare between science and theology. (1991, p. 17, footnote 30).¹²

This deep division in the reading of Dewey, together with considerations about the usefulness of an idea of method in science delimit two key aspects of Rorty's reading: first, a contrast is posed between hermeneutic strategies. A dilemma arises on wheth-

¹¹ What the topic of myth of scientific method comes down to, for Rorty (1982b), as he points out in "Method, Social Science, and Social Hope", is that "epistemologically-centered philosophy has wanted notions of 'method' and 'rationality' which signify more than good epistemic manners, notions which describe the way in which the mind in naturally fitted to learn Nature's Own Language" (195).

¹²This interpretative decision of Rorty's takes on such a dimension that it is the axis of radical differences with Sydney Hook (1902-1989) regarding the heritage of Dewey's philosophy. For Rorty, a contrast between his own version of Dewey and that of Hook's expresses two opposing strands regarding how to understand Dewey. Rorty himself comments that Hook described his version of Dewey as "nietzscheanized" and "irrational". That is to say, the reproach to Rorty was not only that of not being faithful to the master but also that of misrepresenting him. For his part, Rorty admits that Hook's reading is in line with the interests set forth by Dewey himself, although he considers that nowadays insisting on these ideas is useless. Though Rorty himself acknowledges that "There would have been a lot to say on both sides" (id), the "preliminary skirmishes" that he offers us in his introduction to *How We Think* allow us to understand its standpoint on the link between method and pragmatism, even if this is limited by its preliminary character, which is acknowledged by the neopragmatist philosopher (Rorty 1991, p. 17, footnote 30).

⁹ As we shall see below, it is inappropriate to argue that Dewey believes that there is an exceptional method attributable to the sciences (and in contrast to ordinary thinking) which is a pattern or model of how to reason.

¹⁰Dewey, LW 8, 1933.

er it is appropriate to adopt certain coherence in the face of current problems and, in its name, to discard some features of an author's thought, as Rorty does with Dewey. Or, on the other hand, whether the best alternative is to rehabilitate an author's philosophy without discarding any of its elements (e.g., the idea of method). It goes beyond the scope of this paper to resolve this metaphilosophical contrast or, in other words, this contrast between ways of understanding philosophy or of doing philosophical exegesis.¹³

It is possible to question Rorty's own judgment independently of this general hermeneutical doubt. From what we argued above, the question of method raises a second question as to whether such an appeal is a *necessary* feature of Dewey's pragmatism on the one hand and the extent of this commitment, on the other. The problematic point made by Rorty is that the appeal to method pulls in a direction contrary to the pragmatist conception of mind and knowledge. Is Rorty indeed, right?

The core of the discussion is the following: with the appeal to method Dewey would be placing—in a spirit contrary to pragmatism—philosophy as a privileged point of view. Rorty has an explanation for this point that is charitable to Dewey: he believes that this ambiguity is a consequence of an excess in the role assigned to philosophy as a product of that “legacy of youth” (where Dewey needed to emphasize the role of philosophy and science vis-à-vis theology).

In contrast to this, we believe it is possible to challenge this conclusion by attending to the role of educational reflection in Dewey's pragmatism. Thus, in no way could the appeal to method in Deweyan philosophy be deemed unnecessary without partly devaluing one of its most original aspects, namely, its anthropological conception. This allows us to account for how

we acquire beliefs and adopt cognitive and practical attitudes, while avoiding certain habits that hinder knowledge or successful and controlled action in the practical realm. Dewey sees this anthropology as having fundamental implications for education. Rorty does not seem to consider either the weight of this anthropological conception or its incidence in the educational sphere. On the contrary, he acknowledges in general the weight of evolutionism in Dewey's philosophy. Our point, however, is that he does not link this incidence with his interests in educational reflection, where method occupies an explanatory role as the *rationale* of a conception of teaching (i.e. “reflective thinking”).

Rorty's argument, for his part, is inscribed into Dewey's exegesis. He has explicitly pointed out that, his introduction to volume 8 of the *Later Works*—which includes *How We Think*, in the second edition of 1933—is the central reference for his critique of Dewey's experimentalism (Rorty 1991, p. 17, footnote 30). This critique is the focus of discussions with Sidney Hook in “Pragmatism without Method” (Rorty, 1983) about the scope of pragmatist philosophy. Rorty proposes a pragmatism *without method*. On the contrary, Hook defends pragmatism *with method* in the spite of a naturalism in the antipodes of Rorty. Both intend to rehabilitate a certain legacy of Dewey.

One prominent edge of Rorty's interpretation is that the Deweyan conception of method would express “[t]he tension between pragmatism's conception of inquiry (in any sphere, not just in philosophy) as a response to particular historical circumstances, and the traditional conception of inquiry as the discovery of eternal “objective” truths”, on the other (*LW* 8, p. x). This tension is in turn fuelled—he argues—by a practical tension concerning the “two public images” of Dewey: the image of an activist for social reformation on the one hand and of an allegedly neutral philosopher who makes contributions to various scientific disciplines on the other (id).

In Rorty's argumentation, this tension appears in the following way: he underlies a certain lack of definition

¹³ Dewey himself would align with Rorty regarding how to read or approach philosophical tradition see (*MW* 12, pp. 109-109).

with respect to Dewey's own criterion for assessing Modernity. We know that Dewey criticized "The spectator theory of knowing" (in which) thought was viewed as an exercise of a "reason" independent of the body, which by means of purely logical operations attained truth" (*LW 4*, p. 195). This position can clearly be traced back to Descartes and to a certain modern conception of knowledge as the search for a method to guarantee knowledge rather than as a reflection on our beliefs, our ways of acting in experience, or of organizing ourselves in community (as it is the case of the epistemological reflections by Dewey's and classical pragmatists).

But, the idea of a method for accessing the truth is indebted to that classical epistemological view which can be related to the myth of the scientific method pointed out by Cowles. Even if the attempt to offer a method by both rationalist and empiricist thinkers cannot be considered a simplification entirely analogous to the myth of the scientific method, the modern method (like the myth of the scientific method) is presented as a rule which guarantees knowledge in an abstract way. It also differs from the idea of the experimental method as it emerges in *How We Think* by its sensitivity to a contingent view of nature and knowledge. Thus, when Rorty attributes to Dewey the modern idea of method, it is worth showing, following Cowles, that only through a forced simplification of *How We Think* can that mythical notion be attributed to that text.

In Rorty's favor we can argue that Dewey has in good consideration the ideas of some modern thinkers, particularly those related to erroneous ways of reaching beliefs (*MW 6*, pp.199-201). This explains the exaltation of the seventeenth century on a par with the defense of method. Likewise, the confusion into which Rorty falls is still based to some extent on Dewey's own claims. A certain oscillation is palpable in the text, which is well described when he says:

[s]ometimes it seems as if Dewey is telling us that the seventeenth century discovered not only the true layout of the solar system and the laws of

motion but a new method of inquiry, one with spectacular advantages over previous methods. Dewey recommends that we try this method out in areas where it has not been previously applied—that we "generalize the experimental side of natural science into a logical method which is applicable to the interpretation and treatment of social phenomena. When Dewey writes in this vein, it sounds as if he were saying "All of us, no matter whether we would prefer a more religious or a more secular culture, or whether we are politically radical or politically conservative, naturally want to use the best possible tools in our work. The method discovered in the seventeenth century is a better, unfortunately neglected, tool." (*LW 8*, p. xii).

When taking for granted that Dewey upholds the "myth of the scientific method", Rorty assumes that this contrasts sharply with Dewey's advocacy of "reflective thinking" (*MW 6*, p. 245):

What Dewey describes as "reflective thinking" sometimes sounds like something everybody does quite naturally, something which is the common property of the ancients and the moderns, and of any reasonably literate and articulate person, no matter what his or her persuasion. But sometimes, particularly when Dewey is comparing this sort of thinking invidiously with "intellectualism" and "rationalism", reflective thinking sounds like something quite particular, something which the moderns do more of than the ancients did, something more commonly found among laboratory scientists than among medieval schoolmen, and more prevalent among liberals than among conservatives (*LW 8*, pp. xiii).

This tension is a "real problem" (*LW 8*, p. xiv). In fact, Dewey would be aware of it since he offers something halfway between "a well-defined procedure—a method in the sense of a set of directions for what to do next, something like a recipe—and a mere recommendation to be open-minded, undogmatic, critical, and experimental" (p. xiii). Such is the moral, according to Rorty, of *How We Think*.¹⁴ After making clear that the obsession for de-

¹⁴ Rorty adds that the same objective motivates *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry* (*LW 12*, 1938). It is beyond the scope of the present article to deal with this text in detail, but it is worth mentioning that there are no substantive variations between the experimentalist view of *How We Think* and the one presented in *Logic*. However, there is an important nuance: in *Logic* Dewey defends an idea of inquiry that has a direct impact on

limiting critical thinking does not annul some important considerations on Modernity (even when these are not enough to support the appeal to a method), Rorty gives his final assessment on the origin and maintenance of this sort of ambiguity in Dewey. He therefore points to a general hermeneutical appreciation:

That attempt (i.e. offering a general method or procedure) should be viewed as an unfortunate aftereffect of the nineteenth-century philosophical vocabularies on which Dewey was raised, vocabularies which suggested that “the nature of judgment” or “of reasoning” or “of thought” or “of science” were suitable topics for “philosophical research.” Dewey did a great deal to break up these vocabularies, and thus to make obsolete the idea of a discrete, permanent, range of problems which formed the distinctive subject-matter of a discipline called “philosophy” (or, for that matter, of one called “psychology”). But, like all of us, he could not question all his beliefs at once (LW 8, pp. xvii, xviii).

Summing up: the appeal to method expresses a tension between two opposing ways of understanding inquiry (this tension is in turn sustained by Dewey’s inability to lay out his social commitment in a framework –or “vocabulary,” to use the Rortyan term– that demands a certain neutrality). Rorty provides a framework to mitigate the impact of this critique by arguing that the appeal to method is characteristic of a nineteenth-century vocabulary that Dewey has not yet been able to question in the early twentieth century. This argument is accompanied

the notion of method. Specifically, he denies that there are *a priori* criteria (i.e. external to the research context) for assessing knowledge. Inquiry is, according to Dewey, a process within which epistemic norms are adjusted and eventually challenged. In line with scientific *practice*, research could be characterized as a “self-corrective process” (LW, 12, 13). On the basis of this conception Dewey questions traditional epistemology for detaching research from a context and proposing abstract norms of epistemic evaluation. Richard Bernstein has pointed out that this argument contributes to the famous Deweyan critique of epistemic foundationalism (Bernstein, 2010: 269). Attending to this reading, it is difficult to grant Rorty his interpretation of Dewey’s defence of method as appealing to a set of rules/ external to every investigative process which are ideal at one point, in line with the Cartesian conviction of a set of rules for directing the mind. Although it is true that Dewey traces a genealogy of method and situates its emergence in Modernity (pointing to Bacon as one of its cultists) (for instance in *Reconstruction in Philosophy*) it is no less true that in his description of method he always insists on the need to think in an experimental context where the norms are permanently self-correcting.

by biographical consideration of the two public figures before whom Dewey himself struggles. But it is above all because of the argument (which assumes a hermeneutical position) that Rorty has no qualms about dissociating certain pragmatist commitments of Dewey, such as his conception of inquiry –which operates behind his idea of method– at the same time as the anthropological conception (linked to evolutionism) of the appeal to method.

In this approach to the tension pointed out by Rorty, first, there is no reference to the links between method and education, and method and evolutionism, not to mention, secondly, that there are few considerations in line with an educational reflection. Both issues prevent Rorty from appreciating the implications of the notion of method in *How We Think*. Although these omissions are connected to Rorty’s metaphilosophical commitments, we are interested in emphasizing that his bias responds to his own educational conception. Educational reflection in Rorty, as Stefano Oliverio argues, is “suspended between the lack of a focused thematization and the recurrence of the topic in his works” (Oliverio, 2020, p. 2).

Two educational conceptions within pragmatism.

In contrast to Dewey, Rorty never has been considered a philosopher of education nor an educator. However, it’s worth mentioning a broader educative project in Rorty’s pragmatism going back to *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (1979). In his celebrated work, Rorty aligns himself with the humanistic tradition in education (whose main representative is Hans-Georg Gadamer) which advocates for the “[...] attempt to place objectivity, rationality, and normal inquiry within the larger picture of our need to be educated and edified” (PMN, 363). Rorty’s emphasis on contingency seeks to challenge the philosophical and common sense view according to which human beings have fixed essences by promoting a romantic image of the self-creative individual. Drawing on this view, Rorty calls to reconstruct philosophy through “redescription”,

that is, “[...] substituting the notion of *Bildung* (edification, self-formation) for that of ‘knowledge’ as the goal of thinking” (PMN, 359); later Rorty is going to develop the idea of vocabularies as the object of that redescription. This broader project is specified in one of his educational writings dedicated to university education (i.e. “Hermeneutics, General Studies and Teaching” (1982)) where he openly links ‘edification’ with the Deweyan idea of ‘growth’ (MW 9, pp. 46): he urges us to see “[...] the goal of inquiry and of life not as getting in touch with something which exists independently of ourselves, but as *Bildung*, self-formation, what Dewey liked simply to call ‘growth’” (Rorty, 1982 p. 3).

Strictly speaking, Rorty devotes a few texts to education (Rorty, 1982, 1990, 1990b, 1999; Rorty, R., & Ghiraldelli, P., Jr. 2008) and this sampling of writings offers some pedagogical guidelines that allow us to infer certain distinctive characteristics of how a pedagogy should be oriented, from primary schooling levels to higher education. Ramón Del Castillo (2014) summarizes Rorty’s educational tenets as follows:

For Rorty, education, from elementary school to higher education, should focus on the development of two impulses: on the one hand, that of sociability, and on the other, that of individuality. The former is based on the inculcation of common values and virtues such as solidarity, loyalty, and hope. The latter impulse, on the other hand, has to do with the inculcation of self-love, with the desire for freedom, and taste. (Del Castillo, p. 85).

