Limits of Pragmatism and Challenges of Theodicy

Essays in Honour of Sami Pihlström

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Sami Pihlström

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Introduction

Sami Pihlström's wide-ranging research interests in philosophy have included the pragmatist tradition, the problem of realism in various areas of philosophy, the philosophy of religion, transcendental philosophy, ethics, metaphysics, as well as metaphilosophical issues. Pihlström's publication record on these topics is extensive, including hundreds of papers and twenty-one academic monographs. During his very productive career, Pihlström has also engaged in teaching, supervising, organisation of scientific meetings, institutional responsibilities and positions of trust. He has been a member and board member of various scientific societies. To mention just a few examples from Pihlström's illustrious *Curriculum Vitae*, he was Director of the Helsinki Collegium for Advanced Studies during 2009-2015, and is President of the Philosophical Society of Finland since 2016, board member of the Institut International de Philosophie (I.I.P.), member of the Finnish Academy of Sciences and Letters since 2017, and the Chair of the Research Council for Culture and Society of the Academy of Finland since 2019. Since 2014, Pihlström has been Professor of Philosophy of Religion at the Faculty of Theology at the University of Helsinki.

Pihlström's early interests were largely focused on the themes of pragmatism and philosophy of science. As the two most important early influences setting a fundamental direction to his later career, Pihlström has mentioned Ilkka Niiniluoto and Heikki Kannisto. Niiniluoto was already an established author on the problem of scientific realism, and hired young Pihlström as a research assistant to his Academy of Finland project in 1993. Niiniluoto also supervised Pihlström's doctoral dissertation and set an example of how to pursue philosophical research on a high international level. With important comments and suggestions, Kannisto helped

Pihlström find his own personal philosophical voice, and also "saved" Pihlström from becoming a logician at an early stage when Pihlström was considering to write his Master's thesis on themes of intuitionistic logic. When starting his formal studies of philosophy at the University of Helsinki in 1989, Pihlström also studied industrial engineering and management at the Helsinki University of Technology for a year. This potential career, too, was soon discarded in favor of philosophy.

As part of his Master's degree, Pihlström undertook advanced studies in comparative literature. He has sometimes expressed regrets about not pursuing this discipline any further, but at the same time also recognized that working with the philosophical dimensions of literature does not necessarily presuppose an approach based on comparative literature in particular. Pihlström's inclination for literature and fiction was clearly manifested already at the very early age of ten, when his children's book *Mishka-karhu Moskovan olympialaisissa* was published by the major Finnish publishing house Otava in 1980. This work consisted of a fictional adventure of the Russian bear mascot of the 1980 Moscow Olympic Games. Much later on, Pihlström has continued discussing philosophical aspects of literature in the academic field, especially in close collaboration with his wife Sari Kivistö, who is Professor of Comparative Literature at the University of Tampere. For their joint work combining philosophy and literature, problems of theodicy and developing the position of *antitheodicism* have been central.

In addition to his prolific authorship and scholarly acumen, Pihlström is widely known as an inspiring teacher and a dedicated supervisor, who has gently guided numerous students on their personal intellectual journeys. It is yet another indication of Pihlström's remarkable breadth that the graduates he has fostered have wandered into diverse fields of inquiry, such as education, theology, social science, and media and communication studies – without forgetting his pivotal role in the cultivation of the next generation of philosophers, of course. As Pihlström's former supervisees, the editors of this volume are forever grateful for his instruction, generous encouragement, and collegial friendship. William James, one of Pihlström's philosophical heroes, famously urged us to act

as if what we do makes a difference, because it does. Even the most thoroughgoing fallibilist must concede that Sami Pihlström's contributions constitute a compelling corroboration of this point.

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The articles of this volume have been divided into two sections. The first concerns the limits of pragmatism as a philosophical tradition and a philosophical programme. Who gets to be called a pragmatist? What kind of applications can pragmatist concepts and arguments have in contemporary philosophical debates? What are the limitations of pragmatist thought?

In the article that begins the first section, Torjus Midtgarden considers the relevance of the ideas of the founder of pragmatism, Charles S. Peirce, in different discussions in contemporary philosophy. Midtgarden argues that Peirce and his Kantian legacy could be appreciated across these different debates, including speech act theory and universal pragmatics as well as feminist standpoint theory. This discussion on Peirce, pragmatism and its Kantian legacy is continued by the three following papers. Ilkka Niiniluoto offers a reconsideration of the possibility of pragmatic realism. Niiniluoto contrasts Sami Pihlström's Kantian pragmatist realism with his own critical scientific realism, Rein Vihalemm's practical realism and Hasok Chang's pluralist pragmatic realism. In the following article, Henrik Rydenfelt points out that pragmatist philosophers may be faced with an antinomy. Drawing from Peirce's criticism of Kant, Rydenfelt argues that two central commitments shared by many pragmatist philosophers, pragmatic humanism – the idea that the world is structured by human practices – is in tension with the pragmatist account of meaning in terms of practical consequences. Probing another possible rift in pragmatist thought, Mats Bergman critically compares two pragmatist views of inquiry, embodied by Peirce and John Dewey. In spite of many points of contention, Bergman argues that these approaches can brought into a fruitful debate that both illuminates their respective limitations and contributes to the development of more robust conceptions of social inquiry. Next, Jonathan Knowles

considers the contemporary pragmatist position called anti-representationalism or, in Huw Price's terms, global expressivism. Anti-representationalism abandons metaphysical realism; Knowles inquires whether this form of pragmatism implies a Kantian pragmatic realism or transcendental idealism.
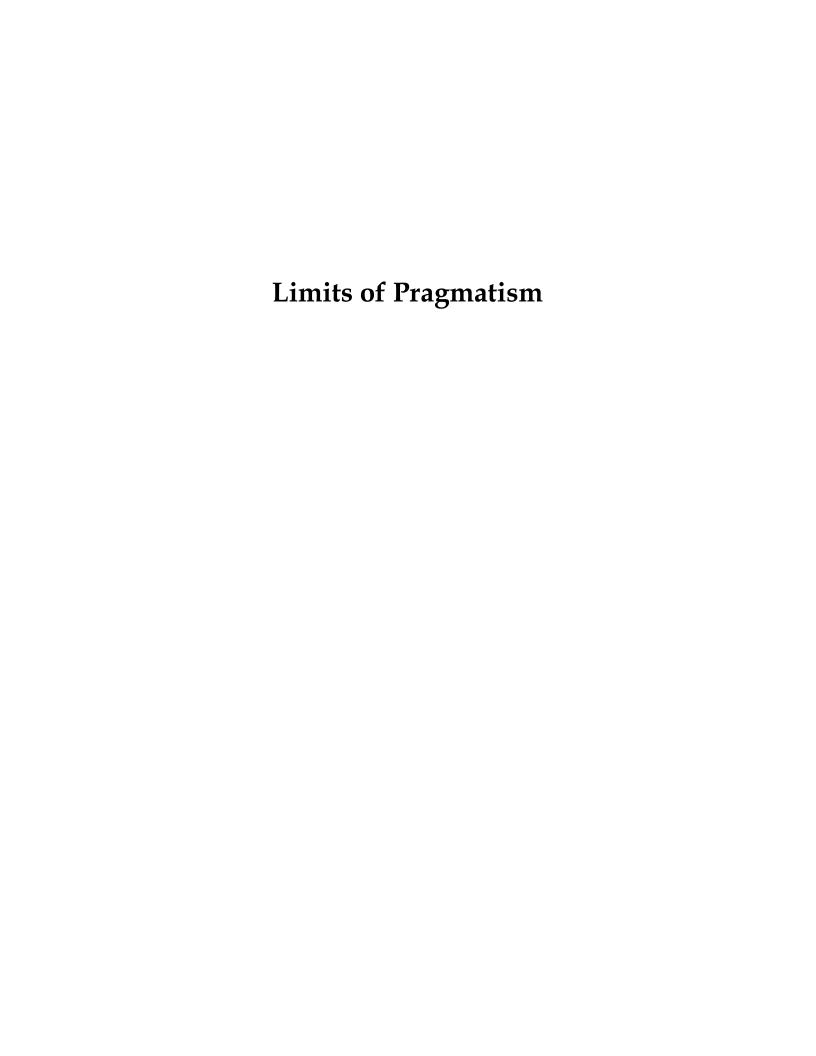
Continuing on themes of contemporary pragmatism, Dirk-Martin Grube questions the pragmatist credentials of neo-pragmatist thinkers such as Richard Rorty. Grube argues that despite their assurances to the contrary, neo-pragmatists embrace anti-realism, leading to a position which is inconsistent with their espousal of naturalism. In turn, Lyubov D. Bugaeva and John Ryder consider Pihlström's proposal of a self as the limit of the world. Attempting to avoid a mystified conception of the self, they offer considerations of the kind of limits – both individual and social – the self might involve in light of pragmatism, naturalism and other philosophical proposals. Leila Haaparanta contrasts two contemporary versions of the pragmatic method. Haaparanta argues that while Sami Pihlström uses a Jamesian pragmatic method as a means of continuous evaluation of philosophical views by moving back and forth between descriptions of human practices and abstract theories, Robert B. Brandom concentrates on the normative underpinnings of the human practice of assertion as the game of giving and asking for reasons. Finally, Heikki J. Koskinen considers some social and normative functions of the philosophical identity label 'pragmatist'. Utilizing conceptual resources of contemporary recognition theory, Koskinen argues that in addition to its constructive roles, a pragmatist philosophical identity can also have some acutely problematic features.

The articles in the second section consider themes in moral philosophy and the philosophy of religion. The first articles concentrate on themes of guilt, suffering, theodicy, and religious and ethical relativism. After showing some ways in which the rejection of theodicy is an existential matter for William James, Wayne Proudfoot draws on his earlier work on religious experience to ask to what extent recognition of another person's experience requires adopting the perspective of the one whose experience it is. Risto Saarinen highlights the immeasurable and elusive nature of meaningless

suffering because these two characterizations manifest a certain parallel to philosophical discussions on gift exchange. Saarinen first makes a comparison between these discussions and Pihlström's antitheodicy. After that, he constructs a philosophical concept of "burden" which can elucidate some aspects of suffering and antitheodicy in a new manner. In his article, Ulf Zackariasson wishes to take a step beyond Pihlström's analysis, with special focus on the latter's treatment of transcendental guilt, and to suggest that not only is guilt a fundamental feature of our moral lives: it is also an important building-block in the distinctly pragmatic commitment to meliorism. Survivor guilt is, then a condensed version of the kind of guilt that, from a pragmatic point of view, should drive us towards a melioristic stance. Connecting with themes explored by Pihlström, Timo Koistinen makes some remarks about Wittgensteinian philosophical method and its relation to religious and ethical relativism. Koistinen's paper focuses on the views of D. Z. Phillips, who has been the most influential Wittgensteinian philosopher of religion in recent decades.

Taking up a topic of vital interest for ethics as well as religion, Vincent Colapietro's essay aims to complement Pihlström's work on solipsism. Drawing on a range of diverse sources including Peirce, Hans Loewald, and Toni Morrison, Colapietro shifts the discussion toward the narcissistic self. Rather than elevating the avoidance of solipsism to a primary duty, Colapietro's account then stresses the recognition of the reality of others as an open-ended exploration. Following Pihlström's lead, Martin Gustafsson then sets out to refute a dichotomy of action and thought that often informs interpretations of Ludwig Wittgenstein. Zooming in on the case of issuing and obeying orders, Gustafsson argues that the Wittgensteinian view does not entail the prioritization of practice over intellect. Rather, the distinction is dissolved. In the following piece, Sarin Marchetti probes James's approach to liberalism. According to Marchetti, its characteristic feature is a conception of freedom as a work of self-transformation, which he contrasts to liberal positions that put the emphasis on autonomous self-legislation. On this basis, Marchetti argues that the Jamesian approach succeeds in evading thorny transcendental and metaphysical issues concerning the possi-

bility of self-sufficient and self-mastering subjects. In Hanne Appelqvist's contribution, the focus turns to Kant's conceptions of faith, beauty, and purpose. While reflective judgments of the purposiveness of nature warrant only descriptions and not explanations in the Kantian frame that Appelqvist explicates, she maintains that establishing the legitimacy of the judgment of beauty on transcendental grounds allows Kant to view nature as purposive for our moral efforts. In the concluding article, David Hildebrand scrutinizes Pihlström's reconstruction of a pragmatist metaphysics. Although he notes several points of agreement, Hildebrand disagrees with Pihlström's contention that pragmatism needs a Kant-style transcendental method. The article closes with some reflections on a possible tension between metaphysical interests and a melioristic justification for intellectual pursuits.

The Editors

Limits of Pragmatism

Peirce's Concept of Scientific Intelligence: Its Kantian Background and Relevance

TORJUS MIDTGARDEN

Introduction: interpreting Peirce's Kantian legacy

The founder of Pragmatism, Charles S. Peirce (1839–1914), was more influenced by Kant than were his fellow pragmatists William James and John Dewey. Some interpreters have seen Peirce's Kantian legacy as sustaining his relevance rather than as restricting it. Sami Pihlström has generally argued that "it is precisely the 'Kantian' nature of pragmatism, as well as the ability of pragmatism to critically reinterpret and transform Kantian ideas, that makes pragmatism a highly valuable philosophical approach today" (2010, 59). For example, in Karl-Otto Apel's (1981) and Jürgen Habermas' (1971) interpretations Peirce's pragmatism is considered as a transformed transcendental philosophy relevant for the 20th century.[1] Nevertheless, as the latter interpretations might equally suggests, there is a delicate and easily tipped balance between exploring Peirce's relevance and overriding topics and distinctions in his work by systematic ambitions.[2] One should also observe that the various philosophical systems that Peirce developed bring out his Kantian legacy in different ways.[3] Whereas the influence from Kant is obvious in Peirce's earliest systems, it is less straightforward in his later systems. Yet in some of his later outlines of a system he points out that a certain semiotic discipline, Speculative Grammar, is to replace 'Kant's transcendentale Elementarlehre' (2.206). This discipline consists in an analysis of *assertion* or an analysis of

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[1] See Apel (1981) and Habermas (1971).
[2] See Oehler (1987), Margolis (2002) and Midtgarden (2007).
[3] See Murphey (1961).

"the general conditions to which thought and sign of any kind must conform in order to assert anything" (2.206). For this semiotic analysis he introduces a new methodology and a Kantian concept of scientific intelligence that guides the methodology. While I have earlier provided a detailed interpretation of this semiotic analysis (Midtgarden 2001; 2007), I in this paper focus on Peirce's use of the concept of scientific intelligence and its relevance for selected strands of 20th century philosophy. More specifically, I first show how Peirce's Kantian concept bears on John R. Searle's Speech Act Theory and Jürgen Habermas' Universal Pragmatics. While both Peirce, Searle and Habermas study language use as communication, Peirce's analysis of assertion enables criticism of the exclusive focus on linguistic rules in Searle and Habermas. Although Habermas' recent epistemological work significantly complements his pragmatics, I point out how his account of objectivity and reference might have benefited from Peirce's semiotic analysis. I then briefly explore common ground between Peirce's use of his concept of scientific intelligence and the concept of 'strong objectivity' in Sandra Harding's Feminist Standpoint Epistemology. Finally, I reflect on these explorations of Peirce's relevance as a way of reading his work.

Scientific intelligence: a methodological strategy

Peirce defines the concept of scientific intelligence in terms of an intelligence that is *capable of learning from experience* and that *needs to learn from experience*.[4] This definition suggests Kant's general concept of discursive intelligence (*diskursiver Verstand*) as a precursor.[5] We are discursive intelligences, on Kant's account, since we need to synthesize elements given through the receptivity of sense. Moreover, as *discursive* intelligences we accomplish such synthesis through our capacity to apply concepts in judgments. The latter aspects of Kant's notion, I return to below, is captured through Peirce's analysis of how a scientific intelligence applies and combines signs through assertions. Moreover, in accordance with Kant, Peirce abstains from any psychologistic determination of the

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[4] See 2.227; 2.335; 3.428; NEM IV, ix–x.
[5] Kant (1982 [1787], B138–139, B149); Kant (1974 [1799], §77).

conception of scientific intelligence and of the terms 'learning' and 'experience'. Notable is further the absence of any definition of 'learning' or 'experience' in terms of specialised scientific methodologies: 'experience' is understood in the prescientific sense of *life experience*.[6] However, in his semiotic analysis Peirce uses the concept of scientific intelligence to consider learning processes that are initiated in the prescientific lifeworld and that condition and enable specialised scientific learning.

For his semiotic analysis of assertion Peirce combines two methodological approaches. Firstly, assuming an intimate connection between the notions of assertion and truth, Peirce applies the concept of scientific intelligence in reformulating his early definition of truth as the opinion ultimately agreed upon by all investigators.[7] Truth is now defined as the "definitive compulsion" of a scientific intelligence (2.333; Ms. 804, 22) or as "the compulsion of rational assent" (Ms. 787, 13). He then employs this definition to distinguish or "deduce" basic sign elements in an assertion (2.333; 2.335–2.336). Secondly, the sign distinctions thus deduced are to be further explored and tested in an experiential domain that consists of "ordinary experience" (Ms. 787, 17) and that is qualified, however, by our prescientific use of linguistic signs (2.333; 3.432). In establishing this domain as "rhetorical evidence" (2.333) Peirce suggests that his analysis yields *fallible* results.[8] Moreover, by using this methodology the aim is to capture certain features of our ordinary communicative practices that provide enabling conditions for asserting and assessing truth claims in science and thus for scientific learning. Through the methodology the conception of scientific intelligence in turn becomes specified in terms of participation in a communicatively enabled and experientially constrained learning process.

Notably, the semiotic analysis abstains from using any "special observations" (3.428) or observations enabled by specialised scientific inquiries. In fact, resorting to "special

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[6] See NEM IV, x; 3.435, and also 2.139; 2.784; 4.91; 5.581; 7.538; 8.330; Ms. 797, 1.

[7] 5.407.

[8] See my interpretation, Midtgarden (2001, 91).

observations" would involve "a vicious circle" (Ms. 787, 15; 3.432) since the analysis is to provide an account of general conditions of specialised inquiries and could not itself appeal to results of such inquiries. Although this methodological requirement has an antecedent in Kant's first *Critique*, the requirement to use only prespecialised experience can be compared to strategies developed by Peirce's fellow pragmatists. Through being supported by the concept of a nonspecialised scientific intelligence, this requirement recalls William James' critical strategy of avoiding 'the psychologist's fallacy'. The psychologist's fallacy is made if the psychologist confuses his "own standpoint with that of the mental fact about which he is making a report" (James (1950 [1890]) I, 196), or – slightly rephrased – if one attributes to the mind studied a too reflective mode of experience. Peirce's approach accords with that of James in so far as a scientific intelligence is not to be qualified by, for example, "a special training for … acoustical experiments, for hypnotism, for observing his own sensations apart from the interpretations of them" (Ms. 787, 5). Moreover, another relevant point of comparison is John Dewey's attack on the 'philosophical fallacy'. Dewey criticises philosophers who fail to consider processes of experience that condition and enable inquiry, and who project back upon such processes distinctions and relations that rather pertain to the outcomes of an inquiry.[9] In line with James' and Dewey's critical strategies, Peirce's methodological use of the concept of scientific intelligence provides for a non-circular reconstruction of conditions of any specialised inquiry. Moreover, Peirce's reconstruction may in turn be used to criticise philosophical theories that bear similarity to his analysis of assertion but that could be seen to fall short of the requirements of his methodology. Below I use John Searle's Speech Act Theory and Jürgen Habermas' Universal Pragmatics as examples of such theories.

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[9] See Tiles (1988, 19–24).

Peirce, Searle and Habermas

An important part of Peirce's reconstruction concerns sign elements that prepare and enable a student's learning of scientific discourses and their referential uses. These sign elements, he points out, are omnipresent in ordinary communication: they are *indexical* signs. The latter are exemplified by indications of a speaker's seriousness, such as facial gestures and tones of voice, as well as pointing gestures, that make the listener attend to "the real world" rather than expecting a tale or an ironic remark (2.337). Although Peirce's analysis considers verbal indexicals, such as personal and demonstrative pronouns,[10] his emphasis on the situated nature of their use, as well as his focus on paralinguistic and non-linguistic indexicals, suggest that indexicality cannot be reduced to a matter of linguistic rules or principles. Moreover, taking seriously that his analysis is to replace the whole of Kant's 'transcendentale Elementarlehre' (2.206), we may follow Peirce scholar Helmut Pape's proposal that Peirce's account of indexicality is a semiotic counterpart to Kant's analysis of space and time as formative conditions of experience, rather than to Kant's analysis of the conceptual capacities of human intelligence (*Verstand*).[11] With this Kantian background in mind, Peirce's analysis may bear critically on the foundations of Speech Act Theory.

Like Peirce's Speculative Grammar Searle's theory analyses ordinary language use; and like Peirce Searle studies language use as interpersonal acts. Yet, through their different systematic intents, the two analyses part company. Searle endeavours to formulate constitutive rules for various classes of linguistic acts, among them the class of "assertives" (1969, 64; 1979, 12–13). When arguing that rules for assertives and other types of speech acts are elements of an abstract rule-system or *langue* (in F. de Saussures' sense),[12] he tends to commit a philosophical fallacy in Dewey's sense. By assuming that practices guiding our language use can be explicated and formulated as general rules Searle tacitly takes ordinary language use to be similar to the uses of logical and

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[10] See 2.287; Ms. 787, 20–21.

[11] See Pape (2008, 23n3).

[12] See Searle (1969, 17).

formal languages that do in fact follow explicit rules or conventions. What is neglected are the indexical signs that form omnipresent parts of our communicative practices and that in turn prepare us for scientific and logical discourses. In effect Searle projects back on the work done by indexical signs a set of explicit rules to account for this work. A similar criticism can be addressed to Jürgen Habermas' theory.

On the face of it, Habermas' Universal Pragmatics may seem more congenial to Peirce. What is taken as an object of study in Habermas' theory is not an abstract system of rules considered as *langue* but rather a speaker's "intuitive rule consciousness" (1998, 33). Habermas thus opts for a *reconstructive* endeavour, aiming to capture a knowing how from the linguistic agent's point of view. Like in Peirce's Speculative Grammar, a fund of communicative experience, accessible from first and second person perspective, would serve as evidence for the reconstruction and provide for a *fallible* reconstruction.[13] Both Peirce and Habermas would thus significantly modify and develop Kant's transcendental methodology. Nevertheless, what Habermas' reconstruction sets out to explore excludes from the very outset a large portion of what would fall under the category of indexicality. Habermas thus tends to commit a philosophical fallacy, too, by distinctively ignoring "nonverbal actions and bodily expressions" (1998, 22), and even social actions coordinated through the medium of "nonpropositional" signs or symbols (1998, 63). From a semiotic perspective, necessary conditions for understanding and assessing referential claims, and hence, truth claims, would thus be left out of account. Verbal as well as non-verbal indexical signs can only fulfil their referential function in communication through sequences of coordinating gestures and movements, as in the case of ostensively referring acts,[14] or by being embedded in situated instructions or local practices that can never be fully articulated through verbal language.[15] Practical skills for identifying referents are developed in ordinary intercourse,

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[13] See Habermas (1998, 44–46).
[14] See Ms. 787, 20–21.
[15] See 2.336; Ms. 787, 21.

and they prepare an understanding of the use of referential terms in scientific discourses.

Moreover, in capturing agents' knowing how, Habermas conceives "communicative rule competence" (1998, 47) on the Chomskyan model of (grammatical) competence. This sets Habermas' project further apart from that of Peirce. Peirce's objective is not simply to reconstruct capacities for constructing sentences and for using them in utterances in performing speech acts. Against the background of Kant's conception of discursive intelligence Peirce analyses how agents can utter and combine tokens of signs in conveying a cognitive content or 'synthesis' in experientially constrained dialogue.[16] To see how capacities for forming and conveying such synthesis would prepare for scientific learning it is instructive to consider Peirce's concept of *abduction*.[17] While scientists make abductive inferences in forming novel explanatory hypotheses, capacities for making abductive inferences are developed already through learning processes in everyday life. Capacities for abductions would involve, but not be restricted to, a grammatical capacity to form novel sentence constructions. On Peirce's semiotic account, the language user would need to become aware of *iconic* or 'diagramming' relations between the form and the contents of sentences. In particular, the language user needs to distinguish novel ways of representing an experienced fact through sentences since, Peirce points out, "the question whether a fact is to be regarded as referring to a single thing or to more is a question of the form of proposition under which it suits our purpose to state the fact" (3.418). In so far as abductive inferences in science propose explanatory connections between states of affair,[18] these inferences have been enabled through learning how to exploit the syntactic and semantic structure of sentences in stating facts in different or novel ways.

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[16] In his analysis of assertion Peirce considers such complex linguistic and cognitive capacity under the semiotic category of *symbols*. See Ms. 787, 28–29; 3.435.

[17] See EP 2, 287; 2.96; 5.144–5.145; 5.171–5.172; 5.188–5.189.

[18] See how Peirce applies his account of abduction to the historical example of Kepler's explanation of the form of the planetary orbit (2.96–2.97).

Peirce's account of language users' capacities for abduction, as well as his analysis of indexicality in ordinary communication, suggest how scientific discourses are rooted in learning process in everyday life. Although these semiotic analyses go beyond the scope of Habermas' Universal Pragmatics, they bear on Habermas' recent epistemological work (2003). Habermas here argues that the formal pragmatic account of truth as a kind of validity claim must be complemented by a 'nonepistemic' conception of objectivity and truth as anchored in our lifeworld practices.[19] By drawing on his earlier interpretation of Peirce (1971), Habermas maintains that practical problem solving presupposes an objective world, in particular through experiences of failed coping and the resistance that objects offer to our background expectations and beliefs.[20] Since expectations and beliefs can be communicated, problematised and corrected already in lifeworld contexts, Habermas now considers learning processes that are initiated in lifeworld practices and that become institutionalised through the pursuit of scientific knowledge.[21] In so far, Habermas' extension and complementation of his pragmatics may seem congenial to the objectives of Peirce's Speculative Grammar. However, by taking Peirce's pragmatism only to be concerned with 'instrumental action', and by neglecting Peirce's semiotic analyses, Habermas fails to appreciate the relevance of the latter for his own purposes. Although briefly mentioning the need for "abductive imagination" in communicatively mediated learning processes (2003, 78), Habermas' conceptualisation of learning processes could further have taken recourse to Peirce's analysis of indexicality. In fact Habermas does recognise the relevance and the need for an analysis of indexicality in providing a convincing account objectivity and reference. Acknowledging that his epistemology needs "a concept of reference that explains how we can refer to the same object (or objects of the same kind) under different theoretical descriptions" (2003, 10), he endorses Hilary Putnam's theory of

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[19] Habermas (2003, 39–40).
[20] See Habermas (2003, 15–16).
[21] See Habermas (2003, 13, 26).

reference and its incorporation of a concept of indexicality.[22] Still, as suggested by Christopher Hookway, [23] already Peirce's analysis of indexicality contain basic elements of the account of reference needed by Habermas.

Peirce and Feminist Standpoint Epistemology

Peirce's use of the concept of scientific intelligence enables further consideration of objectivity. His definition of the concept, we recall, resists psychologistic determinations, while its methodological use supports a semiotic analysis, the aim of which is to reconstruct enabling conditions for asserting and assessing truth claims in the sciences. Since Peirce's use of the concept of scientific intelligence involves a reformulation of his early definition of truth, this use has implications for considerations of objectivity. While Peirce's early definition of truth conveys the idea of an *unlimited* community of inquirers,[24] his reformulation suggests certain provisions for the *variability* and *heterogeneity* of such unlimited community. Through his concept of scientific intelligence he considers how scientific learning processes, culminating in "the compulsion of rational assent" (Ms. 787, 13), would be informed by community members' life experience. Focusing now more on the individual members and their contribution, Peirce's reformulation of his truth definition suggests that the variability (or heterogeneity) of the community has epistemic significance, for example, in terms of a broader range of novel problems and ideas to be developed through abductions or in terms of more extensive and informed criticism of theories. In so far, Peirce use of the concept of scientific intelligence can

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[22] See Habermas (2003, 33–36).

[23] Hookway has pointed out that the conception of indexicality enables Peirce to consider how "[l]earning from experience depends upon being able to establish when judgements at different times have the same object; learning from testimony (and engaging in discussion) depends upon being able to tell when judgements made by different people have the same object; and [the] problems about false belief provide the

additional twist that we can be in cognitive contact with an object through a misdescription of it." (2002, 113– 114)

[24] See in 5.408.

be further elaborated through Feminist Standpoint Episte-mology.

Sandra Harding (1992) has famously argued for "strong objectivity" in rejecting all claims of value neutrality in sci-ence. Strong objectivity could be achieved only through de-tecting androcentric and other social biases that are at work in "the context of discovery", where problems are selected and hypotheses formulated, as well as in "the context of justi-fication", where theories are tested.[25] Scientific communities, however, "that are designed (intentionally or not) to consist only of like-minded individuals lose exactly that economic, political, and cultural diversity that is necessary to enable those who count as peers to detect the dominant culture's values and interests" (1992, 578). Rather, in order to "detect the values and interests that structure scientific institutions, practices, and conceptual schemes … [o]ne must start from *outside* them to gain a causal, critical view of them" (1992, 580–581). One must thus articulate perspectives from the lives of people who are marginalised in society and underrepre-sented in or absent from scientific communities. Harding's proposed inclusion of perspectives from marginalised lives to enable more robust objectivity serves as a relevant point of reference for Peirce's definition of truth in terms of an ideal scientific community. Particularly in highlighting the unlim-ited and variable character of an ideal scientific community, Peirce's truth definition is driven by a wish to avoid limited and limiting perspectives that is congenial to Harding's pro-gram. In fact, Peirce sometimes even provides specification of some such limited and limiting perspectives in commenting that a scientific intelligence should not necessarily be con-ceived of as being of "our nation, or race" (Ms. 787, 5). More-over, given that Peirce's later classification of the sciences recognises a main division between natural and social sci-ence,[26] an epistemological provision to avoid limited and lim-iting perspectives based on nationality or ethnicity would gain particular relevance for the social sciences.

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[25] See Harding (1992, 577–578).
[26] See 3.427.

A final remark: a way of reading Peirce

The ways in which I have explored Peirce's relevance above differ in several respects. Whereas the critical approach to Searle and Habermas exploited Peirce's Kantian legacy, the connection made between Peirce's truth definitions and Harding's Standpoint Epistemology did not. Moreover, when elaborated through Standpoint Epistemology Peirce's concept use gains a critical function toward theories with blind spots for their social biases; yet, when detecting 'philosophical fallacies' in Dewey's sense Peirce's semiotic analysis is used to criticise theoretical neglect of non- or paralinguistic conditions of communication. Nevertheless, in both cases, Peirce's use of concepts would be critically oriented toward the subject matter of a theory in the light of certain prescientific contexts for the theory. In the case of Peirce's Standpoint Epistemological relevance, social contexts made silent or invisible through the theory would receive particular attention; while in detecting philosophical fallacies experiential contexts neglected or distorted through the theory's analytic apparatus would be in view. Moreover, by thus stressing Peirce's critical potential toward other philosophical or scientific theories, the explorations of Peirce's relevance above could serve to tentatively distinguish a general way of appreciating his work and its Kantian legacy. In critically considering how prescientific contexts are silenced, neglected, or distorted through theories, Peirce's philosophical concepts would mainly have a *metatheoretical* function rather than be elements of a systematic theory that define its own subject matter. This way of appreciating Peirce's relevance may be contrasted with readings aiming to reconstruct Peirce's philosophical systems as such, such as Apel's (1981) or Habermas' (1971) interpretations of Peirce's 'transformation' of Kant's transcendental philosophy. Through the proposed way of reading, Peirce's Kantian legacy could be flexibly appreciated across positions and discussions in contemporary philosophy, regardless of their historical or systematic connections to Kant. Yet, one may ask, would this interpretative approach fail to give Peirce's Kantian legacy its due consideration? I will give only one exegetic reason in defence of the course taken in this paper. Throughout his career, and particularly in

his later system building efforts, Peirce's uses resources from several philosophical sources, not only Kant. For example, in the outline of a system considered above Peirce draws on Auguste Comte's influential classification of the sciences,[27] while Peirce's Speculative Grammar in particular adopts perspectives and resources from the medieval Modistae school. When taking such various sources of influence into account, one might be more prepared to acknowledge the relevance of Peirce's work in ways that would make the connections to Kant somewhat less important.

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[27] See 3.427.

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Queries about Pragmatic Realism

ILKKA NIINILUOTO

Sami Pihlström (2003, 351) has proposed pragmatism as a promising philosophy for dedicated "middle-ground-thinkers" who attempt to find reconciliatory standpoints between extreme and even incompatible positions. I have been fascinated by pragmatism as an inspiring movement which is able to interact with all other major philosophical schools. Therefore, we both have appreciated the dialogue between pragmatists and realists, with the hope that we could learn from our agreements and disagreements (see e.g. Pihlström, 2007; Niiniluoto, 2009). In this paper, both of these points are illustrated by the main problem of Pihlström's doctoral thesis *Structuring the World* (1996): the possibility of *pragmatic realism*, taking seriously some of the key ideas of these two rival approaches. The topic is vast and deep, full of intricate philosophical and metaphilosophical issues, and in a single short article I can only take up some selected interesting examples: Pihlström's own pragmatism with a Kantian turn, Rein Vihalemm's practical realism, and Hasok Chang's pluralist pragmatic realism. I cannot argue here who is right in these debates, but in the queries my own critical scientific realism (Niiniluoto, 1999) is used as a point of comparison.

Pihlström: Pragmatic Realism with a Kantian turn

Sami Pihlström's 1996 doctoral thesis is a heroic attempt to reconcile neopragmatism (especially in the form developed by Hilary Putnam) and scientific realism (especially as defended by Ilkka Niiniluoto). Later he has become a leading expert in classical American pragmatism. With influences from the Wittgenstein scholar Heikki Kannisto's lectures on Kant, Pihlström's *Naturalizing the Transcendental* (2003) makes

a Kantian turn in arguing that pragmatism offers a naturalized reconstruction of transcendental philosophy.

Pihlström's (1996, 379-381) main conclusions about pragmatic realism include the following:

(i) Metaphysical realism, i.e., the myth of the ready-made world, is false.

(ii) Minimal realism as a pragmatic assumption: the existence of the inexhaustible external world uncreated by the human mind and human practices.

(iii) Metaphysical theses on what the world in itself is really like or what the things-in-themselves really are fruitless, since we do not possess a God's-Eye View to the world.

(iv) The noumenal world and the phenomenal world are basically identical.

(v) The ways the world is are dependent on the epistemic-pragmatic-conceptual points of view from which we structure the world.

(vi) Science is our best method of obtaining knowledge, and unobservable theoretical entities have to be postulated for explaining phenomena.

Here the assumption (ii) is needed to avoid the relativist conclusion "anything goes", so that "right world versions" can be distinguished from wrong ones (*ibid.*, 52). He continues (*ibid.*, 411) with the "deeply Jamesian position" that we are responsible for the world which we "construct". This normative appeal is the central theme of Pihlström's later monograph *Pragmatic Moral Realism* (2005).

Even though there may be subtle differences in details, these conclusions are close to the definition of critical scientific realism in Niiniluoto (1999). Thesis (ii) accepts minimal ontological realism, and thesis (vi) epistemological and theoretical realism. Theses (i) and (v) agree with conceptual pluralism, which I have used for rejecting metaphysical realism and God's-Eye View (*ibid.*, Chapter 7). The main difference is that Pihlström does not commit himself to my claim (against Putnam's internal realism) that conceptual pluralism is compatible with the Tarskian correspondence theory of truth –

even though "truthmaking" should have a role in pragmatist ontology (Pihlström, 2009).

In a survey article on the history of pragmatist philosophy of science, Pihlström (2008) with good reasons regards Charles S. Peirce as a precursor of scientific realism, and admits that William James and John Dewey had an inclination to instrumentalism. But in the spirit of thesis (vi) Pihlström urges that skepticism about unobservable theoretical entities would be an "utterly unpragmatic attitude". Another issue that he discusses is the contrast between realism and constructivism. With references to Putnam, Joseph Rouse and Paul Hoyningen-Huene's Kantian interpretation of Thomas Kuhn, he concludes:

> The world as investigated by science is an elaborate human construction, not absolutely independent of paradigms, theories, conceptualizations, or (scientific) practices and traditions. In this sense, but only in this sense, we 'construct' the world.

As a realist, I can agree, if scientific practices here include interaction with reality, which was a key element of Peirce's conception of the scientific method. But I would add that conceptualization is a mediating step in our attempt to find scientific knowledge about the world as it is independently of us.

There is a tension between (iii) and (iv): if (in Kantian terms) the world in itself is the same as the phenomenal world, why does not our knowledge about the latter give also knowledge about the former? For example, Eino Kaila in 1939 argued that Kant was wrong in claiming that we know nothing of things-in-themselves, since after all we know their structure, which they share with appearances (see Kaila, 2014, 14). Moreover, for a fallibilist scientific realist, the phenomenal world (*Mundus phaenomenon*) would be replaced by our scientific knowledge, which represents the world in itself (*Mundus intelligibilis*) in the sense of Peirce's semiotics (cf. Niiniluoto, 2014), but this knowledge so far is always only a tiny fragment of the inexhaustible world in itself. As Peirce argued in his pragmatist theory of truth, at best these "worlds" could become identical in the limit for the ideal scientific community.

Pihlström's (2003) project of reconciling pragmatism and transcendental philosophy starts by naturalizing the notion of the transcendental subject. Instead of "an ethereal metaphysical ghost", this subject is inherently social: it is "we" who are engaged in the construction of "our" world (*ibid.*, 223-24). This social emphasis is in line with Peirce's (and Kuhn's) emphasis that the true subject of scientific knowledge is the scientific community (*CP* 2.655), but Pihlström (2009, 11-12) also maintains that the constructive "self" is "not simply an entity or object to be found in the world" but rather "a limit of the world". Pihlström (2003) also acutely analyzes the role of transcendental arguments among several contemporary philosophers (including Peirce, Wittgenstein, and McDowell). His reading of Kant relies on Henry Allison's "one world" or "double aspect" interpretation, where the transcendental and empirical are "perspectives on one and the same thing" (*ibid.*, 162) (see also Pihlström, 1996, 222-225). Without going to detailed Kant exegesis here, I believe that the historical Kant was a two world thinker, who inconsistently with his own principles assumed a causal relation between the noumenal world and the phenomenal world. This gave reason to Fichte for abolishing the things-in-themselves, thereby starting a long period of idealism in German philosophy. Another reaction was Alois Riehl's "critical realism" in 1887, which argued against Kant's agnostic position that we have knowledge of *Dinge an sich* (see Neuber, 2014). This kind of realism against ungraspable thing-in-itself was shared by Peirce 1868 (*CP* 5.310-11), who explained in 1905 that a Kantist becomes a Critical Common-sensist as soon he corrects Kant's doctrine by accepting that "a thing-in-itself can, however indirectly, be conceived". Similar views were expressed by Marxist thinkers like Friedrich Engels in 1886 and V. I. Lenin in 1909, Moritz Schlick in his early work in 1918/1925, and Eino Kaila in 1926 (see Niiniluoto, 1999, 91).

Allison's interpretation is extremely interesting as such, but I doubt its ability to resolve the difficulties in Kant's system – like the issues of agnosticism and causation. But my earlier remark that the one world interpretation would turn Kant into a critical realist who failed to express his views properly (see Niiniluoto, 1999, 92) is misleading. (Recall Peirce's 1905 statement about Kant, whom he "more than

admires", as "nothing but a somewhat confused pragmatist" (*CP* 5.525).) If one asks what are those entities with a double aspect, Allison's reply is that in talking about things-in-themselves we are in fact talking about ordinary spatio-temporal objects without reference to the constitutive conditions of our sensibility and cognition. Thus, while for the scientific realist the basic entities in the world are noumenal things-in-themselves which can at least partially be known by perception and scientific inquiry, for Allison the basic entities are the phenomenal appearances and things-in-themselves are secondary, characterized only in a negative way.

In fact, Kant in *Prolegomena* (§13, Remark II) goes so far as claiming that things-in-themselves have no primary and secondary qualities, so that they cannot be identical with phenomena in any ordinary sense. For the critical realist, the inexhaustible noumenal world is richer than the phenomenal world – Kant's talk about "things" should not be taken too literally, since the mind-independent world is a lawlike flux of causal processes (Niiniluoto, 1999, 219), where physical objects are identifiable by their physical properties and spatio-temporal continuity in the physical space (see Hintikka and Hintikka, 1989).

Pihlström (2003, 119) favors a weak formulation of transcendental idealism which does not presuppose any unchanging "fixed reality" that determines the conditions of objecthood. Kant's transcendental idealism can be reconstructed in a way that "avoids postulating any supersensible realm of noumenal objects" (*ibid.*, 210). Elsewhere Pihlström has told that his pragmatism rejects "the materialist idea that there is, or even could be, purely material World 1 entities with no relation whatsoever to human culture" (Pihlström, 2007, 317). Still, "pragmatism, as such, is no enemy of (moderate) scientific realism", and "Kant himself was not only a transcendental idealist but also an empirical realist" (Pihlström, 2008). Indeed, "the kind of reasonable and moderate realism that one can defend in pragmatism" or naturalized transcendental idealism amounts to Kant what called "empirical realism" (Pihlström, 2003, 155).

Those scientific realists, who endorse eliminative or reductive materialism, may have difficulties in making sense of the Kantian framework even in a naturalized guise. But for

emergent materialists, who apply the more flexible Popperian ontology of three worlds (see Niiniluoto, 1999), the constituted "phenomenal world" is a complex class of World 2 and Word 3 entities. Thus, this kind of realist has no objection, if "the world as we know it" is characterized as an "empirically real" human construction (Pihlström, 2008). Pihlström's account of "our world" is in fact much richer than Kant's phenomenal world, since (as Kannisto has suggested) it may include theoretical entities (cf. (vi) above) – such as electrons, physical space, dinosaurs, and Big Bang. (Perhaps the Kantian term "empirical" is not any more quite adequate here, but this is a side issue.) On the other hand, this construction should allow elimination as well: "our world" does not any more include angels, fairies, brownies, witches, evil spirits, ether, and phlogiston.

But Pihlström's Kantian *empirical realism* is definitely weaker than his earlier pragmatic realism, as the realist assumption (ii) is dropped. But without an external mind-independent reality, how can empirical realism distinguish correct and wrong constructions or avoid relativism of our life-worlds? It is illustrative to compare Pihlström's framework to the arch-constructivist Rudolf Carnap in the *Aufbau* in 1928. Carnap applied the Kantian term "empirical reality" to the objects that can be logically constructed from elementary experiences in his system (see Carnap, 1969, 273). They include on different levels (with clear distinctions) autopsychological, physical, heteropsychological, and cultural objects – i.e., all items of Popper's Worlds 1, 2, and 3. On the other hand, reality independent of the cognizing subject belongs to metaphysics. Hence, metaphysical realism and idealism (which assert or deny external mind-independent things-in-themselves) are meaningless pseudo-statements (*ibid.*, 334).

Even though Pihlström would not approve the young Carnap's logical method of construction and his empiricist criterion of scientific meaning, both of them represent neo-Kantian ways of thinking. So it is important to ask why the minimal realist principle (ii) is not any more included in Pihlström's empirical realism. The existence of a mind-independent world could be

(a) a presupposition which is not needed, and therefore its truth is left open

(b) a metaphysical assumption, which is not meaningful

(c) a metaphysical assumption, which is rejected as false.

Here (a) corresponds to the step of *epoche* (suspension of judgment) in Edmund Husserl's phenomenology. It indicates a difference to pragmatic realism in the sense of Pihlström (1996), but would be compatible with scientific realism. Alternative (b) would agree with Carnap. For example, my conceptual pluralism would not be plausible, since for a Putnamian pragmatist THE WORLD in itself "makes little sense" (Pihlström, 2009, 25). Alternative (c) would turn Pihlström into a metaphysical idealist, but this is denied by the thesis that "metaphysical antirealism, in its different forms, must be rejected as firmly as metaphysical realism" (Pihlström, 2009, vii, 7; cf. Pihlström, 2003, 222). Without the possibility of elaborating this theme here, one may note that the ontological positions of many neopragmatists (e.g. Hilary Putnam, Nicholas Rescher, Richard Rorty) are ambiguous between the alternatives (a) – (c) (cf. Niiniluoto, 1999, 28, 205-210).

In an important recent article Pihlström (2019) asks whether the uncritical appeal to the pragmatist notion of useful truth has contributed to the worrisome "post-truth" era. He suggests that today a pragmatic realist should, as a metaphilosophical move, emphasize the realist and objective aspects of the notion of truth.

Vihalemm: Practical Realism

Rein Vihalemm (1938-2015) was the leading philosopher of science in Estonia, with a specialization in the philosophy of chemistry. His *practical realism* is an interesting contribution which attempts to find a middle way between standard scientific realism and anti-realism (see Vihalemm, 2012). Its five basic theses are the following:

(1) science does not represent the world "as it really is" from a God's eye view point

(2) Putnam's internal realism and social constructivism are not acceptable

(3) science is a practical activity in the real world, involving a purposeful and critically guided constructive, manipulative, and material interference with nature

(4) scientific practice includes a normative aspect

(5) what is "given" in scientific practice is an aspect of the real world.

The key idea of Vihalemm's treatment comes from the Marxist conception of practice. Karl Marx argued in 1845 in his second thesis on Feuerbach that "the dispute over the reality or non-reality of thinking which is isolated from practice is a purely scholastic question". Praxis for Marx is "a human sensuous activity", or material work in the transformation of reality. For Friedrich Engels in 1886 this implies that practice is the criterion of truth, when practice means "experiment and industry". Vihalemm's theses (3) and (5) accept the ontology of the real world against all forms of idealism and dualism (cf. (2)), but thesis (1) expresses epistemic caution, reflected in the conclusion that "to speak about the world outside practice means to speak about something indefinable or illusory".

Vihalemm acknowledges citations to Marx and Engels in Niiniluoto (1999, 39, 275), but argues that my critical scientific realism is "too abstract as the context of practice is not thematised in it". This may be fair, as more about practice should be said within the realist framework. On the other hand, a difference between our approaches is that (following Joseph Rouse) Vihalemm treats truth in a deflationary way, while in my view the practice criterion warrants truth in the correspondence sense (even when something like (1) is accepted). Moreover, Vihalemm's account of the production of the hormone releasing substance TRH is somewhat different from mine (see Niiniluoto, 1999, 271-274). While I argued that TRH was isolated in Guilleman's laboratory from masses of pig brains, but not created by the "negotiations" of his team (as the social constructivists Latour and Woolgar claim), Vihalemm admits that TRH is real and has the chemical structure Pyro-Glu-His-Pro-amide, but claims that there could not be such a thing as TRH "independent of certain

practices (comprising also beliefs)". In my view TRH is a substance with causal powers in rats and pigs even before it was isolated and identified by Guillemin or taken into account "in our dealings with the world". The case of TRH, which is an independently pre-existing theoretical entity found by a research team, should be distinguished from real constructions using genetic technology in synthetic biology (e.g. the discovery and building of new artificial molecules which serve as antibiotics).

Vihalemm (2012) also compares his practical realism to Pihlström's pragmatic realism, suggesting that they should agree with each other. Theses (1) and (4) are clearly common points of these views, but Vihalemm also emphasizes the Marxist background of his conception of practice in thesis (3). Pihlström (2012), who had already published his Kantian monograph in 2003, admits that Vihalemm is in a sense "more realistic" and "more distant from the Kantian transcendental concerns". Perhaps one could say that for Vihalemm the world is constructed "from inside" by our material practices, not from outside (Kant) or from the limit (Wittgenstein).

Chang: Pluralist Pragmatic Realism

Hasok Chang is a prominent historian and philosopher of science, well-known for his contributions to the development of chemistry. In particular, with emphasis on the constructive role of measurement apparatus, he has argued in detail how our conception of temperature has evolved from the discovery of thermometers – just as our conception of time depends on clocks. Such case studies are useful ways of showing how "our world as we know it" is constituted by scientific practices of measurement.

Chang (2016) has recently formulated his own position which he calls – once again – *pragmatic realism*. For him metaphysical realism is "a religious hangover", and notions like "representation" and "correspondence" are dead metaphors. It is no wonder that Chang's version of pragmatism opts for William James rather than Peirce. He defines pragmatic coherence as "a harmonious fitting-together of actions that

leads to the successful achievement of one's aims". Then truth is defined in terms of coherence:

"a statement is true in a given circumstance if (belief in) it is (necessarily) involved in a coherent epistemic activity".

This definition, which equates truth with empirical confirmation, is the same as "James without misunderstandings". Next reality is defined in terms of coherence:

"a putative entity should be considered real if it is employed in a coherent epistemic activity that relies on its existence and its basic properties (by which we identify it)."

In other words, we should consider as real "the presumed referents of concepts that play a significant role in a coherent system of practice" (Chang, 2018).

According to Leszek Kolakowski (1971), the crucial difference between Marxism and pragmatism is that the former regards practice as a *criterion* of truth, while the latter *defines* truth in terms of practice. Thus, for the Marxists success in the practical application of a theory is an indicator of the correspondence of the theory with reality. For the pragmatists such success is conceptually related to truth, so that in a sense truth is created along with pragmatic and empirical success.

Kolakowski's interpretation is not unproblematic. Some scholars question whether James gave a definition of truth at all (see Pihlström, 1996, 41), and Philip Kitcher (2011) takes James to support a "modest" correspondence theory. Vihalemm (2012) avoids this issue by supporting the deflation theory of truth. But Chang's new "coherence theory of truth" is clearly intended as a definition, thereby giving new flesh to Kolakowski's thesis. On the other hand, Chang's "coherence theory of reality" refers to Ian Hacking's entity realism, which uses success in "intervening" as a criterion of existence ("electrons are real, if you can spray them"). This is similar but weaker than the practice criterion of Engels, which mandates inferences to the existence and properties of theoretical entities (see Niiniluoto, 1999, 275).

Chang's definition of reality is restricted to entities which can be relied on in our activities. But is also leads to a very tolerant pluralist ontology. As Priestley made some successful experiments with his phlogiston theory of combustion, Chang is ready to grant reality to phlogiston. However, for the same reason oxygen too has to be accepted as real. Chang

does not see this as a problem for his pluralism, since "phlogiston is real" and "oxygen is real" do contradict each other, and some chemists have made coherent hybrid system which admitted the reality of both (see Chang, 2018). But clearly as descriptions of the process of combustion phlogiston theory and oxygen theory are in contradiction, so that it would be problematic to include both of them in our world picture. Therefore, Chang has to appeal to Hacking's criterion in the narrow sense that our judgment of the reality of an entity is not tied to all the related theoretical statements. For this reason, a critical realist formulates conceptual pluralism so that, as fragments of the same underlying reality, correct world-versions within different conceptual frameworks cannot be incompatible with each other (see Niiniluoto, 1999, 224).

As Chang's coherence theory establishes a *conceptual* connection between success, reality, and truth, he concludes that "it is not that our activities are coherent because our theoretical entities are real and our theoretical propositions are true". So his pragmatism excludes the "no miracle argument" which is used by scientific realists: the best *explanation* for the pragmatic and empirical success of science is the assumption that our theories are true or at least sufficiently truthlike (see Niiniluoto, 2018).

As the final query, one may ask how pragmatic realism is able to treat the issue about the reality of the past. Some prehistorical and historical events and objects have left causal effects (the cosmic microwave background for the Big Bang, fossils for dinosaurs, documents for Napoleon Bonaparte etc.), from which we can infer backward by abduction or retroduction to their real existence in the past (see Niiniluoto, 2018). Many past events have left no traces to the present, so that we do not have any more evidence about them, even though they were real. (This was the crux of Russell's critique of Dewey's theory of truth as warranted assertability.) If abduction is included among the principles of construction, Pihlström (and Putnam) can find a place for some past things in the empirically real world-versions. Vihalemm does not raise this question in his Marxist account of practical realism, in spite of the problem that we cannot interact with past objects with our material practices. Therefore, practical realism should be supplemented with methods which indirectly test

hypotheses about past events and facts. Chang's version of pragmatic realism has to face the problem that there were entities (like dinosaurs) which inhabited the earth even before any human beings and epistemic practices were around them (cf. Niiniluoto, 1999, 40). In order to avoid anti-realism about the past, he should formulate examples of coherent epistemic activities whose success today relies on the existence and properties of past entities.

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Pragmatist Antinomy

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1. Introduction

Pragmatism is not characterized by a particular philosophical thesis. In this, it hardly distinguishes itself from other philosophical traditions. However, there are two central themes pragmatist philosophers have tended to promote. The first is an account of the meaningfulness of philosophical and scientific concepts in terms of their practical consequences. If philosophical notions do not have consequences in terms of human conduct, they are meaningless and, at worst, detrimental to our inquiries. This notion of pragmatism as an account of (a type of) meaning was introduced by Charles S. Peirce and popularized by William James and John Dewey; however, arguments based on the pragmatist "principle" of meaning – the maxim of pragmatism – have been deployed by much more recent pragmatists such as Hilary Putnam, Richard Rorty and Sami Pihlström. The second theme is the view that our world as humanly "laden", or "shaped" or "structured" by our human practices. Among contemporary pragmatists, this theme is evident in Hilary Putnam's internal realism and Sami Pihlström's sophisticated Kantian variety of pragmatism. However, it is also present in other prominent pragmatist traditions, such as the anti-representationalism and subject naturalism of Richard Rorty and Huw Price.

I attempt to show that there is considerable tension between these two themes, the pragmatist account of meaning and pragmatic humanism. Indeed, as I argue, they seem to enter into a conflict which has an irresolvable air, providing – to use Kant's term very broadly – a pragmatist antinomy. I find it plausible that any pragmatist may need to address this issue; however, whether this is cause for concern for all philosophers currently calling themselves pragmatists is beyond

the scope of this discussion. In the next section, I briefly introduce the two pragmatist themes already mentioned. In the sections that follow, I first discuss Peirce's argument against Kant's transcendental idealism (and related views), and then consider how this argument – if successful – turns against pragmatic humanism. Finally, I briefly consider alternative strategies for pragmatists to dispel these concerns.

2. The pragmatist account of meaning and pragmatic humanism

In 1878, Peirce presented his pragmatism as a maxim for the clarification of the meaning of sentences and concepts; in particular, pragmatism was to act as a device for detecting claims devoid of meaning. In Peirce's view, beliefs are of the nature of habits: any belief would result in action under some conceivable circumstances. Accordingly, any meaningful sentence would result in action under some circumstances on part of a person who believes that the sentence is true. Two sentences have the same meaning, if the conceivable conduct resulting from their acceptance in no way differs. The maxim of pragmatism thus maintains that in order to clarify the meanings of words and sentences, we are to consider their conceivable effects in conduct.[1]

This view of the meaning of concepts and propositions Peirce augmented with his account of indexical reference which anticipates some of the key development of 20th century philosophy of language. In Peirce's view, an index is a sign the significance of which is based on its "dynamic" connection to its object as well as to the person interpreting it (2.305). Smoke is an indexical sign of fire: it has an existential connection to both fire as well as to its interpreter's perceptions.

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[1] Peirce's early presentations of pragmatism included the idea that all differences in conduct are (or are grounded in) differing expectations of future sensations. Habits result in action based on stimuli which are "derived from perception", and the purpose of action is to "produce some sensible result" (Peirce 1878, 131). In many of Peirce's later formulations of pragmatism, this connection between conduct and sensation is far less rigid. In his later writings, Peirce emphasises that the practical consequences that we are to trace are the effects on deliberate conduct (e.g. CP 8.191, c. 1904).

Proper names, Peirce maintained, begin their lives as indices, only later becoming symbols, the significance of which is based on convention (2.239). The object of indexical reference may, of course, turn out to be a fiction: in some cases, there is no fire where there is smoke, or the weathercock may be stuck in its current position, unmoved by the direction of the wind which it is presumed to indicate. Nevertheless, the signification of indexicals depends on a presumed existential connection between the sign and its object.

Pragmatism in its narrowest sense is confined to the pragmatist account of meaning. However, there is another starting point shared by most pragmatist philosophers. Stimulated by the early pragmatist F. C. S. Schiller's (1907) humanism, Peirce maintained that our conception of the world is limited to the confines of our possible practical experience (as we will see in some more detail below). In contemporary philosophy, this pragmatic humanism (as I will call it), is perhaps most evident in the work of Hilary Putnam and Sami Pihlström, who have proposed views that have close affinities with Kantian philosophy.[2] Putnam's (1981; 1990) internal realism from the late 1970s to the early 1990s is largely the thesis that objects and their existence are dependent on human conceptual schemes. Pihlström (1996; 1998; 2008; 2013) has argued in considerable detail that pragmatists should accept a sophisticated version of (naturalized) Kantianism, which holds that the world is structured by our human practices. There is no point to philosophical attempts to transcend those limits or to approach what there is from a God's eye point of view.

Other contemporary pragmatists have preferred a less explicitly Kantian starting point. Nevertheless, their starting point is in accounts of human beings and our language-use. Huw Price (2007; 2011) has proposed that philosophical naturalism has long been occupied by attempts to find suitable objects and properties in the world to "match" the terms and concepts used in our various vocabularies, or *object naturalism*. Price argues that pragmatism begins, instead, with *subject naturalism*, a scientific inquiry into human language use, which views our ontological commitments as tools for differ-

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[2] This is despite Peirce's objections to Schiller's views and the label "humanism", to which I will presently return.

ent tasks and purposes. There is no point of view "of the world" from which to adjudicate between the different commitments made in different linguistic practices (or domains of language). The resulting view is a close relative of Richard Rorty's anti-representationalist pragmatism. Claiming to take his inspiration from John Dewey's views, Rorty (1982; 1998) argued that truth is a matter of human practices of justification and discourse, instead of representation of objects or facts. There are considerable differences between these lineages of pragmatism – as well as other lineages which fall outside of the scope of this discussion.[3] Nevertheless, pragmatists of both stripes are committed to the key idea that ontology is human-centric as opposed to theocentric, to use Kant's term. However, as I will now proceed to argue, pragmatic humanism sits uneasily with an important criticism of Kantian thought inspired by the pragmatist account of meaning and reference.

3. Transcendental idealism and Peirce's semantic argument

Transcendental idealism, for Kant, is "the doctrine that [appearances] are all together to be regarded as mere representations and not as things in themselves, and accordingly that space and time are only sensible forms of our intuition, but not determinations given for themselves or conditions of objects as things in themselves" (A369). Peirce's recurrent criticism of Kant often begins with the notion of things in themselves. This notion, Peirce argues, is meaningless.[4] We can refer to an object which is not (currently) cognized, and to an object which will never be cognized in the actual course of history. However, we cannot form a conception of that which falls beyond the scope of potential human cognition, as it involves no practical consequences. Neither can it be referred to by way of an index, as it is not connected to any of our expe-

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[3] For a more detailed discussion and criticism of anti-representationalism from the point of view of Peircean pragmatism, see Rydenfelt (*forthcoming*).

[4] For Peirce's arguments along these lines, see especially CP 5.259–5.264; 6.419 ff.; 8.12 ff.

riences. On grounds of the pragmatist account of meaning and reference, the thing in itself is thus a meaningless notion:

> The Ding an sich, however, can neither be indicated nor found. Consequently, no proposition can refer to it, and nothing true or false can be predicated of it. Therefore, all references to it must be thrown out as meaningless surplusage (CP 5.525).

If articulating transcendental idealism presupposes the notion of an object which cannot be indicated or found, this articulation relies on a concept without meaning.

At first blush, Peirce's criticism appears to be based on a "two-world" or "two object" interpretation of Kant's transcendental idealism in which things in themselves are considered to be other than the objects of our cognition. However, contemporary Kantians such as the pragmatist Sami Pihlström have relied on an alternative, "two-aspect" or "one object" interpretation.[5] The best known interpretation of this kind has been provided by Henry Allison (2004). According to Allison, things in themselves are the objects of our cognition, but only as they appear under the necessary epistemic conditions of that cognition – space and time as well as the categories.

Peirce's criticism, however, can also be directed towards this kind of understanding of Kant's transcendental idealism. Indeed, it may be that Peirce also considered an interpretation of Kant along these lines. Fundamental to Allison's interpretation is the view that we may consider objects as objects for a discursive intellect in general (that is, an intellect which must conceive of objects using the categories but not under the forms of intuition, space and time). This consideration shows, argues Allison, that things in themselves are not spatiotemporal. As space and time are the epistemic conditions of the kind of cognition of objects available for human

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[5] Pihlström offers a detailed discussion of Kant's transcendental idealism in several of his books. In his interpretation, Kant's transcendental idealism is (largely) the denial of transcendental realism, viz., the view that "the world as the object of (possible) experience is the world as it in itself [...] things as they would be when abstracted, *per impossibile*, from the conditions required for representing them" (Pihlström 2013, 24). Here and in other connections, Pihlström acknowledges his debt to Allison's "two-aspect" interpretation.

beings, objects thus considered are not cognized, in Allison's view (cf. Allison 2004, 11–18). This is crucial to Allison's account. If objects considered as objects for a discursive intellect in general *were* cognized, human cognition of objects would not have space and time as its (necessary) "epistemic conditions".

Presented against an "one-object" reading of Kant, Peirce's argument remains semantic, but in a different key. The target is not the thesis that invokes the (pragmatically meaningless) notion of an object which cannot be humanly cognized. Rather, the criticism is directed against the thesis that we can conceive of cognition quite unlike our own without at once being able to cognize in like fashion. Discussing the relationship of his pragmatism and transcendental idealism, Peirce writes:

> I hold, for instance, that man is so completely hemmed in by the bounds of his possible practical experience, his mind is so restricted to being the instrument of his needs, that he cannot, in the least, mean anything that transcends those limits. The strict consequence of this is, that it is all nonsense to tell him that he must not think in this or that way because to do so would be to transcend the limits of a possible experience. For let him try ever so hard to think anything about what is beyond that limit, it simply cannot be done. You might as well pass a law that no man shall jump over the moon; it wouldn't forbid him to jump just as high as he possibly could. (CP 5.536)

The semantic argument could be put by way of a dilemma. On the one hand, if we can conceive of cognition that (supposedly) transcends the limits of our capacities, that cognition is at once turned into a possible human cognition. On the other hand, if something really were beyond all possible human cognition, we could not even have a conception of it. There is no meaningful notion of that which cannot possibly cognized: in Peirce's dictum, the "absolutely incognizable is absolutely inconceivable" CP (5.310). In this way, the semantic argument can be used to undermine the central defense of the one-object interpretation of transcendental idealism.[6]

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[6] It could be suggested that Kant's transcendental idealism should be understood as having a much more modest scope: that it pertains to particu-

4. Pragmatist antinomy?

Peirce's semantic argument appears potent. At least anyone who relies on a notion of cognition which exceeds human capabilities owes us an account of how such cognition is conceivable – while not human.[7] The argument appears to have bite also against pragmatic humanism, as I have here called it. This is most evident in the case of pragmatism with explicitly Kantian affinities; however, its potential targets include nothing less than Peirce's own views. In the passage quoted above, Peirce compares talk about the limits of human cognition and passing a law prohibiting jumping over the moon. Peirce's point is, I take it, that we can make sense of what it would be like to jump over the moon: clearly these words are not without meaning. Nevertheless, we cannot similarly make sense of that which transcends possible practical experience. However, if this is the case, the idea that we are restricted to such experience appears meaningless. Indeed, the whole notion of a boundary beyond which our practical experience cannot reach appears contestable on the same grounds. In this way, pragmatic humanism turns out to be vulnerable to the charge that Peirce levies against transcen-

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lar questions which are, in principle, beyond the scope of human cognition but nevertheless make a practical difference in our conduct. Famously, Kant limited the scope of reason to "make room for faith", arguing that questions concerning the postulates of practical reason – God, freedom of the will, and the summum bonum – fall outside the potential of human cognition. However, the problem is hardly evaded by limiting its scope. If notions of the kind already mentioned are beyond the capabilities of human cognition, they may be considered meaningless on pragmatist grounds.

[7] Donald Davidson's (1974) argument against the "very idea" of incomparable or incommensurable conceptual schemes could be understood as a specific case of Peirce's general line of argument. If a "conceptual scheme" is translatable, it is no longer incommensurable, while a truly conceptual scheme which is not translatable would not be viewed as a conceptual scheme in the first place. However, Davidson's version draws from the more limited (and potentially questionable) notion of translatability (for criticism. cf. Pihlström 1996).

dental idealism on the basis of the pragmatist account of meaning and reference.[8]

In Kant's antinomy of pure reason, reason suggests four transcendental principles which empirical cognition does not match: the limitation of the universe, the finite divisibility of matter, freedom of the will and the necessary being (A460 ff.). In Kant's view, the antinomies are the result of the application of the ideas of reason on our empirical reality. The considerations here presented suggest, I think, that pragmatists are faced with an antinomy of their own (the scope of which is not limited to the pragmatist tradition). We are presented with the plausible idea that our cognition of the world is limited and structured by our human capacities, language and experience. However, at the same time we cannot make good pragmatic sense of the idea that there is a boundary beyond which our cognition cannot reach.

What are the options for the pragmatist in dealing with this problem? One option is to contest Peirce's contention that the absolutely incognizable is absolutely inconceivable. Might it not be that we can at least have a meaningful notion of cognition other than our own? However, this line of response is risky. It implies that we could form beliefs concerning that which we cannot possibly cognize. If this is the case, the pragmatist account of meaning is questionable: not all beliefs would make a difference in practice. A second alternative is to qualify pragmatic humanism. Rather than arguing that there are boundaries which human cognition cannot exceed, humanism could be the much more modest doctrine that not everything will be cognized by human beings in the actual course of history. There is much that will forever rest beyond

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8 The subject naturalist and anti-representationalist strain of pragmatism is less vulnerable to the problem at hand. Subject naturalism is not founded on the idea that the world is structured by human practices; indeed, the subject naturalist might argue that their position is vindicated by the Peircean argument that the contrasting point of view – object naturalism – requires a perspective which is not even conceivable. However – and although this point would deserve more consideration than can be given here – there is still cause for some concern. If this is all that subject naturalism offers, it may easily begin to look like the relatively uncontroversial reminder that ontological commitments are made by us human beings within our various practices.

human cognition and inquiry. However, this version of humanism risks being a platitude most everyone would readily accept rather than an interesting philosophical view.

A third alternative would also qualify humanism, but in a different key. The beginnings of this approach can be drawn from Peirce, whose suggestion that we are "hemmed in" by possible practical experience is something of an outlier in his writings. Instead of humanism, Peirce preferred the notion of *anthropomorphism*, which he thought was closer to the *scientific* opinion (8.262). Scientific explanation, Peirce argued, presupposes that there is "something in nature to which the human reason is analogous" (CP 1.316). Moreover, for this reason, anthropomorphic conceptions are good starting points for scientific hypotheses: in Peirce's view, "other things being equal, an anthropomorphic conception, whether it makes the best nucleus for a scientific working hypothesis or not, is far more likely to be approximately true than one that is not anthropomorphic" (CP 5.47; cf. 8.191). In this anthropomorphic version of humanism, our conceptions are admitted to be humanly "laden". However, our cognition is not in the least limited by this fact. Rather, human cognition is understood as naturally "tuned" into the way the world is. Anthropomorphism of this stripe would not imply reneging on the pragmatist account of meaning, it may well be considered too weak or otherwise implausible by those wishing to advocate pragmatic humanism.

Pragmatists – both classical and contemporary – have proposed that our world is structured by human practices and cognitive capacities. This pragmatic humanism, as we saw, sits uneasily with the pragmatist account of meaning and meaningfulness. Indeed, pragmatic humanism appears vulnerable to the semantic argument which Peirce deployed against Kant's transcendental idealism. The result is a kind of antinomy for pragmatism: we are faced with the seemingly plausible idea that our practical experience has boundaries which it cannot exceed – an idea which cannot make a practical difference and thus appears meaningless from the pragmatist point of view. In the preceding, I briefly considered three alternative lines of tackling this issue. However, it is not clear that any of these alternatives will be found satisfactory. Pragmatists, I have here argued, owe us an account of how

these theses are to fit together; in this, however, they are hardly alone.

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Pragmatic Aims and Changing Habits: Toward a Partial Reconciliation of Two Pragmatist Conceptions of Inquiry[1]

MATS BERGMAN

Numerous reconstructions of the philosophy of pragmatism have postulated that there is a fundamental split in the tradition (e.g., Mounce, 1997; Rescher, 2012; Misak, 2013). As Sami Pihlström (2013) has observed, the upshot has often been "a strict dichotomy between Peircean pragmatism, on the one hand, and all later, inferior pragmatist systems, on the other" (p. 11) – although the roles of hero and villain have at times also been reversed. The alleged rift has typically been articulated in terms of diverging conceptions of the pragmatic principle and its relation to reality and truth, carving the field into Peircean and Jamesian factions.[2] However, the issue can also be approached from the point of view of inquiry, in which case it is Peirce and Dewey that emerge as the main protagonists of the drama (see e.g. Talisse, 2002; Misak, 2013, chap. 7).

While there are sundry differences between the Peircean and Deweyan accounts that need to be acknowledged, I be-

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[1] This essay incorporates some portions that have been previously published in Bergman (2016b). I wish to thank Intellect for the kind permission to reuse the materials.

[2] C. S. Peirce's coining of the neologism "pragmaticism" in 1905 seems to support such a reading. However, contrary to the received view, the neologism was not really intended to partition pragmatist thought into two opposing camps. Rather, Peirce (1910) conceived of pragmaticism as a "special and limited form of pragmatism, in which the pragmatism is restricted to the determining of the meaning of concepts (particularly of philosophic concepts) by consideration of the experimental differences in conduct of life which would conceivably result from the affirmation or denial of the meaning in question" (p. 1050).

lieve we should follow Pihlström's lead and reject the inclination to simply divide the pragmatist views of inquiry into the good and bad. The two conceptions at stake can be brought into fruitful debate in ways that not only illuminate some of their respective limitations but are also conducive to developing more nuanced and robust pragmatist conceptions of social inquiry. Focusing on some tensions pertaining to the aims of inquiry, my objective in this short essay is to make a modest contribution to such a rapprochement.

Transformation and minimal meliorism

There is plenty of common ground to be found between Peirce's and Dewey's respective conceptions of inquiry. Dewey's chef-d'oeuvre *Logic: The Theory of Inquiry* builds on the "doubt-belief model" that Peirce sketches in "The Fixation of Belief". While Peirce portrays scientific inquiry as a process brought on by doubt-producing experiences and aimed at establishing belief-habits, Dewey prefers the vocabulary of rendering an indeterminate or problematic situation determinate; but the two accounts accord in their main outlines. The commonalities can be further traced to Peirce's criticism of "Cartesianism" – a stinging reproof of epistemological foundationalism and the 'method of doubt', summarized in the dictum "Dismiss make-believes" (EP 2:335). However, the differences are also considerable, relating to (1) the nature of the factors that induce inquiry, (2) the degree to which inquiry is considered transformative, (3) the determination of the aims of inquiry, and (4) the question of whether inquiry should be ameliorative or not.

With regard to the first point of contention, Dewey argues that *any* "problem of scientific inquiry that does not grow out of actual (or 'practical') social conditions is factitious; it is arbitrarily set by the inquirer instead of being objectively produced and controlled" (LW 12:493). While Peirce also stresses that doubt needs to be genuine, he eventually distinguishes two legitimate birth-states: "a more acute *definite* doubt whether a given proposition be true or not, and a commonly milder *indefinite* doubt as to what is the character of a given subject of speculation" (MS 334:C). Here, Peirce's position

appears to leave a wider space for detached inquiry as well as for conceptual experimentation than Dewey's actualism.

As to transformation, there is a sense in which inquiry always entails change for Peirce as well as for Dewey; it is a process of revising our habits. However, Dewey extends the transformation to the whole problematic situation, including the objective subject matter at hand. The constructionist implications of this position have often been targeted by Peircean critics, who e.g. aver that the principal aim of the physical sciences is to understand external subject matters, not to change them (Misak, 2013, p. 118). And that is arguably true of many lines of social research as well. But if Dewey exaggerates the transformative character of scientific investigation, then Peirce can be faulted for dismissing such ideas too quickly in his focus on "external permanency" in inquiry. For example, investigations into social regularities anchored in humanity (e.g. "laws" of economics based on presumed self-interest) can very well affect those habits, especially if one accepts that human character can be construed as a "bundle of habits" of varying degrees of interconnection and mutability (cf. CP 6.228; MW 14:29).

In fact, Peirce's "thoroughgoing evolutionism" adds a twist to the story of "fixating" habits, as he argues that even "mechanical laws are nothing but acquired habits, like all the regularities of mind, including the tendency to take habits, itself" (CP 6.268). While some habits are for all practical purposes external and permanent, none is absolutely so – not even a physical law. This is obviously a controversial hypothesis, but less so when applied to human and social inquiry, where much of the subject matter is to some extent fluid and adaptable. Yet, the upshot is not anti-realism or nominalism. The habits in question are real in the specific sense that they "Really *would* produce effects, under circumstances that may not happen to get actualized" (EP 2:480).

While both Peirce and Dewey portray scientific investigation as concerned with particular questions instigated by doubt or a problematic situation, the latter stresses that the aims of a particular line of inquiry are wholly internal to the problematic situation; they are ends-in-view rather than ends-in-themselves. Genuine inquiry is then construed as thoroughly practical in the sense of always being in some

way traceable to concrete real-life problems; and the aim of knowing is determined by "what happens in the actual procedures of scientific inquiry" (LW 4:83). But for Peirce, the motive and aim of scientific inquiry is not bound to concrete problem-solving in such a manner. Accordingly, he maintains that "if Truth consists in satisfaction, it cannot be any actual satisfaction, but must be the satisfaction which would ultimately be found if the inquiry were pushed to its ultimate and indefeasible issue" (EP 2:450). Peirce goes so far as to aver that the very thought of practical application should be banned from philosophy (CP 1.645). In stark contrast, Dewey is a thoroughgoing meliorist who views *all* types of developed inquiry, from engineering to mathematics, to be parts of the "persistent gradual amelioration of the estate of our common humanity" (MW 9:233). Put differently, scientific knowledge is not conceived as an end-in-itself, but as a means toward social and moral development. Whereas Peirce associates "the spirit of science" with a general desire to learn the truth (e.g. CP 7.186), Dewey maintains that the only desire required is a specific "desire to resolve as honestly and impartially as possible the problem involved in the situation" (LW 14:56).

Yet, the very idea of improvement – of progressively reducing "the defects and inconsistencies of this world" (LW 13:256) – already suggests something directing all forms of inquiry, irrespective of their particular aims. Indeed, Dewey explicitly advocates a "humanisation" of natural science, which is not to be pursued "for what is called truth for its own sake, but with the sense of its social bearing" – providing "the technique of social and moral engineering" (MW 12:179). If Dewey's promotion of participatory democracy and education is added to the mix, then inquiry as a whole can be said to be subordinated to a higher goal: societal meliorism.

I have now drawn a fairly sharp line between the two basic pragmatist conceptions of inquiry. And yet, there is a minimal core of meliorism that they share. Namely, both can be construed as being directed toward the improvement of habits, including habits of thought and feeling as well as habits of action in a narrower sense. Accordingly, Peirce argues that the "continual amelioration of our own habits [...] is the only

alternative to a continual deterioration of them" (MS 674:1). Also, although Dewey rebuffs an ethics of static values (LW 1:322), his progressive meliorism does not categorically reject the Peircean *summum bonum*, broadly understood as "growth of concrete reasonableness". This entails the embodiment and development "of general ideas in art-creations, in utilities, and above all in theoretical cognition" (EP 2:443). From this point of view, "the principal end of inquiry, as regards human life" is to "actualize ideas of the immortal, ceaselessly prolific kind" (CP 2.763). Translated into Dewey's less exalted terms, this means "the process whereby the existent becomes, with the aid of action, a body of rational tendencies or of habits generalized as much as possible" (LW 2:5). The highest "end and good" is not perfection as such but "the ever-enduring process of perfecting, maturing, refining" – that is, "the active process of transforming the existent situation" (MW 12:181).

However deep their differences may be, the two pragmatist views of inquiry are at least united by their faith in development. Peirce's conception of the scientific attitude combines the hope for achieving truth with a warning against ever assuming "that any given general fact is an ultimate one" (W 6:206). As for Dewey (2015), the driving force in his social philosophy is gradual progress, where "amelioration" entails "improvement of this and that bad feature rather than […] either universal condemnation and destruction or consecration and conservatism" (p. 15).

And yet, the Deweyan and Peircean variants of melioristic inquiry clearly differ in at least two vital respects. Firstly, whereas Dewey's links the legitimacy of scientific inquiry strongly to its capacity to aid us in addressing concrete social and moral ills, Peirce does not approve of "the Philistine position" that subordinates all scientific knowing to such practical needs (MS 1519:6-7). Secondly, their notions of what is supposed to get modified in melioristic inquiry are divergent. For Dewey, it is not just a matter of altering the inquirers' habits, but of actively changing the world. Peirce's more conservative stance stops short of such a transformative programme.

Critical deficits and indefinite doubts

The pragmatists' belief in reason and growth has been derided ever since the movement first flourished in the early 1900s. Influential social thinkers such as Lewis Mumford, Antonio Gramsci, Theodor Adorno, and C. Wright Mills suggested that pragmatism amounted to a kind of 'acquiescence' in service of the *status quo*; and the suspicion has perhaps never been fully laid to rest (cf. MacGilvray, 2000). Pragmatism's leading lights have been faulted for a gradualism that disregards economic realities and power relations. But more fundamentally, the pragmatists have been accused of expounding perspectives that are unable to accommodate robust critical inquiry.

Regarding Dewey, at least, this allegation can feel rather unfair, as he asserts that philosophy *is* "criticism of the influential beliefs that underlie culture; a criticism which traces the beliefs to their generating conditions as far as may be, which tracks them to their results, which considers the mutual compatibility of the elements of the total structure of beliefs" (LW 6:19). In fact, Dewey explicitly rejects the view that pragmatism would only be a matter of "adjustment" or a surrender to "industrial utilitarianism" (LW 3:146). The Deweyan universe is full of contingencies, perils, and possibilities; and in this picture, the distinctive role of "critical and constructive" philosophy is to investigate "the values and ends that known facts and principles should subserve" (LW 13:258). Still, Dewey's emphasis on intelligent meliorism can appear rather technocratic, given its focus on social engineering (see, e.g., MW 10:241). And it is undeniable that Dewey's emphasis on actual problems often seems to imply a reduction of inquiry to the short-term solving of piecemeal problems.