This cluster of educational writings promotes at least three theses: i) educational purposes mark a kind of contrast between lower (primary and secondary) education and higher education; ii) these purposes draw a sentimental education focused on promoting certain feelings and the identification with others throughout imagination as a means to guarantee a democratic *ethos*; iii) the relevancy of linguistic education is twofold. On the one hand education should be oriented towards the reading of appropriate narratives (particularly novels featuring heroes who express the values to be instilled). On

the other hand, at the highest schooling levels, the aim of education should be oriented to students modifying the vocabulary they use to express themselves in order to question certain aspects of their tradition (a tradition that they have received in a more or less dosed or unquestioned way during schooling) (Del Castillo, 2014, p. 95). Furthermore, Rorty expresses a major concern for the role of university education in contemporary societies that is not as prevalent in Dewey’s educational reflection (Rorty, 2022). In these texts on university education (concretely “Education without Dogma” (1990), “Demonizing the Academy” (1995), and “American Universities and the Hope for Social Justice” (2001)) Rorty criticizes certain leftist political activism that highlights the necessity to preserve social identities instead of pointing out social and economic inequalities.¹⁵

At the core of Rorty’s educational view, we find the concern for fostering a democratic *ethos*. Nonetheless, it starts from a kind of “protectionism” about truth that merits debating to what extent it is appropriate to promote heroic figures or events in order to guarantee values such as hope (ii). Regarding this point, a Rortyan thesis derived from (ii) is that education, as socialization, should not be oriented towards questioning what is considered true, but it should merely transmit it.¹⁶

This controversial engagement can be justified by how Rorty defines ‘sentimental education’. He describes

¹⁵ This without mentioning Rorty’s criticism of a small group (a radical 2 percent) to foster “leftist political indoctrination” (Rorty, 2022 p. 95) by promoting, for instance, “compulsory undergraduate courses that would “sensitize students to cultural differences”” (Rorty, 2022 p. 91). Regarding this, Rorty explains “There is a big difference between offering a tempting smorgasbord of courses designed to help students grasp what the strong have been doing to the weak, and telling them that they must take such courses” (p. 91).

¹⁶ In current social epistemology there is a debate between two factions about the epistemic aims of formal education. One faction affirms that the epistemic aim is truth (to instruct in true beliefs without giving relevance to justification, which is similar to the Rortyan approach regarding socialization) while the other faction states that the end of formal education must be justification (associated in this case with the idea of critical thinking). The absence of references to Dewey by both factions of this debate is striking. See Marabini & Moretti 2020 for further reference to this issue.

it as “[...] manipulating sentiments in such a way that [people] imagine themselves in the shoes of the despised and oppressed” (Rorty 1998, p. 179). Hence sentimental education points to promote both individual and communal growth.¹⁷ On the other hand, it implies a centrality of language as the object of learning (ii and iii). This commitment is a marked point of disagreement for Dewey who understood that for empirical reasons the earlier stages of thinking (school period) require an experimental method of learning: learning by doing in the context of characteristic occupations (communitarian tasks). According to Dewey if we do not promote a practical engagement at the beginning of our education we risk to lose contact with practical interests without mentioning “[I]ack of interest in study, habits of inattention and procrastination, positive aversion to intellectual application, dependence upon sheer memorizing and mechanical routine with only a modicum of understanding” (MW 6, pp. 227,228). Moreover, Dewey mentioned the tendency to oppose technical and humanistic education as an effect of prioritizing the teaching of books over the development of practical skills in school period.

Although Rorty does not say nothing against Dewey’s experimentalism as a method of learning he overlooks Dewey’s experimentalism in terms of a method of learning in the school period. Dewey considered that to focus education on books in earlier stages of thinking was one of the best vices of the traditional school. Even though this Deweyan project has been criticised for many conceptual and empirical reasons, it is still a crucial part of his philosophy of education and is totally absent of Rorty reconstruction. Rorty does not charge Dewey with the idea that his model of education is at odds with the fos-

tering of propositional knowledge neither. However, the appeal to method is a fundamental element in Dewey’s pedagogy if we take seriously the anthropological conception of learning according to which in earlier stages of thinking is convenient to favour practical skills and in a later period it is convenient to foster the learning throughout books (i.e. propositional knowledge). This ambitious idea of Dewey’s pedagogy is presented in HWT as the core of his experimentalism. Regarding other differences, although Dewey, like Rorty, associated education with socialization, the former did not mark a diversification between lower and/or higher education. Considering Deweyan conviction that certain spontaneous tendencies in children resemble the scientific spirit (MW 6, 228), it could be thought that in Dewey that differentiation is unfeasible: education seems to have one and the same trajectory from the first educational levels signed by reflective thinking. For instance, Dewey considers that the principle that educational instruction “out of the needs and opportunities of activities engaged in by the students themselves” (MW 4, p. 187) is realized at the initial level as well as in scientific laboratories, its aim being to introduce it into the rest of the levels (primary and secondary). Despite his reflections on language and the role of judgments and concepts, Dewey does not give this principle the centrality that Rorty does, which can be seen in his emphasis on the notion of “vocabulary” –which he briefly introduces in (Rorty 1989).¹⁸

While Dewey offers an idea of *how* to educate (a way of thinking that is convenient or correct for education), Rorty not only does not take a stand on the matter but, on the contrary, he distrusts the possibility of speaking about a correct way of thinking from a pragmatist approach.¹⁹ This is the most relevant contrast between

¹⁷ As Abellanosa (2020) suggests, for Rorty education also “is a communal enterprise, a process which every individual must be involved in and take responsibility. Truth is shared and every member of the community should be involved in the process of finding it” (100). Additionally, Good and Garrison (2014) note that Dewey’s understanding of democracy likewise rests on the idea that “if we wish to grow, we must interact cooperatively with otherness and difference, not just tolerate them” (p. 62).

¹⁸ On this relevant notion in Rorty’s work see Santelli 2020.

¹⁹ It’s true that Rorty would accept the idea of ‘a correct way of thinking’ if the epistemic status of standards at stake remains internal to inquiry. However, he would not accept that this correct way is a result of a philosophical reflection on the issue (in this case a conception of learning). For Rorty this is to go too far. Rorty emphasized, more emphatically, from the 90’s onwards

each other. The reasons for this reticence are directed in principle to an antiquated form of philosophical projects. We reckon that the difficulty in linking the method with reflective thinking stems partly from this point. Rorty does not disagree with the habits of reflective thinking but considers that these cannot be the product of a philosophical theory on the nature of thought (such as the one that Dewey would supposedly offer). Dewey's metaphilosophical conviction is that pragmatism can be considered as a provider of "working hypothesis in educational theory" (MW 7, p. 329) nonetheless. Rorty (1990b), in a text where he warns against the temptation of philosophizing in education, sustains that "[i]nsofar as philosophy has a social function, it seems to me a therapeutic one - helping people get out from under outdated philosophical ideas" not "the suggestion of new, concrete alternatives" (p. 41). This last role should be carried out by education and politics (and philosophy is neither of both). Such hypotheses on the other hand would not so much make up a pure theory as a contribution within an interdisciplinary weave where empirical contributions both shape and ratify such hypotheses. *How We Think* is a concrete example of such a reflection. To the extent, therefore, that the offering of a working hypothesis can be distinguished from the defence of a pure theory, we believe that this metaphilosophical questioning (i.e. 1) does not fully conform to Dewey's conception. On the other hand, even if an educational reflection such as Rorty's may be composed of general guidelines, these must be carried out in a particular context (i.e. the school). An interesting question arises at this point, namely: Can a pragmatist conception provide tools to expound a conception of

that the role philosophy is mostly "therapeutic" (1990b, p.41). On the other hand, when Dewey promotes a theory of inquiry he is thinking in terms of a kind of experience that provides epistemological value to the process of inquiring. So, even though Rorty shares the Deweyan idea that the epistemic criteria are internal to the process of inquiry, the context of research does not include experience as a relevant future. We would like to thank to one of the anonymous referees for let us note this objection and for his/her helpful comments and suggestions on a previous version of this paper.

learning? Is Rorty's refusal to offer a view in this respect justified beyond whether we ascribe to him an interest in doing so? Whereas Dewey considers that it is necessary to offer a theory of how we think which organizes schooling, Rorty understands that this is an excess (Rorty 1990b). But is there a way to expose this difference that does not place Dewey as committing something like an excess, such is Rorty's accusation? Rorty thinks there is not. We think that there is.²⁰

The defence of method in Dewey corresponds to the attempt to expound a certain anthropological conception strongly tied to evolutionism. This is supported, in the first place, by the analysis done by Cowles, who sees that in the approach to the experimental method of *How We Think* the attempts to transfer to the practical field (education, in this case) the evolutionist view of knowledge and the mind. On the other hand, Dewey himself around the time of *How We Think* justifies his reliance on pragmatism, in fact, by appealing to the experimental view provided by evolutionism. An additional element that we emphasize is the relevance that evolutionism assumes for education, which is consigned in "The Bearings of Pragmatism Upon Education" (1908-1909)" (MW 4, pp. 181-182). This anthropological conception makes it possible to provide a framework for educational theory. Regarding this, Dewey acknowledges not being original. He assumes that just as education depended for decades on

²⁰ This contrast merits further treatment of Richard Rorty's "conversational" conception since it involves a series of points that ultimately converge on the question of what constitutes an epistemic community and what boundaries it establishes. Presumably Rorty's answer on the latter point does not lead to the idea of an ultimate justification or a normativity prior to the internal practices of a community. It is precisely the idea of "method" what causes Rorty's rejection because of this aseptic connotation. However, we believe that following *How We Think* Dewey's pretension does not deviate from Rorty's interests. Where, then, does the difference lie? Why does Rorty not accept the postulation of a method as a way of thinking better than another in order to forge an educational conception? Our hypothesis is that Rorty considers that any serious epistemic practice is acquired during the process of individualization (a moment in which humanistic education is prevalent) which is subsequent to the teaching phase on which Dewey focuses (i.e. at the primary level when experimentalism is the element articulating educational practices). Of course, it would be worthwhile to go deeper into this point in another article (see Waks, 1997).

rationalist and empiricist conceptions of the mental, his time required a different conception which evolutionism fitted. Among the data that demanded a new education stood out the budding democracy, in which Dewey had a special interest. The experimental view in education contributed to a democracy conceived not as a mere regime among others, but as the regime that would allow developing the powers or capabilities of the mind.

Dewey, thus, represents an example of an empirically informed philosophy in which the conceptual task must be supplemented and adjusted by appropriate experimental research (Bernstein, 2010, 23). From this position a general concept of learning can be offered without reverting to the privileged place, well-delimited by Rorty, of an exceptional vocabulary. In the case of an educational theory, Dewey considers that school could work as an experimental laboratory to test different proposals for educational practices based on evolutionary psychology and biology. When he wrote *How We Think* Dewey had already carried out this experimental task for nearly a decade (Martin, 2002: pp. 203-210). To some extent, he configures a naturalism within which the idea of how we think does not appear as a mere speculation but it is based on a recent scientific impact and provides a response to a given social context. For all of the above, in short, it is possible to avoid the Rortyan conclusion that the Deweyan method is nothing more than a secular battering ram against the still influential presence of theology. Instead, method is a contribution to offer a general idea of learning, as a hypothesis, to an educational theory that can be extended and reconfigured in the light of new data.

Two further clarifications should be made about the relationship between Dewey and Rorty. Firstly, Rorty's metaphilosophical views are not necessarily influential in his educational writings. Even though Rorty says that educational reflection should avoid the temptation of Theorizing (with a capital T as philosophy would be the Mother of Sciences or the last word of any val-

id knowledge), there is no implication between Rorty's metaphilosophical ideas and his ideas about educational practices. However, in this section, specific links between Rorty's philosophical project and his educational conception have been pointed out. Secondly, beyond this remarkable differentiation about the appeal to method, we could find points of commonality shared by Dewey and Rorty about democratic education (understood as a general socialization process) and inquiry. We will see that Rorty gives a similar function to a 'democratic culture' than Dewey if we include those similarities that aim to avoid dogmatism and social division. Curiously, this similarity is explained by shared conviction: on the one hand, philosophy can intervene positively in public affairs. Social reform as a concept could get perfectly closer to the conception of "philosophy as cultural politics" that Rorty defended from the 1980s on and which gives title to the fourth volume of his *Philosophical Papers* (2007). Indeed, Rorty understood his commitment to cultural politics as the last step of his effort to reassess the "celebrations of American democracy, naturalism, and social reconstruction" he linked with the "heroic period of Deweyan Pragmatism" (Rorty 1982b, 64, 61). Regarding this, the examples he offers in that last volume of collected papers point out the constructive or positive role he envisioned pragmatist philosophy playing –e.g. "proposals for new roles that men and women might play", "sketches of an ideal community", "social hopes, programs of action, prophecies of a better future", etc. (Rorty 2007 ix,x).²¹

Although Dewey's reformist interest is more far-reaching than Rorty's cultural politics, the truth is that this reformist conviction cannot be reduced to an exceptional or privileged role intended for philosophical research. The difference is that conceptual research in Dewey might go hand in hand with scientific experimentation and aim at an interdisciplinary construction. There is no theory without this empirical and constructive com-

²¹ Koopman (2013), *inter alia*, has emphasized this positive conception of cultural politics.

ponent. The role that Rorty assigns to philosophy is more modest, even without losing sight of its practical impact. If Dewey were willing to give prescriptions without appealing to the scientific background, Rorty's accusation would be better justified. But that is not the case. The only point Rorty could still appeal to is that while having the function of being an empirically informed reflection, the Deweyan notion of philosophy is still very ambitious. On this last point, it would be difficult to think of a Deweyan counter-objection other than the realization that for the purposes of intervening in public spheres theory is necessary as an operational foundation (so to speak) –the idea of “a clue of unity” of the practices (MW 6, p. 180). In the case of education, for instance, it is difficult to conceive of an educational theory that does not consider some kind of grounding along these lines. In “Texts and Lumps” (1985) Rorty vaguely approaches this point by indicating that the insistence on method is based on the confusion between a “ pedagogical device –the device of summarizing the result of the one's own narrative in dense little formulas– and a defence of a method for discovering the truth” (Rorty, 1985, p. 76). Dewey would have subscribed to this idea and would add that the method comes from experimentation in the classroom by paying attention to how students learn. Undoubtedly, he would have had no problem calling ‘method’ to the “summary” in question.