More fundamentally, pragmatism can be accused of providing no programme of problematization, in which the aim would be to actively criticise habits in order to render them doubtful or indeterminate. This possible critical deficit in the pragmatist conceptions of inquiry is traceable all the way to their anti-Cartesian roots – more specifically to the thesis that the cause of doubt should be a genuine disturbance or a felt problematic situation. According to Peirce, the "breaking of a

belief [a strong habit] can only be due to some novel experience, whether external or internal"; and he adds that "experience which could be summoned up at pleasure would not be experience" (CP 5.524). Dewey contends that problems "that are self-set are mere excuses for seeming to do something intellectual, something that has the semblance but not the substance of scientific activity" (LW 12:112). Put differently: as long as our habits work in practice, then there is no point in questioning them. Habit is "the means by which we know how; the better it functions the more unconscious it is" (MW 14:124-5). If this is the case, then inquiry should not seek to produce doubts, but merely respond to them as they arise. Habits can truly get broken up only by existential or experiential forces, which can be construed as precognitive conditions of cognition (LW 12:111). These inquiry-instigating, "brute" indeterminacies simply occur.

However, that does not exclude the deliberate pursuit of such destabilising factors. In fact, Dewey argues that one thing that social and humanistic research should adopt from the physical sciences is the active search for problems through experimentation (LW 4:200). More than that, he maintains that the "scientific attitude may almost be defined as that which is capable of enjoying the doubtful" (LW 4:182).

In a sense, habit plays a triple role in the generic pragmatist account of inquiry. For not only does it both restrict and enable thought; conscious inquiry also requires "conflict of habits" (MW 14:126). Active thinking only arises "in the *thin cracks* of solid habits" (Dewey, 2015, p. 8). With this in mind, Peirce's focus on the fixing of belief and Dewey's emphasis on determining situations can be somewhat misleading, for the process involves habit-breaking as well as habit-taking (cf. CP 6.613). In fact, this is the distinctive role that Dewey assigns to philosophy: the challenging of routines and uncriticised "beliefs that have grown up and taken on strong emotional and emotive force, no one knows how" (LW 13:259). It is a criticism that "exercises a liberating power; it tends to free human activity from the grip of custom by opening up new possibilities" (LW 13:259). The sciences are not exempt, for "after a certain conceptual frame of reference has once become habitual, it tends to become finally obstructive with reference to new lines of investigation" – a danger that is

most acute in fields like "the social disciplines, law, politics, economics and morals" (LW 12:501). Thus, one of the most central tasks of philosophical inquiry is the kind of criticism that tests and modifies our conceptual frames of reference, with an aim of keeping them flexible. In Peirce's terms, this is learning in the sense of acquiring new habits, something that requires the cultivation of "a habit of changing habits" (NEM 4:142). Thus, pragmatism is naturally accompanied by what Peirce calls "critical common-sensism", which does not prescribe wholesale doubt but severe criticism of any specific proposition claimed to be beyond doubt (EP 2:432-3).

Where pragmatism does seem to fall short is in providing directives and tools for the breaking up of habits. Dewey tends to speak generally of a need to imaginatively compare alternative hypotheses, to examine the meaning of propositions in terms of their consequences, and to clarify our "ruling ideas" (LW 12:501). Thus, he avers that "any problematic situation, when it is analyzed, presents, in connection with the idea of operations to be performed, alternative possible ends in the sense of terminating consequences" (LW 12:495). But Dewey's perspective is somewhat hampered by his strict requirement that any inquiry must be a localized response to "tensions, obstructions and positive potentialities that are found, by controlled observation, to exist in the actual situation" (LW 12:497). That is, while imagination plays a vital role in projecting possible consequences of conceptions, propositions, and hypotheses, the activity must always be instigated by a particular real-life problem. Accordingly, Dewey argues that social research ought to engage in "specific inquiries into a multitude of specific structures and interactions" and avoid the "waste of mental energy due to conducting discussion of social affairs in terms of conceptual generalities" (MW 12:193). Social philosophy should be concerned with "reconstruction of special situations rather than […] refinements in the general concepts of institution, individuality, state, freedom, law, order, progress, etc." (MW 12:190). For Dewey, there is something deeply suspicious about a social philosopher who, "dwelling in the region of his concepts, 'solves' problems by showing the relationship of ideas, instead of helping men solve problems in the concrete by supplying

them hypotheses to be used and tested in projects of reform" (MW 12:189).

Very well, but how? What is the poor philosopher to do *as* a philosopher? One of the ironies here is that much of what Dewey himself ends up doing can be construed as attempts to clarify and develop concepts on a rather abstract level. This is not to say that his admonition against detached conceptual analysis would not be apposite; but he goes too far because of his singular focus on the existential situation. Put in the Peircean terms discussed above, Dewey tends to restrict doubt to *definite* doubt, and neglects the inquiry-inducing value of the kind of *indefinite* doubt that pertains to the character of the subject matter under consideration. It is here that Peirce can step in, with an explicit affirmation that artificial hesitancy, "whether feigned for mere amusement or with a lofty purpose, plays a great part in the production of scientific inquiry" (CP 5.394; but cf. CP 5.443).

Dewey does not accord any "mental" operation the status of inquiry if it does not produce "overt acts that terminate in a changed environment" (LW 4:185). On the one hand, he clearly recognizes that the development of possible solutions involves thought experiments performed by means of symbols; the "carrying on of inquiry requires that the facts be taken as representative and not just as *pre*-sented" (LW 12:118). But on the other hand, he holds that an "imaginative survey", crucial as it is, is never sufficient to constitute or produce knowledge unless "some overt experimental act takes place by means of which an existential incorporation and organization is brought about" (MW 4:151). For his part, Peirce views internal experiments as processes of inquiry that can generate authentic doubt and habits, but do not therefore need to result in concrete world-changing actions.

Thus, Peirce and Dewey differ in their views of what is required of a valid problem of higher inquiry. Where Dewey demands tangible results, Peirce settles for potential practical consequences. Peirce's blocking of all considerations of applicability in the "sciences of discovery" (including philosophy) is arguably too strict; but his point of view allows for more imaginative freedom in social inquiry than Dewey's actualism. Conceptual investigations do not necessarily need to be launched by real-life conflict and terminate in concrete action;

a genuinely raised question about the nature of concepts – producing *indefinite* doubt – is also perfectly valid. Even the "free play" of thought ("musement") can induce genuine inquiry, breaking routines by imagining new possibilities.

From this angle, pragmatic elucidation turns out to be a form of inquiry that can generate habit-change, including "beside associations, what may be called "transsociations," or alterations of association, and even […] *dissociation*" (CP 5.476). Its basic tool is the famed pragmatic principle, of which the following formulation is particularly pertinent here:

> Consider what effects that *might conceivably* have practical bearings, – especially in modifying habits or as implying capacities, – you conceive the object of your conception to have. Then your (interpretational) conception of those effects is the whole (meaning of) your conception of the object. (MS 322:11-2)

Although this maxim is often taken to be just an instrument for clarifying extant ideas – including by Peirce himself – I have previously argued that the course of reflection it prescribes should be viewed as a form of inquiry (see Bergman, 2016a); and I even venture to suggest that it may possess neglected critical potential. Consider for example debates about the contested idea of "democracy". In these disputes, we are not only looking at actual forms of democracy, but also imaginatively projecting the potential consequences of different ideal conceptions of "democracy" (e.g., Athenian, Constitutional, Deweyan, agonistic). In such deliberation, we do to some degree affect (generate, reinforce, disintegrate) habits of thinking with personal, social, and political implications. Thus, it is feasible to hold that a central aim of pragmatic clarification is to awaken critical cognizance of our commonsensical habit-bundles – routines, biases, and prejudices – and of possibilities for change. And the principle can equally well be applied to probes of controversial neologisms, such as "post-truth", "mediatization", and "filter bubbles".

By this tentative suggestion, I by no means wish to insinuate that the classical pragmatists would provide us with all the conceptual instruments and techniques we need; but I do maintain that the notions they have outlined may be much more amenable to the development of certain kinds of critical

frameworks than the detractors think. This does not entail just a utilitarian project of developing better tools of inquiry or of solving concrete conceptual and social problems. On a deeper level, it is a matter of reconceiving the character of aims and problems of social research – of inquiry into human and social possibilities, linked to a vision of philosophy as "concerned with making the most possible out of experience, personal and social" (LW 13:256). Thus, the reconciliation of the Peircean and Deweyan approaches that I have begun to outline in this essay points to a distinctive kind of critical – or, perhaps better, ethical – inquiry that is focused on continual criticism and improvement of values and ideals as well as of concepts and conditions (cf. EP 2:377-8; LW 1:322). It is a programmatic proposal, with many open questions. But if nothing else, I hope that these preliminary reflections have suggested some additional reasons to heed Pihlström's astute counsel against assuming simplistic dichotomies in our assessments of the tradition of pragmatism.

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Pragmatism, Naturalism, and Realism: Pihlström, Price and Beyond

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1. Introduction

Pragmatist philosophers have generally been supporters of naturalism. Perhaps most fundamentally, pragmatists reject the idea of *a priori* certainty or 'first philosophy' in favour of a fallibilist, gradualist and evolving conception of our knowledge, one Quine made popular with the idea of the 'web of belief' facing 'the tribunal of experience as a corporate whole' (Quine 1953, 41).[1] Coupled with this epistemological naturalism we also tend to find pragmatists stressing a more substantive or (as it is often put) metaphysical naturalism, on which human beings are contained within the physical and biological world that science informs us about. Exactly how the latter commitment is to be understood varies. Sometimes the idea is that we are *purely* material entities like any other on earth and have to be understood accordingly. Other pragmatists see naturalism as in no way inconsistent with, indeed, as requiring, a conception of ourselves that natural science cannot capture; John McDowell's (1994) emphasis on our *second nature* is a well-known example of such a view that many pragmatists have appealed to.

Whether pragmatism cleaves to a scientific or some 'non-scientific' (cf. Knowles 2006) form of naturalism, it is clear that further questions need to be asked and answered about how exactly its epistemological and metaphysical aspects hang together. This is underlined by the acceptance by many

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[1] "The Web of Belief" was the title of Quine's book with J. S. Ullian from 1970.

pragmatists of a further doctrine, namely *anti-realism*. Peirce's view of the truth as what we would be believe 'at the end of enquiry' is perhaps the best known version of such an anti-realist philosophy, but one also finds anti-realist strands in James and Dewey, as well as perhaps the foremost apologist for pragmatism in the contemporary era, Hilary Putnam.[2] Some will immediately protest that pragmatist thinking is not correctly viewed as *anti*-realist at all; rather, pragmatists only reject what Putnam calls 'metaphysical realism': the idea of there being a fixed totality of objects and properties existing independently of thought and language that we can nevertheless refer to and talk about in thought or language. I am sympathetic to this way of finessing pragmatism's commitments, but at a certain, coarse-grained conception of the dialectical landscape, I still think there is a good question to be raised here. Though differing in detail, many of the most sophisticated anti-realist positions in contemporary philosophy stem from the idealist tradition of Kant (and subsequent German philosophy); and isn't that a tradition that is precisely non- (or even anti-) naturalistic? For Kant there is a kind of first philosophy in the forms of intuition and the categories of understanding, however different the status these things have from *a priori* knowledge on more traditional conceptions. Moreover, Kant's underlying picture of our place in reality sees us, in some fundamental aspect of our being, as outside of nature. Nature – the scientific conception of reality – is ultimately one of the things we, as rational beings, construct on the basis of our non-natural faculties, on the basis of of influence from *Das Ding an sich*, a thoroughly unknowable quantity. This seems hard to view as a naturalistic philosophical position. But then how exactly *do* we commensurate anti-

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[2] Whether all (or most) of the main figures of pragmatism, new and old, flirt with anti-realism is no doubt somewhat a matter of who gets to count as one. Both Quine and Sellars for example are often seen as pragmatist thinkers, but also typically as realists. Rorty's generally quietist attitude to philosophy suggests he at least would at least never have wanted to be seen as an anti-realist. Having said that, perhaps all or nearly all who would call themselves pragmatists would reject metaphysical realism (see below); the question of whether avoiding this amounts to a substantively anti-realist position is the central issue of this paper.

realism (or anti-metaphysical realism) with a naturalistic world-view for the pragmatist?

Enter Sami Pihlström. Pihlström's work has covered a large variety of topics within theoretical philosophy, ethics and the philosophy of religion, but an abiding interest has been the relationship between Kant's transcendental project and pragmatism. In his monograph from 2003 *Naturalizing the Transcendental* and several subsequent publications he attempts to show how transcendental philosophy can be freed from the procrustean bed of first philosophy, and thereby merge fruitfully with a pragmatism that respects a recognizable form of naturalism. Transcendental work is needed to reveal the presuppositions of our various discourses and conceptions of reality, but there is no one overall such conception, rather a plurality that evolve and sometimes replace one another. *A priori* understanding exists, in a structural sense of being an essential aspect of any kind of empirical understanding, but it need not be given once and for all (cf. Pihlström and Siitonen 2005, Pihlström 2012a, here drawing on ideas from thinkers like C.I. Lewis, Wittgenstein, Kuhn and Michael Friedman). The transcendental subject is seen as *emergent* from natural processes, with emphasis put on the constituting character of embodied *practices* (Pihlström 2009). Pihlström claims a form of empirical realism can be defended, such that there are thoroughly objective answers to our questions, even though the form of these answers and even our very conception of their objectivity must be seen relative to certain forms of understanding that simultaneously serve to constitute the domain in question (cf. Pihlström 2011). Finally, since there is on this picture no sense to the idea that science "limn[s] the true and ultimate structure of reality" (Quine 1960, 221), we can also be fully paid up (local) realists about other discourses or dimensions of our understanding, including the ethical and even the religious, without reneging on anything that one might think of as a reasonable naturalism. Indeed, the ethical can be seen as constituting a broader background to our peculiar form of being-in-the world. Thus, in a nutshell, is Pihlström's answer to the question of how pragmatism combines naturalism with a form of anti-realism – as I shall continue to say. For even though it is a form that, as he would stress, also involves a strong and recognizable

empirical realism, it also remains (as far as I understand Pihlström's intention at least) a form of Kantian idealism, replete with transcendental subjects and something like the unknowable *Ding an sich* (cf. Pihlström and Siitonen *op. cit.*).

Pihlström's answer to pragmatism's challenge – that of combining its epistemology with its metaphysics – is subtle and resourceful. This paper will not be directly concerned with assessing its various merits and challenges, but with contrasting and comparing it at a more general level with the view of someone else who has recently emerged as a leading pragmatist thinker, Huw Price. Over the last years Price has developed a systematic philosophical view that he explicitly relates to various pragmatist forbears and dubs *global expressivism* (cf. especially Price 2011, 2013). What is interesting about global expressivism from the perspective of pragmatism's challenge is the seemingly very different response it offers to Pihlström's. In particular no resort (at least explicitly) is made to transcendental or Kantian philosophy; indeed, Price does not appear to make any concession to anti-realism or a non-scientific form of naturalism. And yet he does also want to be considered a fully paid up pragmatist. In this way, Price can be seen as closer to the deflationst pragmatist tradition represented by Quine and Rorty, rather than the neo-Kantian line Pihlström recommends and identifies to an extent in the work of Putnam. Now Pihlström has repeatedly made clear his dissatisfaction with the former, a dissatisfaction that has also recently been extended to Price's global expressivism (Pihlström 2012b). My question here will involve assessing the reasonableness of that dissatisfaction by asking: can Price consistently uphold his pragmatism without buying into the kind of Kantian view that Pihlström recommends?

My answer will be that it can, or at least that there is no compelling reason to think otherwise. Price rejects metaphysical realism as a consequence of his overall metasemantic position, which involves rejecting *representationalism* as incoherent. I argue that beyond this it is not at all obvious that anti-representationalism involves substantive anti-realist commitments. However, I also think awkward questions can be raised for Price about his promotion of precisely global expressivism. In light of these, I think we might fruitfully

consider a slightly different route for pragmatism that can be seen as combining elements from both Price's view and a Kantian world-view.

The rest of the paper goes as follows. The next section (section 2) outlines Price's global expressivism. Section 3 takes up the issue of whether the anti-representationalism behind this must involve a form of (neo-)Kantian metaphysics, of the kind Pihlström recommends for pragmatism. Finally section 4 considers briefly my own naturalistic and realist programme for pragmatism.

2. Global expressivism

The central idea behind Price's pragmatism is the rejection of representationalism, which he claims stands at the heart of much traditional philosophy, not least that pursued by metaphysical naturalists. The following analogy aims to bring this connection out:

> Imagine a child's puzzle book, arranged like this. The left-hand page contains a large sheet of peel-off stickers, and the right-hand page shows a line drawing of a complex scene. For each sticker – the koala, the boomerang, the Sydney Opera House, and so on – the reader needs to find the unique outline in the drawing with the corresponding shape. The aim of the game is to place all the stickers in their correct locations, in this sense.
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> Now think of the right-hand page as the world, and the stickers as the collection of all the statements we take to be true of the world. For each such statement, it seems natural to ask what makes it true; what fact in the world has precisely the corresponding "shape". Within the scope of this simple but intuitive analogy, matching true statements to the world seems a lot like matching stickers to the line drawing. (Price 2011, 3)

An overarching problem for contemporary philosophy is the lack of perfect fit between the shapes on the left – what we say in everyday discourse or special sciences, and take on the whole to be true and defensible – and the shapes on the right hand side: what take to be available in the world as it is in itself to make these true. The traditional metaphysically-inclined philosopher will seek to analyse our talk to reveal hidden correspondences – or lack thereof, thereby providing

an impetus to eliminate the talk in question from the ranks of true knowledge, or perhaps to reconsider the metaphysical conception of the world as given on the right-hand side of the book. Price claims that underlying this project is the idea that language relates to the world representationalistically: there is a non-trivial specification available, in principle, of what it takes for our terms to refer to something in the world, and for the sentences composed of such terms to be true, a specification itself to be given in terms acceptable within the picture of the world given on the right hand side of the book.

With this analogy in mind, Price critiques a view he calls *object naturalism*: the idea that all truth or all knowledge is essentially of a natural scientific character (cf. Price 2004). Price claims such a naturalistic programme presupposes representationalism, in more or less the sense just outlined (as do certain other, non-naturalistic programmes). However, Price thinks representationalism is actually rather dubious, for various reasons. Part of this is the allure of semantic deflationism, which understands (*inter alia*) the truth of a statement as a non-substantial property, essentially coeval with asserting it. But without representationalism object naturalism becomes unmotivated, possibly incoherent. This does not however mean that we should reject naturalism *tout court*. Price thinks we should remain *subject* naturalists, that is, see human talk and thought as natural phenomena to be understood as part of a natural world and studiable by science. But that does not entail seeing such talk as representing this natural world. Moral talk, for example, can be seen as having quite a different function – plausibly something along the lines urged by expressivists like Blackburn (1984) and Gibbard (1990), whereby it gives expression to and thereby aids the coordination of particular kinds of non-cognitive attitude. But since this expression is typically itself in declarative sentences, and truth is deflated, there is no question of anti-realism here. From the perspective of science, morality will not appear to latch on to anything 'real', but to use science as a standard for morality would be arbitrary, indeed to involve a use-mention fallacy (here Price draws on Carnap's distinction between external and internal questions, cf. Price 2009). In fact, semantic deflationism, together with functional pluralism, will plausibly lead one in the direction of *global*

expressivism, insofar as no discourse's function will be explained truth-theoretically (i.e. in a correspondence fashion; cf. Macarthur and Price 2007). Science may be a *kind* of Archimedian point for certain explanatory projects, including that of global expressivism, but it does not give a metaphysical picture of reality, and indeed many of its central concepts, such as time and causation, are themselves amenable to expressivist analyses. The view is also termed by Price 'global pragmatism' (Price 2013, 155), which he suggests may be the more appropriate label insofar as what is distinctive about it is the rejection of representationalist paradigms for understanding discourses, rather than its espousal of particularly expressivist ones.[3]

Price then is a fully paid up naturalist, and a scientific one at that (cf. Price 2010), who sees philosophical work as essentially a form of anthropology, understanding our different discourses by reference to their various biological functions and genealogically determined roles. Moreover, he does not subscribe to any kind of anti-realist position or Kantianism. Indeed, he thinks the norm of truth amounts to a third norm of evaluation of our statements (contra Rorty), in a way that underscores bivalence and thereby a realist interpretation of truth (Price 2003).[4]

He also aims to be a good pragmatist, however, and the question arises as to whether he can pull this combination off. *Can* he consistently co-opt the virtues of pragmatism in solving our philosophical quandaries without broaching the territory of idealism, 'non-scientific' theorizing, or indeed any substantive metaphysics or ontology? Or is Price's view really under closer analysis a kind of Kantian idealism, or best seen as such?

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[3] Truth talk for example is not plausibly expressivist in the way ethics is, but nor is it to be understood in terms of latching onto some feature of fundamental reality, but rather in terms of particular use and function for us (*ibid*.). Price's idea of certain discourses 'e-representing' the environment (Price 2013) in a way others don't also involves divergence from traditional expressivist analyses.

[4] For a slightly different response to Rorty's downgrading of truth that is nevertheless also fundamentally deflationary, see Knowles (2018a).

3. Does anti-representationalism imply a form of idealism?

Pihlström I think might well answer this last question affirmatively. In his (2012b) he rejects Price's vision of philosophy as anthropology, arguing instead that we need a different conception of what metaphysics amounts to. But he also notes the following:

> For a 'Kantian' (and Wittgensteinian) pragmatist, an interesting further question inspired by Price's work would be whether global expressivism could be understood as a pragmatist version of transcendental idealism within which (only) a pragmatic or empirical realism becomes possible. (17, note 4)

This sounds like a friendly invitation to come over the path of righteousness. But should Price accept it?

Pihlström has of course developed his own alternative conception of metaphysics in much more detail than I can present here, and I therefore cannot rule out that the benefits accruing in virtue of adopting it might be decisive. What I want to do here is to take up the general question of whether the anti-representationalist position Price espouses ('AR' in the following) must in any case accept a kind of substantively anti-realist or idealist view, as Pihlström seems to think it must, or at least should, to be plausible.[5]

To assess this we need first to return to the question of representationalism and its relation to metaphysical realism. I have so far said little by way of Price's reasons for rejecting representationalism beyond the appeal of semantic deflationism. Though Price is not categorical here, he does offer some arguments that are reminiscent of Putnam's model-theoretic arguments against metaphysical realism (Putnam 1983). Through the latter Putnam argued that the metaphysical realist's understanding of reference is necessarily infected by a crippling indeterminacy, hence undermining the idea that we can make so much as sense of the idea of such a realism – the idea that there is a fixed, ready-made world, given

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[5] The question of naturalism and the possibility of metaphysics will thus play a less prominent role in this paper, though what I say will also have a bearing on these issues at various points.

completely independently of consciousness or conceptual activity – insofar as there will always be several ways of assigning referents to terms such that all the sentences in question remain true. Adding constraints such as causal covariation cannot help because they just represent *more theory*, itself susceptible to the indeterminacy argument. A central component in Putnam's thought is the idea that specifying how language relates to world from within the theory of the world itself looks to be incoherent. Price's arguments make a similar charge of self-referential paradox against representationalism understood as part of object naturalism. Focussing on the idea that there are substantive reference relations for the object naturalist, he points out that these too will have to be scrutable to empirical enquiry. But this leads to a threat of incoherence. If for example it turns out that there is in fact nothing in the world for 'reference' to refer to, we will land in one such an incoherence (viz "'reference' refers to nothing"; Price 2004, 193; see also the argument on pp. 194-5).

One might of course challenge these arguments, as well the connection between them and the idea of metaphysical realism. Here however I will just assume that they are at least on the right tracks and further that metaphysical realism and representationalism are mutually entailing.[6] So, in rejecting representationalism, Price is, at least as far as I understand things, also rejecting metaphysical realism. However, since the charge against the latter (and representationalism) concerns one of incoherence, this can hardly be seen as enunciating a substantive commitment to a particular metaphysical view, *a fortiori* to any kind of anti-realism. What we need to ask is if anything else follows from AR – does it exert distinctive pressure towards a substantive form of idealism?

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[6] Knowles (2014, §2) defends Price's arguments, and the idea that metaphysical presupposes representationalism. The idea behind the latter is that it is only if one can make sense of some part of our language making contact with something substantively outside of it that one can make sense of a discourse articulating 'the real' rather than merely appearing to (and hence of such a 'real' at all). I also think the opposite holds: that if one can make sense of such determinate and substantive reference, metaphysical realism follows (cf. Knowles 2018b, 304).

Insofar as AR rejects representationalism, it owes an account of meaning not based on the traditional semantic notions of truth and reference. Some form or other of use theory of meaning is typically invoked by supporters of AR here, and various different forms or outlines of this have been offered (those of Brandom, 1994, and Horwich, 1998, are perhaps the most fully worked-out versions of such theories in contemporary debate, but it is only the general idea I mean to invoke here).[7] A question then arises whether use theories of meaning entail a form of idealism. If what ultimately gives 'shape' to our truth-aimed utterances – what they say – is not a relation to something beyond utterances, but the system of utterances itself, as encoded in their use by us, will it follow that our very conception of what is real – the facts we countenance as such – must be somehow dependent on or relative to the these patterns of use?

A somewhat similar kind of thought has been discussed by various 'deflationary' metaphysicians in recent years, notably Eli Hirsch (2011) and Amie Thomasson (2015). Both these thinkers espouse a Carnapian picture of ontological commitment on which the rules of our language determine the broad contours of our ontology, such that questions about whether there exist, say, properties or endurant material objects can be largely decided by conceptual investigation. (Price of course also sees Carnap as an ally, as we have noted.) Moreover, both these thinkers staunchly repudiate the idea that their view involves a form of anti-realism, seeing the accusation as involving a use-mention fallacy. Our practices make available certain concepts and modes of thought, but the thoughts themselves do not assert language-relative truth or existence. 'There are properties' may follow from the rules of our language (along with relevant empirical input), but the claim itself makes no reference to such rules, even implicitly.

This kind of move might seem only to provide a very minimal form of realism, indeed one that hardly deserves the title at all. For example, James Miller (2016) has argued that Hirsch's claims for the realistic status of our ontological discourse entails commitment to some kind of *amorphous lump*

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[7] Price himself rejects Horwich's account and favours Brandom's (cf. Price 1997, 2013), but the reasons are not relevant to our concerns here.

(Eklund 2008) view of a more thoroughgoingly mind-independent reality. An 'amorphous lump' is of course very reminiscent of Kant's *Ding an sich* and hence we seem to arrive back at something like transcendental idealism. Hirsch's view is also a descendent of Putnam's doctrine of *conceptual relativity* (see e.g. Putnam 1987): the idea that there may be incompatible ways of conceptualising the same portion of reality that are nevertheless in some sense equally good. This might also seem to shore up under the kind of transcendental idealistic picture just sketched. Moreover, one might think AR in any case is committed to the claim that if there were no humans (or other rational beings) with concepts, there would be no truths, which sounds distinctly idealistic.

In my view however AR can resist these charges of being anti-realistic, at least in a substantive sense. That is, I think the charges, to the extent they are cogent, do not go beyond establishing that AR is not a metaphysically realist position. (And, to repeat, given that AR sees metaphysical realism as incoherent, this does not amount to a demonstration of any substantive kind of anti-realism.)

To start with, I believe AR should and need have no association with the doctrine of conceptual relativity. Putnam's writings on this issue are subtle and resourceful. For example, he convincingly argues against the idea that conceptual relativity involves a 'cookie cutter' conception of our relation to reality, whereby our concepts carve out bits of an underlying 'dough', for this either falsely gives the impression that we freely create realities, or else that in fact there are significant fault lines to be discerned in the dough after all – thereby denying the phenomenon (Putnam 1987, 33). Nevertheless, it is hard to make sense of the idea of conceptual relativity, I submit, without commitment to *some* notion of a *Ding an sich*. For if there is no real question of whether there is, say, a cup in front of me as well as the particles that make it up – if both are equally good but incompatible descriptions of what is before me – then surely, even if it must be non-structured, an underlying reality must be said exist. And yet can we really make sense of such an non-structured *Ding an sich* or the validating role it is meant to play in relation to our structured claims about it? I myself struggle.

The *motivations* behind conceptual relativity are another issue, and deserve more discussion than I can offer here. Let me merely register a) that Putnam's own examples are of a diverse nature and all have been challenged as really implying conceptual relativity (some by Putnam himself); b) in view of the point of the previous paragraph, I take there to be genuine motivation to avoid acknowledging unreconstructed conceptual relativity.[8]

In rejecting conceptual relativity, it important to bear in mind the distinction between this and what Putnam calls conceptual *pluralism* – a distinction which maps onto Price's between *horizontal* and *vertical* pluralism (Price 1992). The point is that in rejecting conceptual relativity, AR need not accept the idea of there being 'one true theory of the world'. For we can still acknowledge different discourses with radically different functions, such as the everyday material, the scientific, the ethical and the mathematical, none of which it makes any sense to see as providing a privileged conception of 'reality' (indeed, this concept is simply jettisoned). Retaining such a clearly vertical conception of pluralism, at the same time as abjuring representationalism and metaphysical realism, is in my view key to a genuinely pragmatic but also non-compromising form of realism.

What of the final issue I mentioned, concerning the language dependence of truths? If we had never evolved from whatever existed, say, at the time of the dinosaurs, the latter would surely still have existed. No one would want to deny that – but nor would or need a supporter of AR, for such a commitment is encoded in our very concepts of the things in question (given relevant empirical input). Still, if truths are dependent on language, then if we had never existed there would be no truths, *a fortiori* not the truth *dinosaurs exist(ed)* either. Is that not to admit to idealism? I don't think it obviously is. For on the one hand, it strikes me simply as coeval

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[8] A promising way in my view to undercut at least a significant subset of Putnam's examples of conceptual relativity is to reject, with Thomasson (*op. cit.*) and others, the idea of the concept *object* as a generic, rather than some purely formal concept. This undercuts any general question as to e.g. how many objects there are in a room, which is an example of the kind of question Putnam thinks illustrates conceptual relativity.

with rejecting metaphysical realism; whilst, on the other hand, I don't think it's at all obvious that the two counterfactual thoughts are inconsistent with one another. One might think that, on the assumption that we didn't come into existence, saying the dinosaurs would nevertheless have existed entails that it is *true* that they would have existed, which contradicts the implication of AR that under this assumption there wouldn't be any truths. But what exactly is being claimed here? A rendering in terms of possible worlds or situations would seem helpful: In the world where we don't exist, dinosaurs still do, hence 'dinosaurs exist' is true, and hence we have a truth here and get a contradiction with our second counterfactual. However we have to remember that what is being envisaged is precisely a *counterfactual* situation: it is a situation judged from our *actual* position of existing. We are judging what we would say about a situation that *in fact* does not obtain. So it does not verify that there are truths without human language. It would only do this if the possible world were interpreted realistically, in the manner of David Lewis. But this seems a thoroughly non-obligatory, unpragmatic, if not to say bizarre understanding of possible worlds talk.

Again, I don't want to suggest there isn't more to be said here. What I do think our discussions show is that it is far from clear that any direct inconsistency, incoherence or breach with an uncompromising realism is entailed by AR – beyond the rejection of metaphysical realism, which in any case is incoherent.

4. The limits of global expressivism

I have so far expressed my allegiance to AR through the endorsement of Price's views, which he sees as leading to a global expressivism. However, this does not mean I think global expressivism is itself unproblematic.

One worry is what Simon Blackburn (following Robert Kraut) has called the 'no exit' problem (Blackburn 2013, and e.g. Kraut 2016): any espousal of expressivism for a particular discourse seems to need to be grounded, ultimately, in some kind of non-expressivistically understood vocabulary, but *ex hypothesi* no such vocabulary exists. In earlier work (Knowles

2011, 2014) I suggested this was a real challenge for Price, one that indeed might push him towards some kind of Kantian position (2011, 78 f.). Price has since himself responded to the no exit problem in his own way, making use of the idea of 'e-representation' (2103, 157 ff.). I think there is more to say about the adequacy of this reply, but I think it is at least fair to say that global expressivism – or, better, global *pragmatism* – is not obviously incoherent conceived as a thoroughgoingly realist and naturalist position.

What I do however think is problematic about Price's view is its pragmatist credentials. More specifically, given AR, plus Price's own austere form of naturalism, a rejection of object naturalism is in fact not clearly mandated; one might pursue the expressivist project, but it remains unclear why, as op-posed to some kind of physicalist, reductionist one (cf. Knowles 2017, where a Quinean position is developed as an example of such an anti-representationalist object natural-ism). If that is the case, then Price's overall philosophy argua-bly doesn't bring with it the virtues that pragmatist views generally have been hoped to do.

In my view, we need to connect AR to something other than Price's global pragmatism in order to avoid reductive physicalism; but we can I believe also do this without buying into some kind of transcendental idealism, and at the same time maintaining much of the spirit of Price's subject natural-ism. There *is* arguably much to be learned, from a subject naturalistic perspective, about our different discourses in terms of different kinds of contents or thoughts they articu-late. Broadly speaking I think such an account can motivate a distinction between those that ineluctably presuppose human activity and those that do not; those that delineate *our* world – a world for us: a world of agents, values, coloured, solid ob-jects and so on – and those that delineate 'things in them-selves': the posits of fundamental physics and possibly other theoretical science, that aim to abstract from the realm of sen-sibility – truths that would be valid for all rational beings, regardless of their particular sensory and biological capaci-ties.[9] Importantly for this pragmatist, 'things in themselves' is

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[9] The phrase 'valid for all rational beings' I take from Danielle Macbeth (2014). The distinction also arises in the recent work of Daniel Dennett

not connected to any idea of 'reality', so they would not make up *reality* as it in itself; the world for us is as real a world as we are ever going to get. Further, this distinction between the for-us and in-itself does not map onto that between e-representational and non-e-representational discourses, nor is the position's naturalism reductive insofar as it does not favour the vocabulary of natural science as our explanatory framework; in both these ways, my position is clearly distinct from Price's (cf. Knowles 2017). Indeed, something like a naturalised phenomenology, in the sense of an investigation of the lived, experienced world should also have a central place to play in this project, in my view. There will be space for explanatory cross-fertilization between our different discourses, but the idea that any one or subset of them is metaphysically fundamental, or that they variously seek to carve up 'reality' in different ways, would fall by the wayside.

This kind of view may of course smack of metaphysical theorizing itself, in some sense of the word (viz. Sellars' "how things in the broadest sense of the word hang together in the broadest sense of the word"). I prefer to see it rather as growing out of reflection on the nature of science and what our best understanding of, in particular, the world of fundamental physics and conscious experience, respectively, amounts to. However, this is not a distinction that perhaps will bear much weight, and insofar I would not want to reject the idea of metaphysical thinking entirely. There are also of course echoes of Kant in the distinction I have drawn, albeit the specific content I attach to this is not itself one Kant would espouse (nor is it, I stress again, meant as any kind of idealism). In any case, my main aim here in concluding this paper has been to outline this further possibility, somewhere between Kantianism and global expressivism if one likes, for a pragmatist, anti-representationalist philosophy. I look forward to future dialogue concerning the relative virtues these different pragmatic philosophies have to offer.

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(2018), though whether Dennett would count as my kind of pragmatist is not something I would want to pronounce positively on without further consideration.

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Comparing Pragmatism with Neo-pragmatism on Realism and Naturalism. Margolis and Pihlström versus Rorty and Robbins?

DIRK-MARTIN GRUBE

In 2002, a young Finnish scholar participates in the evaluation commission of a dissertation in Uppsala. Being the opponent of that dissertation, I have a chance to get to know this scholar. I am deeply impressed by his in-depth knowledge of pragmatism. Since then, I have often been impressed by *Sami Pihlström* and learnt a lot from him, about pragmatism and other matters. I appreciate co-operating with him and we have shared important moments in our careers. For example, I was very happy to be given the chance to hold the opening lecture at Pihlström's 2013 conference on Joseph Margolis so that I could honor Margolis' life work (Margolis is my dissertation supervisor). Pihlström and myself publish regularly in each other's anthologies and I consider it to be a special honor that he commented (see Pihlström, 2018, 67-71) on a project that is very important to me, the 'justified religious difference'-account I propose in order to make sense of religious diversity (see Grube, 2018, 47-55). I contribute with great pleasure to this *Festschrift* and look forward to future co-operations with Pihlström.

Pihlström is a full-fledged pragmatist. He is one of the leaders of the second-generation pragmatists, the generation that follows Margolis, Hilary Putnam and all those who helped to resuscitate pragmatism from the oblivion it had fallen into in much of the 20th century (see Margolis, 2002, IX-X). Pihlström has done a lot to develop pragmatism further in philosophical terms, e.g. by softening the supposedly sharp contradistinction between pragmatism and Kantianism (see

Pihlström, 2015, 106). Pihlström has also done much valuable work to defend pragmatism against its popular misunderstandings, e.g. against neo-pragmatist attempts to reduce pragmatism to some kind of postmodernism.

Those attempts are the main topic of this contribution. In the following, I compare some aspects of the neo-pragmatism of Rorty and his followers (e.g. Robbins) to the classical pragmatism of Peirce, James, Dewey and others. More precisely speaking, I take Margolis' and Pihlström's reconstruction of the basic characteristics of pragmatism and analyze to what extent neo-pragmatism (fails to) meet those characteristics. The reason why I compare both is that I admire (most) classical pragmatists (and consider myself to be a pragmatist in the spirit of Margolis, Pihlström and others), yet, have doubts about many neo-pragmatist theses. Above all, when Rorty embraces some form of wild postmodernism, I part company with him. In my view, Rorty's postmodernism, e.g. his aggressive rejection of all realist pretentions, betrays the basic intentions of the classical pragmatists. Whereas they search for some kind of middle ground between strong forms of realism and an all-out anti-realism, he succumbs to the latter. He shares with them the antipathy against the Scylla of strong forms of realism. Yet, whereas they search for the passage of Medina, he crushes full speed on the anti-realist Charybdis.

This is not to deny that I am attracted to some neo-pragmatist ideas, such as the criticism of strong realist programs and its 'emancipatory' academic agenda (i.e. its deconstruction of the dominant position of the natural sciences). I use even some of Rorty's suggestions for my own theorizing, e.g. his criticism of truth proper in the name of justification (I use the pluralistic character of justification as a basis for a constructive view on religious diversity (see Grube, 2018, 50-54) and his emphasis upon ethnocentricity (see below, 3.2.).

Yet, I strongly disagree with neo-pragmatists when they develop these suggestions in a radical postmodernist, i.e. relativistic, direction. For example, I abhor them when they embrace a radical anti-realism (see section 2), when they level *all* kinds of distinctions between the different academic pursuits (see section 3.1.), when Rorty mocks Truth (with a capital T) as well as truth, and when he pushes his ethnocentrism so far

as to principally undermine the activity of justification (see below, section 3.2.).

1. Margolis' and Pihlström's Characterization of Pragmatism

What characteristics does pragmatism have? This question is not easy to answer since pragmatism "never had a single doctrinal or methodological center" (Margolis, 2002, 2). Yet, there are some characteristics both Margolis and Pihlström have collected. Let us look at them in turn.

In the context of distinguishing pragmatism from a certain kind of naturalism, Margolis suggests the following criteriological triad to which pragmatism subscribes:

(1) [T]he physical world is independent of mind, language, inquiry, and subjectivity;

(2) whatever determinate entities belong in the ontic sense to the world according to (1) are *not,* or not for that reason, also epistemically independent of mind, language, inquiry, and subjectivity;

(3) metaphysics (or semantics) and epistemology are indissolubly linked, so that inquiries in the one implicate inquiries in the other (Margolis, 2002, 22).

Pihlström suggests a comparable triad in the context of summarizing a pragmatist perspective on theological realism, viz. that
(1) pragmatism opposes scientism, "non-scientific perspectives and practices are equally important…as scientific ones" (Pihlström, 2019, 5);
(2) in whichever way pragmatism attenuates realism, it must never overlook "the brute reality of pain, suffering, evil and death" (ibid.) and
(3) ethics and metaphysics are deeply entangled in pragmatism, "our metaphysical categorizations of reality depend on our ethical perspectives (and vice versa"; ibid.).

Although Margolis and Pihlström provide somewhat different motivations, both agree that the classical pragmatists reject strong forms of realism but do not push that rejection so far as to embrace an all-out anti-realism. Both agree also

that the classical pragmatists oppose certain kinds of naturalisms. According to Pihlström's first criterion, pragmatism is opposed to scientism by including non-scientific perspectives - presumably in the way in which James does when opposing Clifford -, Margolis' entire triad is intended to distinguish pragmatism from a particular kind of naturalism, viz. attempts at naturalizing in the spirit of Willard van Orman Quine's Epistemology-Naturalized program (which tries to reduce epistemology to the natural sciences). Both Margolis and Pihlström agree also that metaphysics does not stand on its own in pragmatism but is intrinsically linked with ethics (Pihlström) or with epistemology/semantics (Margolis).

I find both triads very helpful for explaining what pragmatism consists of. However, I would like to raise the following question to both Margolis and Pihlström: Isn't there another methodological characteristic of classical pragmatism, viz. that it deconstructs classical dualisms, e.g. that between realism and idealism or, in a different sense, that between Is and Ought? The intention is not to leave it at that and walk away from the issue (as Rorty does) but to '*aufheben*' those dualisms (see Pihlström 2015, 103) in a higher-order synthesis? I have always been fascinated by those attempts and wonder whether both Margolis and Pihlström agree that they characterize pragmatism as well - and, if so, whether they are worth being added as a separate, e.g. methodological criterion or whether they can be subsumed under one of the existing criteria (say, under Pihlström's third criterion).

2. Neo-Pragmatism and the Realism/Anti-Realism Debate

As indicated, both Margolis and Pihlström agree that the classical pragmatists attempt to steer some kind of middle course between strong forms of realism and an all-out anti-realism. Yet, the neo-pragmatists do not attempt to steer such a middle course but succumb to an all-out anti-realism. Under the sway of postmodernist influences, they see us as maneuvering only within the confines of language, with no possibility to relate language to reality. A characteristic example is the neo-pragmatist Robbins holding that "[m]eaning and truth are both intralinguistic, functions of connections

between the sentences that we use rather than of their connection to anything else in the world" (Robbins, 1993, 341). Questions of legitimacy are 'intralinguistic' as well, according to Robbins (1993, 341). For neo-pragmatists, the human race is thus imprisoned in language and there is no way out of this prison, no way to relate language to reality.

Rorty's position seems at first glance to be more complex. He thinks that the realism/anti-realism debate is relevant only for representationalists (Rorty, 1991, 1-12) whereas representationalism should be given up in favor of anti-representationalism. According to Rorty, anti-representationalism is defined by viewing knowledge not "as a matter of getting reality right, but rather as a matter of acquiring habits of action for coping with reality" (Rorty, 1991, 1). According to it, the differences between theoretical physics and literary criticism are "…sociological, but not epistemological" (ibid).

Yet, let us not be fooled by Rorty's rhetorical ingenuity. What he calls anti-representationalism *is* a sort of anti-realism. At least, in standard philosophical terminology it is. For most philosophers (as well as non-philosophical sane minds) knowledge *does* have something to do with getting reality right, good language use has something to do with relating language to reality properly. To be sure, the way in which language relates to reality is contested. Yet, Rorty's attempts to ridicule all attempts to do so are not only absurd but also morally highly reprehensible in the age of 'post-truth' and 'fake news'. We want language to represent reality properly and call people who use language to misrepresent reality liars.

Frankly, I regard Rorty's attempts to supersede the realism/anti-realism debate with the representationalism/anti-representationalism debate as nothing but a rhetorical trick. It is an attempt to camouflage the radical consequences of his approach. Rorty's recipe is simple: If your approach implies the radical position A (e.g. an anti-realism) but you do not wish to be seen in A's neighborhood, declare the debate between A and non-A to be obsolete. Make it appear to be part of a more comprehensive discussion between B and non-B and suggest that only people believing the outdated position B will take the A/non-A debate seriously whereas the more

enlightened non-B people do not bother about it any longer. An excellent strategy for distracting from the fact that you hold A!

I suggest die-hard theists should also use it! If they want to distract from the fact that they hold a theistic position (say, because they are afraid that it is indefensible), they should suggest that the debate between theists and atheists is irrelevant because it is part of a more comprehensive debate between B and non-B (if they are as ingenious as Rorty was, they will surely come up with a suggestion what B consists of) and makes sense only within B. Yet, B is outdated, thus, the theism/atheism debate is outdated as well. An excellent strategy for camouflaging a die-hard theism!

Yet, we should not let the theist get away with this strategy. Nor should we let Rorty get away with it. Rather, we should view his attempt to construe a debate (viz. between what he calls representationalism versus anti-representationalism) supposedly being 'above' the realism/anti-realism debate to be invented for the purposes of distracting from his radical anti-realism. The simple truth is that he *is* an all-out anti-realist. Since the classical pragmatists reject an all-out anti-realism, Rorty deviates from classical pragmatism on the realism issue. And so does Robbins. Thus, neo-pragmatists hold a different view on the realism-issue than classical pragmatists do.

3. Neo-Pragmatism and Naturalism

Margolis suggests that pragmatism and naturalism are difficult to reconcile. True, the early pragmatists were naturalists. Yet, their naturalism was "philosophically innocent" (Margolis, 2002, 6). But attempts at naturalizing epistemology à la Quine are incompatible with pragmatism, according to Margolis (Margolis, 2002, 7). This point ties in with Pihlström's first characterization of pragmatism, viz. that it opposes scientism. Thus, if we understand naturalism as including attempts at naturalizing and scientism, both Margolis and Pihlström hold that classical pragmatism is incompatible with naturalism.

What is neo-pragmatism's stance on naturalism? In order to answer that question, I will first look into Robbins and then into Rorty.

3.1. Robbins and Naturalism

Robbins is a naturalist. He defends a "religious naturalism" (Robbins, 1993, 343) and reduces religious faith to a commitment to "our own imaginative projections" (Robbins, 1993, 338). Yet, it has been observed that Robbins' naturalism is incompatible with his neo-pragmatism:

> Either neopragmatism really *is* a nonmetaphysical position, in which case it is compatible with a full range of theistic positions (but is neutral regarding the theism/naturalism distinction); or it is a decidedly *naturalistic* position, in which case it is not metaphysically neutral but must defend its metaphysical assumptions against…competitors (Clayton, 1993, 363).

I think that Clayton has a point and would like to expand on it. The issue that makes neo-pragmatism incompatible with naturalism it that of realism. You cannot hold the kind of radical anti-realism neo-pragmatists hold *and* favor a naturalism at the same time. The reason is that a defense of naturalism will have to rely on some form of a robust realism. I will explain what I mean with the help of an example drawn from Robbins.

Robbins holds that:

> people who happen to hit on the internal structure of the atom are no more firmly in touch with reality than people who dream great dreams of social justice or come up with new forms of art (Robbins, 1993, 342).

According to Robbins' (radical) anti-realism, artists, ethicists, and physicists are all in the same position vis-à-vis reality: The physicist is in no better position to claim that she has captured reality when she makes a discovery about atoms than the artist is. This is a consequence of Robbins' imprisonment-thesis, i.e. the thesis that we are all confined within language and that there is no way to relate language to reality (see section 2).

Yet, if all of us maneuver within the confines of language, why exclude the anti-naturalist, say, the theist? Why should she not be as much in touch with reality as the poet is? Why should we assume à la Robbins that she talks only about her 'own imaginative projections' when she says she talks about God? If Robbins holds that the artist is as much in touch with reality as the physicist is, he cannot deny the same right to the theist. After all, he denies that there is any independent way to check language's relation to reality. His attempts to re-interpret the theist's language in natural terms are thus completely arbitrary.

Without realism, naturalism is thus a lost cause. Naturalists *must* assume that reality can be captured better by naturalist means than by, say, supernaturalist ones. If they deny that reality can be captured at all, they deprive themselves of the resources to fend off supernaturalism. *Naturalism without realism is blind*.

It may be retorted now that there are other than realist ways to ground a naturalism. For example, it can be based upon aesthetic preferences. Thus, it can be argued, neo-pragmatists can uphold their radical anti-realism *and* favor naturalism if they base the latter on those grounds.

Yet, the problem is that the kind of naturalism that can be based upon other than realist grounds will be a seriously attenuated form of naturalism. But if attenuated, it cannot deliver what naturalists want it to deliver, viz. to rule out religion. A naturalism based upon aesthetic preferences is worlds apart from, say, the anti-religious naturalism of evolutionists. They insist on the use of Darwinist explanatory schemes because those schemes capture reality best (in their eyes). But if the neo-pragmatists were right and there would be no way to capture reality, there would be no point in using Darwinist schemes. They are on the same foot with art (after all, the artist is as much in touch with reality as the scientist is, according to Robbins). In sum, naturalism based upon other than realist grounds would lose its bite, its capacity to rule out religion.

Let me be clear about my own intentions at this point: I have no intention of defending naturalism and think that current naturalists as e.g. Dawkins are bad philosophers. My point in emphasizing that robust forms of naturalism (which

rule out religion) require robust forms of realism is not to promote the former but to point to the inconsistencies of neo-pragmatism: Neo-pragmatists cannot have the cake (their cake, not mine!) and eat it at the same time. They cannot undermine realism and hold robust forms of naturalism at the same time. If they want to be naturalists, they have to give up their anti-realism, if they want to be anti-realists, they have to give up their naturalism.

3.2. Rorty on Naturalism and his (Ab)Use of Ethnocentrism

In Rorty's case, not only his aggressive anti-realism but also his ethnocentrism is difficult to reconcile with a naturalism. Margolis thus holds that Rorty's is inconsistent when he follows the naturalizers *and* proposes ethnocentrism (ethnocentrism implying that the range of validity of one's justifications is limited to one's own ethnos). Rorty's

> postmodern advocacy of ethnocentric solidarity precludes legitimation and cannot…be reconciled with his naturalism (Margolis 2002, 4).

Rorty is indeed incoherent. Yet, I do not disagree with ethnocentrism as such. Rather, I use it myself (as a way to heighten the consciousness for the historical character of our legitimations). But I have grave doubts about the relativistic implications of Rorty's ethnocentrism. He emphasizes that justifications are valid for 'us', only for our own ethnos, and contrasts the relativity of ethnocentric justifications with universalist validity claims (what he calls 'objectivism'; see Rorty, 1986, 3vv). Proceeding in this fashion, he wants to make us believe that there is an exclusive alternative between two extremes, his kind of relativistic ethnocentrism and universalism.

Construing exclusive alternatives is another trick that permeates Rorty's writings. The recipe here is: If you wish to defend position A but think that it cannot be defended (it would be incoherent to defend a relativistic ethnocentrism as a universal policy), construe an exclusive alternative between A and B and depict B as undesirable as possible (as Rorty does with 'objectivism'). This way, you escape the necessity

to provide positive arguments for A. It is sufficient to shoot B down. After all, everybody disagreeing with B falls automatically under A since A and B are exclusive alternatives.

This is how Rorty 'defends' his radical ethnocentrism. He suggests first that there is an exclusive 'either/or' between his ethnocentrism and universalism. Next, he shoots down universalism.

Yet, we pragmatists should not build our case on cheap 'either/or'-strategies. We should make clear that our resistance to universal validity claims does not lead us to Rorty's kind of relativistic ethnocentrism. The fact that we do not believe in universalist legitimatory resources does not mean that we undermine the activity of legitimation in the way Rorty does. There are many ways in between traditional universalism and a relativistic ethnocentrism á la Rorty. For example, postulating legitimatory resources that overlap between different ethnoi is such a way. This postulate avoids Rorty's relativism *without* falling back into traditional universalism. *We pragmatists relativize without succumbing to relativism.*

These considerations on Rorty's ethnocentrism convey that he cannot favor naturalism. His ethnocentrism rules out the possibility to recommend naturalism as a general policy. The reason is straightforward: Since ethnocentrism undermines the possibility of robust legitimations in Rorty's hands, he cannot legitimize naturalism in a robust sense. Whatever he says about naturalism is valid only for Rorty's own ethnos. People not belonging to his ethnos have no reason to adopt naturalism. If he suggests they should become naturalists as well, he is plainly inconsistent.

4. Conclusion

I hope to have achieved a number of things in this contribution. I have:

   - demonstrated that neo-pragmatists are inconsistent when they embrace an anti-realism *and* a naturalism and

   - pointed out two rhetorical tricks Rorty uses and we (honest) pragmatists should stay away from.

Implicitly, I hope to have raised doubts whether the neo-pragmatists are true pragmatists. Put alternatively, I have

(implicitly) pointed out a way in which neo-pragmatists can become better pragmatists, viz. by moderating their aggressive anti-realism (they should flirt less with postmodernism) as well as their naturalism (the latter seems to be a remnant of days past, of an age in which one could uncritically embrace modernist ideologies).

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Reflections on Limits

LYUBOV D. BUGAEVA & JOHN RYDER

In his *Death and Finitude*, Sami Pihlström argues for a philosophical anthropology that derives from a melding of pragmatism and a conception of a transcendental self. The need for this approach, he says, is that naturalization alone cannot account for a self as subject, so a transcendental self is necessary. However, the idealist traits of Kant's notion of a transcendental self are also unacceptable, and a pragmatic redesign of the concept of the transcendental self is called for. Whether or not this pragmatically construed transcendental self is acceptable, or even desirable, is a question that deserves a degree of close attention that we cannot give it here. We may point out, though, that one of the reasons Pihlström gives for requiring some notion of transcendence is that 'naturalization' alone does not yield the self as subject, but he thinks this because he understands a 'naturalized' view of the self to require that the self be understood only in terms appropriate to the sciences and thus purely as an object rather than a subject. While this is certainly a common view of 'naturalization' and naturalism, it is not the only available naturalism. If one raises the question of a naturalized understanding of the self based on a different conception of naturalism, for example the one common in the American naturalist tradition, rather than that most commonly employed in analytic philosophical discussions, the adequacy of a 'naturalization' of the self may be at least plausible. Pihlström does seem to end up with something like this approach to naturalism after 'pragmatizing' the transcendental self. Whether one needs to go through all that in order to have a naturalist conception of the self that is both object and subject is a larger question.

Be that as it may, our interest here is in exploring a related concept that Pihlström places at the heart of his philosophical anthropology, and that is the concept of limits. In his hands, at any rate in the concept of the self as he develops it, the self is to be understood importantly as a 'limit of the world' in an explicitly Wittgensteinian sense. Again, the details of Pihlström's development of this idea are beyond our scope. That he makes of the concept of limits something central is, however, intriguing and fruitful. We would like simply to accept his view that the idea of limits is philosophically important, and then range a bit over some of the philosophical possibilities that are available to us.

Pihlström treats the self as a 'limit of the world' in a specific sense. In his hands, if we are to understand the relation between the self and the rest of the world as one in which the self is 'involved' in the world, we can do so only if we acknowledge that in some way or ways the self 'constitutes' the world. This is the transcendental side of Pihlström's transcendental pragmatism. However, unlike in Kant's treatment of the transcendental self's constitution of the world, transcendental pragmatism does not posit a self as an entity independent of the world that in turn constitutes the world. For Pihlström, the transcendental self is not an independent 'thing'; it is, therefore, a 'no thing'. Because it is a necessary 'no thing' by virtue of its constitution of the world, it is, following Wittgenstein, not an entity in the world but a limit of the world.

We fully agree with Pihlström that the self constitutes its world, in some specifiable senses and respects, and that the self is not an entity independent of this constitutive feature of its relation to its world. It is not independent of its world because not only does the self in some ways constitute its world, but its world constitutes the self, also in certain specifiable ways. The relations between the self and its world are, in other words, mutually constitutive. Moreover, one of the reasons this is the case, or so we would posit, is that *all* relations are constitutive. If to be an entity that both constitutes by its relations and is constituted by them is to be a 'limit', then limits are central not to philosophical anthropology alone but to nature generally. Limits, we may say, are more central philosophically than Pihlström may realize, though it

is his analysis of limits in the constitution of the self that has pointed us to this idea. We would like to explore briefly some of the ways limits feature in our understanding of ourselves and our world.

Limits can be construed variously. Every distinction between one complex of nature and another implies limits, if only because each has the integrity and identity that it has; borders of all kinds – social, geographical, political - are limits; transitions in nature generally and in human experience are limits; the prevailing possibilities that frame the future potential of individual persons, societies and nations, indeed of complexes generally, are limits; presences and absences are limits, as are beginnings and endings; the eventuality of death, with which Pihlström grapples in detail, is a critical limit in our experience. Some limits can be pushed, twisted, revised, and revoked, while some cannot; some limits, for example laws, enable a complex to survive, function, and prosper, while some limits are obstacles; some limits seem to be universal, for example Newtonian space and time, until we discover that they are not.

Limits are central to and for everything, to all of nature, whether related to human beings or not. The reason is simply that the defining traits of any complex of nature posits the limits of its identity and integrity. At the level of the most general ontology, then, it is possible, indeed necessary, to talk about limits, though for our purposes we shall avoid that level of abstraction and restrict ourselves to a discussion of limits in relation to experience, or, as Pihlström helpfully calls it, philosophical anthropology. His primary interest in this respect is to posit the self as a limit of the world in the attempt to understand a pragmatically construed transcendental self, and in death as a limiting feature of experience, not simply as an eventual end but as a context in which meaning becomes possible.

We ought to make the point here that there seems to us to be problems with these accounts. With respect to the self as limit of the world, there is something unnecessarily mystifying about the idea, in both Pihlström and Wittgenstein's hands. The self, even as subject, can be fully a natural entity by virtue of the fact that the self is enmeshed in innumerable mutually constitutive relations with its many environments.

That there are countless limits to be identified and ideally understood with respect to the self, as both subject and object, is as certain as we can be about anything, but there is no mysterious 'limit of the world' at work; there is the self, which in multiple orders of relations functions as subjects and in equally multiple orders of relations has the traits of an object. What is distinctive is to be found in the details of the limits with respect to human being generally and to specific individuals.

As for death as a limit that enables meaning in life, Pihlström runs the risk in saying so of intellectualizing the human condition to a point where one may not be able to recognize most people. It is fair to say, we suspect, that most people lead normally meaningful and to some extent fulfilling lives – through their families, homes, communities, habits and activities – without ever confronting, and certainly not in a carefully reflective way, the fact of their own deaths. Most people, presumably, pay relatively little attention to the inevitability of their own deaths until they are forced by circumstances to do so. Indeed, one could plausibly claim that for many people, their death is denied through their belief in eternal life, and in fact for certain sorts of religious belief, meaning in life derives precisely from rejecting rather than confronting death. Such facts of most people's lives do not prevent meaningfulness, whether found or placed, which suggests that the importance of a Heideggerian authenticity in this regard, which Pihlström appears to echo, may be rather overstated.

However it is with such matters, surely limits play a central role in experience generally, which is to say in what it is to be a human being, and in more daily and pedestrian features of experience. And often, critically important features of human life turn out to be puzzling limits. Language is a good illustration of the point. Language, if not a dimension of experience in a technical sense, is surely a constituent of experience. Much, though not all, of what it is to live human lives is to live linguistically. The degree to which language configures our experience is debated by linguists, socio-linguists, psychologists, philosophers, and others. Interestingly, though, for a feature so central to human being, we also debate the extent to which language can be ascribed to non-

human entities. The obvious cases are certain species of animals, though it is worth pointing out that comparable questions will arise in relation to artificial intelligence once the technology reaches a sufficient degree of complexity to allow artificial intelligence to grow and learn. If such a human artifact is programmed to 'speak', and if its own capacities develop sufficiently, then at some point it may well be possible to ascribe language to it. When that point is reached, then important limiting features of human experience will have been stretched to apply to non-human complexes, and our understanding of those limits will have to adjust accordingly.

Emotions are another curious case. According to Antonio Damasio, emotions play a significant role in the evolution of consciousness as they map bodily changes, which trigger feelings, in brain structures (Damasio 2003, 112). Like language, our emotional capacities surely condition much of our experience, again if not as dimensions of experience than as constituents, though there remains a great deal to explore about how these factors come into play and how they limit experience. For example, there are interesting questions about the constitutive nature of emotions in relation to film such that the possibilities of enactive cinema depend in part on how emotions configure our engagement with what is happening onscreen. Enactive cinema (as well as some VR and AR experiences) creates a situation that tests the limits of our experience; it traps a viewer in a 'no escape' involvement with the film characters when, for example, an enactive avatar, which is sensitive to a viewer's emotional state, is used. Enactive and VR or AR cinema also give a chance to a viewer to experience with the whole body what it is like to be the other, for example a tree in the CVR experience "Tree" (Milica Zec and Winslow Porter, 2017), or a Syrian refugee girl in a camp in Jordan in the CVR "Clouds Over Sidra" (Gabo Arora and Barry Pousman, 2015). Experiments in active perception open "a new landscape for creating worlds and stories", as it was put at the Tribeca Film Festival, while testing the limits of our imagination. In such cases, the transcendental self that Pihlström speaks about, i.e. the subject, conceived of as a or the limit, is not a necessary category for the demarcation of facts. However, if one wants to retain the idea of the transcendental self as a 'limit of the world', then in the case of

enactive cinema it may align with the acknowledgement of the epistemic position of the emotionally engaged empirical self that is construed through the enactive cinematic experiences. Such experience does not only make the epistemic position possible, but connects the transcendental subject with life.

At more specific levels, it is certainly the case that a range of features of our individual characters condition, or limit, experience. Talents, interests, and other such traits constitute our lives in specific and limiting ways. For the vast majority of us who have any musical talent at all, that talent is not sufficient to allow us to reach the levels of noteworthy accomplishment that concert musicians or prominent composers reach. However much we might aspire to such heights of achievement, our modest talents limit us. If we learn to tailor our aspirations to the limits placed on us by our own characteristics, the talents can be a source of pleasure and satisfaction; if not, they are a source of frustration. Personal interests present a similar scenario. Many of us are interested in athletic activities of one sort or another, and those interests incline us to organize our lives in certain ways and not others. The interests are themselves limiting factors in how we live our lives. To a considerable extent, in fact, such interests, like talents, are factors in the meaning we ascribe to or derive from our lives. In these respects, the limits that help to define us provide enabling conditions for us to lead reasonably satisfying and meaningful lives.

The notion of limits and of the transgression of limits is also built into the rites of passage that mark transitional stages in an individual's life, for example radical changes in social status such as graduating from university, starting a new job, and getting married, or psychological states such as feeling uprooted, and suffering from the 'empty nest' syndrome, or one's physical condition, such as becoming an amputee, etc. A ritual passage transforms the participants of the process; the transformation is "not just any sort of change but a momentous metamorphosis, a moment after which one is never again the same" (Grimes 2002, 6). Even some commonplace situations such as travelling, dying, being ill, coming of age, etc. are potential rites of passage since they may involve essential subjective transformations. At the level of philosophi-

cal categories, the passage from one condition to another is a function of a shift in sets of relations. A person, like any other natural entity, is constituted by its relations, and in the case of the rite of passage, one moves from one set of relations to another. To use slightly different terms, while the rules may "frame the ritual process", it nevertheless "transcends its frame" (Turner 1980, 160). The same is true for the individual in the passage. When the experienced liminality is narrated in literature, film, or performative art, a reader or a viewer becomes a participant of the shared experience and thus transgresses the limits of his or her personal experience.

We have so far considered limits in regard to individual capabilities and activities. There is an equally significant place for limits in social experience. It should not surprise us to find that just as limits provide both defining traits and obstacles for individuals, the same is true for communities of any size and scope. This is clear enough if we consider a nation as an example. The political boundaries of nations, by which we mean national borders, establish the limits for the writ of national law; they demarcate the geographical area in which an individual citizen can demand and expect the rights of citizenship; they posit the points at which immigration and customs control are, under typical conditions, expected or required; they establish the limits within which social systems from education to health care apply; and much else that distinguishes one nation from another and establishes the identity of a nation. These boundaries are of course malleable, as are the nature and implications of the range of limitations they create. Whether malleable or not, they are in the ways specified, enabling conditions of nations, without which nations and whatever goods they may generate would be impossible.

National boundaries can also be obstacles for people both outside and inside a nation, this despite the fact that national borders are remarkably porous. Leaving aside the legal arrangements that make crossing national borders seamless, such as in the Schengen Zone in Europe, illegal border crossings of goods and people are common. This is true even where one may not expect it. While it is nearly impossible to cross the Demilitarized Zone between the Republic of Korea and the DPRK, it is quite possible to have oneself smuggled

across the DPRK's northern border with China. In countries and areas that have less strict controls on their borders, such as the United states and Europe, the extent to which undocumented immigrants make their way to their country of choice is common knowledge.

Even such permeable borders can become challenging obstacles, and the limits they pose can create new, sometimes unanticipated, problems. This is being written in early 2019, a time in which tighter controls over national borders has become an issue. In recent years, wars and poverty in Africa, and wars in Syria and Afghanistan, have generated waves of refugees seeking to enter Turkey and, in greater numbers, Europe. For a time, some member states of the EU, notable Germany, were welcoming refugees, and Italy extended considerable efforts to rescue migrants in dangerous boats floating in the Mediterranean. Soon, however, some nations began to resist. We saw barbed wire and armed police along Hungary's borders with Croatia and Serbia to prevent refugees from the Middle East entering the country. Throughout Europe anti-immigrant parties found greater support, and eventually Italy refused to accept any more refugees or even assist them in the sea. The political limits of many of the EU member states rather quickly became much greater obstacles than they had been. A similar process is unfolding in the US, where the federal government has twisted itself into dysfunction over the desire of some to build a wall along all, or part, of the border with Mexico. Even without a wall, restrictions at many points along that border have since early 2017 become much stronger and, as in Europe, controversial.

The most striking illustration of national limits creating unexpected problems concerns the ongoing saga of the United Kingdom's effort to extricate itself from the EU, a process twice delayed and still underway as this is being written. No doubt many volumes will be written about this event in the coming years, and the details are too complex and befuddling to develop here. The reason for bringing it up is that in the process of 'Brexit' a critical stumbling block has been the land border between the UK and the Republic of Ireland, which is a line that distinguishes the Irish Republic from the six counties that make up Northern Ireland and which are part of the UK. The problem in a nutshell, is this. It was a central com-

ponent of the Good Friday Agreement of 1998 that ended the Troubles in Northern Ireland, that the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic will be open. As long as both the UK and the Irish Republic were EU members this was not a problem. But with the UK withdrawing from the EU, that border now becomes an external EU political limit, which the Republic of Ireland would be expected to secure. However, no one on either side of that political limit wants the border to be secured. Where, then, does the demarcation line between the UK and the Irish Republic, especially with respect to customs and immigration control, lie? This so far intractable problem is a prime reason for the difficulty the UK is having in leaving the EU, and that difficulty is affecting the lives of millions of people, primarily to their detriment. The problems created by limits can be as profound and damaging as what they enable.

For societies, whether on the scale of small communities or entire nations, limits are defining traits and they are obstacles. They both enable communities to prevail and be the communities they are, and they present challenges to development, sometimes even to maintenance of the status quo. In this regard, limits play much the same range of roles for people in community as they play for people individually. And, as we have indicated earlier, limits of various kinds are no less centrally important for entities well beyond the human.

The primary point of these remarks is to suggest that we would do well, as Sami Pihlström has rightly urged, to attend carefully to limits and the roles they play. We may have some quarrels with the way he describes the role of limits in the understanding and nature of the self, but his general point is right. Our comments are an effort to point to some minimal reasons for thinking this, and to urge that more attention be paid to limits in our philosophical analyses of any topic.

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The Pragmatic Method and the Philosopher's Practice

LEILA HAAPARANTA

Introduction

Scientists normally tell at the beginning of their research reports what method or methods they have used in their research. That practice is less common in philosophical books and articles, although there are several philosophical methods in use and philosophers often mention and discuss their methods at some points in their texts. Philosophical methods are sometimes hidden, or they may be an integral part of the very philosophical activity. It may also happen that the whole study is both practicing philosophy and discussion about the method, as is often the case in phenomenological studies. Occasionally it is common knowledge within a philosophical tradition or school that a certain method is used, and therefore it is uninformative to describe the method to the intended audience at the beginning of each and every study. Philosophers' attitudes towards their methods vary; some are willing to say that methods are like tools that are applied to objects of research; others would regard the toolbox metaphor as completely misleading and argue that it is not part of the philosopher's practice to choose different tools for different purposes.

This paper is about the pragmatic method, more precisely, about the ways philosophers use that method. It is inspired by Sami Pihlström's book titled *"The Trail of the Human Serpent is Over Everything": Jamesian Perspectives on Mind, World, and Religion* (2008). In that book Pihlström interprets William James's pragmatic method and reconstructs a *Jamesian* view on what the pragmatic method is. He clarifies with several examples how the method can be used and how James uses

it. The pragmatic maxim, which is the core of the method, is expressed by Charles Peirce (1878), and James also refers to Peirce's formulation in his *Pragmatism* (1907) (James 1975, 28). Like Peirce and James, a pragmatist thinks that our beliefs are rules for action. The meaning of an expression, the thought of an object, a scientific theory, and a philosophical view receives its content and value from its consequences, which are broadly understood. Those consequences include various kinds of effects, such as sensations, behavioral reactions, actions, and in the broadest meaning, the consequences to our lives. Pihlström stresses the ethical dimension in his own Jamesian view. He points out that Peirce and James paid attention to different consequences. On Peirce's view, he argues, "James focused on particular experiences and practical consequences of actions, whereas the practical consequences that Peirce was interested in were general patterns and habits" (Pihlström 2008, 5). Pihlström's Jamesian view is thus interested in what is particular or local, and evaluation of abstract theories against the background of actual human life. More importantly, it is not focusing on the formal structure that a philosophical position possibly instantiates, even if Pihlström does not ignore the importance of logical consistency. Pihlström sees similarities between the pragmatic way of arguing and the transcendental argument, in which a philosopher starts with what is actual, that is, actual experience or human life, and moves "backwards" towards the necessary conditions for its possibility. He remarks that he interprets Jamesian pragmatism "transcendentally" and as a method which serves in the evaluation of "philosophical concepts, conceptions, problems, and hypotheses in terms of their (potential) ethical relevance" (Pihlström 2008, vi). He sees Peirce as a philosopher who was interested in the possible and the conceivable, and James as one who focused on the actual (*ibid.*, 13).

This paper is not about Peirce or James. Instead, it studies Pihlström's Jamesian pragmatic method by comparing it with Robert Brandom's method. Brandom is a Kantian pragmatist, who has been influenced by Peirce more than by James. In the next section, Brandom's theory of assertion is presented and described in terms of the distinction that Pihlström makes between Peirce and James. The paper then seeks to find ways

of applying the method which Pihlström regards as Jamesian and which he values as a philosophical method, although he does not support James's philosophy in all its details.

Brandom's game of "giving and asking for reasons"

Brandom follows the pragmatist principle that beliefs are rules for action, and concepts and theories should be evaluated in view of what difference they make to practice. His maxim for semantic theories is as follows:

> What gives semantic theory its philosophical point is the contribution that its investigation of the nature of contentfulness can make to the understanding of proprieties of practice, paradigmatically of judging and inferring. That semantic theory is embedded in this way in a larger explanatory matrix is accordingly important for how it is appropriate to conceive the semantic interpretants associated with what is interpreted. It means that it is pointless to attribute semantic structure or content that does no pragmatic explanatory work. (Brandom, 1994, 144)

An important source to which Brandom and Jaroslav Peregrin, whose view comes close to Brandom's, both refer is Gottlob Frege's *Begriffsschrift* (1879) (Brandom 2000, 50; Peregrin 2014, 3 – 4). In that book Frege argues that two judgments have the same conceptual content if one can derive from them the same consequences when they are combined with a set of common premises (BS, § 3). Another source that points to the same direction is Wilfrid Sellars, who takes the meaning of a linguistic expression to be determined by the role it has in relation to perception, other linguistic expressions, and overt behavior, and to whom the connections between perception, language, and action are not basically behavioristically understandable regularities, but rule-governed and social (Sellars 1974, 423 – 424).

Brandom's philosophy focuses on semantic theory and logic and their links to practice. For Brandom, it is the rules that govern practice, not the regularities found in practice, which are relevant in view of semantic theory. Like Frege in his *Begriffsschrift*, Brandom argues that the inferential role determines the meaning of a word; what matters in logic and semantics are actions called judgments and their consequenc-

es. Beliefs are here rules for action, as Peirce would say, and judgments and inferences are seen as patterns or habits rather than particular actions. For Brandom, language is normative because its vocabulary is governed by inferential rules. Those rules include, but cannot be reduced to, the explicitly formulated inferential rules of a logical system. Even if Brandom emphasizes rules and normativity, he does not think that rules are all that can be told of language; instead, it is the persons, the users of language, and their normative attitude that is the final court. That includes the human activity of evaluating, hence, treating our own and others' utterances as correct or incorrect (Brandom 1994, 37).

Brandom's vocabulary is ethical in the sense of deontological ethics. He uses such expressions as "commitment," "entitlement," "responsibility," "authority," and even "deontic attitude." An assertion is an act and an acknowledgment of a commitment to a belief. In Brandom's theory, commitment and entitlement are two kinds of deontic statuses. Being entitled to assert means having authority; being committed to what has been said means having responsibility. One who asserts is entitled to make inferences from her assertion and to use her assertion as a reason, but she is also committed to give reasons for her assertion if her addressee asks for them. The term "deontic attitude" means in Brandom's theory a person's attitude of taking an asserter to be committed or entitled. Thus, for Brandom, assertions serve as reasons and they allow further inferences (Brandom 1994, 157 – 168). That is the human practice Brandom is interested in. For the addressee, assertions are commitments whose reasons she is allowed to ask the asserter, who, for her part, is responsible for giving reasons. Because the asserter as well as the addressee may use those assertions as reasons for further inferences, all assertions are testimonies, even if the authority and the responsibility that come along with the assertion may vary.

Brandom does not think that norms can be presented as explicit rules which humans would follow. He also denies, as was stated above, that norms would basically be regularities of behavior. Therefore, it seems to be the speaker and the addressee that apply and interpret norms in particular situations. The ethical framework that Brandom gives is general;

hence, he is Peircean in his interest in the general patterns in which assertions are located. However, he is Jamesian in his emphasis on the particular encounters and the attitudes of the asserter and the addressee. For Brandom, the pragmatist, assertions are connected with social practices, and those practices allow description by means of deontic vocabulary. Still, what is irreducible in his analysis is the persons' attitude and their encounters, and that brings in the element of particularity in his use of the pragmatic method. The normative attitude need not be propositional and it may even include evaluation of the speaker's moral virtues, as I have argued earlier (Haaparanta 2018).

Pihlström's Jamesian method

I mentioned above that Pihlström favors the Jamesian view on the pragmatic method. That means, among other things, that the consequences that Pihlström is interested in are particular, hence, an abstract theory or a philosophical view must be evaluated in terms of particular events in the world and the actions of individuals; the general scheme of an action is not sufficient. However, more can be said of the steps between the general view and the practical consequences. Pihlström's intention is not to focus on mechanical rules or inference schemes that would reveal the steps. He does not argue that the use of the pragmatic method is to follow given rules of moving from the general to the particular, for example, from a metaphysical theory to those actual morally laudable or blamable deeds or activity. That kind of guidebook for using the pragmatic method would be against the pragmatic spirit, because it would try to present a general scheme applicable to every instance of pragmatic evaluation. Still, something should be said about the use of the method, and that is exactly what Pihlström does in his book. His main interest is in ethical consequences of our acting on a theory. Beliefs are "tested in the laboratory of life" (Pihlström 2008, 38). The question now arises how a Jamesian pragmatist connects a general philosophical view to its practical *ethical* consequences. Pihlström states that the pragmatic maxim is not "a precursor of the positivist repudiation of metaphysics"; instead, it is "a method to be used precisely in order to find out what

the practical, ethically relevant core of metaphysical issues is" (*ibid.*, 15).

If the similarities of the transcendental argument and the Jamesian pragmatic method are emphasized and the pragmatist's argument is thus expressed in words, actual human life that the argument starts with must be described in the vocabulary that is available to the philosopher in everyday life. That description of human practice is not morally neutral; on the contrary, it includes moral vocabulary. As Pihlström states, "it is essential to our manner of being as subjects that we perceive the world in moral terms" (*ibid.*, 45). However, the description is not about actual human life with its evils: what is required is a description of practice that is morally desired and valuable. Therefore, actuality is ideality for the philosopher who is a member of the given community, perhaps the community of all human beings, and who recognizes and is able to express shared values. It is from this starting-point that the method proceeds to the necessary conditions of the possibility of that kind of morally good practice. Pihlström states that it is a field of commitments or a form of life (*ibid.*, 49).

For Pihlström, metaphysics has an ethical basis (*ibid.*, 59). That somewhat surprising view becomes less surprising if we take into account that here metaphysics is not a study of the basic ontological categories that are supposed to have their being independently of the human perspective (*ibid.*, 77). Pihlström seeks to test metaphysical views, such as belief in the immortality of the soul, against human life described in ethical terms. He argues that belief, or hope, which is close to belief here, for immortality should be ethically motivating ideal in this worldly life, if it is given legitimation by means of the pragmatic method. He also argues:

> … to find out that a metaphysical position is such that we cannot *live* on the basis of it, or cannot really *believe* it to be true while continuing to engage in the world in the habitual ways we simply cannot give up (e.g., for ethical reasons), is to find out that it is pragmatically false. This sounds radical but is in fact a direct consequence of the basic pragmatist view that beliefs, including metaphysical beliefs, are habits of action and must be critically evaluated in terms of their potential consequences for action. (*Ibid.*, 73)

Morality in human practice is implicit; it is not expressed in language. However, a Jamesian pragmatist must assume that it can be generalized to the extent that it can be described in words. For a philosopher, however, there is one more level, namely, the level of the vocabulary of ethical theories, and the competition between those theories. Pihlström denies that pragmatism should be interpreted as a consequentialist position in ethics; instead, he points out that "we may see it as offering a *criterion for the adequacy of any ethical view* in terms of its ability of that view to account for the preciousness of our mortal human life" (*ibid.*, 85). Hence, a Jamesian pragmatist should test ethical theories as well as metaphysical theories. It seems that such evaluation of ethical theories would not result in defeating any particular theory; it may rather be the case that consequentialism, deontological theory and virtue ethics could live together. Still, I would not argue that pragmatism is instrumentalism about philosophical theories in the sense that it would describe ethical theories as tools that are useful for different purposes.