Conclusions

In this paper we have addressed a certain historical-conceptual core that is consolidated in the appeal to method of *How We Think*. Thus, in the first part we have pointed out the links between method and evolutionism and method and education. We have emphasized the way in which Cowles shows the influence of evolutionism in *How We Think*. We have shown that Dewey, in this context, takes care of showing the consequences of pragmatism for education by appealing precisely to this evolutionary

framework. We have also set forth the defence of “reflective thinking” as a result of the delimitation of a way of thinking that arises from the Deweyan conception of inquiry and the pragmatist conception of belief: given certain tendencies and habits that need regulation and attending to the demand for an education for democracy, the appeal to method is a more than possible resource to guide an education within the formal system. In our reconstruction, the influence of Darwinian psychology is a fundamental insight to understand Deweyan educational theory.

In the second part, we have examined Rorty's critical reconstruction of the appeal to method. Faced with the questioning that the exaltation of the scientific method is nothing more than a nineteenth-century sequel of a philosophical scheme, we argued that such a reading is limited by not attending to the two relations specified in the preceding section. In this part, we have complemented Cowles' analysis by reconstructing the educational interests which were visible in Dewey by the time of *How We Think*.

This allowed us to neutralize Rorty's claim that method is a legacy from Dewey's youth. Besides, we argue that this neutralization has consequences for the scope of educational theory by giving rise to two different educational conceptions within the pragmatist tradition. Our critique aimed at questioning Rorty's objections arising from his educational approach: on the one hand (1) the idea that the role of philosophy should be only therapeutic and that a philosophy approach that provides a conception of learning as Dewey does in *How We Think* goes too far. On the other hand, (2) even though Rorty understands Dewey's criticism of certain classical conceptions in epistemology and the Deweyan interconnection between education and democratic culture, his rejection of the epistemic role of experience impedes him from positively valuing Dewey's experimentalism. This, in turn, has two specific consequences: on the one hand, Rorty appropriately rejects the idea of the myth of the scientific method but he considers that a systematic theory on inquiry or learning is an

excess for philosophical rejection. On the other hand, he underestimates experimentalism as a method of learning and this is one fundamental aspect of Deweyan naturalistic philosophy as expressed in *How We Think*.

Finally, the contrast we have presented between Deweyan pedagogy and Rorty's pedagogical guidelines acquires relevance in view of the discussions on how to guide education of our time. At first sight, these demands seem contradictory. On the one hand professionalization of future workers for a system that proposes mastery of increasingly technical and specialized means, but on the other hand without an education that contributes to democracy, a formative instance (perhaps the only one) is lost to avoid dissolution of the public space, of political communication and participation. And these elements are objects demanded by society when the consequences of the economic model of life (growing inequality, environmental impact, authoritarian and/or fascist attitudes channelled in formal democracy, etc.) are exhibited. In the tension between these two postulates there is a question: how to reach a sustainable position without losing sight of the worth-considering aspects of each claim? Following Martha Nussbaum (2012) in the main developed countries an "education for profit" has consolidated, which places technique as a knowledge attached to the material conditions that define social development, but in an unreflective way. In our milieu and at a regional level (south America), what is conceived as 'critical education' is often reluctant to consider the discussion of an interesting sense of an education for work. In this case, the emancipatory factor is given priority in a political key that prioritizes aspirations for change but approaches labour or technical demand with a sometimes unwavering suspicion (De Sousa Santos, 2019). In contrast to this, we understand that Dewey's educational philosophy offered a way of linking democracy and technical development in a sense applicable to our time. The acknowledgement of this link has been defined by Dewey as "radical liberalism" (LW 11, 45) and it represents a sys-

tem that is equidistant from both the bold liberalism of *laissez-faire* (LW 11, pp. 282-288) and the dogmatic doctrines of "Soviet socialism" (LW 9, 91-96). By his side, in his later political writings, Rorty shows a concern for the crucial role that the university could have in making feasible the link between humanistic education and economic development. However, the appeal to method, against this background, is a necessary limit to guarantee a democratic education in the school curriculum that fosters a kind of thinking that allows to sustain the democratic system itself and to deepen it, so that the democratic ideal becomes less of an ideal and more of a reflective *praxis*.

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BOOK REVIEWS

KANT AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE: A REVIEW ESSAY

Kant and Artificial Intelligence

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Walter de Gruyter, 2022

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Pragmatists and Kant

There is a problem that pervades Kant interpretation which needs to be set right. It has to do with the way pragmatists (and others) interpret his view of “necessity,” which is far more subtle and important than the oft-rehearsed formulas drawn from the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* and *The Metaphysics of Morals*—works concerned exclusively with the *form* of the will, not with the will as enacted *empirically*. One assumes (wrongly) that the form of the will subsumes the empirical will, and using the logic of Reason (alone), it does. But there is far more to the logic of action than can be exhausted by the logic of pure practical reason, i.e., those things we can think about relative to action, and the norms governing how we *ought* to think about such matters. Thinking is only one kind of acting, however, and it lacks the power fully to determine our action. We can only say that when we have adhered to the rules that ought to govern our thinking about action, we have a clearer idea of what we should do.

As a pragmatist I am not sympathetic to any claims of necessity in which some sort of logic motivates some sort of claim about how the world (moral, natural or supernatural) *must* be. But neither is Kant sympathetic to such claims, as too many pragmatists forget, or never learned. It is important to remember that Kant gives us the word “pragmatism,” and that his anthropological writings (flawed as they are), as he explicitly says, are empirical and therefore fallible, subject to change over time as we learn more about the human story. The main thing to remember, as that anthropological story unfolds,

is that *ought* still implies *can*. This applies to the norms of thinking as much as it does to the norms of action (thinking is, after all, acting). If I *ought* to think in this way rather than that about the relationship *between* my thinking and my other actions, then I can rest assured that I *can* think about it in one way rather than the alternatives. If I can’t think about, for example, future empirical discoveries that haven’t been made, then there is no force in saying I ought to, or ought to be responsible for forming my will around the universalizability of the maxim taken from such actions.

That brings us to “artificial intelligence,” so called. We are justified, I argue, in updating the empirical side of Kant’s anthropology to address the questions raised by AI. Note that I do not accept this label. It is not “artificial,” if that is supposed to denote “other than natural,” especially in Kant’s sense of nature. Rather, it is a perfect instance of what Kant calls “mechanical” and as such best understood as under the domain of nature. Nor is AI “intelligent” in Kant’s sense of that term. I cannot here go into the details of these matters of how to label, but I can recommend some other writings that illuminate the subject.¹ But with this said, it is clear that we, today, need to think about the implications of LLMs and other mechanisms that go under the label “AI” in ways that do take account of our duties to others and ourselves. I am not a deontologist, but then, in my view, neither was Kant. The story is not as simple as the one told by the last hundred years of duty-ethics. It is not as if pragmatists would advise us to *ignore* the idea of duty.

What, then, is our duty with regard to inquiry, thinking and acting, in the presence of LLMs and these other mechanisms? We must be pragmatic. There we hit something that Kant would have known, since he invented the idea. It seems that if Kant makes something obligatory (for thinking or other actions) but we lack the neces-

¹ See Auxier and Mueller, “Kant, Moral Imagination, and the Pathologies of Reason,” with Laura J. Mueller, in *Studia Philosophica Wratislaviensia*, Vol. XVII, fsc. 4 (2022), pp. 5-27. <https://wuwr.pl/spwr/article/view/14992>.

sary means of performing the act (including thinking the thought), then his own formula of “ought implies can” swoops in to save the day. That principle is categorical for Kant, not hypothetical, as with Hume, and means that the act must be *possible* “under natural conditions” (C1 A548/B576). Please do note that qualifier—under natural conditions. Whatever does this mean?

Unlike most pragmatists, I am not allergic to Kant. Kant is not, however, a communicable disease in a room of philosophers immunized by pragmatism. They don’t think they have to consider his ideas. So I am lonely sometimes, in my infirmity of thinking that pragmatists do and must think about these ideas. Dewey wrote his dissertation on Kant. So did Royce. Peirce is steeped in Kant. Only James, who had no training in the history of philosophy, was allergic, and largely ignorant of this philosophy. It is not good for pragmatists to follow that path. They persist in a misunderstanding shared with analytic philosophers, and born of laziness in reading. The last 120 years of ethics has drawn on senses of “necessity” that collapse a number of important distinctions Kant was using in his deployment of *Notwendigkeit*. It makes him a bit mystifying to read and follow these days, especially in English, where a number of subtleties are lost in translation.

I am pleased to say that the book I want to consider here *Kant and Artificial Intelligence*, edited by Kim and Schönecker is a corrective to these problems, if pragmatists would read it. The editors and contributors on producing an important volume in the long history of philosophical discussions of Kant. As several contributors point out (and I have emphasized above), the idea of artificial intelligence did not exist when Kant was alive, so speculation is unavoidable, and updating the critical system for application to the new problems is obligatory, for our thinking and other actions. However, as they also rightly say, a great deal of what Kant said bears on this topic, and there can be no doubt that Kant’s philosophy has had a huge effect on how the debate on arti-

cial intelligence has unfolded, from Turing to the present. People have used his ideas, but perhaps not in the way pragmatists would and should, due to the unfortunate allergy.

This volume is not bound by the same standards that high-end Kant scholarship must meet, since “getting Kant right” is not a categorical imperative for this kind of inquiry. In order to get to the main business of the book the contributors must draw on their own readings of Kant. Nevertheless, for the sake of clarity we should divide the effort into three kinds of attitudes: (1) there are the applications of Kant which seek to stay within some chosen “accurate” tradition of Kant interpretation, remembering that there are four or five major strains and several minor branches of Kant interpretation. (2) There are those efforts that seek to build outward from Kantian ideas but without any special loyalty to the text or scholarly traditions descending from Kant. These might be called Kantian in spirit but not according to the letter. (3) There are efforts that do not focus on Kant in any special way but rather treat Kantian philosophy as a toolbox for approaching contemporary issues in their own terms, and which therefore do not seek to be even Kantian in spirit. We find all three attitudes in this volume. And perhaps we would find most pragmatists in the third group.

I want to assess these essays on their own terms rather than quarrel with whatever version of Kant they put forward. I don’t want to impose purposes on them that are foreign to their attitude. Yet, I have my own ideas about how to handle Kant on this topic, and also how to approach the philosophical issues of artificial intelligence. It is difficult to set one’s own perspective aside, and so I will include mine instead of pretending to an objectivity I doubt anyone really possesses. As I worked through the volume, I slowly realized that my own views about how both Kant and AI should be handled could not be wholly left out.

Getting Kant Right

Therefore: I should make it clear that as an interpreter of Kant I am a defender of the full architectonic, which means that I regard most English language Kant interpretation as irrelevant to Kant's actual purposes and accomplishments. It also means that I part ways with most pragmatists regarding Kant because I don't think he has been rightly understood in our tradition. The naturalistic and analytic readings descending from Kemp Smith, and bent to the purposes of 20th century logic are, quite simply, not Kant, and even historical interpreters trained in the analytic tradition are usually bad interpreters, since their ideas about logic, truth, knowledge, and the like are almost entirely foreign to Kant's ideas about these topics. Making Kant relevant to or respectable to and by analytic philosophers does not lead to good interpretation. The first generation of pragmatists knew very well not to give way to the logic of Russell and his hoarde of simplifiers. But somewhere in the confusion, the pragmatists lost their understanding of better logic, better epistemology, and better metaphysics than these narrow ideas can provide. Instead of inheriting and improving on Kant, we cut off our faces despite our noses. There are exceptions to this summary, but most of the recent Kant scholars, even some very prominent ones, and nearly all pragmatists are, in my opinion, deeply misguided. Most do not accept the architectonic on its own terms, and make too much of a distinction between Kant's pre- and post-critical thought.

My own reading is closest to Cassirer's, and I regard the critical phase of Kant's thought as more continuous with the pre-critical phase than is typical for English language Kant scholarship. I am impatient with people who don't finish the first *Critique*, which is much of the English-speaking world, and who treat Kant's moral philosophy as a detachable and independent ethical theory, and with those who don't even read the third *Critique*—who don't understand that logic is about judgment, and who oversimplify To understand Kant requires the study of his

own logic, and its differences from contemporaries, such as Christian Wolff and Frederic Castillon. Without this effort, one will never understand the structure of Kant's arguments. He does not employ the logic of the 20th century, and would not use the so-called "mathematical logic" even if he knew it. The idea of divorcing logic from the *act* of judging would make no sense to him, nor would the idea of collapsing all judgment into a simplistic judgment of true or false. Judging is something we do. Judgment is something we *think* about, theorize, as well as do. Yet, Kant was perfectly comfortable with mechanizing our thinking and processes of *describing* our judgment, and he advised pressing that strategy as far as possible, but in no sense can we achieve complete explanations thereby. This relative comfort with mechanization is, of course, relevant to the question of the book, and it does come up. But the limitations Kant places on this strategy carry the day.