Concluding Remarks

The use of the pragmatic method as Pihlström describes it is not giving analysis of actual human practice and then moving towards general philosophical views by following given rules of inference. Still, there is the philosopher's reason at work in the process. The use of the method is continuous evaluation of philosophical views by moving back and forth between the description of particular phenomena or human practice and abstract theories. As for metaphysical theories, pragmatist metaphysics is not analytic metaphysics. Instead, it seems to be closer to phenomenological metaphysics, as it includes descriptions of what phenomenologists would call the world of the natural attitude. It differs from the pure or radically transcendental, even if not from more naturalized, phenomenological philosophies in that no parenthesizing of the natural world is included in the use of the method. It is always the natural world with its idealities, such as moral values, that is in focus in pragmatism.

As was noted above, Brandom construes human linguistic practice by means of deontological ethical vocabulary. Still,

his linguistic pragmatism does not exclude the vocabulary of virtue ethics. Jamesian pragmatist philosophy as Pihlström presents it does not favor one ethical theory and its vocabulary over the other alternatives. What matters is the continuous *moral* evaluation of all abstract philosophical, hence also ethical, views. This feature suggests that even if Jamesian pragmatism does not propose any specific ethical theory, its metaphilosophy is thoroughly ethical. It pays attention to the moral virtues of a philosopher and praises practical wisdom over other forms of human rationality. That is also essential to Pihlström's way of applying the pragmatic method, which is not regulated by explicit rules, but illuminated by various examples.

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Pragmatism, Recognition, and Philosophical Identity

HEIKKI J. KOSKINEN

1. Questions of Pragmatist Identity

Let us begin by considering the second person singular question 'Are you a pragmatist?'. Speakers of this utterance type could be encountered in philosophical circles, whether the social context be one of a conference, a seminar room, or an informal talk over a beer. For the addressee, this externally presented identity inquiry can raise the related first person singular question 'Am I a pragmatist?'. Both of these questions apparently presuppose a living autonomous subject who is at least a potential bearer of a pragmatist identity, and also able to participate in *interpersonal dialogue* as well as in *internal reflection* on the matter. The situation changes somewhat when some other researchers ask the interpretative third person singular question 'Is *x* a pragmatist?' of a deceased thinker *x*, basing their scholarly evaluation on an already completed textual corpus instead of a living interactive dialogue (cf. Koskinen & Pihlström, 2006).

What all of our three initial question types arguably share is that they presuppose some antecedent understanding of what pragmatism is, and even more crucially, of what it is to be a pragmatist. Otherwise, there would seem to be no point at all in presenting the very questions themselves. Consequently, one relevant issue then concerns the adequate doctrinal content of pragmatism and the closely related semantic criterion for applying the label or predicate 'pragmatist'. Although these questions might constitute interesting topics for learned debate, in this paper, I am *not* going to focus on such

criterial matters of meaning. Instead, I shall adopt a more general approach based on a semantic ascent (cf. Quine, 1960) of a higher order, and consider some *social and normative functions*[1] of the philosophical identity label 'pragmatist'. Utilizing conceptual resources of contemporary recognition theory,[2] I will argue that in addition to its constructive roles, a pragmatist philosophical identity can also have some acutely problematic features. In what follows, I shall further specify the mentioned problematic aspects and try to justify my claim.

2. Pragmatist Identity and Its Functional Components

Philosophical identity can be taken to designate something like a person's understanding of who they are, of their fundamental defining characteristics as an academic researcher, as a thinker, or indeed, as a philosopher (cf. Taylor, 1994, 25). In terms of ontological categorization, we may say that identities of this sort are *qualitative* in nature, and based on specific features or properties and their combinations (cf. Koskinen, 2017, 81). For articulating some of the important socionormative functions of the philosophical identity of a *pragmatist*, I shall rely on Kwame Anthony Appiah's (2005, 66-69) useful analysis of a paradigm of social identity.[3] According to this model, we may say that we have an ethically and politically relevant identity group label 'pragmatist' when the following conditions are fulfilled:

(*i*) A classification of philosophers as pragmatists is associated with a **social conception** of pragmatists;

(*ii*) Some philosophers **identify as** pragmatists; and

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[1] This focus on the *social* and *normative* aspects can itself be seen as a central theme of pragmatism, as argued in several connections by Sami Pihlström (cf. e.g. 2005; 2008).
[2] For the theoretical framework, see Honneth (1995); Taylor (1994); Ikäheimo & Laitinen (2007). Cf. Koskinen (2017; 2018; 2019).
[3] Because the domain of my discussion is limited to a particular context, to make the model more specific, I have substituted 'philosophers' for 'people', and 'pragmatists' for the generalized identity group label 'L'.

(*iii*) Philosophers are sometimes **treated as** pragmatists.

A noteworthy aspect of this analysis is that the functional roles of the three components can be understood without specifying any particular conception of pragmatism, or any presupposed or fixed meaning of the predicate 'pragmatist'.

Conditions (*i*) and (*iii*) articulate a generic social dependence that points to heteronomous relations based on factors external to the individual philosopher. The former concerns a socially constructed *understanding* of pragmatists, while the latter has to do with social forms of *behaviour* towards pragmatists. The subjective condition (*ii*) then goes between the two external or social ones, and concerns internally grounded and autonomous *self-identification*. Even though the second condition of this hotdog model thus focuses on the subjective and reflexive element of self-understanding, it is not fully independent of all external or heteronomous influence. This is because the precise social identities that one can identify with are not constructed monologically, or in atomistic isolation, but depend rather on antecedent social conceptions of the relevant identity-notions (cf. Honneth, 1995, 163-164; Taylor, 2004, 52).[4]

3. Constructive Roles of Pragmatist Identity in Internal and External Contexts

Why, then, should any philosopher wish to identify herself as a pragmatist, and thus fulfill the subjective condition (*ii*) above? Surely, some positive aspects must be involved to provide motivation for such a self-defining maneuver. In talking about the possible constructive roles of a pragmatist identity in terms of the Appiah-inspired analysis presented above, we can distinguish two basic types of context within it. On the one hand, there are the *internal* or reflexive cases of

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[4] In the case of pragmatism and 'pragmatist', the relevant social conceptions are likely to be determined by the community of pragmatism scholars, and also to be connected in specific ways e.g. to the thought of C. S. Peirce, William James, John Dewey, and possibly to some later neo-pragmatist thinkers.

self-relation in the sense of self-understanding, where some philosopher recognizes or identifies herself as a pragmatist, as in (*ii*). On the other hand, there are also the *external* or properly interpersonal cases, where one philosopher recognizes another as a pragmatist. These external cases then involve both the conceptual aspect of understanding (*i*) and the behavioral aspect of treatment (*iii*).

Utilizing the schematism of Ikäheimo and Laitinen (2007, 35-36) as a notational basis, let us assume that 'A-B-X' depicts the general form of all cases of *some A taking B as X*. We can then use this structure to represent recognition-relations in particular, such that A is the *subject* or recognizer, B is the *object* or the recognized, and X is the *content* or the specification of *as what* the object B is recognized. With 'a pragmatist' substituted for the 'X' of the original schematism, we then have the internal and external contexts as:

(*1*) A recognizes B as a pragmatist and **A = B**

(*2*) A recognizes B as a pragmatist and **A ≠ B**

The distinctive difference between the internal and external contexts is based on the numerical identity and non-identity of A and B, and this contrast is explicitly written into the second conjuncts of (*1*) and (*2*).[5]

To say something about the possible constructive roles of a pragmatist philosophical identity, let us then begin with the internal context (*1*) where A recognizes herself (A being numerically identical with B) as a pragmatist, and thus creates a reflexive self-relation of understanding based on pragmatist identity in the qualitative sense. For the individual herself, such adoption of a pragmatist identity can create psychologically effective structures of meaning, and generate certain overall orientation within the extensive field of philosophy.

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[5] It could perhaps be argued that subordinating conditions (*i*) and (*iii*) both under context (*2*) is itself a pragmatist move, at least if we assume that pragmatism in a very broad sense understands knowing the world as inseparable from agency within it, or takes experience to consist in transacting with rather than representing the world (cf. e.g. Legg and Hookway, 2019, 1).

Pragmatist identity can provide *scripts* and *narratives* that philosophers can use e.g. in shaping the content of their career plans and in formulating the stories of their own research histories (cf. Appiah, 1994, 160). Pragmatist identity can also offer a source of *values*, for example in the sense of suggesting what to focus on, and what to hold important in one's own work as well as in the work of others. Moreover, to refer to a theme from William James (1907; cf. also Pihlström, 2008), the adoption of a pragmatist identity can facilitate the expression and development of one's *philosophical temperament*. In the internal context (2), the collective identity of a pragmatist can thus be a multi-dimensional instrument for constructing a positive individual life-script within philosophy.

In the properly interpersonal external context (2), where philosophers can unilaterally or bilaterally (cf. Koskinen, 2019, 36–37) recognize *each other* as pragmatists, a pragmatist identity can contribute towards constructing a concrete social network of significant others. Having a pragmatist identity can provide a useful foundation for interacting with other researchers who also wish to identify themselves as pragmatists. Such identity-based interaction with other pragmatists can then result e.g. in finding important supervisors, mentors, and collaborators. This in turn can result in funding opportunities, coming up with interesting new research topics, suggestions of useful conferences and events to attend, and platforms for publishing one's work. All such aspects can be highly constructive and positive in nature, and they can function as instruments of *inclusion*, creating a sense of belonging as well as valuably add to the positive freedoms of an individual philosopher.

4. Problematic Features of Pragmatist Identity

Supposing that on the basis of the previous sections, we have some understanding of questions of pragmatist identity, the identity's functional components, and its constructive roles in internal and external contexts, we may now raise the question of the initially suggested *dark side*. In justifying the claim that in addition to its constructive roles, a pragmatist philosophi-

cal identity can also have some problematic features, we may analyze these features with the help of the same internal and external contexts that we distinguished in the previous section.[6] Before proceeding to do so, however, it is important to note that the defended claim itself is modal in nature. The problematic features to be articulated constitute some *possible* problems for internal and external recognition of philosophers as pragmatists, but no *necessary* connections regarding pragmatist identity and any particular problematic features are thereby claimed or implied.

In the internal context (*1*) we saw that a pragmatist identity can function as a multidimensional instrument for constructing a positive individual life-script within philosophy. However, for someone identifying herself as a pragmatist, this philosophical identity can also function in more negative (cf. Pihlström, 2018)[7] or non-constructive ways. Since concepts arguably are ways of organizing our sensations, thoughts, and actions (cf. Koskinen, 2017, 72-75), the typical or assumed conceptualizations that go with the scripts and orientations of a pragmatist identity can also cause *disregard* of some other concepts, and as a consequence, *blindness* to some potentially interesting and important phenomena. This in turn can result in internal structural *restrictions* in one's systematic ability to think.

Another potential negative aspect of a pragmatist identity in the internal context (*1*) has to do with *unnecessary intellectual burdens*. In one's systematic thinking, one might well learn or adopt some useful conceptualizations from specific pragmatist thinkers, but this does not mean that the intellectual utilizer would thereby also inherit a duty to defend other thoughts of the original thinker or pragmatist source. No such normative strings can plausibly be attached to individu-

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[6] It should be noted that the close dynamic relationship between one's *internal self-relation* and *external relation to others* is a central feature of contemporary recognition theory. This connection is clearly visible in both Honneth (1995) and Taylor (1994), as well as in Appiah (1994; 2005).

[7] Pihlström's recent Finnish work deals with the meaning and importance of negative thinking.

al concepts or thoughts. However, in practice this does not always seem to be so clear, for it is not uncommon to see someone taking on unnecessary intellectual burdens from 'great thinkers' (of pragmatist or of some other variety), and becoming an apologist for more than is necessary.

Moreover, in the internal context, the danger of *inauthenticity* of one's own pragmatist identity must also be counted among the potential problems. This difficulty can arise, for example, if a philosopher identifying herself as a pragmatist first explicitly commits herself on pragmatist grounds to a principled practically oriented approach, and then goes on to talk about some highly sophisticated conceptual details of complex pragmatist theory. The result can at least raise questions of problematic tension between the official preaching and actual practicing.[8]

In the external context (2), we saw that aspects of pragmatist identity can function as instruments of inclusion, creating a sense of belonging as well as valuably adding to the positive freedoms of an individual philosopher. However, despite such positive and constructive features, again there is a potentially problematic side of things. Once we view the social conceptions of (*i*) and the identity-based social treatment of (*iii*) under the general external context of (2), we come up against various types of extraneous or heteronomical constraints. For one thing, we have no control over what others read into our pragmatist identity, and how they treat us on the basis of it. This results in a certain *loss of autonomy*. Supposing that something like successful philosophical self-realization, or realizing without coercion one's self-chosen life-goals also within philosophy (cf. Honneth, 1995, 174) is a good thing and constitutes a plausible goal, then this external factor can become a negative and seriously inhibiting feature.

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[8] Applying the central principles of a philosophical school of thought to itself often results in illuminating and penetrating critiques. A famous historical example of this is provided by the Vienna Circle and its logical empiricism. For a Finnish volume on the Vienna Circle, see Niiniluoto and Koskinen (2002). For connections between logical empiricism and pragmatism, see Pihlström *et.al.* (2017).

The possible mismatch between the internal and external contexts can create all kinds of misunderstandings as well as smaller and greater tragedies of *misrecognition*. As Taylor (1994, 26) points out, adequate recognition is not just a courtesy we owe people, but a vital human need. Nonrecognition or misrecognition can thus inflict harm, and be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being (*ibid.*, 25, cf. Honneth, 1995, 131-139).

The external context (2) also brings with it questions related to the use of *power*. Assumedly, there are some scripts that go with being a pragmatist, and embedded in the social conception (*i*) of pragmatists, there will be proper ways of being a pragmatist, there will be expectations to be met, and demands will be made (cf. Appiah, 1994, 162). As a result, there is no bright discernible line between recognition and compulsion (cf. *ibid.*, 163). When the question of who counts as a proper pragmatist is combined with the active use of power by some relevant authority, the negative consequence can be that the pragmatist identity becomes an effective instrument of social *exclusion*. If such exclusivity is extended from individuals to entire groups or institutions, then this can also generate unnecessary hostilities between different philosophical schools or traditions. Again, such a development is not necessary, but has been known to occur, and thus also constitutes a genuine possibility.

5. Conclusions

For pedagogical purposes, the initial placing of philosophers into an assortment of identity-based boxes can perhaps function as a useful introductory strategy. However, on closer scholarly inspection, the boxes usually turn out to be distorting and simplifying classifications that hide the true intellectual complexity of individual thinkers and positions. For philosophers in particular, fixed identities are problematic, because by their very job description, philosophers are the ones who are supposed to be able to 'think outside the box'. In view of the potentially problematic features of pragmatist identity listed above, a fitting conclusion might be to recom-
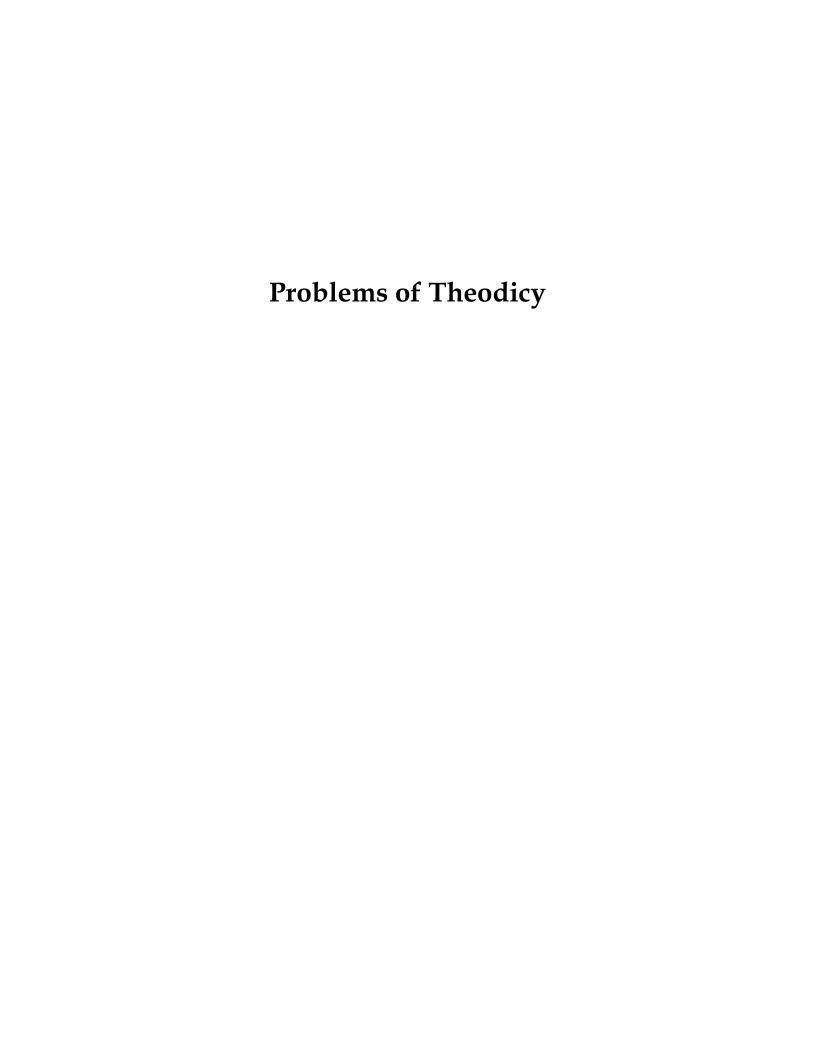
mend proceeding in the spirit of Kant's famous enlightenment motto '*Sapere aude!*'. This reminds us of the importance of daring to think for oneself, and of having the courage to use one's own understanding and reason, uninhibited by philosophical identities of pragmatist variety, or indeed, of any variety whatsoever.

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Problems of Theodicy

Recognition, Theodicy, and Experience

WAYNE PROUDFOOT

Sami Pihlström proposed several years ago that recent work on the concept of recognition could be of central importance for the philosophy of religion.[1] In a recent book written with Sari Kivistö and in numerous articles, he has used that concept to argue convincingly for the rejection of all attempts at theodicy and "solutions" to the problem of evil. (Pihlström and Kivistö, 2016). Theodicy as understood here is any attempt to justify or rationalize suffering and evil. Pihlström makes a good case for the importance of this approach to issues in the philosophy of religion in contrast to reflection on theistic arguments or many other traditional topics. The problem with attempts to provide a theodicy, either religious or secular, is not a problem to be solved by rational argument. It is a failure of moral recognition and thus an ethical failure. Even to address "the problem of evil" and to argue against various proposed solutions is morally suspect. Recognition of the suffering of others is an ethical matter that cannot be adequately met by weighing evidence, considering logical arguments, and deliberating.

Antitheodicism for Pihlström is rejection of the very idea of theodicy, not only of arguments in justification of suffering, but of any serious consideration of the "problem of evil." To truly recognize the suffering of others requires a transformation of perspective. Both the suffering of another and the need to recognize it are existential matters. For Pihlström it is also a necessary condition for the moral point of view. This

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[1] For examples of contemporary theory and politics of recognition see Honneth (1992) and Taylor (1994).

leads him to claim a form of transcendental argument for antitheodicism.[2]

Pihlström and Kivistö (2016, 5) write that theodicies may be regarded as failures of recognition in several different ways. They may fail to recognize or acknowledge (1) the suffering individual, (2) the sufferer's experience, and (3) the sincerity of that experience and of the sufferer's account of it. They also affirm the need to acknowledge the perspectives of individual sufferers in their own distinctiveness, while recognizing that this acknowledgment can never be complete because another can never fully replicate the sufferer's experience. (Pihlström and Kivistö, 2017:15). After showing some ways in which the rejection of theodicy is an existential matter for William James, I will draw on my earlier work on religious experience to ask to what extent recognition of another person's experience requires adopting the perspective of the one whose experience it is.

Recognition in William James

Pihlström and Kivistö provide readings of several philosophical and literary figures on the topic of recognition and suffering, from the book of Job to Richard Rorty on George Orwell, but one of the fullest readings is of William James. They hold that pragmatism is particularly well suited to address this issue and that the philosophical theory of recognition and pragmatism should be critically examined together and integrated in the defense of antitheodicism.

As Pihlström notes, until recently many scholars held that James's only considered discussion of ethics was in a single essay, "The moral philosopher and the moral life." A closer examination has made it clear that ethical concerns run through almost all of his work. James is known for his metaphysical pluralism and the motivation for that pluralism is chiefly ethical. His conceptions of free will and of meliorism, the view that humans can help to contribute to making the world better, emerge from these concerns. I'll examine these issues by looking at a few passages from his 1884 essay "The

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[2] Pihlström and Kivistö (2016, 270-272). I have doubts about all transcendental arguments including this one, but I take his point that it is basic for ethical relations among persons.

dilemma of determinism" and *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902).

"The dilemma of determinism" engages directly with the question of theodicy, but not by any attempt to justify suffering and evil. To the contrary, James rejects a fixed deterministic order of any sort, whether theological or scientific. He cites a recent article in a Boston paper about a gruesome murder in a nearby town in which a man shot his wife and then, in response to her entreaties, raised a rock and smashed her skull. James argues that to accept either a theological justification that from a God's-eye view this event fits morally into the rest of the universe or a scientific determinism that naturalizes this event in the sense that it was fated to happen is to make a mockery of or to undercut his deep conviction that the world would have been better without it.

James's pluralism is motivated by epistemological and moral considerations, but the moral ones are more basic. He writes that the achievements of science result from

> our indomitable desire to cast the world into a more rational shape in our minds than the shape into which it is thrown by the crude order of our experience…. If there be two conceptions, and the one seems to us, on the whole, more rational than the other, we are entitled to hold that the more rational one is the truer of the two… The world has shown itself, to a great extent, plastic to this demand of ours for rationality… I, for one, feel as free to try conceptions of moral as of mechanical or logical rationality. If a certain formula for expressing the nature of the world violates my moral demand I shall feel as free to throw it overboard, or at least to doubt it, as if it disappointed my demand for uniformity of sequence, for example; the one demand being, so far as I can see, quite as subjective and emotional as the other is (James 1979, 115-116).

Later in the same essay James (1979, 173) writes critically of contemporary Parisian literature that he says worships subjective sensibilities. Ernest Renan and Émile Zola represent suffering and hardship as redeemed by the refined sensibilities they make possible. These are not philosophical justifications of suffering and evil, but they serve a similar end. They lead the reader to regard suffering as an occasion for the production of energy, of aesthetic appreciation, regret and higher

forms of sensibility that might not have been possible without them.

Zola refers to the world as a "roman experimental" on an infinite scale. James has a very different view. In "Is Life Worth Living?" (1895) he writes that he doesn't know what the sweat and blood and tragedy of this life mean if there is nothing at stake. If this life be not a real fight, he writes, it is no more than play-acting and we can withdraw from it at will.

> But it <u>feels</u> like a real fight—as if there were something really wild in the universe which we, with all our idealities and faithfulnesses, are needed to redeem; and first of all to redeem our own hearts from atheism and fears. For such a half-wild, half-saved universe our nature is adapted. (James 1979, 55, original emphasis).

In *Varieties* James distinguishes between two religious temperaments, "The Religion of Healthy-Mindedness" and "The Sick Soul." The first is a view of the world in which all things are regarded as good. An immediate feeling of this kind can be developed into a theological account or a description of the natural world. Systematic healthy mindedness conceives of good as the essential aspect of being and deliberately excludes evil from its field of vision. Liberal Christianity in America in the second half of the nineteenth century, according to James (1985, 78-79), was a victory of healthy-mindedness over the morbid theology of sin and hell-fire. The sick soul, by contrast, acknowledges melancholy and despair and the senses of failure and fear that are a normal part of life. In Christian theology a sense of one's depravity can be followed by conversion and a new happiness for which the radical pessimism articulated in the doctrine of sin was a condition.

James (1985, 136) takes the sick soul to be the more comprehensive view because it doesn't deny the negative moments in life. He writes that

> ...morbid-mindedness ranges over the wider scale of experience... Averting one's attention from evil breaks down in the face of melancholy. ...the evil facts which it [healthy-mindedness] refuses positively to account for are a genuine por-

tion of reality; and they may after all be the best key to life's significance, and possibly the only openers of our eyes to the deepest levels of truth.

James doesn't always formulate his opposition to theodicies in terms of recognition. He comes closest to this in the "Moral Philosopher and the Moral Life" (1979, 158) when he says that in a world without sentient beings there would be no moral facts, but with the arrival of one person there is a chance for goods and evils. With more such beings there are different claims and therefore obligations, each of which deserves to be taken seriously and to be met. Conflicts require choices to be made. These often require actual experiments rather than philosophical arguments. We are more likely to learn from novels, dramas, sermons, and books on political or social and economic reform than from abstract moral treatises. We should seek to bring about the largest total universe of good we can envisage and when we make bad mistakes we will be informed of that fact by the cries of the wounded.

This account does capture the idea of acknowledgment and respect for the claims of all sentient beings, though without the reciprocity of contemporary recognition theory. But much of James's rejection of healthy-mindedness does not rest on the concept of recognition, but on the myopia and self-deception that characterize refusal to recognize suffering and evil that is a vivid and real part of life, including conflicts within oneself. James here acknowledges some insight in the doctrines of sin and salvation so central to 18th and 19th century evangelical Protestant Christianity in America.

Recognition in the study of religious experience

Jonathon Kahn (2018) has recently suggested that my book *Religious Experience* can be read as an illustration of the politics of recognition. Though I had not thought of it in that way, his article raises important questions. In that book I examine the concept of religious experience, reflect on ways it has been studied, and offer my own analysis (Proudfoot, 1985). I draw a distinction between explicating an experience and explaining it and show that there is an asymmetry between the ways in which these terms operate in the study of religion. I argue that a scholar studying religious experience

must try to explicate or describe the experience she is studying in terms used by the subject whose experience is being studied. That requires learning relevant languages and the context in which a subject identifies his or her experience and the account he or she provides. Without careful attention to the subject's account it is not possible to identify the object of study. I also suggest that a person's account of an experience taken to be religious usually includes, often tacitly, an explanation of that experience or a refusal of certain kinds of explanations. The scholar should explicate the experience in the subject's terms, but he or she need not agree with the subject's account of that experience. The scholar is free to account for it in terms that make best sense to her.

Kahn writes that my focus on explication is a welcome instance of a politics of recognition because I don't allow the analyst to dismiss *prima facie* accounts people give of their experiences. But he takes my claim that the scholar need not account for the experience in the subject's terms to undercut and withdraw the recognition I seemed to offer earlier. Recognition, he writes, quoting Charles Taylor (1994), "…is not just a courtesy we owe to people. It is a vital human need" (Kahn, 2018, 149). Religious experience may not be freighted in the same way as attention to recognition of evil and of persons who suffer, but even where these experiences are not of suffering they are often passionate, existential, and entangled with a person's ethics and identity in comparable ways.

Kahn also says that I try to cultivate religious experience as a site of conflict between two hermeneutical stances and that fomenting that contest is the imaginative achievement of the book. He sees me as privileging the subject's, or as he puts it the adherent's, perspective epistemologically rather than politically. But, he writes, epistemology has its politics and I choose to subordinate the adherent's perspective to that of the analyst, thus establishing a certain kind of power relation. At one point he asks if explication is just a hoop the analyst must pass through in order to justify his explanation of someone else's experience (Kahn 2018: 153). I certainly didn't mean it that way, but I appreciate his point about locating politics and power even, and perhaps especially, where it is not explicit.

I'll first clarify how I used the distinction between explication and explanation and then address the broader issue raised by both Pihlström and Kahn: to what extent does recognition of another's experience require adopting the account he or she gives of that experience? I proposed that distinction to clarify what I take to be required to study such experiences. I argue that an analyst reflecting critically on someone's experience must first explicate it, insofar as possible, in terms used by the person having or recounting the experience. That is necessary in order to identify the experience, even though the terms of the account may identify it only negatively, by that which it is not. After having done that it is permissible for the analyst to give his or her explanation of the experience. The terms of that explanation need not be restricted to those of the subject's account.[3]

Kahn (2018, 152-153) writes that I require explication of the subject's account and ascribe explanation exclusively to the analyst.[4] He also says that I don't recognize the potential compatibility of explication and supernaturalism. I may not have been sufficiently clear, but I didn't ascribe explanation only to the analyst. I said that the identification by the subject of an experience as religious not only might, but usually does, explicitly or implicitly, include an explanation of that experience or at least a refusal of certain kinds of explanation. That is one feature of the experience that should be captured in the analyst's explication. The subject's explanation is very much a part of the story. Explication and supernaturalism are certainly compatible. In the chapter on explanation I was clear about my preferences for naturalistic explanations, but I didn't rule out the explanations of others, whether of those who reported the experiences or of those studying them. It is not unusual for the analyst to be the subject reflecting later on his or her experience. Augustine's *Confessions* is a prominent example, but it is quite common.

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[3] I put this in chronological terms for purposes of analysis, but often the analyst toggles back and forth between explication and explanation, trying to give each its due.

[4] Kahn (2018, 154-155) notes that I also ascribe explanation to the adherent, but he says he had to work hard to find it in the text. I had thought that was not only "nascent," but central to my argument.

Part of Kahn's objection, I think, is to what he takes to be the tone of the book. He writes that "Proudfoot can sound defiant of the religious adherent, expressing little interest in how the religious adherent will hear an explanation that is entirely strange and potentially hostile." (Kahn, 2018, 154). I don't share that view, but Kahn is a careful reader and his point cannot be easily dismissed.[5] He is voicing his and others' conviction that it is inappropriate to offer an account of another person's experience that differs from that person's own account. In the context of religious experience, at least, Kahn takes this to be a refusal to recognize the other and his or her experience.

For Pihlström and Kivistö, the problem is theodicy. In order to solve the problem of evil the theodicist has to either deny the suffering of others or to argue that it is or will be justified in the light of some unseen order that is good overall. Whether that theodicy is constructed to justify the ways of God to man or in the service of some natural order, it denies the sufferer's experience either by claiming that the suffering is in the service of a greater good or by imposing some other meaning from outside.   In either case it is a refusal to acknowledge the person and the meaninglessness of her suffering. It is a colossal failure of recognition and is ethically wrong.

Kahn holds that *Religious Experience* also displays a lack of recognition, though he regards it more as a political rather than an ethical matter. This is in part a result of his mistaken view that I don't attend to the subject's explanation of his or her experience. He also seems to think that differing with the subject's account, and in particular offering a naturalistic account of such experiences, is itself evidence of a failure to acknowledge that person and her particular experience. But it is clearly possible to recognize and respect a person, that person's sincerity, and the fact and power of the experience in his or her life, while also differing with the explanation she gives of that experience.   This is compatible with my point that the subject's explanation is, in part, constitutive of the experience.

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[5] Kahn may also be influenced by my discussion of reduction, but I don't have space to address that here.

James's *Varieties* is quite different and was intended for a broader audience. His use in his lectures of extensive and vivid reports from accounts of religious experience and his comments show recognition and respect for his subjects, but he doesn't shy away from making judgments.[6] He is clear about his judgment that the "sick soul," with its recognition of evil and suffering, is more comprehensive and thus superior to the "healthy-minded," who must deny such things in order to hold that everything that is is good. The question that motivates theodicy, whether or not there is an unseen moral order that will bring goodness about despite this misery and evil, was an issue for James. His assertion in 1898 that theism guarantees that such an order will prevail gives way in *Varieties* (1902) to the claim that religion doesn't need such a guarantee, that a "chance of salvation" is enough. This statement of his personal belief, along with his description of himself as a "piecemeal supernaturalist," comes in a postscript neatly separated from the conclusions of his research (James, 1985, 409-414).

My distinction between explication and explanation, acknowledgment that experiences are in part shaped by their concepts and beliefs and that accounts of religious experience often include causal claims, should be of interest and use to readers who accept and to those who reject my own naturalistic account, which I didn't take to be central to the argument of the book. It ought to be and is possible in the study of religion, as elsewhere, to differ sharply in explanatory accounts and in evaluations of beliefs, practices, and institutions in a way that doesn't detract from recognition and respect for the people and communities being studied.

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[6] His respect flags and his Protestant bias shows when treating extreme medieval Catholic ascetic practices (cf. James 1985, 280-284).

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Gifts and Burdens: Elaborating Pihlström's Antitheodicy

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In his book *Kantian Antitheodicy: Philosophical and Literary Varieties* (co-authored with Sari Kivistö), Sami Pihlström argues that antitheodicy is the only way to recognize appropriately the other's suffering. Referring to Emmanuel Levinas and many others, Pihlström claims that there are sincere experiences of meaningless suffering. When others attempt to explain away or justify such suffering with the help of utilitarian considerations or externally imposed meanings, they fail to recognize the sincerity of the person who experiences meaningless suffering (Kivistö & Pihlström 2016, 93-96, 263-264).

For Pihlström, such attempts of theodicy are not merely immoral. In addition, they fail to grasp the necessary conditions for the possibility of the moral point of view. To show this, Pihlström lays out a Kantian "transcendental form of antitheodicism". According to this view, a truly moral point of view means that one needs to recognize adequately others' experiences of suffering. As theodicies seek to justify or explain away meaningless suffering, they cannot recognize adequately sincere experiences of meaningless suffering. Therefore, theodicies prevent us from adopting a moral point of view. (2016, 263-264)

Meaningless Suffering

Pihlström further claims that one can recognize other people's sincere experiences of meaningless suffering when no theodicy is attempted. Therefore, theodicies are to be rejected for transcendental reasons, as they prevent our understand-

ing of the necessary conditions of a moral point of view. (2016, 263-264).

When a person sincerely experiences "meaningless suffering", what kind of suffering does he or she experience? Pihlström and Kivistö offer a variety of characterizations which manifest at least two clusters of meaninglessness. In the first cluster, such suffering offers no "compensation" or "future benefits" (2016, 264). There is a permanent "disproportion" between suffering and theodicist justification. No "purifying fire of suffering" occurs (2016, 91-92). No harmony in the world of things can be assumed and all evidentialist accounts to balance suffering with other benefits remain inadequate (2016, 113, 156). Meaningless suffering cannot be instrumental for the sake of some greater good (2016, 53-54).

In another book written in Finnish, Pihlström (2018, 185-190) compares such suffering with the Lake Inari which, according to a Finnish song, is so deep that it cannot be measured. Pihlström concludes that suffering is in this way "immeasurable". It cannot be explained, and it is not big or small, but immeasurable like the Lake Inari. In another paper on the so-called argument from evil, Pihlström (2017) concludes that this argument understands evil and suffering as pieces of empirical evidence against theism. Such understanding fails to capture the actual depth of living with evil and suffering. The actual depth of immeasurable suffering can thus falsify both theodicy and the evidentialist argument from evil.

Let us summarize this first cluster of characterizations with the phrase that meaningless suffering is *immeasurable*. Such immeasurability covers and refutes all ideas of compensation, proportion and instrumental utility.

The second cluster includes characterizations in which suffering escapes fixed meanings. Suffering "everywhere and always resists being given a meaning or context". "The I with which the phenomenology of suffering must begin is an I for whom the other's suffering is unthinkable and unjustifiable", Pihlström and Kivistö (2016, 93-94) write, relying on Emmanuel Levinas. To recognize the suffering of others, "one should take seriously the incomprehensibility of the human life". For such reasons, authors like Beckett and Kafka can provide guidance. They manifest such "ethical openness" which is

necessary to acknowledge the meaninglessness of suffering. (2016, 264-265). Instead of order, optimism and progress, antitheodicists live in a world "where disasters of natural and moral kinds can strike without rhyme and reason" (2016, 143).

Let us summarize this second cluster with the phrase that meaningless suffering is semantically *elusive*. This concept manifests the core idea of Levinas, that is, suffering as something which resists being given a meaning and remains incomprehensible. At the same time, elusive does mean trivial of irrational but, like suffering in Levinas, something extremely important that cannot be defined or even properly comprehended.

I have highlighted the immeasurable and elusive nature of meaningless suffering because these two clusters of characterizations manifest a certain parallel to philosophical discussions on gift exchange. In the following, I will first make a comparison between these discussions and Pihlström's antitheodicy. After that, I will construct a philosophical concept of "burden" which can elucidate some aspects of suffering and antitheodicy in a new manner. Let me add immediately that the following is my own development of the ideas offered by Pihlström.

Immeasurable and Elusive Gifts

Since the classical discussions of Aristotle and Seneca, Western thinkers typically consider that some items of interhuman exchange have a quantitative value or measure, whereas others do not. Payments and other items of calculative exchange have such value, but gifts are often considered to be priceless. Seneca (*De beneficiis* 1, 2) teaches that the recipient of gifts or benefits should show some gratitude, but he or she should not feel to be in debt. Gifts do not have a price tag attached, and this is what qualifies them as gifts. While some thinkers consider that gifts are nevertheless masked payments, the majority view in Western tradition teaches that there is a categorical difference between gifts and payments in this regard. (Saarinen 2005).

In his *Eudemian Ethics* (7, 10), Aristotle teaches that money and knowledge cannot be compared with the same measure.

As Marcel Hénaff (2010) has shown in detail, this sentence has been interpreted in the Western thought as meaning that knowledge and truth belong to the same categorical realm as the gift. In some important sense, truth and knowledge have no price and they cannot be sold. The realm of gifts thus contains many different realities which cannot be measured in universally quantitative terms. In addition to truth and knowledge, respect and recognition are often considered to be gift-like in this sense (Saarinen 2016). I do not respect you because you pay me for that. I can only respect you when prices are not relevant in this act.

Some instances of suffering can be understood in terms of prices. My daily labor and my physical training are connected with some suffering but also with some health benefits and monetary compensation. They therefore belong to the realm of economic exchange. However, meaningless suffering makes the claim that we cannot understand it in terms of costs and benefits. The immeasurable nature of such suffering takes place within the realm of non-economy.

Another major discussion in gift exchange concerns the elusive nature of gifts. While this discussion has its classical roots in Seneca, it has been formulated in exemplary fashion by Jacques Derrida (1995) in his discussion on "pure gift". Derrida argues that the idea of a pure gift is impossible since this idea deconstructs or destroys itself. When we want to give a completely altruistic or "pure" gift, we find that it is impossible, because there is always some non-altruistic intention involved. The mere thought of my giving something purely altruistically elevates my self-understanding in a manner which is not entirely altruistic.

On the other hand, Derrida does not want to abolish the categorical difference between gifts and payments. The idea of the pure gift remains elusive and incomprehensible, but it is nevertheless an idea which convinces us that there is something beyond economic exchange. However, the pure gift remains semantically elusive. If we want to define it properly, we soon find that it resists being given a fixed meaning.

The elusiveness of meaningless suffering, and maybe suffering in general, resembles the elusiveness of pure gift in Derrida. Insofar as suffering can be explained or justified, it then no longer remains "mere" suffering but becomes like a

payment which expects a return or compensation. We can only recognize meaningless suffering adequately when we refrain from explaining and justifying it in economic terms. In this second sense, too, suffering approaches the realm of gifts.