Kant says:

Judgment, through its a priori principle of judging nature in terms of possible particular laws of nature, provides nature's supersensible substrate (within as well as outside us) with *determinability by the intellectual power*. But reason, through its a priori practical law, gives this same substrate *determination*. This judgment makes possible the transition from the domain of the concept of nature to that of the concept of freedom. (C3 196 Pluhar translation, emphasis in the original).

In short the things in themselves are *determinable* by our thinking, and our reason, in virtue of its practical powers, can determine for our thinking the noumenal realm made available to us by our postulates of pure practical reason. This means that we are capable of thinking about possible actions (both inside and outside us) as "can"—as possible. Pragmatists need this power as much as anyone—think of Dewey's theory of dramatic rehearsal of actions we might perform, since we cannot think in situations when action must be taken without delay. What Kant is saying is not so different.

This transition from judging to judgment is subjective, because the determination involved is the subject

determining *itself* in the mode of a feeling of liking or not liking, but this power of determination is not limited to judgments that “x is beautiful”(which is only an illustration of reflective judgment), it is a characteristic of all judgments. The reflective judgment is weak, has little influence over action, but it is comprehensive, i.e., inclusive, of the determinate judgments of reason and understanding, and allows us to see each in light of the other—particular causal laws in light of freedom, freedom in light of limiting circumstances in nature.² All of this is importantly relevant to questions of whether mechanized inference is or is not “intelligent.”

What is necessary, here, then, is that we must exercise our reflective judgment in order to have any *purpose* for our actions. The special concept of reflection is purpose, and we legislate the *form* of purpose (subjective, but universal) to our subjective life, including all feeling, by judging in this way. That all actions must be thought of as having a purpose is a requirement of our thinking; in short, it is *necessary*, but in a way that should not trouble pragmatists. Kant says:

This necessity is of a special kind. It is not theoretical objective necessity, allowing us to cognize a priori that everyone *will feel* this liking for an object I call beautiful. Nor is it a practical objective necessity where, through concepts of a pure rational will that serves freely acting beings as a rule, this liking is a necessary consequence of an objective law and means nothing other than that one absolutely (without any further aim) ought to act in a certain way. Rather, as a necessity that is thought in an aesthetic judgment, it can only be called exemplary, i.e., a necessity of the assent of everyone to a judgment that is regarded as an example of a universal rule *that we are unable to state*. Since an aesthetic judgment is not an objective and cognitive one, this necessity cannot be derived from determinate concepts and hence is not apodeictic. Still less can it be inferred from the universality of experience For not only would experience hardly furnish a sufficient amount of evidence for this, but a concept of the necessity of these judgments cannot be based on empirical judgments. (C3 237 Pluhar translation)

² I am drawing on the work of Rudolf Makkreel in this summary of reflective judgment in Kant. See his *Imagination and Interpretation in Kant* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

Kant goes on to argue that this is *hypothetical* necessity (just as Peirce argues), and without it, nothing has a purpose. He carefully argues that we deal with the squirreliness of this ineffability by forming symbols, and that every judgment has a subjective/reflective aspect. There is no avoiding it, we must interpret. In short, Kant refuses to allow subjectivity to be replaced by formalisms, and he holds that judging is situational (particular), fallible, and purposive. It is not mechanical and could never be. It is pre-cognitive, a matter of feeling.

So, without relinquishing necessity, Kant diverts it into a theory of symbol formation and interpretation, and boldly makes the whole of the moral life depend on that theory (C3 sections 58 and 59—the argument that beauty is the symbol of morality). This tells us why we should try to do our duty even when we cannot know exactly what it is. There would be an aesthetic judgment, shared by everyone, that we were trying to do our duty as we understood it. Such a view opens out onto Royce’s ethics of loyalty to loyalty, which I find more satisfying, I must admit.

Updating Kant

Yet, there is value in trying to make Kant into an analytic epistemologist, more as a test of the viability of analytic philosophy than as a measure of Kant. Kant is permanent. Analytic philosophy was a 20th century experiment that became an all-consuming fashion, and is now largely over, in the US, and barren in the other places it is still pursued. It made some contributions to philosophy, but most of them were negative—we now know what happens if we try to turn everything into language (regardless of how broadly, narrowly, or variably language is conceived), and most of those lessons are about dead ends. But they needed to be explored. The narrow and cognitivist interpretations of language have failed, and whatever “intelligence” is, it isn’t *just* language, although it does of course *involve* language, when it comes to human beings. The days of denying that animals are “intelli-

gent” are behind us, fortunately, although the judgment of science and history might run counter to Kant’s expectations on that subject. Thus, and this would not surprise Kant, the fundamental question of artificial intelligence must include pre-cognitive and non-linguistic capacities, or it isn’t “intelligent” in any defensible sense. Along with some contributors to *Kant and Artificial Intelligence*, I sympathize with the enactivists on this issue.

Thus, I want to bring the perspective of an architectonic Kantian enactivist to these essays, for the benefit of pragmatists, while keeping in mind the purposes of these authors, as much as I can. I very much appreciate the first essay, by Tobias Schlicht, for its comprehensiveness and value as a way of becoming oriented to the spread of questions involved in the central issue of the book. For this reason, I will use its structure as the basis of this assessment. Most of what the book says turn out to be special cases of Schlicht’s excellent essay. I will give summaries of the major parts of the book, but most of what I have to say is encapsulated in Schlicht’s helpful contribution.

Schlicht’s View

I find helpful each of Schlicht’s summaries of what AI is, and how Kant has been co-opted or incorporated into the various efforts to say what artificial intelligence is. For example, while it is a bridge too far to say that Kant gave a “functionalist” interpretation of mental activity because he was “agnostic” about the substrate (as we saw above, he wasn’t so very agnostic), it is not absurd to lift some of the functional discussion from the first *Critique* and use it to work at the question of artificial intelligence. Kant was optimistic about the substrate, and anyone who thinks he was needs to read the second *Critique*—those postulates are not tentative. The very definition of Reason depends on a logical proof (in the Kantian sense of “logic”) of the indispensability of Reason for making sense of action, whether in the causal (natural) or the moral (rational) domain. Kant believes we can *have* moral knowledge, even

though we must address ourselves and our judgments to the noumenal realm in order to get it (see determinability and determination above). One cannot explain physical action without making this move, at least within the critical philosophy.

But, as Schlicht rightly points out, there are incredibly important functional descriptions of mental activity in the first *Critique*. I do not think most philosophers of mind grasp what Kant means by “Understanding” (merely how the body, below the level of thinking, must sort out the world of sensation, including space and time, by categorizing it) or how it relates to what he means by “Reason,” which uses Understanding and depends on it, but does not usually consider the limitations Understanding exercises over (especially) theoretical cognition. That is why a critique of pure reason is *needed*—we can theorize things we cannot experience. And we do. Pragmatists hate that. So does Kant.

But Kant’s idea of Understanding maps on to what machines do very closely, and it is indeed the right place in Kant’s philosophy to get a full view of the analogy between mental activity and the processing of digital data. The structural features of understanding are indeed a mechanism (a part of the domain of nature) and (according to Kant) best theorized as subsumed under the causal order. Several authors make this point in the book. And for Kant this very *unfree* process of Understanding presents problems of a sort closely akin to those argued about in the tradition descending from Turing. Thus, one really must do the work that the functionalists have done, both to extend Kant into the present and future, and also to address the philosophical concerns Kant left to us. Getting Kant “right,” in this approach, is not very important, so long as one does not claim that “Kant is a functionalist,” which would be quite wrong. And of course, Schlicht, while discussing the functionalist aspects, says no such thing, and neither does even Dennett, as far as I know. Rather, Schlicht accurately surveys the scholarship on this issue and expresses the appropriate doubts.

Representations?

Moving beyond classical cognitivism to connectionism, we normally find at the center of the discussion the problem of mental representations, as it has haunted philosophy since Descartes, even as Wittgenstein criticized it (and well before that, it was attacked among pragmatists—what Bowne criticized as “picture thinking” as early as 1882, and James cited his criticisms in *Principles of Psychology*). Schlicht does not summarize this criticism of mental representations, and indeed, it really doesn’t come up in the book (and it still finds many able defenders, even a few pragmatists-in-name-only, “pinos”), but it is important to the artificial intelligence debate, so let us pause over it for a moment. The fact that our term “representation” does not exist in German and is conceptually irrelevant to Kant’s philosophy has not prevented people from dragging Kant into this argument, on both sides of the old dualism. The term “Vorstellung” in German is most closely translated as “presentation,” as indeed Pluhar renders it in his translations of the three *Critiques*. There is no “re” in what Kant was describing, no repetition in the mind of what the body experienced, but rather, only an act: presenting, “setting before.”

Much confusion has been created by the inability of English speakers to grasp that there is no “re” in the presentations Kant is talking about, and this is not helped by the fact that the German term “Darstellung” is also translated as “representation” but has a completely different function and meaning than “Vorstellung” in Kant’s philosophy, and actually more closely approaches what many of the 20th century analytic philosophers actually were arguing about. Pluhar translates this term as “exhibition,” and that isn’t a bad rendering. The difference disappears in English. But if our contemporary epistemologists and philosophers of mind go on the trail of this term in Kant’s corpus (and German Kant scholarship), they will quickly realize that it means something quite different to claim that Kant was a “representationalist” than they

have imagined, and when the problem is righted, then something quite profoundly anti-Cartesian arises. That change would require them to rework their interpretations around the powers of reflection and purpose, yielding a hermeneutics of the image and imagination (as Rudolf Makkreel has rightly shown in his many writings on Kant).

Presentations come as schemata for Understanding; exhibitions come as symbols. Both are deliverances of our power of imagination in its varied activities –Kant says it does many other things, not just schematizing and symbolizing, but also synthesis, and other activities. This power is mysterious, “an art concealed in the depths of the human soul.” (C1 A141/B181) He does not have room for a critique of it, or even sufficient knowledge of it to do so. Kant scholars as a group neglect this power, but it is crucial when it comes to so-called AI, that is, mechanical combining (not to be confused with synthesis, which machines cannot do. Synthesis in general is “the result of imagination, a blind but indispensable power of the soul, without which we should have no knowledge whatsoever, but of which we are scarcely ever conscious.” (C1 A78/B103) Imagination runs ahead of sensibility into the supersensible substrate and engages the *determinability* of that substrate –it is an immediate encounter with possibility. And in that engagement, it does not apply laws of Understanding but rather invents and applies laws of its own. That is what symbolization is for Kant. In the genius, imagination also has a “talent for producing something for which no definite rule can be given.” (C3 307) It is creative, original, and (as we saw above) exemplary. It goes without saying, I hope, that mechanized processes cannot do this, and as such, have “no knowledge whatsoever.”

The Major Models for Interpreting “AI”

Schlicht goes right past the old problem of mental representations and dives into the newer account of connec-

tionist processing, providing some valuable history and lesser-known passages from Kant that directly address whether Kant might be reconcilable with the multiple realizability interpretations of artificial intelligence. The connectionist thinkers have seen that the power of images is to be the heart of the matter, and in this they are right, I think. But most (who are not specialists in Kant) think Kant has not much to teach them, and in this they are wrong. Schlicht is not as hesitant about this way of tackling the problem. But here I invoke my earlier point about the “spirit” of Kantianism (with a nod to the irony involved). There are many connectionist models, and a sober thinker has no trouble finding sympathy with at least some of them, but I do not think they are Kantian in spirit. The “attitude” of connectionism, as I call it, is disinclined to make use of many Kantian tools, since they think of him as an arch representationalist. That is a worry about the baggage they bring. More about this shortly.

That brings us to the enactivist model. The deep continuity between life and mind is stressed here, and these philosophers rightly land on Kant’s discussion in the second division of the third *Critique* of the distinction between self-organizing processes and organized beings. The middle course between brute mechanisms and teleology is created there by Kant and (whether intentionally or not) employed by the enactivists to good effect. This approach enables enactivists to take emotion and feeling into account (and any other precognitive process you might care to mention, including the imaginative processes of which we are “scarcely aware”), recognizing the cognitive value of feeling (a point American thinkers have insisted upon since William James). Here I wish that there had been more authors who support this paradigm in the book, and that Schlicht had stressed the work of Jaak Panksepp, Ralph D. Ellis, Sean Gallagher, and others who hold to the importance of emotion and affect in the development of consciousness. I also wish that enactivists themselves would read Susanne Langer, who was the true empirical pioneer of their viewpoint, and who still

has much to contribute, although they don’t know it.

I agree with Varela and others that Kant’s theory stands in need of revision, that it is under-developed, largely due to the state of the science in his day. But also Varela holds that Kant needs some “naturalizing,” and I must agree. The difficulty is that the domain of causal law and the domain of reason are too sharply distinguished from one another in Kant, even if, as we saw, there is a bridge in the determinability and determination of the supersensible substrate (by imagination and perhaps other powers we possess). But that isn’t a very appealing solution to pragmatists. Enactivists will see “law” as a metaphor and “reason(s)” as natural, both of which are borne out by our more advanced science. In short, Kant took important steps toward relieving us of the unnecessary dualism of mind and its freedom versus body and its determinism, but did not solve the problem. Enactivists regard the problem as more or less resolved by a better, and more radical empiricism (in James’s sense) that does not impose categories on real processes, but derives categories descriptively from patterns we discover in our study of ourselves and the world. But enactivists have, of course, a high bar for what will count as artificial intelligence. Machines will have to feel the world and create their consciousness *from it*. That is very close to what Kant describes as the “feeling of life” in the third *Critique*. (C3 204, 277-278) The recurring controversy about the machine at Google that reported being afraid of death touches on this, but the report falls far short of a human or animal fear. I notice that the contributors to this book allow that Kant would not recognize anything we currently have called “AI” as “intelligence.” I agree with them all in this regard.