While the acts of justifying and explaining may be finally inadequate with regard to suffering, a certain understanding of it may be possible in spite of elusiveness. The comparison with gift exchange can be regarded as an attempt to understand this phenomenon. The relationship between explanation and understanding is a complex issue; let it suffice to say here that an antitheodicist need not sacrifice his capacity to understand suffering, even when she wants to steer clear from the morally problematic attempt to justify it.

Burdens

Still another discussion in gift theory concerns the issue of negative gifts. While gifts are typically depicted as positive additions to their recipients, theorists sometimes ask whether there is an opposite movement that could be characterized as negative gift. Topics like forgiveness and release are sometimes mentioned in this discussion, but in my view they nevertheless remain positive gifts. When a debt is covered, a positive addition to the recipient is given. Neither can debt be called a negative gift, since debts typically belong to realm of measurable payments. (Saarinen 2005, Olivetti 2004).

Let me make a new proposal to the discussion concerning negative gifts. I introduce the concept of "burden", claiming that it depicts the event of receiving something harmful without deserving it, exchanging it for something else or striving for it. Receiving burdens in this manner resembles the event of receiving gifts. Let me also claim that meaningless suffering is a burden in this sense. While the concept of burden is my own innovation, it receives some conceptual features from the concept of *onus*, "burden", in the Latin Bible. Typically, illnesses, accidents and other harmful events are called burdens in this sense. As a rule, people have not caused or deserved their own burdens, and they are not intended to be punishments, although a person or a story-teller can sometimes interpret them as such.

Burdens resemble gifts in that they are received without any particular merit or guilt from the recipient. In addition, burdens do not have quantity, that is, they are immeasurable. We may think of illness or separation from the beloved as burdens. They bring forth suffering, but we cannot say how much. The same burden, for instance, separation, may feel significant for one person and insignificant for another. In reality, this separation is immeasurable.

For philosophers like Levinas or Derrida, the concept of burden may sound too externalistic, as the philosophers focus on intentions and agency rather than to the nature of the objects received. My concept of burden nevertheless also assumes a first-person stance which involves intentions and agency. If I aim to make a list of all my personal burdens, I will see how elusive the items of this list are. Some burdens are especially harmful when I am not conscious of them. Other burdens may disappear when I do not think of them. The suffering and burdens of others are even harder to be comprehended adequately than my own burdens, as their intentions and agency are not available to me.

In addition, the concept of "pure burden" is particularly elusive, as many burdens also contain positive sides. However, they cannot be transformed into an evidentialist calculation of harms and benefits. At the same time, my burdens are not mere objects but clusters constructed with the help of my evaluations of them.

Since we experience burdens as suffering, we easily aim at inventing psychological justifications for them. Maybe this illness is a punishment, or maybe it educates me. Maybe the separation from the beloved was my own fault. In reality, however, there need not be any justification or explanation. The burdens received are as incomprehensible and elusive as the positive gifts discussed by Derrida. When we aim at justifying and explaining them, they are inadequately transformed into debts and payments, ceasing to belong to the realm of gifts. Therefore, the burden as burden remains immeasurable and incomprehensible.

The immeasurable and elusive nature of suffering in terms of burden connects it with Pihlström's antitheodicy. We bear the burden of suffering, and the attempts to justify, measure and comprehend it only alienate us from its fundamental re-

ality. The illness and the separation was nobody's fault, it just happened and is now there as burden. There are many clever explanations and justifications for what happened, but in reality they are all inadequate and downright false. The burdens are immeasurable and elusive. They are not particularly big or small, they escape our explanatory attempts and demand openness.

In this manner I interpret Pihlström's antitheodicy, or his view of meaningless suffering, in terms of a negative gift, that is, burden. In this interpretation, Hénaff's and Derrida's views of positive gift exchange are transformed to cover also negative gifts, that is, burdens and meaningless suffering. This interpretation shows how and why our burdens remain immeasurable and elusive. In this manner, the interpretation is also concerned with the "transcendental" conditions of possibility. We cannot comprehend burdens, as they remain immeasurable and elusive. If we define them in more detail, they can no longer be adequately recognized.

This is not the only way to interpret Pihlström's antitheodicy. My interpretation connects it with some classical issues of gift exchange. I remain sympathetic to Pihlström's claim that we can only recognize adequately other people's suffering when we do not aim at justifying it or explaining it away. This means a certain seriousness, an attitude which Pihlström often highlights as an ideal of philosophical and academic life.

Seriousness and Levity

My more distant aim is to consider how the category of burden works when we think about suffering. I share the view of Ingolf Dalferth (2015) that illnesses and suffering are *malum*, evil in the broad sense. On the other hand, moral goodness, virtues, merit, guilt, evil, justice and punishments primarily belong to such realm of calculations which does not manifest gift exchange. Perhaps meaningful and measureable suffering also belongs to calculable exchange.

Meaningless suffering, however, manifests a gift-like burden. Failures of theodicy reveal important features of such burden. Due to its *immeasurable* character, a burden cannot be an object of calculative justice or evidentialist theodicy. While

attempts of such theodicy assume suffering which is compatible with economic exhange, the deeper nature of suffering as burden is not economic or calculative.

Due to its *elusive* character, meaningless suffering manifests the limits of human rationality. While theodicies typically assume a universal rationality which can be employed by human beings, antitheodicies often operate within a Kantian transcendental framework which does not give access to rationalities beyond the specific human perspective and horizon (Pihlström & Kivistö 2016). If meaningless suffering is a phenomenon which transcends human rationality, then it remains elusive.

In sum, burdens are negative gifts. Burdens exceed our capacity to measure and define, revealing the limits of human understanding when confronted with meaningless suffering. In addition to Pihlström's Kantian interests, this result bears some affinity to Jean-Luc Marion's (1998) philosophy of gift and donation. The phenomenology of burdens underlines the seriousness with which we need to approach human suffering.

However, there may be a particular angle from which one can have a "lighter" look at the existing burdens. In the classical theory of Seneca, the recipient of the benefit should not think that he is indebted. Receiving a gift, instead of a credit, means that there is no debt. Analogically, one could think that the one carrying a burden should not think that others owe him something. The burden is received, but it does not imply victimization.

Other people have a duty to recognize adequately the one who carries a burden. The carrier should not, however, feel that she performs some achievement for a greater cause. You cannot and should not justify your accidental burdens. Instead, it may be psychologically sound to say that your burden is light (cf. Matthew 11:30). Obviously, saying this may sometimes be ironic or an exaggeration. Silence may then be the best option. Such duties and attitudes manifest the complex balances of gift exchange and antitheodicy.

Another complication concerns the similarities and even overlappings between gifts and burdens. In everyday life, you receive many things of which you cannot say whether they are gifts or burdens. Continuing my workplace routines

may be a gift, but it may also be a burden. The separation from my beloved may be a burden, but it may also give me new opportunities. If gifts and burdens resemble one another in the phenomenal world, who can define which is which?

Generally speaking, I do not advocate a Stoic attitude to the changes which occupy us in everyday life. While gifts and burdens remain elusive, my first-person attention to them can normally provide an understanding that can distinguish between gifts and burdens, admitting that the two are sometimes mixed. My lighter look only aims at gazing into the abyss in such manner that the abyss cannot stare back.

While I admire Pihlström's seriousness, my interpretation of antitheodicy in terms of gifts and burdens may slightly increase the amount of optimism and light-mindedness that a sympathizer of antitheodicy is allowed to display. When all parties recognize suffering and at the same also take distance from victimization, both the carrier of burdens and those around him can more easily look beyond adversities. The insight that a sincere experience of meaningless suffering involves immeasurability and elusiveness effectively debunks theodicist attempts of rationalization. At the same time, this insight enables a certain ethical openness with regard to various undeserved gifts and burdens.

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"We are all survivors" – survivor guilt and pragmatic meliorism

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The Hollywood blockbuster *Saving Private Ryan* is set in a framework of survivor guilt (Spielberg 1998).[1] The movie starts and ends at a military burial ground in France, with an elderly man surrounded by his relatives visiting the grave of a Captain Miller. The story that unfolds in the movie explains the setting. The Ryan family loses three of its sons in battle in 1944, and a fourth is deployed somewhere in France. The US military sends a patrol led by Captain Miller to make sure that the missing brother can return safely to the US. The operation is motivated by a policy that (probably for propaganda reasons) stated that the last surviving son of families should be taken out of active duty. Since the operation has no military purpose, Miller is openly critical of it from the outset, but he still obeys the orders he receives.

The patrol manages to find the missing brother, but on its way back it is drawn into combat in a French village. Miller seeks to keep Ryan out of harm's way, since his orders are to bring him home safely. Towards the end of the movie, the village is almost entirely demolished and most of Miller's men are dead or badly wounded. Miller, dying from multiple wounds, looks up at Ryan and whispers: "James, earn this. Earn it." The movie then ends with the elderly man (who we now understand is Ryan) in tears, asking the grave of Captain Miller "Did I earn it?"

Ryan did not ask to be saved. He did not kill any of Miller's men. You could imagine him replying: "Hey, don't

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[1] The real events that inspired the movie are described in https://www.history.com/news/saving-private-ryan-real-life-dday-back-story.

blame *me*!" Yet he immediately accepted, and apparently continued throughout his life to accept, his guilt. Ryan's reaction is typical of the phenomenon often described as *survivor guilt*. Guilt and the tragic character of human life are recurring themes in Sami Pihlström's work, closely linked to his idea of evil and morality as a whole as phenomena that we must be prepared to take utterly *seriously*.

In this paper, I wish to take a step beyond Pihlström's analysis, with special focus on his treatment of transcendental guilt in *Transcendental Guilt*, and suggest that not only is guilt a fundamental feature of our moral lives: it is also an important building-block in the distinctly pragmatic commitment to *meliorism*. Survivor guilt is, then, a condensed version of the kind of guilt that, from a pragmatic point of view, should drive us towards a melioristic stance.

Survivor Guilt

The *Dictionary of Psychology* defines survivor guilt as "a feeling of guilt for surviving a tragedy in which others died, often associated with a sense of having been partly responsible for what happened" (Colman 2015). In its purest forms, survivor guilt arises in cases where the survivor had no real chance of influencing others' fate either positively or negatively; the survivor could, realistically, have neither rescued the victims nor caused their death (Metz 2018).[2] Much of the research on survivor guilt has come to concentrate on Holocaust survivors; but the same phenomenon is discernible in many different kinds of tragedies.

Thaddeus Metz points out that, from the perspective of mainstream normative ethics, survivor guilt presents something of a puzzle. For Kantians, who stress that "ought" implies "can", and focus on agency, there is something strange about the idea that you should feel guilty about something you neither caused nor could have prevented: Ryan has no good reason for feeling guilt about the way *others* exercised their agency. For a utilitarian, survivor guilt may be justified by its beneficial consequences – *if* it causes you to do good for

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[2] I will not discuss whether *Saving Private Ryan* offers the purest form of survival guilt or not; it is, I take it, certainly pure enough for present purposes.

others. However, it would be even better, overall, if you did good without this negative emotion; and besides, survivor guilt will not help us handle *the same kind of situations* better than before, since these situations are such that there is nothing the subject *can* do about them. Ryan may have gone on to do good deeds in his life; but his life-long guilt may, on balance, have caused more pain for him than it made him do good for others. From a virtue ethics standpoint, too, there seems to be little reason to feel guilt unless you were somehow responsible for how the situation unfolded (which is typically not the case in "pure" cases of survivor guilt) (Metz 2018). If Ryan had himself acted recklessly or in a cowardly way and thereby jeopardized others' lives, then he should have felt guilt for *that*; but this is not how the movie portrays the situation.

The arguments *for* considering survivor guilt reasonable – as Metz frames his discussion – are, he notes, often reasons that do not really require a person to *feel* survivor guilt as much as to act *as if* she feels it. It is possible, of course, that Ryan just feigns survivor guilt (the actor playing Ryan manages to do that, so it is clearly possible) simply because he takes that to be the conventionally expected reaction. Another problem is that defenses of survivor guilt seem forced to have recourse to instrumental considerations, such as that it encourages people to do good. Such defenses conflict at least to some extent with much psychological research that shows that survivor guilt can, in extreme cases, paralyze subjects and cause them to isolate themselves from others (Harris and Ellor 2009).[3]

In *Transcendental Guilt*, Pihlström perceptively points out that, before we begin to ask questions about the justifiability of some human phenomenon, we ought to ask ourselves whether this is meaningful *given the kind of phenomenon that we are discussing* (Pihlström 2011). Certain phenomena may be such integral parts of a *human* life that it makes no sense to categorize them as either justified or unjustified – they simply do not belong to these categories. Pihlström suggests, in *Transcendental Guilt*, that guilt – including survivor guilt – is of

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[3] I will not be able to go into the rather extensive psychological literature on survivor guilt in this paper.

that kind. No amount of reasoning could prove to Ryan that he should not in any way feel guilty for the death of all these men (and would we even be honest if we told him that?).

You may agree with this last claim for many different reasons. Humeans would suggest that, like all emotions, guilt is not something we can regulate by reason at all (or only very indirectly). Certain Christian theologians would hold that it is the soul's acknowledgement of its fallen state vis-à-vis God, and hence points to something true and important. For Pihlström, guilt is a "fundamental concept characterizing the very idea of moral responsibility itself. To be human is to acknowledge the impossibility of being thoroughly liberated from one's guilt, to refuse to accept an eventual harmony in which all evil would be eternally forgiven" (Pihlström 2011, 11–12). As long as we take ourselves to be agents who are accountable for what we do, even the best among us will always be guilty in this *transcendental* sense. My own guilt, both for things that I have done and for things that I have neglected to do, is also and always *my* guilt; and although reconciliation with wronged parties is important and relieving, it is hard to see how anyone's forgiveness would entirely eliminate it. Reactions such as Ryan's are, as Wittgenstein put it, simply "there, like our life", and it is in *this* sense they are integral parts of human life.

"Transcendental guilt" is then a guilt that precedes any concrete and particular instances of guilt that we may feel.[4] One of the great strengths of Pihlström's work is his insistence that we, as philosophers, take such features of human life seriously. If ethical theories suggest that we condemn such reactions as entirely unreasonable, then that is a problem for those theories, not for the reactions. I will suggest that taking survivor guilt seriously allows us to frame a strong case for a pragmatic meliorism.

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[4] I will not quarrel with Pihlström's use of the term "transcendental." Of course, it is conceivable that people in some form of society would never feel survivor guilt, or guilt at all. But such thought-experiments are of little value for *us*, and should not lead to any skepticism regarding the phenomenon as we reflect on what human life is like for beings such as us in settings such as ours.

Before I go on, though, I want to make clear that I do not wish to romanticize survivor guilt. In certain instances it takes pathological forms that completely crush subjects, and we should do all we can to alleviate the suffering this causes. However, we must not let these pathological forms color our understanding of the phenomenon as a whole, just as we should not let controlling and obsessive forms of love dictate our understanding of love as a human phenomenon. Pragmatists, with their practical and forward-looking perspective, are bound to ask how we may live as best as possible with the less extreme forms of (survivor) guilt that befall all of us. I will suggest that meliorism can be seen as a natural response to such guilt, but then note that this is not an attempt to justify guilt rationally: it is just a way of acknowledging it and seeking to do something constructive with it.

Human life as claimed

Survivor guilt generates many different responses. In certain cases, it is so extreme that it makes life unbearable, leading people to end their lives. Another reaction that is more common, however, is to begin to treat one's life as what I would call partially or entirely *claimed*. Numerous Holocaust survivors have felt a duty to witness about the Nazi atrocities to younger generations, and to keep traditions and customs alive that now take on a new meaning for them as a tribute to the many who perished. Parts of their lives are claimed in the sense that it is not in any meaningful sense up to them anymore whether to perform these actions or not. Much like for Ryan, the sense of responsibility that is both a precondition and a consequence of our view of ourselves as (moral) agents is greatly amplified by the concrete reminder they have received about the fact that, as Pihlström puts it: "We are all survivors" (Pihlström 2011, 23).

I say "greatly amplified" because I believe that these extreme cases of survivor guilt are continuous with more mundane experiences of the miraculous character of our existence, and with how, in countless ways, it has only become possible at the expense of many others. *We* were born among countless unborn potential siblings; we occupy positions and consume non-renewable resources in ways that unavoidably

affect the livelihood of others. For my own part, I would not have been born if the Soviet Union had not attacked Finland in 1939. That attack cost countless lives, and many more were never born because of it; and you could probably tell similar stories for most human beings.

Of course – and analogously to Ryan – we did not ask to be born, and those of us who live in affluent societies did not choose that life (in any meaningful sense); so we are, of course, not culpable for this in any traditional sense. Still, I believe that very many people feel a similar obligation, as Hanks' character puts it, to "earn it." Our destiny is to fail; but that fact – and it is a fact – must not lead us to stop trying, even though the best we can hope for is, as Ana Honnacker puts it, to "fail better" than before (Honnacker 2018, 60).

Meliorism and a pragmatic philosophical anthropology

From the point of view of a pragmatic philosophical anthropology, a rudimentary form of meliorism is more or less unavoidable if we are to have a world at all. Habits of action, thought and judgment that we have developed in response to concrete problems allow us to uphold and occasionally restore equilibrium between organism and environment, and constitute the world in which we find ourselves. If we really did not believe that we could improve the courses of events via our actions, any response on our part would be as effective or ineffective as any other. Then habits of action, thought and judgment, including habits of inquiry, would lack meaning, and the world would become a jumble of unrelated events (if we could even speak of "events"). It is in a world such as ours and for beings such as us that habits allow us to in-habit the world (Zackariasson 2015).

This faith in human agency is tempered, however, by the kind of guilt that Pihlström traces as an integral part of what it is to be human: in a world of imperfection and finitude, and given all our individual imperfections, there can be no perfect solutions and hence no complete reconciliations. And in a manner similar to the extreme cases of survivor guilt, this insight can crush human beings. In *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, James describes this threat in his discussion of sick souls; but he also shows that there are ways to live construc-

tively with it. Sick souls, according to James, are concerned, even obsessed, with the evil they find within and around them, and this concern threatens to paralyze them entirely by undermining their faith in *any* form of reconciliation whatsoever. However, via gradual or sudden conversions (to some religious or secular outlook), people have found resources to overcome this threatening paralysis. Speaking of John Bunyan and Leo Tolstoy, James remarks:

> Each of them realized a good which broke the effective edge of his sadness; yet the sadness was preserved as a minor ingredient in the heart of the faith by which it was overcome. The fact of interest for us is that as a matter of fact they could and did find *something* welling up in the inner reaches of their consciousness /…/ Tolstoy does well to talk of it as *that by which men live*; for that is exactly what it is, a stimulus, an excitement, a faith, a force that reinfuses the positive willingness to life, even in the full presence of the evil perceptions that erewhile made life seem unbearable (James 1982, 187; emphasis in the original).

The kinds of religious or secular outlook on life typical of sick souls – outlooks that James takes to be more profound than optimistic – typically contain a resolve to act *despite* and *in full view* of the circumstances – much like constructive responses to survivor guilt. Such resolve would make no sense absent a belief in the possibility actually to influence and improve the courses of events under which we live. We return here to the kind of tacit acceptance of a rudimentary form of meliorism as indispensable for beings such as us: the world we live in may be indifferent, but it cannot make us completely impotent in every respect.

In *Pragmatism*, James argues for a more substantial form of meliorism that connects our notion that what we do makes a difference to the world's fate as a whole. Meliorism, for James, is the mediating position capable of retaining the best elements from both optimism and pessimism, while avoiding their shortcomings (c.f. Koopman 2009). From optimism, it retains energy and a sense of possibilities; from pessimism it retains a seriousness paralleling that which we find in Pihlström's discussion of guilt: life is not something we should take easily. To these elements, meliorism adds, in its pragmatic version, something James thinks is lacking in both

pessimism and optimism: emphasis on the *openness* of the universe. When combined with the sense of being claimed, which is part of survivor guilt, this leaves us with no excuse not at least to *try* to make things better for ourselves and others. Meliorism certainly does not redeem us from survivor guilt; nor is it intended to. It offers a fruitful way to live with, and acknowledge, it.

This chain of reasoning, inspired by Pihlström's analysis of guilt, says, in my view, something important about what it may mean for philosophers to take human life seriously. That is not necessarily the same as always letting "ordinary" people have the final say on how we should understand phenomena such as religion – or guilt, for that matter. It does mean, however, that you need to let features of ordinary human life permeate your ways of understanding and reflecting on phenomena, and be careful not to exceed the bounds that these features set as you engage in philosophical reflection. Pihlström frames these "red lines" of philosophy in transcendental terms, and insists that this ambition leaves no room for theodicies as a form of religious (or a-religious) apology. The problem with them is not that there cannot be clever arguments about the logical consistence of statements about the existence of evil and of a good, omniscient and almighty God, or about whether instances of evil make us less rationally entitled to believe in God, and so on. Pihlström points out, however, that – regardless of which position we are defending – such accomplishments are Pyrrhic victories, because they compromise our lives at the deepest possible level by tempting us to relativize and not take very seriously the enormous suffering of human beings during, for instance, the Holocaust (Pihlström 2013, chap. 5).

Concluding Remarks

One appealing feature of pragmatist philosophy is its insistence on human beings as *agents*. Once we become aware of the enormous unlikelihood of our existence, and of the relatively privileged situation of most human beings, survivor guilt is a natural human reaction. The types discussed in the literature illustrate the more mundane forms that are central features of human life.

Saving Private Ryan ends with Ryan crying at the grave of his rescuer, repeatedly asking: "Was it enough?" This is probably a question we all ask ourselves at some point; and one thing we can know for sure is that the answer is "No": it will never be enough *for us*. Even if, somehow, Miller had responded from beyond the grave that it was indeed enough, this is only the response of one of the many people who died saving Ryan; and that, in turn, was only *one* episode in Ryan's life. In the transcendental sense, a *human* life will always be permeated by guilt. The important thing is to acknowledge that, and not let it lead us to inertia and despair.

The pragmatic argument for meliorism, then, is strengthened by the insight that lives such as ours are always permeated with a form of survivor guilt. Meliorism resonates with our sense of ourselves as agents that I take to be central for human beings such as us, and that Pihlström links to guilt. Meliorism states that it is possible that what we do jointly – perhaps with the assistance of some higher powers that are on our side – suffices for the world's salvation (James 1995). Religious and secular outlooks on life understand "salvation" differently, and have different views of the ultimate fate of the universe; but meliorism is available to both. We are all to some extent both victims and perpetrators, and thus are implicated in events that will never have any fairy-tale endings. Nevertheless, improvement *is* possible, it is worthwhile to strive for it, and survivor guilt obligates us to do so by claiming our lives.

One of the most appealing features of Pihlström's work is his insistence that philosophy's first and foremost task is to resist the temptation to compromise human life by adopting some abstract theories that, for instance, imply that survivor guilt is by-and-large an unreasonable response to a life of comparative privilege. We need to take certain things so seriously that we refuse to engage in discussions about whether they are justifiable or not, and then reason about how we can lead good human lives in full acknowledgement of them. Then we truly have a philosophy with a distinctly human face.

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Contemplative Philosophy and the Problem of Relativism

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The problem of relativism in its various forms has been a prominent topic in Sami Pihlström's publications. In his works he has devoted attention to the ways in which issues linked with religious and ethical relativism touch upon Wittgensteinian philosophy of religion (see, e.g., Pihlström 2005; 2007; 2013; 2018; Kivistö and Pihlström 2016). I hope that what follows sheds light on some issues Pihlström has explored in this context. I will make some remarks about Wittgensteinian philosophical method and its relation to religious and ethical relativism. This paper focuses on the views of D. Z. Phillips, who has been the most influential Wittgensteinian philosopher of religion in recent decades. (I have treated issues linked with this theme elsewhere, Koistinen 2011; 2012; 2019.)

A starting point of Phillips's thought is the later Wittgenstein's grammatical, descriptive and anti-theoretical view of the task of philosophy. The aim of philosophical investigation is not to provide rational foundation or justification for human thought, action and ways of using language. The method of philosophy differs from the methods of science: philosophy is not a source of knowledge, it does not provide theories of the structure of the cosmos or the workings of the human mind, etc. Instead, philosophy's task is descriptive, as Wittgenstein says in *Philosophical Investigations*: "Philosophy may in no way interfere with the actual use of language; it can in the end only describe it. For it cannot give it any foundation either. It leaves everything as it is" (PI § 124).

Wittgenstein himself did not develop a method for the philosophical study of religion on the grounds of his conception of the task of philosophy, but this has been a central theme in

Phillips's works from the beginning of his career (Phillips 1965). In many of his writings published in and after the late 1990s he developed a conception of the "contemplative philosophy of religion", which is influenced by Wittgenstein and Rush Rhees. It is also closely related to Peter Winch's contributions to philosophy of religion (Phillips 1999; 2001; Rhees 1997; 1998; Winch 1987).

One of the most striking features of Phillips's contemplative approach is its strong contrast with normative traditions in the philosophy of religion and ethics. Many philosophers of religion and moral philosophers today as in the past have defended religious and moral views in the name of philosophy. In Phillips's view, these kinds of efforts are grounded on a misleading conception of the task and limits of philosophical enquiry. He stresses that philosophy is neither a judge nor an arbiter of truth and rationality in religious and ethical matters. To put it bluntly, philosophy does not tell us whether it is rational to believe in God, what is the best way to live, or how to solve ethical and political problems in contemporary culture. Philosophical enquiry clarifies meanings in ethical and religious discourses, but substantial problems cannot be solved by philosophical enquiry. A philosopher is not, as Wittgenstein says, "a citizen of any community of ideas" (*Zettel*, 455). In Phillips's view, philosophy takes the form of neutral and disinterested enquiry in a sense that it does not involve religious and ethical concerns: ethical and religious judgements are not "underwritten by philosophy" (Phillips 1999, 160). Seeking for the right answers in religious and moral matters is not characteristic of the Wittgensteinian philosophy: "[a]ny suggestion of the philosopher as the sage who points us in the right spiritual or moral direction would be anathema to Wittgenstein and wholly repugnant to Rhees and Winch" (Phillips 2007, 41). The spirit of this tradition stands in contrast to the spirit of our technological-scientific culture that emphasises finding answers and solutions. Phillips expresses this by saying that he is "trying to go nowhere" (Phillips 1999, 55–56; 160).

Phillips contrasts his thought especially with the (broadly understood) "foundationalist" philosophy of religion. This tradition originated in early modern philosophy, and is still dominant in the contemporary analytic philosophy of relig-

ion. Central interests and questions in the field are related to the legacy of Cartesian scepticism and the Enlightenment idea of rational religion (Phillips 2004, Chapter 2; 1988). A large part of the studies focus on rationality or the epistemic justification of religious/theistic beliefs, and the aim of discussion is to offer clearly formulated arguments and evidence for and against controversial "factual" religious truth-claims. It is typically assumed that controversial religious-metaphysical claims are intelligible and that participants in the debates understand what each other is saying. Phillips emphasises that the starting point of contemplative philosophy is entirely different: the main problem is the intelligibility of what is said. Philosophical problems have to do with conceptual confusions, and conceptual problems cannot be solved directly by providing evidence for truth-claims. Phillips sees similarities between Wittgenstein's philosophy and the Socratic tradition: for them "the very reason for discussion is that we cannot mean what we want to say. The need for discussion is occasioned by the presence of confusion, not by the fact that evidence is being sought for two equally intelligible theories or hypotheses" (Phillips 2004, 13).

A large part of Phillips's work is directed against the way philosophers of religion approach their subject. He tries to show that central controversies in this field involve confusions. The way philosophers deal with religious issues distorts the meaning of the religious concepts have when used in the ordinary contexts that surround them. For example, in the theism vs. atheism debate, philosophers such as Richard Swinburne and J. L Mackie have tried to determine the truth or falsity of theism in terms of probabilistic reasoning. In Phillips's view, the whole debate is a confusion which arises from participants' failure to understand religious language in its actual contexts. For example, in the language of the Bible, rituals, prayers and hymns, the talk about probability of beliefs has no place at all.

In this respect Phillips's approach in philosophy of religion is negative and therapeutic, but it has also positive dimension. The aim of philosophical contemplation is to offer an understanding of different religious (and atheistic) possibilities (Phillips 2001, 4–8). The task of contemplative philosophy is to give attention to the variety and heterogeneity of reli-

gious belief and language: philosophy "teaches differences", as Wittgenstein once described his method (Drury 1981, 171). Furthermore, Phillips thinks that the practice of philosophy extends our understanding of different ways of religious thinking and acting. In doing his job a philosopher is asked to transcend his or her own personal perspectives and his task is to do conceptual justice to the variety of perspectives *in their own terms* (Phillips 2004, 56). This is a demanding task for several reasons: there are objections of intellect as well objections of will. It may be difficult to understand the beliefs and practices of peoples' living in other cultures, and it is extremely difficult to do conceptual justice to perspectives or world pictures which one finds personally repulsive (Phillips 2001, 245; Winch 1996, 173).

Phillips's moral philosophy echoes these views. He is strongly against efforts to provide a neutral or objective standard by which we can choose between rival moral perspectives and practices. Instead, Phillips's "interventions" in moral philosophy are characterised by a pluralistic effort to show the heterogeneity of ethics. The deep-seated "presumption of theory" in moral philosophy, i.e. the effort to give a general theoretical account of morality, is misguided. Moral philosophy should not make things tidier than they are and there are genuine (unconfused) religious and ethical disagreements and differences between people. The standards of what is good or bad are bounded by the diversity of contexts and perspectives. According to Phillips, it is simply given that there are conflicting religious, ethical and political perspectives, and there is no reason to suppose that these differences are always resolvable. He says, alluding to Wittgenstein, "'They are there like our life'. It may said that if our moral perspectives and practices are different, we could not go on. To which we should reply: that is how we go on" (Phillips 1992, xv).

Now, for many philosophers Phillips's position is hard to swallow. Does it lead to Protagoras's relativism? Since ancient times philosophers have thought that one central task of philosophy is to try to offer answers to ultimate questions in human life, and philosophers have often put forward arguments for moral, political and religious views. Is Phillips's

position a betrayal of ideals and tasks associated with any serious philosophy?

Pihlström, who is in many ways sympathetic to Wittgensteinian philosophy, shares these doubts. He contrasts purely Wittgensteinian descriptive moral philosophy to his own normative moral realism, and he thinks that moral philosophers "need genuinely ethical intervention". He argues that Wittgensteinian philosophy does not leave "enough room for a normative evaluation of human life" (Pihlström 2005, 63; see also Pihlström 2013, 159). These are complex methodological issues and Pihlström is very careful in formulating his views and avoids making dogmatic claims about Wittgenstein's and his followers views. In the following I cannot do justice to Pihlström's nuanced discussions about the Wittgensteinian philosophy, but I can illuminate some aspects of Phillips's thought that are relevant in evaluating contemplative philosophy. Here it is to be noted that relativism is a vague concept and there are many different kinds of relativism: moral, cultural, religious, epistemic, ontological, semantic, etc. Different ways of understanding relativism require different ways of dealing with it.

Moral matters. If moral relativism is understood as a view that "every moral view is as good as any other", Phillips is obviously not advocating relativism. Firstly, this view appears to be a general sceptical or nihilistic philosophical doctrine, and for Phillips moral philosophy is not a matter of advocating doctrines or theses. Secondly, and more interestingly, Phillips claims that it is absurd to make the relativistic claim that all moral beliefs are equally valid, for "validity" here has no sense at all (Phillips 1992, 106). This kind of relativism seems to imply the following assumption:

> One can claim that "p is a valid moral judgement and its denial is not" only if there is a further external justification, which is independent of the moral practices in question.

This is an illusory metaphysical picture of moral reality, for moral practices are constitutive of our ways of thinking. The starting point of moral evaluation is given in our actual ways of acting and thinking. Moral ways of thinking do not start from radical doubt that questions actual ethical practices or perspectives. Following Winch, Phillips argues that one of the

deepest confusions in philosophy is to see practices as grounded on systems of beliefs. The foundationalist philosopher who seeks practice-independent grounds for moral (or any other) practices confuses matters by treating practices – or language and language games – as systems of belief or as descriptions or reality. It is misleading to ask whether practices are true or not. "Practices" in the Wittgensteinian sense of the word do not describe anything, they are not beliefs, and they are not grounded in beliefs. Instead, practices and language games are "contexts in which *beliefs, true or false*, are expressed and have their sense" (Phillips 2000, 31; cf. Phillips 1992, 65–66; Winch 1987, Chapter 14).

In his approach to moral philosophy Phillips rejects the principle of universality according to which true moral propositions must not be tied to particular conditions. Instead, particular conditions are the central focus of philosophical investigation. The problem with philosophical theories of morality is that that they do not recognise the actual heterogeneity and diversity of moral practices, but this does not mean that Phillips denies that the talk about truth and falsity (or right and wrong) surrounding moral judgements is a fundamental part of morality. He only reminds us that the standards of morality can be found (logically/conceptually) only from within the practices themselves. The essentialist and foundationalist assumptions which usually direct the debates over relativism are, in Phillips's view, confused.

Furthermore, Phillips rejects moral objectivism by referring to the specific character of moral judgements. According to Phillips, the notion of truth has a different kind of role in the moral life than it does in the context of empirical matters. In moral matters one cannot find the same kind of agreement as we find, e.g. in the context of colour judgements. Moral (and religious) judgements are personal judgements: there are no experts who could offer the right answers to moral problems. In moral matters, every person must speak in their own voice (Phillips 2004, 82–83). The question whether this-or-that is a moral truth cannot be settled by appealing to objective facts in the way we appeal to them in empirical questions. Moral judgements – when they are expressed in their ordinary context – are not hypothetical beliefs or opinions but

are instead "convictions" (Phillips 2004, 82; cf. Rhees 1999, Chapter 9).

Religious matters. Many contemporary debates in the philosophy of religion are related to questions associated with relativism. One of them concerns religious diversity. It is obvious that doctrines and truth-claims made by various religions differ from each other, so how should one understand the differences and disagreements between religious traditions? In contemporary philosophy of religion one of the most widely discussed answers to the problem of religious diversity is offered by John Hick (1989). Some significant features of Phillips's thought can be illuminated by referring to the differences between his and Hick's views. Hick has argued that all great world religions worship the same transcendental reality, although these religions seem to include incompatible assertions about that reality. In developing this "pluralistic hypothesis", Hick uses the Kantian distinction between phenomenal and noumenal reality and suggests that one can make an analogous distinction within each world religion between ultimate divine reality in itself and ultimate divine reality as humanly thought and experienced. Accordingly, he holds that the conceptions and experiences of different religious traditions represent different phenomenal awarenesses of the same ineffable noumenal reality. Hick also speaks about different religious views as different *interpretations* of ultimate reality. One could say that Hick's thought approaches relativism, although he accepts the metaphysical presupposition about the independent existence of ultimate reality.

Phillips finds Hick's theory unsatisfactory and rejects both the relativistic and metaphysical-realistic aspects of the theory. He holds that Hick's "neo-Kantian" position stands in the Cartesian epistemological tradition which was strongly criticised by later Wittgenstein. Neo-Kantian philosophers are wrong in holding the representational view that we have only an indirect grasp of reality: there is a dualistic gap between things as they are in themselves and their appearance to us. Representationalism has led neo-Kantian philosophers (and many others) to scepticism, which does not offer us "certitude about our everyday world" (Phillips 2004, 39; cf. Ashdown 2002).

Phillips's "ordinary realism" rejects the dualistic picture which denies that our practices, our actual ways of using language, make direct contact with reality. The basic point underlying Phillips's thought comes clearly into view in his criticism of Hick's idea that different religious experiences and concepts are different *interpretations* of the ultimate reality. The problem with this idea is that it suffers from problematic assumptions concerning concept formation. (Phillips directs a basically similar argument against Steven Katz's and Wayne Proudfoot's neo-Kantian views concerning concept formation in their treatments of phenomenon of mysticism and religious experience. Phillips 2000, 119-128; Phillips 2001, 8 –17.) Put briefly, Phillips argues that Hick's neo-Kantian way of speaking of religious concepts as interpretations is conceptually inadequate, because interpretations are always interpretations of something. One cannot equate religious (or any other) concepts with interpretations, for interpretations are logically dependent on concepts that are not further interpretations. Language games and forms of life are not interpretations of reality but they are given contexts in which thinking and speaking get their sense. So we are not locked into different interpretations of reality. Neo-Kantian talk about the limits and boundaries of language is in this sense delusive.

Pihlström has shown that there are important connections and differences between his own Kantian-pragmatist-transcendental approach and Wittgensteinian philosophy. Therefore, it is interesting to note that Phillips distances himself from Kantian views. He explicitly contrasts contemplative philosophy with transcendental philosophy. Phillips argues that contemplative philosophy does not try to determine necessary conditions and concepts which make language or "saying something" possible. According to him, contemplation of world pictures is not "to set up any kind of transcendental project, any kind of demonstration of the conditions of discourse, conditions that seek to get behind, in some way, the possibilities exemplified *in* discourse itself" (Phillips 1999, 155). Thus, the task of philosophy is not to determine claims that are necessary presuppositions and conditions of language games, but instead directs our attention to the constitutive elements of human life and thought. It is not

a matter of establishing world pictures or the possibility of them nor showing how we can solve existing disagreements between them. There is no deeper level than that given in the diversity of human voices, and philosophers do not know more or less than we know.

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A Solitude "So Profound the Word Itself Has No Meaning"

VINCENT COLAPIETRO

> " … avoiding solipsism is nothing less than my most important duty as a philosopher – and as a human being"
>
> – Sami Pihlström

In a letter to Victoria Lady Welby, C. S. Peirce offered more than an abstract definition of sign. At least implicitly, his characterization rises to the level of pragmatic clarification. The "essential function of a sign is," he suggests, "to render inefficient relations efficient" or, I would add, to render even efficient relations more widely efficient (SS, 31). Peirce was quick to point out that this does not mean that a sign will necessarily put such relations immediately "into action." It will rather put in place at least the possibility of enhancing the efficiency of relations and the sign will do so by establishing "a habit or general rule" whereby signs will or, better, *would* on occasion act. Peirce is highlighting here the dynamism of signs. That is, a sign forges a connection among forces in such a manner that the range of their efficacy is widened and, possibly, their impetus is intensified.

These considerations prompt Peirce to assert, "a sign is something by knowing which we know something more" (31-32). The traditional definition of sign as a dyadic relationship is deficient not simply because it oversimplifies the irreducible complexity (specifically, the irreducible triadicity) of semiosis, but also because it in effect allows a static, sterile relationship to eclipse a dynamic, generative one. In insisting upon the interpretant of a sign and, in most instances, a series

of interpretants, Peirce is insisting upon the generative character of even the most rudimentary forms of sign-action.

There is no better illustration of Peirce's assertion ("a sign is something by knowing which we know something more") than an author, not least of all vis-à-vis other authors. In coming to know Peirce's writings, we come to know far more than simply *his* thoughts. In addition, we come to know the thoughts of Plato, Aristotle, Scotus, Kant, Hegel, and a host of other authors. Of far greater import, we come to know, in some manner and measure, what their thoughts are about. For someone of Peirce's reflexive bent, this means knowing what their thoughts about thought itself are. Very early in his authorship, we catch a glimpse of this. "Thought, says Plato, is a silent speech of the soul with itself. If this be admitted immense consequences follow; quite unrecognized, I believe, hitherto" (W 2, 172). No thought regarding thought is more critical for Peirce's project than this one, save that all thought is in signs (or more simply, thinking *is* semiosis). But, in truth, these are two different ways of making the same point.

Sami Pihlström's own writings are, of course, an illustration of the point about authors as signs in a dynamic, generative sense. In knowing him, we come to know both other authors and many of the topics to which an historical assemblage of effective co-inquirers, whether or not they see themselves as such, have devoted their critical attention. One of the functions of an author is indeed to assemble other authors, often ones who have rarely, if ever, been considered together, and show how reading them together advances our understanding of a given topic.

I want on this occasion to honor his multifaceted contribution to contemporary thought, to date, by considering how another thinker does this. At first blush, this might seem like an extremely odd way of honoring an individual. For I am seizing this occasion as an opportunity to write not about him but someone else. It is however not nearly as odd or inappropriate as it likely seems to be. For my concern is to address one of the focal questions of Sami's more mature thought, but in terms other than his own. While I am deeply interested in his writings, on their own terms, my concerns to some extent both overlap with, and diverge from, his central preoccupations, not least of all what he understands by solipsism. My

contribution to this volume is not designed either to contest or advance his thoughtful and painstaking treatment of this thorny and tangled topic; rather it aims to complement his work in this area.

Jonathan Lear has written a remarkable essay on Hans Loewald. It concerns legacy in general and the Freudian legacy in a very particular regard (Freud's belated introduction of Eros into the putatively explanatory framework of psychoanalytic practice). But it equally concerns narcissism. In reading Lear's essay, I was led back to Loewald's "Ego and Reality" (in coming to know Lear better, I came to know "something more," an author whose name but not whose writings were familiar to me). In reading Loewald's essay, in turn, I came to think about Peirce – in particular, his realism – in a different manner. I am disposed to think that, in reading Loewald's essay, I came to know something more – something deeper – about Peirce's stance toward reality. In any event, what Sami is discussing in reference to solipsism, Lear and Loewald are exploring under the rubric of narcissism. What the three are exploring has a direct if unnoticed bearing upon Peircean realism (one's stance toward the other, not simply other selves, is to some extent a result of brute secondness, but arguably to a greater degree a moral achievement). I have no intention of folding his discussion into theirs, only to highlight certain parallels and, of greater importance, raising a fundamental question about the minimal conditions for human intelligibility.

The point might be made this way. To ring a change on a biblical text, the only way to gain the world is by losing oneself, specifically, by shedding the narcissistic self in its diverse guises. The narcissistic self proves to be so absorbing that especially other selves are bereft of their ontological weight and, indeed, their irreducible otherness. The conjoint institution or establishment of the ego and reality requires a number of stages (it does not take place quickly, let alone instantaneously). Moreover, it is conjoint. That is, the maturation of the ego is coordinated with the acknowledgment of reality, in the sense that the form of selfhood is intimately connected to the character of reality. It is not only the case that the psyche acquires, rather haltingly, the capacity to differentiate itself from the world in which it is enveloped and, to such a great

degree, by which it is sustained. It is also the case that the acquisition of the capacity involves a series of stages.

Peirce is actually explicit about this. In a review of the English translation of Ernst Mach's *Die Mechanik* (*The Science of Mechanics: A Critical and Historical Exposition*) published in *The Nation* in 1893, he is critical of Mach's sensationalism. Of course, Peirce readily admits the *majeure force* of our experiential compulsions must be fully acknowledged (secondness must be given its due). In his judgment, sensationalists and their opponents equally acknowledge this: "The proposition that all of our knowledge is based upon and represents experience is nowadays accepted by sensualists and their opponents alike, the latter taking 'experience,' in its ultimate sense, for whatever has been forced upon our minds, willy-nilly, in the course of our intellectual history" (CN I, 188). To this *majeure force*, in everyday life as much (if not more than) in scientific inquiry, "we can only submit, and it is idle to dispute the reality of such things as food, money, beds, shoes, friends, enemies, sunshine, etc." (Ibid.). In truth, this submission turns out to be a *series* of surrenders and, as the result of each one, a more adequate understanding of experiential reality is secured (Colapietro 1989, 95-97). While an anti-sensationalist might acknowledge the otherness of such reality, such acknowledgments are early in the efforts of the psyche to differentiate itself from the world and hardly give the world its due.

What is the moral of this tale? The acknowledgment of reality is an achievement of the ego, of the psyche as an "I." This implies, of course, that evasions and distortions of reality are failures of the ego. A psychoanalytic account such as the one sketched by Hans Loewald in "Ego and Reality" complements Peirce's pragmaticist portrait of deliberative agents who establish themselves by a series of conjoined espousals and surrenders.

The *vir* is begotten.[1] This portrait of the ego can be stripped of its masculinist biases, since the *vir* is simply the self who emerges with the resolve and courage requisite to

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[1] Peirce suggests, "by the indefinite replication of self-control upon self-control … the vir is begotten, and by action, through thought, he [the vir] grows an esthetic ideal" (5.402n3; see Krolikowski).

acknowledge reality, above all, reality in its ego-shattering or, at least, humbling force. Such moral traits are hardly the monopoly of males.

While Eros is only belatedly and, then, only peripherally acknowledged by Freud[2] – so much so that Loewald takes as the legacy of Freud the task of granting the reality of Eros a place and power it hardly possesses in Freud's thought – love is much more fully embraced and indeed celebrated by Peirce. The acknowledgment of reality entails the overcoming of narcissism, the shattering of the imperceptible insulations of a relentlessly aggressive ego to bend the world to its whims and wishes. But the overcoming of narcissism is, in turn, truly the triumph of love and, thus, a transfiguration of love (in one its classical articulations, the transformation of *cupiditas* into *caritas*; in another, that of Eros into *agapé*).

On Peirce's account at least, love is a logical sentiment without which the moral achievement represented by an abiding resolve to acknowledge the irreducible reality of other beings would simply not be possible. The reduction of reality as so much stuff to be molded to serves the desires of an ego always poised to regress to earlier stages of psychic development is not the only reduction to be resisted. Given the omnipresence of narcissistic regressions, however, it is one of the forms of ontological reductionism we most need to guard against.

Even if the reality of the self is to some extent that of an illusion (Peirce CP 4.68), a fiction instituted by the psyche to secure a foothold in a world of compulsions and surprises, thwarted expectations and exploded dreams, the reality of such a self proves indispensable to securing and maintaining the distinction between ego and reality, self and other. Its synechistic much more than its fictive character needs to be appreciated and its fictive character itself should not be exaggerated.

The line between fact and fiction, the outer world of experiential compulsion and the inner world of fanciful flights, is inherently and invincibly fuzzy. So, too, the very status of the

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[2] As Lear points out, Loewald's hermeneutic genius is illustrated in his appreciation that, In Freud's *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, what is novel is the introduction of Eros, not Thanatos (1998, 123-25).

ego as an agent able to mark itself off from what is other than itself is precarious and problematic. But, even on Peirce's account, the ego possesses the stability, integrity, and ingenuity to draw and maintain the most momentous distinctions, including that between ego and non-ego. Loewald supplements Peirce's account of how the maturation of the ego is intimately interwoven with the acknowledgment of reality. Part of the paradox here is that the otherness of reality is, in Peirce's account, at once qualified and emphasized.

We might set in dramatic contrast the self engulfing the world in such a manner that there is no distinction between self and world and the world engulfing the self in such a manner that the self is, at most, an epiphenomenon, an incidental and impotent byproduct of cosmic forces. It might even seem that Peirce's account begins with such a self and ends with such a world. I would however strenuously oppose this reading of his stance.

Toni Morrison allows this glimpse into the interiority of Zula, one of the characters in an early novel. "Lovemaking seemed to her, *at first*, the creation of a special kind of joy" (122; emphasis added). But then things changed. She "liked to think of it as wicked," but not "ugly," "sooty," but also not "aesthetic"; even this, however changed. "During the lovemaking she found and needed to find the cutting edge." And as we move from this revelation deeper into the interiority of Zula's psyche we come to the point most relevant to this essay, a point best comprehended in the context of the movement from the disclosure of Zula's concern for a cutting edge to her being cut off from others. Hence, I will quote at length this pivotal passage in Morrison's stunning novel: Immediately after disclosing Zula needing to find a cutting edge, the author writes:

> When [in lovemaking] she left off cooperating with her body and began to assert herself in the act, particles of strength gathered in her like steel shavings drawn to a spacious magnetic center, forming a tight cluster that nothing, it seemed, could break. And there was utmost irony and outrage in lying under someone, in a position of surrender, feeling her own abiding strength and limitless power. But the cluster did not break, fall apart, and in her panic to hold it together she leaped from the edge into soundlessness and went down howling, howling in a

stinging awareness of the endings of things: an eye of sorrow in the midst of all that hurricane rage of joy. There, in the center of that silence, was not eternity but the death of time and *a loneliness so profound the word itself had no meaning*. For loneliness assumed the absence of other people, and *the solitude she found* in that desperate terrain *had never admitted the possibility of other people*. She wept then. Tears for the deaths of the littlest things: the castaway shoes of children; broken stems of marsh grass … prom photographs of dead women she never knew; wedding rings in pawnshop windows … (122-23; emphasis added)

For our purpose, what needs to be probed is the possible connection between, on the one hand, Zula's feeling of "abiding strength and limitless power" and, on the other, "a loneliness so profound the word has no meaning." What if the words *loneliness* and *solitude* here, without exaggeration, have no meaning, precisely because they preclude the very possibility of other people touching this "terrain" or region of the self? Her tears however are indicative of a connection to others that her surging feeling of "abiding power and limitless strength" rules out. At a certain moment, she feels or experiences herself, in the deepest recesses of her being, to exist apart from others ("I alone exist" – "I alone am real"). But such moments exist alongside of those of tears "for the deaths of the littlest things." That is, the power of the self to enclose itself within itself and preclude the being of others – indeed, the very possibility of their being – needs to be confronted: the feeling of possessing such power cannot be gainsaid. But, then, the *experience* of those who presume such limitless power to maintain an invincibly insular self – in this instance, Zula's tears for such things as "the castaway shoes of children" and "prom photographs of women she never knew" – also needs to be given its weight and salience. However deeply the self withdraws from the possibility of others, s/he is always in the next moment able to be touched by them – and touched profoundly, more profoundly than an apparent solitude so deep and enwalled "the word itself has no meaning."

For those of us who are conservative sentimentalists and, thus, who take such commonplace (if all too uncommon!) sentiments as mercy, gratitude, awe, reverence, courage, and above all love to be vital, human individuality or selfhood is a function of "an outreaching identity" (Peirce CP 7.591;

Colapietro 1989). Our lives inevitably require sorting out the lasting effects of our earliest identifications, that is, our primordial attachments – and, *that is*, our inaugural (better, our inaugurating) loves. The others from whom we must, to some extent, extricate ourselves are, without exaggeration, inextricably woven into the fabric of our psyches. The task of extrication thus turns out to be both necessary and, strictly conceived, impossible.

"The hand which inflicts the wound is also," G. W. F. Hegel (1975 [1830]) remarked, "the hand which heals it" (43). His claim has no greater pertinence than to the topic under consideration here. For love or its absence has inflicted the wound. The grammar of our lives is far from hidden. Indeed, it is manifest on the surface of those lives. The possibility of acknowledging others is rooted in the actuality of always already having incorporated others into the interiority of our psyches. But, also, the actuality of trying to maintain, at the center of our being, a solitude "so profound the word itself has no meaning" is, equally, rooted in the actuality of the countless "little deaths" suffered by the human psyche. The affective habits of each individual psyche define nothing less than an orientation toward the world and, according, a stance toward other selves.

My interest in narcissism both draws me to and pushes me away from Sami Pihlström's treatment of solipsism. There is much in his work I find helpful for my purpose, but much I find of little relevance. He and I are conjoined in a concern to explore acknowledging the reality of others, more precisely, exploring the difficulties accruing to this task. While I would not identify my most important duty as the avoidance of solipsism, I as a human being do see nothing more pressing than acknowledging the reality of others (Cavell 1996, Chapter 2; Dewey LW 1, 392). Such acknowledgment is, as John Dewey implies, bound up with a pragmatic commitment to human experience: "Respect for the things of experience alone brings with it such a respect for others, the centres of experience, as is free from patronage, domination, and the will to impose" (LW 1, 392).

In reading Sami Pihlström's work, other works, often ones I was reading even before he was born (!), become available to me in new and surprising ways; moreover, the

problematiques framing those works come to be seen in a novel and unexpected light. With their aid, I return to "the rough ground" (Wittgenstein 1968 [1952], #107), the publicly available terrain of our shared practices and our overlapping experiences, but I do so with new eyes, at least, with a more nuanced sensitivity to the most commonplace phenomena, not least of all, the quotidian tragedies of humans withering into disembodied sounds because others are so self-destructively captivated by their own images. Humans not only use words in ways that violate the grammar of those words, to the point of emptying their utterances of meaning. They also accomplish what is seemingly impossible. They embody in their lives the meaning of words having "no meaning." Nothing is more imperative than returning to the rough ground of everyday life and making *our* way – as justly, mercifully, truthfully, reasonably, and otherwise admirably – *among other beings,* above all, *other selves*. This is, of course, a defining claim of pragmatic realism (Pihlström 2005). Herein Sami and I are one for all of our otherness.

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Blind Obedience

MARTIN GUSTAFSSON

1. Introduction

In a discussion of Wittgenstein's relation to the pragmatist tradition, Sami Pihlström (2012) criticizes what he calls "dichotomous" interpretations of Wittgenstein's thought. According to such interpretations, Wittgenstein defends one of two sides in a series of antithetical pairs: "propositional" vs. "non-propositional" conceptions of certainty, "anti-Cartesian fallibilism" vs. "the truth in skepticism", "metaphysics" vs. "criticism of metaphysics", and "therapeutic" vs. "systematic" philosophy. Pihlström argues that such dichotomies foist upon Wittgenstein precisely the sort of schematic simplifications that his philosophy is meant to undermine.

In this paper, I will look at yet another dichotomy that is often allowed to shape readings of Wittgenstein, namely, that between action and thought. According to Russell Goodman, Wittgenstein defends "the priority of practice over intellect" and this supposedly shows his affinity with pragmatist philosophers (Goodman 2002, quoted by Pihlström 2012, 4). Now, I do not want to deny that there are passages in Wittgenstein's writings that can be used to support such an interpretation. Indeed, I would even admit that there is a sense in which it captures an important and genuinely Wittgensteinian point. However, insofar as the alleged priority of practice over intellect is construed in such a way that "practice" is seen as a separately conceivable, "non-intellectual" foundation for intellectual phenomena, I think we should be skeptical towards the idea that such a priority claim can be found in Wittgenstein's work. Rather, the alleged dichotomy between practice and intellect is ultimately one that Wittgenstein would want to dissolve. According to him, making adequate sense of the notions of practice and

intellect requires that we acknowledge their mutual interdependence, rather than conceive their relation in terms of some one-directed priority.

Within a short paper such as this, I can provide no satisfactory exegetic or systematic defense of this reading. Instead, I will simply discuss an example in order to gesture at what I think such a defense would involve. My study case is the practice of issuing and obeying orders. This is no peripheral case for Wittgenstein, but plays a central role in the *Philosophical Investigations*. It is present already in the famous example of the builders in §2, and is repeatedly discussed throughout the so-called "rule-following considerations". Indeed, Wittgenstein explicitly says that "Following a rule is analogous to obeying an order" (§209), so it is clear that he takes the case of ordering and obeying an order to be of considerable philosophical importance.

In §219, he writes:

"All the steps are really already taken" means: I no longer have any choice. The rule, once stamped with a particular meaning, traces the lines along which it is to be followed through the whole of space. — But if something of this sort really were the case, how would it help me?

No, my description made sense only if it was to be understood symbolically. – I should say: *This is how it strikes me*.

When I follow the rule, I do not choose.

I follow the rule *blindly*.

This is one of those passages that are tempting to use in support of a reading according to which Wittgenstein thinks practice is one-directedly prior to intellect. Indeed, the final sentence of the passage may seem to lend support to straightforwardly anti-intellectualist interpretations, according to which Wittgenstein holds that some sort of pre-conceptual, animal, bare stimulus-response pattern of reactions constitutes the basic stratum of language use. My aim in what follows is to question such readings, by clarifying what the relevant sort of "blindness" can reasonably be taken to amount to.

2. The Nature of Blind Obedience

Suppose I order someone, "Stand up!", in response to which she stands up. What happens? Well, different things might occur. One possibility is that her action is preceded by deliberation. Perhaps her English is very rudimentary, and she needs a couple of seconds to remind herself of what my words mean before she acts. Or, perhaps she engages in critical reflection, pondering if she should really obey my order or not, before she decides to stand up after all. However, it is also quite possible that her obedience is immediate, unreflective: on hearing my order she simply stands up, without any prior deliberation.

There is a familiar temptation to assume that such immediate obedience cannot be fully immediate after all. For it may seem that if her standing up is really an instance of her *obeying my order* (rather than a bare reflex response to the noises that I produce), then she must *understand* the order before she acts upon it; and this understanding is a form of "mediation" which forges a necessary link between my ordering and her obeying it. Obedience is a self-conscious, intelligent action, and might therefore seem possible only if the sense of the order is appropriately grasped. The idea, then, is that only on the basis of such prior grasping is genuine obedience possible.

Wittgenstein of course questions the model suggested here, according to which "understanding" or "grasping" the order must always occur prior to actually obeying it. Certainly, he would agree that a prior process of understanding can sometimes occur, as in the case when the agent's English is so rudimentary that she must first remind herself of what the English words "Stand up!" mean. Suppose, for example, that the agent is a native Swedish speaker and that her action is preceded by her translating the order into Swedish, telling herself:

(S) Få se nu, 'stand' betyder väl 'stå' och 'up' betyder förstås 'upp', så han vill givetvis att jag ställer mig upp.

Only after she has told herself this Swedish sentence (S) will she stand up. In this case, the occurrence of (S) in the agent's

mind can rightly be said to forge a link between my issuing the order and the agent's obeying it.

What Wittgenstein questions is not that something like this can happen, but that it *must always* happen, even for example in the case of an agent whose mastery of English is quite perfect and who is not aware of going through any such conscious process of interpretation before she acts. Even with regard to such a case, there is a temptation to think that a prior process of understanding must occur, albeit a more ethereal and elusive one than in the case of the Swedish agent. Indeed, one might feel that a similar ethereal process must also occur in the case of the Swedish speaker, *in addition* to her telling herself the sentence (S) – for doesn't it remain to explain how she understands (S) itself? After all, just like my original order (S) is just another string of words, and her understanding those words might seem no less in need of explanation that her understanding my order. The real understanding (the argument goes) cannot consist simply in being presented with a series of words, be they on public display or spoken silently by oneself "in the mind"; for those words must in turn be understood, and so the real understanding remains to be accounted for.

Having gotten this far in the dialectic, it becomes almost irresistible to think that what must ultimately happen in a process of "real" understanding is that some very special kind of item occurs before the speaker's mind – an internally and irreducibly meaningful item whose sheer presence somehow compels understanding, an item that guarantees its own correct uptake. One of Wittgenstein's central aims is to show how this notion of an item that cannot but be correctly understood dissolves under pressure. As Jason Bridges notes in a recent discussion of the rule-following considerations, this idea "falls apart under scrutiny. There is simply no making sense of the idea of an item, mental or otherwise, that 'logically' forces us to understand it in a particular way" (Bridges 2014, 278). "An item," Bridges continues:

> cannot tell a person something unless she understands it to tell her that, and there is no getting around the fact that her understanding it this way is something she must bring to the table, not something that the item can itself provide for. (Bridges 2014, 278)

Consequently, understanding is no more guaranteed in the case in which an "irreducibly" or "non-contingently" meaningful item is what carries meaning and is present to the agent (whatever such an item would be).

So, what if we abandon the attempt to account for understanding in terms of such an ethereal process of understanding? What if we instead acknowledge that obeying an order can indeed be immediate, and that in such a case the understanding is not prior to but instead *consist in* the obedient action? Then aren't we reducing the obedient action to a bare reflex response, after all?

No. To see why, let us compare the two sorts of case. Thus, compare the case when someone immediately and spontaneously obeys the order "Stand up!" with the case when someone jumps to his feet in response to the sudden and unexpected roar "UARRGH!!". The Wittgensteinian point is *not* that these two cases are similar. In the former case, there is genuine obedience in response to the content of the order: the person who stands up does *what she is ordered to do*. In the latter case, there is no obedience and no content, but only a brute reflex response. Suppose instead that the reflex response had been something completely different – a fainting-fit, say. This response would have been neither more nor less correct than standing up – it would simply be another response to the roar. In contrast to the order, the inarticulate roar invites no particular response (even if the intention of the one who roared might have been to achieve a certain effect).

But how can these two cases be distinguished, if we do not postulate a hidden process of understanding that occurs in the former case but not in the latter? According to Wittgenstein, this difference is to be accounted for by reference to a background of established linguistic practice mastered both by speaker and hearer, a practice to which the order "Stand up!" can be recognized as belonging. Given that the speaker and the hearer have already manifested their mastery of this practice again and again, we can in this particular case say that the order has content, and that it is understood and obeyed, without postulating any hidden process of understanding taking place behind the scenes. By contrast, in the case of the inarticulate roar, there is no such shared practice

to which the roar belongs. This is precisely what makes it *an inarticulate roar* (rather than an order) and the response a brute reflex response (rather than an instance of obedience).

It is crucial to see this difference between the two cases, for it has important further consequences. Again, obedience – even immediate, direct, unreflective obedience – requires the presence of a background linguistic practice. And a human linguistic practice is a resourceful institution. In particular, it provides the resources for reflection and criticism. Thus, if obedience – at least in its human form[1] – comes together with such resources, the upshot is that the possibility of obedience goes hand in hand with the possibility of critical reflection and disobedience. We can obey unreflectively – "blindly", if you like – only if we have some resources to reflect, criticize and disobey.

On the other hand, it cannot be the case that disobedience would be the common response to an order. If so, the institution of ordering would be pointless: "Orders are sometimes not obeyed. But what would it be like if no orders were *ever* obeyed? The concept of an order would have lost its purpose" (Wittgenstein 2009, 345).

Even more significantly, disobedience is a "non-standard" response also in the sense that it requires some specific positive reason. Such a reason might be that obeying the order would be bad, or that obeying the order stands in conflict with some other instruction of overriding importance, or that one wants to undermine the authority of the order-giver, and so forth. Unless some such specific reason is present, it is not clear that the order has even been understood. By contrast, immediate obedience does not require any further positive reason to manifest understanding; for, again, such obedience typically constitutes the understanding of the order.

And yet, it would be completely mistaken to object that Wittgenstein somehow denigrates critical reflection and belit-

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[1] I do not think it is an upshot of the Wittgensteinian conception that non-linguistic animals such as dogs cannot obey orders (if so, the conception would be obviously mistaken). However, I do think it entails that there is a formal difference between obedience among linguistic and non-linguistic animals. I cannot here clarify this point, but for discussions of related issues see Boyle 2012 and Gustafsson 2016.

tles the possibility of disobedience. According to his conception, in any given particular instance of ordering, critical reflection and disobedience may be called for. And when such critical reflection and disobedience takes place, there is indeed a distinction to be made between understanding and obedience: She who reflects critically before she obeys has surely understood the order, and the same is true of her who disobeys (rather than just misunderstands). But again, her understanding is not a matter of some hidden process in the mind, but is present *in* the way she discusses the order, weighs its pros and cons against each other, and so forth. And this in turn presupposes the background of a human linguistic practice in which she has shown himself to be a competent participant, *and* of a practice of ordering where orders are by and large obeyed.

Importantly, there are psychological differences between individual human beings. Some are more prone to reflection and criticism, whereas others have all too great respect for authority and obey orders unreflectively even when critical reflection is called for. It is certainly a good idea to try to reduce such an exaggerated and unreflective respect for authority – for example, by bringing up children in such a way that they don't obey blindly when there are good reasons to engage in critical reflection and perhaps even disobedience. The Wittgensteinian conception does not deny any of this. It merely clarifies the conditions that must be in place for meaningful discussions about the dangers of blind obedience to so much as get off the ground.

3. Conclusion

I hope my brief discussion of blind obedience has given the reader some idea of why I think we should be skeptical of a "dichotomous" reading of Wittgenstein according to which action and practice are in some one-directed fashion prior to thought and intellect. Even "blind obedience" and "blind rule-following" are pretty rich notions for Wittgenstein. They presuppose mastery of linguistic practice, and such mastery already provides the resources for deliberation and critical reflection. Thus, in an important sense, practice and intellect come together for Wittgenstein, and there is no reductionism

involved in this unity. In particular, Wittgenstein in no way reduces thought and intellect to some independently conceivable notion of "blind response". What *is* true is that "blind" obedience (or rule-following), in the relevant sense of the term, has a kind of default status for Wittgenstein: it cannot generally be the case that agents deliberate before they act, and deliberation requires some specific positive reason. On the other hand, deliberation is always a possibility, and an agent incapable of critical reflection cannot act at all, not even "blindly".

Finally, I don't mean to suggest that this marks a distance between Wittgenstein and the classical thinkers in the pragmatist tradition. As far as I can judge, philosophers such as William James and John Dewey would heartily agree with virtually everything I have said on Wittgenstein's behalf (neo-pragmatists such as Rorty are trickier – I personally suspect that Rorty's views still suffer from a lingering reductionist behaviorism, even if I shall not try to justify this claim here). However, I gladly leave it to Sami to decide to what extent I am right about this affinity between pragmatist views and my Wittgenstein, since his knowledge of classical pragmatism far surpasses mine.

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Jamesian Liberalism and the Self

SARIN MARCHETTI

1. Despite not writing any full-fledged and comprehensive treatise of the kind Thomas Jefferson, Walter Lippman, or John Rawls did, William James is among the great American liberal philosophers. As Ralph Waldo Emerson before him, and John Dewey and Richard Rorty after him, James was indeed highly skeptical of the opportunity of theorizing upon such a topic – and much else –, mostly because of his wider distrust of top-down, idealized approaches in philosophical and political matters alike. As a consequence, and consistently with the pragmatist line he was part of, throughout his work we find a wealth of bottom-up, non-ideal insights about how to picture and exercise this particular philosophical option. In what follows I shall briefly present James's distinctive understanding of liberalism, highlighting the two key features of it that in my opinion are still very much relevant for us today, placing them in some historical context: namely, the ethical feature of liberalism and its grounding in a conception of the self as contingent and mobile.

2. Like most, if not all concepts, philosophical and otherwise, liberalism meant different things to different people, and still do. That said, on a minimal and relatively uncontroversial understanding of it, liberalism has to do with liberty: with what liberty is and most importantly with what we might do with it. By taking liberty as one of our dearest human values, James was a liberal thinker through and through. Still, rather than defending liberty as a metaphysical feature of the world or of ourselves as part and parcel of it, James took liberty as something to build and care for midst our daily activities, hence furthering J.S. Mill's practical (that is moral and political) analysis and defense of such concept in his 1859 master-

piece *On Liberty*. The metaphysical footing of liberty, if there is such a thing, was to be found in the ethical practices made possible and fostered by it: the "dilemma of determinism", as James famously and forcefully claimed in his timely essay bearing that name, is truly an ethical one about which kind of universe would accommodate our dearest moral concerns and transactions (James 1978a). It is in fact a running theme of James's pragmatist approach: asking not so much how something can be conceived or justified from without our individual and communal lives, but rather how something can be achieved and reshaped from within them. Liberty – or freedom, James's preferred term for it –, was such a thing, and centrally so: at once an ideal to pursue and a distinctive way of life to nurture through strokes of daily practice at risk of losing it and its benefits altogether.

Differently from Mill, James did not dedicate one single work to articulating his view but rather scattered his reflections on the topic throughout his writings. If this makes it somewhat harder to guess the shape of his proposal, James opted for this impressionistic (at times Gestaltic) approach for a reason: given the centrality of freedom in human affairs, no single entry would suffice to shed proper light on it. A multifocused approach would then better serve the purpose, showing its widespread presence and role in our lives and philosophies. James's psychological, philosophical, and religious writings are variously permeated by discussions of different aspects of this seminal notion. We Jamesians are to be very grateful to Sami Pihlström for his many efforts to put some order in this wealth of material, and for the resulting original interpretation of James as a philosopher of freedom and indeterminism[1]. It is indeed impossible, if not at the cost of glaring oversights, to isolate and pick one thread without weighting its place within the wider context, which Pihlström carefully reconstructed and conveniently put to work to show the opportunity of a Jamesian understanding of freedom. Now, the very minimal unit one should take into consideration when accounting for James's master-notion, and this is what I shall be doing in this text, is the combo of metaphilosophical and ethical considerations at the heart of

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[1] See, among his many publications, Pihlström 2008 and 2009.

his conception of freedom and hence of liberalism as it surfaces in some key moral writings. In so doing, I will briefly argue for the opportunity of giving practical and ethical considerations about freedom primacy over metaphysical ones, engaging in this way – although only tangentially and at any rate only cursorily – Pihlström's rich and sophisticated reconstruction[2].

3. William James's moral and political thought was remarkably well adapted to its historical context, and in particular to the emergence, in the late nineteenth century, of a generalized culture of uncertainty, risk, and probability. That context has been ably charted by intellectual historians such as Ian Hacking, who depicted it as a pivotal moment within the broader trend of the formation of new psychological, epistemological, and political subjects and subjectivities as conceptualized by Michel Foucault in a number of by-now classical writings[3]. In the face of normalization, and counter to it, James developed a strenuous ethics rooted in a conception of liberty or freedom as self-transformation. Such an ethics remains a valuable source of freedom today insofar as we remain bound to probability and uncertainty as an ongoing context for moral living[4].

By the end of the nineteenth century, in an era which witnessed the painful yet liberating passage from a culture of certainty to one of probability, with the invention of insurance companies and the scientific management of risk, chance became something which individuals and society as a whole simply could not ignore or circumvent. An entire new mindset suddenly broke into the lives and institutions across the Atlantic, making the world of fixities and certainties look outdated and more importantly frustrating. The old categories of – and reliance on – tradition, custom, and authority

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[2] A sample of our disagreement has been given by Pihlström himself in his generous review of my work in Pihlström 2015.

[3] See Hacking 1990, which is very much indebted to Foucault's 1970s writings on institutions, technologies, and biopower. For pragmatism as a revolution driven by the taking of chance and mobilization of things and persons seriously, see Menand 2001.

[4] On this extremely rich context and James's pivotal contribution to it, see Koopman 2016 and 2017, to which this section is indebted.

cast a dim light on the meanings, values, and truths people and nations lived by. What took place was a generalized-yet-microscopic call for action in the face of uncertainty and instability. Not only we witnessed radical changes in practices – epistemological, moral, and even religious –, but the very picture of rationality – theoretical as well practical – was turned upside down, with transaction replacing mirroring as the privileged model of, and metaphor for, sound thinking, speaking, and acting.

Now, fascinating as it is, this is not material for historians of philosophy and culture only, as our contemporary world is still very much indebted to, and relying on, this indeterministic intellectual and social climate. We the heirs of chance and probability can indeed hardly make sense of the modern – let alone the ancient – mindset of certainty and authority, if not derogatorily. For sure we still sometimes crave for stable enough rules and feasible plans, but always against a background of mobile hypotheses and risky assumptions. The very notions of possibility and novelty lie at the very heart of our scientific and artistic pursuits alike. Variables took the place of invariances, as we started to conceive and account for reality – brute or social alike – as something to cope with rather than to copy – where the latter activity is itself a function of our practical attitude and interests. Descartes's quest for certainty (and, well before it, Plato's duplication of worlds) is now conceived as a deceiving answer to a misguided problem: that of reconciling necessity with contingency. If necessity as certainty goes, all we are left with are ways of making the best of contingency as mobility. Between Descartes and us, in a period that culminates in the late nineteenth century of Darwin and Nietzsche, chance had stabilized as the very practical tool with which to distribute meanings, values, and truths. Further revolutions in technology, imagination, and ways of living together fostered ever new ways of making sense of our individual and communal practices without transcendental banisters or fixed rails, adjusting our expectations and provisions of a future yet to be fully written and still entirely within the reach of our best hopes.

4. I have been presenting the so-called probabilistic revolution as the wider context through which we can begin to understand the shifting sands of the moralities and epistemologies of selfhood in late nineteenth-century America, of which James offered a particularly strong version: the very moralities and epistemologies we have been furthering ever since by adjusting them to our most pressing contemporary needs. James provides an exemplary case study of how we first came to terms with the specifically moral problematic of probability, with which we are still very much struggling. James's entire philosophical vision, from his functionalistic psychology to his pragmatist conception of truth to his exhortative ethics, can in fact be seen as a positive response to chance, possibility, and probability, which are part of the broader shift in sensibility concerning the very viability of the project of living with doubt and uncertainty.

In a late account of his overall philosophical outlook, summing up the main features of his individualistic philosophy, James explicitly relates novelty and activity with a democratic form of individualism. He writes:

> This then is the individualist view…

> It means many good things: e.g.

> Genuine novelty

> order being *won*, paid for.

> the smaller system the truer

> man [is greater than] home [is greater than] state or church.

> anti-slavery in all ways

> toleration – respect for others

> democracy – good systems can always be described in individualistic terms.

> hero-worship and custom. (James 1975a, 285)

By emphasizing novelty and the need to win order and pay for it, James works out a conception of freedom midst uncertainty as the work of self-transformation. This conception offers an alternative to standard modern accounts of freedom

as autonomous self-legislation. This alternative understanding of freedom involves a focus on our *practices* or *acts* of freedom as an unbroken work on the self as opposed to the emphasis on the *capacity* for freedom construed as giving the law to oneself of Lockean and Kantian heritage. James's alternative, I contend, is a resource for us today insofar as we are still learning how to negotiate lives of probabilities, chances, and indeterminacies after the demise of certainty.

Freedom as self-transformation avoids some of the more puzzling and contentious implications of the idea of self-legislation having to do with transcendental and metaphysical questions concerning the very possibility of self-sufficient, self-mastering subjects, apparently nowhere to be found in a secular, disenchanted world. Once we give up the philosophical mindset and scientific and cultural framework according to which the goal of individual and communal life is that of placing one's thoughts, words, and deeds against a non-human, certain as well as ideal reality in order to make sense of them and of ourselves, what we are left with is the open-ended task of reweaving such strings of thought, language, and conduct from the very contingent and mobile place we presently occupy, with further actual or fictionalized ones possibly available[5]. The quest for certainty made sense in the modern historical and intellectual context, where it was indeed a live option, while it turned unproductive and hence uninteresting with the probabilistic revolution which turned our philosophical and ordinary lives upside down. We find no pessimism in James, though, as he saw this passage as an injection of energy and opening up of possibilities in our ways of being free and giving our activities meaning. What was indeed problematic, for James, was exactly our being stuck in a modern, static conception of the self and its moral duties, which lead to the very petrification of our truths and values. A pragmatist, mobile account of freedom as self-transformation would have given individuals the moral force

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[5] This thread has been most profitably and imaginatively taken on and furthered by Richard Rorty, who took James's shift (and Dewey's) from certainty to contingency at the heart of his own pragmatist project. For a classical reference, see Rorty 1989.

to rethink and remake themselves otherwise for the sake of melioration.

James thought of freedom in terms of energy, effort, and what the vernacular of his day often referred to as the strenuous attitude: "the pragmatism or pluralism which I defend", he wrote, "has to fall back on a certain ultimate hardihood, a certain willingness to live without assurances or guarantees" (James 1975b, 124). For James, the strenuous life was about the flexibility of the self in the face of practical necessity, not the power of the self over a weaker or stronger fixed external reality. The greatest challenge to ourselves is always our very self, such that what we find in the most strenuous moments of our lives is not the power of our self against something other than itself, but rather the effort of our will against our entrenched habits:

> We forget that every good that is worth possessing must be paid for in strokes of daily effort. We postpone and postpone, until those smiling possibilities are dead. […] By neglecting the necessary concrete labor, by sparing ourselves the little daily tax, we are positively digging the graves of our higher possibilities. According as a function receives daily exercise or not, the man becomes a different kind of being in later life. (James 1978d, 51)

James reinforces this picture by praising

> [the] zone of insecurity in human affairs in which all the dramatic interest lies; the rest belongs to the dead machinery of the stage. This is the formative zone, the part not yet ingrained into the race's average, not yet a typical, hereditary, and constant factor of the social community in which it occurs. (James 1978b, 192)

This willingness to live courageously in the absence of certitudes and assurances as opposed to the discouragement incidental to fixities and closure is for James the signature mark of the pragmatic temperament, which he encourages us to explore in conduct and reaffirm in strokes of daily effort:

> The zone of the individual differences, and of the social 'twists' which by common confession they initiate, is the zone of formative processes, the dynamic belt of quivering uncertainty, the line where past and future meet. It is the theatre of all we do not

take for granted, the stage of the living drama of life; and however narrow its scope, it is roomy enough to lodge the whole range of human passions. The sphere of the race's average, on the contrary, no matter how large it may be, is a dead and stagnant thing, an achieved possession, from which all insecurity has vanished. Like the trunk of a tree, it has been built up by successive concretions of successive active zones. The moving present in which we live with its problems and passions, its individual rivalries, victories, and defeats, will soon pass over to the majority and leave its small deposit on this static mass, to make room for fresh actors and a newer play. (James 1978b, 193)

Now, the willful mobilization and transformation of our habitual stratifications, it has to be noticed, is *not* a mysterious power inbuilt in our nature, but rather a functional name for the effort of attention we bring to bear when we attend to the reworking of our own habits of thought, speech, and conduct. In this context, a notion of liberty worth the name would then have to be experimental, practical, and mobile rather than transcendental, fixed, and metaphysical. James looked toward those situations where we meet our limits to exhort us to not be debilitated where all we have as a basis for our action is the slimmest of probabilities. For James, acting on probabilities involves resolving oneself to act with confidence where no certainty is to be found nor hoped for. This meant, for James, emancipating decision from certitude. Without either guarantee or insurance, still we go on acting with won or renewed confidence. James affirmed new forms of agency whereby we can transform ourselves midst uncertain conditions. He sought to embrace the new realities of chance in which he took himself to be living. In these new conditions, "the world we practically live" (James 1975a, 140) is not something metaphysically given, but rather a chance for self-transformation itself.

5. In closing, the Jamesian conception of freedom as self-transformation I briefly depicted guarantees no metaphysical grounding for the ethical life, but rather the other way around. It is because we come to morally react in such mobile and meliorative ways to the world, that we reshape its metaphysical substance – if any. It is not that the world has changed from the modern to the contemporary times, but

rather that, via reconfiguration in scientific, technological, and cultural *practices*, new spaces for moral thinking and conduct opened up and fostered us to respond accordingly in an unbroken exercise in meaningful self-transformation. It might well be that there will come a time in which invariances will become actual and pressing concerns again – and we do unfortunately have some signs of such backward-looking attitude in our current politics –, and yet those won't be so many changes in the essence of the world but rather shifts in our ways of dealing with it. Jamesian liberalism tells the story of our individual and communal coming to maturity, where what has been given up as obsolete is a conception of the world and the self as inhospitable to chance, variance, and transformation.