The turn to predictive processing is a step backward into mechanism from enactivism. Large Language Models and other predictive systems are, if anything, less creative than even parallel processing. It certainly isn’t a model for thinking or brain-processes. It is only the metaphor *du jour*. The brain is not some processing unit apart from the

rest of the body, and should not be conceived as a machine of any kind. It is one of the sub-processes in an organized being. Causal relations do not, as far as we know, exist in nature; they are metonymic strategies (taking the part for the whole) for speaking about nature, not provable relations in the world. To claim they exist as such is neither pragmatic nor Kantian –it is beyond our possible experience to observe a determinate cause of an event. The brain seen as a machine is at best an analogy and a deeply misleading one, if taken literally. However, Kant recommended that we press mechanistic explanations as far as they can be pressed, and he really believed in a domain of causes (in a way few scientists do today); he just didn't believe we can experience them directly. The inheritance of Whitehead and many others who showed that causal talk needed to be de-literalized is too often ignored by people who don't seem to understand that contemporary science requires no notion of causation. And this step forward removes science from Kantian philosophy.

Yet, pressing mechanistic explanations, hypothetically, creates a kind of inquiry in which the *analogy* of machine processing (including the predictive kind) to organic processes may be warranted. (C3 417-418) Several authors in this book recognize this fact and employ it properly. If we manage to solve some problems of "learning" in machines on this analogy, then well and good, but it is important to remember that we don't know *why* these techniques work until we drop the crude analogy to a computer and seek deeper and broader analogies (e.g., to non-local quantum processes). We ask: What is learning *in ourselves* (to which we have no complete answer) and what is the machine doing that has structural analogies? One might as well analogize to the way a plot unfolds in a narrative as analogize to mechanical processes, since the former is more illuminating regarding learning. Predictive processing ignores the deeper concerns, such as judging and judgment, which is not mere selection, and which can only be handled by a subtler logic than most philosophers use these days.

For this reason I was very pleased to see Schlicht stress the *Jaesche Logic*, and would recommend a balancing with the *Dohna-Wundlachen Logic* of Kant. The failing of most people who study Kant is that they do not recognize that the architectonic rests on a revolution in logic that preceded the critical turn, and which precipitated it. Kant created new categories of inquiry that brought with them several new senses of "necessity," broadening it beyond logic to ontology and epistemology, and providing a basis for a far subtler interpretation of the relation of knowledge and being. People who discuss Kant and speak only of "transcendental necessity," as characterized by "determinate" (apodeictic) judgments, the conditions for the possibility of x, often do not understand "possibility," which may be interpreted either *problematically* or *hypothetically*. As we saw above, reflective judgment is not apodeictic but rather hypothetical. And the 20th and 21st century interpreters do not notice when Kant shifts from one type of necessity to another sense of necessity. This difference makes a great difference, and neither type of necessity applies to what Kant calls "empirical science." This is what Hume contributed to Kant's awakening. Causation (in the sense Kant and Hume believed) cannot be handled by an assertoric logic.

Nativist "AI"

This brings us, at length to the distinction between "nativist AI" and "possibility empiricism," a difference which rests on whether one makes a bright-line distinction between domain specific systems, defining AI strictly in those terms, or allows that AI may be available in non-human forms, i.e., *across* domains. Any time one encounters an a priori and necessary restriction in empirical science, one has encountered a mistake. Thus, adopting the domain-specific stance, as a necessity, *will* block the road of inquiry, eventually. As a special case of possibility empiricism, the domain-specific stance could be used as a hypothesis, but we are not anywhere close to achieving

artificial intelligence with our machines, in the enactivist sense. I do not say it cannot be done in principle, but the quest for a criterion of artificial intelligence is far from over. Every new proposal is more likely to be a false limitation than a goad to better thinking, unless it is taken as a conjecture or suggestion, and never elevated to a principle or a law, as the Turing test effectively was. The various proposals about computer learning are not going to serve us well as criteria for pronouncing some process or machine “artificially intelligent.”

Exo-axiology

The underlying idea, as Kant pointed out, is communication. An extra-terrestrial being might be intelligent and we could never discover it unless it can conform to our limitations in communicating, as Kant clearly says (C1 B853).³ The communicative power takes on forms of limitation that are ontologically non-necessary but empirically devastating to our cognitive capacities. We don’t know very much because of the conditions we impose on the knowing process (no matter how liberally we define “knowledge”). We would gladly know more, and are demoralized by the fact that we can imagine it but are never likely to know it. Even the least limiting of our cognitive powers, imagination, is still very limited. We must resist the urge to claim that if we cannot make sense of something, it therefore doesn’t make sense at all. That isn’t just Kant’s view, it’s good pragmatism. Whether something makes sense in the infinitely distant future is for ideally situated inquirers at that time to judge, as Peirce explained and Dewey endorsed. The unknowable, when we make a claim about it, produces antinomies. In the first *Critique* its many erroneous forms are exhibited in the Transcendental Dialectic, the part nobody teaches.

³ See also Kant’s *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, trans Günter Zöllner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), AP, 237-238; VIII, 215.

The Rest of the Nice Book

The Theoretical division of this new AI book, then, includes various forays into the how and why of Kant’s usefulness in addressing AI. I am not optimistic about Richard Evans’s effort here, as a piece of Kant interpretation or even as something in the spirit of Kant. He uses the narrow logic of the 20th century and ignores the architectonic. I think he takes himself to be developing a view in the Kantian spirit, but if so, he has not done that. Yet, he has done some important tool-boxing of Kant in a vein that may prove fruitful, and the reason is that we currently do talk to and manipulate our machines mainly using this same narrow logic. That logic is a clunky tool for communicating and is holding us back, as many computer scientists lament. When our communication with the machines, and the cosmic order itself, is more flexible, we will have greater power. But for now, yes, finding formalized solutions to current problems, and theorizing those formalisms in an epistemic way, is potentially valuable.

I am much more optimistic about Sorin Baiasu’s effort, since he emphasizes the analogical character of his method of “thinking Kant” in the present. He limits his points of reference to the first three divisions of the first *Critique*, which is too narrow, but he knows he is doing that and is careful not to claim anything about Kant directly. David Chalmers has rightly emphasized the distinction between sensibility and understanding. Now if he would do the same for understanding, reason, judgment, and imagination, with acknowledgement that this is only part of the list of irreducible cognitive powers humans possess, we would have even more progress. What was needed was a generalization of these powers, which is what Whitehead gave us. I have to despair of Chalmers and his followers ever grasping that what they want has already been achieved by people they don’t care to read, but we should all welcome the important and true things they assert. It doesn’t matter who gets credit, so long

as we find our way to a better account. Yet, I can't help thinking that Whitehead's vocabulary and pluralized formalizations are better than the current language favored by Chalmers and his crew.

Similarly successful is Hyeongjoo Kim's essay answering John McCarthy's call for help in defining AI. One reason Kim is successful is the emphasis on the relationship between transcendental idealism and empirical realism as compatible. They are in fact far more than compatible, and one needs the full architectonic to understand why this is not a problem at all, but connecting the problems of today to the Kant of the first *Critique* in a responsible way is always helpful. More helpful would be to connect Kant's actual philosophy *as a whole* (i.e., the architectonic) to the problems of today, since many are addressed somewhere in that corpus, and tremendous insights are to be had quite beyond the first *Critique*. There is far more to Kant's theory of imagination than its ability to derive a schema that is both intellectual and sensible. Kim's essay makes a very nice transition to the Practical division of the book, and as the co-editor, he is to be praised for the seamlessness of the transition.

With that praise in place, I would have switched the order of the first two chapters in the Practical division, but I will discuss them in the order they occurred. In the Practical division, we shift to what many interpreters take to be a different set of questions, and this is clear in the two chapters regrettably devoted to trolley examples. In fact, the practical and theoretical aspects of Kant's philosophy pose the same questions but in the practical domain; they are asked in a more general way. People often seem to forget that the problem of "pure reason"—why it requires a critique of its own—is that human beings can *think* about things theoretically that they cannot fully *experience*. Yet, since thinking is a kind of experiencing, we have a problem explaining ourselves to ourselves, and besides, we do get knowledge of a sort from theoretical cognition when it is rightly used: synthetic a priori knowledge. The main challenge comes from theoretical

cognition, since here we think about things in a way that tempts us to substitute the *results* of thinking for the rest of our experiencing.

As with Tobias Schlicht in the theoretical division, Dieter Schönecker (also a co-editor) makes a number of the points I would make in his chapter. That temptation to think beyond the bounds of possible experience comes in two forms: we think things are true of the world that are really only true of our thinking (which creates dialectic); *and* we think we can do things we cannot in fact do (which brings about moral error). Both problems take the form of determinate judgments gone awry. These are the problems of pure reason and pure practical reason. Since thinking is primarily practical, and since theoretical cognition has its basis in practical action, we have then, pure practical reason, which tempts us only to think about things we cannot do, and full-fledged theoretical cognition, pure reason, which tempts us simply to make inferences that fail to conform to the limitations of our power of determinate judgment.

Yet, when the problems associated with our powers of pure practical reason and theoretical cognition have been addressed, there remains the more important problem of the genuine practical relation between our practical thinking and our practical action, and how we make sense of how each comes from the other. This is where so many interpreters get lost in the theory of the form of the will, in the *Groundwork* and in *The Metaphysics of Morals*. These are books about how we ought to *think* about the will, the norms of pure practical reason, not about what in particular cases the will *should will*, which is practical and situational. The issue of "agency" and the associated problems of self-determination and autonomy, come from the logical extension of our powers of action in a *problematic* rather than a hypothetical logic. This is not about what we might do, but only about what we *can* do, and it definitely isn't about how we ought to think about what we might do. This is the reason that determinate judgment is the relevant logic:

we are concerned with how what is actual relates to what is possible, i.e., problematic logic.

This kind of logic can also be extended to an infinity of actions which we *may* perform (not might –ought implies can), and here the aim is to know what we should and shouldn't do, such that knowledge is the aid of action. Here the stakes are higher, since we only risk *logical* error when we misuse theoretical cognition. No one dies of a bad theory unless it is coupled with further action. Failing to know what we ought to do is far more dangerous than failing to know how to think about what we may do. Yet, knowing what we are doing (and may do) is very important. For this reason we cannot wholly divorce our agency from our knowledge. If we do, the moral quality of our actions disappears and we are counting on luck. That is a fair description of the amoral quality of mechanical thinking. As our authors point out, then, in the practical section of this book, agency requires a robust autonomy. That is the basic reason they are skeptical of the likelihood we can ever create Kantian "AI."

Lisa Benossi and Sven Bernecker are certainly right to make autonomy and freedom the center of their case, but they take the view that robots "could not possibly" be moral agents, to which I must reply that this assertion isn't knowable. Although they also say that this is "unlikely" and that it is a "low probability," rather than "impossible" later, I think they mean what their abstract says, which comes to "never." Otherwise, they don't need the logic they use, which isn't probabilistic. The negation of robot moral agency has both a logical and a practical dimension. Logically speaking, they use Harry Frankfurt's much narrower logic rather than Kant's, and that makes their case irrelevant to Kant, which they do not acknowledge. It is at most Kant-like or in the spirit of Kant, but I deny the latter. Kant doesn't think like they do. His own logic is perfectly adequate for addressing this question. We don't need Frankfurt. So I am less enthusiastic about this approach, even if, on its own terms, there is no serious problem. It isn't a sin to depart from Kant.

For Kant, and his ethics, saying "never" requires that we prohibit a possibility (as they say "could not possibly," rather than "can not possibly") and that may be done in one of two ways: problematically or hypothetically. The first implies that no finite series of steps leads to moral agency for robots, while the second requires that no possibility of robot moral agency is consistent with any actuality. Both arguments can be made, but neither can be knowledge. Both theses are under limitations Kant explains in the Transcendental Dialectic of the first *Critique*.

For the same sorts of reasons Benossi and Bernecker give for saying that we cannot conclusively answer the questions about whether we *should* seek to create machines that have moral standing or even personhood, they should also say that we cannot know whether our creations can be moral agents. After all, we create new moral agents every day, in having children, at a rather alarming rate, and often with the aid of machines, while others we keep alive by means of machines, and others are part machine. There is no bright line distinction between "artifacts" and ourselves, and their conditions, that "a robot uses sensors to detect aspects of the environment, software to reason about it, and actuators to interact with it," (pp. 147-148) will have to be adapted or discarded eventually. In the future our integration with the machine world will increase rather than decrease, and so the practical changes must drive the theoretical positions we take, not vice-versa. Is it permissible to prohibit making these machines? Yes, I think they are right. That prohibition is permissible. But it doesn't matter. When we *can* make machines that deserve moral standing, we *will* make them. We might as well think about what we are going to say about their agency and standing now, since their existence is a matter of when, not whether. That is pragmatism, in my opinion.

Schönecker's case that machines cannot have practical reason because it is free, and they are not, is closely in keeping with what I would expect Kant himself to say. It is

clearly Kantian in spirit, but I think both Schönecker *and* Kant overstate the matter. This is a pragmatic question as well. The separation between the domain of causal laws and the domain of reason and free action is too stark in Kant's first two *Critiques*. It thus serves us badly when taken apart from the full architectonic. When we include the reflective power of judgment and its critique, our thinking about freedom is broadened beyond the way that reason is made determinate in understanding and in action. There is a kind of judgment that is reflective and draws on the special concept of purpose. This form of judgment is exemplified in the judgment that "x is beautiful," based on a "free play" of understanding and imagination. We saw this at the beginning of this essay. This form of judgment then raises the question of purpose in nature, and the answer is a hypothetical proposition: it is *as if* nature were made for our purposes (including our self-improvement for an everlasting time), and for our freedom of action. Indeed, we cannot help thinking so, Kant says. (C3 434-436)

This feature of nature, which Emerson called "the sentiment of virtue," leaves us with the experience that all of nature is working for our good, or at least our betterment. Thus, Schönecker's claim that to be free is to be able to will the good seems right, but it needs context, and the context is the domain of nature. The determinate nature of our understanding and our practical reason, and the concomitant form of determinate judgment, is not sufficient to undergird our experience of freely moving our bodies, as Kant points out, so there must be more. I take Schönecker's final analogy about swimming and flying (pp. 185-186) to capture this feeling, perhaps better than his earlier argument does. The question is what can we know, do, and hope regarding purpose? That is the real role of practical reason in Kant, not just acting freely and autonomously legislating our duty to ourselves. We want more. We want nature to cooperate in our purposes.

I suggest that Schönecker has focused too narrowly on practical reason in its determinate form. Ironical-

ly, the higher bar for freedom, the freedom of thinking, imagining, and even acting as organized beings in a world of purposes, is more attainable for robots than the lower bar set by Schönecker's focus on practical reason. It is easily imaginable, without falling into dialectic, that machines might have purposiveness *as* self-organizing processes –this is what many interpreters mistake for "learning." If that is so, then the line between self-organizing processes and organized beings is thin. We want a principle for thinking about *life*, and if self-organizing processes are not life, they are very close to it. (C3 422-429)

Elke Elisabeth Schmidt unfortunately goes the way of the trolley example and "conceptual analysis" for the sake of tapping or pumping or refining or adjusting our "intuitions" –not in the Kantian sense. She does not state this, but the outcome of conceptual analysis is the forming of moral intuitions. One does not need such examples to form Kantian moral judgments. None of this, then, has anything directly to do with Kant and I have yet to see a genuinely Kantian response to the so-called trolley problem. The genuine response is that the problem itself is clearly just the sort of thing avoided by the limitations on theoretical cognition set out in the *Transcendental Analytic* and the mistakes illustrated in the *Transcendental Dialectic*. The relevant "programmer" isn't the one who sets the trolley car programming for autonomous trolleys, it is the philosopher who poses the problem and then insists it has some importance for our thinking. It does not.

Conceptual analysis is foreign to Kantian philosophy, as indeed it is to pragmatism, and our moral intuitions are not guides to anything reliable, no matter how they are pumped or refined or adjusted. As Kant says, don't trust your natural inclinations as moral guides. Here many pragmatists will protest, but I remind them that education and imaginative rehearsal are methods of intelligizing practice, and they are morally required for the melioration of any situation, since all situations carry valuative features. Kant is saying nothing different when

he cautions us from following our natural inclinations. He is saying, in effect, “don’t imagine that following your uneducated desire will lead you in the better direction.” Pragmatists hold the same view. This kind of philosophy, driven by conceptual analysis, is Thomson, and Foot, not Kantian in spirit or letter, and not really even drawing much from the Kantian toolbox. Thinking is what is required by Kant, not analogizing without the aid of genuine practical reason. Kant confines intuitions to their determinate forms, or, under the right circumstances, their reflective forms. Moral imagination is not disciplined by trolley examples, and Schmidt’s case is an example of trying to cut Kant’s moral philosophy off from the architectonic. Kant would not expect good results from that and neither do I.

Ava Thomas Wright takes for granted, as I do, that morally autonomous machines will be built as soon as they can be. Unfortunately, she falls victim to the same problems Schmidt has. The problem is how do we handle issues that will result from conflicts with these machines, whether they are driving machines or trolleys, or house cleaners and factory workers. Perhaps we got a foretaste of this kind of conflict when the Google employee refused to turn off a machine because it reported being afraid of death, but this case was not a thought experiment, such as Schmidt and Wright apparently believe are the relevant analogies to life and death decision-making. But those self-driving cars are motoring their way into our moral world. The problem isn’t hypothetical anymore. If they lack agency, we will still sue the corporation that kills our loved one with one.

Wright seeks to set these conflicts on firm Kantian ground by placing them in the domain of right rather than virtue. This is worth thinking about, but it also presupposes an interpretation of Kantian moral thought that separates it from the architectonic. Keeping Kant’s moral philosophy within the architectonic provides greater interpretive freedom and does not oblige us always and everywhere to place such conflicts wholly within one side

or another of a determinate conceptual difference. It also keeps the moral philosophy in proximity to pragmatism. The question of purpose is the most comprehensive question in Kantian moral philosophy, and it is reflective in form rather than determinate. I recommend a broader analysis. We will find that things Wright thinks are necessary are not quite *as* necessary.

The longest trolley ride into things not relevant to Kant is relieved by Claus Dierksmeier’s chapter, which does acknowledge the importance of the architectonic. His emphasis on purposes keeps his argument well within the tradition of Kantian moral philosophy as Kant pursued it himself. The insight about partners rather than parts strikes me as very much in keeping with the organicity of Kant’s analogy between nature and society. Working the analogy as a “symbol,” in Kant’s sense, would be even better. A symbol, for Kant, is a complex but unfinished product of our imaginations, in which what is beautiful stands for (without replacing) what is moral, and hence what seems purposive in nature can serve as a guide to what is purposive in ourselves, as natural beings. This organicity applies especially to our social organization, which grows from our *sensus communis*, which is natural in us for Kant. I find much to praise and nothing to criticize in this essay. I only recommend that Dierksmeier consider his view in relation to the Kantian symbol. Kant is not a deontologist, in the sense employed by the moral philosophers of the last 100 years. He is a common-sense moral philosopher, owing more to the Scots and to Rousseau than to any strict formalist version of moral thought. Dierksmeier is trending this direction, but could perhaps benefit from some of Cassirer’s essays on Kant’s relation to Rousseau.

That brings us to the final chapter, the sole essay in the division of Aesthetics. I do not agree with Larissa Berger that Kant’s requiring of disinterestedness for a judgment that “x is beautiful” is phenomenal, although I agree that it has *implications* for the phenomenal. The distinction between phenomenal and noumenal, or, in first *Critique*

language, of appearances versus things in themselves, is brought together in the third *Critique* in the discussion of the supersensible substrate. We saw that discussion in the part above, in the excerpt on determinability and determination of that substrate. But there is more (see C3 176, 196, etc.) Somehow Berger manages to write a huge number of pages about the phenomenal in Kant as it applies to pleasure and disinterestedness without once mentioning the supersensible substrate in the third *Critique*, which cannot be theoretically cognized, but it can be felt, and indeed must be appealed to in order to solve the Antinomy of Taste (C3 339-344).

This oversight is unfortunate because it disqualifies her claim that “quite strikingly, Kant seems to be confident that he can just presuppose [the] T[hesis of] D[isinterestedness] as a brute matter of fact.” (p. 270) This is far from being accurate. I recommend that Berger consider the discussion of whether there is an ontological unity of the noumenal and the things in themselves in a felt supersensible substrate before she concludes that the disinterestedness requirement is presupposed or ungrounded. Before she offers her three speculations as to why Kant does not ground his account of disinterestedness further (p. 272), she might consider her own point: “Unlike Nagel, Kant does not use the term ‘subjective’ to refer to the phenomenal character of experience.” (p. 279) What, then, is “phenomenal” for Kant, since subjectivity is noumenal, as indeed is personhood, at least when it comes to our standing as “persons.” The other person is the only truly sublime experience we have, so it seems to me that the Analytic of the Sublime bears on the case of disinterestedness, since we can never judge the beauty of a *person* disinterestedly. The limit case helps us define the ground of disinterestedness.

The fact that the term “noumenal” never occurs in this chapter by Berger suggests to me that Berger has not really considered the meaning of the word “phenomenal” in Kant, which is the contrast term to noumenal. The realm of appearances in the first *Critique*, and as determined by our power of understanding, is broadened to the domain of reason in the second *Critique*. Both are related by reflective judgment, as we saw at the beginning of this review. There is a realm of things that can be thought about and acted upon, which is phenomenal, and thought about but not acted upon practically, which is noumenal. The noumenal is the ground of the phenomenal in the domain of reason, which is to say that we cannot make sense of our own actions unless there is a wider realm of meaning for our actions than we can determine by acting. Without imagination’s mysterious power to determine the determinable in the supersensible substrate “we should have no knowledge whatsoever.” In short, there must be a world we never made with meanings we will never fully know. The issue of the supersensible substrate in the third *Critique* is the question of whether the purposes we feel in acting might bring the purposiveness of nature to our power of reflective determination of ourselves as subjects. The discussion of the supersensible substrate in the third *Critique* is, indeed, inconclusive, but it introduces the problem of natural teleology, which may be said to offer some solutions.

In all, the volume is a nice contribution to current discussions, and while there is not much Kant *scholarship* in it, there is a good bit of thinking in a Kantian spirit, which may be added to the broader discussions of AI that are going on. Pragmatists could do themselves a favor and pay attention.

ON STROUD'S AMBEDKAR

"The Evolution of Pragmatism in India",
Scott R. Stroud. University of Chicago Press;
1st edition, 2023, 310 pages.

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It is no exaggeration to say that Scott Stroud's book on Ambedkar was the most anticipated scholarly treatment of Ambedkar's philosophy, among the half dozen or so books that have been published in the last couple of years. Stroud's essays on Ambedkar and his relationship with Deweyan Pragmatism have been much discussed over the years, and this book is to be welcomed for its sustained argument linking Ambedkar's ideas with the pragmatism of his teacher John Dewey. Stroud follows Ambedkar from his days at Columbia University to his death and after—the response to his 'conversion'—but always under the intellectual shadow of John Dewey. If the promise of the book was that it would study the reception of Dewey's ideas in Ambedkar's thought, then Stroud succeeds, although sometimes at the cost of obscuring, if not flattening Ambedkar's own voice.

Dewey's imprint on Ambedkar's thought is here shown from one of his earliest writings, a review of Bertrand Russell's *Principles of Social Reconstruction*, Ambedkar's submissions before the Southborough Committee, the intellectual bombshell that was the *Annihilation of Caste*, all the way to his *Buddha and His Dhamma* and the 'conversion' to Buddhism, of his own and his close to half a million Dalit followers. Dewey's thought helps Ambedkar build what Stroud helpfully terms his 'Navayana Pragmatism'. The book is a relentless *quellenforschung*, tracing the ideas of Dewey in Ambedkar's speeches, and the memories of Dewey in Ambedkar's experience. Stroud unearths the marginalia of books, Dewey's class syllabi, notes, transcripts, lectures, conversations, and anything else which might give a clue to Dewey's influence on a

young Ambedkar. This is matched in good measure with Ambedkar's reception of these learnt ideas in his speeches, submissions, writings, etc. but mostly it is Ambedkar in his oral mode that Stroud is interested in, which could be due to his background in communication and rhetoric. Such is the closeness of Stroud's reading, that the reader might be forgiven for thinking if any of Ambedkar's more important ideas are products of his own mind. Despite Stroud's assertions about the creativeness of Ambedkar's use of, and his resistance to certain Deweyan ideas, one leaves with the sense that Ambedkar's thought is almost completely derivative, and, dare I say, almost second-rate. A major reason for this impression is the near-total absence of Ambedkar's political and historical writings in Stroud's analysis. Works such as *Who Were the Shudras*, *Who Were the Untouchables*, his critiques of Gandhianism and the Indian National Congress, his books on India's Partition and the creation of Pakistan, and even unpublished manuscripts like *Philosophy of Hinduism and Untouchables* or *The Children of India's Ghetto* are scarcely mentioned. This omission undermines any attempt to write a comprehensive study in the history of political philosophy or an intellectual biography—both of which *The Evolution of Pragmatism in India* purports to be. Stroud claims to have provided "a historically informed account of what Ambedkar's philosophy looks like if we are sensitive to its extensions, adaptations, and resistances to themes in Dewey's complex thought" (p.14). However, an intellectual biography of Ambedkar—or any major figure—cannot be adequately written with reference to only one thinker. Stroud seems aware of this limitation and adopts a notably broad approach to intellectual biography. To justify his focused examination of Dewey's influence on Ambedkar, Stroud suggests that we could similarly benefit from exploring the impact of other thinkers—such as Edwin Seligman, Vladimir Simkhovitch, Gabriel Tarde, and Henri Bergson—on Ambedkar, as all are referenced in his work. This suggests that the book is more accurately a study of the reception of a major

philosopher (Dewey) in Ambedkar's thought, rather than a comprehensive intellectual biography.

Yet there are further issues. Among the figures Stroud mentions, only Bergson is a philosopher widely recognized today, either within or outside academic circles. This raises the question of how Ambedkar, as a philosopher, would reconcile the seemingly divergent philosophies of Bergson and Dewey. Given Stroud's method of detecting the influence of Dewey on Ambedkar through devices like "echoing"—not through explicit identification but by selectively highlighting certain ideas or phrases from thinkers as diverse as Marx, Plato, or Burke—it is worth considering how a Marxist, Burkean, or Platonist Ambedkar might coexist with a pragmatist Ambedkar, given the typical incompatibility of these philosophical tendencies.

A note about method

While scholars have the right to frame their research questions as they see fit, Stroud's narrow focus on Ambedkar's speeches turns out to have overlooked the full range of Ambedkar's intellectual contributions. There are many instances within Ambedkar's broader body of work—particularly in his books and unpublished writings—where a more nuanced and deeper understanding of his pragmatist moves in forging an Indian historical sociology could be explored. Ironically, Stroud's case for Ambedkar's pragmatist leanings might have been even stronger had he drawn from the wealth of material that extends beyond the political speeches he focuses on. His narrower approach of studying the rhetor Ambedkar, misses opportunities to capture the richness and complexity of his ideas. Even the speeches that Stroud examines, while historically significant, were often delivered in contexts of political maneuvering, lobbying, and public persuasion. Ambedkar, as a politician and reformer, naturally tailored these speeches to specific audiences according to the occasion.