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Kant on Religious Faith and Beauty

HANNE APPELQVIST

> *Kauneus, untemme sisar,*
> *on opas meillä*
>   – Uuno Kailas

For Kant, religious faith arises as a response to the apparent disharmony between nature and morality. In Kant's view, "[e]verything in nature works in accordance with laws. Only a rational being has the capacity to act *in accordance with the representation* of laws, in accordance with principles, or has a *will*" (G 4:412). Nature and rational agency are thus governed by their own sets of principles, which creates the disharmony between the two domains. For theoretical reason, nature is a mechanistic aggregate of facts, and the human being an empirical creature subject to laws of nature. However, from the perspective of practical reason, the human being cannot think of herself as such. Instead, she must think of herself as an agent and thus capable of acting in accordance with principles that originate – not in nature – but in her own practical reason.

So for Kant, agency means responsiveness to reasons instead of mere mechanistic subjection to laws of nature. The principle constitutive of such agency is the moral law, i.e., the *a priori* principle of practical reason. This is the principle of universalizability. Insofar as something is a reason for me to act in a certain way, it ought to be a reason for everyone else as well. Otherwise, the very notion of a reason would collapse. (G 4:421, see Allison 1990, 204–205.) The moral law commands with an apodictic force: if I understand that the maxim of lying cannot be universalized without contradiction, I realize that I must not lie. And the command is uncon-

ditional: there are no excuses, but no promises of a recompense for moral worth either, insofar as recompense is understood as an empirical fact. For no empirical consequences should be among the determining grounds of my will. Insofar as my will is good, its sole determining ground is the formal (empirically empty) moral law. Hence, I must tell the truth irrespectively of what I calculate to follow from my action. I may foresee that telling the truth will have unfortunate empirical consequences for myself and perhaps more generally too. The only consolation I am given is that, even if doing the right thing for the right reason does not lead to my happiness, at least I am *worthy* of happiness. This break between morality and happiness – underscored by the problem of evil or, as Kant calls it, "counterpurposiveness" in the world[1] – reflects the gulf between nature and morality as domains of thought responsive to qualitatively different kinds of laws, independent of and irreducible to one another.

Still, Kant suggests that there is something right in the idea of a connection between morality and happiness. While in nature and in history we see injustice flourishing and many good deeds going unrewarded, our practical reason assumes that moral efforts cannot be futile. For if something is required of me, then that something ought to be possible. Kant expresses this idea, arising from practical reason as a necessity, by reference to his concept of the *highest good*. This is the idea of a distribution of happiness in proportion to moral worth, the idea that ultimately justice will prevail (CPR A814/B842). As the grounds for this idea cannot be found in the empirical world, its source must be the moral law itself, together with Kant's principle that ought implies can.[2] Kant writes: "It is a priori (morally) necessary *to produce the highest good through the freedom of the will*" (CPrR 5:113). And: "a natural and necessary connection between the consciousness of morality and the expectation of happiness in proportion to it as its result can at least be thought as possible" (CPrR 5:119).

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[1] For Kant's treatment of the problem of evil, see RE, 17–30; for a discussion see Kivistö and Pihlström 2016.
[2] "For if the moral law commands that we ought to be better human beings now, it inescapably follows that we must be capable of being better human beings" (R 6:50).

But how can we think of the highest good as possible? Kant's response to this question introduces the notions formative of religious faith, namely, God and the soul's immortality. First, in Kant's view, the moral law demands perfection, i.e., complete conformity of the will with the moral law. Yet, we realize that such perfection is an impossible goal for us as finite, empirical creatures. Given that the moral law requires perfection and given that it must be thought of as possible, we are led to assume the possibility of an infinite progress towards perfection – a possibility that requires immortality and eternity. Second, a harmony between happiness and moral worth cannot be expected in the sensible world. And yet, again, practical reason assumes the possibility of such harmony. This leads to the assumption of a supersensible cause of nature that contains the ground of that harmony, namely God, an intelligent causality, a rational being causing the world by his will for a certain purpose. (CPrR 5:122–125.)

However, from the perspective of theoretical reason, God's existence is a mere *hypothesis*. From the perspective of practical reason, in turn, it is a *belief* arising from pure reason. And given the principled impossibility of giving empirical content to the notion of a supersensible will, neither the hypothesis nor the belief can be elevated into knowledge. This is because, for Kant, *knowledge* requires both concepts and empirical content (CPR B75). Moreover, Kant emphasizes that the normative pull of morality does not in any way rely on the postulate of God's existence but precedes religious faith. It is only when the subject acknowledges the absolute demand of morality that the hope of a just distribution of happiness in accordance with morality can arise in the first place. (CPrR 5:129–130.) In Kant's view, there is no *duty* (an objective practical necessity) to believe in God. The only duty that arises from the moral law is to strive to promote the highest good. Still, the realization of the demand of morality leads to a *need* (a subjective practical necessity) to assume that there is God who, as the intentional ground of the world, will guarantee the possibility of an ultimate harmony between good will and happiness. (CPrR 5:125–126.)

Kant himself acknowledges that his account of nature and freedom as two domains independent of one another has a certain affinity with Christian faith. By contrast to Stoics, say,

who claimed that the connection between morality and happiness is immanent or even analytical, Christianity acknowledges the gulf between the empirical world and the domain of the supersensible inhabiting the noumenal subject but also – we hope – God as a supreme, rational cause of nature. "Christian morals", Kant writes,

> deprives the human being of confidence that he can be fully adequate to it, at least in this life, but again sets it up by enabling us to hope that if we act as well as is within our *power*, then what is not within our power will come to our aid from another source, whether or not we know in what way (CPrR 5:127fn).

Kant takes up this "aid from another source" again in the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, also known as the *Third Critique*. What is at stake in this book is, again, the seeming gulf between the sensible, empirical world of which we can have knowledge and the intelligible world of freedom, intentional agency, and God. Kant's question is, whether we have the right to see the world *as if* designed for a certain purpose. To see the world in this way would make sense, first, of intentional action as directed towards some ends – where intentional action is understood as flowing from a will capable of setting its own ends – but also, second, of the world itself being hospitable for our efforts so that the pursuit of the highest good does not seem as hopeless as theoretical reason suggests. Kant writes:

> Now, although there is an in incalculable gulf fixed between the domain of the concept of nature, as the sensible, and the domain of the concept of freedom, as the supersensible, so that from the former to the latter (thus by means of the theoretical use of reason) no transition is possible, just as if there were so many different worlds, the first of which can have no influence on the second: yet the latter **should** have an influence on the former, namely the concept of freedom should make its end that is imposed by its laws real in the sensible world; and nature must consequently also **be able to be conceived** in such a way that the lawfulness of its form is at least in agreement with the possibility of the ends that are to be realized in it in accordance with the laws of freedom (CPJ 5:176).

Hence, in the *Third Critique*, Kant strives to show that nature may indeed be *legitimately* conceived as purposive. He starts by distinguishing between two perspectives one may adopt towards the world. These are also the perspectives involved in the two aspects I encounter in myself, namely, myself as an empirical creature and as a moral agent. The first, determining perspective is the perspective operative in the pursuit of knowledge about the facts of nature, determining those facts and objects under concepts of understanding and allowing no knowledge of purposes, freedom, God, or even the world understood *as a whole*. But in addition to this, Kant now claims, there is another perspective, which does allow us to see natural organisms, actions, objects, and states of mind as *purposive* (CPJ 5:179–181). The reflective perspective shows these phenomena from a teleological viewpoint by contrast to the causal one, thus making sense of intentional action as directed towards some ends or purposes. Moreover, the reflective perspective allows us to look at the world as a whole and as such as having a certain purpose. Hence, if legitimate, the reflective perspective is a significant addition to the *First Critique*'s strict account of knowledge that excludes attribution of purposes to nature (CPJ 5:417). For as we have seen, the interconnected notions of purpose and intentional causality are indispensable for making sense of human agency and of seeing the world as hospitable for our moral ends.

Now, perhaps somewhat surprisingly, Kant's strategy in establishing the legitimacy of the reflective perspective, even if it does not yield knowledge, is to analyze the judgment of beauty. The reason for this move is that, in Kant's view, the judgment of beauty is *merely* reflective as it is not grounded in concepts of understanding, necessary for cognitive judgments, nor leads to concepts (CPJ 5:190). Instead, the judgment of beauty is based on the subjective feeling of pleasure one experiences in the free, non-conceptual and disinterested contemplation of the form of the object seen as a harmonious whole. Kant argues that in spite of its subjective ground, the judgment of beauty has *universal validity*. Moreover, when making a judgment of beauty, I claim that the relation between the *form* of the representation of the object and my subjectively felt pleasure is *necessary* in spite of lacking any conceptual grounds. I make the judgment of beauty with a

universal voice and demand (though do not predict) that others agree with me. (CPJ 5:211, 5:236–237.) This seems paradoxical, for how could I demand that others agree with my judgment of beauty if I cannot argue for it by means of conceptual proofs. And indeed, Kant admits that the judgment's claim to necessity requires a transcendental ground.

In the antinomy of taste, Kant addresses the question explicitly. He presents two seemingly conflicting statements about the judgment of beauty. According to the first, the judgment of beauty cannot be grounded on a concept, because then one could prove the judgment by arguments (denied by Kant's view). According to the second, the judgment must be related to a concept, because otherwise the claim to the necessary assent of others (presupposed by Kant) would be without ground. In Kant's view, both statements have a valid point, but they use the notion of a concept in different senses. While the first mistakenly assumes that the concept in question would be a determinate concept of understanding, the latter correctly assumes the concept to be qualitatively different from determinate concepts of understanding. (CPJ 5:338–339.) Accordingly, Kant argues that there is a kind of concept involved in a judgment of beauty, but one that is "indeterminate and indeterminable" (CPJ 5:339). He writes about this peculiar concept as follows:

> But now all contradiction vanishes if I say that the judgment of taste is based on a concept (of a general ground for the subjective purposiveness of nature for the power of judgment), from which, however, nothing can be cognized and proved with regard to the object, because it is in itself indeterminable and unfit for cognition; yet at the same time by means of this very concept it acquires validity for everyone (in each case, for sure, as a singular judgment immediately accompanying the intuition), because its determining ground may lie in the concept of that which can be regarded as the supersensible substratum of humanity (CPJ 5:340).

According to Henry Allison, the indeterminable concept to which Kant refers is the concept of beauty itself. The concept of beauty is neither a determinate nor a determinable, because beauty is "nothing by itself, without relation to the feeling of the subject" (CPJ 5:218). It is not a property of the

object, determinable by a concept of understanding (CPJ 5:187, 5:228). Rather, beauty is "the form of the **purposiveness** of an object, insofar as it is perceived in it **without representation of an end**" (CPJ 5:236). (See Allison 2001, 246–260.) In Kant's account, purposiveness signifies the type of causality underlying the object: we call an object purposive when we see it *as if* it were arranged in accordance with the representation of a rule even when we cannot state what that rule is, i.e., even when we cannot establish the object's purpose from the viewpoint of theoretical philosophy (CPJ 5:220). In short, when I judge something to be beautiful, I disinterestedly contemplate its sensuously given form and see that form *as if* it were intended for some purpose while acknowledging the impossibility of conceptually expressing what that purpose might be. In doing so, I assume a will that has arranged the object – the design of a wall paper, a flower, a crustacean – in accordance with the representation of a rule instead of being a mere product of chance.

But as suggested above, it is not just beauty that is at stake here. For we presuppose similar purposiveness when we treat human behavior, not as mere empirical behavior, but as intentional action (CPJ 5:220). Given that very notion of purposiveness is connected to intentional causality, to a will that has arranged the object in accordance with a representation of a rule, Kant's mention of the "supersensible substratum of humanity" becomes understandable (CPJ 5:220, 5:340). This is because the intentional causality in question is precisely that of which we can have no knowledge as it does not correspond to anything among empirical facts, but which is nonetheless presupposed to make sense of action (G 4:446–447, 4:452; See Allison 1990, 205).

In short, by establishing the legitimacy of the power of judgment's *a priori* principle of formal purposiveness by analyzing the judgment of beauty as the purest, non-conceptual form of reflective judgment, Kant takes to have shown that we may legitimately see objects, actions, and states of mind in the teleological, purpose-oriented way (CPJ 5:220). Most importantly, the same reflective perspective, governed by the principle of purposiveness, may be directed to nature and its organisms as well: nature itself may be seen *as if* organized by a supersensible will for a particular purpose. In other words,

the world-whole may be seen as a work of art and as such as evoking the idea of a will that has arranged it for a specific purpose. (CPJ 5:397–400.) According to Kant, the ultimate purpose of the world-whole can be no other than the moral vocation of a human being. This is because among the purposes we find in nature the only unconditional purpose is the one grounded in the moral law (CPJ 5:435).

This is not to back off from Kant's original claim that we cannot have knowledge of freedom, God, or immortality. In fact, Kant emphasizes that reflective judgments of the purposiveness of nature and its objects only warrant descriptions and never scientific explanations (CPJ 5:417). This is because the purposiveness we perceive in nature arises from the *a priori* principle of the power of judgment itself in its reflective use (CPJ 5:183). Nevertheless, by establishing the legitimacy of the judgment of beauty as a non-conceptual judgment that does not reflect the laws of nature but has a transcendental ground, Kant takes to have shown that we have the right to judge nature as purposive for our moral efforts. This is to say that we have the right to hope that, at the end of the day, the absolute demand of morality and happiness will come together in a harmony.

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Pihlström's Pragmatist Metaphysics: Transcendence and Meliorism

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I have been privileged to read Sami Pihlström's philosophical work for over twenty years. His early book, *Structuring the World* (Pihlström 1996) was an unusually mature and profound exploration of the varieties of contemporary realism and their relation to science, ethics, and human interests in living, broadly considered. Most pertinent for me, early on, was our mutual interest in neopragmatism, particularly the similarities and differences between Hilary Putnam and Richard Rorty regarding realism. We both saw Classical Pragmatism (especially Charles Peirce, William James, and John Dewey, hence, CP) as providing a *via media* beyond the realism/antirealism debate; we also believed, *pace* Rorty, especially, that CP's approaches to metaphysical issues were immune to the typical attacks faced by more traditional approaches. By their very nature, pragmatist metaphysics would not promise a "once and for all" account, and offered clues as to how future metaphysics might be done and why it might have practical relevance. We agreed, and I wager we still do, that CP's linchpin is its general stance or *starting point* toward the activity of philosophy. One starts, in life and in philosophy, from a living perspective, one which is historically and culturally situated, personal, and attuned to needs, present and future. This starting point helps steer past dead-end debates (e.g., those premised on absolutism or dualism, across many domains); more importantly, it guides how older areas of philosophy (such as metaphysics) might be renovated, now, so they might become instrumental for coping with problems.

This paper will, first, explore these important points of commonality with Pihlström — the neopragmatists, the start-

ing point and, relatedly, the viability of a pragmatist-style metaphysics. The latter two elements are, to use Pihlström's phrase, "entangled with ethics," and we will see how. Second, I explore some points of contrast I have with Pihlström. For example, he argues for a greater emphasis on pragmatism's debt to Kant and to a (suitably caveated) notion of "transcendence." Both of these are crucial, he believes, for future work in pragmatism. I detail both to analyze them and to help exhibit them to those pragmatists not yet acquainted. Third, the analysis in the previous section leads to some critical questioning. Why, I ask, should pragmatism and Kantianism be synthesized? Why would a qualified "transcendental method" be needed for a pragmatist metaphysics? Finally, I conclude by revisiting Pihlström's take on the starting point, which urges philosophy toward its earliest function as wisdom. I raise a brief and (hopefully) critical question about how one can judge if a speculative or theoretical endeavor (e.g. pragmatist metaphysics) is sufficiently engaged in worldly issues to be considered truly melioristic.

Neopragmatism and the Starting Point of Philosophy

In many of his books and articles, Pihlström chronicles how CP inspired and informed the neopragmatisms developed by erstwhile analytic philosophers Hilary Putnam and Richard Rorty. CP's critiques of the dualisms — between, for example, fact/value, theory/practice, and language/reality — inspired the neopragmatists and Pihlström as well.[1]

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1 Regarding fact/value, Pihlström writes, "No facts, for us, are *possible* without valuational perspectives that transcendentally constitute them as facts of objective reality. Nor are facts possible in the absence of normatively organized and reorganizing human practice." (Pihlström 2009, 139; see also 2005, 34-35). Reflecting on the tension between theory and practice in the field of so-called "applied ethics," he comments, "What I am slightly skeptical about is the possibility of literally "applying" a philosophical theory to some practical or concrete subject-matter drawn from ordinary human life….What the (Deweyan or Wittgensteinian) pragmatist questions is the supposition that we could 'first' have a theory (Kantian ethics), developed quite independently of its applications to *any* concrete issues, that we could then, 'secondly,' apply….The 'application' of philosophy to life is there right from the beginning. To be a philosopher is to be

More important, both neopragmatists saw that CP's critiques of philosophical dualisms were part a wider, meta-philosophical criticism of philosophy for setting itself apart (and above) the rest of culture. Putnam lambasted as aloof and amoral what he called The View from Nowhere and Metaphysical Realism; my own critique calls out the targeted approaches for their "theoretical starting point" (Hildebrand, 2003, especially Chapter 6). Discussing his own pragmatism, Pihlström writes that it "is primarily (though not exclusively) based on Dewey's. In the Deweyan scheme, there is no place for the theoretical vs. practical distinction presupposed in both the traditional conception of applied philosophy and its postmodern rival. Instead, philosophical problems are always already humanly significant problems, 'problems of men,' if they are problems worth considering at all." (Pihlström 2005, 95)

The adoption of this CP starting point (whatever its name) liberates pragmatism from puzzles or approaches declared "timeless" by the tradition, and frees inquiry to investigate subject matters and devise theories with greater relevance to actual human lives and cares. In essence, this is the adoption of a practical and a *normative* starting point, whether philosophy is debating "objectivity" vs. "relativism" or the nature of moral values. As Pihlström writes, "[T]he relativism vs. objectivity issue arises *within* our moral practices themselves, in a situation in which we already structure our world and lives from an ethical perspective – a perspective that is not called into question in a way that would make full-blown relativism possible. (Pihlström 2005, 33) And the method (or metaphilosophy) chosen is *itself* an ethical choice because normativity is already ubiquitous: "Morality is *not* a special section of our lives; it is not a particular language-game. Its significance cannot be captured in any explanatory theory, precisely because it is ubiquitous, constitutive of our theoretical pursuits as well." (Pihlström 2005, 131)

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a human being concretely engaged in the 'problematic situations' of life. Such situations lead us to philosophical theories rather than being mere 'test cases' to which theories are applied." (Pihlström 2005, 86, 95)

Limits of Neopragmatism and the Entanglement Thesis

Pihlström has a keen eye for the limitations of various neopragmatist positions, and I think some of his own innovations emerge from their shortcomings. While Pihlström sides with Putnam over the (general) feasibility of a modest realism, both part ways with Rorty for overextending the constructivism all pragmatists share into a so-called "linguistic idealism" or "intersubjective-relativism." Still, Pihlström parts company with *both* neopragmatists regarding their common disinterest (or rejection) of metaphysics. By the 1970's Rorty had disavowed metaphysics *tout court* (including Dewey's), while (the later) Putnam saw it as in a conflict with ethics which it could not win (see Putnam's 2004 *Ethics without Ontology*). But Pihlström's takeaway from the CP starting point is pro-metaphysics. He reasons that if normativity is ubiquitous (as the starting point says) then metaphysics shouldn't be abandoned but developed. For if facts, values, theories, and practices are all "entangled" in experience, there are plenty of ethical and practical reasons to investigate the world metaphysically.[2]

Metaphysics Reconstructed

What are the general contours and principles of a pragmatist metaphysics? What are its aims? Recall that Pihlström's support for metaphysics as a contemporary enterprise sets him apart from the neopragmatisms of Rorty and Putnam. It also aligns him with earlier efforts to revolutionize metaphysics, especially by Kant, James, Dewey, and Wittgenstein. Writing about the prospects for a "pragmatist metaphysics," Pihlström says:

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2 Pihlström writes, "We must, however, go beyond both Kant and James in arguing not simply for the *primacy* of practical reason in relation to theoretical reason (in the case of theism in particular, or in ethics and the philosophy of religion generally) but for the deep *entanglement* of practical reason with its theoretical counterpart....There can be no neat separation between the theoretical and the practical faculties of this 'whole man' [to use James' phrase]....We might even regard the entanglement of theory and practice, or their inseparability, as a defining characteristic of pragmatism, particularly James's – though not Peirce's." (Pihlström 2009, 166)

> If metaphysics is understood as the quest for the ultimate truth about Being, most pragmatists have regarded such a project as hopeless from the start…..On the other hand, if metaphysics is not understood in this metaphysically realistic manner but reconceived as a deeply human attempt to make sense of human existence in a world that continuously needs to be categorized from the perspective of, and in terms of, human practices and habits of action, pragmatists are not antimetaphysical at all. (Pihlström 2011, 96)

A pragmatic metaphysics neither shies away from deep issues nor quibbles argumentatively about puzzles ("paper doubts," to borrow Peirce's phrase); the goal, rather, is "to synthesize philosophical depth with relevance to life." (Pihlström 2009, 13) It does this, in part, by remaining pluralistic and sensitive to the contexts and problems by various peoples and cultures today. Pihlström writes:

> Context-sensitivity is needed in the case of notions such as being, existence, and reality. Pluralistically, the pragmatist should endorse many different kinds of contextualization – not only linguistic…but also metaphysical. ….[M]etaphysical views should be contextualized into the 'problematic situations' within which they actually arise in the course of our lives. Such metaphysically relevant problematic situations do occur in real life….The pragmatist metaphysician should explore the prospects of pluralism and conceptual relativity in such situations, thus ultimately understanding metaphysics as a project in the service of the good life – again ultimately inseparable from ethics. (Pihlström 2009, 52)

Such a "metaphysics of the human world" is, then, an inquiry "into the historically transformable categories of any humanly experienceable (always already categorized and conceptualized) reality….the basic categorial features of…a humanly inhabited world." (Pihlström 2009, 58, 59) It is metaphysics as "last philosophy" not "first philosophy," as Dewey put it, a "ground-map of the province of criticism." (LW1: 308) Such projects are obligated to learn about empirical conditions and needs before applying metaphysical descriptions because, as Pihlström puts it, "we cannot arrive at *any* understanding of reality as we humans, being ourselves part of that reality, ex-

perience it, without paying due attention to the ways in which moral valuations and ethical commitments are constituents of that reality." (Pihlström 2009, 5) The goal is not to limn reality "as it really is," but to note just those patterns and structures recurring in experience in order to exercise greater control over the sources of well-being and fulfillment. This is a melioristic metaphysics, that is, one which must stay in touch with and serve the advancement of moral life.[3]

To Speculate or Not to Speculate — the Pragmatists' Question

Pihlström is well aware of divisions within the contemporary philosophical scene, including between pragmatists, regarding whether metaphysical inquiry is a worthwhile (or even sensical) enterprise. Some see the CP's attempt to overcome The View from Nowhere as also a reason to move away from metaphysics altogether (see, e.g., Seigfried 2004). Others, such as Pihlström, take the CP's work as instructing pragmatists how to create a different kind of metaphysics, along the lines indicated above. Pihlström believes that since metaphysics, broadly speaking, has again become a popular with contemporary philosophers, pragmatists should enter their own versions into healthy competition: "By arguing that the pragmatist need not, and should not, abandon metaphysics

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3 About the normative framework within which such a metaphysics is conducted, Pihlström writes, "If metaphysics…is, when pragmatically reconstructed, about a humanly categorized reality, then the crucial question about the ethical standards we employ, explicitly or implicitly, in such categorizations inevitably arises. Nothing we do, not even the most abstract and theoretical metaphysical categorization of reality we might engage in, takes place in a moral vacuum, in an ethically neutral state. The world, if really human, is always already a moral construction." (Pihlström 2009, 71) About metaphysics' need to keep checking itself by remaining aware of present moral issues, he adds, "For the pragmatist, therefore, metaphysical inquiry ought to remain in close touch with ethical reflection on the practices and habits of action within which our ontological commitments arise and without which no metaphysical account of the world's being one way or another is even possible." (Pihlström 2009, 96; see also p. 99 about "subordinating" metaphysical postulates to ethical values.)

(but only certain specific ways of doing metaphysics, that is, metaphysical realism), I challenge pragmatists to create forms of metaphysics more responsible and critical than the ones typically found in contemporary literature in this field." (Pihlström 2009, viii)

As will become evident, Pihlström believes that a pragmatist metaphysics can be viable only insofar as it incorporates the insights of CP, Kant, and a (qualified) transcendent method. By hewing to what was valuable in Kant, a pragmatist metaphysics can maintain the close connection Kant achieved between metaphysics and ethics while moving beyond Kant's limitations. Let us turn to Kant, now.

Pragmatist Metaphysics' Debt to Kant

As mentioned, Pihlström embraces the crucial starting point at the heart of pragmatism, its melioristic motive. This motive recognizes that philosophy and metaphysics inhabit an already existing and normative sphere — life. Pihlström argues that this realization should be traced to Kant. "Kant is the original 'pragmatist metaphysician' and…pragmatist attempts to reintegrate metaphysics and ethics need to employ a transcendental method, pragmatically 'naturalized'." (Pihlström 2009, vii)

What is it about Kant's transcendental method that is so relevant to pragmatists? Why does Pihlström emphasize it to a greater degree than many other contemporary pragmatists? For Pihlström, there are several ways pragmatism is strengthened by grappling with its Kantian inheritances. To list just a few, pragmatists can (a) recognize that experience is prefigured by our human nature:

> The key to [Kant's] transcendental method is not a mystical postulation of two worlds, one of which is cognitively inaccessible; the transcendental thinker…is not a skeptic about our knowledge of the external world…..It is through transcendental idealism (only) that we can view ontological postulations of categories as constituting reality for us. (Pihlström 2009, 62)

The key here is that Kant's transcendental approach does *not* presume a two-realm ontic structure. Kant's approach, Pihlström argues, was also something employed by pragma-

tists to (b) uncover illusions created by our own reason and to identify what was problematic with metaphysical realism:

> [B]oth Kant and James insist on the need to locate and abandon a mistaken assumption – i.e., metaphysical realism, or what Kant called transcendental realism – that sets the metaphysical issues they examine on the wrong track from the beginning….Thus, the 'necessity' of adopting transcendental idealism is a pragmatic necessity. We need such a (metaphilosophical) account of the world and our place in it, if we are to adequately deal with the metaphysical illusions reason inevitably produces…..James'…rejection of metaphysical realism about 'the world' is readily comparable to Kant's. It is even most plausibly understood as a basically Kantian position according to which the way we 'constitute' or 'structure' reality is transcendental, not empirical, causal, or factual. (Pihlström 2009, 80, 83)

Finally, full appreciation of the transcendental method is necessary to understand (c) the natural "entanglement" of ethics and metaphysics, that is, the way human categories *necessitate* the way we frame and see the world:

> Transcendental idealism is required for human practices to play the ontologically constitutive role they play in pragmatism. It is only on the basis of such idealism that we may expect an ontological investigation of our practice-laden categorization of reality to *prescribe* the way(s) the world, for us, must be. (Pihlström 2009, 62)

Whether or not there is actually a *benefit* for pragmatists in seeing how experience is *necessitated* (within contingent categorial structures) is a question I raise later on.

The Transcendental Method Made "Pragmatic"

For Pihlström, then, Kant was an important forefather of pragmatism's innovations. He showed that encounters are never raw, but are always configured to help cope with human existence. He also showed why metaphysical realism is incoherent; after all, if we must assume there to be transcendental conditions necessary for any possible human experience, then it is incoherent to posit a world radically apart from those conditions. Whatever metaphysical inquiry even-

tually investigates, it is safe to say that it will *not* be a world independent of human mentality's constructive activities.

The question becomes, are Kant's own delimitations on metaphysics acceptable? For Pihlström and pragmatism the answer is clearly "no." Kant's picture is insufficiently dynamic, historicist, and responsive to the plurality of practices which make up human life. Indeed, in the pragmatist (and Wittgensteinian) picture, "practice" is *ontologically* basic. Pihlström writes, "There is no identification, and hence no acceptable ontological status, of properties (or anything else) in the absence of our being engaged in practices – contexts – within which we are able to count something as real, or commit ourselves ontologically. Our very commitments are in this sense prior to the identities of the things they are commitments to." (Pihlström 2009, 53)

So while Kant's account of the mind's categorial structures established an important baseline for philosophy and metaphysics — an anthropocentric scope for inquiry — it is still too inflexible and asocial to yield an adequate (and useful) scheme. A viable pragmatic metaphysics must press beyond his fixed categories toward a more evolving, social, and practice-laden sphere. It is how *we* categorize *our* particular world which lays out the task for pragmatist metaphysics. "Practices," Pihlström writes, "in this transcendental pragmatism…act as the dynamic, historically transformable substitute for the atemporal transcendental ego that constitutes objective reality." (Pihlström 2009, 48) This task, Pihlström notes, is naturally an *ethical* one and ties together (entangles) metaphysics and ethics:

> If we take seriously the Kantian claim that our very notion of reality is, ineliminably, a function of our ways of constituting reality, and if we extend this view to cover historically transformable categories instead of fixed a *priori* structures of cognition, in particular to our human *practices* – as pragmatists since James and Dewey have suggested – then the crucial question arises as to what extent these world-constituting practices involve moral elements. (Pihlström 2009, 4)

The Kantian Remainder: Necessity, Qualified

Much here seems uncontroversial for a pragmatist — the notion that there's no world "apart" from human takings, the interwoven character of *what there "is"* with *what we "interpret" there to be*; the way practices explain this dynamic interplay; and, the overarching normative framework into which all this is set. Given all this, why continue to call it "Kantian"? In other words, what is the Kantian remainder and why is Pihlström insisting it is important?

In a word, the Kantian remainder informs Pihlström's "transcendental pragmatism," especially because this metaphysical account retains some version of "necessity." As he puts it, he is seeking "*the transcendental (necessary) conditions for the possibility of certain (kinds of) objects or entities, as the kind of objects or entities they are* (or are conceivably taken to be by us)." (Pihlström 2009, 60-61; emphasis in original.) This reimagined metaphysics examines, he says, "a *humanly categorized reality* [and] the practice-embedded conditions necessary for us to be able to experience an objective, structured world." (Pihlström 2009, 3)

Still, cautious of older, metaphysically realist notions of "necessity," Pihlström qualifies the necessity sought. Insofar as it is our world — our "schemes, perspectives, and practices" — being investigated, we must, Pihlström writes, "understand the necessity at work here as itself contextualized within (contingent) relativized, historically changing, practice-laden schemes or frameworks….The contextualizing schemes invoked here manifest different possibilities of structuring reality, different ways in which the world might be categorized." (Pihlström 2009, 90) It is only within these "human categorial structurings…[that] we 'necessarily' (in the relativized sense) categorize reality in certain (91) ways." (Pihlström 2009, 90-91)

Pihlström believes that contemporary pragmatism requires a more fulsome acknowledgement of both Kant and the transcendental method to innovate its metaphysics and, overall, its approach *qua* pragmatism. Having reviewed, in germ, his reasons, I move to a brief interrogation as to whether or not it is really needed.

Does Pragmatism Need a Transcendental Method?

As we saw in the previous section, Pihlström believes that pragmatism is indebted to Kant's transcendental method, one which entangled metaphysics and ethics and advanced what I called a melioristic motive. We saw, also, that in order to build upon Kant, pragmatist metaphysics must adapt his method in fairly radical ways — it must be made fallible, historical, personal, and dynamically indexed to particular human practices. These are radical changes to Kant that, on first glance, seem to be *superseding* his insights rather than merely adapting them. For some Kantians, it must surely seem that Kant is being left in the dustbin of History.

Not so for Pihlström; he argues that the debt to Kant should remain active in contemporary pragmatist thinking and that pragmatist innovations emerge from "syntheses" with Kant. "Pragmatism and Kantianism," he writes, "should be synthesized; this synthesis will be most valuable as it enables us to pay attention to the emergence of another, even more important synthesis: the one between metaphysics and ethics." (Pihlström 2009, 171) Once the Kantian-transcendental approach — suitably naturalized — is assumed by pragmatists, pragmatist method is improved: "Reinterpreting pragmatism as a form of transcendental philosophy yields a novel conception of the correct methodology of metaphysical inquiry as a mixture of pragmatic and transcendental approaches." (Pihlström 2009, 10) One result is a modest realism in which the world we find is not given *a priori* but "is quasi-transcendentally structured in terms of human practices, within which any categorizing and conceptualizing activities we may engage in inevitably take place….The world…is dependent on us, or structured by us, though not causally, empirically, or factually, but formally or transcendentally….[W]e impose on the world its form(s), under which it is, or may become, a possible object of our inquiries and other engagements." (Pihlström 2009, 89)

At least two important questions are raised by Pihlström's proposal to update Kant. First, how "Kantian" is this proposal, really? I cannot claim to be a Kant scholar, but given the radical amendments and qualifications Pihlström finds necessary to make Kant suitable for "synthesis" with pragma-

tism, it is at least ambiguous that this is still Kant. (In addition to the details already adduced, consider Pihlström's fealty to the Jamesean view that one's *personal* temperament and perspective is an ineliminable factor in any metaphilosophical *via media*. Kant would surely never have tolerated this, which Pihlström clearly acknowledges.[4] (See Pihlström 2009, 85, 157)

This first question leads naturally to a second question: what does the pragmatist *gain* with a "transcendental method"? Recall that pragmatists need to keep Kant in mind due to his "transcendental method," the ability to explain why we *must* see things categorized as they are, though in Pihlström's version that *must* recognizes that these are *our* current needs, practices, circumstances, etc. In other words, the method illuminates the fact that we always see via a lens or filter and that this constitutes a "necessity" in our thinking, even if that necessity stems, ultimately, from our *own* practices.[5]

But what does this actually *do* for us? What is gained by seeing how the world is "quasi-transcendentally structured"? Dewey's *Experience and Nature* discusses how important it is to uncover one's habitual preconceptions and biases. He spoke not of "transcendental" but of "empirical" philosophy,

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4 "What I here call transcendental idealism is a broader doctrine than the one defended in the Transcendental Aesthetic of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, because I am…generally suggesting that the reality we find ourselves in is structured by us – not merely by our 'cognitive faculty' but also by our practical interests and purposes….To put the point in a more Jamesian manner, our practical needs, interests, and purposes are always already at work within our cognitive faculty itself; there is no pure cognition independently of practical orientation in the world. Our practical needs, interests, and purposes are always already at work within our cognitive faculty itself; there is no pure cognition independently of practical orientation in the world." (Pihlström 2009, 157)

5 As Pihlström puts it, a "transcendental 'answer'…or at least transcendental reflection, pragmatically developed" is necessary to answer the questions, "how can we (or I, or anyone) experience, know, represent, view, or think and speak about (etc.) – or, indeed, have or live in – a/the world, a nonchaotic reality with a more or less objective, determined structure?" and "how is experience as an 'openness to reality' possible?" (Pihlström 2009, 13)

likening it to "a kind of intellectual disrobing" in which we stand back from our "intellectual habits" so we might "inspect them critically to see what they are made of and what wearing them does to us." While this doesn't recover a God's Eye View on ourselves or the world, we nevertheless gain perspective, a "cultivated naïveté of eye, ear and thought." (Dewey LW1: 40) I think this is all that Pihlström is after — and if that's true, then why do we need a *transcendental* method to do it? Why must we seek the "conditions of the possibility" of our ways of imposing structure on our experience? If, on the other hand, Pihlström *is* after something more "necessary" — despite the many qualifications layered upon the terms *transcendental* and *necessary* — then what is being sought? I cannot see what he is after.

Conclusion: Toward a Wise Metaphilosophy

As mentioned, I find myself profoundly sympathetic to Pihlström's metaphysics and metaphilosophy. There is a *via media* between metaphysical realism and antirealism, a modest realism that neither denies the presence of human values nor natural facts. Metaphysics and ethics are entangled. What makes this *via media* possible is a change of starting point, a personal and perspectival approach to philosophy which recognizes the ethical basis of theory and practice. Such a metaphilosophy is the bedrock of what pragmatism is, at least for me, and so Pihlström is right to see one's choice of philosophy itself as an ethical choice. I agree with him that it is worth defending the moral superiority of the entanglement view on practical ground an an approach more likely to help us care effectively for the world — to solve problems. (Pihlström 2009, 7, 30) As he eloquently puts it, "The 'application' of philosophy to life is there right from the beginning. To be a philosopher is to be a human being concretely engaged in the 'problematic situations' of life. Such situations lead us to philosophical theories rather than being mere 'test cases' to which theories are applied." (Pihlström 2005, 86, 95)

Ultimately the challenge for him, me, and anyone else sympathetic with the notion that theory must ultimately contribute to practices — especially practices aiming to relieve or prevent human misery — is to determine *how effective one is*

obligated to be. So, when Pihlström states that his "ultimate purpose is to show that metaphysics…is part of, or subordinated to, the project of living a good life" (Pihlström 2009, 34) we can anticipate the critical response by Rorty et al. claiming that *any* kind of metaphysics is still too aloof from concrete human problems to make life better. To these critics, the motive of meliorism is performatively contradicted by the very doing of metaphysics.

In my view, the nub of this issue — whether pragmatists should engage in metaphysics — is not neatly resolved by Pihlström's argument that metaphysics and ethics are entangled; clearly, they are, but the Rortyan question remains. How effectively can one advance the values one believes in by writing and talking about metaphysics? This is in part an empirical question as to how engaged metaphysical philosophy can be; it is also a question of whether the intellectual's best avenue for meliorism is through scholarship and teaching. If meliorism is best achieved by more or less engaging directly in actions which change ordinary affairs, then metaphysics is too remote an activity to be genuinely melioristic. On the other hand, one might see meliorism as an indirect, longer-run enterprise; in that case, writing deeply reflective philosophical texts or lectures for narrow audiences may be sufficiently melioristic.[6] This is partly an empirical question and partly one of personal temperament. I cannot see a single, definitive pragmatist answer.

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6 One can find these two takes on meliorism in Pihlström's writings. At times, he seems comfortable with a fairly academic version of "meliorism": "As I see it, there is, in principle, no reason to oppose the possibility of a theoretical pursuit of coherent, reflexive moral life as one form of practical deliberation, as soon as naive conceptions of moral theories as decision algorithms are given up." (Pihlström 2005, 49) Still, at other times, Pihlström seems to be rallying philosophers *away* from overly-theoretical philosophizing: "The philosopher who feels that it is her or his duty to say something about the "practical," "applied," issues must again and again carefully ask the question of whether she or he is doing the right thing. Mightn't some "real" social or political action be more advisable for such a thinker than philosophizing, let alone academic "applied philosophy"? The important, though difficult, thing is to keep our abstractly philosophical and more concretely social or political aspirations (which need not be incompatible) in some balance." (Pihlström 2005, 96)

In closing, I wish to reiterate what a privilege it is to engage closely, again, with Pihlström's work for this volume. I continue to learn from him and find inspiration in his magisterial command over a wide range of philosophical genres and his quest for wisdom. More important, Pihlström is a philosopher willing to take risks and to put himself into his writings. As he put it in 2009, "I have increasingly felt the need to say something about some key philosophical problems independently of such a detailed scholarly documentation, speaking more with my own voice" (Pihlström 2009, viii). His voice is as engaging now as it was twenty years ago, and I am grateful to hear it.

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