Ambedkar, Pragmatist?

Stroud's method of assigning philosophical labels based on what he calls "echoing" can be problematic. For instance, if instead of Dewey's concept of "associated life," Ambedkar had drawn upon a poetic expression used by, say, the Mughal Emperor Babur to analyze caste dynamics in India, would it be reasonable to classify Ambedkar within the Timurid literary tradition? Babur had observed that the caste men and women of India lack *ikhtilaat-e-amizish* (social intercourse or mingling) and *amad-o-raft* (interaction, literally "comings and goings"). (Thackston 1996) Though observed in the course of writing an autobiography, this is still a sociological description of caste society that is arguably more germane to Hindu caste society than Dewey's "associated life."

Of course, Ambedkar's theoretical tools are sharp enough that he would not need to reference the leisurely musings of a pre-modern Turkic prince. Ambedkar's paper *Castes in India: Their Genesis and Mechanism* had delved much deeper into the subject than most anthropological scholarship on caste of his time. I mention Babur only to complicate Stroud's understanding of thinking about influence and reception. I think we must differentiate between what Stroud calls echoing, with agreement with an author's particular ideas and the rather different case such as the substantial acceptance of a philosophical theory. Although Ambedkar might agree with a pragmatist idea that beliefs are not just abstract mental states but tools that guide practical actions, his agreement doesn't make him a pragmatist in the same sense that it makes Frank Ramsey a pragmatist. There is, first, the question of whether Ambedkar is even a philosopher, which requires a satisfactory answer.

Yet, it was after reading Stroud's quotation-heavy book, that I found myself reconsidering the nature of Ambedkar's intellectual project and how might we understand the nature of his corpus. How should we categorize Ambedkar? Is he after all, a philosopher? A political theo-

rist? A sociologist of caste? What is the gain in classifying him as a pragmatist, when he doesn't identify himself as such? A glance at his vast body of work and the range of his book titles reveals that if he is a philosopher (say when he reconstructs, or rather invents a materialist, revisionist Buddhism), it is only one facet of his much larger identity. If he a political theorist, then what are his normative political positions on questions he writes about, such as democracy, nation, minority, etc? Would he have written differently if the facts of Indian political life between 1920 and 1954 had been different? For example, Ambedkar's understanding of what a minority is, comes out of his advocacy for Dalits, who were at the bottom of the hierarchy of the Hindu caste system. Ambedkar had to fashion this notion of minority in the service of his community, an 'impossible category to realize' as Anupama Rao calls it. (Rao, 2009) Stroud's focus on Dewey's influence on Ambedkar certainly highlights his philosophical borrowings, but the limited uptake, development and advancement of Dewey's ideas within Ambedkar's work will allow detractors to question the value of his philosophical contributions.

So, while Stroud's portrayal serves to position him within the canon of pragmatist philosophers, I would argue that Ambedkar is better understood as a philosophically trained founder of an Indian historical sociology, in the tradition of thinkers like Ibn Khaldun or Emile Durkheim (incidentally Dewey might approve and commend this role for philosophy). This might seem unconventional, and I do not insist on this as an exclusive characterization. Instead, I use it to highlight how Ambedkar applied his philosophical education to theorize about caste, tackle the specific social ills of his time, in order to reconstruct a social science for the Indian present and future. Much like Ibn Khaldun drew upon Greco-Arabic thought or Emile Durkheim incorporated both Aristotelian and Enlightenment traditions from Descartes to Kant (Dale 2015, 278), Ambedkar's intellectual work combined philosophical rigor with a deep analysis of social structures and historical conditions, but his sight always remained affixed on the question of caste.

For example, Ambedkar's analysis of the caste system's persistence—his argument that the caste system endures because even low castes seek to dominate those lower than them—mirrors the structure of Rousseau's argument in his *Discourse on Inequality*, and clearly seems informed by him. When talking about how the poor welcome inequality instead of getting rid of it, Rousseau writes that Citizens "consent to bear chains in order that they may impose chains [on others] in turn." (Rousseau 2019, 188) Ambedkar's argument is that the gradational structure of caste hierarchy allows even middling castes to dominate lower castes and the lower castes to dominate the lowest, i.e. untouchables, thereby reinforcing the system. To this, Ambedkar adds, in his characteristic pithiness, that the *varnavyavastha* is a gradation of castes forming "an ascending scale of reverence and a descending scale of contempt" (BAWS Vol 7, 26).

In the *AoC*, Ambedkar employs another metaphor from the social sciences, which he fashions to his particular needs. For Ambedkar, the caste system in India is more than a functional division of work or roles within society, it is not just a 'division of labor' (a metaphor made famous by Adam Smith, and having a rich antecedent history as well), but a *division of labourers*. The Caste-system rigidly assigns people to specific occupations based on their birth, thus enforcing a social order that locks individuals into fixed roles. Value and dignity, or the lack of it, is accorded to these inherited roles, or birth. I do not think that Ambedkar's appropriation of Deweyan ideas is qualitatively much different from these examples of borrowings from enlightenment age philosophers. But with Stroud, and with Meera Nanda and Arun Mukherjee, I agree that Dewey's influence is much the larger.

"Associated Life"

Now, coming to how Stroud captures this reception. He writes that Ambedkar's reception of Dewey's thought, "was not complete, ... while Ambedkar echoed some of

the Deweyan texts that he owned, he purposely selected and reconstructed those portions of Dewey's expansive thought that might prove useful for his own purposes, and he rejected or resisted other parts of Dewey's philosophy that he heard or read." The device of echoing allowed Ambedkar to appropriate from Dewey as much as Marx or the Buddha. This sounds uncontroversial as it stands, but it is Stroud's particular examples that one can quarrel with. In Chapter 1, Stroud tries to show the imprint of Dewey's psychological ethics, his understanding of the individual as a socialized self, "bearing habits and integrating with its...environment, social and natural", and the influence of the "all kinds of social arrangements, organisms and institutions, and man's moral ideas and judgments." (p. 41) We are informed that Ambedkar's year-long study with Dewey helped equip him with the tools to analyze and address the specific nature of social conflict, particularly the dynamic between society and the individual that he would encounter upon his return to India. This is a very useful suggestion, and it also aligns with my own view laid down above. The chapter is the strongest in the book and is especially valuable for its reconstruction of Dewey's course syllabus, which later evolved into his *Human Nature and Conduct*, among other texts. But we could push Stroud's notion of echoing further, to see if instead of echoing, which Ambedkar certainly does, he creatively transforms, re-describes or redeploys Deweyan language.

We know that Ambedkar borrows Dewey's phrase "associated life" but I do not think his usage quite echoes Dewey's naturalistic understanding of social organism and its interaction with morality, as Stroud suggests in the chapter. Instead, Ambedkar seems to use the term as a stock phrase when discussing the 'terms of co-existence in a caste society' (BAWS 5, 21, *italics mine*). Whatever its salience was in Phil 132 or Phil 231 while studying with Dewey, Ambedkar seems to be evolving this expression into a contract-metaphor. Such usage appears when he is discussing the question of suffrage. In Ambedkar's

imagination, granting a person the right to vote essentially means empowering them to determine the conditions under which they will coexist with others in society. Given this understanding of suffrage, it is unreasonable to confer this power solely on the higher classes, often the intellectuals or the propertied classes, while leaving the lower classes subject to their discretion. Ambedkar wants to say that the act of voting is not just a privilege, but a means of ensuring that all individuals, regardless of their social or economic status, have a say in shaping the societal dynamics they are a part of. "They, too, must have the power to regulate the *terms of associated life*," Ambedkar writes. (BAWS Vol. 2, 559, *italics mine*)

Ambedkar's particular usage of Dewey's 'associated life' can be explained by the pre-Independence milieu of inter-communal struggle marked by seeking protections and privileges for one's own community on the occasion of achieving franchise. Democracy came to be construed as power-sharing among groups—and Ambedkar's marginalized Dalit community could have been left out by being counted within the Hindus. In his turn, Ambedkar argued that vulnerable groups must have a say in setting the terms of societal interaction, especially when they have historically been oppressed. He believed that the poorer and more vulnerable an individual or group, the greater their need to participate in democracy, to avoid being subject to the whims of the powerful majority (BAWS Vol. 2, 338), and the Dalits were marginalized in more ways than that. Extending this logic to labor relations, Ambedkar argued for power-sharing between capitalists and workers, and the right to negotiate and set the terms of their engagement. (BAWS Vol. 2, 559).

Unlike the traditional social contract theorists, who imagined pre-political individuals coming together to form society, Ambedkar saw caste as a pre-existing social reality that defined social relationships even before the formation of a modern state. Thus, he argued that any meaningful reform in India needed to renegotiate the social contract among castes, rather than merely between

individuals and the state. Beyond the exigencies of political struggle, if we were to think about Ambedkar's theoretical project, I think it would be far more productive to see Ambedkar's insights on the "terms of associated life" as a shift in the traditional understanding of the social contract. While classic theories often focus on a social contract or *Gesellschaftsvertrag* between individuals and the state or a contract of rulership (*Herrschaftsvertrag*) legitimizing authority between rulers and the people (Lessnoff 1986, 28), Ambedkar can be seen as bringing attention to a different kind of social contract, perhaps even a return to its early 17th century understanding. As a consequence of renegotiating a social contract between distinct social groupings like castes, Ambedkar sought mechanisms that allowed for power-sharing and autonomy for marginalized castes. His advocacy for separate electorates, proportional representation, and other forms of political safeguards was an attempt to ensure that the "terms of associated life" were not dictated solely by the dominant castes. Ambedkar's approach to democracy was thus informed by a recognition that different social groups needed to actively participate in setting the conditions for their mutual coexistence. Elsewhere, I have characterized Ambedkar, following Arend Lijphart, as a proponent of Consociational Democracy (Lijphart 1969).

Rhetorical Reconstruction and Echoing

For Stroud, 'Ambedkar's appropriation of Dewey's words and ideas can be best seen as a rhetorical method of reconstruction' (p. 120). Stroud calls this "technique of appropriating the text of Dewey in novel arguments" *echoing*, since it purposefully repeats some of what was uttered previously in a new context. Let us examine an example of this process from Chapter 3. For Stroud, echoing involves revising a text through 'slight changes or entropic degradations', and 'the echoed text is not often announced as echoed' (p. 117), it simply uses a selec-

tion of previous material in the new context of advocacy.' Stroud's suggestion that Ambedkar "echoed" Dewey's writings for rhetorical purposes seems uncontroversially true, but his tethering of the label pragmatism to Ambedkar as a result of these rhetorical strategies overlooked a very simple point: Ambedkar did not limit himself to echoing Dewey. Therefore, I return to my earlier worry about the incoherence of a Pragmatist Ambedkar and a Burkean Ambedkar inhabiting one author. In some of the examples that Stroud uses to demonstrate this practice of 'echoing' Dewey, Stroud ignores Ambedkar's use of figures quite distant from pragmatist the tradition. In one of Stroud's detailed treatments of a passage from *Annihilation of caste*, Ambedkar quotes Dewey's statement that "Every society gets encumbered with what is trivial, with dead wood from the past, and with what is positively perverse... As a society becomes more enlightened, it realized that it is responsible not to conserve and transmit the whole of its existing achievements, but only such as make for a better society." (BAWS Vol. 1, 79) This is a famous passage. Stroud claims that Ambedkar is not 'merely relaying the passage', but 'using and sculpting that text to fit his needs and context.' Stroud makes much of the comparison between Ambedkar's language and Dewey's original passage to demonstrate Ambedkar's 'reconstructive method'. The problem for Stroud's characterization is that in the very next line Ambedkar writes, 'Even Burke, in spite of the vehemence with which he opposed the principle of change embodied in the French Revolution, was compelled to admit that "a State without the means of some change is without the means of its conservation. Without such means it might even risk the loss of that part of the constitution which it wished the most religiously to preserve." What Burke said of a State applies equally to a society. (BAWS Vol. 1, 79)' Ambedkar's point is plain, that damaging and harmful practices ought to be discarded, and it is not something particular to Deweyan pragmatism, and this tendency to employ the pragmatist label upon mere

quotation of Dewey, seems rather forced. In response to Stroud's question, "Why does Ambedkar echo Dewey's words and passages in such creative ways?", a straightforward, unembellished answer is that it serves as one method for him to enrich his writings with the language of prominent thinkers, contributing to his larger goal of constructing a historical sociology of caste.

But there is a more substantial point in the passage above as well, Ambedkar's stance is not about conserving or fixing parts of tradition, as Stroud takes it; rather, it's about rejecting an entire self-reinforcing system that he believes cannot be reformed.

When discussing the resources which can be pragmatically reconstructed from the Shstras—the Hindu religious scriptures, Stroud writes about how Ambedkar is "keen to sustain Dewey's emphasis on how we reconstructively engage with texts that our tradition has preserved" (p.124) In an earlier article, Stroud had meditated on this idea at length, "What remains common to Dewey and Ambedkar, however, is the pragmatist urge to not throw out everything from one's past tradition; one must save what is useful, fix what is damaged, and abandon that which is harmful. In other words, one does not revolt against the past in the present, one reconstructs the past for the needs of the present. This is why Ambedkar planned on asking his high-caste audience of reformers in this 1936 speech to abandon pernicious shastras or sacred texts in an attempt to change the religiously infused mental habits that result in caste separation." (Stroud, 2018, 11) Stroud's claim that Ambedkar urged his high-caste audience of reformers to abandon only the "pernicious" shastras implied a distinction between harmful and benign texts in Ambedkar's view. However, this interpretation misunderstood Ambedkar's argument in *Annihilation of Caste* (1936). Ambedkar argued that because of the deep entanglement between Hinduism and the caste system, Hindus should abandon their religious faith, reject the religious texts, and, in essence, cease to be Hindus in any recognizable traditional sense.

While Ambedkar wished the reformers luck in their efforts, he was ultimately skeptical about their chances of success. Stroud overlooks this critical aspect of Ambedkar's thinking.

Ambedkar's intention was not simply to reform the shastras but to fundamentally reject Hinduism's entire foundation. He had already signaled his intention to convert to another religion in his earlier speech, *Mukti Kon Pathe* ("Which Path to Salvation?"), where he encouraged his Mahar followers to do the same—a move Stroud also notes. Ambedkar's argument is that even partial belief in the shastras upholds the entire caste-based system, making selective reform impossible. Ambedkar's view is that because caste is so deeply intertwined with Hinduism's scripturally sanctioned social-structure and salvific eschatology, the entire tradition must be discarded. He writes, "the old must cease to be operative before the new can begin to enliven and to pulsate. This is what I meant when I said you must discard the authority of the shastras and destroy the religion of the shastras" (BAWS Vol. 1, 78). In its place, he proposed the establishment of a singular, authoritative religious text (for people who wish to continue to identify as Hindus) and suggested legal penalties for propagating doctrines from traditional Hindu scriptures. His revolutionary antagonism against religion and toward secular uplift is clear. Ambedkar believed that religious teachings could not be selectively reformed, as the pernicious elements were inseparable from the whole. This is why, even in his formulation of Navayana Buddhism, there are almost no references to supernatural phenomena, marking his complete departure from traditional religious structures.

One example which Stroud briefly discusses from *AoC*, but doesn't dwell on, might be helpful in showing readers the pragmatic possibilities in Ambedkar, beyond the influence of quoting pragmatist texts (such as Dewey's *Democracy and Education*). In discussing this example, Stroud, in effect, repudiates his earlier view (2018) that Ambedkar's pragmatism allowed for the possibility

of retaining something valuable from his received Hindu tradition. (pp. 177-180)

For Ambedkar, the meaning of religio-philosophical terms in the Indic tradition, such as jati, varna, karma, and dharma is not only defined by religious texts and religious scholars but also shaped by the lived practices and beliefs of the people. In the AoC, Ambedkar applies a kind of pragmatic test to critique the so-called reformist strategies of the founder of the Hindu reformist group, the Arya Samaj. He does this by unraveling the supposed distinction between caste and varna, showing that the Arya Samajist aspiration to reduce thousands of castes into four Vedic varnas based on worth (guna), instead of birth in a caste (jati) is a failure in practice. Stroud engages with this critique but doesn't cash out properly perhaps one of Ambedkar's clearly pragmatist moves.

The founder of Arya Samaj, Dayanand Saraswati, in his *Satyartha Prakash* or Light of Truth, had claimed that caste should be based on merit, not birth. Remember that the strategy is to ameliorate the injustices of untouchability and caste domination while retaining the language of Varna or Caste. He suggests that anyone, regardless of birth, can become a Brahmin through the acquisition of certain virtues and knowledge. Saraswati cites examples like the sage Javal, born of unknown parentage, who became a Brahmin, and Vishwamitra, a Kshatriya by birth, who was later accepted as a Brahmin. This position, on the surface, appears meliorist, but Ambedkar identifies its flaw. He argues that retaining caste labels like Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra, even when linked to merit rather than birth, perpetuates the old hierarchical system. The labels carry deeply entrenched associations with status and hierarchy, which cannot be easily eradicated.

Ambedkar's critique is rooted in a pragmatic understanding of social structures. He recognizes that the meaning of social terms such as caste names is determined not by their origins or ideal forms but by their everyday use in society, which reinforces the hierarchy they represent. For Ambedkar, reform cannot succeed if

it retains the very symbols and names that perpetuate caste-based discrimination. He writes:

"So long as these names continue, Hindus will continue to think of the Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Shudra as hierarchical divisions of high and low, based on birth, and act accordingly. The Hindu must be made to unlearn all this. But how can this happen if the old labels remain and continue to recall to his mind old notions?" (BAWS Vol. 1, p 59)

I think this may qualify for a genuine pragmatist analysis. As David Hildebrand notes regarding Dewey, what really mattered was that terms, concepts, and propositions be judged by their consequences in inquiry. For Ambedkar, this test is applied not just to philosophical inquiry but to social and political reform. He is concerned with the practical outcomes of ideas, not their ideal forms or coherence with traditional interpretations. Ambedkar's pragmatism is thus a tool for assessing the effectiveness of ideas in promoting social justice, and in this case, he finds the Arya Samaj's reform efforts inadequate. A transformation of values and attitudes requires a transformation of social structure, even if it means doing it by discarding names. By contrast, Saraswati's approach—reinterpreting the Vedas to justify social equality while retaining caste labels—falls short in Ambedkar's eyes because it allows for hierarchical ideas to sneak back in. As Stroud also notes, "names and labels are concretizations of habits of actions, reaction and judgment. They are normative, in other words. In the caste matrix, caste labels become associated with the extreme valuing and devaluing that grounds the harmful actions and reaction of caste individuals to each other, or of policies and institutions to members of a certain group or class." (p.179)

The test is pragmatic as Ambedkar assesses the consequences of their proposals, rather than their coherence or historical origins, and finds them wanting. The Arya Samaj's emphasis on merit-based caste reform, while theoretically progressive, would ultimately fail because the caste labels themselves reinforce the very hierarchy

the reform seeks to dismantle. Ambedkar sees the use of these terms in practice as inseparable from their oppressive connotations, and thus rejects the entire framework. In a way, Ambedkar calls for revolutionary means due to pragmatist reasons.

According to Stroud, Ambedkar proposes that the solution to dismantling the problematic mental attitudes and habits of caste lies in “conversion and the adoption of new identities,” specifically through embracing Buddhism—more precisely, Navayana Buddhism. Here, I wish to highlight what I term the “Navayana conundrum.” This refers to the puzzle of how Ambedkar’s Navayana, or “New Vehicle” Buddhism, can be termed a conversion. Typically, conversion implies adopting an established religion, even if that religion no longer has a significant presence in terms of followers. However, Ambedkar redefined nearly every key concept from classical Buddhist schools, infusing Buddhism with entirely new ideas often borrowed from other traditions and philosophies. Given such a radical reworking, in what sense can Navayana still be called Buddhism?

This is a contentious and provocative question that remains largely unaddressed by scholars like Stroud. Ambedkar rejects the Four Noble Truths, which are common to all major philosophical sects of Buddhism, hence serving as the foundational framework of the Buddha’s teachings across different sects across time and space. They represent the core understanding of human suffering and the path to its cessation, and all Buddhist schools—Theravāda, Mahāyāna, and Vajrayāna—acknowledge and build upon them. Life for Ambedkar, maybe marked by *dukkha*, but for him it means suffering or pain proper, not the Buddhist notion of dissatisfaction or unsatisfactoriness on account of impermanence, change or decay. The cause for suffering for Ambedkar is class antagonism, exploitation and domination, not *tanha* or craving or desire, which leads to attachment, which in turn is responsible for birth, death, rebirth in the cycle of *samsara*, regulated by Karma. By discard-

ing the karma-rebirth complex, the traditional Buddhist view of personhood, and redefining Nirvana—not as extinguishment and escape from the cycle of *samsara*, but as living harmoniously in righteousness—what remains of philosophical Buddhism? Stroud, when he introduces Adlerblum’s observation about the Indian student finding Dewey’s ideal of happiness more fitting for India than Nirvana (p.8), he doesn’t directly tackle what happens to Buddhism when it rejects the very metaphysical presuppositions that originally gave rise to the Buddha’s understanding of salvation. Stroud doesn’t see that this may be the greatest proof of Ambedkar’s pragmatism, not perhaps of the classical variety, but the Rortyan kind, as Ambedkar seems to be willing to transcend all descriptions, textual, historical, philosophical to reshape the religious views, and thereby the social identity of, first his followers, and then Indian people at large. This might indeed be one of the most radical attempts in Indian history through imaginative redescription by one individual, trying to expand the ability of a society to redetermine the suffering of the Dalits and the Shudras (and by extension all oppressed classes) in a way that generates and cements empathy and solidarity. Re-inventing a religious tradition, i.e. Buddhism, which also suffers from the Karma-rebirth conundrum and pressing it as a tool for achieving moral and social progress is one of the best examples of how human thought, as well as human nature, “is contingent and changeable”, the first hallmark of Ambedkar’s pragmatism. (p.239-40)

Ambedkar on Nationality

Stroud’s archival research into John Dewey’s lectures offers valuable insights into the philosophical milieu that B.R. Ambedkar was exposed to during his time at Columbia University. By reconstructing what Ambedkar might have heard from Dewey regarding individualism, collectivism, and the role of the nation-state, Stroud aims to illuminate the potentially felicitous influence of Dewey’s

conception of nationhood, with its cross cutting cleavages and progressive possibilities. However, while this archival work is commendable, it does not guarantee that Ambedkar assimilated Dewey's progressive ideas into his writings about nationhood. In fact, a close examination of Ambedkar's works reveals that Dewey's framework finds little to no uptake in Ambedkar's considered writings on the issue, which suggests that, in this case, despite having access to progressive views of nationality, Ambedkar consciously chose a more reactionary stance.

While Ambedkar was undoubtedly exposed to Dewey's lectures advocating for the nation-state as a facilitator of individual freedom and moral development, his own writings reflect a starkly different viewpoint. Ambedkar adopts an essentialist perspective, particularly concerning Hindus and Muslims, viewing them as inherently distinct nations rooted in deep-seated historical and religious conflicts. For Ambedkar the nationalistic sentiments prevalent among both Hindus and Muslims act in a centrifugal motion, blowing both communities farther and farther away. Perhaps, although he doesn't say it explicitly, the Dalits are the only segment of the Hindu people which, being a part-apart and on account of their near-constant servitude to the Hindus, are less conducive to enable a Hindu nationalistic self-consciousness. As between Muslims and Hindus, Ambedkar sees them as essentialized categories, sometimes using the word 'race' to define them. For Ambedkar, the conflict between the Muslims and other minorities with the Congress was not based on whether the Congress has benefited these groups or not. The core of their disagreement lay on a completely different question - whether, after Independence from British rule, Hindus were to assume the role of a dominant ruling class, with Muslims and other minorities relegated to subordinate positions. The assumption is that in the event of elections, Muslims and Hindus will vote as if like corporate bodies, with an overwhelming, if not whole vote going to their coreligionist candidate. Of course, Ambedkar is not alone in

this essentialist corporatized view of groups. Ambedkar is merely continuing to employ the categories proliferated by the Muslim league, a body initially populated by Muslim landed interests, the *ashraaf*. Stroud spends many pages discussing Ambedkar's exposure to Dewey's exposition of the development of nation in Kant, Hegel and Fichte. Yet again, these ideas have no real uptake in Ambedkar's writings. Rather, Ambedkar seems taken by Ernest Renan's notion of the nation as a "spiritual principle" which is a different, almost reactionary intellectual trajectory. He leverages Renan's ideas to argue that Hindus and Muslims lack shared historical experiences of pride or sorrow, thereby reinforcing his argument for their existence as separate nations. As to what really constitutes a nation, Ambedkar quotes Renan's proposal, who viewed a nation as a living entity, characterized by a spiritual essence. This essence is comprised of two intertwined elements. Firstly, it involves the collective ownership of a rich legacy of shared memories. Secondly, it encompasses the present-day consensus, a collective desire to coexist and maintain the integrity of the shared heritage passed down through generations. "The nation, like the individual, is the outcome of a long past of efforts, and sacrifices, and devotion." The legacy left by ancestors is supposed to have shaped the current identity of a nation. Factors like a heroic past, notable figures, and authentic glory serve as the foundation upon which a national identity is built. The essence of a nation lies in having shared triumphs in history and a united determination in the present, a history of achieving remarkable feats together and the ambition to replicate such achievements in the future. (BAWS Vol. 8, 61) Ambedkar is quick to jump to reactionary conclusions. In the logic that would influence his historiography as well, it is a foregone conclusion that Muslims and Hindus have no historical antecedents which they can be said "to share together as matters of pride or as matters of sorrow" (BAWS Vol. 8, 60). Ambedkar thinks that moments of violence and suspicion over many centuries attains a kind

of ontological significance that no amount of cultural and social coexistence and conversation can heal, for there exists a fundamental difference between the two: "In the religious field, the Hindus draw their inspiration from the Ramayan, the Mahabharat and the Geeta. The Muslims, on the other hand, derive their inspiration from the Quran and the Hadis. Thus, the things that divide are far more vital than the things which unite" (BAWS Vol. 8, 62). We are told that to rely on shared aspects of Hindu and Muslim social life, such as common language, race, and country, is a fundamental misjudgment by Hindus, who mistake these accidental and superficial similarities for core and fundamental commonalities. In reality, the deep-seated political and religious conflicts between Hindus and Muslims create a divide that is far more profound than any superficial commonalities can bridge. We see that Stroud's characterization has underplayed the extent to which Ambedkar's conception of nationhood was shaped by immediate political realities rather than philosophical instruction, as in this case where Ambedkar's support for the partition of India is driven by his assessment of insurmountable religious and cultural divisions (arguable), and not by Dewey's ideals of creative reconstruction of social identities. Ambedkar's pessimism about overcoming religious divisions and his belief in the inevitability of conflict between Hindus and

Muslims stand in contrast to Dewey's faith in the transformative power of education and democratic processes. The deeper value of Stroud's archival work, therefore, lies not in establishing a direct influence of Dewey on Ambedkar's thought but in highlighting the philosophical alternatives that were available to him. Recognizing that Ambedkar had access to Dewey's progressive views but chose a different path allows for a deeper understanding of his intellectual journey.

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